

- SUBJECT:** Establishing a commercial oyster mariculture advisory board
- COMMITTEE:** Culture, Recreation and Tourism — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — K. King, Gervin-Hawkins, Burns, Clardy, Frullo, Israel, Krause, Martinez, C. Morales
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Bradley Lomax; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Joey Park, Coastal Conservation Association Texas; David Sinclair, Game Warden Peace Officers Association; Patricia Shipton, Nueces County)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Robin Reichers, Texas Parks and Wildlife)
- BACKGROUND:** In 2019, the state established the Texas Oyster Mariculture Program under the Parks and Wildlife Commission to oversee the development and regulation of the oyster mariculture industry.
- DIGEST:** HB 3600 would establish a commercial oyster mariculture advisory board within the Office of the Governor to advise all state agencies with regulatory authority over the commercial oyster mariculture industry.
- The board would make recommendations to the governor and relevant agencies concerning the oyster mariculture industry and could consult with both state and federal agencies. The bill would exempt the board from certain provisions governing state agency advisory committees.
- The governor would appoint seven members, including:
- four members from the oyster mariculture, seafood, or related industries who have a documented interest in free enterprise and commercial use of oysters, and;

- three members from the scientific and conservation community who have a documented interest in coastal environmental sustainability.

Members would serve staggered three-year terms and vacancies would be filled for the remainder of a term by the governor's appointment. The governor would designate one of the industry representative members as the board's presiding officer for a one-year term. The presiding officer would remain a voting member. Members would not be compensated, but would be entitled to reimbursement for expenses related to official duties.

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.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 3600 would contribute to the continuing development of the oyster mariculture industry in the state by creating an advisory board that would provide regulatory guidance and consistent policy recommendations on the industry to the governor and relevant state agencies.

Currently, the oyster industry is subject to regulatory oversight by multiple state agencies. Due to a lack of coordination, these agencies have been unable to significantly assist the development of the new oyster mariculture industry. HB 3600 would create a focused advisory panel representing both business and conservation interests that would be an interface between the industry and state agencies and would work to provide a coordinated approach to facilitating the growth of the industry.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.