
HOUSE BILL 1421

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Chambers and Rule

1 AN ACT Relating to adding counties to the voluntary stewardship
2 program; and amending RCW 36.70A.710 and 36.70A.740.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 36.70A.710 and 2011 c 360 s 4 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 (1)(a) As an alternative to protecting critical areas in areas
7 used for agricultural activities through development regulations
8 adopted under RCW 36.70A.060, the legislative authority of a county
9 may elect to protect such critical areas through the program.

10 (b) In order to participate in the program, (~~within six months~~
11 ~~after July 22, 2011~~) by July 1, 2024, the legislative authority of a
12 county must adopt an ordinance or resolution that:

13 (i) Elects to have the county participate in the program;

14 (ii) Identifies the watersheds that will participate in the
15 program; and

16 (iii) Based on the criteria in subsection (4) of this section,
17 nominates watersheds for consideration by the commission as state
18 priority watersheds.

19 (2) Before adopting the ordinance or resolution under subsection
20 (1) of this section, the county must (a) confer with tribes, and
21 environmental and agricultural interests; and (b) provide notice

1 following the public participation and notice provisions of RCW
2 36.70A.035 to property owners and other affected and interested
3 individuals, tribes, government agencies, businesses, school
4 districts, and organizations.

5 (3) In identifying watersheds to participate in the program, a
6 county must consider:

7 (a) The role of farming within the watershed, including the
8 number and acreage of farms, the economic value of crops and
9 livestock, and the risk of the conversion of farmland;

10 (b) The overall likelihood of completing a successful program in
11 the watershed; and

12 (c) Existing watershed programs, including those of other
13 jurisdictions in which the watershed has territory.

14 (4) In identifying priority watersheds, a county must consider
15 the following:

16 (a) The role of farming within the watershed, including the
17 number and acreage of farms, the economic value of crops and
18 livestock, and the risk of the conversion of farmland;

19 (b) The importance of salmonid resources in the watershed;

20 (c) An evaluation of the biological diversity of wildlife species
21 and their habitats in the geographic region including their
22 significance and vulnerability;

23 (d) The presence of leadership within the watershed that is
24 representative and inclusive of the interests in the watershed;

25 (e) Integration of regional watershed strategies, including the
26 availability of a data and scientific review structure related to all
27 types of critical areas;

28 (f) The presence of a local watershed group that is willing and
29 capable of overseeing a successful program, and that has the
30 operational structures to administer the program effectively,
31 including professional technical assistance staff, and monitoring and
32 adaptive management structures; and

33 (g) The overall likelihood of completing a successful program in
34 the watershed.

35 (5) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (9) of this
36 section, beginning with the effective date of the ordinance or
37 resolution adopted under subsection (1) of this section, the program
38 applies to all unincorporated property upon which agricultural
39 activities occur within a participating watershed.

1 (6) (a) Except as otherwise provided in (b) of this subsection,
2 within two years after July 22, 2011, a county must review and, if
3 necessary, revise development regulations adopted under this chapter
4 to protect critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural
5 activities:

6 (i) If the county has not elected to participate in the program,
7 for all unincorporated areas; or

8 (ii) If the county has elected to participate in the program, for
9 any watershed not participating in the program.

10 (b) A county that between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2007, in
11 accordance with RCW 36.70A.130 completed the review of its
12 development regulations as required by RCW 36.70A.130 to protect
13 critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural activities
14 is not required to review and revise its development regulations
15 until required by RCW 36.70A.130.

16 (c) After the review and amendment required under (a) of this
17 subsection, RCW 36.70A.130 applies to the subsequent review and
18 amendment of development regulations adopted under this chapter to
19 protect critical areas as they specifically apply to agricultural
20 activities.

21 (7) (a) A county that has made the election under subsection (1)
22 of this section may withdraw a participating watershed from the
23 program by adopting an ordinance or resolution withdrawing the
24 watershed from the program. A county may withdraw a watershed from
25 the program at the end of three years, five years, or eight years
26 after receipt of funding, or any time after ten years from receipt of
27 funding.

28 (b) Within eighteen months after withdrawing a participating
29 watershed from the program, the county must review and, if necessary,
30 revise its development regulations that protect critical areas in
31 that watershed as they specifically apply to agricultural activities.
32 The development regulations must protect the critical area functions
33 and values as they existed on July 22, 2011. RCW 36.70A.130 applies
34 to the subsequent review and amendment of development regulations
35 adopted under this chapter to protect critical areas as they
36 specifically apply to agricultural activities.

37 (8) A county that has made the election under subsection (1) of
38 this section is eligible for a share of the funding made available to
39 implement the program, subject to funding availability from the
40 state.

1 (9) A county that has made the election under subsection (1) of
2 this section is not required to implement the program in a
3 participating watershed until adequate funding for the program in
4 that watershed is provided to the county.

5 **Sec. 2.** RCW 36.70A.740 and 2011 c 360 s 10 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) (~~By July 31, 2015, the~~) The commission must:

8 (a) In consultation with each county that has elected under RCW
9 36.70A.710 to participate in the program, determine which
10 participating watersheds received adequate funding to establish and
11 implement the program in a participating watershed (~~by July 1,~~
12 ~~2015~~); and

13 (b) In consultation with other state agencies, for each
14 participating watershed determine whether state agencies required to
15 take action under the provisions of RCW 36.70A.700 through 36.70A.760
16 have received adequate funding to support the program (~~by July 1,~~
17 ~~2015~~).

18 (2) By July 31, (~~2017~~) 2023, and every two years thereafter, in
19 consultation with each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710
20 to participate in the program and other state agencies, the
21 commission shall determine for each participating watershed whether
22 adequate funding to implement the program was provided during the
23 preceding biennium as provided in subsection (1) of this section.

24 (3) If the commission determines under subsection (1) or (2) of
25 this section that a participating watershed has not received adequate
26 funding, the watershed is subject to the provisions of RCW
27 36.70A.735.

28 (4) In consultation with the statewide advisory committee and
29 other state agencies, not later than August 31, 2015, and each August
30 31st every two years thereafter, the commission shall report to the
31 legislature and each county that has elected under RCW 36.70A.710 to
32 participate in the program on the participating watersheds that have
33 received adequate funding to establish and implement the program.

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