

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to soil and water conservation
3 districts; dissolving specified soil and water
4 conservation districts and transferring district
5 assets and liabilities to specified regional
6 districts; dissolving specified soil and water
7 conservation districts and transferring district
8 assets and liabilities to specified counties; amending
9 s. 582.01, F.S.; providing and revising definitions;
10 amending s. 582.055, F.S.; requiring the department
11 provide travel expenses for soil and water
12 conservation district board members; amending s.
13 582.06, F.S.; revising provisions for the
14 establishment, composition, membership, organization,
15 and responsibilities of the Soil and Water
16 Conservation Council; amending s. 582.10, F.S.;
17 establishing regional soil and water conservation
18 districts beginning on a specified date; amending s.
19 582.16, F.S.; providing for the transfer of certain
20 contractual obligations for real property interests
21 equipment, vehicles, other personal property, and
22 records; providing an exception; amending s. 582.18,
23 F.S.; providing for the appointment of district
24 supervisors; creating s. 582.181, F.S.; providing for
25 soil and water conservation district governing boards;

26 | amending s. 582.19, F.S.; revising provisions for the
 27 | qualifications and tenure of soil and water
 28 | conservation district supervisors; amending s.
 29 | 582.195, F.S.; revising provisions to changes made the
 30 | act; creating s. 582.196, F.S.; authorizing certain
 31 | compensation for soil and water conservation district
 32 | board supervisors; amending s. 582.20, F.S.; revising
 33 | the powers of soil and water conservation district
 34 | supervisors; amending s. 582.295, F.S.; providing for
 35 | the reassignment of assets of certain dissolved soil
 36 | and water conservation districts; amending s. 582.30,
 37 | F.S.; revising provisions to changes made by the act;
 38 | repealing s. 582.11, F.S., relating to hearings
 39 | regarding the creation of soil and water conservation
 40 | districts; repealing ss. 582.12, 582.13, and 582.14,
 41 | F.S., relating to referendums for the creation of soil
 42 | and water conservation districts; repealing s. 582.15,
 43 | F.S., relating to the organization of soil and water
 44 | conservation districts; providing an effective date.

45 |
 46 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

47 |
 48 | Section 1. The following soil and water conservation
 49 | districts are dissolved and all assets and liabilities of each
 50 | district are transferred to their respective regional districts

51 as provided in s. 582.10:

- 52 (1) Alachua Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 53 (2) Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 54 (3) Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 55 (4) Broward Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 56 (5) Charlotte Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 57 (6) Chipola River Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 58 (7) Clay Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 59 (8) Choctawhatchee River Soil and Water Conservation
60 District.
- 61 (9) Collier Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 62 (10) Dixie Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 63 (11) Duval Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 64 (12) Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 65 (13) Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 66 (14) Gadsden Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 67 (15) Gilchrist Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 68 (16) Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 69 (17) Hardee Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 70 (18) Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 71 (19) Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 72 (20) Holmes Creek Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 73 (21) Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 74 (22) Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 75 (23) Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District.

- 76 | (24) Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 77 | (25) Lake Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 78 | (26) Leon Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 79 | (27) Levy Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 80 | (28) Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 81 | (29) Marion Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 82 | (30) Nassau Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 83 | (31) Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 84 | (32) Orange Hill Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 85 | (33) Orange Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 86 | (34) Osceola Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 87 | (35) Palm Beach Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 88 | (36) Peace River Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 89 | (37) Putnam Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 90 | (38) Santa Fe Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 91 | (39) Sarasota Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 92 | (40) Seminole Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 93 | (41) South Dade Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 94 | (42) St. Johns Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 95 | (43) St. Lucie Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 96 | (44) Sumter Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 97 | (45) Suwannee County Conservation District.
- 98 | (46) Tupelo Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 99 | (47) Volusia Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 100 | (48) Wakulla Soil and Water Conservation District.

