

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

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

48 |
 49 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
 50 |

51 Section 1. The following soil and water conservation
 52 districts are dissolved and all assets and liabilities of each
 53 district are transferred to the Florida Department of
 54 Agriculture and Consumer Services:

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

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

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

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

129 (9) The Union Soil and Water Conservation District is
 130 dissolved and the assets and liabilities of the district are
 131 transferred to Union County.

132 Section 3. Section 582.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 133 read:

134 582.01 Definitions.—As used in this chapter, the term:

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

143 (2) "Agricultural operations" or "agricultural purposes"
 144 means the following activities:

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

150 (b) Feeding, breeding, or managing livestock, equine, or

151 poultry.

152 (c) Producing or storing feed for use in the production of
 153 livestock, including, but not limited to, cattle, calves, swine,
 154 hogs, goats, sheep, equine, and rabbits, or for use in the
 155 production of poultry, including, but not limited to, chickens,
 156 hens, ratites, and turkeys.

157 (d) Producing plants, trees, fowl, equine, or other
 158 animals.

159 (e) Producing aquacultural, horticultural, viticultural,
 160 silvicultural, grass sod, dairy, livestock, poultry, egg, and
 161 apiarian products.

162 (f) Processing poultry.

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

168 (h) Slaughtering poultry and other animals.

169 (i) Manufacturing dairy products.

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

175 (3)-(1) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of

176 Agriculture.

177 (4)~~(2)~~ "Council" means the Soil and Water Conservation
178 Council.

179 (5)~~(3)~~ "Department" means the Department of Agriculture
180 and Consumer Services.

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

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

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

199 (9)~~(7)~~ "Landowner" or "owner of land" means a person who
200 holds legal or equitable title to any lands lying within a

201 district organized under the provisions of this chapter.

202 ~~(8) "Qualified elector" means a person qualified to vote~~
 203 ~~in general elections under the constitution and laws of this~~
 204 ~~state.~~

205 (10)~~(9)~~ "Supervisor" means a member of the governing body
 206 of a district who is appointed ~~elected~~ in accordance with the
 207 provisions of this chapter.

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

212 582.055 Powers and duties of the Department of Agriculture
 213 and Consumer Services; rules.—

214 (4) The department shall provide for travel expenses to
 215 members appointed to the soil and water conservation district
 216 board.

217 Section 5. Section 582.06, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 218 read:

219 582.06 Soil and Water Conservation Council; establishment,
 220 composition, membership, organization, and responsibilities
 221 ~~powers and duties.~~—

222 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—It is declared to be in the best
 223 interest of the state that public agencies responsible for and
 224 involved in the development and implementation of best
 225 management practices, agricultural water quality, and water

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226 supply policy and planning work together to reduce duplication
227 of effort, foster maximum efficient use of existing resources,
228 and advise and assist the agencies involved.

229 (2)-(1) COMPOSITION.-

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

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

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

249 (3) MEMBERSHIP, ORGANIZATION, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.-

250 (a) The following representatives or their authorized

251 designees shall serve ex officio in an advisory capacity to the
 252 Soil and Water Conservation Council:

253 1. The Secretary of Environmental Protection.

254 2. The executive director of the Fish and Wildlife
 255 Conservation Commission.

256 3. The associate dean of research of the Florida Medical
 257 Entomological Research Laboratory at the University of Florida
 258 Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

259 4. The state conservationist for the United States
 260 Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation
 261 Service.

262 5. The president of the Florida Farm Bureau.

263 6. Two supervisors nominated by the Association of Florida
 264 Conservation Districts, two representatives of Florida
 265 environmental groups, and two private citizens who are
 266 landowners or producers enrolled in best management practices.

267 7. Such other representatives of state or federal agencies
 268 as the council deems desirable.

269 (b) The council shall be chaired by the commissioner or
 270 the commissioner's authorized designee. A majority of the
 271 membership of the council shall constitute a quorum for the
 272 conduct of business. The chair shall be responsible for
 273 recording and distributing to the members a summary of the
 274 proceedings of all council meetings. The council shall meet at
 275 least three times each year, or as needed. The council may

276 designate subcommittees from time to time to assist in carrying
277 out its responsibilities, provided that the Subcommittee on
278 Managed Marshes shall be the first subcommittee appointed by the
279 council. The subcommittee shall continue to provide technical
280 assistance and guidance on basin management action plans and
281 research proposals, taking into account the total maximum daily
282 load reduction implications and natural resource interests.

283 (c) The council shall:

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

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

290 3. Develop and recommend to the department a request for
291 proposal process for research.

