

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R13068 BEF-D

S.B. 1205
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Finance
4/3/2019
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Carrizo cane (*Arundo donax*) is an invasive species in the Rio Grande Valley that absorbs vast amounts of water along river banks. It has taken over much of the local ecosystem, affecting the Rio Grande. Carrizo cane is also known to grow upwards of 15-20 feet tall, and its thick brush prevents law enforcement from pursuing suspects entering it. Smugglers are well aware of this, and use it to their advantage.

While experts have emphasized that Carrizo cane cannot be eradicated, there are a few approaches to maintaining its growth and expansion. Some private landowners and organizations have attempted to cut down this plant, though experts have testified this approach is ineffective as the plant will return.

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) has begun using a low-toxic herbicide, Imazapyr, which is sprayed on top of the Carrizo cane and salt cedar canopies to kill the plants. This approach has shown success in lowering the height of the species and preventing overgrowth. It is a slow-acting herbicide that is reapplied once every 1-3 years with a 95-97 percent rate of control.

During the 84th Legislature, S.B. 1734 by Senator Uresti created a program under the TSSWCB aimed at eradicating cane along the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande Carrizo Cane Eradication Program was developed with the following goals:

- reduce arundo canopy, density, and biomass;
- improve border access for law enforcement officers;
- improve visibility to allow better detection of illegal activities;
- restore ecological function, degraded riparian habitats, and biodiversity;
- improve river function, decrease sedimentation, and reduce potential for flooding; and
- enhance water savings by conserving water lost to evapotranspiration by arundo.

While S.B. 1734 passed and the program was implemented, TSSWCB never received the funding necessary to achieve its goals. TSSWCB used some funds to spray a few areas along the Rio Grande, but their funds ran out within months.

S.B. 1205 would provide \$10 million to TSSWCB in order to assist in their efforts to controlling Carrizo cane along the Rio Grande. This \$10 million is contingent on the federal government also providing \$10 million toward the project.

As proposed, S.B. 1205 amends current law relating to an appropriation of money from the general revenue fund to the State Soil and Water Conservation Board for the purpose of eradicating Carrizo cane, contingent on the receipt of federal funds for the same purpose.

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. APPROPRIATION. Provides that if the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) receives at least \$10 million in federal funds for use during the state fiscal biennium ending August 31, 2021, for the purpose of eradicating Carrizo cane along the Rio Grande River, then the amount of \$10 million is appropriated from the general revenue fund to TSSWCB for the state fiscal biennium ending August 31, 2021, for the purpose of eradicating Carrizo cane along the Rio Grande River.

SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. Effective date: September 1, 2019.