

Texas Two-Step: Defending Democracy & Electing Environmental Leaders This Fall

Clean Water Action Texas has endorsed candidates in 22 races across city, county, state, and federal offices for the upcoming November 2022 elections after conducting a thorough screening and review process. We use candidates' voting histories and records for those who have held office previously or are current incumbents, or issue questionnaires on pertinent environmental problems and approaches that the candidate's desired office will affect.

What's in it for them? When we endorse a candidate, they instantaneously gain consideration with a group of engaged voters, activists, and community leaders. This is powerfully valuable, especially as we head into fall elections which will be decided, in many races, on the margins. Texas is checkered with voting districts where genuine communication about issues that voters hold in high value will be able to swing a race, and where Getting Out The Vote (GOTV) will win the day.

Mark Your Calendars With Important Election Dates:

- **Monday, October 24th–November 4th: Early Voting**
All voters may choose to vote early during this period
- **Tuesday, November 8th: Election Day**

In 2021, the Texas Legislature adopted new maps for state legislative and congressional districts. They neither reflect nor represent Texas' recent population growth across the state, made up of 95% people of color. In the face of this blatantly racial gerrymandering, Clean Water Action remains committed to educating ourselves and our members about the environmental records and stances of candidates across all levels of government so that we can help elect and defend champions for our issues of environmental protection, restoration, and justice.

Don't know where to vote? Visit www.votetexas.gov, where you can also discover what races will be on your ballot, along with other useful election information.

Our endorsed candidates:



US House

Colin Allred, CD 32
Greg Casar, CD 35
Michelle Vallejo, CD 15

Statewide Offices

Beto O'Rourke, Governor
Luke Warford, Railroad Commission
Jay Kleberg, TX Land Commissioner

TX Legislature

John Bryant, HD 114
Gina Hinojosa, HD 49
John Bucy, HD 136
Venton Jones, HD 100
James Talarico, HD 50
Vikki Goodwin, HD 47
Erin Zwiener, HD 45

Austin City

Kirk Watson, Mayor, Citywide
José Noé Elías, District 3
Ken Craig, District 5
Paige Ellis, District 8
Linda Guerrero, District 9

Harris County

Lina Hidalgo, Judge, Countywide
Lesley Briones, Precinct 4
Adrian Garcia, Precinct 2

Hays County

Susan Cook, Commissioner, Precinct 4

The Devil's in the Details: Water Forward and Green Infrastructure for Austin

Imagine a city that continues growing and evolving, supporting new residents, students, tech businesses, growing an economy around its natural beauty, outdoor spaces, and access to refreshing natural waters. Now imagine that this city is in a consistent and worsening drought cycle AND has secure and locally sourced water resources for all of these current and future demands. How can this be the same place?

With our allies and over many years, Clean Water Action both informed and supported the 2018 adoption of *Water Forward*, known as [Austin's Integrated Water Plan](#), that will serve as the City's roadmap to all things water for the next 100 years. Principles of integrated water planning include managing drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater in a holistic way, working to mimic nature's water cycles to enhance quality of life as well as environmental and economic health and vitality.

In October 2021, the Austin City Council adopted requirements in which new developments totaling more than 250,000 square feet must use rainwater, stormwater, AC condensate, and even wastewater treated onsite for non-potable (non-drinking water) uses. Some of these uses include irrigation, toilet flushing, and as part of the water for a building's cooling towers. However, several other elements of implementing Austin's historic "One Water" plan became stranded in a dispute over unrelated zoning issues when they were included in a proposed Land Development Code overhaul. These elements have been pulled out of the Land Development Code



◀ Sample Green infrastructure: Landscaped curb area that helps to retain rainwater.

and put forth on their own as resolutions led by Austin City Councilor Tovo's office for approval and implementation.

Beneficial steps to protect water quality *and* quantity include:

1. Require green infrastructure in urban settings where traditional landscape requirements are not possible (also known as "Functional Green");
2. Require surface parking lots to include tree islands, landscaped medians, and perimeter landscapes that allow for rainwater to soak into the ground locally and require that pavement be graded, or sloped, to allow the runoff to enter the planted areas;
3. Remove an exception to flood mitigation requirements for redevelopments that are not increasing impervious cover; and
4. Require all subdivisions and site plans in urban watersheds to meet steep slope protections.

