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**SENATE BILL 5259**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Zeiger, Warnick, Van De Wege, Fortunato, and Takko

AN ACT Relating to encouraging the success of agriculture on agricultural land; and amending RCW 36.70A.020, 36.70A.177, 36.70A.190, 36.70A.710, and 36.70A.740.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.020 and 2002 c 154 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

The following goals are adopted to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations of those counties and cities that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040. The following goals are not listed in order of priority and shall be used exclusively for the purpose of guiding the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations:

(1) Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

(2) Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

(3) Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

(4) Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

(5) Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

(6) Property rights. Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

(7) Permits. Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

(8) Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses. Encouraging the conservation of productive agricultural lands requires local governments to have a regulatory strategy that allows agricultural landowners to successfully engage in agriculture.

(9) Open space and recreation. Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.

(10) Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

(11) Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

(12) Public facilities and services. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

(13) Historic preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.177 and 2006 c 147 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A county or a city may use a variety of innovative zoning techniques and other measures described in this section in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance ((~~under RCW 36.70A.170~~)). This section applies to lands that are within an urban growth area and lands that are not within an urban growth area. The innovative zoning techniques ((~~should~~)) and other measures must be designed to conserve agricultural lands and encourage the agricultural economy. Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, a county or city should encourage nonagricultural uses to be limited to lands with poor soils or otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes.

(2) Innovative zoning techniques a county or city may consider include, but are not limited to:

(a) Agricultural zoning, which limits the density of development and restricts or prohibits nonfarm uses of agricultural land and may allow accessory uses, including nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, that support, promote, or sustain agricultural operations and production, as provided in subsection (3) of this section;

(b) Cluster zoning, which allows new development on one portion of the land, leaving the remainder in agricultural or open space uses;

(c) Large lot zoning, which establishes as a minimum lot size the amount of land necessary to achieve a successful farming practice;

(d) Quarter/quarter zoning, which permits one residential dwelling on a one-acre minimum lot for each one-sixteenth of a section of land; and

(e) Sliding scale zoning, which allows the number of lots for single-family residential purposes with a minimum lot size of one acre to increase inversely as the size of the total acreage increases.

(3) Accessory uses allowed under subsection (2)(a) of this section shall comply with the following:

(a) Accessory uses shall be located, designed, and operated so as to not interfere with, and to support the continuation of, the overall agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties, and shall comply with the requirements of this chapter;

(b) Accessory uses may include:

(i) Agricultural accessory uses and activities, including but not limited to the storage, distribution, and marketing of regional agricultural products from one or more producers, agriculturally related experiences, or the production, marketing, and distribution of value-added agricultural products, including support services that facilitate these activities; and

(ii) Nonagricultural accessory uses and activities as long as they are consistent with the size, scale, and intensity of the existing agricultural use of the property and the existing buildings on the site((~~. Nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, including new buildings, parking, or supportive uses, shall not be located outside the general area already developed for buildings and residential uses and shall not otherwise convert more than one acre of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses~~)); and

(c) Counties and cities have the authority to limit or exclude accessory uses otherwise authorized in this subsection (3) in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

(4) Other measures that a county or city may use with regard to agricultural lands include, but are not limited to:

(a) Consolidating multiple permit requirements to create a more efficient permitting system;

(b) Exempting agricultural lands from requirements a county or city determines to be unnecessary;

(c) Reducing the amount of time required for permit review;

(d) Expanding opportunities for county or city employees to provide technical assistance to landowners who request assistance; and

(e) Increasing coordination among counties or cities and other agencies to avoid duplication of work during permit review.

(5) This section shall not be interpreted to limit agricultural production on designated agricultural lands. Furthermore, this section must be applied in a manner that allows agricultural landowners to successfully engage in agriculture.

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.190 and 1991 sp.s. c 32 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department shall establish a program of technical and financial assistance and incentives to counties and cities to encourage and facilitate the adoption and implementation of comprehensive plans and development regulations throughout the state.

(2) The department shall develop a priority list and establish funding levels for planning and technical assistance grants both for counties and cities that plan under RCW 36.70A.040. Priority for assistance ((~~shall~~)) must be based on a county's or city's population growth rates, commercial and industrial development rates, the existence and quality of a comprehensive plan and development regulations, and other relevant factors.

(3) The department shall develop and administer a grant program to provide direct financial assistance to counties and cities for the preparation of comprehensive plans under this chapter. The department may establish provisions for county and city matching funds to conduct activities under this subsection. Grants may be expended for any purpose directly related to the preparation of a county or city comprehensive plan as the county or city and the department may agree, including, without limitation, the conducting of surveys, inventories and other data gathering and management activities, the retention of planning consultants, contracts with regional councils for planning and related services, and other related purposes.

(4) The department shall establish a program of technical assistance:

(a) Utilizing department staff, the staff of other state agencies, and the technical resources of counties and cities to help in the development of comprehensive plans required under this chapter. The technical assistance may include, but not be limited to, model land use ordinances, regional education and training programs, and information for local and regional inventories; and

(b) Adopting by rule procedural criteria to assist counties and cities in adopting comprehensive plans and development regulations that meet the goals and requirements of this chapter. These criteria shall reflect regional and local variations and the diversity that exists among different counties and cities that plan under this chapter.

(5) The department shall provide mediation services to resolve disputes between counties and cities regarding, among other things, coordination of regional issues and designation of urban growth areas.

