

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3477
By: Gallego
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS), a division of the Texas Water Development Board, has been the state's clearinghouse for maps, aerial photos, and digital geographic data since 1972.

The mission of TNRIS is to provide a "centralized information system incorporating all Texas natural resource data, socioeconomic data related to natural resources, and indexes related to that data that are collected by state agencies or other entities" (Texas Water Code, Sec. 16.021). TNRIS supplies geographic data to government, academia, private sector, and to the public.

StratMap was initially funded in 1997 to develop the data and technologies to migrate state wide mapping products into modern, computer based mapping systems. At its inception, StratMap was envisioned to create data needed to update the USGS topographic map series. Although StratMap was initially funded with 2.5 million per year in general revenue this has diminished to just over 1 million per year.

Today, StratMap working with the Texas Geographic Information Council, is building the next generation of mapping services required to meet previously unforeseen challenges of law enforcement, public health & safety, water planning, and a wide variety of other issues.

The StratMap appropriation has historically attracted 2.5 federal matching dollars for every StratMap dollar. This has produced an invaluable capability for state government that is used by all levels of government, private industry and individual citizens.

To meet projected challenges of mapping that is current, accurate, reliable and accessible, The TWDB is seeking additional funding to increase the effectiveness and value of the StratMap program. The key to future mapping resides with active local and county government participation in a state wide effort to build a common base for Texas. Mapping is not just for natural resources planning anymore; as it is essential for all location based functions and services. This technology affects all aspects of public services and is an enabling technology for commerce and government operations.

Continued success of StratMap is dependent on increasing the levels of detail and currency of mapping products. Federal funding has become erratic during a time when the primary responsibility for mapping has been transferred to the states. To meet current and future needs, Texas can benefit from a unified program in place to ensure consistent, accurate maps serving the needs of the public and government.

The key to this support is building a network of technology and inter-governmental relationships that strengthen local participation in contributing geographic data to state wide map compilations in exchange for economic incentives, technology transfer, standards, and coordination.

Current StratMap funding is based on general revenues and is supplemented with TWDB funds to operate the program within TNRIS. General revenues have been reduced from \$2.5 million per year to a little over \$700 thousand per year. We are now in a time of broad adoption of geographic data and services. The demand for data especially current and accurate data continues to grow. To meet these current and future needs StratMap is seeking a sustainable source of funding.

C.S.H.B 3477 is needed to create the “Strategic Mapping Account” in the general revenue fund and to also allow TNRIIS the authority to award grants to eligible political subdivisions who are selected for such awards under the criteria assuming future funding for the program is available.

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

SECTION 1: Sections 16.017, Water Code by inserting (b) authorizing the executive administrator of the TWDB to operate the Texas Natural Resources Information System - a strategic mapping program to acquire, store, and distribute digital, geospatial information.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 16, Water Code, by adding Sections 16.023 and 16.024, as follows:

Section 16.023 STRATEGIC MAPPING ACCOUNT. (a) Created in the general revenue fund and consists of:

- (1) money directly appropriated to the TWDB;
- (2) money transferred by the TWDB from other funds available;
- (3) gifts or grants from the federal government, state, regional, or local governments, educational institutions, private sources, or other sources;
- (4) sales proceeds of maps, data, publications, and other items; and
- (5) interest earned on the investment of money in the account and depository interest allocable to the account.

(b) The account may only be used by the TWDB to:

- (1) develop, administer, and implement the strategic mapping program;
- (2) provide grants to political subdivisions for projects related to the development, use, and dissemination of digital, geospatial information;
- (3) administer, implement, and operate other programs of the Texas Natural Resources Information System, including:
 - (A) operating the Texas-Mexico border information center;
 - (B) the acquisition, storage, and distribution of historical maps, photographs, and paper map products;
 - (C) maintaining and enhancing information technology; and
 - (D) the production, storage, and distribution of other digital base maps, as determined by the executive administrator or a Texas Geographic Information Council member.

(c) The board may invest, reinvest, and direct the investment of any available money in the fund as provided by law for the investment of money under Section 404.024, Government Code.

Sec. 16.024. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR DIGITAL, GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION PROJECTS. (a) Requires a political subdivision seeking a grant to file an application.

(b) An application must be filed in the manner and form required by the TWDB.

(c) Requires the TWDB to consider in reviewing a grant application:

- (1) the degree to which the political subdivision has used other available resources to finance the development, use, and dissemination of digital, geospatial information;
- (2) the willingness and ability of the political subdivision to develop, use, and disseminate digital, geospatial information; and
- (3) the benefits that will be gained by making the grant.

(d) The TWDB may approve a grant to a political subdivision only if it finds:

- (1) the grant will supplement rather than replace money of the political subdivision;
- (2) the public interest is served by providing the grant; and

(3) the grant will further the state's ability to gather, develop, use, and disseminate digital, geospatial information.

SECTION 3: This act takes effect September 1, 2007.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

Deletes SECTION 1 of the original (increasing the real property recording fee), SECTION 2 of the original (remitting of fee to the comptroller) and SECTION 3 of the original (Strategic Mapping Program) in their entirety.

In SECTION 1 of the substitute, SECTION 3 of the original is inserted and language is changed to reflect that the TWDB's Strategic Mapping Program already exists and should be operated as part of TNRS.

In SECTION 2 of the substitute, references to fees deleted from the original are removed – Sec. 16.024(a)(1) and (6) of the original.

SECTION 2 of the substitute changes citations (Secs. 16.023 and 16.024) instead of other sections from the original (Secs. 16.023-16.025).