

RCW 84.34.108 Removal of classification—Factors—Notice of continuance—Additional tax—Lien—Delinquencies—Exemptions. (1) When land has once been classified under this chapter, a notation of the classification must be made each year upon the assessment and tax rolls and the land must be valued pursuant to RCW 84.34.060 or 84.34.065 until removal of all or a portion of the classification by the assessor upon occurrence of any of the following:

(a) Receipt of notice from the owner to remove all or a portion of the classification;

(b) Sale or transfer to an ownership, except a transfer that resulted from a default in loan payments made to or secured by a governmental agency that intends to or is required by law or regulation to resell the property for the same use as before, making all or a portion of the land exempt from ad valorem taxation;

(c) Sale or transfer of all or a portion of the land to a new owner, unless the new owner has signed a notice of classification continuance, except transfer to an owner who is an heir or devisee of a deceased owner or transfer by a transfer on death deed does not, by itself, result in removal of classification. The notice of continuance must be on a form prepared by the department. If the notice of continuance is not signed by the new owner and attached to the real estate excise tax affidavit, all additional taxes, applicable interest, and penalty calculated pursuant to subsection (4) of this section become due and payable by the seller or transferor at time of sale. The auditor may not accept an instrument of conveyance regarding classified land for filing or recording unless the new owner has signed the notice of continuance or the additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty has been paid, as evidenced by the real estate excise tax stamp affixed thereto by the treasurer. The seller, transferor, or new owner may appeal the new assessed valuation calculated under subsection (4) of this section to the county board of equalization in accordance with the provisions of RCW 84.40.038. Jurisdiction is hereby conferred on the county board of equalization to hear these appeals;

(d) (i) Determination by the assessor, after giving the owner written notice and an opportunity to be heard, that all or a portion of the land no longer meets the criteria for classification under this chapter. The criteria for classification pursuant to this chapter continue to apply after classification has been granted.

(ii) The granting authority, upon request of an assessor, must provide reasonable assistance to the assessor in making a determination whether the land continues to meet the qualifications of RCW 84.34.020 (1) or (3). The assistance must be provided within thirty days of receipt of the request.

(2) Land may not be removed from classification because of:

(a) The creation, sale, or transfer of forestry riparian easements under RCW 76.13.120; or

(b) The creation, sale, or transfer of a fee interest or a conservation easement for the riparian open space program under RCW 76.09.040.

(3) Within thirty days after the removal of all or a portion of the land from current use classification under subsection (1) of this section, the assessor must notify the owner in writing, setting forth the reasons for the removal. The seller, transferor, or owner may appeal the removal to the county board of equalization in accordance with the provisions of RCW 84.40.038. The removal notice must explain

the steps needed to appeal the removal decision, including when a notice of appeal must be filed, where the forms may be obtained, and how to contact the county board of equalization.

(4) Unless the removal is reversed on appeal, the assessor must revalue the affected land with reference to its true and fair value on January 1st of the year of removal from classification. Both the assessed valuation before and after the removal of classification must be listed and taxes must be allocated according to that part of the year to which each assessed valuation applies. Except as provided in subsection (6) of this section, an additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty must be imposed, which are due and payable to the treasurer thirty days after the owner is notified of the amount of the additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty. As soon as possible, the assessor must compute the amount of additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty and the treasurer must mail notice to the owner of the amount thereof and the date on which payment is due. The amount of the additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty must be determined as follows:

(a) The amount of additional tax is equal to the difference between the property tax paid as "open space land," "farm and agricultural land," or "timberland" and the amount of property tax otherwise due and payable for the seven years last past had the land not been so classified;

(b) The amount of applicable interest is equal to the interest upon the amounts of the additional tax paid at the same statutory rate charged on delinquent property taxes from the dates on which the additional tax could have been paid without penalty if the land had been assessed at a value without regard to this chapter;

(c) The amount of the penalty is as provided in RCW 84.34.080. The penalty may not be imposed if the removal satisfies the conditions of RCW 84.34.070.

(5) Additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty become a lien on the land. The lien attaches at the time the land is removed from classification under this chapter and has priority to and must be fully paid and satisfied before any recognizance, mortgage, judgment, debt, obligation, or responsibility to or with which the land may become charged or liable. This lien may be foreclosed upon expiration of the same period after delinquency and in the same manner provided by law for foreclosure of liens for delinquent real property taxes as provided in RCW 84.64.050. Any additional tax unpaid on the due date is delinquent as of the due date. From the date of delinquency until paid, interest must be charged at the same rate applied by law to delinquent ad valorem property taxes.

