

# *Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation*

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## **Agency at a Glance**

The Legislature created the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation in 1993 as a non-profit, quasi-governmental agency to eradicate the boll weevil and pink bollworm from Texas cotton fields. The Foundation is primarily a grower-initiated and grower-funded effort to eradicate boll weevils by hiring employees to map cotton fields throughout the state and to set and monitor traps for boll weevils. The Foundation also arranges for aerial pesticide applications in areas of boll weevil infestation.

Cotton growers vote to participate in the eradication program, and assess themselves to pay for eradication efforts. Similarly, cotton growers may vote to withdraw from the program at any time. Because the Foundation is a quasi-governmental entity, its employees are not state employees and its budget is not subject to the legislative appropriations process.

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*For additional information,  
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All active cotton-growing areas of Texas participate in the Foundation's boll weevil eradication efforts. The Foundation also works to eradicate the pink bollworm, a cotton pest that primarily causes damage in West Texas. The pink bollworm is a moth whose larvae feeds on cotton bolls, damaging the cotton. Since the program's inception, boll weevil and pink bollworm populations have been reduced by more than 99 percent.

## **Key Facts**

- ◆ **Funding.** In calendar year 2008, the Foundation operated on a budget of about \$58 million, including \$28 million in assessments from nearly 26,000 growers, \$14 million in federal funding, and \$13 million in state funding. The Foundation also has an accumulated statewide debt of \$99 million in low-interest loans from the Farm Service Agency.
- ◆ **Staff.** The Foundation operated with 346 full-time employees and 622 additional seasonal employees in calendar year 2008.
- ◆ **Field Offices.** The Foundation conducts eradication efforts across the entire state, and is divided into 16 eradication zones covering nearly six million cotton acres. The Foundation has 56 offices across the state.

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Neil Walter (Oglesby)

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## **Agency Head**

Lindy Patton, President and CEO

(325) 672-2800

## **Recommendations**

1. Continue the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation for 12 years.
2. Provide the Foundation flexibility in the collection and use of grower assessments to meet the changing nature of boll weevil eradication efforts.

# Issue 1

## ***Texas Has a Continuing Need for the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation.***

### **Key Findings**

- ◆ Texas has a continuing interest in eliminating the boll weevil to protect the cotton industry and promote the wider benefits of boll weevil control.
- ◆ The Foundation's cooperative approach to boll weevil eradication offers some advantages over traditional regulatory approaches.

Boll weevil eradication is beneficial to cotton growers in Texas, as Texas is the top cotton-producing state in the United States. Increased cotton production, largely resulting from boll weevil eradication efforts, greatly benefits Texas' economy, as the cotton industry contributes significantly to the state's economic health. Since its inception, the Foundation has reduced boll weevil and pink bollworm populations by more than 99 percent. The Foundation effectively accomplishes its mission of working to eradicate the boll weevil and pink bollworm from Texas cotton fields. The Foundation's current structure promotes meaningful participation by cotton growers that encourages a cooperative, self-policing attitude and makes the program more proactive than traditional regulatory approaches.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Change in Statute**

##### **1.1 Continue the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation for 12 years.**

This recommendation would continue the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation as a quasi-governmental agency with oversight from the Texas Department of Agriculture for the standard 12-year period, until 2021.

# Issue 2

## ***Statute Limits the Foundation's Ability to Adapt the Use and Collection of Grower Assessments to Meet the Changing Nature of Boll Weevil Eradication Efforts.***

### **Key Findings**

- ◆ The statutory provision prohibiting assessments from being used outside the zone in which they were collected could have unintended consequences on certain growers, affecting the overall effectiveness of the State's eradication efforts.
- ◆ The Foundation's method for collecting assessments based on acres of cotton in production is difficult to collect and unfair to some growers.

The Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation primarily funds boll weevil and pink bollworm eradication efforts by collecting assessments from cotton growers based on the number of acres in

production. Inflexible methods and mechanisms for collecting and using grower assessments may affect the Foundation's ability to successfully complete its mission of eradicating the boll weevil from Texas cotton fields.

## Recommendations

### Change in Statute

#### **2.1 Remove statutory limitations preventing the Foundation from transferring assessments among zones and allow the Foundation flexibility to do so, upon approval of the Foundation Board and the Agriculture Commissioner.**

This recommendation would remove statutory language specifying that grower assessments collected in one zone may only be used in that zone, and authorize the Foundation to transfer grower assessments among zones. Both the Foundation Board and the Commissioner of Agriculture would be required to approve the transfer of grower assessments collected for eradication efforts in one zone for use in another zone. This recommendation would allow boll weevil-free areas to help infested areas with maintenance efforts to reduce the overall risk of reinfestation.

#### **2.2 Allow the Foundation statutory flexibility to adapt its assessment collection method and mechanism for its eradication program, not just its maintenance program, upon approval of the Foundation Board and the Agriculture Commissioner.**

Under this recommendation, the Foundation would have authority to change the method and mechanism of its collection of grower assessments. The Foundation currently has this statutory flexibility for the boll weevil and pink bollworm maintenance program, but this recommendation would expand that authority to the eradication program. This would allow the Foundation to collect assessments at central points in the cotton marketing process, such as cotton gins or warehouses, as well as to collect assessments based on cotton production or acres in production or a combination of these methods. To change the method or mechanism for collecting grower assessments, both the Foundation Board and the Commissioner of Agriculture must approve such action. This change could allow the Board flexibility to decide how to collect assessments and potentially benefit financially from reduced administrative and legal costs associated with greater ease of collection and higher collection rates.

## *Fiscal Implication Summary*

These recommendations would not have a fiscal impact to the State.