

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5109

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, February 22, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to a conservation futures levy.

**Brief Description:** Preserving farm and agricultural land through conservation futures levies.

**Sponsors:** Senators Jacobsen and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 2/22/05 [DP-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Morton and Sheldon.

**Staff:** Bob Lee (786-7404)

**Background:** The conservation futures tax is a local option property tax assessed at the county level, at a maximum rate of 6.25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Revenue from the tax may be used to purchase or acquire development rights for open space, agricultural, and timber lands.

**Summary of Bill:** The maximum rate of the conservation futures levy is increased to 12.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Up to 50 percent of increased revenue must only be used for acquisition of easements on farm and agricultural land or purchase the development rights to farm and agricultural land. Such acquisitions must be made in a way to retain the long-term farm and agricultural use of the land. The remaining 50 percent of the increase may be used for the same purposes that the current conservation futures tax is now used.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Despite growth management, the state is losing a significant number of acres of agricultural each year. This bill would supplement growth management by allowing the purchase of conservation easements and allow the retention of agricultural land while assisting in the viability of the farmer. Funds are available from federal sources but it takes local matching funds to secure federal funds.

**Testimony Against:** The conservation futures tax was instituted in the early 1970's as a way to control haphazard growth. Now the Growth Management Act has addressed haphazard growth. The purchase of development rights goes against affordable housing by reducing the land that has been designated for housing but this concern does not exist with purchasing conservation easements.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Curtis Johnson, Skagit County Agricultural Preservation; John Roozen, Washington Bulb Company; Marguerite Sutherland, Preserve Land for Agriculture Now; Fred Colvin; Dick Cartner; and Don Stuart, American Farmland Trust.  
CON: Trent Matson; Building Industry Association of Washington.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: PRO: Anne Mack.