

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1488

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, March 13, 2025

Title: An act relating to conservation district revenue limitations.

Brief Description: Concerning conservation district revenue limitations.

Sponsors: House Committee on Finance (originally sponsored by Representatives Berg, Duerr and Peterson).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/3/25, 57-39.

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 3/13/25 [DPA, DNP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Increases the maximum annual per-parcel rate charge for conservation districts.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair, Operating; Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital; Frame, Vice Chair, Finance; Gildon, Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Kauffman, Pedersen, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Wagoner.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Torres, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Boehnke, Braun, Hasegawa, Muzzall and Warnick.

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.

Staff: Alia Kennedy (786-7405)

Background: Conservation Districts. Conservation districts are governmental subdivisions approved by a county to support conservation efforts and responsible use of natural resources. There are 45 conservation districts in Washington that receive basic funding from the Washington State Conservation Commission. Districts may also receive funding through special assessments or benefit charges.

Conservation district special assessments are charges imposed on properties to fund services or improvements that benefit land within the district. The charges are separate from property taxes. Local governments typically charge an amount to a parcel of property reflecting a benefit to the property through the assessments. The charges may differ depending on the benefit received and are commonly spread across the tax rolls and collected much like property taxes, usually appearing on a property tax statement.

The system of rates and charges 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 per-acre charge is \$0.10 per acre.

The maximum per-parcel charges are:

- \$5 per parcel in counties with a population of less than 480,000;
- \$10 per parcel in counties with a population of 480,000 and up to 1.5 million; and
- \$15 per parcel in counties with a population over 1.5 million.

The county treasurer collects the special assessment on behalf of the district and is allowed to retain the actual costs incurred in collecting the assessment.

Summary of Amended Bill: The maximum annual per-parcel charges are:

- \$7.50 per parcel in counties with a population of less than 480,000;
- \$15 per parcel in counties with a population over 480,000 and less than 1.5 million; and
- \$22.50 per parcel in counties with a population over 1.5 million.

Beginning March 1, 2029, the Department of Revenue (DOR) must adjust the maximum annual per parcel rates based on the consumer price index for all urban consumers, all items, for the Seattle metropolitan area, as calculated by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics or its successor agency.

The adjusted maximum annual per parcel rates must be rounded to the nearest \$0.50 or \$1. If the adjustment to the maximum annual per parcel rate is negative, the maximum annual per parcel rate for the prior year continues to apply.

EFFECT OF WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Reinstates a maximum annual per parcel amount for conservation district rates and changes but increases the rates to \$22.50 per parcel for counties with a population over 1.5 million persons, \$15 per parcel for counties with a population over 480,000 but less than 1.5 million persons, and \$7.50 per parcel for all other counties.
- Requires DOR to adjust the maximum annual per parcel rates every three years based on the consumer price index.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 on Substitute House Bill: No public hearing was held.

Persons Testifying: N/A

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: N/A