

SUBJECT: Studying the hydrology and geology of confined and unconfined aquifers

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Keffer, D. Bonnen, Burns, Frank, Kacal, T. King, Larson,
Lucio, Nevárez, Workman

0 nays

1 absent — Ashby

WITNESSES: For — Steve Box, Environmental Stewardship; Ty Embrey, Middle Trinity Groundwater Conservation District, Panola County Groundwater Conservation District, Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District; Jim Conkwright, Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District; (*Registered, but did not testify*: John Dupnik, Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District; Matt Phillips, Brazos River Authority; Julie Williams, Chevron; Teddy Carter, Devon Energy; Robby Cook, Hemphill County Underground Water Conservation District; Linda Curtis, Independent Texans; Michele Gangnes, League of Independent Voters of Texas; Paul Nelson, Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District; Drew Satterwhite, North Texas Groundwater Conservation District; C.E. Williams, Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District; Brian Sledge, Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District, Upper Trinity Groundwater Conservation District, Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District, Benbrook Water Authority, Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District; Ken Kramer, Sierra Club - Lone Star Chapter; Stacey Steinbach, Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts; Patricia Hayes, Texas Association of Groundwater Owners and Producers; Josh Winegarner, Texas Cattle Feeders Association; Billy Howe, Texas Farm Bureau; CJ Tredway, Texas Oil and Gas Association; Dean Robbins, Texas Water Conservation Association; Perry Fowler, Texas Water Infrastructure Network; Chloe Lieberknecht, The Nature Conservancy; Doug Shaw, Upper Trinity Groundwater Conservation District; Robert Turner, West Texas Regional Groundwater Alliance; Gregory Ellis)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Larry French, Texas Water Development Board)

BACKGROUND: The current drought has placed pressure on the state’s supplies of surface water. As a result, Texas water policy increasingly has focused on finding and exploiting sources of fresh and brackish groundwater to help meet the state’s growing water demands. While much work has been done to characterize and map the state’s groundwater resources, more information is believed to be needed, particularly regarding the interaction of these groundwater supplies.

DIGEST: CSHB 1232 would require the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to conduct a study of the hydrology and geology of the state’s confined and unconfined aquifers to determine:

- the quality and quantity of groundwater in those aquifers, specifically regarding salinity;
- whether those aquifers were tributary or non-tributary;
- the contribution of those aquifers to the flow of any surface water;
- the contribution of those aquifers to any other aquifer in this state; and
- the suitability of those aquifers for the disposal of concentrate from desalination facilities through the use of injection wells.

The TWDB would have to map and report its findings.

Before conducting the study, the TWDB would have to define “suitability” for the purpose of disposing concentrate from desalination facilities and the minimum rate at which an aquifer would have to contribute to another aquifer or the flow of any surface water in order to be included in the study.

By December 31, 2016, the TWDB would have to report the results of the study to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House of

Representatives, and the Senate and House committees with jurisdiction over natural resources.

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, 2015.