



2019 Legislative Agenda

Environment Texas is a statewide advocate for clean air, clean water and open spaces. We believe there's something special about Texas — something worth protecting and preserving for future generations. Whether it's swimming at Barton Springs on a hot day, paddling down the Trinity River or hiking through Big Bend National Park, Texas' natural wonders enrich our lives in countless ways. Yet the places we love and the environmental values so many of us share are too often threatened by powerful industries, neglect, and more. We have solutions to many of our environmental problems; we just need leadership to put them to work.

Hurricane Harvey

We're proud of how Texans came together to help their neighbors amid the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. With more global warming-fueled super storms on the horizon, we must work to build more resilient communities and protect our families from flooding and related toxic threats. Environment Texas supports:

- Protecting prairies and other open space to slow down flood waters
- Creating a statewide debris management plan with emphasis on landfill diversion and environmental protection
- Limiting flood and pollution problems from sand mining with stronger enforcement, erosion prevention measures and setback requirements
- Requiring retrofit of floating roof tanks, a major source of air pollution during Hurricane Harvey, with geodesic dome covers
- Restoring the public's right to know about dangerous chemicals stored near them
- Flood-proofing oil and gas infrastructure by requiring remote shut off valves and containment berms for all new wells in floodplains and labeling of storage tanks
- HB 100 (Johnson) to direct state agencies to plan for extreme weather

Clean water

From taking a dip in the local swimming hole to the water we drink from the faucet, we all want our natural waters and drinking water to be safe, healthy and plentiful. Environment Texas supports:

- Creating a state website with bacteria testing data for freshwater swimming holes (as we already do for Gulf beaches)
- Requiring new state buildings to use green stormwater infrastructure like rain gardens and green roofs
- Studying the use of green stormwater infrastructure as a water pollution reduction strategy
- Getting toxic lead out of school drinking water through mandatory testing and a grant program to help schools install filters
- Prohibiting discharge of sewage effluent into waterways that recharge the Edwards Aquifer
- Increasing funding for water conservation, including for a statewide public awareness program

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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Clean air

We look forward to the day where our air is safe and clean to breathe for all Texans, especially vulnerable populations like our kids and senior citizens. Environment Texas supports:

- SB 208 (Campbell) to double the current 440 yard requirement between concrete plants or quarries and existing residences, schools, and churches to 880 yards
- SB 271 (Watson) & HB 270 (Israel) to allow state employees to telecommute, reducing traffic and air pollution
- HB 245 (Farrar) to require air and water permits be posted online
- Establishing mandatory fines for violations of Clean Air Act permits and eliminating the “affirmative defense” which allows polluters to escape penalties for unauthorized pollution
- Reauthorizing the fees which fund the Texas Emissions Reduction Program
- Restoring funding for the LIRAP program, which enables low-income Texans to repair or replace their high-emission vehicles, and the Local Initiatives Program, which helps Texas cities comply with federal air quality requirements.
- Allowing cities to adopt local option taxes for transportation investments
- Expanding funding for public transportation and creating a long-term funding solution for sustainable transportation

Clean energy

Wind and solar power, energy efficiency and electric cars are reducing air pollution, conserving water, reducing electric bills and creating jobs. Environment Texas supports:

- Not discriminating against wind and solar energy in the Chapters 312 and 313 economic development programs
- Renewing the Light-Duty Motor Vehicle Purchase or Lease Incentive Program and providing \$10 million in incentives for Texans to purchase electric vehicles
- Requiring all new homes and commercial buildings to be “solar ready,” where either solar is installed during construction or the building is optimized to easily incorporate solar PV later.
- Raising the energy efficiency goal for electric utilities
- Allowing battery storage and demand response to be used as transmission assets by electric utilities.
- Expanding our state’s renewable energy standard to set a goal of 50% renewable electricity by 2030 and 100% by 2050.
- Adopting a solar homeowners’ bill of rights, including right to timely interconnection to the electric grid and protection against discriminatory fees
- HB 451 (Turner) to include LED light bulbs in the annual sales tax holiday for energy efficient products

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Food and the environment

Unsustainable farming practices can harm bees, pollute our waterways, and deplete the soil. We should make it easy for farmers to grow nutritious food for everyone and leave the land healthier than we found it. Environment Texas supports:

- SB 236 (Nelson) to promote community food gardens on state property
- HB 136 (González) to create a pollinator health committee to study the threats to bees and other pollinators and develop a plan to protect them
- Banning use of bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides along state highways and on other state property
- Creating incentives and support for farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices such as no-till planting, crop rotation, and planned grazing in order to improve soil health and store more carbon in the ground

Wildlife over waste

The “Don’t mess with Texas” campaign has been one of the most successful anti-littering campaigns ever. And yet too much trash still winds up along our roads, in our creeks, on our beaches, or in overflowing landfills, creating an eyesore and threatening wildlife and public health. To keep Texas beautiful, we need to prevent trash at the source. Environment Texas supports:

- Restoring right of local governments to restrict use of single use plastic bags and polystyrene (aka “Styrofoam”) cups and containers
- Fighting illegal dumping of tires
- HB 286 (Thompson) to produce a plan to stimulate the use of recyclable materials as a feedstock in manufacturing.

Protect our parks

Camping, fishing, hiking and nature viewing: our local and state parks protect some of the most beautiful places in the state and give us places to teach our kids about the great outdoors. Environment Texas supports:

- Fully funding the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department base and exceptional funding request, including additional funding for state parks, repairs to facilities damaged by Hurricane Harvey, to complete the development of Palo Pinto Mountains State Park and to fund the local parks grants program
- SJR 24 (Kolkhorst) to amend the Texas constitution to permanently authorize use of the Sporting Goods Sales Tax to fund state parks

Oil and gas

The oil and gas industry has been a boon to state revenues, but has led to pollution of our air and water. Environment Texas supports minimizing the damage from drilling by:

- SB 185 (Miles) to require reporting and public notification of oil and gas well fires, leaks and spills
- Eliminating loophole that exempts casinghead flared gas from taxation
- Studying methane emissions on public lands and developing recommendations on best practices to reduce pollution
- Requiring annual reporting on total volumes of wastewater
- Banning most forms of flaring and venting and requiring operators to identify and reduce methane leaks
- Raising the maximum penalty the Railroad Commission can assess from \$10,000 to \$25,000 per day
- Increasing bonding requirements to ensure that the oil and gas industry—rather than taxpayers, communities or families—pays the costs of the damage caused by drilling operations