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S.B. 2
(1_133_0726-2)
133rd General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for S.B. 2's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: In Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources

Primary Sponsors: Sens. Peterson and Dolan

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The Department of Agriculture, in particular the Division of Soil and Water, will incur additional expenses to hire seven watershed planning and management coordinators to run the Statewide Watershed Planning and Management Program created under the bill. Pay and fringe benefits costs would be between \$68,000 and \$82,000 per coordinator annually. These costs will be paid from GRF line item 700428, Soil and Water Division.
- The Division must also help political subdivisions or organizations prepare strategies for protecting and restoring watersheds, referred to as “nine-element plans.” These plans are used to obtain funding under the federal Clean Water Act and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The cost of developing these plans varies based on the size and location of the watershed and could range from \$15,000 to \$20,000 based on estimates from the Department.

Detailed Analysis

The Department of Agriculture will incur additional costs to administer the Statewide Watershed Planning and Management Program created by the bill. Specifically, the bill requires the Division of Soil and Water Conservation to employ and assign at least one watershed planning and management coordinator in each of the seven watershed regions established by the bill to coordinate watershed planning. Currently, the Division has 24 full-time employees and four part-time employees and does not have the staff to assign to each of these regions and fulfill the bill’s requirements. As a result, the Division anticipates that it would need to hire seven new employees as natural resource administrators. Based on the state’s employee classification plan, if coordinators are hired at the starting annual salary of approximately \$53,000 for a Natural Resources Administrator 1, it will bring the Department’s potential payroll costs to between \$68,000 and \$82,000 per employee. This includes \$7,400 (14% of annual

salary to cover the employer's share of retirement) and the employer's share of health insurance (\$7,782 for single coverage or \$21,424 for family coverage). The Division is funded by GRF line item 700428, Soil and Water Division. In FY 2018, \$3.4 million was spent under this line item.

Watershed planning for soil and water conservation districts

The bill requires natural resources administrators hired by the Division to engage or assist in certain tasks in each of the seven watershed regions. This includes working with each soil and water conservation district in gathering data to quantify water quality and nutrient best management practices. The bill requires that the data be used to establish a baseline of nutrient best management practices that are being used in Ohio. The bill specifically requires the Department to ensure that assistance and available funding are provided to soil and water conservation districts to accomplish these tasks. According to the Department, the required data collection and creation of a baseline of nutrient best management practices could be part of the process of developing a nine-element plan or watershed management plan. Nine-element plans outline a soil and water district's plan for addressing water quality issues and can be used to secure additional state and federal funding for a community's watershed protection and restoration plans, including steps to address nonpoint source pollution. Federal funding would be from the Clean Water Act or the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Based on estimates from the Department, the cost of developing these plans varies due in size and location of the watershed and could range from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Water quality best practices certification program

Lastly, the Department may incur costs to ensure that assistance and available funding are provided for farmers who participate in a certification program that uses practices designed to minimize impacts of water quality. The bill states that it is the General Assembly's intent to collaborate with both of the following to establish the certification program for farmers: (1) organizations representing agriculture, conservation, and the environment, and (2) higher education institutions engaged in water quality research. Consequently, the Department may incur some additional cost to ensure that assistance and available funding is provided to farmers who participate in such a program.