



Legislation Text

File #: 2015-0446, **Version:** 3

A MOTION declaring that it is county policy to protect and conserve land and water resources that will enhance our quality of life, strengthen our region's economy, enhance biodiversity, provide recreational opportunities and promote sustainable farming and locally grown food and forestry and directing the executive to develop and transmit a work plan for implementing a program to protect and conserve these high value resources.

WHEREAS, King County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation, and the county's population is projected to increase by at least thirty percent by 2040, and

WHEREAS, protecting trail corridors, ecological lands, forests, farmland, rivers and streams, rural character and historic resources located on farmland, enhances biodiversity, protects our water and air quality and human health, provides fresh local food for our growing population and helps the county reduce greenhouse gases, and

WHEREAS, conservation enhances the region's quality of life and contributes to a vibrant economy, and

WHEREAS, as one example of the economic benefits of resource conservation, in April 2014, the King County council adopted Motion 14118, affirming King County's support for the Skykomish Valley Economic Development, Recreation, and Natural Resource Conservation Initiative and recognizing the shared vision of the town of Skykomish and the Stevens Pass Greenway to enhance economic development, increase recreation opportunities and conserve the natural resources in the Skykomish valley, and

WHEREAS, protecting high conservation value lands, including forests and farmlands, promotes

numerous determinants of equity, including health and human services, food systems, parks and natural resources and community economic development, that comprise the county's equity and social justice initiative, and

WHEREAS, King County has long been a leader in environmental protection and conservation, making our region one of the most livable areas in the country and a sought-after place to live, work and do business, and

WHEREAS, in 1968, King County voters approved the Forward Thrust initiative, which provided funding to preserve four thousand acres of park land as well as fifty-three miles of waterfront and riparian corridors, and

WHEREAS, in 1982, the King County council approved the Conservation Futures Tax, which has successfully preserved more than one hundred thousand acres of valuable resource lands and farmlands, and

WHEREAS, in 1989, King County voters approved the Open Space bond measure, which provided funding for the preservation of high-value open space land, and

WHEREAS, in 2003, 2007 and 2013, King County voters approved tax levies to support parks, trails and open space, providing funding to acquire and develop trail corridors, as well as to preserve valuable open space, and

WHEREAS, in July 2009, the King County council adopted Ordinance 16600, which placed a charter amendment called the Open Space Protection Amendment on the November 2009 general election ballot, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Open Space Protection Amendment was to provide enhanced protection for high conservation value properties either owned by the county or on which the county held a conservation easement, and

WHEREAS, in July 2009, the King County council adopted Ordinance 16601 identifying approximately one hundred fifty thousand acres of county-owned high conservation value properties that would receive additional protection under the Open Space Protection Amendment, and

WHEREAS, in November 2009, the voters of King County overwhelmingly approved the Open Space Protection Amendment, and

WHEREAS, in December 2012, the King County council passed Motion 13777, which adopted the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan to guide county operations and inform decision making for King County to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, develop performance targets to reduce energy consumption and prepare for climate change, and

WHEREAS, the King County council is in the process of reviewing the 2015 update to the Strategic Climate Action Plan, and

WHEREAS, there is a unique opportunity for this generation to build on the county's strong history of support for resource conservation and protect the last remaining unprotected farmland, forest land and ecological lands in King County, and

WHEREAS, our region's ecological, agricultural, forest and other open space lands are irreplaceable and, if lost, will be lost forever, and

WHEREAS, King County has identified many high conservation value properties that are at risk, and

WHEREAS, the priority conservation areas include ecological lands, forests, farm land, trail corridors and rivers and streams, and

WHEREAS, over time, the opportunities to protect these lands will diminish and the costs will increase, and

WHEREAS, the acquisitions will affirm King County's commitment to remain one of the greenest metropolitan regions in the world, and

WHEREAS, bold, visionary leadership coupled with swift action is needed to ensure that we continue to protect and enhance our region's quality of life in the face of dramatic growth;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. It is the policy of the county to ensure that King County remains one of the greenest metropolitan

areas in the world by protecting and conserving land and water resources that will enhance our quality of life, strengthen our region's economy, enhance biodiversity, provide recreational opportunities and promote sustainable forestry and farming and locally grown food.

B. The executive is requested to develop and transmit to the council a work plan for implementing a preservation and conservation program to identify, protect and conserve water and land resources, including farmland and forest lands, ecological lands, river and stream corridors, trail corridors and historic resources on farmlands, consistent with the purposes of this motion. The work plan should be developed through a collaborative regional effort that should engage stakeholders, cities, tribes, nonprofit groups and the public. The work plan should include information about the percentage of land within the county that is currently designated to be within each of the following: agricultural production districts; forest production districts; and the farmland preservation program. The work plan should include criteria for prioritizing high conservation value resources for protection, a budget estimate to preserve and maintain the identified properties, recommended funding strategies, a proposal for outreach and education and a timeline for implementation, as well as the legislation necessary to implement the program.

C. The executive should transmit the work plan for implementation of the preservation and conservation program by March 30, 2016, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the policy staff director and the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment committee, or its successor.