

BILL ANALYSIS

S.C.R. 2
By: Uresti
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Amistad International Reservoir, situated on the Texas-Mexico border near Del Rio, supplies water to numerous area communities for municipal, industrial, and agricultural purposes; yet, with a salt content near the upper limit of the Texas standard for drinking water, the reservoir may become an unusable resource for all.

Two of its main tributaries, the Rio Grande and the Pecos River, are heavily saturated with salt due in part to the composition of the surrounding land, which was once part of a great inland sea. When dry land emerged, salt from the sea was trapped in the soil and in underground aquifers. Originating in New Mexico, the Pecos River, in particular, is one of the most saline waterways in North America and accounts for nearly 30 percent of the salt loading of the reservoir.

The upper limit of Texas drinking water standards for minerals including salt is 1,000 milligrams per liter. When that limit is exceeded, municipalities that rely on water released into the Rio Grande from the Amistad Reservoir will face costly treatment methods to meet state standards. Moreover, the elevated levels of salt may force farmers to discontinue the growth of certain crops. While fresh water inflow from runoff could help alleviate the salinity, the potential for such runoff is limited.

The Amistad International Reservoir is shared by both the United States and Mexico, in accordance with the terms of a 1944 treaty. For that reason and because the reservoir's holdings derive from multiple states, it is incumbent on the national government to take the lead in addressing this urgent problem.

Congress began that process by enacting Section 729 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986, 33 U.S.C. Section 2267a (West 2001 & Supp. 2008), and by developing a program in Section 5056 of the WRDA of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-114, 121 Stat. 1041, 1213-1214 (2007), that directs the secretary of the army to rehabilitate and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and to implement long-term monitoring, data collection and analysis, applied research, and adaptive management within the Rio Grande Basin.

Past studies must be evaluated to determine a strategy for moving forward. In addition, it is imperative that funding and continuing authority for Section 5056 of the WRDA of 2007, which is set to expire in 2011, be reenacted so that efforts to solve the salt problem in the reservoir can continue.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Not applicable.

ANALYSIS

Be it resolved that the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to reauthorize the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, Section 5056, and to appropriate sufficient funds to carry out work related to that legislation.

Be it resolved that the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate of the United States Congress, and all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress

with the request that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Not applicable.