

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 58th Legislature (2022)

3 HOUSE BILL 4412

By: Lowe (Dick)

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6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to natural resources; creating the
8 Healthy Soil Program Act; defining terms; requiring
9 Oklahoma Conservation Commission administer program;
10 stating purpose of the program; stating composition
11 of the program; stating certain Commission duties;
12 authorizing the promulgation of certain rules;
13 authorizing uses of certain funds; providing for
14 codification; and providing an effective date.

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

16 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
17 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3-6-101 of Title 27A, unless
18 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

19 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Healthy Soil
20 Program Act".

21 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3-6-102 of Title 27A, unless
23 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

24 As used in the Healthy Soil Program Act:

1. "Champion" means a land manager who is declared a soil
health champion due to the land manager's excellence in applying and

1 promoting soil health principles, as modeled by the Soil Health
2 Champions Network of the National Association of Conservation
3 Districts;

4 2. "Commission" means the Oklahoma Conservation Commission;

5 3. "Eligible entity" means a local governmental entity with
6 proven land management capacity to support healthy soil and
7 including conservation districts;

8 4. "Healthy soil" means soil that enhances its continuing
9 capacity to function as a biological system, increases its organic
10 matter, and improves its structure and water- and nutrient-holding
11 capacity;

12 5. "Program" means the healthy soil program created in the
13 Healthy Soil Program Act;

14 6. "Soil health principle" means a principle that promotes soil
15 health in a given environment and includes:

16 a. keeping soil covered,

17 b. minimizing soil disturbance on cropland and minimizing
18 external inputs,

19 c. maximizing biodiversity,

20 d. maintaining a living root, or

21 e. integrating animals into land management, including
22 grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects, or
23 keystone species, such as earthworms;

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1 7. "Supported method" means a method that is based upon soil
2 health principles and is scientifically supported to promote healthy
3 soil;

4 8. "Technical assistance" means assistance provided to a farmer
5 or rancher to achieve the purpose of the Healthy Soil Program Act
6 and includes outreach, education, financial assistance or assistance
7 with project planning, project design, grant applications, project
8 implementation or project reporting; and

9 9. "Technical assistance provider" means a local, state,
10 federal, tribal, or educational entity with demonstrated technical
11 expertise in designing and implementing agricultural management
12 practices that contribute to healthy soils and includes a
13 conservation district, the United States Natural Resources
14 Conservation Service, the United States Forest Service, the United
15 States Bureau of Land Management, or the state Forestry Division.

16 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
17 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3-6-103 of Title 27A, unless
18 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

19 A. There is hereby created a healthy soil program to be
20 administered by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

21 B. The purpose of the program is to promote and support farming
22 and ranching systems and other forms of land management that
23 increase soil organic matter, aggregate stability, microbiology and
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1 water retention to improve the health, yield, and profitability of
2 the soils of the state.

3 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
4 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3-6-104 of Title 27A, unless
5 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

6 A. The Healthy Soil Program shall be composed of:

7 1. A healthy soil assessment and education program;

8 2. A healthy soil ~~grants~~ grant program; and

9 3. Other programs established by the Oklahoma Conservation
10 Commission to accomplish the purposes of the Healthy Soil Program
11 Act.

12 B. In administering the healthy soil assessment and education
13 program, the Commission shall:

14 1. Work through technical assistance providers or eligible
15 entities to:

16 a. encourage farmers, ranchers, and land managers to
17 undertake voluntary soil health measurements,

18 b. raise awareness about desirable soil health
19 characteristics,

20 c. facilitate on-site, producer-led workshops and
21 training sessions to promote and engender soil health
22 stewardship, and

23 d. complete a baseline soil health assessment by testing
24 the organic matter, water infiltration rate,

1 microbiology, and aggregate stability of soils, in
2 addition to analyzing phospholipids and monitoring
3 soil cover;

4 2. Establish a statewide network of champions to promote soil
5 health stewardship, offer guidance to producers and land managers,
6 and encourage teamwork;

7 3. Create a program to provide ongoing training in soil health
8 stewardship and workshop facilitation for champions and eligible
9 entities;

10 4. In collaboration with technical assistance providers,
11 sponsor soil health workshops and training sessions through
12 conservation districts on farms throughout the state; and

13 5. Educate students and the general public about the importance
14 of soil health stewardship.

15 C. In administering the healthy soil grant program, the
16 Commission shall:

17 1. Award grants to eligible entities to provide technical
18 assistance to producers and land managers in advancing soil health
19 principles and implementing supported methods;

20 2. Develop a user-friendly grant program application and
21 application and reporting processes;

22 3. Develop criteria for the award of grants; provided that
23 grants shall be awarded equitably and priority may be given to
24 eligible entities serving young producers, veterans, small farms or

1 ranches or for projects that benefit economically or socially
2 disadvantaged communities; and

3 4. Ensure that grant funds are only used to advance soil health
4 and soil health stewardship.

5 D. The Commission shall encourage producer, land manager,
6 landowner, and interagency collaboration in the management of
7 healthy soils and shall:

8 1. Work with technical assistance providers to advance soil
9 health stewardship across private, state, federal, and tribal land
10 jurisdictions by fostering collaboration among producers, land
11 managers, and landowners; and

12 2. Conduct outreach to producers and land managers to promote
13 the program and other federal, state, or local grant opportunities
14 that support and promote healthy soils.

15 E. In administering the program, the Commission shall support
16 local economic growth in Oklahoma and shall:

17 1. Identify ways to increase the generation and use of compost
18 to build healthy soils;

19 2. To the extent permitted by statute, prioritize in-state
20 sourcing of the resources needed for the program, including testing
21 resources, compost, seeds, fencing supplies, and equipment; and

22 3. Support the emerging market for food grown in Oklahoma under
23 management for healthy soils.

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1 F. The Commission may adopt rules to carry out the provisions
2 of the Heathy Soil Program Act.

3 SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
4 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 3-6-105 of Title 27A, unless
5 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

6 Funds appropriated to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission to
7 administer the program may be used for:

- 8 1. The healthy soil grant program;
- 9 2. The healthy soil assessment and education program;
- 10 3. Promotion and outreach;
- 11 4. Department staffing support;
- 12 5. Capacity building for eligible entities;
- 13 6. Soil health research;
- 14 7. Travel reimbursement and per diem in accordance with the
15 State Travel Reimbursement Act, Section 500.1 et seq. of Title 74 of
16 the Oklahoma Statutes; and
- 17 8. Other expenditures as determined by the Commission to be
18 necessary to support the overall effective administration of the
19 program.

20 SECTION 6. This act shall become effective November 1, 2022.

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