

2017 Legislative Agenda



Get the Lead Out

Lead is a potent neurotoxin that affects how our children develop, learn, and behave. Yet across Texas, hundreds of schools have found lead in the drinking water. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 3695 and SB 1587 to get the lead out of water at school by removing lead service lines, installing NSF-certified filters on faucets or fountains used for drinking or cooking at school, testing water fully and properly, and providing public access to all data and remediation steps.

Clean Water

More than one-third of Texas rivers and streams aren't safe for swimming or fish because of water pollution, including from urban and agricultural runoff. Environment Texas:

- Supports HB 1536 and SB 2026 to direct the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to study the use of green stormwater infrastructure
- Supports HB 1334 to allow local governments to provide tax breaks for rainwater harvesting
- Supports SB 1796 and HB 3036 to prohibit discharge of sewage effluent into waterways that recharge the Edwards Aquifer
- Opposes HB 1643 to help factory farms hide pollution from public view

Water conservation

Water conservation is the cheapest, fastest and most environmentally responsible way to meet Texas' demand for water. Investing in water efficiency and conservation measures will

help protect Texas' rivers and is a better choice for meeting the state's water needs than building new reservoirs and adding pipelines to transfer water to distant consumers. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 1684 to require water utilities to designate an employee as the water conservation coordinator responsible for implementing the water conservation plan
- HB 2240 to require entities seeking state financial assistance for a water supply project have a time of day restrictions on outdoor watering in order to get that assistance

Clean Air

Despite decades of progress under the Clean Air Act, Texans across the state continue to breathe unhealthy air, leading to increased risk of premature death, asthma attacks and other adverse health impacts. Environment Texas:

- Supports SB 26 to reauthorize the Texas Emissions Reduction Program and provide incentives for plug-in electric vehicles
- Supports HB 1927 to create an alert system for notification of the release of toxic chemicals by a manufacturing facility
- Opposes SB 1045 to reduce rights of citizens in air pollution permitting cases

Parks and wildlife

Under the current budget for 2018-2019, Texas Parks and Wildlife will see a \$92.5 million short-fall, which will reduce hours of operation for many parks, close other parks altogether, delay critical repairs, and reduce support for local parks and playgrounds. And the development of new parks, such as Palo Pinto Mountains State Park near Fort Worth, will not happen. Environment Texas supports:

- Fully funding the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, including the Local Parks grant program
- HB 78 to permanently require that 94 percent of the Sporting Goods Sales Tax be appropriated for the state and local parks as was intended

Oil and gas

Oil and gas development has a significant impact on the quality of Texas' air, water and land. Unfortunately, the state agency responsible for regulating oil and gas in Texas, the Railroad Commission of Texas (RCT), has a poor track record of protecting the public from pollution. The elected commissioners receive millions of dollars in campaign contributions from the very industries they regulate. Too often RCT decisions benefit Big Oil at the expense of health and the environment. The Sunset Commission has found that the RCT's "actions have little deterrent effect" to prevent violations of state law. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 237 to change the name of the Railroad Commission to the Texas Energy Resources Commission
- HB 247 and SB 568 to require the Railroad Commission report information to the internet about enforcement actions taken against violators of environmental and safety laws
- HB 464 to reduce conflicts of interest at the Railroad Commission by reforming campaign finance practices
- SB 1868 to require the state to hold a public hearing if oil companies want to drill near schools or daycares

No Bees, No Food

Honey bees enable the production of at least 90 commercially grown crops in North America and contribute more than \$15 billion to the United States economy annually through their vital role in keeping fruits, nuts, and vegetables in our diets. In recent years, beekeepers report they're losing on average 30% of all honeybee colonies each winter — twice the loss considered economically tolerable. While a number of factors are impacting bee populations, including habitat loss and mites, scientists point to the increased use of and exposure to a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids ("neonics") as a major cause of the recent increase in bee deaths. Environment Texas:

- Supports HB 1535 to ban use of neonics along state highways and on other state property
- Supports HB 2600 to create a pollinator health committee to study the threats to bees and other pollinators and develop a plan to protect them
- Opposes SB 1172 to preempt local governments from protecting bees by regulating seeds treated with neonics

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. Wind and solar companies employ over 31,000 Texans and save more than 14.7 billion gallons of water every year. Environment Texas:

- Opposes SB 277 to restrict state support for wind energy near military facilities
- Supports SB 1552 to reauthorize state law to allow Texas college students to fund on-campus clean energy projects

Fighting Trash

Texas is being trashed. According to TxDOT's "Don't Mess With Texas" campaign, on our roads alone "approximately 435 million pieces of visible litter accumulate" each year. Discarded single-use plastic bags are often caught in trees or waterways, causing eyesores and threatening wildlife. Hundreds of thousands of tires are dumped illegally each year in Texas, posing risks to public health including mosquito-borne illnesses. Over 250 million household batteries, which contain toxic chemicals, are sent to Texas landfills each year, threatening groundwater. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 3482 to clarify that cities can adopt ordinances to limit use of single-use plastic bags
- HB 489, SB 570 and HB 3744 to fight illegal dumping of tires
- HB 1874 to create a battery recycling program
- SB 746 and HB 2092 to prevent grease and grit trap waste from being spread on land