



## Your Winter Report

# Victory: Texans vote ‘yes’ for \$1 billion for state parks

By Luke Metzger, executive director

On Nov. 7, Texans voted for a historic investment of \$1 billion to create new state parks across Texas.

If you believe the stereotype, Texans don’t care much about the environment, especially lands protected and managed by the government. That stereotype fails to explain, though, why so many Texans spend hot days tubing down the river in Guadalupe River State Park and cool(er) fall and winter days hiking Enchanted Rock and Big Bend Ranch State Park.

Texas state parks are also home to the state’s iconic bluebonnets, cypress trees and mockingbirds. Countless Texas kids, at some point or another, have had a photo taken in a field of bluebonnets, which flourished as a result of Lady Bird Johnson’s 1960s-era campaign to protect Texas wildflowers.

## Texans unite behind state parks

Now Texans of all backgrounds—urban and rural, newcomer and fifth generation, Republican, Libertarian and Democrat—have come together for another great outdoor cause: making sure more of Texas’ incredible wildlands stay wild and accessible to current and future generations of Texans and visitors. Gov. Greg Abbott expressed his support for the state parks expansion the morning of Election Day when he reminded Texans to get to the polls.

Environment Texas led the campaign for the expansion, and benefited from the coincidence of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Texas State Park System in 2023, as well as



Environment Texas staff in Austin’s Pease Park with state Sen. Sarah Eckhardt (third from right) and other coalition members.

a surplus in the state budget.

Most importantly, we worked with fellow state park enthusiasts and supporters of all backgrounds, such as influential Dallas businessman and conservative activist Doug Deason and Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter and Texas native Kacey Musgraves, who narrated our video promoting the expansion of Texas’ state park system.

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**Thanks  
for making it  
all possible**

## State-by-state progress: Wind and solar energy tripled over past decade

In 2022, the United States produced more than three times as much solar, wind and geothermal power than the country did in 2013, with growth in all 50 states. That's according to "Renewables on the Rise 2023," an online dashboard unveiled on Oct. 11 by our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center and Frontier

Tim O'Connor



Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy, tours a warehouse rooftop with solar panels. Our latest Renewables on the Rise dashboard showed that renewable energy has tripled in the U.S. over the past decade.

Group. You can check out the Renewables on the Rise 2023 dashboard and see data for Texas on our website.

"Abundant and clean renewable energy sources, most notably wind and solar, are increasingly playing a leading role in how we power our lives," said Johanna Neumann, senior director of Environment America Research & Policy Center's Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy.

"The sooner we power our lives with renewable energy, the better it will be for our health and our planet."

The Renewables on the Rise 2023 dashboard details progress over the past decade in six areas—wind, solar, electric vehicles, electric vehicle charging, energy efficiency and battery storage—that are key elements in the transition to a future powered by clean and renewable resources.

The data compiled for the 2023 dashboard predates the impact of expanded clean energy tax credits and other new federal incentives. Coupled with state clean energy goals and other programs, the federal incentives should spark even greater adoption of renewable energy in 2024 and beyond.

## Victory: Amazon announces end of plastic-padded shipping bags

In July 2023, Amazon announced that it is "phasing out padded bags containing plastics in favor of recyclable alternatives."

The eventual end of the blue and white plastic mailing envelopes is welcome news. Most plastic is landfilled, burned in incinerators, or broken into small pieces in the environment, rather than being recycled. Plastics have been found in nearly every corner of the globe, as well as in human bodies, potentially with harmful impacts.

Amazon is changing its practices after Environment Texas worked with PIRG and other allies to call on the company to reduce its single-use plastic packaging. Similar actions also have resulted in 1 in every 3 Americans living in a state with a ban of at least one type of single-use plastic.

Thanks to your action and support, we'll continue to urge companies to reduce wasteful plastic packaging.

## 1 million Americans tell power plants to clean up their act

Coal- and gas-fired power plants aren't just bad for your health and that of your loved ones. They're also a major source of the pollution that's warming our planet, causing deadly heat waves, drought and worsening storms and wildfires.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently proposed new limits on climate pollution from coal and gas plants. That's why Environment America and our partners delivered one million comments from Americans who want power plants to clean up their act.

