

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1461

C 30 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Changing conservation assistance revolving account provisions.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville, Buri and Pettigrew; by request of Conservation Commission).

House Committee on Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade
House Committee on Capital Budget
Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development

Background:

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Washington that began in 1998. Under CREP, private agricultural landowners in eligible geographic areas are provided with incentives to restore and improve salmon and steelhead habitat. Eligible areas are those that contain salmon or steelhead species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Twenty-seven counties in Washington contain eligible lands and streams.

Landowners who enroll in CREP voluntarily remove lands from production and grazing under 10-year or 15-year contracts. Landowners then plant trees and shrubs to stabilize stream banks and serve other ecological purposes. In return, landowners receive annual rent, incentive and maintenance payments, and cost-sharing for these installations.

The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) is a federal stream rehabilitation program similar to CREP but applicable to geographic areas that do not contain federally-listed endangered species.

The Conservation Assistance Revolving Account (CARA) is a dedicated, appropriated account initially capitalized by the 2004 Legislature with a \$500,000 capital budget appropriation. Administered by the Conservation Commission through local conservation districts, the purpose of CARA is to provide financial assistance to landowners enrolled in CREP. Ninety percent of a landowner's costs of installing streamside improvements is reimbursed by the USDA and the other 10 percent is reimbursed by the Conservation Commission. However, the USDA cannot issue reimbursements until the projects are complete. The CARA funding bridges the financial gap between the time that the landowner invests in restoration installations and the time federal reimbursement is received.

Summary:

The CARA may be used only to make loans to landowners for projects enrolled in the CCRP and the CREP.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	0
Senate	46	0

Effective: July 24, 2005