

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
85R8927 SLB-F

S.B. 1597
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The 84th Texas Legislature passed S.B. 991, which required the General Land Office (GLO), in consultation with the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), to conduct a study of state-owned land, using data readily available to the agencies, regarding the use of wind or solar power to desalinate brackish groundwater. The bill's directive was intended to study ways to use less water-intensive methods of powering desalination plants. Currently, fossil-fueled electricity production used to power desalination plants is very water-intensive, so we are using water to make water. Coupling desalination with certain renewable energy resources would allow for freshwater production that uses significantly less water.

The final study was completed by the Webber Energy Group at The University of Texas at Austin and found 193 cost-effective sites on state-owned land that had the potential to use solar or wind to desalinate brackish groundwater. This was the first study by the state to examine potential opportunities that could result from focusing on using renewable energy to power a desalination project. With the efforts the state has made to develop renewable energy, including on state lands, and the increased focus on developing desalination of brackish water, there are unique synergies that warranted further investigation.

S.B. 991 (84R) was an important first step to understanding how low-water-use renewable energy can help alleviate some of the state's water stress, as well as determining necessary steps to encourage private sector investment in the renewable energy desalination industry in Texas.

S.B. 1597 is a follow up to the study directed by S.B. 991 (84R). This bill now requires GLO to conduct an evaluation based on the findings of the study to identify one or more potential pilot sites for possible development of solar-powered or wind-powered brackish desalination. The bill further requires GLO to evaluate the potential for generating revenue for the state through any solar-powered or wind-powered desalination operations. GLO must submit a report of its evaluation to the legislature by December 31, 2018.

As proposed, S.B. 1597 amends current law relating to a requirement that the General Land Office conduct an evaluation and submit a report regarding the use of wind and solar power to desalinate brackish groundwater on real property owned by the state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. DEFINITION. Defines "land office" to mean the General Land Office (GLO).

SECTION 2. EVALUATION. (a) Requires GLO to conduct an evaluation to identify the economic potential for using wind and solar power to desalinate brackish groundwater on real property owned by the state and possible pilot sites that have the best potential for implementation of a pilot program for the purpose described by Subdivision (1) (relating to the economic potential for using wind and solar power to desalinate brackish groundwater on certain real property) of this subsection.

(b) Requires GLO, in conducting the evaluation, to take certain actions.

(c) Authorizes GLO, in conducting the evaluation, to request data from any state agency and coordinate with a research division of a university.

(d) Requires an agency or a research division that receives a request under Subsection (c) of this section to provide the requested data or assistance.

(e) Requires the evaluation to include certain recommendations, evaluations, and proposed strategies relating to using wind and solar power to desalinate brackish groundwater.

SECTION 3. REPORT. (a) Requires GLO, not later than December 31, 2018, to report the results of the evaluation conducted under this Act to the governor and legislature.

(b) Prohibits the report described by this section from disclosing information that is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 (Availability of Public Information), Government Code.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.