

- SUBJECT:** Allowing certain entities to dredge San Jacinto River without permit
- COMMITTEE:** Culture, Recreation and Tourism — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Cyrier, Martinez, Bucy, Holland, Jarvis Johnson, Kacal, Morrison, Toth
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Gervin-Hawkins
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 1 — 20-11 (Alvarado, Johnson, Kolkhorst, Lucio, Menéndez, Miles, Rodríguez, Watson, West, Whitmire, Zaffirini)
- WITNESSES:** No public hearing
- BACKGROUND:** Parks and Wildlife Code ch. 86 requires a person to first obtain a permit from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission before taking marl, sand, gravel, shell, or mudshell under the management of the commission. The commission is required to consider impacts to navigation, erosion, river hydrology, pollution, and economic considerations to commercial oystering and fishing operations prior to approving a permit.
- DIGEST:** SB 2126 would allow the San Jacinto River Authority and the Harris County Flood Control District to take sand, gravel, marl, shell, and mudshell from the San Jacinto River and its tributaries to restore, maintain, or expand capacity to convey storm flows. The authority or district could deposit the material on private land.
- The authority and district would not have to obtain a permit or pay a fee to take the material or purchase the material taken from the river system.
- This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 2126 would empower local authorities and provide for a long-term solution to address concerns over excess sand deposits in the San Jacinto River system that have resulted in increased flood risks. The bill would reduce the burdensome and inefficient process through which river authorities currently contract for these services. By having the San Jacinto River Authority and the Harris County Flood Control District oversee the private dredging operations, the bill would ensure the public interest was protected.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 2126 would circumvent rules designed to mitigate negative environmental impacts from dredging. The bill should require the San Jacinto River Authority and Harris County Flood Control District to follow current permitting processes for dredging operations to allow the Parks and Wildlife Commission to review an application for environment and commercial impacts.