



10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WATER AND THE 83RD TEXAS LEGISLATURE

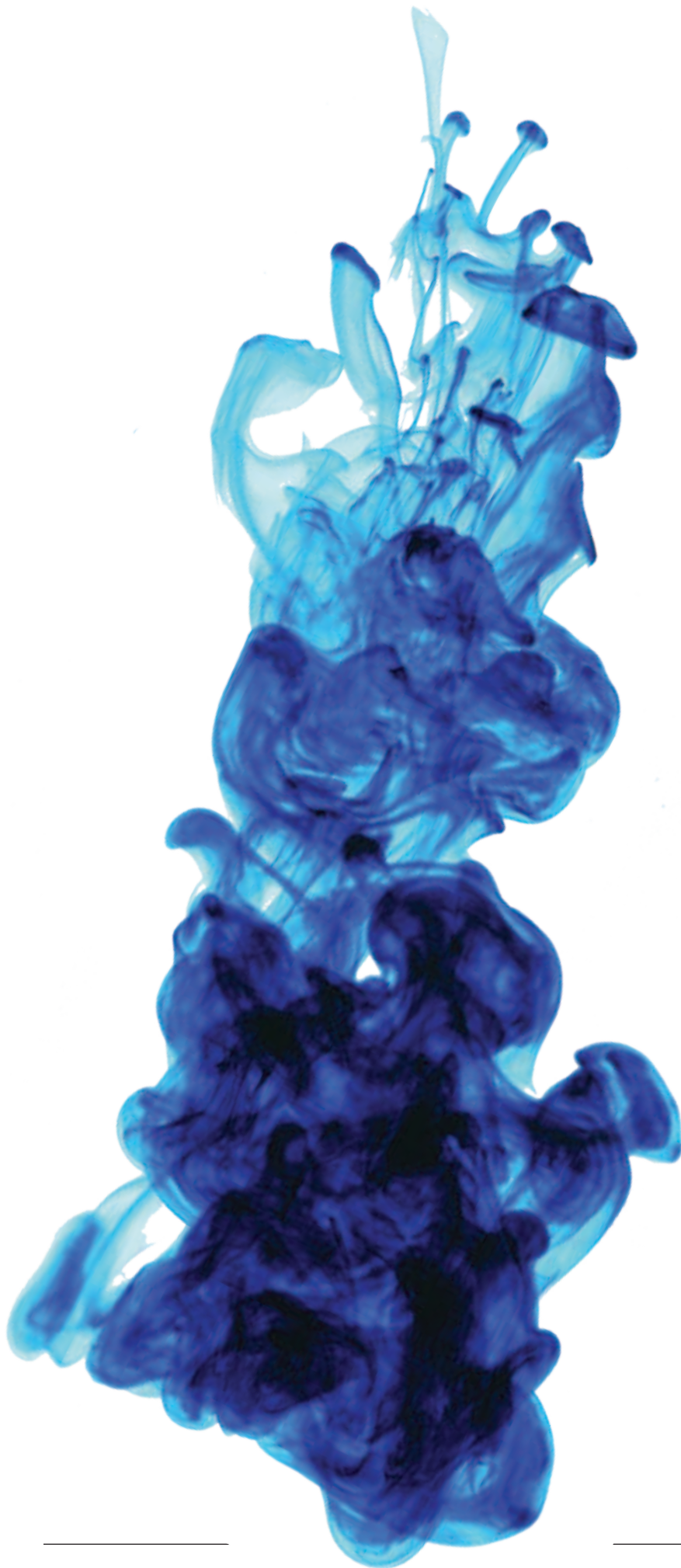
A brief primer on water issues in the current legislative session

1. Texas' 83rd Legislative Session began Jan. 8 and ends May 27.
 - March 8, the 60th day, is the deadline for filing bills and joint resolutions other than local bills, emergency appropriations and bills that have been declared an emergency by the governor.
2. The House Committee on Natural Resources was specifically charged with researching drought and water issues and developing a report on its findings during the period between sessions.

The committee's interim charges included examining the following issues:

 - the statewide drought and the performance of state, regional and local entities in addressing it; drought's impact on the state water plan and strategies for the state to deal with drought
 - the water-energy nexus in the state
 - desalination projects in Texas, including brackish groundwater desalination
 - agricultural irrigation conservation incentives
 - agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction and their implementation of relevant legislation from the previous session
3. The House Natural Resources Committee's jurisdiction includes overseeing the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, as it relates to the regulation of water resources, as well as the Multi-State Water Resources Planning Commission, the Texas Water Development Board and several river compacts.
4. The interim charges given to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources also involved studying the following water issues:
 - impediments to implementation of the state water plan and recommendations on ensuring that Texas has access to sufficient water for future generations
 - alternatives to using surface water or groundwater in the generation of electricity and extraction of fuels, and the potential for desalination and other technologies for the reuse of brackish water
 - recommendations on the management of groundwater resources
 - the bundling of small water and sewer systems by a single investor-owned utility and the causes and regulatory issues associated with rapidly escalating water and sewer rates for Texans who live in unincorporated and rural areas
5. The House's interim charges are available in full at www.house.state.tx.us/_media/pdf/interim-charges-82nd-march-release.pdf.

The Senate's interim charges are available in full at www.senate.state.tx.us/assets/pdf/SenateInterimCharges82_Final.pdf.
6. Distributed to the Legislature and the Governor's Office at the beginning of the session, the House Committee's interim report recommended establishing a "dedicated fund and funding source for the implementation of the state water plan." The full report is available at www.house.state.tx.us/_media/pdf/committees/reports/82interim/House-Committee-on-Natural-Resources-Interim-Report.pdf.



7. To keep up with the House Natural Resources Committee's meetings, go to www.house.state.tx.us/committees, and visit www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/Commit.htm for the Senate's.

8. To keep up with the status of bills filed by the Legislature, visit www.legis.state.tx.us/BillLookup/BillNumber.aspx.

For an idea of the input lawmakers may be receiving from constituents regarding water, the annual Texas Lyceum Poll showed this year that voters were open to the possibility of tap fees increasing to fund water supply projects.

A snapshot of registered voters' opinions on public policy, the poll found that 64 percent of voters claimed they would be willing to pay more in water tap fees to ensure that the state's water needs are met. The poll was taken in September 2012 and sampled 1,175 registered voters in Texas, with 44 percent self-identifying as Democrat and 44 percent as Republican. The Texas Lyceum is a nonprofit, nonpartisan group. The poll can be accessed at www.texaslyceum.org.


9. In regards to groundwater regulation, the Texas Supreme Court case *The Edwards Aquifer Authority v. Burrell Day and Joel McDaniel*, which was decided in February 2012 in favor of rule of capture for groundwater, could have an impact on water discussions in the Legislature. The full decision is available at www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us. 

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