



Oppose or Amend HB 1066

The Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, League of Independent Voters, and Simsboro Aquifer Water Defense Fund **oppose HB 1066** because it blocks the public from participating in major permitting decisions that could significantly impact their property rights.

HB 1066 has a single purpose: provide for the automatic extension of export permits. The stated reason is so that the term of the export permits match those of operating permits, which is a reasonable goal.

But the process for achieving that goal is problematic. The bill provides that the Board of a groundwater conservation district (GCD) **shall** extend the export permit term **without a public hearing** except under very limited circumstances (if the permittee is not paying the required fees or is subject to an enforcement action).

This provision is almost identical to HB 2378 from last session, which was vetoed by the Governor because it left the public out of these important decisions.

HB 1066 continues to deny the public a say in the process. The directive that a district **shall** renew the export permit **without a hearing** explicitly locks affected landowners and others out of the process. As with any government entity, the Board of the GCD is not a proper substitute for the voices of affected individuals.

This is particularly egregious for existing export permits, which were issued for a specific term of years (in most cases, 30 years), with the explicit understanding by the permittee, the district, and the public that the normal procedures – including a public hearing – would be followed when the permit came up for renewal.

We urge an amendment to apply the bill prospectively, so that existing permits undergo at least one renewal using the procedures in effect when they were granted. Don't change the rules mid-stream – let the public be heard when these permits come up for renewal as they are supposed to.

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