

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION - 2022
COMMITTEE STATEMENT
LB925

Hearing Date: Wednesday January 26, 2022
Committee On: Natural Resources
Introducer: Gragert
One Liner: Adopt the Resilient Soils and Water Quality Act and state intent regarding appropriations

Roll Call Vote - Final Committee Action:
Advanced to General File

Vote Results:

Aye:	5	Senators Aguilar, Cavanaugh, J., Gragert, Groene, Wayne
Nay:	3	Senators Bostelman, Hughes, Moser
Absent:		
Present Not Voting:		

Oral Testimony:

Proponents:

Tim Gragert
Charles Shapiro
Craig Derickson
Alan Moeller
Daryl Obermeyer
Tom Hoegemeyer
Annette Sudbeck

John Hansen
Jeff Steffen

Opponents:

Neutral:

Steve Ebke

Representing:

Introducer
Self
Self
Nebraska Elder Climate Legacy Initiative
Self
Self
Nebraska Association of Resource Districts; Lewis and Clark NRD
Nebraska Farmers Union
Self

Representing:

Representing:

Nebraska Cattlemen; Nebraska Corn Growers; Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Pork Producers, Nebraska Soybean, Nebraska State Dairy, Nebraska Wheat Growers

Summary of purpose and/or changes:

LB925 creates the Resilience Soils and Water Quality Act, directing the Department of Natural Resources to facilitate education on soil health throughout the state by providing technical and legal assistance in the formation of a producer learning community, by dividing the state into regions to establish research farms and to appropriate two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) in fiscal years 2022-23 to 2026-27 to carry out the Act.

LB925 outlines Legislative findings based upon the conclusions reached by the Healthy Soils Task Force that was created in 2019 and codified at section 2-402 to 2-404. From the Task Force report, LB925 states Legislative findings with regard to the breadth and importance of sustaining Nebraska's land base, the critical nature of the state's soil and water, and the challenges the state currently faces and is expected to be faced with regards to top soil, shrinking profit margins, depletion of natural resources, extreme weather events, nitrate levels in drinking water, and increased public interest concerning the impact of current practices on the environment.

The Act's stated purposes in order to promote education on soil health best practices , are to:

- (1) initiate first steps to accelerate use and scope best practices for healthy soil management;
- (2) protect and improve soil and water quality throughout the state
- (3) protect the public's health and enhance agricultural production and profitability
- (4) address soil health economics, resource stewardship and managerial and environmental issues
- (5) increase awareness, education, and promotion of healthy soil best practices; and
- (6) provide observational proof of healthy soil benefits through access to demonstration and research farms and data.

To fulfill its purposes, the Act directs the department to provide technical and legal assistance in the formation of a producer learning community comprised of active agricultural producers, landowners, and others with an interest in soil health and water quality; directs the department to divide the state into different regions in which to establish demonstration and research farms to reflect the state's soil diversity, encourages use of the land management of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States, the state's natural resources district boundaries, and Nebraska Extension Engagement Zones of the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources as guidance in establishing boundaries; authorizes the department to enter into lease agreements with private landowners for the purpose of establishing demonstration and research farms; and requires annual report to the Legislature, Governor, Agricultural and Natural Resource Committees of the status and progress of implementing the Act and any impacts beginning in 2022.

LB978 states Legislature's intent to appropriate \$250,000 in fiscal year 2022-23 through 2026-27.

Sec. 1 Names Sections 1-5 the Resilient Soils and Water Quality Act.

Sec. 2 Legislative findings; and reference to findings of Healthy Soils Task Force created by LB243 in 2019 and codified as section 2-402

Sec. 3 States six purposes of the Act.

Sec. 4 Terms for purposes of the Act.

Sec. 5 Directs the department to provide assistance in the formation of a producer learning community comprised of active agricultural producers, landowners, and others with an interest in soil health and water quality; divide the state into regions to reflect diversity of soil types with research farms; provides authority and duties of the department; and requires annual report to the Legislature, Governor, Agricultural and Natural Resource Committees of the status and progress of implementing the Act and any impacts.

Sec. 6 States Intent to appropriate \$250,000 FY 2022-23 through FY 2026-27 to carry out the purposes of this Act.

Bruce Bostelman, Chairperson