

SUBJECT: Determining the supply of groundwater in certain regional water plans

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — favorable, without amendment

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

0 nays

1 absent — Nevárez

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 30 — 31-0, on local and uncontested calendar

WITNESSES: *(On House companion bill, HB 3942)*

For — Walt Sears, Northeast Texas Municipal Water District;
(Registered, but did not testify: Fred Aus, Texas Rural Water Association;
Patricia Hayes, Texas Association of Groundwater Owners and Producers;
Linda Price, Northeast Texas Region D Water Planning Group)

Against — Harvey Everheart, Mesa Underground Water Conservation
District

On — Leah Adams, Panola County Groundwater Conservation District;
Steve Box, Environmental Stewardship; Amanda Maloukis, Rusk County
Groundwater Conservation District

BACKGROUND: Under Water Code, sec. 16.053, every five years each of the 16 regional water planning groups covering the state must submit to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) a regional water plan that is consistent with the guidance principles for the state water plan, provides information based on data provided by the TWDB, and is consistent with the desired future conditions adopted for the relevant aquifers located in the regional water planning area.

As part of the joint planning process, groundwater management areas, with participation from groundwater conservation districts within the

footprint of the management area, determine the desired future conditions of groundwater resources within a groundwater management area.

DIGEST: SB 1101 would require a regional water planning group to determine the supply of groundwater for regional planning purposes if no groundwater conservation district existed within the area.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2015.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 1101 would allow a regional planning group to have a seat at the table for determining desired future conditions of aquifers if there were no groundwater conservation districts within the planning group. SB 1101 would affect only Region D because it is the only regional water planning group without a groundwater conservation district.

Without a groundwater conservation district in the area to help define the desired future conditions of the aquifers, Region D has been required to use water supply numbers generated by the two different groundwater management areas covering the area. Conflicting numbers have caused unnecessary complications in completing the regional water plan for Region D, which could have an impact on state water plan funding for the region.

OPPONENTS SAY: SB 1101 could have unintended consequences. New rules for adopting desired future conditions went into effect in 2011. It is important to complete the current five-year water planning process under the new rules before any changes are made.