101 (49) Yellow River Soil and Water Conservation District.
 102 Section 2. (1) The Baker Soil and Water Conservation
 103 District is dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the
 104 district are transferred to Baker County.
 105 (2) The Blackwater Soil and Water Conservation
 106 District is dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the
 107 district are transferred to Santa Rosa County.
 108 (3) The Glades Soil and Water Conservation District is
 109 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 110 transferred to Glades County.
 111 (4) The Hendry Soil and Water Conservation District is
 112 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 113 transferred to Hendry County.
 114 (5) The Madison Soil and Water Conservation District is
 115 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 116 transferred to Madison County.
 117 (6) The Martin Soil and Water Conservation District is
 118 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 119 transferred to Martin County.
 120 (7) The Polk Soil and Water Conservation District is
 121 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 122 transferred to Polk County.
 123 (8) The Taylor Soil and Water Conservation District is
 124 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 125 transferred to Taylor County.

126 (9) The Union Soil and Water Conservation District is
 127 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 128 transferred to Union County.

129 Section 3. Section 582.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 130 read:

131 582.01 Definitions.—As used in this chapter, the term:

132 (1) "Agriculture" means the science and art of production
 133 of plants and animals useful to humans, including to a variable
 134 extent the preparation of these products for human use and their
 135 disposal by marketing or otherwise, and includes aquaculture,
 136 horticulture, floriculture, viticulture, forestry, dairy,
 137 livestock, poultry, bees, and any and all forms of farm products
 138 and farm production. For the purposes of marketing and
 139 promotional activities, the term includes seafood.

140 (2) "Agricultural operations" or "agricultural purposes"
 141 means the following activities:

142 (a) Raising, growing, harvesting, or storing of crops,
 143 including, but not limited to, soil preparation and crop
 144 production services such as plowing, fertilizing, seed bed
 145 preparation, planting, cultivating, and crop protecting
 146 services.

147 (b) Feeding, breeding, or managing livestock, equine, or
 148 poultry.

149 (c) Producing or storing feed for use in the production of
 150 livestock, including, but not limited to, cattle, calves, swine,

151 hogs, goats, sheep, equine, and rabbits, or for use in the
152 production of poultry, including, but not limited to, chickens,
153 hens, ratites, and turkeys.

154 (d) Producing plants, trees, fowl, equine, or other
155 animals.

156 (e) Producing aquacultural, horticultural, viticultural,
157 silvicultural, grass sod, dairy, livestock, poultry, egg, and
158 apiarian products.

159 (f) Processing poultry.

160 (g) Post-harvest services on crops with the intent of
161 preparing them for market or further processing, including, but
162 not limited to, crop cleaning, drying, shelling, fumigating,
163 curing, sorting, grading, packing, ginning, canning, pickling,
164 and cooling.

165 (h) Slaughtering poultry and other animals.

166 (i) Manufacturing dairy products.

167
168 The term does not include constructing, installing, altering,
169 repairing, dismantling, or demolishing real property structures
170 or fixtures, including, but not limited to, grain bins,
171 irrigation equipment, and fencing.

172 (3)-(1) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of
173 Agriculture.

174 (4)-(2) "Council" means the Soil and Water Conservation
175 Council.

176 (5)~~(3)~~ "Department" means the Department of Agriculture
 177 and Consumer Services.

178 (6)~~(4)~~ "District" or "soil and water conservation
 179 district" means a governmental subdivision of this state and a
 180 body corporate and politic, organized in accordance with the
 181 provisions of this chapter for the purpose, with the powers, and
 182 subject to the provisions set forth in this chapter. The term
 183 "district" when used in this chapter means and includes a "soil
 184 and water conservation district." All districts organized under
 185 this chapter shall be known as soil and water conservation
 186 districts and shall have all the powers set out herein.

187 (7)~~(5)~~ "Due notice," in addition to notice required
 188 pursuant to the provisions of chapter 120, means notice
 189 published at least twice, with an interval of at least 7 days
 190 between the two publication dates, in a newspaper or other
 191 publication of general circulation within the appropriate area.

