

SUBJECT: Establishing policy findings of the state regarding land stewardship

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Puente, Hamilton, Gattis, Creighton, Guillen, Hilderbran, Laubenberg, O'Day

0 nays

1 absent — Gallego

WITNESSES: For — David K. Langford, Texas Wildlife Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Marida Favia del Core Borromeo, Exotic Wildlife Association; Craig Chick, Texas Association of Realtors; Jim Conkwright, High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1; Amy Hardberger, Environmental Defense; Billy Howe, Texas Farm Bureau; Ken Kramer, Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club; Stephen J. Salmon, Riverside and Landowners Protection Coalition; James Terrell, Select Milk Producers, Inc.)

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 2883 would state that it was the policy of the state to encourage voluntary land stewardship to benefit the water in the state. The bill also would state that it was the policy of the state to encourage voluntary land stewardship as a significant water management tool by providing assistance to landowners to conduct those activities. The bill would find that voluntary land stewardship enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of Texas' watersheds and groundwater supplies, resulting in a benefit to the natural resources of the state and to the public.

"Land stewardship" would be defined as the voluntary practice of managing land to conserve or enhance suitable landscapes and the ecosystem values of the land. The definition would include land and habitat management, wildlife conservation, and watershed protection. Land stewardship practices would include runoff reduction, prescribed burning, managed grazing, brush management, erosion management, reseeding with native plant species, riparian management and restoration, and spring and creek-bank protection.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

NOTES:

Provisions similar to those in HB 2883 also are included in HB 4 by Puente, which passed the House on May 1.

The companion bill, SB 476 by Uresti, has been referred to the Senate Natural Resources Committee.