



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

# STATE CAPITOL REPORT

Vol. 27, No. 11

Publication of the Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club

July 23, 2009

## Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Updating Land and Water Plan

### Public Meetings Being Held Over the Next Two Months

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (Parks & Wildlife) is currently in the process of updating the agency's **Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan** (Land and Water Plan). The goal of the Land and Water Plan, last updated in 2005, is to guide the agency in conserving the state's natural and historic heritage and in providing public access to the outdoors. The Plan serves as a tactical document that guides planning, operational and budget decisions for the agency. The revisions to the Plan will reflect current conservation challenges and the changing landscape in Texas.

**Parks & Wildlife is hosting a series of public meetings around the state to present the proposed changes to the Plan and to solicit public input.** The first such meeting was held in Austin on July 20 and was attended by representatives of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, Texas Wildlife Association, and numerous other groups which form the

constituency for the agency. **In addition, Parks & Wildlife is providing an opportunity for the public to participate in an online public comment process.**

### The Draft Plan

**As currently drafted – and the Plan is definitely a document in development – the Plan sets out four major goals for the agency:**

- Promote effective stewardship of natural and cultural resources
- Increase and facilitate access to the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of Texas
- Utilize relevant, current and sound science to inform policy decisions and operations
- Employ best business practices to achieve our mission efficiently and credibly.

**Parks & Wildlife**, *continued from page 1*

There are numerous objectives and sub-objectives under each of these potential goals, but all of them are subject to revision based on public comment and further evaluation by the agency staff and governing commission.

**The draft document is available on the Parks & Wildlife website at: [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/nonpwdpubs/land\\_and\\_water\\_plan/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/nonpwdpubs/land_and_water_plan/). There is a link from that web address to a site to make an online comment or set of comments on the draft plan.**

**Sierra Club Perspective**

Lone Star Chapter volunteer leaders Evelyn Merz and Brandt Mannchen, both of Houston, and Chapter staff members Ken Kramer and Jennifer Walker have been monitoring and providing periodic input to the development of the draft Plan.

The Sierra Club representatives emphasize the need for conservation practices on all land in the Parks & Wildlife Department's inventory, to anticipate and plan for emerging conservation issues such as the impact of climate change on fish and wildlife, and to give attention to the sustainability of nongame as well as game species populations, among other issues and concepts.

**The Lone Star Chapter will post a set of suggested comments regarding the**

**draft plan on the chapter website at <http://texas.sierraclub.org>.** These comments will be updated as necessary until the comment period expires.

**The Schedule**

**As of now, the Parks & Wildlife Department is planning to accept public comments on the current version of the draft plan through September 18**, four days after the last public meeting is held (September 14 in El Paso). On page 4 of this issue is a schedule of each of the remaining public meetings and their locations. Each meeting is set for the 6:30 to 8:00 PM time frame.

The intention of the agency is to have the final draft available to be considered for adoption by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, the governing body of the agency, by the Commission's regular business meeting in November. The Plan would be dated as 2010 and would serve as the agency's strategic document for a subsequent five years or longer.

**DONATE, Please**

to the

**Lone Star Chapter**[http://action.sierraclub.org/lonestar\\_scr](http://action.sierraclub.org/lonestar_scr)

# DOE Approves \$218.8 million for Texas Energy Plan from Federal Stimulus Monies

## Loans and Grants for Energy Efficiency and On-site Renewable Energy

On July 10, the U. S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy approved \$218.8 million for Texas's Energy Program (SEP). The Texas Energy Program is run by the State Energy Conservation Office, a division of the Texas State Comptroller of Public Accounts. The monies, authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) – known unofficially as the federal economic stimulus package – will fund five new programs, according to SECO. These programs should lead to new jobs and direct reductions in energy use, saving money for cities, school districts and other public entities.

The authorized monies are separate from other ARRA-funded programs, including the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) programs for major cities (which must apply directly to DOE for these funds by August 10) and for smaller cities. There is a separate Energy Star Appliance Rebate Program. All these will be run by SECO.

### The Texas Energy Program

The Texas Energy Program includes a Building Efficiency and Retrofit Program (which will receive \$158 million in ARRA

funds), Transportation Efficiency Program (\$17 million), Distributed Renewable Technology Program (\$30 million), Energy Sector Training Centers (\$6 million) and Public Education and Outreach Campaign on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources (\$5 million).

