

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3619

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 support passage of HB 3619.

Donna Gottwald

Self

Helotes, TX

I support HB 3619

Jensie Madden

Self- Retired Educator

Fischer, TX

Please SUPPORT HB 3619. While I do not believe that "one size fits all" should be used for all GCD rules in Texas, I do believe that this particular rule should be required for all GCDs. Before granting a new permit for pumping substantial groundwater, the GCD should be required to consider the impact of such pumping to the exempt wells in the area. Landowners dependent on their small, exempt wells for residential use and livestock should not have to worry about their wells being depleted because a large user was granted a permit.

Cosette Brennan

self - retired

Spring Branch, TX

I support passage of HB 3619.

William Warren

self/self

San Antonio, TX

I support this bill. These are all important criteria to consider when granting a water permit. In the Hill Country, we're always on the edge of a drought. We have to be careful with the water that we do have.

Kermit Heaton

myself

Paige, TX

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I support HB 3619

I own a small ranch with an exempt water well in the NE corner of Bastrop County. I depend on that well for my livelihood. I spent literally millions of dollars to purchase the land assets and drill the water well based on the Texas laws that make the water under my land, mine; and not belong to a bunch of water developers (whom I properly discribe a pirates).

Why protect pirates and not the current owners of the water? The current owners, whether using it today or tomorrow need protection, also.

Eva Silverfine

Self

San Marcos, TX

I am writing in support of HB 3619. Given our limited water resources and the great expense individuals incur when drilling a well--and the impact large permit holders can have on these resources and individuals--it is quite reasonable to allow groundwater conservation districts to consider how a permit for a large user will impact exempt wells.

Mobi Warren

self; retired teacher

San Antonio, TX

This is a bill essential to protect our water and I wholeheartedly support it.

Laura McGrew

Self, Communications Manager for a nonprofit

San Antonio, TX

I support HB 3619 requiring GCD to consider whether there will be unreasonable impacts to exempt wells prior to granting a permit. It is the job of our state government to protect its citizens over its corporations. This bill protects landowners, and helps establish more of a voice for families impacted by large permit requests.

Suzanne Ragan

Self Retired High School Teacher / currently parttime substitute

Paige, TX

Support HB 3619 - The 147 acres that I live on was purchased after my father returned from the Pacific on the Texas Veterans Land Bill. He purchased this to be passed on to myself then to his grandsons and stay in the family. He said he would only purchase land that included all mineral rights, "if you do not own the land from heaven to hell then someone can take it from you". Even though I own the land on the surface and the mineral rights, organizations are trying to pump the water from under my property, this will take away the water I use for my home, agriculture and lower the level of my stock tanks which I have put in to have surface water. This water and surrounding area is used by wildlife and the endangered Houston Toad.

Over the years I have had to lower my pump due to drought and more demand on the water table, this is expensive and not something I can afford to do, nor can most of my neighbors. Without my wells, my property will not be ilvable by myself or my heirs.

I am a member of the group that is contesting the LCRA pumping permit, had I known in time I would have contested the previous permit also. As a matter of record, LCRA already has wells adjacent to their power facility, as a result of their water usage I have friends whose have lost the use of their wells and do not have the funds to drill a new well, they have received no

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consideration from LCRA.

All GCD's must consider our domestic wells before issuing any permits to others, we were here and depending on this water many years before corporate and public entities came in demanding to pump the water. To take water from local citizens who depend on it for home and lively hood to be sold for monetary gain is just not right.

Please support HB 3619

Patricia Clark

Self

Bulverde, TX

Wells relied on by individual landowners are being threatened by the unbridled demand for water by the high density subdivisions being developed in our area. We strongly support HB 2619

Christy Muse

Christy Muse

Spicewood, TX

Please vote YES for HB 3619. I have 18 years of experience working in water and natural resource protection. HB 3619 improves groundwater conservation district's permitting process by taking in to consideration impacts to smaller domestic wells.

Karen Hixon

self, investments

San Antonio, TX

I support passage of HB 3619

Barbara Schmidt

Self / retired

Kingsland, TX

I strongly support this bill.

