
Local Government & Housing Committee

HB 1797

Brief Description: Examining rural and resource lands.

Sponsors: Representatives White, Priest, Springer, Anderson, Miloscia, Nelson, McCoy, Rodne, Simpson and Sullivan.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires, subject to funding provisions, the William D. Ruckelshaus Center to conduct an examination of policies guiding the maintenance of rural character and resource lands in Washington.
- Establishes a related account in the State Treasury.

Hearing Date: 2/12/09

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386)

Background:

The Growth Management Act.

The Growth Management Act (GMA or Act) is the comprehensive land use planning framework for county and city governments in Washington. Enacted in 1990 and 1991, the GMA establishes numerous requirements for local governments obligated by mandate or choice to fully plan under the Act (planning jurisdictions) and a reduced number of directives for all other counties and cities.

Directives applying to all counties and cities require the designation of agricultural, forest, and mineral lands that have long-term significance for commercial use. All counties and cities must also designate and protect critical areas, areas that include wetlands, frequently flooded areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.

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.

The GMA directs planning jurisdictions to adopt internally consistent comprehensive land use plans that are generalized, coordinated land use policy statements of the governing body. Comprehensive plans must address specified planning elements, including a rural element, each of which is a subset of a comprehensive plan. The implementation of comprehensive plans occurs through development regulations mandated by the GMA.

The GMA includes requirements relating to the use or development of land in urban and rural areas. Among other requirements, counties that fully plan under the GMA must designate urban growth areas, areas within which urban growth must be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature.

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center.

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Center) is a joint effort of the University of Washington and Washington State University that is dedicated to helping public, tribal, private, non-profit, and other community leaders build consensus and resolve conflicts around difficult public policy issues. The Center provides neutral expertise to improve the quality and availability of voluntary collaborative approaches for policy development and multi-party dispute resolution.

Summary of Bill:

Examination by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center.

Subject to the availability of amounts for this specific purpose, the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Center) must conduct an examination of policies guiding the maintenance of rural character and resource lands in Washington. The examination must begin by July 1st of the year in which funds are made available. In completing this examination, the Center must:

- work and consult with willing participants including, but not limited to, agricultural, environmental, forestry, development, realty, tribal, and local government interests; and
- involve and apprise legislators and legislative staff of its efforts.

The Center must conduct fact-finding and stakeholder discussions with the stakeholder participants and must, in part, identify stakeholder concerns and desired principles for rural land development and maintenance of resource lands. The fact-finding must identify existing regulatory, management, and scientific information related to rates of growth and policies guiding development in rural and resource lands. The stakeholder discussions must identify options and recommendations for accommodating expected growth in rural and resource lands in a manner that leads to the conservation of forest, farm, and natural areas.

The Center must work to achieve agreement among participating stakeholders and to develop a coalition that can be used to support agreed upon changes or new approaches to maintaining the character of rural lands and conserving agricultural and forest lands of long-term significance.

Reporting requirements for the Center are specified. The Center must issue two reports of its fact-finding efforts and stakeholder discussions to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate: one by December 1 of the year in which funds for the examination become available; and one by the following July 1. The Center also must

issue a final report of findings and legislative recommendations to these same recipients by September 1 of the year following the year in which funds for the examination become available.

Account Creation.

The Rural and Resource Lands Study Account is created in the State Treasury. Proceeds from gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private sources, in trust or otherwise, must be deposited into the account. The Legislature may also appropriate moneys to the account. Expenditures from the account may be used only for an examination by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center of policies guiding the maintenance of rural character and resource lands in Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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