

## **Water Conservation Summary from 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature**

During the 2013 Regular Legislative Session, the House Committee on Natural Resources addressed a variety of water related issues regarding implementation of the state water plan, conservation and drought, permitting and planning, utilities and ratemaking, and special water districts. Here is a list of the water conservation related bills.

[House Bill 2781](#) makes a number of changes in current law governing the use and oversight of rainwater harvesting systems. HB 2781 lessens the risk for contamination and ensures appropriate training of permitting staff for counties or municipalities with a population over 10,000. The Texas Water Development Board shall ensure that training on rainwater harvesting is available for the members of the permitting staffs of municipalities and counties at least quarterly.

[House Bill 857](#) requires all retail public utilities supplying potable water to file an annual water audit with the Texas Water Development Board, however, retail public utilities serving less than 3,300 connections that do not receive financial assistance from the TWDB are only required to submit a water audit once every five years computing the utility's system water loss during the preceding year. This bill enhances efficiency and accountability for the promotion of water conservation. The next annual water loss audit reports are to be submitted by May 1, 2014.

[House Bill 1461](#) requires each retail public water utility required to file a water audit with the TWDB to notify each of the utility's customers of the water loss reported in the water audit. The notice may be done through the utility's annual consumer confidence report or on the next bill the customer receives after the water audit is filed. This bill encourages entity transparency and consumer awareness in water loss prevention and water conservation.

[House Bill 3605](#) requires Texas Water Development Board to establish a water loss threshold for considering a retail public utility's application for financial assistance. If a utility's water loss is greater than the threshold a portion of that financial assistance must be used to mitigate the utility's water loss. This bill also requires the Texas Water Development Board to further evaluate the water conservation plans of entities seeking state financial assistance for compliance with best management practices.

[Senate Bill 198](#) ensures that the homeowner's associations cannot prohibit the use of drought-resistant landscape or water-conserving turf, but it does allow those associations to require the homeowner to submit a plan for such use. This bill represents a compromise between promoting water conservation of water resources on the individual level and upholding the property values of homes by retaining consistent landscape plans.

For more information about xeriscaping, please visit [Water IQ: Know your water](#) for conservation tips.

The 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature also included funding for:

- **Water Conservation Education Grants** - \$1 million in FY14 for grants to water conservation education groups to be awarded by a competitive process that may require matching funds.
- **Agricultural Demonstration Projects** - \$1.8 million for FY 2014 and \$1.8 million for FY 2015 out of the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund for the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation Demonstration Project, a partnership project in the Texas Panhandle to enhance agricultural water efficiency to extend the life of the Ogallala Aquifer.
- **Agricultural Metering** - \$1.5 million for FY 2014 and \$1.5 million for FY 2015 from General Revenue to be used for grants to groundwater conservation districts for agricultural water conservation (grants will be made available only to districts which require metering of water use and may only be used to offset half the cost of each meter).