Dear Environment Texas members,

Some are calling it a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Now we have to make the most of it.

With Barack Obama in the White House and a stronger pro-environment majority in Congress, we have new hope of building the world’s first new energy economy, solving our planet’s climate crisis, and preserving our country’s natural heritage.

Yet, all across Texas, the seeds of this moment were planted long before Nov. 4. We’ve been busy, making tangible progress at the local, state and federal levels.

Take clean energy.

Texas was one of the first states to pass laws mandating that utilities invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy. And last summer, state leaders approved a plan to invest $5 billion to help bring clean wind power to Texas cities. This action ensures Texas will remain the national leader in wind power for some time to come and provides a model for the country.

Or, consider our public lands.

When the General Land Office proposed selling the Christmas Mountains—neighbor to Big Bend National Park—to private interests, and also selling open space along the Blanco River to developers, we spoke out and successfully defeated the plans.

We’re proud to have played a role in many of these achievements. And we’re ready to build on our work to make the most of this opportunity for historic change.

Thank you for helping to make it all possible.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

From our staff

Luke Metzger
Director

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On Jan. 7, 2008, Environment Texas and the Sierra Club filed suit in federal district court against Shell Oil Company for violations of the Clean Air Act at its Deer Park refinery and chemical plant, which has resulted in the release of millions of pounds of excess air pollutants over the past five years.

Unfortunately, state environmental regulators have done little to stop these violations. “The state of Texas has failed to put a stop to these blatant violations,” said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas. “So ordinary citizens are stepping up to enforce the law themselves.”

Our lawsuit seeks a court order requiring Shell to end its Clean Air Act violations. In addition, Shell would face civil penalties of up to $32,500 per day for each violation of the Clean Air Act.
Clean Energy

Showing the way: Texas remains a renewable energy leader

It was a good year for renewable energy in Texas.

In July 2008, Environment Texas celebrated a key victory for wind and solar power when the Public Utilities Commission approved the build-out of transmission lines to bring more than 18,000 megawatts of renewable energy to our cities. According to GE, this will reduce CO2 emissions from the electric sector by 10 percent.

And in October, after a year-long push by Environment Texas and our allies, Congress extended the vital incentives for the wind and solar energy industry as part of the economic recovery package. These incentives will help ensure that the renewable energy industry is in Texas for years to come and will help to generate new jobs, lower electric bills, and reduce global warming emissions.
Texas’ solar potential

Texas receives more sun than any other state. According to an analysis by Environment Texas and allies, with the right incentives, Texas could put solar panels on a half million rooftops by 2020, creating 22,000 jobs and reducing CO2 emissions by as much as taking 4.3 millions cars off the road.

“Solar power is ready for primetime,” said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas. “We should use our technological know-how to become a world solar leader, creating thousands of high-paying ‘green collar’ jobs and helping clean up our air.”

Solar power progress in 2008

In 2008, Environment Texas took action on several fronts to help secure Texas’ solar power future.

We helped organized the Texas Solar Forum, the largest-ever gathering in Texas of solar industry representatives and advocates, to educate lawmakers on the economic potential of making Texas a world solar leader. Our door-to-door canvassers collected more than 7,000 petitions, which urged Gov. Rick Perry to make solar power a centerpiece of Texas’ energy future. And we released a report on solar potential, which included findings that solar power plants covering 30 miles by 30 miles in west Texas could power the state.

And in the fall, we worked on our campaign to generate at least 5 percent of our electricity from solar by the year 2020. We sent eight organizers across the state, from Wichita Falls to Brownsville, to recruit more than 100 business leaders, elected officials and other community leaders to endorse our plan. The Legislature will consider our proposals in 2009.
Homes and businesses account for almost half of our energy use—and half of our global warming emissions. So in 2008, Environment Texas worked to promote investment in energy efficiency upgrades to new and existing building infrastructure.

Working with allies such as Austin Mayor Will Wynn, architects, and others, we helped convince national officials to establish a new model building code that requires new homes to be more energy efficient. The code has now been adopted by the cities of Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio.

