

# Water Protection Standards

Water is life. Texas faces 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 water initiatives are implemented in a just and equitable manner.

## Our legislators must do more to protect Texas water.

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## Water Standards and Supply Are On the Ballot

Texas water is precious, life-giving, and threatened. It's up to us to **demand that our representatives take action to protect water resources**, and prevent negative environmental and community impact from desalination.

- According to Texas Water Trade, more than 1 million of Texans do not have access to clean, safe drinking water.
- Nearly 40% of Texas water bodies do not meet water quality standards, with the majority (44%) impaired for bacteria.
- TCEQ is experiencing a significant backlog in the implementation of the Total Maximum Daily Load program. There are more than 500 water body segments listed as impaired that have not yet received a TMDL for their given impairment(s).
- Seawater desalination has been proposed as a viable water supply strategy in previous legislative sessions; however, our bays and estuaries are not protected from salty waste discharges. TCEQ needs to establish standards to protect marine life and coastal communities from the impacts of seawater desalination.
- Pre-production plastics should be regulated by TCEQ (HB 4144), however there are no such regulations in the current surface water quality standards. Since 2018, more than [2.4 million plastic pellets](#) (nurdles) have been collected by volunteers along Texas Gulf beaches. Attempts to regulate surface water quality standards have been prevented due to the pressure from plastics manufacturers.

## Proposed Solutions

### Water and Ecological Health

- 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 sufficient funding for environmental flow studies to ensure that Texas rivers and streams are able to support wildlife and ecosystems.

### **Water Quality Standards**

- Prohibit the discharge of pre-production plastics, including pellets, powders, and flakes, 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 seawater desalination plant discharges.
- Prohibit the discharge of produced water—whether treated or not—from oil and gas operations, due to the substantial risks posed by toxic pollutants contained in such wastewater. No discharges should be allowed until TCEQ has enough data to assess the impacts of produced water on human health.

### **Flood Risk Management**

- 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.

### **Texas Water Initiatives**

- 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.