
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5766

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

By Senate Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, Hatfield, Honeyford, Schoesler, and Brown)

READ FIRST TIME 02/22/13.

1 AN ACT Relating to improving relationships between agricultural
2 producers and state regulatory staff; adding a new section to chapter
3 89.08 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that relationships
6 between agricultural producers and personnel assigned to state
7 regulatory agencies are in need of improvement in a number of areas in
8 the state. The legislature further finds that many of the staff at
9 state regulatory agencies lack experience and background with
10 agricultural operations and producers. The legislature further finds
11 that tension is created because of a lack of clarity regarding agency
12 roles in addressing natural resources issues, particularly water
13 quality, involving agriculture. Furthermore, the legislature finds
14 agricultural producers lack familiarity with the expectations placed
15 upon state regulatory personnel.

16 The legislature finds the state conservation commission includes
17 representatives of state regulatory agencies and conservation
18 districts, but does not have representatives of general agricultural
19 organizations or commodity groups. However, the legislature finds that

1 the state conservation commission and local conservation districts have
2 had a long-term experience in successfully working with agricultural
3 producers and state agency personnel on a range of natural resource
4 issues to address concerns regarding the use and stewardship of the
5 state natural resources.

6 The purpose of this act is to initiate a public process employing
7 the state conservation commission to test processes to clearly define
8 agency roles, improve mutual understandings, and build improved working
9 relationships between agricultural producers and state regulatory
10 personnel.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 89.08 RCW
12 to read as follows:

13 (1)(a) The commission shall initiate a state forum that includes
14 persons designated by the directors of state regulatory agencies, and
15 agricultural producers nominated to the commission by state and
16 regional agricultural organizations to:

17 (i) Design a process to be instituted at the county or regional
18 level on a pilot project basis that would provide an opportunity for
19 local producers to meet-and-greet the field staff assigned by the
20 regulatory agency to that area of the state and begin a dialogue that
21 improves communication and mutual understanding and cooperation;

22 (ii) Design a process whereby input and complaints can be received,
23 evaluated, and form the basis for recommending possible change to
24 agency procedures;

25 (iii) Examine and propose revision of existing training provided to
26 and procedures followed by field enforcement staff of state regulatory
27 agencies that interact with agricultural producers, including cross-
28 training of state regulatory agency field enforcement staff and
29 conservation district technical assistance staff;

30 (iv) Examine policy issues that create tensions between state
31 regulatory agencies and agricultural organizations and propose methods
32 to relieve these tensions, including recommending to the legislature
33 policy changes; and

34 (v) Examine the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies
35 and entities, both regulatory and incentive-based, as they relate to
36 programs interacting with agricultural landowners, and recommend policy

1 changes to, if necessary, better clarify these roles and
2 responsibilities.

3 (b) An initial report of the recommendations in this subsection (1)
4 shall be made to the appropriate policy committees of the legislature
5 and to the governor by December 16, 2013.

6 (2) The state forum may request assistance from local conservation
7 districts to host and conduct local forums on a pilot basis to initiate
8 a dialogue between state regulatory agency staff assigned in a
9 particular county or region of the state, and agricultural and rural
10 landowners in that county or region. The commission may provide
11 incentives to those conservation districts that engage in the pilot
12 program through the commission's existing district governance and
13 accountability program. The commission shall seek involvement from at
14 least one district from each side of the crest of the Cascade mountains
15 each year. The commission shall consult with legislators to assist in
16 determining which counties may benefit from the establishment of these
17 forums.

18 (3) State regulatory agencies shall cooperate with the commission
19 and participate in the state and local forums. In conducting this
20 pilot program, the commission may test various options including
21 establishing yearly or periodic forums.

22 (4) The commission shall submit a final report by December 1, 2017,
23 to the committees with jurisdiction over agricultural issues in the
24 house of representatives and the senate on the results of the forums
25 and the pilot program, and shall also submit any recommendations to
26 further decrease tensions and improve working relationships and
27 understanding between the agricultural landowners and the staff
28 assigned to state regulatory agencies.

29 (5) As used in this section, "state regulatory agencies" means the
30 department of ecology, the department of agriculture, and the
31 department of fish and wildlife.

32 (6) This section expires July 1, 2018.

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