

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5961

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As of February 1, 2022

**Title:** An act relating to incentivizing the use of biochar in government contracts.

**Brief Description:** Incentivizing the use of biochar in government contracts.

**Sponsors:** Senators Sefzik, Warnick, Honeyford, Rolfes, Short and Van De Wege.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/01/22.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs state agencies and local governments to consider using biochar when planning government-funded projects.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

**Staff:** Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

**Background:** Biochar is a fine-grained charcoal left behind after pyrolysis of crop residues, livestock manures, or other organic materials. Pyrolysis is the high-temperature processing of organic materials in the absence of oxygen.

Biochar is used in multiple applications, including as a soil amendment and in sewage and wastewater treatment. Researchers have found that biochar applied to wet soils can decrease the production of methane and nitrous oxide. Other research has shown that biochar can be useful for restoring degraded soils because of its ability to bind to heavy metals.

**Summary of Bill:** State agencies and local governments must consider whether biochar products can be used when planning government-funded projects or soliciting and

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reviewing bids for such projects. Biochar means a carbon-rich material produced during the pyrolysis process. If biochar products can be used in the project, a state agency or local government must use biochar products unless:

- biochar is not available within a reasonable period of time;
- biochar products that are available do not comply with existing purchasing standards;
- biochar products that are available do not comply with federal or state health, quality, and safety standards; or
- biochar purchase prices are not reasonable or competitive.

A state agency is not required to use biochar products if:

- application of biochar will have detrimental impacts on the physical characteristics and nutrient condition of the soil as it is used for a specific crop; or
- the project consists of growing trees in a greenhouse setting, including seed orchard greenhouses.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The state should encourage the uses of biochar to see if it can be a successful approach to enhance plant growth and suppress methane. By encouraging the cultivation of biochar in government contracts, it may help develop this approach. Biochar can sequester carbon back in soil, and is renewable. The state can help build the market and encourage the use of biochar. A project to recycle timber products in the Olympic Peninsula to create biochar could create many jobs. The definition of biochar should be modified to match the international definition, to include gasification.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Simon Sefzik, Prime Sponsor; Isaac Kastama, Clean & Prosperous Washington.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.