

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 277
By: Larson
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that declining groundwater levels and intermittent river flows have become a reality for some areas of Texas and that these water sources are susceptible to drought. The parties report that there has been water conservation success in other states through underground water storage, but contend that a lack of information prevents Texas from taking full advantage of such a measure. H.B. 277 seeks to address this issue by providing for the study of certain aquifer storage and recovery projects.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 277 amends the Water Code to remove the requirement that the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) undertake aquifer storage and recovery studies, investigations, and surveys first in areas designated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality as priority groundwater management areas and then in other areas of Texas in a priority to be determined by the TWDB ranking of where the greatest need exists. The bill instead requires the TWDB, working with appropriate interested persons, including groundwater conservation districts, regional water planning groups, and potential sponsors of aquifer storage and recovery projects, to conduct studies of aquifer storage and recovery projects identified in the state water plan or by interested persons and report the results of each study to regional water planning groups and interested persons. The bill adds a temporary provision set to expire January 1, 2019, requiring the TWDB to conduct a statewide survey of the most favorable areas for aquifer storage and recovery, to prepare a report that includes an overview of the survey, and, not later than December 15, 2018, to submit the report to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, December 1, 2017.