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**SENATE BILL 5253**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Liias, Warnick, Das, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Lovelett, Rolfes, Saldaña, Van De Wege, and Wagoner

AN ACT Relating to implementing the recommendations of the pollinator health task force; amending RCW 43.23.300, 17.24.081, 77.12.058, 89.08.620, and 84.34.020; adding a new section to chapter 43.23 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 17.21 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.30 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 39.04 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The purpose of this act is to implement the recommendations of the pollinator health task force created by section 3, chapter 353, Laws of 2019, entitled "Recommendations of the Pollinator Health Task Force - for Pollinator Health in Washington" (November 2020).

(2) The task force provided recommendations to help prioritize and enact policy changes for pollinators in Washington. The recommendations are organized under five broad categories: (a) Habitat; (b) pesticides; (c) education; (d) managed pollinators; and (e) research.

(3) The task force met for the first time the same week that the Asian giant hornet was first discovered in Washington and the week after the Houdini fly was also reported for the first time in Washington. Asian giant hornets primarily hunt honey bees and destroy entire honey bee hives. The Houdini fly threatens native mason bee populations as well as managed mason bees. Washington is home to over 400 different species of native bees, 65 species of butterflies, as well as moths, wasps, beetles, flies, and hummingbirds. The loss of pollinators, managed and unmanaged, can lead to decreased yields of many fruits, nuts, and vegetables. Washington is currently the top producer in the United States of apples, sweet cherries, alfalfa, blueberries, and pears. In Washington state, honey bees and other pollinators are responsible for the production of tree fruits, small fruits, and other crops.

(4) The legislature intends to clarify and update the description of farm and agricultural land as it is used under the property tax open space program. The inclusion of pollinator habitat to the definition of "open space land" is designed to clarify that the protection of pollinator habitat be included in the description of farm and agriculture land as it is used under the property tax open space program. The amendments to RCW 84.34.020, as provided in section 10 of this act, are intended to clarify an ambiguity in an existing tax preference, and are therefore exempt from the requirements of RCW 82.32.805 and 82.32.808.

(5) The legislature intends by this act to implement various recommendations from the pollinator health task force to protect and expand the habitat upon which pollinators depend, by providing technical and financial assistance to public and private landowners, and by coordinating with state agencies and local governments in promoting practices to ensure sustainable, healthy populations of managed and native pollinators.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.23 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department shall create and chair a pollinator health task force. The department shall appoint the members of the task force, which must include, but is not limited to, representatives of the following interests, organizations, and state agencies:

(a) The conservation commission;

(b) The department of natural resources;

(c) The department of fish and wildlife;

(d) The state parks and recreation commission;

(e) The Washington state department of transportation;

(f) The state noxious weed control board;

(g) The tree fruit industry;

(h) The seed industry;

(i) The berry industry;

(j) Other agricultural industries dependent upon pollinators;

(k) Washington State University;

(l) Pesticide distributors and applicators;

(m) Conservation organizations;

(n) Organizations representing beekeepers or apiarists;

(o) A member of the public from west of the crest of the Cascade mountains; and

(p) A member of the public from east of the crest of the Cascade mountains.

(2) One or more representatives of Washington tribes must also be invited to participate on the task force.

(3) One youth representative from an organization that encourages students to engage in agricultural education must also be invited to participate on the task force when available.

(4) The task force shall build upon existing pollinator research and pollinator habitat plans at the national and state level including, but not limited to, the state-managed pollinator plan, to assist with the development of an implementation plan to implement the state pollinator health strategy.

(5) The task force shall assist, as practicable, with implementation of the recommendations of the task force submitted to the legislature in November 2020.

(6) The department shall provide the implementation plan to the appropriate committees of the senate and house of representatives by December 31, 2021, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036.

(7) The department shall provide information related to implementation of the state pollinator health strategy and a recommendation of whether to extend the task force beyond January 1, 2024, to the appropriate committees of the senate and house of representatives by December 1, 2022, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036.

(8) This section expires January 1, 2024.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.23.300 and 2019 c 353 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department shall establish a program to promote and protect pollinator habitat and the health and sustainability of pollinator species. As funds are made available, the program must provide technical and financial assistance to state agencies, local governments, and private landowners to implement practices that promote habitat for managed pollinators, as well as beekeeper and grower best management practices. The program must be administered in coordination with the apiary program established in chapter 15.60 RCW, the honey bee commission authorized in chapter 15.62 RCW, and programs administered by the conservation commission and conservation districts.

