

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 4373
By: Canales
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Regional water planning groups (RWPGs) are required to make copies of a regional water plan available at applicable county courthouses and public libraries, which is often a burdensome and expensive task. Revising these requirements would better align the public participation processes for regional water planning and regional flood planning and would provide significant cost savings for RWPGs, facilitating the use of critical funds for the development of regional water plans. C.S.H.B. 4373 seeks to require an RWPG to maintain a website and post an applicable regional water plan on the group's website instead of providing physical copies of the plan.

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

C.S.H.B. 4373 amends the Water Code to remove the requirement for a regional water planning group to provide a copy of an initially prepared regional water plan in the applicable county courthouse and at least one public library of each county having land in the region. The bill requires a regional water planning group instead to post the plan on the group's publicly accessible website and authorizes the group to make the plan available for review at other locations. Notice for the hearing regarding the plan must include the address of the website on which the plan will be posted. The bill requires each regional water planning group to maintain a publicly accessible website and consider and accommodate residents of the regional water planning area who may need assistance accessing the plan because of a lack of access to Internet services.

C.S.H.B. 4373 applies only to a regional water plan required to be made available for public inspection on or after the bill's effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 4373 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes provisions that were not in the introduced that expressly require each regional water planning group to maintain a publicly accessible website and authorize such a group to make the applicable regional water plan available for review at locations other than the group's website.

The substitute omits provisions in the introduced that revised the notice requirements for a public meeting prior to the preparation of a regional water plan and regarding revisions to plans in the case of an interregional conflict and specified that the consideration and accommodation of residents without Internet access particularly applies when there is a heightened interest in or response to public notice or comment.

Whereas the introduced version's provisions applied only to a notice required to be given on or after the bill's effective date, the substitute version's provisions apply only to a regional water plan required to be made available for public inspection on or after the bill's effective date.