Patrick Cox, Executive Director

Trinity Edwards Springs Protection Association - TESPA

Wimberley, TX

TESPA supports this legislation for its protection to landowners and well owners from unreasonable and unnecessary withdrawals of groundwater.

Cheryl Hamilton, Dr.

Self, Retired senior citizen

San Antonio, TX

I support passage of this bill.

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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 3619

Oliver Steck
self, Musician/Entertainer
Austin, TX

I support passage of HB 3619.

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

I support this bill.

Cameron Kissling
Self, student
Bulverde, TX

I support HB 3619

George Witta, Mr.
Self, Rancher
Elgin, TX

I am in favor of HB 3619 and desire it to become law. I am a rancher/land owner with a well on the property. The guarantee of ground water for land owners is far more important than allowing water marketers to draw the aquifer dry for profit. Before drawing down the aquifers, there are many other options such as rain water recovery that should be considered.

Alan Montemayor
Self, Retired senior citizen
San Antonio, TX

I support passage of this bill.

Doug Marousek
self, retired U.S. Dept. of Agric. statistician
Bastrop, TX

I am FOR HB 3619 that would require Ground Water Conservation Districts to consider domestic wells in their deliberations before granting large scale permits. This bill will protect my intention to drill a well in the future at a reasonable cost and with the expectation that it will not soon go dry due to depletion of the water resource beneath my property.

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Jonathan Grant
Self/Retired
San Marcos, TX

I support passage of HB 3619.

Michele G Gangnes, Director
Simsboro Aquifer Water Defense Fund and self (attorney)
Lexington, TX

FOR HB 3619.

Exempt registered landowner wells must be recognized in the permitting process, up front, and afforded protection, for local L/O livelihood and regional prosperity. Currently, they are first to be affected by mega-export projects and the last to be considered. Vista Ridge in Burleson County began running wells dry in NE Lee County within 6 months of 30/+ year project (L/Os not within permitting GCD)—thousands of dollars in impacts on life-savings/revenues with no recourse. Could this have been avoided? Yes, with responsive and responsible Water Code imperatives. Instead, all attempts in Post Oak GCD and Lost Pines GCD to establish L/O protections have been spurned by Water Code, water marketers AND GCDs. HB 3619 would at least START the process of recognizing and protecting 36.002 private property interests for landowners who want to conserve and protect aquifer supply and still have something left for Texas' future generations. How can they afford to do that under the current regime that favors (discriminates in favor of) non-exempt permit protections? L/O's spend thousands to "protect" others' billions? This is not the "Texas way" rural Texas can defend. Their legislators owe them loyalty on this "life or death" survival issue.

Kelly Davis
Save Our Springs Alliance
Austin, TX

Save Our Springs supports the passage of HB 3619. This bill would enact common sense measures to ensure that small well owners are not adversely affected by large-scale groundwater pumping permits.

Travis Brown
Self, retired from Texas Department of Agriculture
Lexington, TX

As a landowner in Lee County, I strongly support HB 3619. Our community has long been targeted by water marketers eager to make a profit by selling the groundwater here. This bill will help level the playing field when groundwater districts consider these massive pumping permits. The impacts on farmers and ranchers and other landowners should be considered when evaluating these permit applications. I am also on the board of the Simsboro Aquifer Water Defense Fund.

David Foster, State Director
Clean Water Action
Austin, TX

Clean Water Action supports HB 3619.

Linda Curtis
League of Independent Voters of Texas

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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 3619.

Mary Wier

Self

Bastrop, TX

I am for house bill 3619. My husband and I are landowners in Bastrop with a well in the Simsboro which we depend on for drinking water and household use. I believe our well and those of our neighbors should be considered before permits are granted. I know it is important to supply water where it is needed, but we can do this thoughtfully and with conservation in mind. I think it is important to keep our groundwater bountiful and clean for future generations.

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 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

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Executive Director
Hill Country Alliance

Lee Dustman, Mr.
self retired
Bastrop, TX

As private water well owner, I support being considered a 'stakeholder' in groundwater disputes.

Patricia M Seidenberger
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support passage of HB3619.