

MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Stakeholders, Community Members, and Agricultural Partners

From: Washington Department of Natural Resources

Date: 11/12/2025

Subject: Upcoming Legislative Proposal – A Sustainable Approach to Water Management: Leasing Conserved Water to Strengthen Communities and Protect Resources for Future Generations

Overview

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be proposing legislation that includes water rights and other trust assets to be included in its existing leasing authority. This proposed change would give DNR flexibility in water management—the leasing of Underutilized or conserved water rights—to better support sustainable use of one of our most precious resources.

What the Proposal Does

The proposed legislation would allow the DNR to **lease water savings**—water conserved through efficiency improvements or reduced use—to **nearby farmers and other local water users**. This ensures that water conserved through good stewardship remains available to support local economies and agricultural production.

Why This Matters

- **Maximizes Efficiency:** Every drop of water saved can be put to beneficial use, ensuring smarter, more sustainable management of our shared resources.
- **Supports Local Agriculture:** By keeping conserved water in local communities, this program helps sustain farming operations and rural economies.
- **Strengthens Partnerships:** The leasing program fosters collaboration among landowners, farmers, and the DNR, reinforcing community-based water solutions.
- **Increases Revenue:** leasing water will generate additional revenue for DNR's trust beneficiaries, the majority of which is the common school trust that funds public school construction across the state.

The Big Picture

Water is one of our most valuable and limited resources. This legislative effort represents a forward-looking solution that balances **economic vitality, environmental responsibility,**

and **community resilience**. By leasing water, we can ensure that **conservation benefits everyone**—today and into the future.

Next Steps

The DNR will continue engaging with community members, agricultural organizations, and other stakeholders to refine the proposal and ensure it meets local needs. Updates and opportunities for public input are available on the DNR's website.

For more information:

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