
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SSB 6521

Brief Description: Requiring state agencies to use an agriculture impact statement.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen and Honeyford).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires all state agencies and units of state government to complete an agriculture impact statement before acquiring any interest in real property other than a water right.
- Requires the Conservation Commission to develop the agriculture impact statement form.

Hearing Date: 2/19/10

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Membership of the State Conservation Commission.

The State Conservation Commission (Conservation Commission) has 10 members: two appointed, three elected, and five ex officio. Two members are appointed by the Governor, one of which must be a landowner or operator of a farm. The two appointed members serve four-year terms. The three elected members serve three-year terms. One of these members is elected each year by the District Supervisors at their annual statewide meeting. One of the members must reside in eastern Washington, one in central Washington, and one in western Washington. At least two of the three elected members must be landowners or operators of a farm.

The Director of the Department of Ecology, the Director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Public Lands, the President of the Washington Association of

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Conservation Districts, and the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Washington State University are the ex officio members of the Conservation Commission.

Duties of the Commission.

The Commission has several duties: (1) assist the supervisors of districts; (2) keep the supervisors of the districts organized and informed of the activities and experiences of the other districts, and facilitate an interchange of advice and experience between districts; (3) review and advise on agreements by districts; (4) secure cooperation and assistance of federal, state, and local agencies in the work of the districts; (5) administer and distribute allocated funds; (6) facilitate with local governments in the administration of activities dealing with the conservation of renewable natural resources; (7) disseminate information throughout Washington about the activities and programs of the districts; (8) review and comment on state and local plans, programs, and activities; (9) compile information and make studies, summaries, and analyses of district programs; (10) assist districts in obtaining legal services from state and local legal officers; (11) require annual reports from districts; and (12) establish uniform accounting and auditing procedures.

Summary of Bill:

All state agencies and units of state government are required to complete an agriculture impact statement before acquiring any interest in real property other than a water right. The Conservation Commission may exempt smaller scale acquisitions and activities from the requirement. The form of the agriculture impact statement must be developed by the Conservation Commission in consultation with the affected agencies.

Each year, the Conservation Commission is required to report to the Governor and the Legislature on the status of the agriculture impact statement program, the results of the information submitted over the previous year, and other appropriate factors. As part of the first installment of its annual reporting requirements, the Conservation Commission must include information about how applicable the agriculture impact statement requirements are in terms of agency rulemaking, applicability in regards to federal and local government, whether the agriculture impact statement should extend to water right purchases, and whether existing processes adequately provide for an evaluation of agricultural impacts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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