

SB 130 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Water

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Meeting Dates: 4/29, 5/4

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Delays sunset from January 2, 2022 to January 2, 2030 for pilot program allowing participating irrigation districts to change place of use of water within district boundaries without applying to the Water Resources Department for a temporary transfer.

Senate vote: Ayes, 29; Nays, 1--Heard.

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact.

REVENUE: No revenue impact.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History and purpose of pilot program
- Length of time needed to demonstrate program use and effectiveness
- Program implementation and potential use across all irrigation districts

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 2003, the Legislative Assembly authorized a pilot project allowing three irrigation districts to make annual place of use changes to water rights within their legal boundaries without obtaining authorization for a temporary transfer from the Water Resources Department (WRD). The pilot project required that districts meet standard water right transfer criteria and maintain records, including ensuring that there is no injury to other water rights or an expansion of the authorized irrigated acres.

According to WRD, only a small number of transfers were completed during the first years of the program, leading to insufficient data to assess the pilot project. In 2007, the legislature extended the pilot to 2009 (Senate Bill 89, 2007). The project was again extended in 2009 to 2016 and expanded to include 15 districts (Senate Bill 664, 2009). In 2015, Senate Bill 267 made some adjustments to the project, extended the sunset to January 2, 2022, and required a report to the Legislative Assembly by January 31, 2021.

Senate Bill 130 would extend the sunset on the pilot program to January 2, 2030.