

RCW 84.34.300 Special benefit assessments for farm and agricultural land or timberland—Legislative findings—Purpose. (1) The legislature finds that farming, timber production, and the related agricultural and forest industries have historically been and currently are central factors in the economic and social lifeblood of the state; that it is a fundamental policy of the state to protect agricultural and timberlands as a major natural resource in order to maintain a source to supply a wide range of agricultural and forest products; and that the public interest in the protection and stimulation of farming, timber production, and the agricultural and forest industries is a basic element of enhancing the economic viability of this state. The legislature further finds that farmland and timberland in urbanizing areas are often subjected to high levels of property taxation and benefit assessment, and that such levels of taxation and assessment encourage and even force the removal of such lands from agricultural and forest uses. The legislature further finds that because of this level of taxation and assessment, such farmland and timberland in urbanizing areas are either converted to nonagricultural and nonforest uses when significant amounts of nearby nonagricultural and nonforest area could be suitably used for such nonagricultural and nonforest uses, or, much of this farmland and timberland is left in an unused state. The legislature further finds that with the approval by the voters of the Fifty-third Amendment to the state Constitution, and with the enactment of chapter 84.34 RCW, the owners of farmlands and timberlands were provided with an opportunity to have such land valued on the basis of its current use and not its "highest and best use" and that such current use valuation is one mechanism to protect agricultural and timberlands. The legislature further finds that despite this potential property tax reduction, farmlands and timberlands in urbanized areas are still subject to high levels of benefit assessments and continue to be removed from farm and forest uses.

(2) It is therefore the purpose of the legislature to establish, with the enactment of RCW 84.34.300 through 84.34.380, another mechanism to protect agricultural and timberland which creates an analogous system of relief from certain benefit assessments for farm and agricultural land and timberland. It is the intent of the legislature that special benefit assessments not be imposed for the availability of sanitary and/or storm sewerage service, or domestic water service, or for road construction and/or improvement purposes on farm and agricultural lands and timberlands which have been designated for current use classification as farm and agricultural lands or timberlands until such lands are withdrawn or removed from such classification or unless such lands benefit from or cause the need for the local improvement district.

(3) The legislature finds, and it is the intent of RCW 84.34.300 through 84.34.380 and 84.34.922, that special benefit assessments for the improvement or construction of sanitary and/or storm sewerage service, or domestic water service, or certain road construction do not generally benefit land which has been classified as farm and agricultural land or timberland under the open space act, chapter 84.34 RCW, until such land is withdrawn or removed from such classification. The purpose of RCW 84.34.300 through 84.34.380 and 84.34.922 is to provide an exemption from certain special benefit assessments which do not benefit timberland or open space farm and agricultural land, and to provide the means for local governmental

entities to recover such assessments in current dollar value in the event such land is no longer devoted to farming or timber production under chapter 84.34 RCW. Where the owner of such land chooses to make limited use of improvements related to special benefit assessments, RCW 84.34.300 through 84.34.380 provides the means for the partial assessment on open space timber and farmland to the extent the land is directly benefited by the improvement. [2014 c 97 § 312; 1992 c 52 § 14; 1979 c 84 § 1.]