

Agriculture & Ecology Committee

SJM 8019

Brief Description: *Petitioning the secretary of agriculture to review certain policies of the conservation reserve enhancement program.*

Sponsors: *By Senators Rasmussen, Parlette, Spanel and Oke.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Requests the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to review policies to allow the inclusion of perennial horticultural crop lands within the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.*

Hearing Date: *3/22/01*

Staff: *Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).*

Background:

Agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Washington have entered into an agreement for improving the water quality in streams crossing agricultural lands where the streams provide habitat for salmonids listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. The agreement is for a voluntary program for devoting up to 100,000 acres to tree planted riparian buffers. Under the agreement, the federal government and the state provide a substantial portion of the costs of establishing the necessary conservation practices and certain other costs.

Among other eligibility criteria, the land enrolled in the program must be crop land that has been cropped 2 out of the last 5 years and must be physically and legally capable of being cropped. Attached is a copy of a "Fact Sheet" regarding the program provided by the USDA's Farm Service Agency.

Summary of Bill:

The Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture is requested to review the

department's policies that would allow the inclusion in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program of lands that are currently used to produce perennial horticultural crops.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.