



SIERRA CLUB

LONE STAR CHAPTER

The Sierra Club Supports SB 30 (Huffman/Bonnen): Supplemental Appropriations

To: The Honorable Dr. Bonnen, Chair
Members, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director, Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club,
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The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is in support of the Supplemental Appropriations bill passed by the Senate and carried in the house by Dr. Bonnen.

In particular we support additional monies for Parks and Wildlife for land acquisition (\$100 million), additional money for FIF (Flood Infrastructure Fund) and \$3.8 billion for a fund to help customers be made whole for the extra gas bills due to securitization and winter storm uri. High gas prices plus the additional monies charged to customers by 7 or 8 distribution gas companies or alternatively at electric cooperatives is not the fault of customers. We do know this is a complicated issue with recent court cases about whether the high electricity prices charged load serving entities during Winter Storm Uri could ultimately impact customers and how the \$3.8 billion could be best used, but there is no doubt that customers need relief.

Land Acquisition

It is no secret that Vistra Corporation currently owns the land on which Fairfield Lake and Park - coincidentally the "Park of the Year" in 2022 - and is in negotiations to sell the land - and water - to a private developer. ***The Sierra Club finds it ironic that during a conversation about the need to increase dispatchable energy, Vistra is choosing to sell the land and water in a place where new generation could be added, including through the use of federal funds available at former coal plants and mines.*** In fact, Vistra and others are calling for a new and potentially very expensive market design change known as the PCM to incent new generation and yet they are walking away from land where geothermal, solar, storage and gas could be added with existing transmission lines nearby.

In any case, we hope that the additional money for Parks and Wildlife can lead to a purchase of the land and water right. Losing the water right to a private developer which could then sell the water upstream or downstream would be devastating for the lake and fishing resources.

We hope the \$100 million will bring Vistra and the developer to the table.

FIF (Flood Infrastructure Fund)

There are literally billions of dollars - estimates are north of \$40 billion to truly fund flood infrastructure - in requests to the TWDB for flood infrastructure. With the State Flood Plan due to be finalized soon, assuring that TWDB has at least a base for funding is key and the \$400 million meets the request by TWDB in its LAR. We support this request. We would note that Sierra Club supports both gray and green infrastructure and we would support language in SB 30 to make it clear that both types of flood infrastructure should be prioritized.

Winter Storm Uri Securitized Gas and Electric Costs

The bill includes significant funds - nearly \$4 billion - to pay back customer costs on securitized debt authorized by the legislature in 2021. We support this request and the associated legislation. We would note the original bill only would have dedicated the money to pay back securitized debt on gas distribution companies, but the bill as it passed the Senate includes potential relief for both gas and electric customers. We would also support additional funds to help customers save gas through gas conservation programs since the proposed money only keeps these customers whole from the high gas costs. We would also note our disappointment with the Attorney General of Texas who still has not seemed to fully investigate potential gas price gouging during Winter Storm Uri which could have led to these high costs to consumers and the gas distribution companies, and the power sector, which relies heavily on gas for power plants.

The Sierra Club is separately supporting legislation for gas conservation by Rep. Darby and energy efficiency programs by Rep. Anchia, as well as electric bill relief for low income customers by Rep. Hernandez. Ultimately we will need both a short term one-time relief like that offered in SB 30, but also investments in long-range programs to help customers save money, energy and gas.