



To: The Honorable Tracy King

Members, House Committee on Natural Resources

From: Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director, Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club, 512-740-4086

**CSHB 2990: Modernizing Access to Permit Information in a Digital Age**

**The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is in full support of CSHB 2990 by Rep. Morales Shaw, which would modernize requirements of applicants and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to assure that all administratively complete applications** for water quality, industrial and hazardous waste, municipal solid waste, and underground injection control permits, as well as for major water rights amendments, are posted online –either by the applicant or by TCEQ. In addition, the website must also be included in the notice of intent to obtain a permit (NORI) and any subsequent public notice.

The bill and its committee substitute are timely and necessary. During COVID-19, when members of the public had difficulty accessing information, the TCEQ began posting more information including new applications on their website. Providing transparency and access to information is a hallmark of good government and this bill makes sense. The Sierra Club is frequently consulted by members of the public about proposed permits and how to access them, and the lack of timely access to permit information is often a source of frustration for community members. Having a copy of a permit at a local library or at the TCEQ headquarters is not conducive to public participation or community dialogue.

Indeed, having access to permits should create more public involvement and more dialogue between industry and communities. Oftentimes, having information such as maps or diagrams can lead to modifications of permits that are in the public interest and lead to a more harmonious relationship. Where there is true opposition, having an accurate up-to-date permit or water rights, can also lead to negotiated settlement, or in some cases, to denial of permits that are not in the public interest.

**We would also note the bill does not have a fiscal note.**