



2025 Texas Legislative Agenda

The Sierra Club's legislative agenda for the 89th Texas Legislature include specific goals in the following priority areas:

- Priority 1: Community Protections
- Priority 2: Clean, Reliable, Affordable Energy For All
- Priority 3: Parks, Wildlife, and Land
- Priority 4: Water Resources Management & Protection
- Priority 5: Local Democracy & Voting Rights

Priority 1: Community Protections

Communities across Texas are suffering from pollution, generation after generation. It has to stop. There are no sacrifice zones without sacrificed people. Every Texan deserves to breathe clean air and live in a healthy and safe environment. The Sierra Club prioritizes bills that will address the adverse impact pollution has on communities, especially those on the frontline which are disproportionately communities of color.

Our main goals include:

- Legislative efforts that increase funding and improve protections and processes overseen by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality including:
 - Expands and improves air quality monitoring along the Gulf Coast and in the Permian Basin, including for Hydrogen Sulfide, Methane, Ozone and speciated monitors for PM 2.5;

- Requires consideration of cumulative impacts, improved community monitoring, and environmental justice in state permitting decisions;
- Supports improved regulations and siting of cement plants, concrete batch plant and aggregate operations;
- Ends affirmative defense, and Maintenance, Shutdown and Start-up practices that pollute frontline communities;
- Requiring the TCEQ to develop health-based standards on hydrogen sulfide pollution.
- Improve oversight and regulation of oil and gas activities by TCEQ and the Railroad Commission of Texas by:
 - Assuring improved plugging of orphan wells by taking advantage of federal funding, increasing financial assurance requirements for oil and gas wells and limiting plugging extensions on inactive wells;
 - Limit the time period that railroad commissioners can accept contributions to the same election period allowed for statewide judicial candidates or officeholders, and limiting contribution amounts to the same amounts allowed for statewide judicial candidates or officeholders;
 - Controlling emissions of methane and eliminating the practice of routine flaring and venting;
 - Increasing maximum administrative penalties on oil and gas facilities from \$10,000 to at least \$25,000 and up to \$40,000, the same level as at TCEQ;
 - Prioritizing onsite reuse of fracked “produced” wastewater;
 - Creating a process for a State Action Plan to implement federal methane standards.

Priority 2: Clean, Reliable, Affordable Energy For All

The solutions to our climate and pollution crises are right in front of us, but our elected leaders have not kept up with the times. Advances in renewable energy, energy storage, geothermal energy, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency need better policy support at the state level for Texas to make them real solutions. Our transmission system needs upgrading to get cleaner forms of power to and from homes and businesses. Continued funding for the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan is also a priority. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act represent a unique opportunity to grow clean energy and electrify transportation, and reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide and we must take advantage of these federal funds in a way that

Contacts: Cyrus Reed, Legislative and Conservation Director, Cyrus.Reed@sierrclub.org, 512-740-4086
 Evgenia Spears, Water Program Coordinator, Evgenia.Spears@sierraclub.org
 Matt Johnson, Deputy Director, Matthew.Johnson@sierraclub.org

prioritizes impacted communities. The Sierra Club prioritizes bills that enable these technologies in a way that supports good jobs and includes a just transition from fossil fuel industries.

- Create an Integrated Resource Planning Process at the four non-ERCOT utilities so that all future supply and demand-side resources can be considered equitably in a public process;
- Increase monitoring and enforcement tools at the PUCT, including for the gas supply;
- Create a more transparent process for interconnection of large loads like data centers, bitcoin and AI, consider fairer cost allocation so these loads pay their fair share, require energy efficiency, water conservation, noise mitigation and self-generation standards, and require that “flexible” loads like Bitcoin must register as controllable load resources that can be controlled by ERCOT;
- Oppose efforts to further subsidize fossil fuel plants through state-backed incentives or capacity market schemes;
- Protect agricultural and construction workers from extreme weather with rest break and other policies that assure continued production while saving lives;
- Make our building codes climate resilient by updating our statewide overall and energy building codes to the latest national standards, and ensure counties have the same powers as cities to adopt codes, require inspections, and enforce rules to save energy, save water, and protect against floods and hurricanes;
- Increase energy efficiency savings and distributed energy resource opportunities and programs
 - Require all private utilities to achieve a goal of reducing peak energy by at least 1% and reduce overall energy use by 1% of sales by 2030 through energy efficiency programs;
 - Improve energy savings programs, outreach and reporting requirements at public municipal utilities and electric cooperatives to encourage them to meet a similar goal as private utilities;
 - Continue and Improve energy use and savings reporting from state agencies, universities and political subdivisions;
 - Create a market-based program for residential and small business demand reduction at times of peak energy use;
 - Expand new programs to help residential consumers on payment assistance and lowering energy burdens, including by creating a new state income-based assistance program;

- Clarify rules that allow third-parties and customers to utilize electric storage, energy efficiency, demand response, and renewable onsite generation to provide reliability services and participate fully in energy markets;
- Create a Texas Energy Efficiency Council so that state agencies, private and public utilities and other stakeholders can coordinate and expand efficiency programs;
- Bolster the transmission process at the Public Utility Commission and ERCOT to resolve constraints that impact generation, and to enable economic transmission and bulk transmission projects - including high voltage lines - to proceed more readily;
- Increase Resiliency Measures at Private and Public Utilities to help Texans survive weather extremes, including finally funding Backup Power Packages approved by voters in 2023;
- Increase Renewable Energy Equitably
 - Create a Clean Energy Economic Development and Worker Training Taskforce to assure a just transition for workers into new industries including off-shore wind;
 - Oppose efforts to make it harder to grow renewable energy in Texas through market changes or burdensome permitting requirements.
- Insurance Reform: Support efforts to increase insurance protections for Texas homeowners and small businesses from climate extremes like floods, hurricanes and fires, and consider changes to create pooled insurance policies for resiliency from extreme weather to lower insurance rates.

