



2021 Legislative Agenda



Fund our state 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. The passage of Proposition 5, to guarantee that the state sales tax on sporting goods goes towards funding our state and local parks and historic sites, will give the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) the ability to finally catch up on a huge backlog of repairs. But fixing parks is not enough. Demand for parks is skyrocketing. Our population has been booming, but the park system has not. Our existing parks are overcrowded at times, with visitors sometimes facing long lines to enter or even being turned away. Environment Texas supports:

- As recommended by the Sunset Commission, reauthorizing TPWD and having the agency develop a plan for land acquisition with clear and tangible goals
- Appropriating all of the Sporting Goods Sales Tax to state parks and historic sites
- Continuing Rider 32 to allow TPWD to carry forward unexpended balances for deferred maintenance and construction projects
- Allowing TPWD to have standing in contested cases over pollution discharge permits and other potential impacts to parkland
- HCR 3 (VanDeaver) to study adding the Northeast Texas Trail into the state park system

Stop concrete pollution

By failing to follow best practices, too many Aggregate Production Operations (APOs) are causing significant harm to public health and the environment in Texas. Gravel pits and quarries can permanently scar the land and pollute groundwater. Rock crushing facilities release crystalline silica, a known carcinogen that can cause silicosis, a chronic disease that scars lung tissue. Concrete batch plants, often located in heavily populated neighborhoods, can harm the public with noise, light and air pollution. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 56 (Johnson) to setback operations 880 yards from property lines
- HB 291 (Murr) to improve reclamation of quarries
- HB 65 (Johnson) to require written notice of a standard permit
- HB 289 (Collier) to allow representatives of a school, place of worship, licensed day-care center, hospital, or medical facility or a person residing within 880 yards of a proposed plant to request a hearing
- HB 416 (Walle) to include detailed plot plans in applications for standard permits for concrete batch plants

Clean Air

We look forward to the day where all Texans can breathe safe and clean air, especially vulnerable populations like children and senior citizens. Despite progress in recent years, air pollution from cars and trucks, petrochemical facilities, power plants, concrete batch plants and more causes thousands of premature deaths each year, as well as inducing a host of human health issues including asthma and cancer. We need the state of Texas to hold polluters accountable and fund programs to reduce air pollution. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 351 (Talarico) to improve air quality in schools
- SB 126 (Johnson) and HB 711 (Perez) to develop safety standards for above-ground petrochemical storage tanks
- Establishing mandatory fines for violations of Clean Air Act permits and eliminating the “affirmative defense” which allows polluters to escape penalties for unauthorized pollution
- SB 87 (Miles) to require TCEQ to consider the cumulative effects of air contaminant emissions in the permitting process.
- Requiring retrofit of floating roof tanks, a major source of air pollution during Hurricane Harvey, with geodesic dome covers
- Requiring air and water permits be posted online

Clean Water

From taking a dip in the local swimming hole to the water we drink from the faucet, we all want our water to be safe, healthy and plentiful. Environment Texas is working to protect our waterways from pollution with nature-based infrastructure, such as rain gardens and green roofs, and to protect our drinking water. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 186 (Zwiener) to provide a property tax break for installing rainwater harvesting or graywater systems
- Creating a nature-based infrastructure financing program within the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to fully fund community projects

- Reducing Texans’ exposure to toxic PFAS and PFOA “forever chemicals” by setting drinking water standards, improving disclosure requirements for shipping and disposal, and monitoring the health effects of PFAS among impacted communities
- Limiting flood and pollution problems from sand mining with stronger enforcement, erosion prevention measures and setback requirements
- 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 nature-based infrastructure like rain gardens and constructed wetlands
- Protecting children’s health by getting toxic lead out of school drinking water
- Prohibiting discharge of sewage effluent into waterways that recharge the Edwards Aquifer
- Increasing funding for water conservation, including for a statewide public awareness program
- Increasing county authority over floodplain management to allow counties to enforce stream buffers and other nature-based flood management tactics

Wildlife Over Waste

Every day, people throw away tons of single-use cups, containers and other plastic “stuff.” Among the worst forms of plastic pollution is polystyrene foam (the stuff most of us call Styrofoam), which never fully degrades. Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our oceans and rivers and threaten wildlife for centuries. Environment Texas:

- Supports HB 176 (Zwiener) to restore the right of local governments to protect wildlife from plastic pollution
- Opposes HB 631 (Darby) to preempt the rights of local governments to regulate landfills
- Supports fighting illegal dumping of tires
- Supports giving every consumer and small business access to the parts, tools and service information they need to repair products so we can keep things in use and reduce waste.