The Building Efficiency and Retrofit Program will be based on SECO's *LoanSTAR* Program. A revolving loan mechanism will be utilized with SEP/ARRA funding to provide loans of up to \$10 million to eligible public entities to perform energy efficiency and retrofit activities on government-owned buildings and facilities. These loans may be used for installing on-site renewable energy equipment as well, with a payback of 10 or 15 years depending on the type of project.

Under the Transportation Efficiency Program, entities will be able to submit proposals through two projects – the Traffic Signal Project and the Alternative Fuels Project. Eligible entities are governmental entities and may include units of state and local government, public schools, public colleges and universities, public hospitals and government-owned utilities. Thus, these entities could replace lighting sources for traffic signals to save energy or upgrade their fleets to run on

## **Schedule of Remaining Public Meetings on the Revision of the Land & Water Plan – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**

**All meetings are scheduled from 6:30 to 8 PM.**

**Mission — Monday, July 27**

Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park  
Conference Room  
2800 S. Bentsen Palm Drive (FM 2062)  
Mission, TX 78572

**Houston — Monday, August 3**

Houston Garden Center  
Hermann Park  
1500 Hermann Drive  
Houston, TX 77004

**San Antonio — Monday, August 10**

**\*Please bring your parking ticket to the  
meeting for parking validation.**

Central Library Auditorium  
600 Soledad  
San Antonio, TX 78205

**Arlington — Monday, August 17**

Arlington Convention Center  
1200 Ballpark Way  
Arlington, TX 76011

**Midland/Odessa — Monday, August 31**

Sibley Nature Center  
1307 E. Wadley  
Midland, TX 79705

**Amarillo - Tuesday, Sept. 8**

Amarillo City Commission Chamber  
509 S.E. 7th Ave.  
Amarillo, TX 79105

**El Paso — Monday, Sept. 14**

TEA, Region 19 Education Service Center  
6611 Boeing Drive  
El Paso, TX 79925

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/nonpwdpubs/land\\_and\\_water\\_plan/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/nonpwdpubs/land_and_water_plan/)**

# TxDOT Asks for Public Input

## Here's Your Chance to Tell Them What You Think

On July 10 the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) posted a Notice of Opportunity to Comment seeking input from the public and “transportation partners” across the state on the restructuring of the department’s system of transportation project planning, funding and programming. **The deadline for comments is 5 PM on August 10.** Full information about the opportunity to comment may be found in the July 10<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Texas Register* or online at <http://www.txdot.gov/news/028-2009.htm>.

### Background

During the spring state legislative session the legislation to continue TxDOT – legislation which would have made numerous changes in the agency’s structure and functions – got bogged down in haggling between the House and Senate over several contentious issues. The result was that the legislation continuing the agency did not pass, which in part prompted the very short special session earlier this month that continued and/or moved the “sunset” date for several agencies.

None of the proposed changes in TxDOT were included in the legislation covering those agencies in the special session. The legislators simply moved the TxDOT sunset date from 2009 to 2011 so that the agency continues in

existence and the Sunset Advisory Commission gets to do another, probably very limited review of TxDOT in this agency review cycle just as it did in the 2007-2009 cycle.

### Dissatisfaction with TxDOT

It became clear during the recent sunset review of the agency and the legislative deliberations over its continuation legislation, however, that there is widespread dissatisfaction with TxDOT and its practices. TxDOT officials said as much in their recent public notice: “*...it became apparent in discussions with the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission that legislators wanted the department to develop a transparent, well-defined, and understandable program for transportation planning and project development* [emphasis added].”

### What TxDOT is Seeking

As a result of the awareness about the dissatisfaction of legislators and others, TxDOT is seeking what the agency notice terms “general ideas and specific suggestions” for the agency’s transportation planning. In its notice TxDOT says that “...information gathered from the comments will be used to assist the department in developing proposed rules to establish a

**TxDOT**, continued from page 5

comprehensive transportation planning and project development program that includes the following:”

- a long-range transportation plan for the state
- a mid-range transportation planning program for the next 10 years
- a short-range work plan for the next four years
- planning and programming requirements for metropolitan [transportation] planning organizations
- criteria for selection of transportation projects
- an extended cash-flow forecast
- funding formulas for transportation projects
- formulas for the allocation of funds to metropolitan planning organizations
- a procedure for changing the scheduling of transportation projects, and
- regular reporting requirements.

*The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is currently preparing comments to submit to TxDOT in response to the agency’s request.*



P.O. Box 1931 Austin, TX 78767  
 tel: (512)477-1729 fax: (512) 477-8526  
 lonestar.chapter@sierraclub.org  
 http://texas.sierraclub.org

State Capitol Report is a publication of the Lone Star Chapter  
 Sierra Club published 18 times a year.  
 Director and Editor: Ken Kramer  
 Conservation Director: Cyrus Reed  
 Layout and production: Jerome Collins

*These comments will be posted to the Chapter website by August 3 for members of the public who might want ideas about important issues to highlight or recommendations to make in their own comments.* **Transportation projects have an enormous impact on the environment – for good or ill – and it is important to have a strong environmental perspective included in the public input that TxDOT receives on transportation project planning.**

### Submitting Comments

*TxDOT is accepting only written comments in response to its recent notice.* **The comments should be addressed to Bob Jackson, General Counsel, 125 East 11th Street, Austin, Texas 78701, or via email to rcarter@dot.state.tx.us.** Again, the deadline for receipt of comments is 5:00 PM August 10.

The department will not respond individually to comments received pursuant to this notice. When proposed rules have been drafted and prior to any formal action by the commission, TxDOT will publish another notice containing a copy of the draft rules and a request for public comments on those draft rules.

**For more information contact the TxDOT office of Government & Public Affairs media relations at 512 463-8588.**

## Texas Parks & Wildlife Commission Meets in Fort Worth August 26-27

The Texas Parks & Wildlife Commission will hold its August meeting and the Parks & Wildlife Department's annual public hearing on August 26-27 in Fort Worth. The meeting will take place at the Amon G. Carter, Jr. Exhibit Hall in the Will Rogers Memorial Center, 3401 West Lancaster in central Fort Worth in the city's cultural district.

Starting at 9 AM Wednesday, August 26, the Regulations, Conservation, and Finance Committees of the Commission will meet, followed at noon by lunch and executive session business. Then at 2 PM the Commission will commence the annual public hearing. The full Commission meeting will begin at 9 AM on Thursday, August 27. The public is invited to attend the committee meetings, annual public hearing, and the full Commission meeting.



**DONATE, Please**

to the

**Lone Star Chapter**

[http://action.sierraclub.org/lonestar\\_scr](http://action.sierraclub.org/lonestar_scr)

**Energy**, *continued from page 3*

alternative fuels.

The Distributed Renewable Technology Program will provide grants to public entities to install photovoltaic solar panels and other energy systems to help save and produce energy, again for public entities. The entity must provide at least a 20 percent match, and the cost may not exceed \$2 million for the project.

Under the Energy Sector Training Centers, \$6 million in funding will specifically be used to purchase equipment needed to train workers in the fields of energy efficiency, transportation efficiency, and renewable energy technologies. SECO will work with the Texas Workforce Commission and other entities currently involved in such training.

Finally, the State Comptroller's Office/ SECO will run and contract a \$5 million outreach and education campaign to encourage renewable energy use and support energy efficiency efforts for all Texans.

### Going Forward

SECO will be developing the RFPs (requests for proposal) and rules for all five programs in the coming weeks and months. For more information and to keep updated as these programs are implemented, go to the SECO website at <http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us/>.





SIERRA CLUB LONE STAR CHAPTER  
STATE CONSERVATION OFFICE  
PO BOX 1931  
AUSTIN TX 78767

LONE STAR CHAPTER

<http://texas.sierraclub.org>

**INSIDE:**

|                 |        |
|-----------------|--------|
| TPWD Plans      | Page 1 |
| Energy Stimulus | Page 3 |
| Public Meetings | Page 4 |
| TxDOT Comments  | Page 5 |

**Explore, enjoy and protect the planet.**

**STATE CAPITOL REPORT SUBSCRIPTION FORM**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check (made payable to "Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club") for a:  
 \$15 Individual or  Citizen Group  \$20 Govt. Agency  \$25 Corp. or Assoc.  
Subscription to the *State Capitol Report* for one year. Mail this sheet in an envelope to  
Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter, State Conservation Office, P.O. Box 1931, Austin, Texas 78767.



100% recycled post consumer fiber paper processed chlorine free,  
FSC forest stewardship council certified

**Lone Star Sierra Club Action Alerts! Work: Thank you for 692 messages delivered to the State Energy Conservation Office July 6!**  
**Click on "Take Action" button at: <http://texas.sierraclub.org/>**