

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 279  
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Natural Resources  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The current process under state law for uranium mining production area authorizations involves extensive procedural requirements, including contested case hearings, which can delay the timely approval of permits. The bill author has informed the committee that these delays complicate the development and operation of uranium mining projects, creating obstacles for the industry and reducing efficiency. H.B. 279 seeks to reduce unnecessary delays and expedite the approval process by making certain uranium mining authorization applications uncontested while maintaining certain environmental protections and by repealing certain outdated provisions relating to the permitting process.

### **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. 279 amends the Water Code to revise the provision that makes an application for an authorization that allows the holder of an injection well permit for the mining of uranium to conduct mining and restoration activities in production zones within the boundary established in the permit an uncontested matter not subject to a contested case hearing or the hearing requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act under certain conditions as follows:

- by also making an application for an amendment to such an authorization that allows the permit holder to conduct mining and restoration activities in production zones within the boundary established in the permit an uncontested matter in the same manner;
- by specifying, with regard to the condition that the authorization be for a production zone located within the boundary of a permit that incorporates a range table of groundwater quality restoration values used to measure groundwater restoration by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), that the incorporation is for each production zone addressed in the application; and
- by specifying, with regard to the condition that the application include groundwater quality restoration values falling at or below the upper limit of such a range, that the inclusion of the values is for each production zone addressed in the application.

H.B. 279 repeals a provision that subjects the first application for an authorization for a production zone located within a permit's boundary to the requirements of the act relating to an opportunity for a contested case hearing as an alternative to the provision that makes an application for an authorization an uncontested matter as described above. The bill also repeals

provisions establishing that a subsequent authorization application for a production zone that is located within the same permit boundary as a production zone for which an authorization was issued with respect to the first application is not subject to an opportunity for a contested case hearing or the hearing requirements of the act unless the subsequent application would authorize the following:

- the use of groundwater from a well that was not previously approved in the permit for supplemental production water;
- expansion of the permit boundary; or
- application monitoring well locations that exceed well spacing requirements or reduce the number of wells required by TCEQ rule.

H.B. 279 applies only to an application for an authorization or an amendment to an authorization that is submitted to the TCEQ on or after the bill's effective date. An application for an authorization or an amendment to an authorization that was submitted to the TCEQ before the bill's effective date is governed by the law in effect at the time the application or amendment was submitted, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

H.B. 279 repeals Sections 27.0513(f) and (g), Water Code.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2025.