

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
81R15903 JSC-D

H.B. 4002  
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Agriculture & Rural Affairs  
5/14/2009  
Engrossed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

In the past eight years, there has been an increase in the number of catastrophic wildfires in Texas. Following the 1998 fire season, the Texas Forest Service (TFS) developed the Texas Wildfire Protection Plan (TWPP), which was funded in 1999 as a pilot project by the Texas Legislature. TFS has successfully implemented the plan, which has since been adopted as a national model, and TWPP is a proactive interagency response model emphasizing risk prevention and unified operations among local, state, and federal responders.

Currently, Texas is one of the few states relying primarily on volunteer fire departments to suppress wildfires. However, when wildfire conditions exceed the capacity of local fire departments, TFS must respond and assist in controlling the wildfires. The combination of an extended drought cycle, increased vegetation, and increasing population in non-urban areas have caused significant increases in fire occurrence, fire intensity, and values at risk. This problem has not been fully addressed due to the drastic reduction of forest industry personnel and equipment.

The balance of the volunteer fire department assistance fund (fund) recently increased from \$15 million to \$30 million.

H.B. 4002 authorizes TFS of The Texas A&M University System to expend an amount not to exceed \$5 million for each year from the fund for staffing and operating costs associated with the preparation and delivery of the service's statewide wildfire protection plan.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 614.104, Government Code, by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsection (c), as follows:

(b) Authorizes money in the volunteer fire department assistance fund (fund), except as provided by Subsection (c), to be used only for a purpose under this subchapter.

(c) Authorizes the Texas Forest Service of The Texas A&M University System (service) to expend an amount not to exceed \$5 million each year from the fund for staffing and operating costs associated with the preparation and delivery of the service's statewide wildfire protection plan.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2009.