



Fall Report

Landmark water legislation signed into law

Bill more than doubles investment in water conservation

In a move that could provide significant help for Texas rivers, Gov. Rick Perry signed landmark water legislation into law.

In addition to revamping the Texas Water Development Board and creating a new water infrastructure fund, HB 4 more than doubles the state's investment in water conservation, with as much as 30 percent of the funding going toward water conservation. If voters approve a related constitutional amendment in November, the state will loan billions of dollars to farmers, businesses and others to help conserve water.

Applause for Gov. Perry

"We applaud the governor for signing this historic bill into law," said Environment Texas Director Luke Metzger. "The drought has underscored that we can't continue with business as usual, and HB 4 wisely makes a big increase in conservation as a strategy toward meeting Texas' water needs. But the job doesn't end there. Our rivers—and the recreationalists and wildlife that depend on them—are suffering. We call on the governor to appoint water board members who will maximize conservation and work to protect our precious rivers."

Conservation comes first

We've also launched a door-to-door campaign to press the governor to direct the Texas Water Development Board to maximize investments in conservation and avoid funding water projects with significant environmental harm. We sent the governor



Env. + Lance Willett/Creative Commons

▲ Whooping cranes in the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

a letter signed by more than 80 legislators, non-profit leaders, small business owners, farmers and faith leaders urging him to pursue a "balanced solution that improves the efficiency of water use and leaves more water in our rivers and aquifers to support the ecosystems that depend on water."

In addition to HB 4, the governor signed several other important bills to promote greater water conservation. SB 198 blocks

homeowners associations from preventing members from installing drought-resistant landscaping. HB 1461 requires water utilities to tell their customers how much water they lose to leaking pipes.

"We need to embark on a more sustainable path for Texas' water future," said Metzger. "We need to invest in projects that cut waste, maximize conservation and protect our rivers."



governor.state.tx.us

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For more information on our efforts to save Texas rivers, visit www.EnvironmentTexas.org and follow us on Facebook at: [Facebook.com/EnvironmentTexas](https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentTexas).

◀ Gov. Perry signs the historic HB 4 water legislation into law



Staff

To our members

The 83rd regular session of the Legislature ended in May, and I'm proud to announce we got quite a bit done for Texas' environment. We stopped the closure of 20 state parks and restored funding for the local parks grant program. We more than doubled the state's investment in water conservation, leaving more water available for our precious rivers. And we helped create a new \$5 million state rebate program to help Texans buy electric cars.

Environment Texas and our members played a key role in these and other victories. Together, we generated thousands of emails, phone calls and letters to lawmakers at key points during the session. We placed an ad in the Texas Tribune using photos of our supporters' families enjoying our parks. We built coalitions with more than 100 mayors, farmers, small business leaders, tourism officials and faith leaders. And at dozens of committee hearings and individual meetings with lawmakers, we made the case for protecting Texas' environment.

Thanks for being with us.

Luke Metzger
Director

Recent action

Texas in last place for protecting ocean waters

Texas has tied for last place in working to protect state ocean waters, according to a report released by Environment Texas, the Marine Conservation Institute and Mission Blue. The SeaStates report is the first national ranking of coastal states' efforts to protect their ocean waters with "no-take" Marine Protected Areas, the best tool to help oceans thrive.

"Despite the stunning views off South Padre Island and rare glimpses of dolphins and sea turtles that so many of us love, Texas is tied for last place for ocean protection," said Dani Neuharth-Keusch, field associate with Environment Texas. "None of our coastal waters are currently protected by no-take Marine Protected Areas."

Free from fishing, oil drilling, and other extractive uses, no-take Marine Protected Areas allow areas to thrive and recover their former abundance and health. Environment Texas recommends that the state consider designating the coastal waters off the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve as our first no-take Marine Protection Area. The state should then embark on an open process of identifying other areas worthy of full protection in our state waters.

Houston to purchase more renewable energy

In June, Houston Mayor Annise Parker announced an agreement to increase the purchase of renewable energy to cover half of municipal electric demand. The purchase makes Houston the largest purchaser of renewable energy in the nation.

"From promoting electric vehicles to adopting some of the strongest energy efficiency standards in the country, Houston is a rising star among clean energy cities," said Environment Texas Director Luke Metzger.

A report by Environment Texas Research & Policy Center calculated that by 2030, improvements in efficiency and expanded solar power in the Houston metro area could reduce demand for electricity from fossil fuel sources by enough to power 627,000 Houston homes; while expanded deployment of electric vehicles would avoid consumption of 104 million gallons of gasoline annually.

