

# Defend Citizen and Local Government Participation in Environmental Decision-Making



In recent legislative sessions, there have been laws passed to limit the ability of citizens and local governments to address environmental concerns. State lawmakers passed HB 40, stripping cities and counties of their ability to regulate oil and gas development within their jurisdictions. In 2017, the Legislature made several attempts to prevent local governments from protecting heritage trees. Similar limitations have been passed in recent sessions on the ability of citizens and citizens groups to comment or protest environmental permits.

In the wake of HB 40, Sierra Club will seek to strengthen citizen and local governments role in oil and gas regulation at the Railroad Commission. We will defend against any attacks that would limit the rights of citizens and local governments to participate in environmental and water rights permitting, enforcement, and development of safeguards, including those related to aggregate and concrete production and sand mining.

In addition, 72 cities and towns in Texas light up their homes, businesses, and streets with “public power.” For some 3 million people, their provider is a local municipally-owned electric utility (MOU), while 75 electric cooperatives with more than 3 million members throughout the state, serve Texans in mainly rural areas. These MOUs and electric cooperatives must maintain their ability to set their own policies and make their own decisions about investments, rates, and governance. So long as they comply with PUC and ERCOT rules and protocols, and as they work to improve transparency and responsiveness to customers, we will work to ensure they maintain independent, local control.

The Sierra Club will stand with our local governments, public power entities, and citizens to maintain local decision-making and participation in decisions about local investment. We will also work to expand local government powers in specific instances, including building codes and resiliency, the ability to prevent hydrocarbon spills in coastal communities, and flood-ordinance powers.