

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2652

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Hearing Date: April 6, 2021 8:00 AM

Annalisa Peace
Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance
San Antonio, TX

The fifty-four member organizations of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance strongly support HB 2652.

Donna Gottwald
Self
Helotes, TX

I support HB 2652

Meredith McGuire
San Antonio Sierra Club
Bulverde, TX

This topic needs ongoing support, because as we get more and better science about the many potential problems of protecting groundwater, Texas will need much stronger regulations to prevent contamination and loss of precious water resources. The predicted drought now and near-term, as well as the likelihood that we will have even more extreme drought conditions in the second half of this century, means that Texas needs to be much more careful to regulate how our water is protected, used, and treated.

Jensie Madden
Self- Retired Educator
Fischer, TX

Please SUPPORT HB 2652. Our state's current separation of laws regarding groundwater and surface water makes policy-making very difficult, because of the interrelations of groundwater and surface water. An Advisory Board to make policy recommendations that take into account these interactions is certainly needed.

Cosette Brennan
self - retired
Spring Branch, TX

I support the passage of HB 2652

Cyndi Jackson, Issue Chair
Texas League of Women Voters

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Wimberley, TX

TESTIMONY
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, April 6, 2021

I am Cyndi Jackson, Issue Chair for Water Resources and a member of the League of Women Voters of Texas. I am sending this letter IN SUPPORT OF HB 2652 Thank you for allowing us to share the League of Women Voters of Texas position on this bill.

While numerous public conservation efforts commit resources to study surface to ground water interactions, this is a complicated topic that will require ongoing scientific study and governmental oversight to fully manage. As water supplies dwindle and “first use” debates arise, it’s essential that Texas creates a comprehensive governance plan around what is quickly becoming our number one resource.

We applaud the inclusion of technical experts in this bill and urge you to adopt.

Thank you for your consideration.
Cyndi Jackson

For additional information, please contact: [Name], Cyndi Jackson; Issue Chair, cyndi.g.jackson@gmail.com 512-692-7721. The League of Women Voters is one of America’s oldest and most trusted civic nonprofit organizations. Formed in 1919, the League of Women Voters of Texas represents over 13,000 grassroots advocates and 34 local Leagues across the State of Texas.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seek to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to people 16 and older of all gender identities.

William Warren
self/self
San Antonio, TX

I support this bill. In the interest of protecting Texas water and waterways, this bill is necessary. We should have the opinion of those who've studied water quality at the table when it comes to making decisions regarding potential impacts to our streams, rivers and groundwater.

Eva Silverfine
self
San Marcos, TX

I am writing in support of HR 2652. The illogic of Texas water law that treats groundwater and surface waters as separate entities is nonsensical and defies all that is known about their interaction. Moving forward, management of water resources in Texas has to develop an integrated approach.

Kermit Heaton
myself
Paige, TX

I support HB 2652

I own a small ranch with an exempt water well in the NE Bastrop County. I depend on that water well of my livelihood. I spend literally millions of dollars to purchase the land and drill the water well based on the Texas laws that make the water under my

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land, mine.

I have anecdotally observed that the water in my well and my surface water have a time delayed relationship. This bill will provide some of the facts needed to make sound decisions in the future.

Mobi Warren
self; retired teacher
San Antonio, TX

I am very glad to see this bill that will lead to better water protection. I wholeheartedly support HB2652.

Suzanne Ragan
Self Retired High School Teacher / currently parttime substitute
Paige, TX

For HB 2652 - As a resident of Bastrop County, who depends on water wells for home and farm water I support a study of the interaction of ground and surface water. As a rural resident it is quite obvious that when the water table lowers our surface water does the same. The more facts and data that is available to understand this interaction the better we will be able to predict the affect our usage and pumping will have on our rivers and streams.

Christy Muse
SELF
Spicewood, TX

Yes - Please vote YES for HB 2652. I have spent the past 18 years working on natural resource issues in the Texas Hill Country region – this bill is a step in the right direction. HB 2652 creates a surface water/groundwater advisory committee. The health of our aquifers is directly related to flowing streams. This bill will create an opportunity to explore this connectivity more deeply to determine how we keep these systems healthy.
Thank you!

Karen Hixon
self, investments
San Antonio, TX

I support passage of HB 2652

Barbara Schmidt
Self / retired
Kingsland, TX

I strongly support this bill.

Jane W. Miller
Citizen
New Braunfels, TX

Please support this bill! Thank you.