(6) The department shall provide planning grants to enhance citizen participation under RCW 36.70A.140.

(7) The department may provide financial assistance and incentives to counties and cities to promote innovative zoning techniques and other measures under RCW 36.70A.177.

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.710 and 2011 c 360 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) As an alternative to protecting critical areas in areas used for agricultural activities through development regulations adopted under RCW 36.70A.060, the legislative authority of a county may elect to protect such critical areas through the program.

(b) In order to participate in the program, ((~~within six months after July 22, 2011~~)) by July 1, 2020, the legislative authority of a county must adopt an ordinance or resolution that:

(i) Elects to have the county participate in the program;

(ii) Identifies the watersheds that will participate in the program; and

(iii) Based on the criteria in subsection (4) of this section, nominates watersheds for consideration by the commission as state priority watersheds.

(2) Before adopting the ordinance or resolution under subsection (1) of this section, the county must (a) confer with tribes, and environmental and agricultural interests; and (b) provide notice following the public participation and notice provisions of RCW 36.70A.035 to property owners and other affected and interested individuals, tribes, government agencies, businesses, school districts, and organizations.

(3) In identifying watersheds to participate in the program, a county must consider:

(a) The role of farming within the watershed, including the number and acreage of farms, the economic value of crops and livestock, and the risk of the conversion of farmland;

(b) The overall likelihood of completing a successful program in the watershed; and

(c) Existing watershed programs, including those of other jurisdictions in which the watershed has territory.

(4) In identifying priority watersheds, a county must consider the following:

(a) The role of farming within the watershed, including the number and acreage of farms, the economic value of crops and livestock, and the risk of the conversion of farmland;

(b) The importance of salmonid resources in the watershed;

(c) An evaluation of the biological diversity of wildlife species and their habitats in the geographic region including their significance and vulnerability;

(d) The presence of leadership within the watershed that is representative and inclusive of the interests in the watershed;

(e) Integration of regional watershed strategies, including the availability of a data and scientific review structure related to all types of critical areas;

(f) The presence of a local watershed group that is willing and capable of overseeing a successful program, and that has the operational structures to administer the program effectively, including professional technical assistance staff, and monitoring and adaptive management structures; and

(g) The overall likelihood of completing a successful program in the watershed.

(5) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (9) of this section, beginning with the effective date of the ordinance or resolution adopted under subsection (1) of this section, the program applies to all unincorporated property upon which agricultural activities occur within a participating watershed.

(6)(a) Except as otherwise provided in (b) of this subsection, within two years after July 22, 2011, a county must review and, if necessary, revise development regulations adopted under this chapter to protect critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural activities:

(i) If the county has not elected to participate in the program, for all unincorporated areas; or

(ii) If the county has elected to participate in the program, for any watershed not participating in the program.

(b) A county that between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2007, in accordance with RCW 36.70A.130 completed the review of its development regulations as required by RCW 36.70A.130 to protect critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural activities is not required to review and revise its development regulations until required by RCW 36.70A.130.

(c) After the review and amendment required under (a) of this subsection, RCW 36.70A.130 applies to the subsequent review and amendment of development regulations adopted under this chapter to protect critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural activities.

(7)(a) A county that has made the election under subsection (1) of this section may withdraw a participating watershed from the program by adopting an ordinance or resolution withdrawing the watershed from the program. A county may withdraw a watershed from the program at the end of three years, five years, or eight years after receipt of funding, or any time after ten years from receipt of funding.

(b) Within eighteen months after withdrawing a participating watershed from the program, the county must review and, if necessary, revise its development regulations that protect critical areas in that watershed as they specifically apply to agricultural activities. The development regulations must protect the critical area functions and values as they existed on July 22, 2011. RCW 36.70A.130 applies to the subsequent review and amendment of development regulations adopted under this chapter to protect critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural activities.

(8) A county that has made the election under subsection (1) of this section is eligible for a share of the funding made available to implement the program, subject to funding availability from the state.

(9) A county that has made the election under subsection (1) of this section is not required to implement the program in a participating watershed until adequate funding for the program in that watershed is provided to the county.

**Sec.**  RCW 36.70A.740 and 2011 c 360 s 10 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) ((~~By July 31, 2015,~~)) The commission must:

(a) In consultation with each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710 to participate in the program, determine which participating watersheds received adequate funding to establish and implement the program in a participating watershed ((~~by July 1, 2015~~)); and

(b) In consultation with other state agencies, for each participating watershed determine whether state agencies required to take action under the provisions of RCW 36.70A.700 through 36.70A.760 have received adequate funding to support the program ((~~by July 1, 2015~~)).

(2) By July 31, ((~~2017~~)) 2021, and every two years thereafter, in consultation with each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710 to participate in the program and other state agencies, the commission shall determine for each participating watershed whether adequate funding to implement the program was provided during the preceding biennium as provided in subsection (1) of this section.

(3) If the commission determines under subsection (1) or (2) of this section that a participating watershed has not received adequate funding, the watershed is subject to the provisions of RCW 36.70A.735.

(4) In consultation with the statewide advisory committee and other state agencies, not later than August 31, 2015, and each August 31st every two years thereafter, the commission shall report to the legislature and each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710 to participate in the program on the participating watersheds that have received adequate funding to establish and implement the program.

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