

SUBJECT: Updating water availability models for certain river basins

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Larson, Metcalf, Farrar, Harris, T. King, Lang, Price, Ramos

0 nays

3 absent — Dominguez, Nevárez, Oliverson

WITNESSES: For — Marmie Edwards, League of Women Voters; Dean Robbins, Texas Water Conservation Association; Heather Harward, Texas Water Supply Partners; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Michael Booth, Booth, Ahrens & Werkenthin PC; Matt Phillips, Brazos River Authority; Tammy Embrey, City of Corpus Christi; Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club; Adrian Shelley, Public Citizen; James Montagne, Sabine River Authority; Leticia Van de Putte, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; Jennifer Smith, San Antonio River Authority; Mia Hutchens, Texas Association of Business; Justin Yancy, Texas Business Leadership Council; Michael Barba, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Stacey Steinbach, Texas Water Conservation Association)

Against — None

On — L'Oreal Stepney, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Ron Ellis, Texas Water Development Board)

DIGEST: CSHB 723 would require the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to obtain or develop updated water availability models for the Brazos, Neches, Red, and Rio Grande river basins no later than December 1, 2022. TCEQ could collect data from all jurisdictions that allocate the waters of these rivers, including jurisdictions outside the state.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 723 would enable the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality to more accurately account for the state's available water supplies, which could help protect communities across the state against water shortages. The bill would require the collection of updated water availability models for four of the river basins for which the need for this information is greatest.

Current water availability models do not take into account the most recent drought of record. This could lead the state and local communities to overestimate available water supplies. These models also have not been updated to reflect the historic flooding that has occurred in Texas over the past few years. CSHB 723 would require TCEQ to update certain availability models to account for these changes. The bill also would provide data necessary to account for flood flows that may be recaptured and stored for use in times of drought.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.