

Sierra Club Opposes HB 2339 – Weakening Standards for Landscape Irrigation

The Sierra Club is opposed to HB 2339 by Rep. Sid Miller, which is on the agenda for the House Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee on Wednesday, April 22. The bill would undermine new standards for landscape irrigation in Texas that are aimed at promoting water conservation.

The Texas Legislature in 2007 passed HB 4, SB 3, and HB 1656, with water conservation highlighted as one of their main themes. All three included identical provisions that promote water conservation efforts by landscape irrigators, and those provisions were supported by the vast majority of those irrigators through a professional association and individual companies.

Based on this legislation, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), with input from stakeholders, including the Irrigators Advisory Council (whose members conducted public meetings around the state to inform people about the new law and the opportunity to comment on proposed rules to implement the law), developed and adopted revised standards to improve management practices for the landscape irrigation business. The Sierra Club, which strongly supports water conservation efforts, supported the passage of the legislation in 2007 and supported the adoption of these new standards.

The 2007 legislation delegated implementation of these standards to cities with populations over 20,000. Since approval of the standards by TCEQ in June 2008, cities have passed ordinances to implement the programs, and implementation is underway.

The proposed HB 2339 would weaken or eliminate several of the standards, and it would make other unnecessary changes in the Irrigation Advisory Council at TCEQ. Thus far there have been so significant problems in the implementation of the standards, which are important to conserving water where irrigation systems are installed. Implementation of the new standards should be allowed to continue. No changes should be made without a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the standards, and such an evaluation should only be done after at least two to three years of experience with the standards.