
Appropriations Committee

HB 2051

Brief Description: Providing short-term disaster recovery financial assistance to agricultural producers.

Sponsors: Representatives Rule, Shewmake, Ormsby and Ramel.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Conservation Commission to develop a short-term disaster recovery financial assistance program (Program) for farmers and ranchers.
- Appropriates \$600,000 from the State General Fund for the Program.

Hearing Date: 1/25/22

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Background:

Conservation Districts (CDs) are a type of government entity that provide voluntary land use and conservation services to landowners, such as habitat restoration and natural disaster preparedness and recovery. Each CD is led by a five-member board. There are 45 CDs in Washington, and at least one in each county.

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) is the state agency that coordinates and provides state funding to CDs. The SCC is led by a ten-member board, and provides landowner services in addition to and in coordination with CDs.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Subject to amounts appropriated, and in cooperation with conservation districts, the Conservation Commission must develop and implement a short-term disaster recovery financial assistance program (Program) for farmers and ranchers. The Program funding must initially address physical damage or economic losses caused by flooding in Whatcom County during November 2021.

Grants may be used for payroll, utilities and rent, marketing and advertising, building improvements or repairs, replacing damaged or lost crops, livestock, and equipment, and other operations and business expenses. To be eligible for grant funds, farmers or ranchers must provide documentation of lost agricultural income or activity as a result of a natural disaster.

The Conservation Commission must coordinate with the Department of Agriculture and Conservation Districts to increase awareness of the Program and other state and federal disaster relief assistance.

A total of \$600,000 in fiscal year 2022 is appropriated from the State General Fund to the Conservation Commission for the Program.

The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Appropriation: The sum of \$600,000 General Fund-State in fiscal year 2022.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2022.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.