

Your Fall Report

What's being done to save the bees?

By Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program

One in 7 Americans now lives in a state that restricts the use of bee-killing pesticides. How did that happen?

Here's a quick look at the progress to date:

States banning bee-killing pesticides

Neonicotinoids (or neonics for short) are a class of pesticides that have been linked to bee die-offs. They're 1,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT, and even sublethal doses cause a lot of damage. These neurotoxic pesticides attack bees' brains, making it harder for them to sleep, forage, fly and even find their way home.

Fortunately, states are recognizing the threat these dangerous pesticides pose to bees, and they're taking action to limit their use and sale. These are the nine states that have already passed laws to that effect: Connecticut and Maryland in 2016; Vermont in 2019; Maine and Massachusetts in 2021; New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island in 2022; and Colorado in 2023.

Thanks to this progress, 1 in 7 Americans now lives in a state with some restriction on bee-killing pesticides.

Next up: Our sister group Environment California is working to build support for a bill currently under consideration in California that would address non-agricultural uses of neonics, such as on lawns, gardens and golf courses. If successful, it would boost that number to 1 in 4 Americans living in a state with a similar such law. And our national network is looking for more opportunities to advance legislation in more states.



Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program, with our canvassing team on our Save the Bees campaign.

Taking neonics off store shelves

When it comes to maintaining our lawns and gardens, there are plenty of safe products on the market. Too many garden centers, however, still sell pesticides that are harmful to bees.

Conservationists have already helped convince The Home Depot and Lowe's to commit to phasing out the sale of bee-killing neonics for consumer use. Now, we're calling on Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, to do the same.

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**Thanks
for making it
all possible**

Renewable energy dodges a bullet in Texas Legislature

The growth of solar and wind energy and battery storage in Texas is one of the clean energy movement's great success stories. Yet some Texas lawmakers have sought to turn back the clock on renewables.

Despite over a dozen bills filed to add crippling new fees and permitting requirements to renewable energy or even to outright ban it, the legislative session ended in May with

levels indicating potentially unsafe levels of fecal contamination on at least one day last year. As part of the report, we created a state-by-state map that allows the public to see which beaches were potentially unsafe for swimming on the greatest number of days last year.

"All of us want to enjoy a safe and healthy day at the beach," said John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney. "By calling attention to the dangers of water pollution, we can make a strong case for our elected representatives to invest in water infrastructure and stop sewage overflows."

To see if your favorite beach is safe for swimming, visit environmenttexascenter.org.

Texans will vote on \$1 billion to create new state parks this November

On Nov. 7, Texas voters will consider Proposition 14, establishing the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund, which would invest \$1 billion to create new state parks.

The ballot measure is the culmination of a multi-year effort to win funding to expand the Texas state parks system. Environment Texas worked with Republican state Sen. Tan Parker and Democratic state Rep. Armando Walle to author the measure, which passed with an overwhelming majority vote.

Environment Texas research has shown that Texas badly needs more protected natural areas. Texas ranks just 35th in the nation for state park acreage per capita and development eats up about ten football fields of open space every hour.

"Prop 14 would result in the biggest investment in nature in Texas history," said Luke Metzger, executive director of Environment Texas. "The Centennial Parks Conservation Fund could create dozens of new state parks, saving some of the state's most beautiful places for future generations, protecting critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and create abundant opportunities for Texans to camp, hike, climb, and fish."

Political ad paid for by Environment Texas, a project of Environment America, Inc.

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmenttexas.org>.

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Our team in Houston raised alarm bells about the anti-renewable energy attacks at Earth Day and other events around town.

the worst measures falling short of passage.

Environment Texas played a role in blocking those anti-clean energy measures, working alongside legislative allies, the renewable energy industry and other clean energy advocates to prevent the end of wind and solar as we know it in Texas.

While lawmakers did increase transmission fees for wind and solar and kick renewables out of the state's economic development program, the House State Affairs committee fended off measures that would have brought renewable energy development to a grinding halt.

Is your favorite beach safe for swimming?

Even though our water is cleaner than it used to be, runoff pollution and sewage overflows still can make swimmers sick. Scientists estimate 57 million instances of people getting sick each year from swimming in polluted waters in the U.S. Those illnesses can include nausea, diarrhea, ear infections and rashes.

Our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center released a new report, "Safe for Swimming?," which revealed that more than half of coastal and Great Lakes beaches surveyed had bacterial



Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment Texas or Environment Texas Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentTexas.org

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What's being done to save the bees?

Members and supporters like you have helped deliver tens of thousands of messages to Amazon, urging it to take bee-killing pesticides off its virtual shelves.

Winning federal progress for the bees

Major progress is also being made at the national level:

- In 2021, we celebrated when we won protection for bees on 11 million acres of Department of Defense-owned land.
- The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in early 2023 and advocated for by our national network, included nearly \$20 billion in additional funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) conservation programs. We're urging the USDA to use this funding to help pollinators, such as through its program to reimburse farmers for replanting prairie that provides native bees with much-needed habitat.

Now, our network is laying the groundwork for even bigger wins, as we urge the Biden administration to reinstate a ban on the use of bee-killing pesticides in wildlife refuges (the places bees should be safest) and call on the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict three of the most common types of neonics as they undergo a periodic review.

Of course, there's still a long way to go to save the bees. They face a triple threat of pesticide use, habitat loss and climate change. And the policies that have been passed so far have mainly addressed the consumer use of bee-killing pesticides, while still allowing for agricultural use.

Still, no one thought it was possible to ban DDT or any other pesticide until Rachel Carson wrote "Silent Spring" and sparked an environmental movement. Together, we can keep that movement burning bright as we work to win a ban on bee-killing neonics.

Farmers market-goers show their support for saving the bees.



Staff

Featured staff



Kimball Nelson

Luke Metzger
Executive Director, Environment Texas

Luke is a leading voice in Texas for clean air, clean water, clean energy and open space. Luke has led successful campaigns to win permanent protection for the Christmas Mountains of Big Bend; to compel Exxon, Shell and Chevron Phillips to cut air pollution at three Texas refineries and chemical plants; and to boost funding for water conservation and state parks. The San Antonio Current has called Luke "long one of the most energetic and dedicated defenders of environmental issues in the state." He has received the President's Award from the Texas Recreation and Parks Society for his work to protect Texas parks, and was chosen for the inaugural class of "Next Generation Fellows" by the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at UT Austin. Luke, his wife, son and daughter are working to visit every state park in Texas.



Environment Texas and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.

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Your 2023 Fall Report

Our mission:

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Texas Citizen Lobby, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Texas' air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

500,000 people call for mature and old-growth forest protections

More than 500,000 people have called on the U.S. Forest Service to protect mature and old-growth trees and forests from logging on federal land as a cornerstone of U.S. climate policy.

In April, the Forest Service issued a rulemaking proposal to improve the climate resilience of federally managed forests. The public comment period on the proposal closed in July.

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people who weighed in, dozens of environmental and grassroots organizations submitted comments, including Environment Texas Research & Policy Center.

Activists and environmental advocates gathered at the Washington, D.C., offices of the Forest Service to celebrate the outpouring of public support.

"I'm not surprised that so many people took the time to get involved in this comment period. We love our trees and forests, so of course people spoke up," said Ellen Montgomery, public lands campaign director for Environment America Research & Policy Center. "Our forests clean our water, are home for wildlife, and are an incredible ally in our work to stop climate change. Our mature and old-growth forests and trees are worth more standing than as lumber."

Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery and activists delivered public comments from 500,000 people to the Forest Service headquarters in D.C.



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