A bill that would close the ‘illegal growth loophole’ to protect farmland, forests, and critical habitats from unnecessary and harmful development and sprawl.

Thirty years ago, Washington state passed the Growth Management Act to help our cities and counties to accommodate rapid growth, while protecting what makes the Evergreen state a great place to live: from vibrant cities to working farms and forests, and a beautiful rural landscape.

However, there is a loophole that has allowed for the illegal growth in our rural landscapes. This loophole undermines the intent of the GMA by allowing counties to subvert the Growth Management Hearing Board appeals process to illegally build sprawling developments that gobble up farmlands, forests, and critical habitats, put a financial strain on jurisdictions to provide adequate infrastructure, facilities, and services to new developments.

Why now?

Our state continues to attract new residents and based on recent projections, we know that growth is going to continue to occur in Washington. So as long as this loophole exists, there will be people who exploit it for irresponsible development on lands that we desperately need to protect.
Here’s what the update will do:

Futurewise has been working to close this loophole since 2008 with a simple legislative solution. SB5042 would ensure that controversial land use changes by counties are allowed to be reviewed by the Growth Management Hearings Board before going into effect. If the GMHB rules against the land use change (for example expansion of the urban growth boundary or removing designations for agricultural lands), the change won’t be allowed to go into effect, and the protections will continue.

Essentially, this amendment to the GMA would prevent counties from issuing permits to developers until after the GMHB has had the opportunity to review whether their proposed action is legal.

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