

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.C.R. 35
By: Truan
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As Filed

DIGEST

Environmental conditions on both sides of the border affect both Texas and Mexico directly. Untreated sewage flowing into the Rio Grande River drives up the cost of water treatment. Air pollution from Juarez forces El Paso into air quality nonattainment status with health consequences for Texans and constraints on business and commerce. Hazardous waste produced in Mexico contaminates the river and enters the shared air shed as dust and fugitive emissions. Solid waste washes into the Rio Grande and the Gulf of Mexico to contaminate the tourist beaches as far north as Mustang Island.

Little of the water in the Texas segment of the river comes from either Texas or the United States, and the majority of the river's watershed lies in deserts with less than eight inches of rainfall per year. The current drought affecting the lower Rio Grande is a glaring example of the region's resource limitations. Irrigated agriculture on both sides of the border has been hurt as a result of the drought, forcing both long- and short-term readjustments in water use and public investment.

The Rio Grande/Rio Conchos basin is shared by two nations, eight states, and 19 Pueblos and Tribes. The watershed of the Rio Grande and its tributaries covers 335,500 square miles, twice the size of California. The Rio Grande-Rio Bravo Alliance, an initiative of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, is an attempt to bring some order to the border regulatory environment. It includes participants from a number of border region states, both federal governments, as well as border region councils of government.

This legislation would provide legislative support and encouragement to this effort.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.C.R. 35 submits the following resolutions:

To urge the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, the Texas Water Development Board, and other state agencies to work with the Congress of the United States and federal agencies to develop a structure for binational, comprehensive, basin-wide management of the Rio Grande; and

To provide that the secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the executive directors of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission and the Texas Water Development Board and to all members of the Texas delegation to the United States Congress.