

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2665
By: Puente
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The 2002 State Water Plan projects that under drought conditions, the current shortfall of water supplies to meet municipal, manufacturing, and agricultural needs in Texas would be approximately 2.5 million acre-feet per year. This shortfall is expected to increase to 7.5 million acre-feet per year by 2050 if nothing is done to increase the currently available water supplies in the state. One of the most cost effective strategies for meeting these needs is the implementation of water conservation strategies and projects throughout Texas. However, state policy on water conservation in Texas is currently fragmented and lacks focus to ensure optimal utilization of water conservation to meet future water supply needs. For example, there are neither state, regional, nor local determinations of appropriate goals for water conservation to achieve the desired level of water conservation. Furthermore, the absence of incentive programs and high profile educational and public awareness programs limit the level of water conservation currently in place in Texas.

The Interim Report of the Texas Joint Committee on Water Resources to the 78th Legislature suggests the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) and the regional water planning groups work together to develop recommendations on how to define and evaluate water-use efficiency measures needed for regional planning. In response to that recommendation, C.S.H.B. 2665 establishes the Water Conservation Implementation Task Force in order to review, evaluate and recommend optimum levels of water use efficiency and conservation for all of Texas.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2665 creates the Water Conservation Implementation Task Force (task force) and names the entities and interest groups from which the TWDB shall select members. The TWDB shall appoint members who represent the following groups: the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, TWDB, regional water planning groups, federal agencies, municipalities, groundwater conservation districts, river authorities, environmental groups, irrigation districts, industries, institutional water users, professional organizations focused on water conservation, and higher education. The legislation also designates that the executive administrator of the TWDB or his designee shall serve as presiding officer of the board.

The duties of the task force shall include: identifying, evaluating and selecting Best Management Practices (BMPs) for municipal, agricultural and industrial water users, and conducting an evaluation of costs and benefits for those BMPs; evaluating the implementation of water conservation strategies recommended in regional and state water plans; considering the need for establishing and maintaining a statewide public awareness program for water conservation. In addition, the task force will: evaluate the proper role, if any, for state funding of incentive programs that may facilitate the implementation of BMPs and water conservation strategies; advise the TWDB and TCEQ on standardizing the methodology for the reporting

and use of per capita water data, and appropriate targets and goals; and evaluate the appropriate state oversight and support of any conservation initiatives implemented by the legislature. The task force may request the assistance of state agencies, departments, or offices to carry out its duties and hold public meetings.

The task force will be charged with developing a Best Management Practices Guide for use by regional water planning groups and political subdivisions responsible for water delivery service. In addition, the Task Force will report recommendations to the 79th Texas Legislature on the above areas.

The task force is temporary and will be abolished on January 1, 2005.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 2665 provides that the duties of the task force include advising the TWDB and the TCEQ on a standardized methodology for reporting and using per capita water use data and appropriate targets and goals. The original, however, provided that the duties of the task force included evaluating the need for standardized methodology for reporting and using per capita water use data and appropriate targets and goals. The substitute also corrects the date the task force will be abolished.