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## Legislation meant to delay Dallas investor's East Texas water grab fails


Story by Megan Kimble • 12h • **2 min read**



 The Trinity River flows through Palestine, Texas on Thursday, July 31, 2025. The river flows to Trinity Bay, on the border of Harris County. (Elizabeth Conley/Houston Chronicle)

A Dallas investor's controversial plan to export East Texas groundwater appears poised to move forward, as lawmakers killed a [bill that would have delayed the project](#) by two years.

On Wednesday night, state Rep. Cody Harris, a Palestine Republican and [the bill's author](#), blamed the state Senate for the legislation's failure, saying the chamber stripped a key provision that would have put a moratorium on new export permits while the Texas Water Development Board studied the effects of pumping groundwater from the area's aquifers. The House voted not to accept the Senate changes.

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"The Senate gutted the most important part of this bill," Harris said late Wednesday. A moratorium would have given lawmakers "a chance ... to make sure we are being good stewards of our most precious natural resource, water," he said. "One part of the bill is worthless without the other."


**READ MORE:** [How a Dallas investor's East Texas water grab triggered a statewide battle](#)

Harris' legislation escalated a fight that has been [brewing in East Texas since the spring](#), when locals learned that two companies tied to Dallas investor Kyle Bass had applied for exploratory permits for wells capable of pumping more groundwater out from under Anderson and Henderson Counties than was currently available.

The bill would have required the TWDB to study the effects of pumping from the aquifers underlying the Nueces and Trinity Valleys Groundwater Conservation District, and put a moratorium on new pumping permits until the study was completed in January 2027.

Harris noted that the bill's failure puts other areas at risk too. Some areas, like Houston County – which isn't covered by a groundwater conservation district – currently have "no protection" from high-capacity groundwater pumping, he said.

State Sen. Robert Nichols, R-Jacksonville, said the moratorium was removed because it was the only way to get the legislation out of committee and through the upper chamber as members expressed concern for the "precedent" that would be set around the state. Still, he noted he supported the moratorium on export projects. "If we're making decisions before that science is completed is a great concern of mine," he said.

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The fight over the project now heads to the State Office of Administrative Hearings, which will decide whether to grant exploratory permits to Bass' companies.

"I call on the groundwater conservation district in Anderson and Henderson and Cherokee counties to deny the permit applications on these water projects," Harris said. "Stand firm and this body will have your back."

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