Of the 50 U.S. facilities that emit the most greenhouse gas pollution into our air, 45 are power plants. Together, those 45 power plants emitted 28% of all greenhouse gases from electricity generation nationwide, while generating only 11% of the nation's power.

This is a problem we can solve. We must require America's biggest polluters to clean up their act, instead of continuing to harm our climate and our health, and we shouldn't allow new power plants to make these problems worse.

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmenttexas.org>.



### Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment Texas or Environment Texas Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentTexas.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentTexas.org)



Ben Masters, used by permission

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## \$1 billion investment for state parks

To make our case to the public, we found that Texas ranks 35th in the nation for per capita state park acreage, behind Florida, South Carolina and Kansas.

If there's anything Texans don't want, it's to be 35th in the nation in something we care about.

This statistic featured prominently in our report, "A Most Valuable Legacy: Investing in the next 100 years for Texas' state parks system," and it ended up cited repeatedly by Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission Chairman and founder of truck stop convenience store chain Buc-ee's Arch "Beaver" Aplin III and others over the course of the campaign.

We then successfully rallied state lawmakers of all political persuasions to pass a bill putting our idea on the ballot this fall.

And now, with more than 76% of voters supporting the measure, Texas has committed to the biggest investment in nature and conservation that the state has ever seen.

A few years ago it seemed like a hugely improbable dream to devote \$1 billion to the state parks. Now, with help from a wide range of bipartisan supporters, it's a reality.

From Lady Bird's bluebonnets and the 1980s "Don't Mess with Texas" anti-littering campaign to this latest victory for state parks, Texans have demonstrated that they care deeply about protecting the wild places that make Texas so special.

We are proud to be part of protecting Texas' natural heritage for the next 100 years and beyond.

Environment Texas Campaign Associate Andrea Laureano helped build the coalition to over 90 organizations endorsing Prop 14, including REI, L.L. Bean and the Access Fund. She also held news conferences across the state to earn widespread media coverage for the initiative.



Chris Sanchez

## Featured staff



Kimball Nelson

Luke Metzger  
Executive Director

Luke is a leading voice in Texas for clean air, clean water, clean energy and open space. Luke has led successful campaigns to win permanent protection for the Christmas Mountains of Big Bend; to compel Exxon, Shell and Chevron Phillips to cut air pollution at three Texas refineries and chemical plants; and to boost funding for water conservation and state parks. The San Antonio Current has called Luke "long one of the most energetic and dedicated defenders of environmental issues in the state." He has received the President's Award from the Texas Recreation and Parks Society for his work to protect Texas parks, and was chosen for the inaugural class of "Next Generation Fellows" by the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at UT Austin. Luke, his wife, son and daughter are working to visit every state park in Texas.



Environment Texas and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.



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# Environment Texas

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## Your 2024 Winter Report

### 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.

### Three surprising facts about bees

Most bees in the U.S. live very different lives than you may have heard. Here are three facts about wild bees that might surprise you:

**1. They don't all hail the queen.** European honeybees may be headed by a queen bee, but they're more the exception than the rule—more than 75% of all bee species are solitary and don't have a queen.

**2. They don't all make honey.** Bumblebees can make small batches of a honey-like

substance, and the cellophane bee brews a beer-like beverage from fermented pollen and agave nectar, but no wild bee produces the kind of honey that we eat.

**3. They face extinction.** Wild bees may be wildly diverse, but they all deal with the same threats: climate change, habitat loss and the widespread use of bee-killing pesticides.

And here's one more fact: Your support of Environment Texas gives our team of researchers, advocates and organizers the resources we need to win protections for all bees.

Together, we're calling on major corporations to stop selling bee-killing pesticides, urging lawmakers to expand bee-friendly habitat, and providing the public with tips and guides to help us all do our part to make the world a little more welcoming to bees.

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*Learn more fun facts about bees and how you can take action to save the bees on our website.*



Dave Angelini