

## Water shortages must be addressed

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My name is Mark Friesenhahn and I live in southwest Comal County. I am a life-time Texan and proud to live in the Hill Country. I am however, becoming concerned about the lack of resources to support massive growth we're experiencing Deep in the Heart of Texas.

I recently had the opportunity to participate in and testify before the Texas House of Representatives Land and Resource Management Committee held in Austin. Representative Kyle Biedermann presented HB 3883 during the committee's public hearing.

The water shortage issues discussed during the hearing are based on facts, are serious and imminent. Simply stated, Trinity aquifer, the primary water source, is currently being stressed and depleted with no end in sight.

This should concern all of us and demand the immediate attention and support of state and local leaders. We must acknowledge that unless actions such those addressed by HB 3883 are taken, we face the potential of running out of water to support our massive growth.

HB 3883 addresses severe and growing water shortages in the Hill Country Priority Groundwater Management Area, a nine-county area comprising unincorporated areas located within Bandera, Blanco, Gillespie, Kendall and Kerr counties; and parts of Bexar, Comal, Hays, and Travis counties. The bill gives the voters in the area rights to approve all or part of the bill, or reject it, broadens the authority of county commissioners to regulate the density and number of housing units subject to water availability, and involves county commissioners in the planning and coordination of comprehensive plans of municipalities and groundwater conservation districts. HB 3883 focuses on local governmental control.

Massive residential and industrial growth occurring in these counties is straining available water resources. Water resources in this area are about 20% short to meet demand now and expected to grow to about 40% by 2070. This is consistent with shortages seen statewide. Aside from moving water from other counties or from storage reservoirs (filled with existing water

supplies) to make up the shortfall, there are no new water sources planned near-term. The concern is real; one development in Comal County currently has a large number of buyers who can't move into their new homes because the developer has not yet secured a water source.

Many farmers, myself included, depend on agricultural irrigation permits for their crops. I wonder aloud: Will my agricultural water be available, especially in severe drought conditions? How many of us will see our water well run dry unless serious action is taken? Where's the new water supply going to come from?

Do our residents living in the new subdivisions and enjoying our beautiful Hill Country realize how vulnerable our water supply really is, especially during drought conditions? When and how will we work to develop the new water sources to support our homes, schools and businesses?

Opponents say that HB 3883 will increase housing prices and restrict development. To the contrary, HB 3883 will better align our growth with available resources. That will benefit of all of us.

I urge everyone to let our local leaders, state representative and senators know that we are worried about our water, the issues involved are non-partisan and insist that they take actions now — in the current Texas legislative session — to approve bills addressing looming water shortages before it is too late.