292 4. Collaborates with partners in the development,
293 implementation, and evaluation of statewide water policy as it
294 relates to water supply and water quality.

295 5. Identify potential funding sources for research or
296 implementation projects and evaluate and prioritize proposals
297 upon request by the funding source.

298 6. Prepare and present reports, as needed, on activities
299 in the state to other governmental organizations, as
300 appropriate.

301 7. Accept and review requests for creating or dissolving
 302 soil and water conservation districts and shall, by a majority
 303 vote, recommend, by resolution, to the commissioner that a
 304 district be created or dissolved pursuant to the request, or
 305 that the request be denied.

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

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

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

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

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

324 Section 6. Section 582.10, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 325 read:

326 582.10 Creation of soil and water conservation districts.—

327 (1) At 11:59 p.m. on June 30, 2024, the state shall be
328 divided into the following 7 regional soil and water
329 conservation districts ~~Any 10 percent of owners of land lying~~
330 ~~within the limits of the territory proposed to be organized into~~
331 ~~a district may file a petition with the Department of~~
332 ~~Agriculture and Consumer Services, asking that a soil and water~~
333 ~~conservation district be organized to function in the territory~~
334 ~~described in the petition. Such petition shall set forth:~~

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

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

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

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

351 ~~determine that such a district be created.~~

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

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

354 (g) Southwest Florida Soil and Water Conservation
 355 District.

356 (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of any other special or
 357 general act to the contrary, the boundaries of the respective
 358 districts named in subsection (1) shall include the areas within
 359 the following boundaries:

360 (a) The counties of Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Gulf, Holmes,
 361 Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington shall
 362 constitute the West Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation
 363 District.

364 (b) The counties of Franklin, Gadsden, Hamilton,
 365 Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla shall
 366 constitute the East Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation
 367 District.

368 (c) The counties of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia,
 369 Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Suwannee, and Union shall
 370 constitute the North Central Soil and Water Conservation
 371 District.

372 (d) The counties of Citrus, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Levy,
 373 Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, and Volusia shall constitute
 374 the Northeast Soil and Water Conservation District.

375 (e) The counties of Desoto, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands,

376 Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota shall
 377 constitute the West Central Soil and Water Conservation
 378 District.

379 (d) The counties of Brevard, Indian River, Lake, Martin,
 380 Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, St. Lucie, and Sumter
 381 shall constitute the East Central Soil and Water Conservation
 382 District.

383 (e) The counties of Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Dade,
 384 Glades, Hendry, Lee, Monroe, and Palm Beach and shall constitute
 385 the Southwest Florida Soil and Water Conservation District ~~where~~
 386 ~~more than one petition is filed covering parts of the same~~
 387 ~~territory the department may consolidate all or any petitions.~~

388 Section 7. Section 582.16, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 389 read:

390 582.16 Change of district boundaries. Upon the change of
 391 boundaries of the respective districts under s. 582.10(2)(a) -
 392 (e), all contractual obligations with respect to an area being
 393 transferred to another district shall be assumed by the district
 394 receiving such area; all real property interests owned by a
 395 district within an area to be transferred shall be conveyed to
 396 the district receiving such area; and all equipment, vehicles,
 397 other personal property, and records owned, located, and used by
 398 a district solely within an area being transferred shall be
 399 delivered to the district receiving such area. However, if an
 400 area is transferred from a district with a contractual

401 obligation to the United States for the operation and
 402 maintenance of works within such area, then the deliveries and
 403 conveyances required in this section shall be deferred until the
 404 United States has approved the assumption of the contractual
 405 obligations by the receiving district ~~Requests for increasing or~~
 406 ~~reducing the boundaries of an existing district may be filed~~
 407 ~~with the department, and the department shall follow the~~
 408 ~~proceedings provided in this chapter to create a district.~~

409 Section 8. Section 582.18, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 410 read:

411 582.18 Appointment ~~Election~~ of supervisors of each
 412 district.—

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

426 governing board members shall be staggered to help maintain
427 consistency and continuity in the exercise of governing board
428 duties and to minimize disruption in district operations ~~The~~
429 ~~election of supervisors for each soil and water conservation~~
430 ~~district shall be held every 2 years, with one supervisor~~
431 ~~elected from each of the five numbered subdivisions created by~~
432 ~~the department pursuant to s. 582.15(4). The elections shall be~~
433 ~~held at the time of the general election provided for by s.~~
434 ~~100.041. The office of the supervisor of a soil and water~~
435 ~~conservation district is a nonpartisan office, and candidates~~
436 ~~for such office are prohibited from campaigning or qualifying~~
437 ~~for election based on party affiliation.~~

