

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1118  
By: Johnson  
Agriculture & Livestock  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

It has been suggested that current law does not provide sufficient support for the State Soil and Water Conservation Board to promote on-the-ground conservation methods for best soil practices. Growing evidence shows that healthy soil can increase water absorption during floods and promote accelerated rates of groundwater recharge. S.B. 1118 seeks to support farmers and landowners by creating a program administered by the State Soil and Water Conservation Board to facilitate priority conservation measures and other soil and land improvement measures.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the State Soil and Water Conservation Board in SECTION 1 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1118 amends the Agriculture Code to authorize the State Soil and Water Conservation Board to develop and administer the On-The-Ground Conservation Program to maximize public benefits by facilitating priority conservation measures and other soil and water conservation land improvement measures by landowners and operators in Texas. The bill authorizes the board to create rules, forms, and procedures necessary for the program's administration. The bill authorizes the board to provide the following through the program:

- technical assistance;
- cost-share assistance;
- direct grants; and
- help in obtaining this assistance and these grants from other public or private sources.

The bill authorizes the board to do the following:

- obtain grants, cost-sharing assistance, or other forms of funding from other state or federal governmental entities;
- coordinate, receive, and use gifts, grants, and donations from private sources;
- work with qualified nonprofit organizations and universities to provide technical assistance;
- designate one or more soil and water conservation districts to administer the program locally;
- establish cost-share rates for eligible soil and water conservation land improvement measures under the program;
- designate and give priority under the program to priority conservation measures as specified by the bill that maximize public benefits to the state;
- establish standards and specifications for each designated priority conservation measure;

- consider local priorities and needs in designating a priority conservation measure; and
- provide certification that specific soil and water conservation land improvement measures have been implemented in accordance with those established standards and specifications.

The bill requires the board to include information regarding the program's activities in its annual report.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2021.