192 (8)~~(6)~~ "Land occupier" or "occupier of land" means a
 193 person, other than the owner, who possesses any lands lying
 194 within a district organized under the provisions of this
 195 chapter, whether as lessee, renter, tenant, or otherwise.

196 (9)~~(7)~~ "Landowner" or "owner of land" means a person who
 197 holds legal or equitable title to any lands lying within a
 198 district organized under the provisions of this chapter.

199 ~~(8) "Qualified elector" means a person qualified to vote
 200 in general elections under the constitution and laws of this~~

201 ~~state.~~

202 ~~(10)(9)~~ "Supervisor" means a member of the governing body
 203 of a district who is appointed ~~elected~~ in accordance with the
 204 provisions of this chapter.

205 Section 4. Subsections (4) through (9) of section 582.055,
 206 Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (5) through
 207 (10), respectively, and a new subsection (4) is added to that
 208 section to read:

209 582.055 Powers and duties of the Department of Agriculture
 210 and Consumer Services; rules.—

211 (4) The department shall provide for travel expenses to
 212 members appointed to the soil and water conservation district
 213 board.

214 Section 5. Section 582.06, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 215 read:

216 582.06 Soil and Water Conservation Council; establishment,
 217 composition, membership, organization, and responsibilities
 218 ~~powers and duties.~~—

219 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—It is declared to be in the best
 220 interest of the state that public agencies responsible for and
 221 involved in the development and implementation of best
 222 management practices, agricultural water quality, and water
 223 supply policy and planning work together to reduce duplication
 224 of effort, foster maximum efficient use of existing resources,
 225 and advise and assist the agencies involved.

226 (2)-(1) COMPOSITION.—

227 (a) The Soil and Water Conservation Council is created
 228 adjunct to ~~in~~ the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
 229 Services to perform the functions conferred upon in this section
 230 and shall be composed of 7 members who have been involved in the
 231 practice of soil or water conservation, or in the development or
 232 implementation of interim measures or best management practices
 233 related thereto, and who have been engaged in agriculture or an
 234 occupation related to the agricultural industry for at least 5
 235 years at the time of their appointment.

236 (b) Beginning with appointments in the 2024-2025 fiscal
 237 year, the commissioner shall appoint one member at-large from
 238 each of the 7 soil and water conservation district regions to
 239 serve on the council. The initial appointments shall sunset on
 240 the second Wednesday of January ~~All members shall be appointed~~
 241 ~~by the commissioner.~~

242 (c) Thereafter, members shall serve 4-year terms or until
 243 their successors are duly qualified and appointed. If a vacancy
 244 occurs, it shall be filled for the remainder of the term in the
 245 manner of an initial appointment.

246 (3) MEMBERSHIP, ORGANIZATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—

247 (a) The following representatives or their authorized
 248 designees shall serve ex officio in an advisory capacity to the
 249 Soil and Water Conservation Council:

250 1. The Secretary of Environmental Protection.

- 251 2. The executive director of the Fish and Wildlife
 252 Conservation Commission.
- 253 3. The associate dean of research of the Florida Medical
 254 Entomological Research Laboratory at the University of Florida
 255 Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.
- 256 4. The state conservationist for the United States
 257 Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation
 258 Service.
- 259 5. The president of the Florida Farm Bureau.
- 260 6. Two supervisors nominated by the Association of Florida
 261 Conservation Districts, two representatives of Florida
 262 environmental groups, and two private citizens who are
 263 landowners or producers enrolled in best management practices.
- 264 7. Such other representatives of state or federal agencies
 265 as the council deems desirable.
- 266 (b) The council shall be chaired by the commissioner or
 267 the commissioner's authorized designee. A majority of the
 268 membership of the council shall constitute a quorum for the
 269 conduct of business. The chair shall be responsible for
 270 recording and distributing to the members a summary of the
 271 proceedings of all council meetings. The council shall meet at
 272 least three times each year, or as needed. The council may
 273 designate subcommittees from time to time to assist in carrying
 274 out its responsibilities, provided that the Subcommittee on
 275 Managed Marshes shall be the first subcommittee appointed by the

276 council. The subcommittee shall continue to provide technical
277 assistance and guidance on basin management action plans and
278 research proposals, taking into account the total maximum daily
279 load reduction implications and natural resource interests.

