

## **JUNE 2016**

### **Monthly Summary from STPRA's Austin Team:**

**Robert Howard**, Organizational Consultant

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**Eric Opiela**, Attorney; STPRA Board Member and Chair of Eminent Domain and Endangered Species Sub-Committees

-- The House Natural Resources Committee heard testimony in early June on interim charges concerning the functioning of the State Water Plan and the effectiveness of the new process to challenge Desired Future Condition (DFC) rulings by groundwater conservation districts. There were also witnesses to a water exporting conflict involving groundwater in Pecos County that is proposed to be moved to Midland-Odessa. There will be a follow-up hearing on that dispute in Ft. Stockton on September 19<sup>th</sup>

--The Senate Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs Committee held a hearing on May 23<sup>rd</sup> that centered largely on surface water rights. There will be a committee hearing on June 20<sup>th</sup> that will focus on the State Water Plan process and a hearing on July 25<sup>th</sup> that will probably delve heavily into groundwater ownership, production, and transfer.

These interim hearings do not involve the consideration of any specific proposed legislation, since bills for next spring's legislative session cannot be filed until November.

Archived and live videos of committee hearings can be accessed at:

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>

-- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission held a meeting in May to consider passage of new proposed rules on chronic wasting disease management. Due to a show of opposition to the rules by some deer breeders, however, the Commission voted to reconsider the proposed rules at its next meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup>. A large show of force is expected from proponents and opponents at that meeting.

--Elections:

Vicente Gonzalez, endorsed by STPRA's Federal PAC to succeed Congressman Ruben Garza in the 15<sup>th</sup> District, was a landslide victor in the May 24<sup>th</sup> run-off election.

Representative Doug Miller (R) District 73, endorsed by STPRA's State PAC, was unsuccessful in a run-off challenge.

Of special note, Ernest Bailes, a Farm Bureau member and dairy farmer endorsed by the Farm Bureau, was successful in winning an open House seat for a district near Conroe.

In total, Speaker Joe Straus held a steady grip on his number of supporters in the House and is expected to easily win a fifth term as Speaker next January.

**These elections will be held on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Early voting is May 16<sup>th</sup> through May 20<sup>th</sup>. Please vote if you live in these districts!**

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