

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 2758

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Establishing the agricultural conservation easements program.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology (originally sponsored by Representatives Quall, Linville and Hunt).

**House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade**

### **Background:**

The Washington State Conservation Commission is a state agency that supports 48 locally governed conservation districts to promote cooperation of landowners and resource users in developing, adopting, and implementing conservation practices. The commission manages technical and financial assistance programs relating to issues such as salmon recovery, streamside buffers, and water quality.

Local governments and certain public and private entities are authorized to acquire the title to or other interests in land for the purposes of protecting, improving, restoring, maintaining or conserving certain open space, farm or agricultural, and timber land for public use or enjoyment. These entities are specifically authorized to acquire development rights in certain open space, farm or agricultural, and timber land (conservation futures) for conservation purposes. The statutes authorizing these acquisitions include some general provisions on future uses of property acquired for these purposes.

### **Summary:**

The agricultural conservation easements program (program) is established, to be managed by the Washington State Conservation Commission. The commission must report to the Legislature on the potential funding sources for purchase of agricultural conservation easements and recommend changes to existing funding authorized by the Legislature.

All program funding must be deposited into the agricultural conservation easements account, which is created in the state treasury. Account deposits include legislative appropriations, other sources directed by the Legislature, and gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources. Expenditures from the account may be used only for the purchase of easements under the program. Local governments and private

nonprofits may be funded from the account on a "match" or "no match" basis. Any easements purchased with account funds run with the land.

The commission is required to adopt rules as needed to implement legislative intent. Legislative findings cite concerns regarding land costs and conversion of agricultural lands. Legislative intent is specified for creation of a program facilitating the use of federal funds, easing local governments' establishment of similar programs, and assisting local governments to fight conversion of agricultural lands.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House 98 0

Senate 47 0

**Effective:** June 13, 2002