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Sierra Club to Railroad Commission: If You Want Stability, Focus on Addressing the Pollution from Flaring and Venting

[Click here to see Sierra Club's formal comments](#)

Austin, TX- Today in a virtual meeting, three elected Commissioners of the Texas Railroad Commission (RRC) considered a petition to “prorate” oil production during the COVID-19 emergency. The Commission’s immediate concern is whether they should act on a petition by two oil producers to reduce oil production. The Commissioners are expected to make a decision by April 21.

The Commissioners heard more than 50 speakers who called into the meeting and provided comments and presentations. The Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter filed joint comments with the Western Environmental Law Center (WELC). Rather than supporting traditional proration - rationing the amount of oil produced based on historic levels - Sierra Club and WELC called for additional regulatory actions to limit oil production based upon waste and pollution.

“To put it simply, the current boom and bust cycle is not sustainable. The Railroad Commission needs to drastically limit permits that allow oil producers to flare literally hundreds of millions of cubic feet of gas, not to mention hundreds of millions more through unlit flares, vents, and fugitive emissions,” **noted Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director of the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter.** “If the Railroad Commission only permitted production when gas can be captured and used, rather than burned off, production would be reduced, which would help stabilize prices and clean up our air.”

Last year, the RRC issued more than 6,500 exceptions to allow excess flaring, mainly in the Permian Basin, where emissions from flaring, venting, and fugitive emissions have been reported to be [three times the federally reported amount](#). In addition to taking action on flaring, Sierra Club and WELC called on the RRC to consider existing storage infrastructure and inspect storage tanks to make sure they are not venting or spilling product. The groups also called on the RRC to bolster its environmental compliance activities, including the use of severance to limit production, and to work with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to begin a new flaring and methane capture rule. Through similar rulemaking, North Dakota has established a gas capture goal that requires producers to meet those goals or face production cuts.

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