280 (c) The council shall:

281 1. Develop and implement guidelines and strategies to
282 assist the department to develop agricultural best management
283 practices to improve water quality and water use efficiency
284 while promoting the sustainability of agriculture.

285 2. Develop and update commodity specific best management
286 practices manuals that are adopted by rule.

287 3. Develop and recommend to the department a request for
288 proposal process for research.

289 4. Collaborates with partners in the development,
290 implementation, and evaluation of statewide water policy as it
291 relates to water supply and water quality.

292 5. Identify potential funding sources for research or
293 implementation projects and evaluate and prioritize proposals
294 upon request by the funding source.

295 6. Prepare and present reports, as needed, on activities
296 in the state to other governmental organizations, as
297 appropriate.

298 7. Accept and review requests for creating or dissolving
299 soil and water conservation districts and shall, by a majority
300 vote, recommend, by resolution, to the commissioner that a

301 district be created or dissolved pursuant to the request, or
 302 that the request be denied.

303 8. When requested by the Governor, Department of Commerce
 304 or a district, the council shall provide a recommendation to the
 305 Commissioner whether to remove a supervisor for neglect of duty
 306 or malfeasance in office only after notice, hearing, and
 307 thorough review.

308 ~~(2) POWERS AND DUTIES; MEETINGS; PROCEDURES; RECORDS.—~~

309 ~~(a) The meetings, powers and duties, procedures, and~~
 310 ~~recordkeeping of the Soil and Water Conservation Council shall~~
 311 ~~be conducted pursuant to s. 570.232.~~

312 ~~(b) The council shall accept and review requests for~~
 313 ~~creating or dissolving soil and water conservation districts and~~
 314 ~~shall, by a majority vote, recommend, by resolution, to the~~
 315 ~~commissioner that a district be created or dissolved pursuant to~~
 316 ~~the request, or that the request be denied.~~

317 ~~(c) When requested by the Governor or a district, the~~
 318 ~~council shall provide a recommendation to the Governor whether~~
 319 ~~to remove a supervisor for neglect of duty or malfeasance in~~
 320 ~~office only after notice, hearing, and thorough review.~~

321 Section 6. Section 582.10, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 322 read:

323 582.10 Creation of soil and water conservation districts.—

324 (1) At 11:59 p.m. on June 30, 2024, the state shall be
 325 divided into the following 7 regional soil and water

326 conservation districts ~~Any 10 percent of owners of land lying~~
 327 ~~within the limits of the territory proposed to be organized into~~
 328 ~~a district may file a petition with the Department of~~
 329 ~~Agriculture and Consumer Services, asking that a soil and water~~
 330 ~~conservation district be organized to function in the territory~~
 331 ~~described in the petition. Such petition shall set forth:~~

332 (a) West Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation
 333 District ~~The proposed name of said district.~~

334 (b) East Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation
 335 District ~~That there is need, in the interest of the public~~
 336 ~~health, safety, and welfare, for a soil and water conservation~~
 337 ~~district to function in the territory described in the petition.~~

338 (c) North Central Soil and Water Conservation District ~~A~~
 339 ~~description of the territory proposed to be organized as a~~
 340 ~~district, which description shall not be required to be given by~~
 341 ~~metes and bounds or by legal subdivisions, but shall be deemed~~
 342 ~~sufficient if generally accurate.~~

343 (d) Northeast Soil and Water Conservation District ~~A~~
 344 ~~request that the department duly define the boundaries for such~~
 345 ~~district; that a referendum be held within the territory so~~
 346 ~~defined on the question of the creation of a soil and water~~
 347 ~~conservation district in such territory; and that the department~~
 348 ~~determine that such a district be created.~~

349 (e) West Central Soil and Water Conservation District.