The long and short of the provisions? This is about runoff, climate and drought resilience, and protecting water quality and human health. It is also about the grow-ability of the city and region that we call home. Next step: the Austin City Council will revisit these important issues for a vote this fall.

Climate Change: Making the Case for "One Water"

This August, Dallas flooded and Houston was in drought. As weather and water patterns change with the shifting climate, we must adapt by designing our water collection, use, treatment, and reuse systems to mimic nature. By doing this, we close loops that help prevent rushing floodwaters, hold onto water where it falls, and use each drop more than one time before flushing it out as waste. Austin's [100-year water plan](#) serves as an example of many of these, "the-old-is-new-again," designs which capture rainwater where it falls so that it can infiltrate the dry grounds and slow its rush to overwhelmed storm drains or flood nearby buildings and roads. Who's the next Texas "One Water" city?



▲ Trinity River flooding in Dallas.

Aren't ALL Waters in the U.S. "Waters of the United States"? Sackett & WOTUS in Texas

Making sure that Clean Water Act programs protect critical water bodies remains a priority campaign for Clean Water Action. For more than twenty years, powerful polluters have been working to limit the definition of "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS) for the Clean Water Act's pollution programs. At issue are many water bodies, including streams and wetlands, that influence the water quality in downstream rivers, lakes, and bays — including many of our drinking water sources. Earlier this year, Clean Water Action mobilized thousands of grassroots comments to EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers urging them to repeal the Trump administration's "Dirty Water Rule" and to develop a strong and durable replacement definition of "Waters of the U.S." for purposes of the Clean Water Act. (Read Clean Water Action's Water Programs Director Jennifer Peter's testimony [here](#).) In October of 2022, the United States Supreme Court will hear the controversial case on this issue, and

Clean Water Action is joining allies to weigh in on this critical decision.

Roughly 11.5 million drinking water consumers across Texas are threatened by the ruling if the intermittent streams and headwaters feeding their drinking water supplies are stripped of Clean Water Act protections, including residents of Dallas, Houston, Austin, and El Paso. With climate change stimulating more intense storms, many areas of Texas will suffer from increased flooding if we are unable to use the Clean Water Act to protect wetlands from destruction. Additionally, the \$10.9 billion* businesses surrounding Texas' vast recreational, sports, and angler industries will suffer losses as well as the 96,700 jobs associated with fish and wildlife related activities.

**According to a 2001 report prepared by Southwick Associates for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.*

Solar Edit: Sunset On the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

On June 22, the Texas Sunset Commission held a public hearing as part of the agency's mandated review that takes place once every twelve years. At the hearing, more than 9 hours of testimony was delivered to the Sunset Commissioners, largely from concerned and upset residents of communities most affected by industrial pollutants which were used at chemical and petrochemical facilities permitted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). In particular, residents and community leaders seemed surprised and upset when the Chairman of the agency stated that he was not familiar with the term "environmental racism." Environmental racism is a given existence in the lives of many who were in the room that day, and who are rarely seen or well-represented in the halls of agencies or the state capitol as they were that day.

Clean Water Action Texas State Director Becky Smith (*see photo*) delivers testimony to the Sunset



Commission members reviewing the performance of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. This Commission will make a final report which includes written responses to testimony and recommendations to the Texas Legislature regarding future directions for the agency. Clean Water Action will remain engaged in the process up through and into the next legislative session, January-May of 2023, to advocate for stronger protections from industrial pollution, siting of new facilities in overburdened communities across Texas, and for strict limits on wastewater discharges to pristine streams and rivers.



Diving In: *Becky Smith and David Foster, current and retired Texas Clean Water Action Directors, attend the August 8th event celebrating the 30-year anniversary of Austin voters approving the “Save Our Springs” ordinance to protect Barton Springs in the heart of Austin.*



Clean Water Fund is a proud member of EarthShare of Texas, a network of environmental organizations working to protect our natural resources and human health. Many employers offer green giving options, and fall is the time to enroll for these payroll contributions. Learn more at www.earthshare-texas.org

TEXAS CURRENTS

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