



Oversight of Oil & Gas Operations

No state produces more oil and gas than Texas, and that development has produced jobs, tax base, and economic wealth. Unfortunately, too often our state's oil and gas regulator, the Railroad Commission, has lacked the resources, statutory authority, and political will to properly safeguard our communities from the worst aspects of oil and gas development. Issues have included seismic activity produced by injection wells, methane leaks, flares and fugitive emissions, water contamination, and road wear and tear. Oil and gas development has unfortunately had destructive consequences in many of our communities.

Fortunately, there are solutions. The Sierra Club will work to ensure that basic inspection, enforcement, and complaint data is accessible and downloadable on the Railroad Commission's website. Transparency of information is key in holding elected officials accountable.

Furthermore, Texas must increase its commitment to enforcement by increasing maximum fines allowed under state statutes for companies that violate our water and air pollution laws. Maximum fines were last established back in 1983, and it's understood that a 1983 dollar is not the same as a 2019 dollar.

Moreover, Texas needs modern rules on flaring, venting, and leak detection to prevent the worst operators from polluting our air and cooking our climate. We can do what most other oil and gas-producing states have done, and enact modern regulations to prevent air pollution.

Texas has done little to properly regulate the oil and gas wastes that are commercially disposed, and we need laws to properly ensure safe injection of liquid wastes and above-ground solid wastes.

In short, we will work to increase the number of inspectors at the RRC, require more robust and modern enforcement measures, ensure transparency and access to information, and modernize our venting, flaring, injection, and waste disposal rules. The people of Texas demand better rules for the oil and gas industry, which would help protect our communities and sensitive water resources as we continue to develop these non-renewable resources.

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