

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

127th General Assembly of Ohio

Ohio Legislative Service Commission
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BILL: **S.B. 292** DATE: **December 12, 2008**
STATUS: **As Reported by Senate Environment and Natural Resources** SPONSOR: **Sen. Roberts**
LOCAL IMPACT STATEMENT REQUIRED: **No Minimal cost**
CONTENTS: **To revise ditch maintenance assessment procedures and make other changes related to soil and water conservation improvements**

State Fiscal Highlights

- No direct fiscal effect on the state.

Local Fiscal Highlights

LOCAL GOVERNMENT	FY 2009 – FUTURE YEARS
Counties	
Revenues	Potential gain in ditch assessments
Expenditures	Potential minimal increase to revise ditch maintenance costs

Note: For most local governments, the fiscal year is the calendar year. The school district fiscal year is July 1 through June 30.

- **Six-year review of assessments.** The bill revises existing six-year ditch maintenance assessment review procedures that county commissioners must follow by permitting them to review and alter an assessment to reflect the estimated cost of the improvement as if it were performed today. This change would allow the county to adjust the assessment for inflation.
- **Changes to soil and water conservation district improvement procedures.** The bill permits soil and water conservation districts to employ the same procedures for maintaining conservation improvements as that provided for counties under the County Ditch Fund Law. Given that soil and water conservation districts follow these procedures in current practice, the fiscal impact of this provision, if any, would be negligible.



Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Background

Under current law, after six annual maintenance fund assessments have been made on owners benefiting from an improvement that was constructed under the Single County Ditches Law, a board of county commissioners must review the permanent base for maintenance fund assessment. The board may then increase or decrease the benefit apportionments of land owners in accordance with changes in benefits that have occurred during the previous six years, but may not, according to an October 2004 Attorney General's opinion, increase the original estimated cost of an improvement project to adjust for inflation.

Ditch Maintenance Fund assessments

The bill allows the board, at the six-year review, to request the county engineer to estimate the construction cost of the improvement if that improvement were to be constructed at the time of the permanent base review. If the board approves the estimate as the construction cost of the improvement, this amount then becomes the permanent base that is used to calculate maintenance fund assessments for owners who benefit from the improvement. Since an estimate prepared by the county engineer will in all likelihood exceed the original estimate, it will result in an increase in assessments to recoup the updated estimate of the project cost. County engineers might incur some new administrative costs for revising these estimates.

Soil and water conservation district improvements

Current law requires a board of county commissioners, or a joint board if one has been appointed, to maintain improvements constructed by the board for a soil and water conservation district. The board may contract with or authorize a soil and water conservation district to do so. However, there is no specific language in current law that governs the maintenance procedures employed by soil and water conservation districts. Generally, the boards of these districts are permitted to use the procedures outlined in the Ditch Maintenance Fund Law to levy assessments. Because most soil and water conservancy districts already follow the Ditch Maintenance Fund Law procedures covering maintenance, the effect of the bill is simply to codify existing practice.

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