100% renewable energy

Texas is home to an abundance of clean energy options — the sun's power, the mighty winds of west and coastal Texas, the earth's heat, and even the energy leaking from drafty windows in our homes and businesses. Despite our wealth of resources, renewable energy supplies just about 25% of our state's electricity (almost half the percentage used by Oklahoma); and while we rank first in solar energy potential, Texas only ranks fourth for installed solar.

By using energy more efficiently and tapping our vast renewable resources, we can move to 100% clean energy: energy that doesn't pollute, doesn't contribute to climate change, and never runs out. Environment Texas:

- Supports SB 304 (Eckhardt) to set a goal for 100% clean electricity by 2035
- Supports adopting a Solar Customer Protection Act to make it easier for Texans to go solar
- Opposes HB 433 (King) to impose a tax on energy sources other than natural gas
- Opposes discriminating against wind and solar energy in the Chapter 313 economic development program
- Supports 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.
- Supports SB 243 (Eckhardt) to boost utility energy efficiency programs
- Supports SB 170 (Blanco) to study expanding our state's renewable energy standard to generate 50% of the state's electricity from clean sources by 2030 and 100% by 2050.
- Supports investing in additional transmission lines to bring wind and solar power to our cities
- Supports clarifying and encouraging utilities and third-parties to utilize energy storage and other alternatives like energy efficiency, demand response and renewable onsite generation to provide reliability services;
- Supports clarifying the right of local governments to partner with a Retail Electric Provider to procure green power on behalf of interested residents and businesses

Reducing pollution from oil and gas

From the huge amount of water required for oil and gas extraction, to the frequent and damaging wastewater spills and the seizure of family farms and ranches for pipeline construction, Texans are increasingly concerned about the serious damage oil and gas production causes to our air, water, land, and climate. Environment Texas:

- Supports SB 127 (Johnson), SB 310 (Eckhardt) and HB 878 (Hinojosa) to phase out tax breaks for fracked gas.
- Supports HB 896 (Reynolds) to banning most forms of flaring and venting and requiring operators to identify and reduce methane leaks
- Opposes HB 884 (Harris) to preempt cities from banning gas hookups in new buildings
- Supports requiring reporting and public notification of oil and gas well fires, leaks and spills
- Supports eliminating loophole that exempts casinghead flared gas from taxation
- Supports requiring annual reporting on total volumes of wastewater
- Supports HB 1043 (Anchia) to raise the maximum penalty the Railroad Commission can assess from \$10,000 to \$25,000 per day
- Supports 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
- Supports 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



Destination: Zero Carbon

Transportation is now America's number one source of global warming pollution, with greenhouse emissions from cars, trucks, buses and other vehicles surpassing every other source. We simply can't solve global warming without changing how Americans get around. We need to make it easier for Texans to purchase, drive and charge electric cars. We need to provide funding for school districts and transit agencies to purchase electric buses. And we need to reduce the need to drive by making it easier, cheaper, safer and more enjoyable to travel on foot, bike or public transit. Environment Texas:

- Supports making sure all Texas Emissions Reduction Program funds go to support clean air, including expanding funding for electric vehicle rebates
- Supports modifying the Clean School Bus program to prioritize electric buses and directing the Public Utility Commission to adopt rules to remove barriers for schools to install charging infrastructure, solar and batteries.
- Opposes HB 427 (King) to assess an annual \$200 fee on electric vehicles
- Supports HB 391 (Israel) to allow state employees to telecommute, reducing traffic and air pollution
- Supports HB 443 (Israel) to require drivers to stop and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians
- 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
- Creating more walkable neighborhoods including by reducing minimum lot sizes and eliminating parking requirements

- Opposes HJR 21 (Craddick), which would take Rainy Day funds to build roads and other infrastructure for oil and gas development

Save the Bees

Bees are dying off at an unsustainable rate, with serious consequences for our natural world. They play a vital role as pollinators, and losing them would have a devastating ripple effect across all ecosystems. That's why we're working to expand bee habitats and stop the use of bee-killing pesticides. Environment Texas supports:

- HB 520 (Beckley) to require utilities, after they dig along state highways, to install native and pollinator-friendly plants
- Establishing a voluntary pollinator-friendly designation for solar farms
- Directing the Texas Military Department to follow the recommendations of the Department of Defense Pollinator Conservation Reference Guide in order to protect pollinator habitat on state military installations
- Establishing community food and pollinator gardens on state property
- Creating a pollinator health committee to study the threats to bees and other pollinators and develop a plan to protect them
- Create no-spray zones around schools, day cares, hospitals, neighborhoods, and waterways and prohibit pesticide application when nearby wildflowers are in bloom
- Banning use of bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides along state highways and on other state property