



TEXAS LIVING WATERS

POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE 89TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE AND BEYOND

Texas Living Waters is a coalition of conservation groups working to ensure Texas has the water it needs for thriving communities and abundant fish and wildlife. Texas' rapid growth is driving increased demand for water, highlighting the need for proactive solutions to ensure long-term resilience. In addition to new water supply strategies being pursued to meet the demand of our growing population, the aging and deterioration of existing infrastructure in communities across Texas is causing or exacerbating water loss, boil water notices, and a need for expensive repair or replacement projects in communities where affordability is often already a concern.

The 89th Texas Legislature comes at a decisive moment for the state's water future. Legislators will have the opportunity to secure and build upon positive outcomes from prior sessions while considering new legislation and investments of state resources. From water supply to flooding, new supply to leaky pipes, our state's water-related needs are as substantial and complex as one would expect in such a large state. We seek to ensure Texas is equipped to meet these challenges in a manner that maximizes positive outcomes for its people and ecosystems.



PRIORITIES AT-A-GLANCE

1: Make Additional Significant Investments to Shore Up Texas' Water Supply and Water Infrastructure

- 1.1 Protect the reliability, longevity, and efficiency of water and wastewater infrastructure with significant funding to support projects and technical assistance.
- 1.2 Prioritize investment in resilient, durable water supply strategies.
- 1.3 Ensure responsible deployment of new supply strategies such as seawater desalination and beneficial use of produced water.
- 1.4 Support conservation of water used in agricultural production by funding the Texas Water Development Board's (TWDB) Agricultural Water Conservation Program.
- 1.5 Protect vulnerable populations and optimize the use of state funds by funding a needs assessment for the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP).

2: Support Implementation of the State Flood Plan

- 2.1 Establishing and funding a technical assistance program for floodplain management activities in small, remote, rural, or otherwise socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.
- 2.2 Clarify county authority to establish and collect drainage fees in unincorporated areas.
- 2.3 Developing and adopting statewide minimum design standards for infrastructure and buildings to reduce loss of life and property from flooding.
- 2.4 Updating statewide building codes in a manner that ensures Texas is eligible for all available federal flood mitigation funding.

3: Advance Protections for Texas Waterways to Preserve Texas' Natural Heritage and Safeguard Public Health

- 3.1 Direct the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to update its metrics for evaluating the need for watermaster programs in additional river basins.
- 3.2 Clarify the TCEQ's role in approving the dedication of water rights to the Texas Water Trust.
- 3.3 Appropriate funds to continue refining environmental flow protections applicable to the state's streams, rivers, and bays.
- 3.4 Build on the Legislature's previous investment in TCEQ's Estuary Programs.
- 3.5 Provide funding to study risks and mitigation solutions for critical water and wastewater infrastructure.
- 3.6 Direct the TCEQ to update wastewater treatment standards to protect sensitive streams from the adverse effects of nutrient pollution.
- 3.7 Direct the TCEQ to establish water quality standards related to pre-production plastics.

4: Empower State Agencies to Do Good Work by Approving Thoughtful, Reasonable Appropriation Requests

- 4.1 Support TWDB's requests related to collection and analysis of groundwater and surface water data to bolster the work of planners and other water professionals.
- 4.2 Provide TCEQ the resources to modernize its operations and administer important federal funds available to Texas.
- 4.3 Provide Texas Parks and Wildlife Department resources to support important land and water conservation programs.



Learn more at:
texaslivingwaters.org