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Patrick Cox, Executive Director
Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association - TESP
Wimberley, TX

TESPA supports HB 2652 to help protect our essential surface and groundwater resources.

Cheryl Hamilton, Dr.
Self, Retired senior citizen
San Antonio, TX

I support passage of this bill.

Paul Sanchez-Navarro, Senior Representative
Defenders of Wildlife
Austin, TX

April 5, 2021

House Committee on Natural Resources
Rep. Tracy O. King
Rep. Cody Harris
Rep. Rhett Andrews Bowers
Rep. Kyle J. Kacal
Rep. Lyle Larson
Rep. Eddie Lucio III
Rep. Dennis Paul
Rep. Four Price
Rep. Ana-Maria Ramos
Rep. Armando Walle
Rep. Terry M. Wilson

Re: HB2652

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) submits comments in full support of HB 2652 (Larson) to establish an advisory board to study surface water and groundwater interaction in Texas.

Founded in 1947, Defenders of Wildlife is a national non-profit conservation organization focused on wildlife and habitat conservation across the country. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the organization also maintains six regional field offices and represents more than 2 million members and supporters in the United States and around the world. Defenders' Texas program, based in Austin, represents almost 100,000 members and supporters in the state.

Increased understanding of the interaction between surface water and groundwater is vital for the future of Texas. Water management decisions will improve over time with greater knowledge of the relationship, benefitting both Texans and our wildlife. Over the past few decades, we have seen increased impacts on our drinking water due to surface discharges of potential pollutants. These same discharges change the rates of dissolved oxygen, sedimentation and persistent organic pollutants that end up wreaking havoc on endemic species like the unique salamanders found in Texas' caves and springs, among others.

The proposed Surface Water and Groundwater Interaction Advisory Board mandate should also include an overview of current
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and innovative wastewater treatment methods that could benefit our fragile aquifers. As the Texas population grows, especially atop the delicate Edwards and Trinity aquifers, we must find ways to improve wastewater treatment so pollutants, including nutrients like nitrates and phosphates do not find their way into our aquifers or rivers and creeks and eventually the Gulf of Mexico estuaries. More people usually mean more water pollution, but it doesn't have to.

Our water standards normally include measuring pathogens, but it is equally important to monitor nutrient loads. The Surface Water and Groundwater Interaction Study would shed light on the current dynamic and offer possible management solutions to benefit humans and animals.

This advisory board would be an important step to ensure the state's freshwater (surface and groundwater) resiliency for the challenging decades to come. Thank you for supporting HB2652.

Sincerely,

Paul Sanchez-Navarro
Senior representative, Texas
SW Program
Defenders of Wildlife
Psanchez-navarro@defenders.org

Elizabeth Bowerman
Comal County Conservation Alliance
New Braunfels, TX

On behalf of the the Board and members of the Comal County Conservation Alliance, I support passage of HB 2652.

Oliver Steck
self, Musician/Entertainer
Austin, TX

I support passage of HB 2652

Catherine Croom, Ms.
self/retired teacher
Bulverde, TX

I support this bill.

Alan Montemayor, Mr.
Self, Retired senior citizen
San Antonio, TX

I support passage of this bill.

Michaela McCown
self- environmental educator
Waco, TX

Please support HB 2652 to establish an advisory board to study surface water and groundwater interaction. We are one of the few states that separate the regulation of surface water and groundwater, and some areas of Texas have very little groundwater

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regulation. This allows for the massive exploitation of water mining, which affects groundwater levels across the state, as well as surface water flow in unconfined aquifers. I have seen the depletion of surface flow in smaller streams over the course of my lifetime due to severe groundwater mining. We need to better understand the relationship between groundwater and surface water flow and conserve use from both locations in order to protect the health and safety of Texans, preserve wildlife, and preserve our natural resources.

George Witta, Mr.

Self, Rancher/land owner

Elgin, TX

I am in favor of HB 2652. As a land owner, a fisherman and 80 years of age, I have long observed Mother Nature and am a firm believer in the fact that all of our resources are interrelated. It is extremely important to consider the effect of aquifer draw down has on related rivers and that controlling the flow of rivers has effect on the aquifers. The more information and documentation on this subject will be extremely helpful in the management of our resources in Texas.

Doug Marousek

self / retired U.S. Dept. of Agric. statistician

Bastrop, TX

I am FOR HB 2652 to establish an advisory board to study surface water and groundwater interaction. There is a well established, scientific connection between groundwater and surface water. I believe such an advisory board will provide more data to the benefit of all parties involved with Texas groundwater rights, including landowners.

