

## S.F. No. 526 – Soil and water conservation district aid

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### Background and current law:

The primary purpose of a soil and water conservation district (SWCD) is to conserve soil and water resources on private land. An SWCD is a political subdivision of the state and is governed by an elected board of supervisors. There are 88 SWCDs in the state, generally corresponding to each county. Otter Tail, Saint Louis, and Polk Counties each have two SWCDs serving the county. In Hennepin and Ramsey County, the county itself exercises the powers and duties of an SWCD. In recent years, the legislature has appropriated money on a biennial basis from the Clean Water Fund to support SWCDs.

### Proposal:

This bill proposes to create a statutory state aid program to provide annual funding to SWCDs. The proposed aid would first be paid in calendar year 2023.

**Subd. 1. Definitions.** Defines terms for the purpose of the aid program.

**Subd. 2. Purpose.** Provides that the purpose of the aid program is to provide ongoing financial support to SWCDs.

**Subd. 3. Distribution.** Requires the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to calculate the aid for each SWCD. The total amount of statewide aid is allocated: 70 percent in equal amounts to each SWCD; 20 percent in proportion to the amount of nonpublic land in each SWCD; and 10 percent in proportion to the population of each SWCD.

**Subd. 4. Certification to commissioner.** Requires BWSR to annually certify to the commissioner of revenue the SWCDs eligible for aid and the aid amounts for each SWCD.

**Subd. 5. Use of proceeds.** Requires that an SWCD use aid under this section to implement its statutory duties. Requires the board of an SWCD to annually establish guidelines for the

use of aid and to publish those guidelines online. Authorizes an SWCD to share aid with other governmental units by cooperative agreement.

**Subd. 6. Payments.** Requires the commissioner of revenue to distribute SWCD aid on the same semiannual schedule as local government aid and county program aid.

**Subd. 7. Appropriation.** Appropriates \$22 million annually from the general fund to the commissioner of revenue to pay aid.

**Subd. 8. Aid amount corrections.** Authorizes BWSR to correct clerical errors in the calculation of aid and directs the commissioner of revenue to pay any additional aid due to an SWCD from the general fund.