

By: Ashby, Flores, et al.

H.B. No. 2018

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 84.002(1), Parks and Wildlife Code, is amended to read as follows:

(1) "Agricultural conservation easement" means a conservation easement in qualified land that is designed to maintain the land's agricultural or timber use and accomplish one or more of the following additional purposes:

(A) conserving water quality or quantity;

(B) conserving native wildlife species through protection of their habitat;

(C) conserving rare or sensitive plant species;
or

(D) conserving large tracts of qualified open-space land that are threatened with fragmentation or development.

SECTION 2. Section 84.009(a), Parks and Wildlife Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The council may:

(1) adopt rules necessary to perform program duties under this chapter;

(2) request, accept, and use gifts, loans, donations, aid, appropriations, guaranties, subsidies, grants, or

1 contributions of any item of value for the furtherance of any
2 purposes of this chapter;

3 (3) establish, charge, and collect fees, charges, and
4 penalties in connection with the programs, services, and activities
5 provided for by this chapter;

6 (4) make, enter into, and enforce contracts and
7 agreements, and take other actions as may accomplish any of the
8 purposes of this chapter;

9 (5) seek ways to coordinate and leverage public and
10 private sources of funding;

11 (6) adopt best practices and enforcement standards for
12 the evaluation of easements purchased through grants from the fund;

13 (7) establish a protocol for the purchase of
14 agricultural conservation easements and for the distribution of
15 funds to approved applicants;

16 (8) administer grants awarded to successful
17 applicants;

18 (9) ensure that agricultural conservation easements
19 purchased under this chapter are not inconsistent with:

20 (A) the preservation of open space;

21 (B) the maintenance of the land's agricultural or
22 timber use; and

23 (C) the conservation of wildlife habitat or
24 water; and

25 (10) approve the termination of easements and take any
26 other action necessary to further the goals of the program.

27 SECTION 3. Section [84.010](#), Parks and Wildlife Code, is

1 amended to read as follows:

2 Sec. 84.010. CRITERIA FOR AWARDING GRANTS. The council
3 shall:

4 (1) give priority to applications that protect and
5 maintain the agricultural or timber productivity of lands that are
6 susceptible to development, including subdivision and
7 fragmentation; and

8 (2) adopt a scoring process to be used in evaluating
9 applications that considers the following:

10 (A) maintenance of landscape and watershed
11 integrity to conserve water and natural resources;

12 (B) protection of habitats for native plant and
13 animal species, including habitats for endangered, threatened,
14 rare, or sensitive species;

15 (C) potential for leveraging state money
16 allocated to the program with additional public or private money;

17 (D) proximity of the subject property to other
18 protected lands;

19 (E) the term of the proposed easement, whether
20 perpetual or for a term of 30 years;

21 (F) the land's agricultural or timber
22 productivity; and

23 (G) [~~(F)~~] a resource management plan agreed to by
24 both parties and approved by the council.

25 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.