350 (f) East Central Soil and Water Conservation District.

- 351 (g) South Florida Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 352 (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of any other special or
353 general act to the contrary, the boundaries of the respective
354 districts named in subsection (1) shall include the areas within
355 the following boundaries:
- 356 (a) The counties of Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Gulf, Holmes,
357 Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington shall
358 constitute the West Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation
359 District.
- 360 (b) The counties of Franklin, Gadsden, Hamilton,
361 Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla shall
362 constitute the East Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation
363 District.
- 364 (c) The counties of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia,
365 Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Suwannee, and Union shall
366 constitute the North Central Soil and Water Conservation
367 District.
- 368 (d) The counties of Citrus, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Levy,
369 Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, and Volusia shall constitute
370 the Northeast Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 371 (e) The counties of Desoto, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands,
372 Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota shall
373 constitute the West Central Soil and Water Conservation
374 District.
- 375 (f) The counties of Brevard, Indian River, Lake, Martin,

376 Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, St. Lucie, and Sumter
 377 shall constitute the East Central Soil and Water Conservation
 378 District.

379 (g) The counties of Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Dade,
 380 Glades, Hendry, Lee, Monroe, and Palm Beach and shall constitute
 381 the South Florida Soil and Water Conservation District ~~where~~
 382 ~~more than one petition is filed covering parts of the same~~
 383 ~~territory the department may consolidate all or any petitions.~~

384 Section 7. Section 582.16, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 385 read:

386 582.16 Change of district boundaries.—Upon the change of
 387 boundaries of the respective districts under s. 582.10(2)(a) -
 388 (g), all contractual obligations with respect to an area being
 389 transferred to another district shall be assumed by the district
 390 receiving such area; all real property interests owned by a
 391 district within an area to be transferred shall be conveyed to
 392 the district receiving such area; and all equipment, vehicles,
 393 other personal property, and records owned, located, and used by
 394 a district solely within an area being transferred shall be
 395 delivered to the district receiving such area. However, if an
 396 area is transferred from a district with a contractual
 397 obligation to the United States for the operation and
 398 maintenance of works within such area, then the deliveries and
 399 conveyances required in this section shall be deferred until the
 400 United States has approved the assumption of the contractual

401 ~~obligations by the receiving district Requests for increasing or~~
 402 ~~reducing the boundaries of an existing district may be filed~~
 403 ~~with the department, and the department shall follow the~~
 404 ~~proceedings provided in this chapter to create a district.~~

405 Section 8. Section 582.18, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 406 read:

407 582.18 Appointment ~~Election~~ of supervisors of each
 408 district.—

409 (1) The governing board of each soil and water
 410 conservation district shall be composed of at least one member
 411 from a minimum of 7 counties within a district who resides
 412 within the district. Members of the governing boards shall be
 413 appointed by the commissioner, subject to confirmation by the
 414 council at the next regular quarterly meeting following the
 415 appointment. Refusal or failure of the council to confirm an
 416 appointment creates a vacancy in the district to which the
 417 appointment was made. The term of office for a governing board
 418 member is 4 years and begins on March 2 of the year in which the
 419 appointment is made and terminates on March 1 of the fourth
 420 calendar year of the term or may continue until a successor is
 421 appointed, but not longer than 180 days. Terms of office of
 422 governing board members shall be staggered to help maintain
 423 consistency and continuity in the exercise of governing board
 424 duties and to minimize disruption in district operations ~~The~~
 425 ~~election of supervisors for each soil and water conservation~~

426 ~~district shall be held every 2 years, with one supervisor~~
427 ~~elected from each of the five numbered subdivisions created by~~
428 ~~the department pursuant to s. 582.15(4). The elections shall be~~
429 ~~held at the time of the general election provided for by s.~~
430 ~~100.041. The office of the supervisor of a soil and water~~
431 ~~conservation district is a nonpartisan office, and candidates~~
432 ~~for such office are prohibited from campaigning or qualifying~~
433 ~~for election based on party affiliation.~~

