

By Senator Collins

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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 to provide for
12 reimbursement of travel expenses for soil and water
13 conservation district board members; amending s.
14 582.06, F.S.; revising provisions for the
15 establishment, composition, membership, organization,
16 and responsibilities of the Soil and Water
17 Conservation Council; amending s. 582.10, F.S.;
18 establishing regional soil and water conservation
19 districts beginning on a specified date; amending s.
20 582.16, F.S.; providing for the transfer of certain
21 contractual obligations for real property interests,
22 equipment, vehicles, other personal property, and
23 records; providing an exception; amending s. 582.18,
24 F.S.; providing for the appointment of district
25 supervisors; creating s. 582.181, F.S.; providing for
26 soil and water conservation district governing boards;
27 amending s. 582.19, F.S.; revising provisions for the
28 qualifications and tenure of soil and water
29 conservation district supervisors; amending s.

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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.; conforming 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 Department of Agriculture and
54 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.

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- 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.

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- 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.

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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,

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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.

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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 and
180 Consumer Services.

181 (6)~~(4)~~ "District" or "soil and water conservation district"
182 means a governmental subdivision of this state and a body
183 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 in~~
203 ~~general elections under the constitution and laws of this state.~~

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

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

211 582.055 Powers and duties of the Department of Agriculture
212 and Consumer Services; rules.—

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

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

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

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

228 (2)(1) COMPOSITION.—

229 (a) The Soil and Water Conservation Council is created
230 adjunct to ~~in~~ the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
231 Services to perform the functions conferred upon in this section
232 and shall be composed of 7 members who have been involved in the

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233 practice of soil or water conservation, or in the development or
234 implementation of interim measures or best management practices
235 related thereto, and who have been engaged in agriculture or an
236 occupation related to the agricultural industry for at least 5
237 years at the time of their appointment.

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

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

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

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

252 1. The Secretary of Environmental Protection.

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

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

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

261 5. The president of the Florida Farm Bureau.

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

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

268 (b) The council shall be chaired by the commissioner or the
269 commissioner's authorized designee. A majority of the membership
270 of the council shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of
271 business. The chair shall be responsible for recording and
272 distributing to the members a summary of the proceedings of all
273 council meetings. The council shall meet at least three times
274 each year, or as needed. The council may designate subcommittees
275 from time to time to assist in carrying out its
276 responsibilities, provided that the Subcommittee on Managed
277 Marshes shall be the first subcommittee appointed by the
278 council. The subcommittee shall continue to provide technical
279 assistance and guidance on basin management action plans and
280 research proposals, taking into account the total maximum daily
281 load reduction implications and natural resource interests.

282 (c) The council shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

318 ~~(c) When requested by the Governor or a district, the~~
319 ~~council shall provide a recommendation to the Governor whether~~

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320 ~~to remove a supervisor for neglect of duty or malfeasance in~~
321 ~~office only after notice, hearing, and thorough review.~~

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

324 582.10 Creation of soil and water conservation districts.-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

352 (g) Southwest Florida Soil and Water Conservation District.

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

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

361 (b) The counties of Franklin, Gadsden, Hamilton, Jefferson,
362 Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla shall constitute the
363 East Emerald Coast Soil and Water Conservation 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

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378 District.

379 (g) The counties of Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Dade,
380 Glades, Hendry, Lee, Monroe, and Palm Beach and shall constitute
381 the Southwest 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:

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

409 (1) The governing board of each soil and water conservation
410 district shall be composed of at least one member from a minimum
411 of 7 counties within a district who resides within the district.
412 Members of the governing boards shall be appointed by the
413 commissioner, subject to confirmation by the council at the next
414 regular quarterly meeting following the appointment. Refusal or
415 failure of the council to confirm an appointment creates a
416 vacancy in the district to which the appointment was made. The
417 term of office for a governing board member is 4 years and
418 begins on March 2 of the year in which the appointment is made
419 and terminates on March 1 of the fourth calendar year of the
420 term or may continue until a successor is appointed, but not
421 longer than 180 days. Terms of office of governing board members
422 shall be staggered to help maintain consistency and continuity
423 in the exercise of governing board duties and to minimize
424 disruption in district operations ~~The election of supervisors~~
425 ~~for each soil and water conservation district shall be held~~
426 ~~every 2 years, with one supervisor elected from each of the five~~
427 ~~numbered subdivisions created by the department pursuant to s.~~
428 ~~582.15(4). The elections shall be held at the time of the~~
429 ~~general election provided for by s. 100.041. The office of the~~
430 ~~supervisor of a soil and water conservation district is a~~
431 ~~nonpartisan office, and candidates for such office are~~
432 ~~prohibited from campaigning or qualifying for election based on~~
433 ~~party affiliation.~~

