

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
87R11906 BEF-D

S.B. 1772
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Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Pollinators facilitate reproduction in approximately 90 percent of the world's flowering plants, and a significant number of plants we grow for food, beverages, fibers, and medicines need to be pollinated by these animals to produce the goods on which we rely. In fact, one out of every three bites of food, from fruits and vegetables to edible oils, are a direct result of pollination services. In the United States alone, bees and other insects produce \$40 billion worth of products annually through the process of pollination, and honey bees alone are responsible for between \$1.2 billion and \$5.4 billion in agricultural productivity. In addition to their value to agriculture, pollinators also play a vital role in maintaining our ecosystems. Pollinators are vital to creating and maintaining the habitats that many animals rely on for food and shelter.

Unfortunately, however, pollinators continue to suffer from loss of habitat and diseases. Increased land use by humans and exposure to parasites and pesticides have led to a deficit in floral abundance and even resulted in local extinctions of select pollinator species across the world. Accordingly, to help promote healthy pollinator habitats in the state, S.B. 1772 would create the Texas Pollinator-Smart program.

Specifically, the bill would require the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to establish the Texas Pollinator-Smart program to encourage the voluntary establishment and conservation of habitats for bees, birds, and other pollinators at and near solar energy sites. It would require AgriLife to develop educational materials concerning the program, a scorecard with criteria to evaluate pollinator habitats at solar energy sites, and a certificate to be awarded to sites that achieve a certain score based upon these criteria.

As proposed, S.B. 1772 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Texas Pollinator-Smart program for solar energy sites.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends the heading to Subchapter K, Chapter 88, Education Code, to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K. TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

SECTION 2. Amends Section 88.821, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 88.821. DEFINITION. Redefines, for purposes of Subchapter K, "AgriLife Extension" or "extension service" to mean Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, rather than the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter K, Chapter 88, Education Code, by adding Section 88.824, as follows:

Sec. 88.824. TEXAS POLLINATOR-SMART PROGRAM. (a) Requires AgriLife Extension to establish and implement the Texas Pollinator-Smart program (program) to encourage the voluntary establishment and conservation of habitats for bees, birds, and other pollinators in and near solar energy sites.

(b) Requires AgriLife Extension to develop educational materials for the program that include information regarding:

(1) benefits to solar energy producers, neighboring landowners, agricultural producers, and the environment of providing pollinator habitats at solar energy sites;

(2) resources and practices for establishing and maintaining pollinator habitats;

(3) native plant species compatible with solar energy sites that provide habitat for pollinators;

(4) methods to prevent, identify, and eradicate invasive species without causing harm to pollinators;

(5) any available grants or other financial incentives for establishing or maintaining pollinator habitats;

(6) examples of pollinator habitats established at solar energy sites in this state or other locations; and

(7) the Texas Pollinator-Smart scorecard and certificate under Subsection (c).

(c) Requires AgriLife Extension to develop a Texas Pollinator-Smart scorecard with criteria to evaluate and score pollinator habitats at solar energy sites in this state, and to award the Texas Pollinator-Smart certificate to solar energy sites with pollinator habitats that meet or achieve a score determined by AgriLife Extension.

(d) Authorizes AgriLife Extension to provide advice and technical assistance to participants and potential participants in the Texas Pollinator-Smart program, including reports evaluating the suitability of solar energy sites.

(e) Provides that participation in the Texas Pollinator-Smart program by a solar energy site is voluntary.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2021.