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SENATE BILL 6082

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State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2012 Regular Session

By Senators Haugen, Swecker, Hatfield, King, Ericksen, Honeyford, Shin, and Parlette

Read first time 01/11/12. Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to the preservation and conservation of  
2 agricultural resource lands; and adding a new section to chapter 43.21C  
3 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 43.21C RCW  
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) The legislature finds the state's farm and range lands are a  
8 unique natural resource that provide for the production of food, fiber,  
9 alternative fuels, and other products necessary for the continued  
10 welfare of people locally, nationally, and globally. Each year, a  
11 significant amount of the state's agricultural land is irrevocably  
12 converted from actual or potential agricultural use to nonagricultural  
13 use. The continued decrease in the state's agricultural resource land  
14 base is threatening the ability of the agricultural industry to produce  
15 safe and affordable agricultural products in sufficient quantities to  
16 meet our current and future local, regional, and national food and  
17 fiber needs, as well as the demands of our export markets.

18 (2) The program and project actions of state agencies, local  
19 governments, and persons, in many cases, inadvertently result in the

1 conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses where alternative  
2 actions would be preferred. The legislature declares that it is the  
3 policy of the state to identify and take into account the adverse  
4 effects of these actions on the preservation and conservation of  
5 agricultural lands; to consider alternative actions, as appropriate,  
6 that could lessen such adverse effects; and to assure that such actions  
7 appropriately mitigate for unavoidable impacts to agricultural  
8 resources.

9 (3) To implement the policy identified in this section, the lead  
10 agency shall ask the following questions when a proposal will affect or  
11 be located on agricultural lands, and in accordance with subsection (4)  
12 of this section, must add the questions to the state environmental  
13 policy act environmental checklist form provided in WAC 197-11-960 when  
14 a proposal will affect or be located on agricultural lands:

15 (a) Is there any agricultural land directly affected by the  
16 proposal, or near the vicinity of a project site? If yes, describe.

17 (b) Describe how much agricultural land will be converted to a  
18 nonagricultural use as a result of this proposal.

19 (c) Would this proposal affect the ability of adjacent agricultural  
20 landowners to continue farming?

21 (d) Would this proposal affect existing agricultural drainage  
22 patterns within vicinity? If yes, generally describe.

23 (e) Would this proposal affect or interfere with normal  
24 agricultural operations such as oversize equipment access, pesticide  
25 applications, and tilling and harvesting? If yes, generally describe.

26 (f) Will this proposal result in placing or removing agricultural  
27 soils from the site? If yes, generally describe.

28 (g) Describe proposed measures to preserve or enhance agricultural  
29 resource lands, if any.

30 (4) The department of ecology must add the questions in subsection  
31 (3)(a) through (g) of this section to the environmental checklist form  
32 in WAC 197-11-960 at the next update of the state environmental policy  
33 act rules, chapter 197-11 WAC.

34 (5) For the purposes of this section, "agricultural lands" means  
35 those lands that are designated agricultural lands of long-term  
36 commercial significance pursuant to chapter 36.70A RCW.

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