

By: Uresti

S.B. No. 476

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a state policy of encouraging voluntary land stewardship to benefit the water in this state.

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

SECTION 1. Section 1.003, Water Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 1.003. PUBLIC POLICY. It is the public policy of the state to provide for the conservation and development of the state's natural resources, including:

(1) the control, storage, preservation, and distribution of the state's storm and floodwaters and the waters of its rivers and streams for irrigation, power, and other useful purposes;

(2) the reclamation and irrigation of the state's arid, semiarid, and other land needing irrigation;

(3) the reclamation and drainage of the state's overflowed land and other land needing drainage;

(4) the conservation and development of its forest, water, and hydroelectric power;

(5) the navigation of the state's inland and coastal waters; ~~and~~

(6) the maintenance of a proper ecological environment of the bays and estuaries of Texas and the health of related living marine resources; and

1           (7) the voluntary stewardship of public and private  
2 lands to benefit the water in the state, as defined by Section  
3 26.001.

4           SECTION 2. Subchapter A, Chapter 1, Water Code, is amended  
5 by adding Section 1.004 to read as follows:

6           Sec. 1.004. FINDINGS AND POLICY REGARDING LAND STEWARDSHIP.

7           (a) The legislature finds that voluntary land stewardship  
8 enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of this state's  
9 watersheds by helping to increase surface water and groundwater  
10 supplies, resulting in a benefit to the natural resources of this  
11 state and to the general public. It is therefore the policy of this  
12 state to encourage voluntary land stewardship as a significant  
13 water management tool by providing assistance to landowners to  
14 conduct those activities.

15           (b) "Land stewardship," as used in this code, is the  
16 voluntary practice of managing land to conserve or enhance suitable  
17 landscapes and the ecosystem values of the land. Land stewardship  
18 includes land and habitat management, wildlife conservation, and  
19 watershed protection. Land stewardship practices include runoff  
20 reduction, prescribed burning, managed grazing, brush management,  
21 erosion management, reseeding with native plant species, riparian  
22 management and restoration, and spring and creek-bank protection,  
23 all of which benefit the water resources of this state.

24           SECTION 3. Subsection (b), Section 11.0235, Water Code, is  
25 amended to read as follows:

26           (b) Maintaining the biological soundness of the state's  
27 rivers, lakes, bays, and estuaries is of great importance to the

1 public's economic health and general well-being. The legislature  
2 encourages voluntary water and land stewardship to benefit the  
3 water in the state, as defined by Section 26.001.

4 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2007.