Priority 3: Parks, Wildlife, and Land

Public land belongs to the people, but it doesn't look that way right now. Oil and gas companies are allowed to drill in state parks, pipelines can cross critical wildlife management areas, and polluting corporations can abuse eminent domain provisions to snatch up land for profit. Sierra Club prioritizes bills that will put Texas lands back on a path that protects and preserves it, and will seek reforms at the Department of Agriculture, Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board and Parks and Wildlife to ensure adequate funding for healthy soils, wildlife and parks, and proper enforcement of pesticide use. In addition, we will support efforts to increase conservation of lands and waters through state agency programs and other incentives.

Contacts: Cyrus Reed, Legislative and Conservation Director, Cyrus.Reed@sierraclub.org, 512-740-4086
 Evgenia Spears, Water Program Coordinator, Evgenia.Spears@sierraclub.org
 Matt Johnson, Deputy Director, Matthew.Johnson@sierraclub.org

- Fund soil conservation programs at the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board through the Smart Climate Initiative and conservation easements at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to encourage farmers, ranchers and private landowners to improve soil health through sequestration of carbon and nutrient retention and preserve habitats;
- Protect pollinators by funding the planting of pollinator-friendly landscaping on state lands and restrict neonicotinoids;
- Support efforts to protect key wildlife species including the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle;
- Require full liability for CO2 Sequestration Projects, protecting landowners;
- Support continued funding of parks and wildlife park operations, land acquisition and expansion of public parks, funding for local parks, and funding for landowner soil, water and habitat conservation efforts.

Priority 4: Water Resources Management & Protection

There are four overarching water challenges: ensuring there's enough water for people and the environment, making sure that water is clean, reducing flood risks endangering many people in the state, and ensuring that our water initiatives are implemented in a just and equitable manner. Texas is not doing enough to meet those challenges, though some progress has been made. Sierra Club is dedicated to advancing progress in meeting those challenges through legislation this session to accomplish the following:

- Prohibit the discharge of pre-production plastic pollution to protect waterways from visible and invisible plastic pollution;
- Establish surface water quality standards for salinity that support aquatic life and protect the Texas coast from desalination plant discharge and petrochemical industrial pollution;
- Increase funding for the Texas Water Fund, Economically Distressed Areas Program, Studies to support Environmental Flows, Flood Infrastructure Fund including nature-based solutions, Agricultural Water Conservation and other programs, including grants and technical assistance to support underserved communities;
- Support clarification and enhanced county powers including protection of natural resources, ability to enforce building codes and flood management protections and establish drainage fees and powers;

Contacts: Cyrus Reed, Legislative and Conservation Director, Cyrus.Reed@sierraclub.org, 512-740-4086
 Evgenia Spears, Water Program Coordinator, Evgenia.Spears@sierraclub.org
 Matt Johnson, Deputy Director, Matthew.Johnson@sierraclub.org

- Prioritize recycling of “produced water” from oil and gas operations in the oil and gas field, and explore its use off-site by establishing stakeholder processes at TCEQ and/or the Railroad Commission to study constituent chemicals and available treatments for produced waters and finalize a program for management of produced waters based on the results of those studies;
- Ensure that management of groundwater and surface water recognizes the connections between those sources, including by funding studies on groundwater-surface water interaction to quantify the impact of groundwater withdrawals and water management on surface water rights;
- Provide Groundwater Conservation Districts with the resources, including updated and improved groundwater availability models, to identify and manage for sustainable levels of groundwater pumping.
- Seek additional funding for the new statewide plugging program for abandoned water wells.

Priority 5: Local Democracy & Voting Rights

Our cities and counties have been under attack for too long from the Texas Legislature. We must continue to defend the right of local communities to establish safeguards for community safety and justice, and we must defend and expand the right to vote. Efforts to weaken local governments, restrict Texans’ and Texas businesses freedom to invest responsibly, and make voting more difficult will be opposed by the Sierra Club as we seek to strengthen our democracy, economy, and local governmental accountability.

- Expand opportunities to vote and support the right to vote for all citizens
- Improve and defend local control on environmental, worker rights and other issues
- Improve and defend first amendment rights to protest
- Oppose new anti-ESG laws and repeal existing laws that prevent local governments and school districts from borrowing money, managing their pension funds and issuing bonds from companies that have legitimate policies designed to reduce risks and costs.

Contacts: Cyrus Reed, Legislative and Conservation Director, Cyrus.Reed@sierraclub.org, 512-740-4086
Evgenia Spears, Water Program Coordinator, Evgenia.Spears@sierraclub.org
Matt Johnson, Deputy Director, Matthew.Johnson@sierraclub.org