

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1820

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks, March 21, 2017

Title: An act relating to the maintenance and operations of parks and recreational land acquired through the conservation futures program.

Brief Description: Concerning the maintenance and operations of parks and recreational land acquired through the conservation futures program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Environment (originally sponsored by Representatives Volz, Tharinger, Senn, McCaslin, Koster, Haler, Shea, Irwin and Holy).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/17, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/14/17, 3/21/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases from 15 to 25 the maximum percentage of conservation futures tax revenue that may be used for maintenance and operations costs in counties meeting certain criteria.
- Specifies that maintenance and operations expenditures of conservation futures tax revenue may be used for acquisitions through the conservation futures program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Hawkins, Vice Chair; Van De Wege, Ranking Minority Member; Fortunato and McCoy.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Statute states that conservation futures are a useful tool for counties to preserve lands of public interest for future generations. The conservation futures levy is a local option property tax assessed at the county level. The maximum levy rate is \$0.0625 per \$1,000 of assessed value. A county may credit all collected taxes into a special conservation futures fund.

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.

Counties may use conservation futures tax revenues to acquire a fee simple or lesser interest for purposes including to protect or improve selected open space, farm, agricultural, and timber lands for public use or enjoyment. All rights or interests in real property acquired with conservation futures tax revenues must be located within the assessing county.

Counties may use up to 15 percent of conservation futures tax revenues collected during the previous year for maintenance and operations of parks and recreational land. These revenues may not be used to supplant existing sources of maintenance and operations funding.

Summary of Bill: A county may use up to 25 percent of conservation futures tax revenue for maintenance and operations of acquisitions through the conservation futures program if the county has:

- acquired rights and interests in at least 400 acres through the conservation futures program; and
- collected a conservation futures levy for at least 20 years.

The lands on which conservation futures tax revenue may be used for maintenance and operations costs is specified as acquisitions through the conservation futures program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill's goal is to help mature conservation futures programs which acquire more and more land each year but do not receive increased dollars for operation and maintenance. In effect, dollars per acre available from conservation futures revenue decline over time. Elected officials are good stewards of public lands.

CON: Last time a conservation futures proposal went before Spokane County voters, they viewed 15 percent as the operations and maintenance level. This goes against the will of these voters.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Mike Volz, Prime Sponsor; Mike Burgess, Clark County; Doug Chase, Spokane County, Parks Director.

CON: Neil Beaver, The Lands Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.