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## Environment Committee

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### HB 1820

**Brief Description:** Concerning the maintenance and operations of parks and recreational land acquired through the conservation futures program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Volz, Tharinger, Senn, McCaslin, Koster, Haler, Shea, Irwin and Holy.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raises the 15 percent cap on the use of conservation futures tax revenue for recreational land operation and maintenance to a maximum of 25 percent of revenues collected during the previous calendar year, under certain conditions.</li></ul>
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**Hearing Date:** 2/7/17

**Staff:** Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

**Background:**

To conserve open space, agricultural, and timber lands for public use or enjoyment, counties, cities, and certain other local governments and nonprofit organizations may acquire private land outright, lease private land, or acquire easements or development rights on private land that limit use of the land. These acquisitions are made through negotiated purchases or donations, not eminent domain. The development rights acquired under this process are called "conservation futures." Property owners whose conservation futures are held by another party may continue to use the open space, timber, or farm and agricultural land in accordance with any terms established by the conservation futures acquisition agreement.

Counties may levy a property tax of up to \$0.0625 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to generate funds to acquire conservation futures or the title to open space, timber, and farm and agricultural lands. The decision to levy this countywide property tax is made by a county legislative authority, which may be either a board of county commissioners or a county council. At least 13

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Washington counties have opted to impose the tax, including Clark, Ferry, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, and Whatcom counties.

The development rights or properties acquired with the use of the property tax revenues must be located within the acquiring county. Counties must also determine whether real property acquisitions would reduce the development capacity to accommodate planned housing and employment growth, and must take reasonable measures to increase development capacity in response to the loss of capacity attributable to conservation futures acquisitions.

Counties may allocate the property taxes to be used for the acquisition of conservation futures and properties into a separate conservation futures fund. Up to 15 percent of the conservation futures property taxes collected in the preceding year may be used for park and recreational land maintenance and operations. Money from conservation future funds that is spent on park and recreational land maintenance and operation may not be used to supplant existing maintenance and operation funding.

**Summary of Bill:**

For certain counties, the 15 percent cap on the use of conservation futures tax revenue for park and recreational land operation and maintenance is raised to a 25 percent cap on the amount that may be spent on maintenance and operations of recreational land. In order for a county to be eligible to use 25 percent of conservation futures tax revenue on recreational land operation and maintenance, the county must:

- have rights and interests in more than 400 acres of property acquired through the conservation futures program; and
- have collected a conservation futures property tax for 20 or more years.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.