



Your Winter Report

Four lawsuits prod polluters to clean up

Companies agree to reduce toxic emissions

In 2017, attorneys representing members of our national network made progress on four major lawsuits against polluting companies.

The impact of the decisions made in these cases will likely be felt across industries, deterring companies from violating environmental laws in other parts of the country.

Given the deep cuts in enforcement funding at the federal level, we're researching more cases in which companies are jeopardizing the environment by violating the law—and we're ready to take legal action to stop the pollution when necessary.

1. Texas members v. ExxonMobil

When we found evidence that ExxonMobil was releasing illegal air pollution at its Baytown, Texas, petrochemical complex, Environment Texas took Exxon to court.

In April 2017, a federal judge ordered Exxon to pay a \$19.95 million penalty for violating the Clean Air Act on 16,386 days, releasing more than 10 million pounds of illegal air emissions, including carcinogens.

2. Fla. members v. Pilgrim's Pride

Our state group filed suit against chicken producer Pilgrim's Pride over discharges of toxic wastewater into Florida's Suwannee River, which has been plagued by low dissolved oxygen levels and toxic algal blooms.

In November 2017, we reached a Clean Water Act settlement with the agribusiness to cease its pollution, upgrade equipment and pay a \$1.42 million penalty for its violations—\$1.3 million will be used to improve soil and water quality in the Suwannee Basin.



Credit: Jose Matos

▲ Our national network made progress on a set of lawsuits against polluting companies in 2017, including one against Pilgrim's Pride in Florida over allegations that the chicken producer contaminated the Suwannee River with toxic wastewater.

3. Pa. members v. ArcelorMittal

When residents of Monessen, Pa., complained of noxious odors, ill health effects and sootfall in their neighborhoods, our state affiliate filed suit against ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel company, to address hundreds of ongoing violations of the Clean Air Act at the company's Pittsburgh-area coke plant.

4. Mass. members v. Casella

Our state group in Massachusetts is in the midst of a lawsuit against Casella Waste Systems, a trash hauler with operations in 40 states, over contamination of drinking water wells and a nearby stream and wetlands. Eighty wells near a Casella-operated landfill in Southbridge, Mass., tested positive for lead and a suspected carcinogen.



Credit: Gashgeron via Shutterstock

Take action

We need your help to defend our environment. Take action online to urge our senators to protect our air, water and public lands.

www.EnvironmentTexas.org

◀ We're working to stop pollution and hold polluters accountable when they violate the laws that protect our environment.



Credit: Staff

You make the difference

As a member of Environment Texas, you're not only helping us defend our clean air, clean water and beautiful open spaces—you're winning real results for our environment in towns, cities, colleges and universities across our state.

Since our last update, we've made real progress in the face of unprecedented challenges. Your support has helped us not only defend the Clean Water Act, but call on local officials to remove lead from schoolchildren's drinking water. Our global warming team not only defended the Clean Power Plan, but did the research and advocacy it took to strengthen programs that cut carbon pollution from the Northeast to the West Coast.

In 2018, each campaign, each action and each small victory will help bring us another step closer to the greener, healthier world we want to live in. Thank you for making this vital work possible.

Luke Metzger
State Director

Your impact

Austin schools to get the lead out

Environment Texas is committed to getting the lead out of the 779 Texas schools where research has found lead contamination in the drinking water. Last fall, we had a major victory with the Austin Independent School District (AISD).

Environment Texas first asked AISD to address lead contamination in school drinking water back in February 2017, but the district failed to act. So we used a Public Information Act request to obtain the district's lead testing data and learned that nine AISD schools and facilities had tested positive for lead. After we shared this information with the media, AISD announced that they would make testing data available online, perform additional testing, and install filters on faucets found to have lead.

This is a great step forward, but there's more to do. In September, Environment Texas Research & Policy Center released a toolkit to give people the resources to take action locally, and all across the state, Environment Texas is working with PTAs, pediatricians, custodial staff and others to get the lead out.

Report: EPA cuts will impact local water quality

Our streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands are critical to our health and our quality of life. But when President Trump announced his federal budget, it included steep funding cuts to the programs and agencies charged with their protection.

A series of reports released by Environment America Research & Policy Center analyzed the proposed budget cuts and revealed how they would threaten coastal resiliency, remove protections for flood-absorbing wetlands, neglect funding for stormwater and sewage treatment, expose more Americans to toxic chemicals, and threaten the future health of important waterways, including Puget Sound, the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay.

In the new year, Environment Texas will continue to call for fully funding the programs that clean up and protect the waters we love. And with your support, you can be sure that you're making a difference on clean water.

