

Amend or Oppose HB 3298/ SB 1907

Studying Water Marketing and Transfers

HB 3298/SB 1907 directs the Texas Water Development Board to conduct a study for the development of a market and conveyance network for water in the State. While a study may be called for, the problems with this bill go beyond the \$2 million fiscal note.

HB 3298/SB 1907 assumes that a statewide water market and water grid is the best plan for Texas. We don't know **whether or not** a statewide approach makes sense, and this study jumps to how to implement it. The study should include an analysis of all the options and approaches to water transfers, including local and regional approaches, and how water transfers fit within the broader range of options for addressing Texans' water needs.

The study also leaves out many important factors in the legislative findings and directives to the TWDB. These issues need to be included from the beginning to ensure that any recommendations resulting from the study are truly appropriate and useful. Specifically:

- **The bill fails to prioritize conservation as a first step.** No transfers should be allowed if the receiving area has not **first** implemented all possible conservation measures.
- **The bill fails to include protection of our aquifers and water resources for the future.** Focusing on water marketing and transfers makes it all too easy to disguise unsustainable practices to water usage and avoid necessary conservation measures. That doesn't solve the problem, it simply postpones the day of reckoning and makes the ultimate reckoning more painful.
- **The bill leaves out any consideration of the potential impacts on areas from which water is transferred.** Water is a basic necessity for life and for almost all types of business activity, from agriculture to manufacturing to service. Any discussion of transfers must include consideration of the **long-term** impacts on the areas from which they are taking water, not just whether there is **currently** a surplus of water in that area. Otherwise, the areas from which water is transferred will never have the opportunity to grow, and they will stagnate.

Last, the bill includes only a short public comment period at the end of the planning process. This is insufficient, given that this study is intended to lay the foundation for potentially major changes in Texas water law and water planning. Stakeholders should be involved throughout the process, providing input on how the study is structured, what facts and data are reviewed, and the process by which they are analyzed.

The following groups strongly urge that the bill, at a minimum, be amended to address these problems:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance

League of Independent Voters

Texas Certified Farmers Market Association

Neighbors for Neighbors

Food Policy Council of San Antonio

Environmental Stewardship

Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance

Farm and Food Coalition (East Texas Community Food Coalition)

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