

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 2759
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Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

A mesonet is a set of earth observation stations designed to detect and monitor "mesoscale" weather phenomena ranging in size from several miles to hundreds of miles, including flooding, severe thunderstorms, high winds, droughts, and heat waves. The TexMesonet hydrometeorological network, initiated after the devastating 2015 Blanco River flood, provides statewide data related to hydrological and meteorological conditions that is collected from accurate, on-the-ground, deliberately placed earth observation stations. This data is shared freely online in English and Spanish, providing benefits for weather forecasting, flood preparedness, drought monitoring, wildfire management, water resources planning, water conservation, agriculture, industry, and the public. Currently, TexMesonet is operated by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) under its umbrella authority for studies, investigations, and surveys, but the network is not explicitly named in statute. Specific statutory authority for this network was included as a major issue in the TWDB Sunset Self-Evaluation Report and would establish the TWDB as the lead agency to coordinate this work in Texas through station ownership and partnerships with public and private entities, among other purposes. H.B. 2759 seeks to codify TWDB duties with respect to the TexMesonet by providing authority to serve as the lead agency to develop the hydrometeorology network and further mesonet efforts in Texas.

H.B. 2759 amends current law relating to the establishment of the TexMesonet Hydrometeorology Network and creation of the TexMesonet Advisory Committee.

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 Section 16.012(b), Water Code, to require the executive administrator of the Texas Water Development Board (executive administrator) to take certain actions, including monitor hydrometeorological conditions.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 16, Water Code, by adding Section 16.026, as follows:

Sec. 16.026. TEXMESONET HYDROMETEOROLOGY NETWORK; TEXMESONET ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) Defines "network."

(b) Requires the executive administrator to establish the TexMesonet Hydrometeorology Network (network) to provide a statewide resource for hydrometeorological data and summary information benefiting weather forecasting, flood preparedness, drought monitoring, wildfire management, water resources planning, water conservation, agricultural readiness and productivity, industrial readiness, and related business readiness and productivity across this state.

(c) Requires the network to:

(1) establish a series of stations throughout this state to monitor hydrometeorological conditions;

(2) coordinate mesoscale, evapotranspiration, and soil moisture monitoring efforts in this state by:

(A) collecting, receiving, analyzing, processing, and facilitating access to basic hydrometeorological data; and

(B) developing and disseminating products, tools, and summary information related to that data;

(3) serve as the centralized repository for hydrometeorological data in this state; and

(4) provide appropriate technical assistance related to the duties described by Subdivisions (1)-(3).

(d) Authorizes the executive administrator to, on behalf of the network, enter into:

(1) any agreement with an individual or a federal, state, or local governmental entity to provide site location and access for earth observation stations; and

(2) a partnership with a public or private entity to provide additional funding and resources for improved access to and development of hydrometeorological data, products, and tools.

(e) Requires each state agency or political subdivision of this state that collects hydrometeorological information, including public institutions of higher education, to cooperate with the network in the development of a coordinated, efficient, and effective statewide hydrometeorological data collection and dissemination resource.

(f) Authorizes the executive administrator to establish the TexMesonet Advisory Committee (advisory committee) to advise and make recommendations to the executive administrator on ensuring data quality and optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of hydrometeorological data collection, product development, and dissemination of data and information. Provides that Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees), Government Code, does not apply to the size, composition, or duration of the advisory committee. Provides that members of the advisory committee serve without compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for actual or necessary expenses incurred in performing functions as a member of the advisory committee subject to any applicable limitation on reimbursement provided by the General Appropriations Act. Authorizes the advisory committee to include members representing the following entities or interest groups:

(1) the office of the state climatologist;

(2) the National Weather Service;

(3) existing hydrometeorological networks; and

(4) other appropriate entities.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2023.