(2) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purpose, the department must:

(a) Develop protocols to increase communication between beekeepers, farmers and growers, and pesticide applicators including, but not limited to, education and outreach to beekeepers, farmers and growers, and pesticide applicators;

(b) Review, in consultation with Washington State University, education needs related to pollinator education and develop a plan that outlines the goals related to pollinator education and the necessary partners, personnel, and other resources;

(c) Create a catalog of current resources on best management practices and other educational resources related to pollinator health and make those resources available to the public on the department's website;

(d) Document, in consultation with Washington State University, the bee species within the state and map their distributions as practicable;

(e) Provide economic and environmental impacts of weed listing and categorization on pollinator health to county noxious weed control boards in consultation with the state noxious weed control board and annually submit a report to the noxious weed control board describing pollinator health issues;

(f) Provide materials, where practicable and in consultation with Washington State University, about certification programs that support pollinator health, biodiversity, and low-impact pesticide application to the public;

(g) Educate the public through plant nurseries about the necessity for blooming nectar plants to be available to pollinators throughout their respective active seasons;

(h) Survey registered beekeepers to determine whether the current apiary program should be expanded to include apiary inspections or registration of apiary yards;

(i) Continue and maintain partnership with federal agencies and neighboring states to promote and enhance the implementation of the national strategy to promote the health of honey bees and improve pollinator health;

(j) Increase the availability of pollinator-related resources on the department's website, as practicable, and other state agencies' websites as appropriate;

(k) Develop guidelines for allowing beekeeping on state managed lands so that impacts to wild pollinators from honey bees may be minimized.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 17.21 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department shall continue to evaluate and update, as necessary, pesticide regulatory and education programs focused on measures to protect pollinator health. This work by the department, when appropriate, must be coordinated with Washington State University pesticide education programs to limit duplication and ensure consistent information sharing.

(2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department must:

(a) Evaluate and adapt pesticide training and drift reduction technical assistance programs to include up-to-date protection measures for pollinators;

(b) Support Washington State University's pesticide education programs continued incorporation of pollinator protection measures during their training and certification classes;

(c) Coordinate with Washington State University on presented research, new protection measures, technological advancements, and any other significant science-based information for reducing pollinator health impacts associated with pesticides;

(d) Coordinate with pollinator health staff in the department and at Washington State University to conduct investigations and share annual findings from pesticide-related investigations with the pollinator health task force;

(e) Evaluate and, if necessary, update the pesticide civil penalty matrix related to pollinator death or damage due to the misuse of pesticides and ensure pollinator health protections are included when evaluating either pesticide investigation violations or penalties, or both;

(f) Evaluate the inclusion of pollinator protection course materials for pesticide license credit issuance. When possible, the department must provide credits for pesticide courses focused on pollinator protection measures.

**Sec.**  RCW 17.24.081 and 1991 c 257 s 12 are each amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for a person to:

(1) Sell, offer for sale, or distribute a noxious weed or a plant or plant product or regulated article infested or infected with a plant pest declared by rule to be a threat to the state's forest, agricultural, horticultural, floricultural, or beekeeping industries or environment;

(2) Knowingly receive a noxious weed, or a plant, plant product, bees, bee hive or appliances, or regulated article sold, given away, carried, shipped, or delivered for carriage or shipment within this state, in violation of the provisions of this chapter or the rules adopted under this chapter;

(3) Fail to immediately notify the department and isolate and hold the noxious weed, bees, bee hives or appliances, plants or plant products, or other thing unopened or unused subject to inspection or other disposition as may be provided by the department, where the item has been received without knowledge of the violation and the receiver has become subsequently aware of the potential problem;

(4) Knowingly conceal or willfully withhold available information regarding an infected or infested plant, plant product, regulated article, or noxious weed;

(5) Introduce or move into this state, or to move or dispose of in this state, a plant, plant product, or other item included in a quarantine, except under rules as may be prescribed by the department, after a quarantine order has been adopted under this chapter against a place, nursery, orchard, vineyard, apiary, other agricultural establishment, county of this state, another state, territory, or a foreign country as to a plant pest, bee pest, or noxious weed or genetically engineered plant or plant pest organism, until such quarantine is removed;

(6) Introduce or move nonnative managed bumble bees into this state to be used in open-field agricultural use.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.30 RCW to read as follows:

The Washington State University extension program must develop a pollinator extension education and outreach program and develop a statewide, science-based, pollinator education plan to educate beekeepers, agricultural producers, land managers, licensed pesticide applicators, other professionals, and the public. The plan should emphasize pollinator best management practices for both native and managed species.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 39.04 RCW to read as follows:

If a public works project includes landscaping, at least 25 percent of the landscaping must be pollinator habitat. For purposes of this section, "pollinator habitat" means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees. The department of agriculture, in consultation with the conservation commission, must develop landscape standards guidelines that include a list of native forage plants that are pollen-rich or nectar-rich and beneficial for all pollinators, including honey bees, and how pollinator plants and habitat should be designed and maintained after installation.

