



# 2018 Program Agenda

*Each year, Environment Texas sets out goals for the legislative session and beyond. In addition to helping us measure our progress, the program agenda lets decision-makers know which high-priority environmental items our members want us to tackle.*

## Clean Air

According to state records, Texas imposed penalties on less than 3 percent of illegal air pollution releases from industrial facilities 2011 through 2016, even though these incidents emitted more than 500 million pounds of pollutants. This pollution includes chemicals linked to health problems including asthma and cancer. For example, ExxonMobil broke clean air laws at its Baytown oil refinery and chemical plant near Houston more than 4,000 times over five years—compounding Texas’ pollution problems and endangering the health of nearby residents – yet the state enforcement against the company amounted to little more than a slap on the wrist.

Environment Texas is working to fight illegal air pollution by:

- Mobilizing fenceline communities through our Neighborhood Witness project.
- Filing federal lawsuits to compel refineries and chemical plants to cut their pollution.

## Get the Lead Out

Lead is a potent neurotoxin that affects how our children develop, learn, and behave. Yet 71% of Texas schools which have tested their drinking water have found lead. Environment Texas supports policies that get the lead out of water at school and early childhood programs by:

- Removing lead service lines, the largest single source of lead in water.
- Testing water fully and properly, and public access to all data and remediation steps.
- Immediate shut-off of outlets where water contains more lead than one part per billion until filters can be installed.

## Methane: UT’s Dirty Little Secret

From Hurricane Harvey to record-breaking heat, the dangers of global warming-fueled extreme weather are clear. Unfortunately, 9,000 oil and gas wells drilled on more than 2 million acres of land owned by the University of Texas produced the equivalent of 11.7 million tons of climate pollution between 2009 and 2014. This pollution carries the same short-term climate impact as 2.5 million cars or 3.4 coal-fired power plants in one year. Simple and affordable modifications to oilfield operations can cut methane emissions dramatically and affordably. For example, high-bleed pneumatic devices can be replaced with low-bleed or no-bleed pneumatic devices. ExxonMobil and other major oil companies recently announced plans to reduce emissions, but other companies that drill on UT land aren’t required to follow these best practices.

Environment Texas supports:

- UT setting a goal to cut oil and gas climate pollution on its land by 50% in 5 years.
- UT establishing a task force to identify best practices to achieve this goal.

## Environment Texas’ mission

*We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way. That’s the idea behind Environment Texas. We protect Texas’ air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.*

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## Flooding and water pollution

Heavy rains have brought significant damage to Texas in recent years, from flooding to polluted waters. Green stormwater infrastructure, include rainwater harvesting and permeable pavement, can help mitigate flooding and protect water quality, at less economic and environmental cost than traditional infrastructure.

Environment Texas is working to get Texas cities to encourage green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) by:

- Requiring all new developments and redevelopments include on-site detention and on-site water quality treatment for pollutant removal.
- Giving credit for using GSI to meet these requirements.

## 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. Bees also provide much of the additional value by pollinating alfalfa, clover and other crops upon which dairy and meat production are dependent. The alarming decline in pollinator populations over the past few decades is well documented. 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 as a major cause of the recent increase in bee deaths.

Environment Texas supports:

- Banning use of neonicotinoids along city roads, parks and other municipal properties.

## 100% renewable 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. Already, the city of Georgetown, the University of North Texas, and TxDOT (in the deregulated parts of the state) are using 100% renewable energy.

Environment Texas supports:

- Adoption of 100% renewable energy standards by Texas cities, universities, state agencies and corporations.
- Installing solar panels on Texas schools.
- Creating incentives and removing regulatory barriers to expand battery storage.

## 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:

- Ordinances to limit use of single-use items such as plastic bags and straws.
- Fees on plastic bottles to help fund litter clean-up.