

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1734
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Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

This bill will put in place statutory authorization for the State Soil and Water Conservation Board (SSWCB) to put in place a program to control Carrizo cane.

Arundo donax (Carrizo cane) is an invasive plant species native to east Asia that grows along the banks of the Rio Grande in the Rio Grande Valley. The cane “commonly grows from 9 to 27 feet tall,” and clusters into large groups. Carrizo cane interferes with the United States Border Patrol’s (U.S. Border Patrol) ability to clearly see individuals attempting to illegally cross the border, and it restricts agents’ access to these areas. This gives illegal border crossers the ability to evade agents and enter the United States undetected. It also creates an obstruction that puts border patrol agents at risk by potentially making them more vulnerable to attack from lawbreakers.

Additionally, a large swath of trash and debris often accumulates in the cane, damaging the environment. The cane uses massive amounts of freshwater resources and serves no useful ecological purpose. The National Park Service is currently undertaking efforts to eradicate Carrizo cane in Big Bend Nation Park, and local officials and landowners across the river have complained about the presence of Carrizo cane.

Simply put, controlling Carrizo cane is essential if the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas and the U.S. Border Patrol are to attain effective control of the border. Removing the cane will also provide benefits to the environment and to freshwater resources. S.B. 1734 requires SSWCB, which has a proven record of controlling invasive species, to manage a program to eradicate the cane. SSWCB has previously managed a program to clear invasive cedar from the North Concho River, working with the consent of landowners. As much of the land along the Texas-Mexico border is privately owned, the removal effort must include both private landowners and local government entities.

S.B. 1734 amends current law relating to the eradication of Carrizo cane along the Rio Grande River.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 201, Agriculture Code, by adding Section 201.0225, as follows:

Sec. 201.0225. CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM. Requires the State Soil and Water Conservation Board (state board) to develop and implement a program to eradicate Carrizo cane along the Rio Grande River.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.