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Credit: Lone Wolf Photography via Shutterstock

▲ Federal budget cuts threaten the health of many of our nation's iconic waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay.



Credit: U.S. Air National Guard

After Harvey: Protecting public health

When Hurricane Harvey pounded the Gulf Coast, Environment Texas stepped up to track the public health threats that persisted even as the flood waters receded, providing the people of east Texas with vital information for navigating the aftermath of the storm.

Knowing storms like Harvey will only become more frequent due to the effects of climate change, Environment Texas made recommendations to businesses and government organizations to help them avoid repeating the same mistakes that exacerbated the effects of Harvey.

Answers in the wake of the storm

As the people of Houston and the surrounding areas began to deal with the devastation the storm had wreaked on their communities, there were a lot of questions about water contamination, chemical fumes in the air, and the safety of the many chemical refineries in the area.

Environment Texas had answers. Neighborhood Witness, a database we set up to track toxic emissions from petrochemical facilities, tracked the millions of pounds of illegal air pollution coming from refineries and chemical plants in the Houston area. Environment Texas Director Luke Metzger toured the San Jacinto River Waste Pits, meeting with community members and helping collect water and soil samples, and Clean Water Advocate Brian Zabcik monitored sewage overflows and other water pollution resulting from the storm.

Metzger also appeared on MSNBC and CBS to share crucial information about public health threats, and research by Environment Texas Research & Policy Center was highlighted in major media outlets such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, Politico and Buzzfeed.

Building a more resilient Houston

Climate change is likely to cause even more severe weather events, and Environment Texas is working to make sure Hous-

ton and other communities in the path of major storms have the infrastructure to protect the public when disaster hits.

Environment Texas Research & Policy Center released six research pieces on everything from managing debris to toxic Superfund sites to sewage overflows, and Environment Texas is pushing to rebuild Houston with better stormwater infrastructure to reduce flooding and toxic runoff.

Shortly after the storm, Metzger met with the Chairmen of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Railroad Commission of Texas, and the Texas Water Development Board to recommend protection measures such as staging the shutdowns of refineries before and after hurricanes to reduce air pollution, flood-proofing oil and gas infrastructure, and other chemical security policies and regulations to protect public health when major storms hit.



Credit: J. Harrison via Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 3.0

▲ Permeable pavement that allows water to soak through is an example of Green Stormwater Infrastructure that could help mitigate flooding.

Texas Stormwater Scorecard

As Texas cities grow, the potential damage from floods becomes worse as more of the state's land is covered with buildings and roads that prevent rain from soaking into the ground where it falls. That's why more Texans are using building and landscaping features that can retain and reuse stormwater onsite. These features include rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavement, and rain cisterns, and are known as Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) and Low Impact Development (LID).

In September, Environment Texas Research & Policy Center released a scorecard evaluating GSI/LID policies in the state's five largest cities. While none of Texas's top cities achieved the highest possible score, the intent of this survey isn't to criticize them for what they haven't done, but to recommend what they could do next. Scores represent what percentage of the steps on our checklist have been implemented by each city:

1. Austin: 90%
2. San Antonio: 65%
3. Fort Worth: 60%
4. Houston: 50%
5. Dallas: 40%

For the full scorecard and in-depth explanations for each city's score, visit: www.EnvironmentTexasCenter.org

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Environment Texas

Our 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 of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Texas Citizen Lobby, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting 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.

Credit: Ivan Volozhanin via Shutterstock



Bee Friendly Food Alliance tops 240

We don't see many bees flying around in the winter, but we do see the fruits of their labor. Bees pollinate many of the world's most common crops—so when beekeepers in the U.S. reported losing 33 percent of their honeybee colonies last year, it was clear that losing the bees would have a devastating effect on our food supply.

Last year, Environment Texas and our national network launched the Bee Friendly Food Alliance, a coalition of chefs, restaurant owners and others in the restaurant industry, to make their voices heard to protect bees. After all, who knows better what we stand to lose without them? And by the end of 2017, more than 240 leaders in the restaurant industry had joined us.

This fall, chefs appeared alongside our staff at media events across the country to shine a spotlight on the Thanksgiving treats made possible by bees, including pumpkin pie, cranberry sauce and green bean casserole. With your support, we'll continue our work to ban the pesticides that are killing bees.

Support our efforts

Support our efforts to save the bees.

Donate online at:
www.EnvironmentTexas.org

◀ A recent study found that three-quarters of all honey on Earth is contaminated with neonicotinoids, a widely used class of pesticides known to harm bees. Help us build momentum to ban these bee-killing pesticides.