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Natural Resources

Texas studies freshwater loss, explores aquifer storage and recovery

July 28—As part of an interim charge to study freshwater loss in Texas, the House Natural Resources Committee is expected to meet this fall to examine aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) as a water storage method that could prevent loss to evaporation. ASR involves collecting water during wet periods and storing it underground in an aquifer from which it can be drawn during periods of peak demand.

According to the Texas Water Development Board, about 7.2 million acre-feet of water currently stored in surface water reservoirs evaporates in an average year. While surface reservoirs continue to feature prominently in the recently adopted 2017 state water plan, many consider ASR to have several advantages over reservoirs that justify its expanded use. In addition to resisting water loss through evaporation, ASR does not involve the acquisition and flooding of land above ground, which can be expensive and result in destruction of wildlife habitat and private property.

Although a few Texas municipalities have used ASR for a number of years, some say a principal challenge to more widespread implementation of it is a legal and regulatory framework for water policy that is not well adapted to the technology. In 2015, the 84th Legislature enacted [HB 655](#) by Larson, which resulted in several changes to the way ASR is regulated. The bill specified how ASR facilities must account for the water they inject and recover and the role of groundwater conservation districts in such projects. The new law establishes the same regulatory framework for all ASR projects, whether the source of the stored water is groundwater, surface water, or treated wastewater. The new law also prescribes measures designed to protect water quality in the receiving aquifer and modifies the requirement that water meet drinking water standards before being injected.

Learn more about ASR in Texas in the House Research Organization's focus report, [Addressing water needs using aquifer storage and recovery](#).