

By: Hinojosa of Nueces

S.B. No. 2970

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 use potential 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
22 use potential; 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 use potential 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 productivity; and

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

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