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

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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

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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 to
475 read:

476 582.181 District governing boards.—

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

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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; or~~

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 classified
519 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:

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State of Florida
County of

Statement of Nominee Candidate for Supervisor of
Soil and Water Conservation District

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

...(Signature of candidate)...

...(Address)...

Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of
....., ...(year)...., at County, Florida.

(2) The supervisors shall designate a chair and may, from
time to time, change such designation by majority vote. The term
of office of each supervisor shall be 4 years, ~~except that two~~
~~supervisors shall be elected to serve for initial terms of 2~~
~~years, respectively, from the date of their election as provided~~
~~in this chapter.~~ A supervisor shall hold office until her or his
successor has been appointed ~~elected~~ and qualified. The
selection of successors to fill an unexpired term shall be in
accordance with s. 582.18(1) ~~s. 582.18(2)~~. Selection for a full
term in a newly created district shall be by election of the
qualified electors of the district. A majority of the
supervisors shall constitute a quorum and the concurrence of a
majority of the supervisors in any matter within their duties
shall be required for its determination. A supervisor shall

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552 receive no compensation for her or his services, but she or he
553 shall, with approval of the supervisors of the district, be
554 reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061.

555 Section 11. Section 582.195, Florida Statutes, is amended
556 to read:

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

561 Section 12. Section 582.196, Florida Statutes, is created
562 to read:

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

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

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

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

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

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

591
592 Any provision with respect to the acquisition, operation, or
593 disposition of property by public bodies of this state does not
594 apply to a district organized under this chapter unless
595 specifically so stated by the Legislature. The property and
596 property rights of every kind and nature acquired by any
597 district organized under the provisions of this chapter are
598 exempt from state, county, and other taxation.

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

601 582.295 Automatic dissolution of districts.-

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

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

612 582.30 Discontinuance of districts; referendum;
613 commissioner's authority.—

614 (1) Any time after 5 years from the organization of a
615 district under the provisions of this chapter, any 10 percent of
616 owners of land lying within the boundaries of such district may
617 file a petition with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
618 Services requesting ~~praying~~ that the operations of the district
619 be terminated and the existence of the district discontinued.

620 The department may conduct such public meetings and public
621 hearings upon petition as may be necessary to assist it in the
622 consideration thereof. Within 60 days after such a petition has
623 been received by the department it shall give due notice of the
624 holding of a referendum, and shall supervise such referendum,
625 and issue appropriate regulations governing the conduct thereof,
626 the question to be submitted by ballots upon which the words
627 "For terminating the existence of the ...(Name of the soil and
628 water conservation district to be here inserted)..." and
629 "Against terminating the existence of the ...(Name of the soil
630 and water conservation district to be here inserted)..." shall
631 appear with a square before each proposition and a direction to
632 insert an X mark in the square before one or the other of said
633 propositions as the voter may favor or oppose discontinuance of
634 such district. All owners of lands lying within the boundaries
635 of the district shall be eligible to vote in such referendum.
636 Only such landowners shall be eligible to vote. No informalities
637 in the conduct of such referendum or in any matters relating
638 thereto shall invalidate said referendum or the result thereof

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639 if notice thereof shall have been given substantially as herein
640 provided and said referendum shall have been fairly conducted.

641 (5)

642 (b) If the commissioner issues a certificate determining
643 that the continued operation of a district is not
644 administratively practicable and feasible under the provisions
645 of this chapter, the department shall file the original
646 certificate with the Department of State and shall provide a
647 copy of the certificate to the supervisors of the district at
648 the district's principal office ~~designated under s.~~
649 ~~582.15(1)(c).~~

650 Section 16. Section 582.11, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

651 Section 17. Section 582.12, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

652 Section 18. Section 582.13, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

653 Section 19. Section 582.14, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

654 Section 20. Section 582.15, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

655 Section 21. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.