
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1733

Brief Description: Retaining productive farmland.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Dye, Dent, Blake and Tarleton.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Conservation Commission to develop an Agricultural Land Assessment (ALA) process.
- Requires state agencies and units of state government to complete an ALA process before acquiring an interest in real property.

Hearing Date: 2/12/19

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

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 Department of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Public Lands, the President of the Washington Association of Conservation

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.

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 Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission has several duties, including:

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

Summary of Bill:

The State Conservation Commission (Conservation Commission) must develop a form and a process, called an Agricultural Land Assessment (ALA), for completion by any state agency before acquiring an interest in certain types of agricultural land. This applies to every acquisition of a property interest other than water rights and the acquisition of rights-of-way by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for physical construction uses. The Conservation Commission may exempt smaller-scale acquisitions and activities from the requirement. The ALA must be developed by the Conservation Commission in consultation with the affected agencies.

Each year, the Conservation Commission must report to the Governor and the Legislature on the status of the ALA program, the results of the information submitted over the previous year, and other appropriate factors. As part of the first report, the Conservation Commission must include: information about the applicability of ALA requirements to agency rulemaking and with regard to federal and local government; whether the ALA should extend to water right purchases; and whether existing processes adequately provide for an evaluation of agricultural impacts.

"Agricultural land" is land that is used for agricultural production, zoned as agricultural land of long-term significance, or otherwise zoned as agricultural land by a local jurisdiction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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