



2015 Legislative Agenda

Protect Texas' State and Local Parks

From camping under the stars at Big Bend Ranch to Little League games on the local ball field, our state and local parks make life better here in Texas. They provide a place for families to spend time together, play sports, and learn about the great outdoors. Our parks protect the clean water we depend on and provide a home for some of Texas' most wondrous wildlife, like the black bear and the leatherback sea turtle. According to a Texas A&M study, each year our state parks contribute \$351 million in economic benefits and create 5,800 jobs statewide. Unfortunately, drought, wildfires, development threats, invasive species, aging infrastructure, and budget cuts are putting great strain on our parks system, jeopardizing Texans' access to our remarkable natural and recreational heritage. Environment Texas supports:

- Full funding of the Legislative Appropriations Request of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, including an additional \$25.3 million for state park operations and a total of \$31 million for the local parks grant program
- Appropriating \$6.5 million for parkland acquisition and development, including building campgrounds in the southern unit of Devils River State Natural Area and the Chinati Mountains, and protecting other parks from development encroachment
- Amending the Texas Constitution to ensure all revenues generated by the Sporting Goods Sales Tax go only to fund the parks system

More wind and solar energy

Texas is surrounded by clean energy options – the power of the sun, the movement of the wind blowing in west Texas

and off our coast, the heat of the earth, even the energy leaking from drafty windows in our homes and businesses. By using energy more efficiently and tapping our vast renewable resources, we can move to 100 percent clean energy that doesn't pollute and never runs out. Renewable energy companies employ over 55,000 Texans and wind energy saves enough water to meet the needs of 130,000 Texans every year. Environment Texas supports:

- Preserving tax incentives that support clean energy
- Maintaining Texas' renewable electricity standard
- Developing a state plan to curb carbon pollution from power plants
- Facilitating greater use of battery storage to support the use of even more wind and solar power

Minimize Damage From Oil and Gas Drilling

Drilling has created a lot of wealth for Texas, but it's come at a price. Amid historic drought, more than 110 billion gallons of water have been used for fracking in Texas since 2005 – enough to fill the Dallas Cowboys' stadium 141 times. Drilling activities in south Texas put more pollution in to the air than six oil refineries in Corpus Christi combined. Damage to roads, water contamination, and threats to wildlife are all taking a toll on our economy and environment. We need to take action to minimize the damage from fracking and protect our families. Environment Texas supports:

- Preserving the right of local governments to set standards for drilling in their communities
- Guaranteeing rights of groundwater conservation districts to have standing to contest wastewater disposal wells and to require drillers to get permits to use their water

- Banning the use of freshwater in fracking by 2020
- Banning flaring and venting of natural gas to protect public from air pollution
- Creating office of public advocate at the Railroad Commission
- Repealing high cost gas tax exemption
- Ensuring up-front financial accountability by requiring oil and gas companies to post higher bonds that reflect the true costs of drilling

Keep our air clean and healthy

Air pollution continues to cause serious health problems for Texas families. Industrial emissions from power plants, natural gas drilling and cars and trucks have led to 19 counties failing federal health standards for air quality. As a result, Texans suffer from an increased risk of a variety of health problems, including chronic respiratory disease, lung cancer, heart disease, and even damage to the brain, nerves, liver or kidneys. And it is our most vulnerable populations, including children and senior citizens, who are at the greatest risk. Environment Texas supports:

- Full funding for the Texas Emissions Reduction Program and other clean air programs, including AirCheckTexas Repair & Replacement Assistance Program
- Defending the public's ability to protect their neighborhoods by maintaining the contested case process and local enforcement authority
- Investing in infrastructure and providing incentives for plug-in vehicles

Keep our rivers flowing

Our rivers are a big part of what makes Texas great. They provide incredible recreational opportunities like swimming and tubing, support wildlife including fish and endangered whooping cranes, and are the lifeblood of coastal fisheries. Unfortunately, amid ongoing drought, pollution, excessive water withdrawals, the health of many of our rivers is at risk. We need to do more to encourage water conservation, protect critical watersheds from pollution, and ensure we leave sufficient water in our rivers to support recreation,

wildlife, and our fisheries. Environment Texas supports:

- Maintain funding of \$6 million for Water Conservation Education Grants, Agricultural Water Conservation Monitoring and Demonstration Projects for Near Term Alternative Water Supplies
- Providing funding for purchasing the development rights of private landowners in critical watersheds
- Tax breaks for water efficient products

Protect communities from pollution

The disasters at the fertilizer plant in West and chemical plant in La Porte remind us of the dangers workers and our communities face every day from the storage and use of hazardous chemicals. We need to do more to protect our communities. Environment Texas supports:

- Preserving communities' right to know about pollution and threats to their safety
- Defending the public's ability to protect their neighborhoods by maintaining the contested case hearing process and local enforcement authority
- Preserving the power of local governments to protect their communities from pollution, including from oil and gas drilling and factory farming

Reduce solid waste

In 2013, Texas sent more than 30 million tons of trash to the dump, straining landfill space, wasting resources and contaminating our land, air and water. Environment Texas supports:

- Developing a statewide program to reduce plastic bag use while preserving local authority
- Encouraging recycling by requiring a small deposit on containers—also known as the “bottle bill”
- Increasing penalty for illegal dumping
- Preventing the TCEQ from authorizing landfill permits unless it has the support of the neighboring community