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

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

449 ~~(c) The names of all nominees on behalf of whom such~~
450 ~~nominating petitions have been filed shall appear upon ballots~~

451 ~~in accordance with the general election laws. All qualified~~
 452 ~~electors residing within the district shall be eligible to vote~~
 453 ~~in such election. The candidates who receive the largest number~~
 454 ~~of the votes cast from each group of candidates in such election~~
 455 ~~shall be the elected supervisors from such group for such~~
 456 ~~district. In the case of a newly created district participating~~
 457 ~~in a regular election for the first time, candidates shall be~~
 458 ~~elected from district subdivisions 1, 3, and 5 for terms of 4~~
 459 ~~years, and candidates shall be elected from district~~
 460 ~~subdivisions 2 and 4 for initial terms of 2 years. Each~~
 461 ~~candidate elected shall assume office on the first Tuesday after~~
 462 ~~the first Monday in January following the election.~~

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

476 ~~remaining supervisors of the district until the next regular~~
477 ~~election.~~

478 Section 9. Section 582.181, Florida Statutes, is created
479 to read:

480 582.181 District governing boards.-

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

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

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

500 (3) The term of office for a governing board member is 4

501 years and begins on March 2 of the year in which the appointment
 502 is made and terminates on March 1 of the fourth calendar year of
 503 the term or may continue until a successor is appointed, but not
 504 longer than 180 days. Terms of office of governing board members
 505 shall be staggered to help maintain consistency and continuity
 506 in the exercise of governing board duties and to minimize
 507 disruption in district operations.

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

510 582.19 Qualifications and tenure of supervisors.—

511 (1) The governing body of the district shall consist of
 512 seven ~~five~~ supervisors, appointed ~~elected~~ as provided in s.
 513 582.18.

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

517 1. Is actively engaged in, or retired after 10 years of
 518 being engaged in, agricultural operations ~~agriculture as defined~~
 519 ~~in s. 570.02;~~

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

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

524 (b) At the time of qualifying, a nominee ~~candidate~~ for
 525 supervisor shall submit an affirmation in substantially the

526 following form:

527 State of Florida

528 County of

529 Statement of Nominee Candidate for Supervisor of

530 Soil and Water Conservation District

531 I, ...(name of nominee candidate)..., a nominee candidate

532 for Supervisor of Soil and Water Conservation District, meet the

533 qualifications pursuant to s. 582.19(1), Florida Statutes, to

534 serve on the governing body of the Soil and Water Conservation

535 District.

536 ... (Signature of candidate)...

537 ... (Address)...

538 Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of

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

540 (2) The supervisors shall designate a chair and may, from

541 time to time, change such designation by majority vote. The term

542 of office of each supervisor shall be 4 years, ~~except that two~~

543 ~~supervisors shall be elected to serve for initial terms of 2~~

544 ~~years, respectively, from the date of their election as provided~~

545 ~~in this chapter~~. A supervisor shall hold office until her or his

546 successor has been appointed ~~elected~~ and qualified. The

547 selection of successors to fill an unexpired term shall be in

548 accordance with s. 582.18(1) ~~s. 582.18(2)~~. Selection for a full

549 term in a newly created district shall be by election of the

550 qualified electors of the district. A majority of the

551 supervisors shall constitute a quorum and the concurrence of a
 552 majority of the supervisors in any matter within their duties
 553 shall be required for its determination. A supervisor shall
 554 receive no compensation for her or his services, but she or he
 555 shall, with approval of the supervisors of the district, be
 556 reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061.

557 Section 11. Section 582.195, Florida Statutes, is amended
 558 to read:

559 582.195 Mandatory meeting of supervisors.—All seven ~~five~~
 560 supervisors of the governing body of each district shall meet at
 561 least quarterly ~~once~~ per calendar year in a public meeting
 562 pursuant to s. 286.011.

563 Section 12. Section 582.196, Florida Statutes, is created
 564 to read:

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

571 Section 13. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) and subsection
 572 (11) of section 582.20, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

573 582.20 Powers of districts and supervisors.—A soil and
 574 water conservation district organized under the provisions of
 575 this chapter shall constitute a governmental subdivision of this

576 | state, and a public body corporate and politic, exercising
577 | public powers, and such district and the supervisors thereof
578 | shall have the following powers, in addition to others granted
579 | in other sections of this chapter:

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

583 | (b) Within another district's boundaries, subject to the
584 | approval of the commissioner, the council, and the approval of
585 | other districts ~~district's approval~~;

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

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.~~

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- 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.