And in November, after recommendation from Environment Texas and allies, the Austin City Council acted to require buildings to undergo energy efficiency audits and require owners to share the results with current and prospective tenants or buyers.

Worker prepares insulation for a new home.
Planning for the future

A new generation of environmental leaders step up

With the support of the Houston Endowment, Environment Texas Research & Policy Center trained and placed college students to work with environmental organizations in the Houston area. Here are highlights from the program:

**Kyle Saari, Rice University**

*Engaging the public:* Working with the Sierra Club, Kyle helped expand the club’s public outreach programming in Houston. Kyle (second from left) leads volunteers in cleaning up garbage at an illegal dump near an elementary school.

**Jonathan Garrett, University of Houston**

*Recycling expansion:* Working with the Baylor College of Medicine, Jonathan helped expand recycling at the Texas Medical Center.

**Liana Ngo, University of Houston**

*Global warming education:* Working with the Citizens League for Environmental Action Now, Liana helped organize teach-ins about the dangers of coal-fired power plants and global warming.

**Melody Poole, University of Houston**

*Addressing air quality:* Working with the Galveston-Houston Association For Smog Prevention, Melody provided research and writing for official comments to the EPA about Houston’s air quality crisis.

**Andrew Tagoe, Johns Hopkins University**

*Pollution education via the Web:* Working with the Houston Advanced Research Center, Andrew helped create a Web interface to help the public understand pollution in their area.
Land Preservation

Across the state, protecting Texas’ wild lands

Barton Springs, Big Bend, coastal prairies—these treasures are a big part of what makes Texas special. Our natural areas provide us with clean, plentiful water and beautiful places to take our families for a swim or hike. Unfortunately, poorly managed development is threatening these special places.

Saving the Christmas Mountains

On Oct. 15, 2008, the Austin Chronicle presented Environment Texas with a “Best of Austin” award for our work to protect the Christmas Mountains, saying “When the General Land Office tried to sell the property to private buyers, it was Environment Texas that first shook the branches, raised a firestorm of public protest, and made caring about public lands an act of Texas pride again.” The mountains are now open to the public for the first time.
Controlling sprawl

Every hour, 20 acres of our forests, working farms and natural areas are destroyed to make room for new strip malls, subdivisions and other developments.

Last year, the General Land Office attempted to sell publicly-owned, ecologically sensitive land in Hays County to a real estate developer. The agency proposed selling the 2,200 acre property, which sits along the Blanco River in Kyle, to Masonwood Properties to build “high-end homes.”

After alerting the media to the plan, Environment Texas helped put the sale on hold. “The state of Texas shouldn’t be in the business of encouraging sprawl,” said Luke Metzger, Environment Texas director. In 2009, we’ll continue to fight to ensure the Edwards Aquifer, the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Texas’ valued natural places are protected from development and mismanagement.

Protecting Texas’ wildlife habitat

Much of this country’s most spectacular wildlife, including jaguars, Sonoran Pronghorn and hundreds of bird species, depend upon protected public lands along the southwestern border for migration. Unfortunately, the construction of a double-layer reinforced wall along the southern border could seriously harm wildlife populations.

In 2008, Environment Texas announced opposition to the plan and endorsed legislation to prevent the Department of Homeland Security from building fences in sensitive areas and to instead promote low-impact border security methods that would preserve the migratory paths of Texas’ wildlife.
Environment Texas Foundation Support

The Environment Texas Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization and conducts research and public education on emerging environmental issues. Contributions to the Environment Texas Research & Policy Center are tax-deductible. To find out more, contact Luke Metzger at (512) 479-0388.

The Environment Texas Research & Policy Center would like to thank the following foundations for supporting our work in 2008:

Educational Foundation of America • Energy Foundation • Houston Endowment • Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation • Magnolia Charitable Trust • Meadows Foundation, Inc. • Trull Foundation

Planned Giving

Environment Texas gratefully accepts bequests and gifts of securities to support our work. Your gift will assure that we can continue to protect Texas’ air, water and open spaces for future generations. For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentTexas.org.

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