

**RCW 76.15.005 Finding.** (1) Trees and other woody vegetation are a necessary and important part of community environments. Urban and community forests have many values and uses including conserving energy, reducing air and water pollution and soil erosion, contributing to property values, attracting business, reducing glare and noise, providing aesthetic and historical values, providing wood products, and affording comfort and protection for humans and wildlife.

(2) As urban and community areas in Washington state grow, the need to plan for, promote, and manage urban and community forests increases. Cities and communities benefit from assistance in developing and maintaining urban and community forestry programs that also address future growth.

(3) Assistance and encouragement in the establishment, retention, and enhancement of these forests and trees by local governments, residents, organizations, and professionals are in the interest of the state based on the contributions these forests make in preserving and enhancing the quality of life of Washington's cities, counties, and tribal lands while providing opportunities for economic development.

(4) Well-maintained urban forests deliver local air and water quality benefits that can have positive impacts on human health.

(5) Increased tree canopy in urban areas can positively impact salmon populations through stormwater management and reduction of stream temperatures, thereby improving critical salmon habitat. [2021 c 209 s 2; 1991 c 179 s 1.]

**Findings—Intent—2021 c 209:** "(1) The legislature finds that preservation and enhancement of city trees and urban forests contributes multiple benefits, including stormwater management, carbon sequestration, local air and water quality enhancements, and fish and wildlife habitat, and is a cost-effective way to meet these objectives. The legislature further finds that climate change is impacting our state in numerous ways, including summer heat waves, heavier winter rains, and lower air quality, all of which can be improved by increased tree canopy. The legislature further finds that modern and well-crafted urban forestry programs can have significant additional benefits related to human health, especially when delivered in highly impacted communities with higher health disparities and that also have lower existing tree canopy. Significant research exists demonstrating health benefits of trees and green spaces, including air and water quality improvements, positive emotional responses to being in nature, physical activity, and social cohesion through interacting in public green spaces. Furthermore, the legislature finds that Washington state faces continued urgency in adequately protecting essential salmon habitat, which is necessary to promote salmon recovery and thus help protect our endangered southern resident killer whale population. It is the intent of the legislature to enhance urban forestry programs that maximize cobenefits related to human health and salmon recovery.

(2) The legislature further recognizes that the existing evergreen communities act, in chapter 76.15 RCW and related programs in state law, established a successful framework for supporting urban forestry in Washington state. That act established the need for tools including canopy assessment and regional tree canopy analysis, and targeted technical assistance to support cities and counties seeking to deliver impactful urban forestry programs. The legislature intends

to modernize and add capacity to the evergreen communities act by utilizing information and analysis around environmental health disparities and salmon recovery plans, and increasing capacity for the delivery of an urban forestry program in order to strengthen and enhance the impacts of this act and to expand participation to include federally recognized tribes and other community-based organizations." [2021 c 209 s 1.]