

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1286
By: Eiland
Transportation
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Texas Gulf Coast is vital to the state's economy. With nearly 400 miles of beaches and a variety of attractions, both natural and man-made, the Texas coast is an abundant source of vacation activities that contribute significantly to the state's tourism revenue. The bays and estuaries of the gulf coast region provide ample fishing, waterfowl hunting, and birding. The gulf coast economy is based on industry sectors that revolve around the natural resources of the coast, with beaches being a top contributor to the economy.

According to the most recent Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA) report, more than 230 miles, or 64 percent, of Texas' 367 mile gulf coast is critically eroding. On average, the state loses 235 acres of Texas gulf shoreline each year, one of the highest rates of coastal erosion in the country. With the coastal region ranked as Texas' second-most popular tourist attraction, generating \$7 billion a year, it is important to protect the resources that make it such a valuable part of the state's economy.

In addition to being an important economic resource, beaches provide habitat for numerous species of plants and animals. Beaches serve as breeding grounds for many species that do not otherwise live on the beach and as repositories for important links in the food chain. In this way, beaches support a rich web of life including worms, bivalves, and crustaceans. Beach erosion can, therefore, negatively impact an entire beach ecology by removing habitat.

H.B. 1286 creates the Save Our Beaches license plates to support the coastal protection and improvement program. The proceeds of the license plates will fund the cleaning, maintaining, nourishing, and protecting of our state beaches.

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

H.B. 1286 amends the Transportation Code to require the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to issue specialty license plates to support the coastal protection and improvement program. The bill requires the remainder of the fee for issuance of the license plates, after deduction of TxDOT's administrative costs, to be deposited to the credit of the coastal protection and improvement fund to the fund the cleaning, maintaining, nourishing, and protecting of Texas beaches.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2009.