
**Agriculture and Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2336

Brief Description: Assessing the suitability of lands in Washington for agricultural and renewable energy purposes.

Sponsors: Representatives Morgan, Dent, Chapman, Kloba, Orcutt, Ormsby, Wylie, Doglio, Fey, Street, Stearns, Riccelli, Gregerson, Mena, Walen, Peterson, Berg, Fosse, Davis, Reed, Duerr, Entenman, Leavitt, Springer, Ryu, Waters, Ortiz-Self, Bronoske, Bateman, Simmons, Berry, Kretz, Schmick, Ramel, Macri, Caldier, Abbarno, Cheney, Goehner, Jacobsen, Klicker, Eslick, Barnard, Walsh, McEntire, Bergquist, Sandlin, Christian, Nance and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), in consultation with the State Conservation Commission, to perform an assessment of unused and underutilized state-owned lands to determine the suitability of such lands for agricultural purposes.
- Requires the WSDA, for state lands that the WSDA determines to be suitable for agricultural purposes, to engage in a campaign to promote agricultural production opportunities on such lands.
- Requires the Washington State University Energy Program to perform an assessment of unused and underutilized state lands that are not suitable for agricultural purposes to determine the suitability of such lands for renewable energy production purposes.

Hearing Date: 1/17/24

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

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.

Background:

Washington State Department of Agriculture.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) oversees, manages, regulates, and supports a variety of programs related to food safety and agriculture in the state. Programs include animal and livestock health, commodity inspection, food safety, food assistance, pesticide and fertilizer inspection, and business and marketing support.

Washington State University Energy Program.

The Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program is a department within WSU. Staff of the WSU Energy Program include energy engineers, energy specialists, technical experts, and software developers. The WSU Energy Program team provides energy services, products, education and information, with a focus on advancing the environmental and economic well-being of the customers of the WSU Energy Program. Customers of the WSU Energy Program include large and small businesses, public and private utilities, local and state governments, tribes, federal agencies and facilities, manufacturing plants, professional and trade associations, schools, universities, national laboratories, and consumers.

Summary of Bill:

Assessment of Lands for Agricultural Purposes.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), in consultation with the State Conservation Commission, must perform an assessment of unused and underutilized state-owned lands to determine the suitability of such lands for agricultural purposes. The assessment must be completed no later than June 30, 2025.

The WSDA must submit the results of the assessment to the Office of the Governor, to the Commissioner of Public Lands, to the director of the Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program, to the director of the Department of Commerce, and to the committees of the Legislature with jurisdiction over agricultural matters.

The WSDA must assess and evaluate, on an ongoing basis, land utilization in the state for agricultural purposes. The assessment and evaluation must include identification and mapping of agricultural land uses and water resources throughout the state, including data regarding surface water and groundwater resource availability and water quality.

Promotion of Agricultural Opportunities.

For unused and underutilized state lands that the WSDA determines to be suitable for agricultural purposes, the WSDA must engage in a campaign to promote agricultural production opportunities on such lands. The WSDA's promotional campaign must include outreach, education, and technical assistance. The WSDA must ensure that the promotional campaign reaches new and emerging agricultural producers, with an emphasis on reaching communities that historically may have lacked access to opportunities as agricultural producers.

Assessment of State Lands for Renewable Energy Purposes.

The WSU Energy Program, utilizing data obtained from the WSDA's assessment of state lands for agricultural purposes, must perform an assessment of unused and underutilized state lands that are not suitable for agricultural purposes to determine the suitability of such lands for renewable energy production purposes. The assessment must be completed by June 30, 2026.

The WSU Energy Program must submit the results of the assessment to the Office of the Governor, to the Commissioner of Public Lands, to the directors of Commerce and the WSDA, and to the committees of the Legislature with jurisdiction over energy matters.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2024.

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