

By: Romero, Harris, Fairly, Guillen, Zwiener

H.B. No. 4530

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the dedication and management of water rights placed in the Texas Water Trust.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Sections 12.028(b) and (c), Parks and Wildlife Code, are amended to read as follows:

(b) Consistent with Section 11.0235(b), Water Code, and the department's duties and responsibilities, the department shall encourage and facilitate the dedication of surface water rights in the Texas Water Trust through lease, donation, purchase, or other means of voluntary transfer for environmental needs, including for the purpose of maintaining or improving:

- (1) instream flows;
- (2) water quality;
- (3) fish and wildlife habitat; and
- (4) bay and estuary inflows.

(c) The department may manage surface water rights in the Texas Water Trust in a manner that is consistent with:

(1) the manner in which a holder of the rights may manage the rights;

(2) the dedication of the rights, including the dedication's terms and conditions;

(3) Sections 11.0237, 11.027, and 11.122, Water Code; and

(4) maximizing environmental benefits.

SECTION 2. Section 15.7031, Water Code, is amended by amending Subsections (c) and (e) and adding Subsection (c-1) to read as follows:

(c) The dedication of any surface water rights placed in trust must be reviewed and approved by the commission, in consultation with the board and the Parks and Wildlife Department. In addition, the Department of Agriculture may provide input to the commission, as appropriate, during the review and approval process for the dedication of surface water rights.

(c-1) The dedication of any groundwater rights placed in trust must be reviewed and approved by the board. The board must provide notice of the dedication to any district or authority that:

(1) was created under Section 52, Article III, or Section 59, Article XVI, Texas Constitution; and

(2) has the authority to regulate the spacing of or production from water wells located in the aquifer, subdivision of the aquifer, or geologic stratum in which the groundwater that is the subject of the groundwater rights is located.

(e) The Parks and Wildlife Department may manage surface water rights in the trust:

(1) under a voluntary agreement with a rights holder;
and

(2) in the manner described by Section 12.028(c), Parks and Wildlife Code.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.