



Dear GEAA members and friends,

With 27 days left in this legislative session, we are discouraged that some much needed legislation has been held up by the [House Natural Resources Committee](#) (HNR) chaired by [Representative Lyle Larson](#).

We had hoped that [HB 817](#), which would ban direct discharge of sewage effluent into waterways that traverse the Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone within the Nueces River Basin, would be a slam dunk. After all, approximately 60% of recharge to the Edwards occurs in this basin – so, applying this ban is simple common sense, especially as there are much [better options](#). As of today, this bill has been left pending in HNR with no plans to move it toward passage.

[HB 4110](#) was also assigned to HNR. Filed in response to concerns voiced by the Guadalupe Blanco River Authority, Edwards Aquifer Authority and other agencies about the impacts of under regulated individual septic systems on the Edwards Aquifer, this bill calls for a study evaluating and making recommendations for the regulation of on-site sewage disposal systems in the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer. If these agencies joined GEAA in multiple requests for approval of HB 4110, apparently no one at HNR was listening. As of today HB 4110 was never even scheduled for a hearing.

Rather than using their legislative muscle to protect the Edwards Aquifer, the agencies designated with its protection seemed to have other priorities. A good case in point is [HB 1806](#) / [SB 1170](#), which will allow Edwards Aquifer water to be exported outside of the Edwards Region to supply high density development in the Hill Country. Even as amended to restrict the amount exported in volume and scope, HB 1806 compromises local governments' ability to manage sustainable growth in counties contiguous to Bexar County. We view this as a subversion of the original protections accorded the Edwards Aquifer.

Likewise, [HB 3656](#) is another of a handful of bills introduced this session that attempt to change some key parts of the initial legislation involved in the creation of the Edwards Aquifer Authority in 1993. This bill would allow the transfer of irrigation permits currently tied to farm land within the Edwards Aquifer District for other uses outside of the District, threatening the flows of Edwards Aquifer Springs and potentially creating a water market we believe would not benefit the Edwards region. A more common sense approach is [HB 1479](#) which would allow Edwards Aquifer *Base Irrigation* water rights from formerly irrigated land to be transferred to another use, but not transferred out of county.

While several good bills came out of HNR this session, it is quite sad that they chose to ignore measures to afford the Edwards Aquifer some much needed protections while allowing measures that undermine the original intent of legislation to protect this marvelous resource in perpetuity. These actions seemed to be abetted by the local agencies charged with protecting our water resources. We can do better and surmise that leadership, both in the legislature and our local agencies should be held to account.

Both HB 817 and HB 4110 could have easily moved forward to the local and consent calendar with support from Representative Larson and his Committee. I invite you to join me in urging HNR Chairman Lyle Larson (512-463-0646 / lyle.larson@house.texas.gov) to prioritize protection, rather than exploitation, of the Edwards Aquifer.

As the clock winds down on the 86th Legislative Session, stay tuned for more information on legislation impacting our natural resources – and our ability to have a voice in protecting them.

Annalisa Peace

Executive Director
[Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance](#)

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