

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 79TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

April 12, 2005

TO: Honorable Mike Jackson, Chair, Senate Committee on S/C on Agriculture & Coastal Resources

FROM: John S. O'Brien, Deputy Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: SB1273 by Jackson, Mike (Relating to the establishment of the Texas Farmland and Ranchland Conservation Program.), **Committee Report 1st House, Substituted**

No significant fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill creates the Texas Farmland and Ranchland Program within the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), to be governed by a council of thirteen members. The bills also creates a new General Revenue-Dedicated Account within the General Revenue Fund, the Texas Farmland and Ranchland Conservation Fund, to fund the purchase of agricultural conservation easements through grants to qualified landowners. Revenue sources to the fund would consist of public or private gifts, grants, donations, or contributions, and other sources, including federal and state mitigation and bond proceeds. This new General Revenue-Dedicated Account would be subject to funds consolidation review by the current Legislature. TDA will provide administrative support to the council as funds for administration of the program become available.

TDA anticipates being able to absorb any new administrative costs within existing resources. The agency anticipates that the grants to purchase easements can be funded with federal funds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency currently operate programs that award grant funds for the purchase of conservation easements to state and local governments. The Council could apply for these federal funds on the behalf of the State of Texas. At this time, TDA cannot estimate the total amount of funding that may become available or the number of grants that the council would be able to award.

Local Government Impact

No significant fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

Source Agencies: 551 Department of Agriculture

LBB Staff: JOB, WK, ZS, JF