

SUBJECT: Calculating and reporting water usage in different sectors

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Ritter, T. King, Beck, Creighton, Hopson, Keffer, Larson, Lucio, Martinez Fischer, D. Miller, Price
0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 23 — 31-0

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: Water Code sec. 16.053 requires every regional water planning group to submit a regional water plan to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The plan must include information on water supply sources, a drought emergency response plan, water management strategies, water needs, voluntary and emergency water transfer considerations, and environmental impact assessments.

DIGEST: SB 181 would require every regional water planning group to include in its regional water plan submitted to TWDB information on expected water use and conservation in the planning area and implementation of water plan projects, including conservation strategies.

The bill would establish findings that tracking water use was necessary to estimate and meet future water demand and that measuring gallons per capita per day was not an accurate measure because a uniform, consistent methodology for calculating it had not been established.

The bill would require that, no later than January 1, 2013, TWDB and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) work with the Water Conservation Advisory Council (WCAC) to develop a uniform, consistent methodology and guidance for calculating water use and conservation for use by municipalities or water utilities in developing conservation plans and preparing required reports.

The methodology would have to include methods for calculating total water use for each sector, total municipal water use in gallons per capita per day, water use in the residential sector in gallons per capita per day, and water use in industrial, agricultural, commercial, and institutional sectors. It would have to include a method of classifying different water users within the various sectors and guidelines on the use of service populations in developing a per-capita-based calculation method.

TWDB, in consultation with TCEQ and the advisory council, would be required to develop a data collection and reporting system to evaluate water usage for municipalities with more than 3,300 connections.

Beginning 2015, before January 1 of each odd-numbered year, TWDB would have to submit a report to the Legislature that included data on water usage among the various sectors and for municipalities with more than 3,300 connections.

The bill also would require TWDB and TCEQ to use these methodologies for certain water conservation planning and financial assistance applications.

The 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, 2011.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 181 would allow Texas to more accurately determine its water use, which is necessary in its water conservation planning. Currently, there is too much variation in how regions calculate their water use. By grouping water use among municipal, agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial sectors that use water in many different ways, Texas cannot get accurate data on how much water is being used.

SB 181 would require TWDB and TCEQ, in consultation with WCAC, to develop methodologies that standardized the calculation of water use throughout the state. By using a uniform measurement for municipal water use and collecting data by individual sector, the bill would give Texas a more accurate assessment of its water use.

Without an accurate account of Texas' water use, water conservation plans for droughts and increased future consumption by a growing population would be nearly impossible. By giving planners a better read of each

sector's water use throughout every region in Texas, the bill would prompt greater water conservation.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

While it is important to accurately measure water use in Texas, SB 181 could conceal higher water use by certain regions by breaking down the numbers by different sectors. Having a true assessment of the total water use of a region forces regions that use more water to better plan for water conservation.

NOTES:

A similar bill, HB 1319 by Laubenberg and Creighton, was reported favorably, as substituted, by the Natural Resources Committee on March 22.