434 ~~(a) Each candidate for supervisor for such district must~~
435 ~~qualify as directed by chapter 99.~~

436 ~~(b) Each nominee who collects or expends campaign~~
437 ~~contributions shall conduct her or his campaign for supervisor~~
438 ~~of a soil and water conservation district in accordance with the~~
439 ~~provisions of chapter 106. Candidates who neither receive~~
440 ~~contributions nor make expenditures, other than expenditures for~~
441 ~~verification of signatures on petitions, are exempt from the~~
442 ~~provisions of chapter 106 requiring establishment of bank~~
443 ~~accounts and appointment of a campaign treasurer, but shall file~~
444 ~~periodic reports as required by s. 106.07.~~

445 ~~(c) The names of all nominees on behalf of whom such~~
446 ~~nominating petitions have been filed shall appear upon ballots~~
447 ~~in accordance with the general election laws. All qualified~~
448 ~~electors residing within the district shall be eligible to vote~~
449 ~~in such election. The candidates who receive the largest number~~
450 ~~of the votes cast from each group of candidates in such election~~

451 ~~shall be the elected supervisors from such group for such~~
 452 ~~district. In the case of a newly created district participating~~
 453 ~~in a regular election for the first time, candidates shall be~~
 454 ~~elected from district subdivisions 1, 3, and 5 for terms of 4~~
 455 ~~years, and candidates shall be elected from district~~
 456 ~~subdivisions 2 and 4 for initial terms of 2 years. Each~~
 457 ~~candidate elected shall assume office on the first Tuesday after~~
 458 ~~the first Monday in January following the election.~~

459 (2) Beginning on July 1, 2024, the commissioner shall
 460 appoint a supervisor from a minimum of 7 counties within the
 461 soil and water conservation district regions to serve on the
 462 governing board for each year the commissioner is in office.
 463 Such initial appointments shall sunset on the second Wednesday
 464 of January. Thereafter, members shall serve 4-year terms or
 465 until their successors are duly qualified and appointed. A
 466 vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the term in the
 467 manner of an initial appointment ~~After the issuance of a~~
 468 ~~certificate of organization of a soil and water conservation~~
 469 ~~district by the Department of State, or in the event of a~~
 470 ~~vacancy resulting from death, resignation, removal, or~~
 471 ~~otherwise, each vacancy shall be filled by appointment by the~~
 472 ~~remaining supervisors of the district until the next regular~~
 473 ~~election.~~

474 Section 9. Section 582.181, Florida Statutes, is created
 475 to read:

476 582.181 District governing boards.—

477 (1) The governing board of each soil and water
 478 conservation district shall be composed of seven members who
 479 reside within the district with not more than one supervisor
 480 from each county within a district.

481 (2) Members of the governing boards shall be appointed by
 482 the commissioner, subject to confirmation by the council at the
 483 next regular quarterly meeting following the appointment.
 484 Refusal or failure of the council to confirm an appointment
 485 creates a vacancy in the district to which the appointment was
 486 made.

487 (3) Beginning on July 1, 2024, the commissioner shall
 488 appoint a supervisor from each county within the soil and water
 489 conservation district regions to serve on the governing board
 490 for each year the commissioner is in office. Such initial
 491 appointments shall sunset on the second Wednesday of January.
 492 Thereafter, members shall serve 4-year terms or until their
 493 successors are duly qualified and appointed. A vacancy shall be
 494 filled for the remainder of the term in the manner of an initial
 495 appointment.

496 (4) The term of office for a governing board member is 4
 497 years and begins on March 2 of the year in which the appointment
 498 is made and terminates on March 1 of the fourth calendar year of
 499 the term or may continue until a successor is appointed, but not
 500 longer than 180 days. Terms of office of governing board members

501 shall be staggered to help maintain consistency and continuity
 502 in the exercise of governing board duties and to minimize
 503 disruption in district operations.

