

AN ACT

relating to the powers and duties of the Rio Grande watermaster and the delivery of water down the banks and bed of the Rio Grande.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter G, Chapter 11, Water Code, is amended by adding Section 11.3271 to read as follows:

Sec. 11.3271. POWERS AND DUTIES OF RIO GRANDE WATERMASTER; DELIVERY OF WATER DOWN BANKS AND BED OF RIO GRANDE. (a) This section applies only to the watermaster with jurisdiction over the Rio Grande and the water division for which that watermaster is appointed.

(b) The watermaster shall divide the water of the streams or other sources of supply of the division in accordance with the adjudicated water rights.

(c) The watermaster shall regulate or cause to be regulated the controlling works of reservoirs and diversion works in time of water shortage, as is necessary because of the rights existing in the streams of the division, or as is necessary to prevent the waste of water or its diversion, taking, storage, or use in excess of the quantities to which the holders of water rights are lawfully entitled.

(d) The watermaster may regulate the distribution of water from any system of works that serves users whose rights have been separately determined.

1 (e) The watermaster's duties do not include activities that
2 relate to other programs of the commission, except as provided by
3 this section. The watermaster's duties shall include activities
4 that relate to situations of imminent threat to public health and
5 safety or the environment. The commission shall adopt rules:

6 (1) defining situations of imminent threat under this
7 section; and

8 (2) addressing the watermaster's duties in response to
9 terrorism.

10 (f) The watermaster may store in a reservoir for release at
11 a later time water in transit that is being conveyed down the banks
12 and bed of the Rio Grande under a permit issued by the commission
13 and in accordance with rules prescribed by the commission. In this
14 section, "water in transit" means privately owned water, not
15 including state water, that a person has pumped from an underground
16 reservoir and that is in transit between the point of discharge into
17 the river and the place of use or the point of diversion by a person
18 who has contracted with the owner of the water to purchase the
19 water. The contract must specify that the contract is for the
20 purchase and delivery of a specified amount of water less the
21 carriage losses incurred in transit, as described and measured
22 according to commission rules.

23 (g) The watermaster may store water under Subsection (f)
24 only if the storage does not hinder the ability of any other holders
25 of Rio Grande surface water rights to store the maximum authorized
26 capacity in a reservoir as specified by commission rules and
27 relevant permits, certified filings, or certificates of

1 adjudication.

2 (h) Before granting a permit to convey water down the banks
3 and bed of the Rio Grande, the commission shall adopt rules that
4 provide for the methods and procedures by which the watermaster
5 shall account for any discharge, delivery, conveyance, storage,
6 diversion, or associated loss of water conveyed down the banks and
7 bed of the Rio Grande. A permit to convey water down the banks and
8 bed of the Rio Grande may not allow the permit holder to share in any
9 beneficial state water inflows into the Rio Grande. The permit
10 holder is entitled to convey only the amount of water specified in
11 the permit, less the carriage losses incurred in transit, as
12 described and measured according to commission rules. A rule
13 adopted by the commission under this subsection must be consistent
14 with the Treaty Relating to the Utilization of the Waters of the
15 Colorado and Tijuana Rivers, and of the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo) from
16 Fort Quitman, Texas, to the Gulf of Mexico, concluded by the United
17 States and the United Mexican States on February 3, 1944, and with
18 any minute order adopted by the International Boundary and Water
19 Commission.

20 (i) In considering an application for a permit to convey
21 water down the banks and bed of the Rio Grande, the commission shall
22 consider the quality of the water to be conveyed. The commission
23 may not issue a permit if it determines that the water to be
24 conveyed would degrade the water quality of the Rio Grande.

25 (j) The watermaster shall maintain a central repository
26 which shall be made available to the public that includes certified
27 copies of all instruments, including deeds, deeds of trust, and

1 liens, that the commission requires to be filed in connection with
2 water rights relating to water in the lower, middle, or upper basin
3 of the Rio Grande and that are subject to a permit, certified
4 filing, or certificate of adjudication. On or after September 1,
5 2003, a lien against a water right shall not be effective against
6 third parties unless a certified copy of the instrument is filed
7 with the watermaster and all requirements under other law are met.
8 The validity of any liens or filings made prior to September 1,
9 2003, is not affected by this section. This section does not affect
10 the validity of a lien as between the holder of the water right and
11 the holder of the lien or the requirements or validity of any other
12 law governing the perfection and recordation of these instruments.
13 The executive director may charge a fee for the filing of certified
14 copies of instruments. A fee collected under this section shall be
15 deposited to the credit of the watermaster fund.

16 (k) This section does not apply to the Rio Grande above the
17 Fort Quitman Dam.

18 SECTION 2. (a) This Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

19 (b) As soon as practicable after September 1, 2003, the
20 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality shall adopt rules
21 necessary for the implementation of this Act and shall expedite any
22 application for a permit for the delivery of water down the banks
23 and bed of the Rio Grande under Section 11.042, Water Code.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2250 was passed by the House on May 2, 2003, by a non-record vote; and that the House concurred in Senate amendments to H.B. No. 2250 on May 28, 2003, by a non-record vote.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2250 was passed by the Senate, with amendments, on May 27, 2003, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor