



# Summer Report

Thien Gretchen

## Amid drought, companies suck Texas waters dry

### Our worst drought since 1789

In 2011, Texans saw the worst drought of our lifetimes—and across the state, some of our most beloved rivers, including stretches of the Guadalupe, ran dry.

But as the drought and extreme heat became increasingly more severe, some of Texas' biggest companies persisted in drawing huge quantities of water from our rivers and lakes—then proceeded to waste the water through highly inefficient practices. As a result, there was barely enough water to support recreation or wildlife, from fish to whooping cranes.

“Our rivers are a big part of what makes life in Texas so great,” said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas. “In order to keep them full and flowing for recreation and wildlife, we must make corporate interests stop the wasteful practices that are sucking our rivers dry.”

### Texas' biggest water hogs

Across Texas, our waters are feeling the heat.

Stretches of the Guadalupe River have run dry twice in the last four years, an event that hadn't occurred for 50 years prior. The spring-fed Comal River was flowing at 62 percent of its normal levels. Hill Country rivers and streams are often too low for paddling, tubing or much else.

Meanwhile, the biggest water users—industrial agriculture, power companies, the oil and gas industry and developers—



Jonathan LaChance Photography

▲ Lake Travis, Austin's main water supply, in 2011.

waste millions of gallons of water through irresponsible and unsustainable practices.

While many Texans have pitched in to save water in their own homes and businesses, no coal-fired power plant in Texas has yet installed water-saving “air-cooling” technology. Many gas drilling companies do not recycle their “frack-water” and many farms still let water waste away in unlined ditches.

Our staff has been knocking on doors across the state to educate Texans about what's at stake. We're also testifying at the Legislature, researching water conservation solutions, and shining a spotlight in the media on the need to keep our rivers full and flowing with water.

“If enough of us speak out, we can save Texas rivers,” said Metzger.



Staff

### more online

◀ Tessa McClellan (center), field associate for Environment Texas, joins Rep. Alma Allen and Galveston Bay Foundation's Bob Stokes to discuss the strain on Texas' waters. Visit our website to find our more. [www.EnvironmentTexas.org](http://www.EnvironmentTexas.org)

## To our members

From rope swinging in to the cool waters of the Guadalupe to floating on the San Marcos on a hot summer afternoon, our rivers are the lifeblood of Texas. And I jumped with joy to see the rains this spring come down, briefly filling our creeks.

But despite the recent rain, 63 percent of Texas was still in drought at the time of press. And corporate water hogs continue to suck huge amounts of water out of our rivers, often leaving little left for wildlife and recreation purposes. It's time we stop business as usual, and force the corporations to stop wasting water.

We have the technology. But Texas corporations don't like to be told what to do. So it's up to us to demand the Legislature take action.

Thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

Luke Metzger  
State Director

## Recent action

### New opposition to bill worsening oil addiction

This February, House Republicans introduced a major transportation reauthorization bill, which cuts all funding for biking and walking safety and cripples environmental review for transportation projects.

It also includes proposals to open the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling, and to open landscapes in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming to oil shale extraction. On top of this, Speaker of the House John Boehner has said that he would attach approval of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline to this bill if it were not otherwise immediately approved.

“Transportation is responsible for one-third of our global warming pollution and two-thirds of our dangerous dependence on oil, but it doesn't have to be this way” said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas. “We should invest in clean, efficient travel choices such as public transit that will move our nation away from oil and toward a brighter, healthier future.”

### Nuclear plants threaten water for 1.2 million Texans

The drinking water for 1.2 million people in Texas could be at risk of radioactive contamination from a leak or accident at a local nuclear power plant, says a new study released by the Environment Texas Research and Policy Center.

According to the new report, “Too Close to Home: Nuclear Power and the Threat to Drinking Water,” the drinking water for 1.2 million people in Texas is within 50 miles of an active nuclear power plant—the distance the Nuclear Regulatory Commission uses to measure risk to food and water supplies.

With an intake within 50 miles of the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant, the city of Fort Worth ranked 10th in the nation for cities with water supplies at risk.

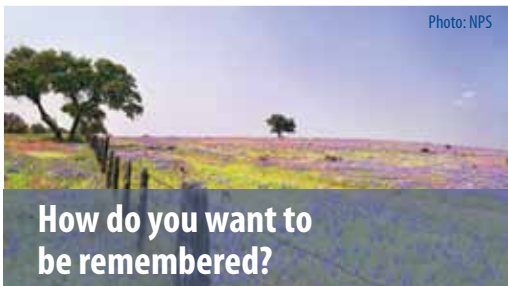


Photo: NPS

## How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Texas or the Environment Texas Research & Policy Center.

For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or email [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentTexas.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentTexas.org).



nrc.gov

▲ Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant.



# EPA moves to cut carbon pollution from power plants

On March 27, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed limits on carbon pollution from new power plants. If passed, they will be the first nationwide limits on the largest single source of the carbon pollution that fuels global warming.

As scientists, doctors and other experts have been warning us for years, cutting this carbon pollution is critical because global warming will bring everything from dirtier air and more deadly heat waves, to more devastating floods and extreme weather.

## In the Path of the Storm

In the weeks before the EPA's historic announcement, Environment Texas released a report documenting why action to cut carbon pollution and tackle global warming is needed. The report, "In the Path of the Storm," found that in 2011 alone, federally declared weather related disasters affected 86 Texas counties housing more than 3.8 million people.

Nationally, the number of disasters inflicting more than \$1 billion in damage—at least 14—set an all-time record last year, with total damages from those disasters costing at least \$55 billion.

We also launched an interactive online map, available at [www.EnvironmentTexas.org](http://www.EnvironmentTexas.org), where citizens can see state by state and even county-by-county records of which weather-related disasters hit when, and then take action in support of EPA carbon pollution limits. The report and map received extensive press attention, including stories in The Washington Post and USA Today.

The real battle began after the EPA's announcement, as utilities, coal companies and other corporate polluters began spending millions to convince the Obama administration to weaken or abandon the standards altogether.

## Scare tactics

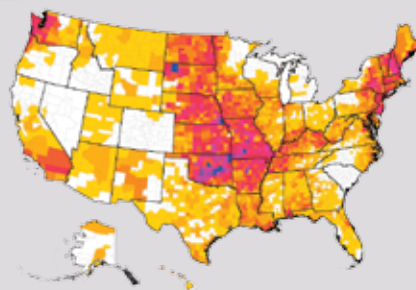
Through paid ads and armies of lobbyists within Congress, the polluters are trying to scare the American public and the Obama administration into thinking that we can't afford to adopt these commonsense standards.

We know that we must adopt carbon pollution standards for power plants, so Environment Texas and our allies launched an unprecedented push to educate and mobilize citizens in support of the standards.

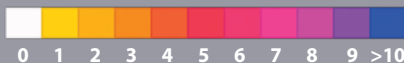
Our on-the-ground organizers are gathering tens of thousands of public comments in support of the standards, holding press events to help raise the profile of the issue, and reaching out to public health groups and local environmental groups to demonstrate broad support.

If all goes well, the EPA is expected to finalize these carbon pollution standards for new power plants by the end of 2012, and begin developing standards for existing coal-fired power plants in the near future as well.

## Map of recent weather related disasters in US



Number of weather related disasters 2006-2011



You can view the full interactive map online at [www.EnvironmentTexas.org](http://www.EnvironmentTexas.org).



## How to build a better, greener Texas

*American families could cut the global warming pollution from buildings by 30 percent and save about \$450 every year on their heating bills by 2030 if we invest in energy efficiency today.*

*These findings were included in "Building a Better America," a report released on March 8 by the Environment America Research & Policy Center staff, along with the US Green Building Council, local and state leaders, architects, builders and public health advocates.*

*In December, the Obama administration announced the Better Buildings Challenge, which includes 60 chief executives, mayors, university presidents and labor leaders, and gives incentives for smarter, more efficient buildings.*

*The leaders have committed to invest nearly \$2 billion of private capital into energy-efficiency projects to upgrade the performance of office, industrial, municipal, hospital, university, community college and school buildings.*

*The administration also announced a \$2 billion commitment to energy upgrades of federal buildings using long-term energy savings to pay for up-front costs, at no cost to taxpayers.*

*"America's homes are like cars that only get 10 miles to the gallon, said Tessa McClellan, field associate for Environment Texas. "It's time to build greener and better in Texas."*

▲ Green roof in Houston.

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## Environment Texas

### 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. We focus exclusively 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.

## President Obama stands up to Big Oil

This January, President Obama and the State Department insisted on a full environmental review before building the Keystone XL pipeline. President Obama's decision was an important step to protect our environment—and prevent global warming, which likely contributed to last summer's extreme heat, which struck Texans across the state.

Already, Texas is ranked first in the nation for emissions of the pollution that causes global warming. If Texas were a nation, we'd be ranked 7th in the world. And, extreme weather could become "the new normal" as global warming continues to wreak havoc on our climate. "The pipeline would be a disaster," said Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas. "It would deepen our dependence on dirty oil from Canada's tar sands and produce catastrophic levels of global warming pollution. President Obama should continue to stand up to Big Oil and reject the Keystone XL."



◀ *The proposed path of the Keystone XL Pipeline.*

Visit our website, [www.EnvironmentTexas.org](http://www.EnvironmentTexas.org), to thank President Obama for rejecting the first permit application for the pipeline and to urge him to continue to fight global warming and dirty energy.