

- SUBJECT:** Controlling or eradicating nuisance aquatic vegetation
- COMMITTEE:** Culture, Recreation, and Tourism — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Hilderbran, Dukes, Homer, D. Howard, O’Day, Phillips
0 nays
1 absent — Kuempel
- WITNESSES:** For — Linda Fernandez, NRS Consulting Engineers, Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group; John M. Wagner, Lake Conroe Association
Against — None
On — Phillip Durocher, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- BACKGROUND:** Rules for the allocation of unclaimed refunds for motorboat fuel on which the gasoline tax has been paid and a tax refund has not been claimed are outlined in Tax Code, sec. 162.502. By law, the comptroller deposits 75 percent of this revenue to the general revenue fund for appropriation to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This revenue can be used for department operations.
- Hydrilla, an old world plant, infests more than 100 bodies of water in Texas, amounting to a total of 75,000 acres. In addition to hydrilla, other invasive plant species, such as sylvania molesta, consume large amounts of water, displace natural ecosystems, and seriously impact water supply and quality.
- Under current law, TPWD may use department personnel or contract with a person not employed by the department for the control of noxious aquatic vegetation.
- DIGEST:** HB 2001 would allow TPWD to implement a program to control or eradicate nuisance aquatic vegetation from public water. The program would include the eradication of hydrilla and giant sylvania.

The department could use money from unclaimed refunds on fuel tax used in motorboats and appropriated to TPWD to implement the program.

TPWD would be authorized to use department personnel or contract with a person outside the department for the eradication of nuisance or noxious vegetation.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2001 would authorize TPWD to establish a program to eradicate nuisance aquatic vegetation. Invasive plant species such as hydrilla negatively affect water quality, hydropower production, flood control, navigation, recreation, property values and human health. Projects to eradicate invasive plant species currently are under-funded. If the spread of these invasive plant species is not reversed through program intervention, it will cause even greater devastation across the state.

The infestation by such plants is a growing problem in Texas lakes and can be dangerous to boaters and swimmers. Hydrilla and other non-native, nuisance plants get trapped on motorboat blades of a boat and then spread to other waterways where the boat travels. Individuals attempting to remove hydrilla from boat blades can become tangled and drown. This dense weed also poses a hazard to swimmers.

Also, additional water must be pumped through an intake pump to push water through a dense mass of invasive vegetation. *Sylvania molesta*, a non-native invasive plant, can kill animal and plant vegetation in a body of water.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.