
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 3088

Brief Description: Preserving farms.

Sponsors: Representatives Linville, Schoesler and Morrell.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates the Farms for the Future Account in the state treasury.

Hearing Date: 2/3/04

Staff: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

Background:

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires all counties and cities to identify natural resource lands such as agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands. The counties and cities that plan under the major GMA requirements also must conserve natural resource lands with long-term commercial significance.

Conservation districts conduct activities related to conservation of renewable natural resources. Some conservation district programs and activities include research, surveys, investigations, educational programs, and technical assistance. Conservation districts are assisted and their programs are coordinated by the Conservation Commission, a state agency.

Numerous programs address conservation of agricultural lands. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a federal program administered by the federal Farm Service Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation. CRP is a voluntary program offering rental, incentive, and maintenance payments as well as cost-share assistance to establish approved long-term, resource conserving cover to improve soil, water, and wildlife resources. Eligible land includes crop land and pasture land meeting specified requirements.

The state Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a part of the CRP and designed to establish forested buffers along eligible streams to address salmon habitat, improve water quality, and increase stream stability. This voluntary program is administered in Washington by the FSA and the state Conservation Commission, which makes grants to local conservation districts to implement the program. Land enrolled in CREP is removed from agricultural

production and grazing according to 10-15 year contracts. In exchange, land owners may receive annual rental, incentive, maintenance, and cost-share payments.

State law allows local governments and certain public and private entities 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.

In 2002 the Legislature established the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program in the state Conservation Commission and an Agricultural Conservation Easements Account in the state treasury. Chapter 280, Laws of 2002 (SHB 2758). Funding for this program was specified to include legislative appropriations and funding from other public and from private sources.

Summary of Bill:

The Farms for the Future of Washington Account is created in the state treasury. Revenues to the account include federal, state, regional, or local appropriations or suitable private funds. Only the WSDA Director or his or her designee may authorize expenditures from the account. Up to five percent of funds from this account may be used for administrative costs.

Legislative findings recognize the competitive market for agricultural products and cite the need for the state to position itself to take maximum advantage of all available programs and funding sources to promote a viable agricultural sector in the state. Legislative findings also recognize the need to establish accommodation between agriculture and other societal, environmental, and economic goals affecting farmland and farming operations. In addition, legislative findings recognize the availability of federal, regional, state, local, and private funding to support continued farming operations and provide enhanced habitat on private lands.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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