

**SUBJECT:** Conserving the William Goodrich Jones State Forest

**COMMITTEE:** Agriculture and Livestock — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 5 ayes — Springer, Anderson, Burns, Fierro, Zwiener  
1 nay — Buckley  
3 absent — Beckley, Meza, Raymond

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, March 27 — 31-0

**WITNESSES:** *On House companion bill, HB 792:*  
For — Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club  
  
Against — None  
  
On — (*Registered, but not testifying:* Wes Moorehead, Texas A&M Forest Service)

**DIGEST:** SB 345 would require the Jones State Forest to remain natural, scenic, undeveloped, and open in a manner that maintained the tree canopy cover of the forest. No statute, rule, policy or ordinance could be enforced with respect to the territory unless it protected and conserved the natural resources, air quality, or water quality of the forest.  
  
The bill would define the "Jones State Forest" as property owned by the state for the use and benefit of the Texas A&M University System to demonstrate reforestation work and forest management work under the Texas A&M Forest Service, consisting of approximately 1,722 acres in Montgomery County.  
  
The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** SB 345 would conserve the William Goodrich Jones State Forest, which is an important natural resource beloved by the local community as well as

the site of numerous research and demonstration activities that benefit the entire state. Conservation of the forest would help preserve the habitat for many animal species, including the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, and allow research and education efforts based in the forest to continue. While a master plan could help with the management and protection of the forest, such a plan would not require legislation and should be developed by local communities.

Any concerns about the status of roadways near the Jones State Forest could be addressed in a floor amendment.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

SB 345 could hinder the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in improving Farm-to-Market Road 1488, which crosses the Jones State Forest. The area around the forest is developing, and TxDOT should be able to expand FM 1488 if necessary.

OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Because SB 345 is creating a conservation area, it would be appropriate to require a public master plan process to develop plans for the management of the forest and ensure that it was well protected.

NOTES:

The bill sponsor plans to offer a floor amendment that would specify that the bill did not preclude the Texas Department of Transportation, for the current operation or future expansion of Farm-to-Market Road 1488, from using an easement that was owned by the state for the benefit of the department for a highway purpose, or from acquiring an additional interest in real property.