(6) The additional tax, applicable interest, and penalty specified in subsection (4) of this section may not be imposed if the removal of classification pursuant to subsection (1) of this section resulted solely from:

(a) Transfer to a government entity in exchange for other land located within the state of Washington;

(b) (i) A taking through the exercise of the power of eminent domain, or (ii) sale or transfer to an entity having the power of eminent domain in anticipation of the exercise of such power, said entity having manifested its intent in writing or by other official action;

(c) A natural disaster such as a flood, windstorm, earthquake, wildfire, or other such calamity rather than by virtue of the act of the landowner changing the use of the property;

(d) Official action by an agency of the state of Washington or by the county or city within which the land is located which disallows the present use of the land;

(e) Transfer of land to a church when the land would qualify for exemption pursuant to RCW 84.36.020;

(f) Acquisition of property interests by state agencies or agencies or organizations qualified under RCW 84.34.210 and 64.04.130 for the purposes enumerated in those sections. At such time as these property interests are not used for the purposes enumerated in RCW 84.34.210 and 64.04.130 the additional tax specified in subsection (4) of this section must be imposed;

(g) Removal of land classified as farm and agricultural land under RCW 84.34.020(2)(f);

(h) Removal of land from classification after enactment of a statutory exemption that qualifies the land for exemption and receipt of notice from the owner to remove the land from classification;

(i) The creation, sale, or transfer of forestry riparian easements under RCW 76.13.120;

(j) The creation, sale, or transfer of a conservation easement of private forestlands within unconfined channel migration zones or containing critical habitat for threatened or endangered species under RCW 76.09.040;

(k) The sale or transfer of land within two years after the death of the owner of at least a fifty percent interest in the land if the land has been assessed and valued as classified forestland, designated as forestland under chapter 84.33 RCW, or classified under this chapter continuously since 1993. The date of death shown on a death certificate is the date used for the purposes of this subsection (6)(k);

(l)(i) The discovery that the land was classified under this chapter in error through no fault of the owner. For purposes of this subsection (6)(l), "fault" means a knowingly false or misleading statement, or other act or omission not in good faith, that contributed to the approval of classification under this chapter or the failure of the assessor to remove the land from classification under this chapter.

(ii) For purposes of this subsection (6), the discovery that land was classified under this chapter in error through no fault of the owner is not the sole reason for removal of classification pursuant to subsection (1) of this section if an independent basis for removal exists. Examples of an independent basis for removal include the owner changing the use of the land or failing to meet any applicable income criteria required for classification under this chapter; or

(m) The sale or transfer to a governmental entity if the governmental entity manages the land in the same manner as designated forestland under chapter 84.33 RCW, or as property classified as timberland under this chapter, and the governmental entity provides the county assessor with a timber management plan or a notice of intent to manage the land as required under this subsection (6)(m). The governmental entity must provide an updated timberland or forestland management plan to the county assessor at least once every revaluation cycle. The county is authorized to collect a fee from the governmental entity for the filing of the forestland or timberland management plan in accordance with the county's fee schedule. When the land is not managed as required under this subsection (6)(m), or when the governmental entity sells or transfers the land at any time, the additional tax specified in subsection (4) of this section is due from

the current government owner, unless the change in use of the land, sale or transfer, meets one of the other exceptions in this subsection (6). [2024 c 109 s 2; 2017 3rd sp.s. c 37 s 1001; 2017 c 323 s 506. Prior: 2014 c 97 s 311; 2014 c 58 s 28; prior: 2009 c 513 s 2; 2009 c 354 s 3; 2009 c 255 s 2; 2009 c 246 s 3; 2007 c 54 s 25; 2003 c 170 s 6; prior: 2001 c 305 s 3; 2001 c 249 s 14; 2001 c 185 s 7; prior: 1999 sp.s. c 4 s 706; 1999 c 233 s 22; 1999 c 139 s 2; 1992 c 69 s 12; 1989 c 378 s 35; 1985 c 319 s 1; 1983 c 41 s 1; 1980 c 134 s 5; 1973 1st ex.s. c 212 s 12.]

Automatic expiration date and tax preference performance statement exemption—2024 c 109: See note following RCW 84.33.140.

Tax preference performance statement and expiration—2017 3rd sp.s. c 37 ss 1001 and 1002: "The provisions of RCW 82.32.805 and 82.32.808 do not apply to this part." [2017 3rd sp.s. c 37 s 1003.]

Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 37 ss 301, 302, and 1001-1003: See note following RCW 82.04.628.

Tax preference performance statement exemption—Automatic expiration date exemption—2017 c 323: See note following RCW 82.04.040.

Uniformity of application and construction—Relation to electronic signatures in global and national commerce act—2014 c 58: See RCW 64.80.903 and 64.80.904.

Finding—Intent—2009 c 354: See note following RCW 84.33.140.

Severability—2007 c 54: See note following RCW 82.04.050.

Purpose—2003 c 170 s 6: "During the regular session of the 2001 legislature, RCW 84.34.108 was amended by section 7, chapter 185, by section 14, chapter 249, and by section 3, chapter 305, each without reference to the other. The purpose of section 6 of this act is to reenact and amend RCW 84.34.108 so that it reflects all amendments made by the legislature and to clarify any misunderstanding as to how the exemption contained in chapter 305, Laws of 2001 is to be applied." [2003 c 170 s 3.]

Purpose—Intent—2003 c 170: See note following RCW 84.33.130.

Application—2001 c 185 ss 1-12: See note following RCW 84.14.110.

Part headings not law—1999 sp.s. c 4: See note following RCW 77.85.180.

Effective date—1999 c 233: See note following RCW 4.28.320.