

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 2619  
By: Wilson  
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. H.B. 2619 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**

H.B. 2619 amends the Agriculture Code to require 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 requires the board to create rules, forms, and procedures necessary for the program's administration. The bill requires 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; and
- designate one or more soil and water conservation districts to administer the program locally.

H.B. 2619 requires the board to establish cost-share rates for eligible soil and water conservation land improvement measures under the program. The bill requires the board to designate and give priority under the program to priority conservation measures that maximize public benefits to the state, specifies some priority conservation measures, and defines "priority conservation

measure" as a priority soil and water conservation land improvement measure so designated. The bill requires the board to establish standards and specifications for each designated priority conservation measure and authorizes the board to consider local priorities and needs in designating a priority conservation measure. The bill requires the board to include information regarding the program's activities in its annual report. Creation and implementation of the program by the board is mandatory only if a specific appropriation is made for that purpose.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2021.