
HOUSE BILL 1797

State of Washington 61st Legislature 2009 Regular Session

By Representatives White, Priest, Springer, Anderson, Miloscia,
Nelson, McCoy, Rodne, Simpson, and Sullivan

Read first time 01/29/09. Referred to Committee on Local Government &
Housing.

1 AN ACT Relating to a rural and resource lands study; adding a new
2 section to chapter 43.79 RCW; and creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that working
5 forests and farmlands, as well as open rural zoned lands, are rapidly
6 being converted to other uses. More than eighteen thousand acres of
7 the forests and farms in King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kittitas counties
8 are converted to development each year, threatening the state's farm
9 and forestry economies. The legislature further finds that if
10 conversion rates are not controlled, the four hundred thousand acres of
11 rural and agricultural zoned lands in King, Pierce, and Snohomish
12 counties will be fractionated in the next twenty years, and likely
13 developed by the end of the century.

14 (2) The legislature also finds that this pattern of growth leads to
15 a number of unfavorable conditions, including: (a) Removal of large
16 areas out of economically beneficial agricultural and forestry use; (b)
17 wasteful use of scarce public funds for roads, infrastructure, and fire
18 and safety services; (c) inefficient water withdrawals; and (d) the
19 generation of polluted storm water from impervious surfaces.

1 (3) The legislature intends to provide for an examination of the
2 environmental, economic, and social consequences of current and
3 expected patterns of growth in rural and resource lands, and to secure
4 a common understanding of associated factors. The legislature intends
5 for this examination to result in a widely accepted strategy for
6 identifying how best to maintain the character of rural and resource
7 lands in ways that: (a) Support the goals of the growth management act
8 and the Puget Sound regional council's vision 2040, goals and
9 objectives that direct growth into existing cities and towns; (b)
10 respect landowner rights, values, and concerns; (c) assist in
11 maintaining forest and farmlands; and (d) support Puget Sound
12 restoration activities.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
14 for this specific purpose, the William D. Ruckelshaus center must
15 conduct an examination of policies guiding the maintenance of rural
16 character and resource lands in Washington. The examination must
17 commence by July 1st of the year in which funds are made available.

18 (2) In fulfilling the requirements of this section, the center
19 must: (a) Work and consult with willing participants including, but
20 not limited to, agricultural, environmental, forestry, development,
21 realty, tribal, and local government interests; and (b) involve and
22 apprise legislators and legislative staff of its efforts.

23 (3) The center must conduct fact-finding and stakeholder
24 discussions with stakeholders identified in subsection (2) of this
25 section. These discussions must identify stakeholder concerns, desired
26 principles for rural land development and maintenance of resource
27 lands, opportunities, and barriers. The fact-finding must identify
28 existing regulatory, management, and scientific information related to
29 rates of growth and policies guiding development in rural and resource
30 lands. The center must issue two reports of its fact-finding efforts
31 and stakeholder discussions to the governor and the appropriate
32 committees of the house of representatives and the senate: One by
33 December 1st of the year in which funds for the examination become
34 available; and one by the following July 1st.

35 (4) The center must facilitate discussions between the stakeholders
36 identified in subsection (2) of this section for the purposes of

1 identifying options and recommendations for accommodating expected
2 growth in rural and resource lands in a manner that leads to the
3 conservation of forest, farm, and natural areas.

4 (5) The center must work to achieve agreement among participating
5 stakeholders and to develop a coalition that can be used to support
6 agreed upon changes or new approaches to: (a) Maintaining the
7 character of rural lands; and (b) conserving agricultural and forest
8 lands of long-term significance.

9 (6) The center must issue a final report of findings and
10 legislative recommendations to the governor and the appropriate
11 committees of the house of representatives and the senate by September
12 1st of the year following the year in which funds for the examination
13 become available.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.79 RCW
15 to read as follows:

16 The rural and resource lands study account is created in the state
17 treasury. The department may accept gifts, grants, and endowments from
18 public or private sources, in trust or otherwise, and must deposit such
19 funds into the account. The legislature may also appropriate moneys to
20 the account. Expenditures from the account may be used only for an
21 examination that complies with the requirements of section 2 of this
22 act. Only the director or the director's designee may authorize
23 expenditures from the account. The account is subject to allotment
24 procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not
25 required for expenditures.

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