**Sec.**  RCW 77.12.058 and 2019 c 353 s 8 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department must implement practices necessary to maintain pollinator habitat on department-owned and managed agricultural and grazing lands where practicable. ((~~For the purposes of this section, "pollinator habitat" means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees, as determined by the department.~~))

(2) The department must evaluate various restoration techniques with the goal of improving habitat for native pollinators. The department must update its riparian habitat recommendations to encourage development of pollinator habitat where practicable when making habitat improvements or for riparian restoration.

(3) For the purposes of this section, "pollinator habitat" means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees, as determined by the department.

**Sec.**  RCW 89.08.620 and 2020 c 351 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) When prioritizing grant recipients, the commission, in consultation with the department of agriculture, Washington State University, and the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service, shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other state, nonstate, public, and private sources of money. The primary metrics used to rank grant applications must be made public by the commission.

(2) The grant program must prioritize or weight projects based on consideration of the individual project's ability to:

(a) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in topsoil through practices including, but not limited to, cover cropping, no-till and minimum tillage conservation practices, crop rotations, manure application, biochar application, compost application, and changes in grazing management;

(b) Increase the quantity of organic carbon in aquatic soils;

(c) Intentionally integrate trees, shrubs, seaweed, or other vegetation into management of agricultural and aquacultural lands;

(d) Reduce or avoid carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in or from soils;

(e) Reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions through changes to livestock or soil management; and

(f) Increase usage of precision agricultural practices.

(3) The commission shall develop and approve a prioritization metric to guide the distribution of funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose, with the goal of producing cost-effective carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits.

(4) Applicants that create riparian buffers along waterways, or otherwise benefit fish habitat, must receive an enhanced prioritization compared to other grant applications that perform similarly under the prioritization metrics developed by the commission.

(5)(a) Applicants that create or maintain pollinator habitat must receive an enhanced prioritization compared to other grant applications that perform similarly under the prioritization metrics developed by the commission.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection, "pollinator habitat" means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees, as determined by the department of agriculture.

(6) The commission shall downgrade a specific grant proposal within its prioritization metric if the proposal is expected to cause significant environmental damage to fish and wildlife habitat.

**Sec.**  RCW 84.34.020 and 2014 c 125 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Open space land" means (a) any land area so designated by an official comprehensive land use plan adopted by any city or county and zoned accordingly, or (b) any land area, the preservation of which in its present use would (i) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources, or (ii) protect streams or water supply, or (iii) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, or (iv) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open space, or (v) enhance recreation opportunities, or (vi) preserve historic sites, or (vii) preserve visual quality along highway, road, and street corridors or scenic vistas, or (viii) provide pollinator habitat through habitat management practices described in a conservation plan, or (ix) retain in its natural state tracts of land not less than one acre situated in an urban area and open to public use on such conditions as may be reasonably required by the legislative body granting the open space classification, or (c) any land meeting the definition of farm and agricultural conservation land under subsection (8) of this section. As a condition of granting open space classification, the legislative body may not require public access on land classified under (b)(iii) of this subsection for the purpose of promoting conservation of wetlands.

(2) "Farm and agricultural land" means:

(a) Any parcel of land that is twenty or more acres or multiple parcels of land that are contiguous and total twenty or more acres:

(i) Devoted primarily to the production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes;

(ii) Enrolled in the federal conservation reserve program or its successor administered by the United States department of agriculture; or

(iii) Other similar commercial activities as may be established by rule;

(b)(i) Any parcel of land that is five acres or more but less than twenty acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses, which has produced a gross income from agricultural uses equivalent to, as of January 1, 1993:

(A) One hundred dollars or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter for all parcels of land that are classified under this subsection or all parcels of land for which an application for classification under this subsection is made with the granting authority prior to January 1, 1993; and

(B) On or after January 1, 1993, two hundred dollars or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter;

(ii) For the purposes of (b)(i) of this subsection, "gross income from agricultural uses" includes, but is not limited to, the wholesale value of agricultural products donated to nonprofit food banks or feeding programs;

(c) Any parcel of land of less than five acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses which has produced a gross income as of January 1, 1993, of:

(i) One thousand dollars or more per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter for all parcels of land that are classified under this subsection or all parcels of land for which an application for classification under this subsection is made with the granting authority prior to January 1, 1993; and

(ii) On or after January 1, 1993, fifteen hundred dollars or more per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter. Parcels of land described in (b)(i)(A) and (c)(i) of this subsection will, upon any transfer of the property excluding a transfer to a surviving spouse or surviving state registered domestic partner, be subject to the limits of (b)(i)(B) and (c)(ii) of this subsection;

(d) Any parcel of land that is five acres or more but less than twenty acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses, which meet one of the following criteria:

(i) Has produced a gross income from agricultural uses equivalent to two hundred dollars or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter;

