

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 313
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Natural Resources
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many areas of the state are producing significant amounts of groundwater without proper oversight and regulation by an existing groundwater conservation district (GCD). Consequently, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) projects future groundwater production using a 25-year horizon to determine areas where oversight and regulation may be needed. Areas identified by TCEQ for potential oversight and regulation are designated as priority groundwater management areas (PGMA). Extending the horizon to 50 years would allow for more comprehensive projections and correspond to current statewide planning processes, such as the State Water Plan.

The passage of S.B. 1, 75th Legislature, Regular Session, 1997, changed the term "critical areas" to "priority groundwater management areas" and authorized TCEQ to implement the PGMA process. This bill would validate actions by TCEQ pertaining to PGMAs and clarify that PGMA rules currently in place apply to the critical areas as they were designated prior to 1997.

S.B. 313 increases the current period for possible PGMA designation from 25 years to 50 years, and authorizes TCEQ to adopt rules regarding the creation of a district over all or part of a PGMA that was designated as a critical area and the addition of all or part of a PGMA to an existing district. This bill also validates actions by TCEQ relating to the creation of a GCD over all or part of a PGMA that was designated as a critical area under prior law.

As proposed, S.B. 313 amends current law relating to priority groundwater management areas.

[**Note:** While the statutory reference in this bill is to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC), the following amendments affect the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality as the successor agency to TNRCC.]

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission in SECTION 2 (Section 35.008, Water Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 35.007(a), Water Code, to require the executive director of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) and the executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to meet periodically to identify, based on information gathered by TNRCC and TWDB, those areas of the state that are experiencing or that are expected to experience, within the immediately following 50-year period, rather than 25-year period, critical groundwater problems, including shortages of surface water or groundwater, land subsidence resulting from groundwater withdrawal, and contamination of groundwater supplies.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 35.008, Water Code, by adding Subsection (j), as follows:

(j) Authorizes TNRCC to adopt rules regarding:

(1) the creation of a district over all or part of a priority groundwater management area that was designated as a critical area under Chapter 35 (Groundwater Studies), Water Code, as that chapter existed before September 1, 1997, or under other prior law; and

(2) the addition of all or part of the land in a priority groundwater management area described by Subdivision (1) to an existing district.

SECTION 3. Provides that all governmental acts and proceedings, including the adoption of rules, of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) relating to the creation of a groundwater conservation district over all or part of a priority groundwater management area that was designated as a critical area under Chapter 35, Water Code, as that chapter existed before September 1, 1997, or under other prior law, are validated in all respects as of the dates on which they occurred.

SECTION 4. Makes application of Section 35.007(a), Water Code, as amended by this Act, only to a designation of a priority groundwater management area made by TCEQ on or after the effective date of this Act, prospective.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.