

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2713

As of November 19, 2020

Title: An act relating to encouraging compost procurement and use.

Brief Description: Encouraging compost procurement and use.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Walen, Chandler, Springer, Kretz, Fitzgibbon, Blake, Doglio, Davis, Ramel, Goodman and Pollet).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/16/20, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Technology: 2/25/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires state agencies and local governments to use compost products in government-funded projects, subject to certain exceptions.
- Encourages local governments that provide residential compost services to enter into a purchasing agreement with their compost processor to buy back finished compost products for use in government projects or on government land.
- Creates a three-year compost reimbursement pilot program for farming operations to receive reimbursement for 50 percent of certain purchases, transportation, equipment, spreading, and labor costs up to \$10,000 per year, with priority given to small farming operations.
- Requires the Department of Agriculture to manage the reimbursement pilot program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY

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Staff: Gregory Vogel (786-7413)

Background: Washington passed an act in 1991 with the intent to increase the procurement of products containing recycled products by state agencies and local governments. The act required the Director of the Department of General Administration (now the Department of Enterprise Services) to adopt standards specifying the minimum permissible content of recycled materials in products commonly purchased by state and local governments, such as paper, latex paint, and building insulation. The state was required to create a mandatory plan to increase purchases of recycled-content products, which included a target for purchase of compost products for landscaping or similar projects.

"Compost products" are defined as mulch, soil amendments, ground cover, or other landscaping material derived from the biological or mechanical conversion of biosolids or cellulose-containing waste materials.

The act also required local governments to adopt a minimum purchasing goal for recycled content as a percent of the total amount of supplies purchased. Local governments were encouraged to consider policies to give preferential purchasing treatment to products with recycled content. Counties and cities were required to adopt specifications for the use of compost products in road projects.

Compost products are now required to meet federal product standards. The amount of compost products required to be purchased by the state was doubled between 1994 to 1998.

Summary of Bill: State agencies and local governments are required to consider whether compost products can be used in government-funded projects when planning or soliciting and reviewing bids. If compost products can be utilized in the project, the agency or local government must do so, subject to the following exceptions:

- compost products are not available within a reasonable amount of time;
- compost products that are available do not meet existing purchasing standards or federal or state health and safety standards; or
- compost purchase prices are not reasonable or competitive.

State agencies may also decline to use compost products in a project if:

- the total cost is financially prohibitive; the application of compost products will detrimentally impact the nutrient condition of soil used for crops;
- the project consists of growing trees in a greenhouse setting; or
- compost products that are available have not been certified as pest-and-pathogen free.

Purchase priority is to be given to local compost producers that are certified by a nationally recognized organization and produce products derived from municipal compost programs. Before compost products are transported or applied for government projects, compliance

with Department of Agriculture (WSDA) pest control regulations must be ensured.

Local governments that provide residential compost services are encouraged to enter into purchasing agreements to buy back at least 50 percent of the finished compost product produced from the compost it delivered to its processor. Local governments are authorized to enter into collective purchasing agreements if doing so is more cost-effective or efficient. The compost processor should offer a purchase price that is reasonable and competitive for the specific market.

WSDA must create a three-year compost reimbursement program to reimburse certain expenses to farming operations in the state. These expenses are for:

- the purchase of compost products;
- transportation;
- equipment;
- spreading; and
- labor.

A farming operation is a commercial agricultural, silvicultural, or aquacultural facility or pursuit including care and production of animals for food and certain nonfood uses, the production of crops, and the farming or ranching of plants or animals in water environments.

Subject to amounts appropriated for this purpose, farming operations may be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of the costs they incur, up to \$10,000 per year. Compost products must be purchased from facilities with solid waste handling permits to be eligible for reimbursement. Compost products that the farming operation has or intends to transfer, whether or not for compensation, may not be reimbursed. Funds must be distributed by WSDA in a manner that prioritizes small farming operators, as measured by acreage.

To be reimbursed, a farming operation must first complete an eligibility review with WSDA prior to transporting or applying any compost products for which reimbursement will be sought under this section. The review is to determine whether the transport and application complies with WSDA's agricultural pest regulations, and to ensure that the farming operation will permit soil sampling by WSDA.

Farming operations seeking reimbursement must submit one application per year on a WSDA-created form that may include verification of the size, sale weight, or amount of compost products used, as well as verification of the costs requested for reimbursement. Applications must be submitted by September 1st for the previous fiscal year.

A new position is established within WSDA for a compost reimbursement pilot project manager, exempt from civil service with a salary that may not exceed \$50,000 per year. The manager is required to facilitate the reimbursements and manage the day-to-day

coordination of the program.

WSDA must submit an annual report to the Legislature that includes the amount of compost for which reimbursement was sought, the qualitative and quantitative effects of the program on soil quality and carbon storage, and an evaluation of the benefits and costs of continuing, expanding, or furthering the 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.