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## Finance Committee

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### HB 1488

**Brief Description:** Concerning conservation district revenue limitations.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Berg, Duerr and Peterson.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Eliminates the maximum annual per-parcel rate for Conservation District rates and charges.
- Adjusts amounts that can be collected by a county treasurer to cover costs for a rates and charges system.

**Hearing Date:** 2/6/25

**Staff:** Rachelle Harris (786-7137).

**Background:**

Conservation Districts.

Conservation Districts (CDs) are a type of government entity that provides 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.

Rates and Charges for Conservation Districts.

A county legislative authority can approve fixed rates and charges (RACs) in order to generate revenue for a CD. In fixing a system of RACs for a CD, the county legislative authority may consider information proposed by the district for consideration, such as: services furnished or available to a landowner; benefits received or available to a property; the character and use of land; the nonprofit public benefit status of the land user; the income level of persons served or

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provided benefits; and any other matters that present a reasonable difference as a basis for distinction.

The RACs system can be implemented as an alternative to a special assessment. A CD's system of RACs may include:

- an annual per-acre amount;
- an annual per-parcel amount; or
- an annual per-parcel amount plus an annual per-acre amount.

The maximum annual rate shall not exceed \$0.10 per acre.

For counties with populations of less than 480,000, the maximum annual per-parcel rate shall not exceed \$5. For counties with a population of more than 480,000, the maximum annual per-parcel rate shall not exceed \$10. For counties with a population of over 1.5 million, the maximum annual per-parcel rate shall not exceed \$15.

#### Collection of Rates and Charges.

Where a system of RACs has been approved by the county legislative authority, a CD prepares a roll to implement the system. The RACs from the roll are spread by the county assessor as a separate item on the tax rolls and are collected with property taxes by the county treasurer. The amount of a CD's RACs:

- constitutes a lien against land;
- is subject to the same conditions as a tax lien;
- may be collected in the same manner; and
- is subject to the same interest and penalties as delinquent real property taxes.

The county treasurer can deduct an amount from the collected RACs to cover the costs incurred by the county assessor to collect the RACs not to exceed the actual costs of such work. All remaining funds must be transferred to the CD.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

Maximum annual per-parcel rates are eliminated for RACs systems in conservation districts.

The amount collected by the county treasurer to cover costs for an RACs system is adjusted so that it is the lesser of the actual costs of the work or 1 percent of the amount collected.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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