(ii) Has standing crops with an expectation of harvest within seven years, except as provided in (d)(iii) of this subsection, and a demonstrable investment in the production of those crops equivalent to one hundred dollars or more per acre in the current or previous calendar year. For the purposes of this subsection (2)(d)(ii), "standing crop" means Christmas trees, vineyards, fruit trees, or other perennial crops that: (A) Are planted using agricultural methods normally used in the commercial production of that particular crop; and (B) typically do not produce harvestable quantities in the initial years after planting; or

(iii) Has a standing crop of short rotation hardwoods with an expectation of harvest within fifteen years and a demonstrable investment in the production of those crops equivalent to one hundred dollars or more per acre in the current or previous calendar year;

(e) Any lands including incidental uses as are compatible with agricultural purposes, including wetlands preservation, provided such incidental use does not exceed twenty percent of the classified land and the land on which appurtenances necessary to the production, preparation, or sale of the agricultural products exist in conjunction with the lands producing such products. Agricultural lands also include any parcel of land of one to five acres, which is not contiguous, but which otherwise constitutes an integral part of farming operations being conducted on land qualifying under this section as "farm and agricultural lands";

(f) The land on which housing for employees and the principal place of residence of the farm operator or owner of land classified pursuant to (a) of this subsection is sited if: The housing or residence is on or contiguous to the classified parcel; and the use of the housing or the residence is integral to the use of the classified land for agricultural purposes;

(g) Any land that is used primarily for equestrian related activities for which a charge is made, including, but not limited to, stabling, training, riding, clinics, schooling, shows, or grazing for feed and that otherwise meet the requirements of (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection; or

(h) Any land primarily used for commercial horticultural purposes, including growing seedlings, trees, shrubs, vines, fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs, and other plants in containers, whether under a structure or not, subject to the following:

(i) The land is not primarily used for the storage, care, or selling of plants purchased from other growers for retail sale;

(ii) If the land is less than five acres and used primarily to grow plants in containers, such land does not qualify as "farm and agricultural land" if more than twenty-five percent of the land used primarily to grow plants in containers is open to the general public for on-site retail sales;

(iii) If more than twenty percent of the land used for growing plants in containers qualifying under this subsection (2)(h) is covered by pavement, none of the paved area is eligible for classification as "farm and agricultural land" under this subsection (2)(h). The eligibility limitations described in this subsection (2)(h)(iii) do not affect the land's eligibility to qualify under (e) of this subsection; and

(iv) If the land classified under this subsection (2)(h), in addition to any contiguous land classified under this subsection, is less than twenty acres, it must meet the applicable income or investment requirements in (b), (c), or (d) of this subsection.

(3) "Timberland" means any parcel of land that is five or more acres or multiple parcels of land that are contiguous and total five or more acres which is or are devoted primarily to the growth and harvest of timber for commercial purposes. Timberland means the land only and does not include a residential homesite. The term includes land used for incidental uses that are compatible with the growing and harvesting of timber but no more than ten percent of the land may be used for such incidental uses. It also includes the land on which appurtenances necessary for the production, preparation, or sale of the timber products exist in conjunction with land producing these products.

(4) "Current" or "currently" means as of the date on which property is to be listed and valued by the assessor.

(5) "Owner" means the party or parties having the fee interest in land, except that where land is subject to real estate contract "owner" means the contract vendee.

(6)(a) "Contiguous" means land adjoining and touching other property held by the same ownership. Land divided by a public road, but otherwise an integral part of a farming operation, is considered contiguous.

(b) For purposes of this subsection (6):

(i) "Same ownership" means owned by the same person or persons, except that parcels owned by different persons are deemed held by the same ownership if the parcels are:

(A) Managed as part of a single operation; and

(B) Owned by:

(I) Members of the same family;

(II) Legal entities that are wholly owned by members of the same family; or

(III) An individual who owns at least one of the parcels and a legal entity or entities that own the other parcel or parcels if the entity or entities are wholly owned by that individual, members of his or her family, or that individual and members of his or her family.

(ii) "Family" includes only:

(A) An individual and his or her spouse or domestic partner, child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, cousin, or sibling;

(B) The spouse or domestic partner of an individual's child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, cousin, or sibling;

(C) A child, stepchild, adopted child, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, cousin, or sibling of the individual's spouse or the individual's domestic partner; and

(D) The spouse or domestic partner of any individual described in (b)(ii)(C) of this subsection (6).

(7) "Granting authority" means the appropriate agency or official who acts on an application for classification of land pursuant to this chapter.

(8) "Farm and agricultural conservation land" means either:

(a) Land that was previously classified under subsection (2) of this section, that no longer meets the criteria of subsection (2) of this section, and that is reclassified under subsection (1) of this section; or

(b) Land that is traditional farmland that is not classified under chapter 84.33 or 84.34 RCW, that has not been irrevocably devoted to a use inconsistent with agricultural uses, and that has a high potential for returning to commercial agriculture.

**--- END ---**