

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 3618
By: Isaac
Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties report that a section of dry riverbed in the Blanco River running through Central Texas has experienced a significant increase in overnight camping. The parties express concern that this activity could lead to serious fire damage due to the dense and dry vegetation in the riverbed. In addition, overnight camping in the dry riverbed has created a public safety concern for inexperienced campers who are unfamiliar with the conditions and terrain created by drought conditions. H.B. 3618 seeks to address fire damage and public safety concerns while balancing the public's interest in this dry portion of the Blanco River.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill expressly does one or more of the following: creates a criminal offense, increases the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or changes the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 3618 amends the Parks and Wildlife Code to prohibit a person from camping or building a fire in a dry riverbed in a section of the Blanco River that is not located in a county adjacent to a county with a municipality with a population greater than 1.5 million. The bill makes a violation of that prohibition a Class C misdemeanor offense and exempts that section of the Blanco River from a statutory provision prohibiting the restriction, obstruction, interference with, or limitation of public recreational use of a protected freshwater area.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2015.