The climate is changing – are your investments?

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▲ Families enjoying a day at the Gulf Coast. Environment Texas is fighting for greater coastal protection.

What President Obama's climate plan means for Texas

On June 25, President Obama announced a climate plan that will set limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency and increase the nation's commitment to renewable energy. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, record drought in many states, and wildfires in Texas, the president's plan to address global warming was loudly applauded by Environment Texas and many others.

"All of us who have felt the effects of global warming, or simply worried about what's in store for our kids, can take comfort in knowing that President Obama has put the nation on a path toward a cleaner, healthier and safer future," said Rachel Stone, clean energy attorney with Environment Texas

More heat waves, wildfires, drought

Left unchecked, global warming is projected to bring Texas more extreme heat waves, drought and wildfires. Scientists have warned that the window is rapidly closing for making the necessary cuts in carbon pollution to protect future generations from the worst consequences of global warming. To respond to this threat, the president's plan contains several key components. It will:

- **Limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants.** The president directed the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which currently lack any such federal limits, despite being the largest single-source of the carbon pollution fueling global warming.
- **Invest in energy efficiency.** New efficiency measures for buildings and new appliances will cut carbon pollution by reducing our overall energy demand.
- **Build more renewable energy.** The plan focuses on expanding production of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar, especially on public lands.

- **Support affected communities.** The president's plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for and recover from the impacts of global warming.
- **Rebuild U.S. leadership internationally.** The president's plan calls for the U.S. to actively engage in international efforts to address global warming.

Focus on carbon pollution

Environment Texas offered special praise for the president's pledge to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants. More than 3.2 million Americans submitted public comments last year in support of the president setting limits on carbon pollution from power plants.

"Carbon pollution from power plants is a huge part of the global warming problem. President Obama acknowledged this and mapped out a plan for cleaning up this pollution," said Stone. "We also know that this plan is just one important step in a multi-year effort, and that the proof of the plan's success will be in the pudding."



Daniel Borman/Creative Commons

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To learn more about our work to curb global warming, visit: www.EnvironmentTexas.org

▲ *President Obama speaks to a group of students about the need for alternative energies.*



Center for American Progress

Jim Hightower supports Save Texas Rivers campaign

This summer, Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas, contacted columnist and activist Jim Hightower, asking him if he would support our Save Texas Rivers campaign by helping us write a letter to our members. Being a Texas native and an avid environmentalist, he agreed and told us why he cares about saving our rivers.

Hightower grew up near the Oklahoma border in Denison, and the banks of Lake Texoma and the Red River were his playgrounds. He spent his boyhood along these waterways, interacting with wildlife and the natural world. Given that these rivers helped shape who he is today, he's been alarmed by the recent state of our ailing waterways, due to drought and water waste.

"It's been unbelievably disheartening to see once-rushing rivers dry up to nothing more than cracked, scorched earth—dead fish all that remain," he said. "I knew I had to ensure that someone was serving as a voice for our ailing rivers. And I've found the loudest voice on this issue to be that of Luke and his team."

It's critical that in the work we do, we have people like Hightower on our side. For years, he has served as a voice for a number of critical issues, and Environment Texas is happy he's joined our call to cut down on water waste and save our rivers.

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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. We focus exclusively 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.

Court rejects Exxon bid to dismiss suit

A federal court rejected, for the second time, an attempt by ExxonMobil Corporation and two subsidiaries to get rid of a lawsuit filed against them by Environment Texas and the Sierra Club. The lawsuit alleges thousands of violations of the Clean Air Act at the nation's largest oil refinery and chemical plant complex in Baytown. In a one-page order, U.S. District Judge David Hittner of the Southern District of Texas formally adopted the recommended ruling on Exxon's motion for summary judgment issued by Magistrate Judge Stephen Smith on April 3, 2013.

Exxon argued that citizens cannot sue when state and federal agencies have already addressed—or even when they have decided not to address—the problem, calling the lawsuit a case of “second-guessing.”

“The court’s ruling vindicates the rights of citizens affected by air pollution to bring polluters to justice when state and federal agencies simply are not getting the job done,” said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas.



Louis Vest

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City of Houston to purchase more renewable energy; Landmark water legislation signed into law, and more.

◀ *ExxonMobil's Baytown refinery*