504 Section 10. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 582.19,
 505 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

506 582.19 Qualifications and tenure of supervisors.—

507 (1) The governing body of the district shall consist of
 508 seven ~~five~~ supervisors, appointed ~~elected~~ as provided in s.
 509 582.18.

510 (a) To qualify to serve on the governing body of a
 511 district, a supervisor must be an eligible voter who resides in
 512 the district and who:

513 1. Is actively engaged in, or retired after 10 years of
 514 being engaged in, agricultural operations ~~agriculture as defined~~
 515 ~~in s. 570.02;~~

516 2. Is employed for a minimum of 5 years by an agricultural
 517 producer who; ~~or~~

518 ~~3.~~ owns, leases, or is actively employed on land
 519 classified as agricultural under s. 193.461.

520 (b) At the time of qualifying, a nominee ~~candidate~~ for
 521 supervisor shall submit an affirmation in substantially the
 522 following form:

523 State of Florida

524 County of

525 Statement of Nominee ~~Candidate~~ for Supervisor of

CS/HB 1075

2024

526 Soil and Water Conservation District

527 I, ...(name of nominee candidate)..., a nominee candidate
528 for Supervisor of Soil and Water Conservation District, meet the
529 qualifications pursuant to s. 582.19(1), Florida Statutes, to
530 serve on the governing body of the Soil and Water Conservation
531 District.

532 ... (Signature of candidate) ...

533 ... (Address) ...

534 Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of

535, ...(year)..., at County, Florida.

536 (2) The supervisors shall designate a chair and may, from
537 time to time, change such designation by majority vote. The term
538 of office of each supervisor shall be 4 years, ~~except that two~~
539 ~~supervisors shall be elected to serve for initial terms of 2~~
540 ~~years, respectively, from the date of their election as provided~~
541 ~~in this chapter.~~ A supervisor shall hold office until her or his
542 successor has been appointed ~~elected~~ and qualified. The
543 selection of successors to fill an unexpired term shall be in
544 accordance with s. 582.18(1) ~~s. 582.18(2)~~. Selection for a full
545 term in a newly created district shall be by election of the
546 qualified electors of the district. A majority of the
547 supervisors shall constitute a quorum and the concurrence of a
548 majority of the supervisors in any matter within their duties
549 shall be required for its determination. A supervisor shall
550 receive no compensation for her or his services, but she or he

551 shall, with approval of the supervisors of the district, be
552 reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061.

553 Section 11. Section 582.195, Florida Statutes, is amended
554 to read:

555 582.195 Mandatory meeting of supervisors.—All seven ~~five~~
556 supervisors of the governing body of each district shall meet at
557 least once per calendar year in a public meeting pursuant to s.
558 286.011.

559 Section 12. Section 582.196, Florida Statutes, is created
560 to read:

561 582.196 Supervisor compensation.—Supervisors of a soil and
562 water conservation district board may receive compensation for
563 per diem and travel expenses authorized pursuant to s. 112.061,
564 not to exceed \$1,000 for each supervisor during any one year,
565 for travel expenses incurred in the performance of their duties
566 under this chapter as provided in s. 112.061

567 Section 13. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) and subsection
568 (11) of section 582.20, Florida Statutes, are amended, and
569 subsection (12) is added to that section, to read:

570 582.20 Powers of districts and supervisors.—A soil and
571 water conservation district organized under the provisions of
572 this chapter shall constitute a governmental subdivision of this
573 state, and a public body corporate and politic, exercising
574 public powers, and such district and the supervisors thereof
575 shall have the following powers, in addition to others granted

576 | in other sections of this chapter:

577 | (2) To conduct agricultural best management practices
578 | demonstration projects and projects for the conservation,
579 | protection, and restoration of soil and water resources:

580 | (b) Within another district's boundaries, subject to the
581 | approval of the commissioner, the council, and the approval of
582 | other districts ~~district's approval~~;

583 | (11) To request that the commissioner ~~Governor~~ remove a
584 | supervisor for neglect of duty or malfeasance in office by
585 | adoption of a resolution at a public meeting. If the district
586 | believes there is a need for a review of the request, the
587 | district may request that the council, by resolution, review its
588 | request to the commissioner ~~Governor~~ and provide the
589 | commissioner ~~Governor~~ with a recommendation.

