

- SUBJECT:** Creating the Lake Houston Dredging and Maintenance District
- COMMITTEE:** Natural Resources — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — T. King, Bowers, Larson, Lucio, Paul, Price, Ramos, Walle, Wilson
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Harris, Kacal
- WITNESSES:** For — Stephen Costello and David Martin, City of Houston; (*Registered, but did not testify*: June Deadrick, CenterPoint Energy; Bill Kelly, Mayor's Office, City of Houston; Trent Townsend, Sullivan Interests)
- Against — Steve Bresnen, North Harris County Regional Water Authority
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: CJ Tredway, Central Harris County Regional Water Authority; Trey Lary, West Harris County Regional Water Authority and North Fort Bend Water Authority)
- BACKGROUND:** Concerns have been raised that there is a need for a long-term plan and ongoing maintenance program to remove the accumulation of sedimentation and siltation on Lake Houston to increase capacity and water quality.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2525 would create the Lake Houston Dredging and Maintenance District as a conservation and reclamation district. The bill would provide the board's governing structure, powers and duties, and financing authority.
- Governance.** The district would be governed by a board of directors appointed as follows:
- three directors appointed by the Harris County Commissioners Court;

- three directors appointed by the city council of Houston; and
- a presiding officer appointed jointly by the county judge of Harris County and the mayor of Houston.

Directors would serve staggered four-year terms.

Powers and duties. The district would have the powers and duties applicable to a conservation and reclamation district, except as otherwise provided by the bill.

Dredging and maintenance. The bill would allow the district to form voluntary interlocal agreements with political subdivisions, corporate entities, or other persons to perform dredging and maintenance operations in areas on Lake Houston and its tributaries.

"Dredging and maintenance operations" would include the removal of sediment and debris that accumulated under and above the water and floating debris.

The district could require payment for operations performed under an interlocal agreement and could seek from any source a grant of money or another resource to assist the district's dredging and maintenance operations.

The dredging and maintenance operations could not negatively affect the quality of water in the lake or degrade the quality of water to be treated by the city's Northeast Water Purification Plant.

The district would have to obtain approval before performing dredging and maintenance operations from the City of Houston Public Works—Engineering Department.

Removing sediments. The bill would allow the district to take sand, gravel, marl, shell, and mudshell from Lake Houston and its tributaries to restore, maintain, or expand the capacity of the lake and its tributaries to convey storm flows. For such purposes, the district would not be required to

obtain a permit or pay a fee to remove the sediments or to purchase the sediments.

The district could deposit the sediments on private land and sell the sediments.

Limitation on powers. The district could not:

- finance, develop, or maintain a recreational facility;
- exercise the power of eminent domain; or
- perform the same function as another conservation and reclamation district whose territory overlapped the district's, except to perform dredging operations.

The district could not impose a property tax or charge a fee, except as otherwise provided by the bill.

Financing. The bill would allow the district to issue bonds payable from and secured by district revenue. The bonds would have to be authorized by a board resolution.

The district would have to study methods of financing its services and improvements and make the results of the study available to the public.

Dates. The initial members of the board would have to be appointed by January 1, 2022.

The 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, 2021.