Rollette Schreckenghost

Self/Retired

San Antonio, TX

I support this bill.

Jonathan Grant

Self/Retired

San Marcos, TX

I support passage of HB 2652.

Michele G Gangnes, Director

Simsboro Aquifer Water Defense Fund and self (Attorney/Landowner)

Lexington, TX

Any development of evidence of interaction, plus compilation of associated data, advances best available science. Promotes imperative of GMA's and GCD's to consider surface water impacts in setting DFCs and in permitting, respectively. If not now, when?

Janice Bezanson, Senior Policy Director

Texas Conservation Alliance

Dallas, TX

While we have not seen the committee substitute for HR 2652, so cannot comment on specifics, Texas Conservation Alliance supports the concept of establishing an advisory board to study surface water and groundwater interaction. The fact that groundwater and surface water are allocated by totally different rules and systems has many problems. It ignores the intimate connection between groundwater and surface water, which affect both water quantity and water quality. TCA appreciates your work at establishing such an advisory board.

Travis Brown

Self, retired from Texas Department of Agriculture

Lexington, TX

I am a landowner in Lee County and I support HB 2652. The interaction between groundwater and surface needs much more consideration by all agencies dealing with water resources in Texas.

David Foster

Clean Water Action

Austin, TX

Clean Water Action supports HB 2652.

Anna Farrell-Sherman

Environment Texas

Austin, TX

We support this legislation.

Linda Curtis

League of Independent Voters of Texas

Bastrop, TX

I personally and our organization, a non-profit, non-partisan association for non-aligned voters in Texas, the League of Independent Voters of Texas, support this bill, HB 2652..

Katherine Romans

Hill Country Alliance

Dripping Springs, TX

April 6, 2021

Dear Chairman King and members of the House Committee on Natural Resources,

The Hill Country Alliance (HCA) and its supporters recognize and appreciate the critical work that the House Committee on Natural Resources plays in shaping and advancing proposed legislation that impacts the water supplies of Texas. We are writing today to express our strong support for HB 2652 (Larson), HB 3619 (Bowers) and HB2716 (King), all of which are being considered by the committee today.

HB 2652 would establish a groundwater and surface water advisory board to study challenges related to groundwater and surface water interactions and to make policy recommendations. As you know, as much as 30% of the base flows of Hill Country rivers

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are sustained by springs emerging from the Trinity and Edwards aquifers in our region. We also know that those spring-fed creeks and rivers provide critical recharge for our aquifers. And yet, current state law does not adequately recognize the intrinsic connection of these two resources. HB 2652 would be an important step forward toward better understanding how we can 'close the gap' between current groundwater and surface water management schemes.

HB 3619 would require that groundwater conservation districts consider impacts to domestic and livestock, 'exempt' wells before granting permits. This bill would provide important protections for landowners who depend on groundwater resources and ensure that the full impact of large groundwater withdrawals is considered before a permit is granted.

HB 2716 would restore the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD's) ability to contest water rights and permits at the TCEQ. As we've seen numerous times in recent years in the Hill Country, TPWD is a landowner with a very real interest in protecting its resources in the region. It is critical that TPWD be able to inform any permitting process with the impacts to state owned and state run resources such as our state parks and public waterways. This is an opportunity that TPWD has had in the past, and it is important to reinstate this ability.

The Hill Country Alliance works across a 17-county region of central Texas. Our mission is to grow an ever-expanding alliance of groups, landowners, individuals and entities working to preserve and protect the region's water, land, night skies, and communities. We are grateful for the leadership of the House Natural Resources Committee, and would welcome any questions about this testimony.

Sincerely,

Katherine Romans
Executive Director
Hill Country Alliance

Megan Brown
self
Pflugerville, TX

I support the creation of an advisory board.

Ron Doughty
Central Texas Water Coalition
Austin, TX

Support

Lee Dustman, Mr.
self retired
Bastrop, TX

The legislature is in need of good information when it makes much-needed changes to ground-water law. Science is a better foundation for action than the 'occult'. Ground-fluids all conform to the laws of physics; our laws for petroleum are far more fair to landowners than the outdated and larcenous principles underlying the 'rule of capture'. Water is life, and Texas needs more water protectors.

Patricia M Seidenberger
Self
San Antonio, TX

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I support passage of HB 2652.