590 | (12) Districts shall provide services to the respective
591 | regions in proportion to the contributions made upon dissolution
592 | and transfer to the regional district through June 30, 2026.

593 |
594 | Any provision with respect to the acquisition, operation, or
595 | disposition of property by public bodies of this state does not
596 | apply to a district organized under this chapter unless
597 | specifically so stated by the Legislature. The property and
598 | property rights of every kind and nature acquired by any
599 | district organized under the provisions of this chapter are
600 | exempt from state, county, and other taxation.

601 Section 14. Subsection (1) of section 582.295, Florida
 602 Statutes, is amended to read:

603 582.295 Automatic dissolution of districts.—

604 (1) If the governing body of a district fails to meet as
 605 required under s. 582.195, the district shall be automatically
 606 dissolved as of January 1 of the year immediately following the
 607 year in which the governing body failed to meet. All assets and
 608 liabilities of the district shall be transferred to the
 609 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The department
 610 will reassign assets to another Soil and Water Conservation
 611 District for similar work.

612 Section 15. Subsection (1) and paragraph (b) of subsection
 613 (5) of section 582.30, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

614 582.30 Discontinuance of districts; referendum;
 615 commissioner's authority.—

616 (1) Any time after 5 years from the organization of a
 617 district under the provisions of this chapter, any 10 percent of
 618 owners of land lying within the boundaries of such district may
 619 file a petition with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
 620 Services requesting ~~praying~~ that the operations of the district
 621 be terminated and the existence of the district discontinued.
 622 The department may conduct such public meetings and public
 623 hearings upon petition as may be necessary to assist it in the
 624 consideration thereof. Within 60 days after such a petition has
 625 been received by the department it shall give due notice of the

626 holding of a referendum, and shall supervise such referendum,
 627 and issue appropriate regulations governing the conduct thereof,
 628 the question to be submitted by ballots upon which the words
 629 "For terminating the existence of the ...(Name of the soil and
 630 water conservation district to be here inserted)..." and
 631 "Against terminating the existence of the ...(Name of the soil
 632 and water conservation district to be here inserted)..." shall
 633 appear with a square before each proposition and a direction to
 634 insert an X mark in the square before one or the other of said
 635 propositions as the voter may favor or oppose discontinuance of
 636 such district. All owners of lands lying within the boundaries
 637 of the district shall be eligible to vote in such referendum.
 638 Only such landowners shall be eligible to vote. No informalities
 639 in the conduct of such referendum or in any matters relating
 640 thereto shall invalidate said referendum or the result thereof
 641 if notice thereof shall have been given substantially as herein
 642 provided and said referendum shall have been fairly conducted.

643 (5)

644 (b) If the commissioner issues a certificate determining
 645 that the continued operation of a district is not
 646 administratively practicable and feasible under the provisions
 647 of this chapter, the department shall file the original
 648 certificate with the Department of State and shall provide a
 649 copy of the certificate to the supervisors of the district at
 650 the district's principal office ~~designated under s.~~

651 ~~582.15(1)(c).~~
 652 Section 16. Section 582.11, Florida Statutes, is repealed.
 653 Section 17. Section 582.12, Florida Statutes, is repealed.
 654 Section 18. Section 582.13, Florida Statutes, is repealed.
 655 Section 19. Section 582.14, Florida Statutes, is repealed.
 656 Section 20. Section 582.15, Florida Statutes, is repealed.
 657 Section 21. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.