

# Solutions as Diverse as Texas



As the only state-based environmental organization with multiple field offices dedicated to grassroots organizing, we often see Texas as a huge quilt of unique communities. Each year we work hard to build public support for important environmental protections in many of these one-of-a-kind places. When we win, it's because thousands of neighbors make their voices heard on issues that affect their lives. These local victories lead to solutions as unique and diverse as Texas itself—and 2014 was no exception!

In Dallas, we won our campaign to pass a local ordinance aimed at reducing litter and pollution problems caused by single-use shopping bags: Dallas has now implemented a 5-cent disposable bag fee to encourage residents to remember their reusable bags and to fund litter clean-up and prevention efforts. We are also working with the Fort Worth Sierra Club to ban single-use bags there, and local officials have already responded by making “Bring Your Own Bag” part of the city’s Steer Fort Worth agenda.

The biggest local environmental headline came from Denton, where residents voted to ban hydraulic fracturing (or “fracking”) inside their city limits. At the request of TCE members and supporters in Denton, we supported this local initiative and helped distribute information about the election. Denton is the only city in Texas that has banned fracking completely, but many other DFW cities have passed local ordinances to set rules and guidelines for this industry.

We turned up the volume on recycling and grassroots democracy this year in Houston. Since Houston is now the only major city in Texas without a long-term plan to reduce waste and divert waste from landfills, TCE generated thousands of letters in support of Zero Waste to Mayor Annise Parker and City Council members. They must have been listening: in September, the City Council finally voted to expand curbside recycling to all houses with public trash service!



TCE continued organizing broad public dissent in response to the misguided “One Bin for All” proposal that recyclers and environmental advocates from across the country say will not work to reduce waste. Our “Zero Waste Houston” coalition of social justice groups and local community leaders is instead pushing for proven, effective solutions such as curbside recycling and composting. With the help of thousands of supporters in Houston who wrote letters, emails, tweets and made phone calls, we are well on our way to achieving quality services so everyone can recycle at home, work and play.



For the first time in over 100 years, Austin elected a City Council using single-member districts in every part of town. TCE participated by hosting one of the first candidate briefings—teaching many novice office seekers about Zero Waste—and by organizing a televised mayoral debate on environmental issues, moderated by our very own Andrew Dobbs (Program Director, Austin). TCE also took the lead on legalizing recycling at food trucks and making sure that our apartment and business recycling rules are actually being enforced.

In addition, we continued to assist local residents in Caldwell County as they organize stiff opposition to a new landfill proposal outside of Lockhart. We need more recycling, not more landfills!







# LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Perhaps you've noticed that TCE has started doing much more work at the local level. In part, it's because we work so much on recycling and waste issues and historically local governments have taken the lead on that front in Texas. In addition, it's the level of government closest to the people, and local elections are non-partisan, which often makes it easier to turn good ideas into reality.

You may have also noticed that our local campaigns are making waves. We often work with a broad range of allies including neighborhood groups, business leaders and many others to boost recycling, fight problem waste facilities or put safeguards in place around oil and gas development that protect the public health and our natural resources.

You're not the only one to take notice. Our ability to get things done at the local level can sometimes create backlash from our opponents. For example, Partners Dewatering Inc. (PDI) is a liquid waste company that collects metal-laden wastes from auto shops and restaurant floors. Their operations outside of San Antonio caused more than 160,000 fish deaths and numerous violations of environmental laws.

In 2013, we worked with water quality, fishing and birding advocates in the Rio Grande Valley to stop PDI's plan to discharge into the Arroyo Colorado, a sensitive waterway that provides the largest flow of freshwater into the Lower Laguna Madre. Then, in 2014, PDI brought a lawsuit against TCE because of our successful campaign, taking us to court for speaking out against their proposal. We are asking the courts to throw out this blatant attempt to chill our freedom of speech and right to organize.

Our victories at the local level must be working, because powerful elected officials began 2015 by calling for the state government to pre-empt several of the ordinances we recently helped pass. Industry lobbyists don't like to lose! The only way we win campaigns and defend those victories is with your support—with your financial backing and letters, emails and calls to government and corporate decision-makers.

We thank you for every way you assist TCE in our efforts. If we can serve you and Texas better, please let us know! If you want to be more engaged, for instance in attending a meeting with your City Council member or your state legislator in their district or Capitol office, we are happy to prepare you! Our door is always open.

*Robin Schneider*

ROBIN SCHNEIDER, TCE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## meet the staff

This is TCE at our annual staff retreat, having fun at one of our favorite campsites in Texas: Colorado Bend State Park. In an amazing display of dedication and talent, each canvasser you see here could knock on roughly 18,000 doors in one year...perhaps yours included! That's how we build the grassroots power we need to challenge corporate polluters and government officials—and to prevail when they inevitably push back.

## contact us

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### TCE'S 4TH ANNUAL TRASH MAKEOVER CHALLENGE

brought out the best fashions (and best audience) yet. With a delicious cocktail of immensely talented designers mixed with a cadre of local political and environmental luminaries and, of course, another epic dance party, this event is staking its claim as a "must-see" event on the Austin cultural map.



MEET US HERE  
ON MARCH 30TH!

# 2015 TEXAS LEGISLATURE

We knew that the 2015 legislative session would be challenging, but we were surprised when Gov. Greg Abbott kicked things off by decrying some of Texas' most effective environmental policies: local ordinances preventing bag pollution, requiring responsible oil and gas production and protecting heritage trees. Legislators have since filed several bills (**SB 343, SB 360, SB 440, HB 190, HB 539, HB 540, HB 1442, HB 1472**) that would strip local government authority and pre-empt things like smoking ordinances and common sense conservation policies. In response, TCE is building unique alliances with groups throughout Texas all over the political spectrum interested in preserving local control on important quality of life issues.

It's not all defense, however. We are working with Rep. Kenneth Sheets' office—a Republican from Dallas—to introduce a battery recycling bill. We look forward to hearings on this important policy, and to gaining support in the legislature for this recycling solution.

Other opportunities and challenges remain to be seen, of course, but with members in all 181 districts and by connecting Texans with their legislators every day, we are confident that we will once again be able to provide a strong voice for our air, land and water. Thank you for making this possible.

## ACTION:

### CONTACT YOUR STATE LAWMAKERS

You can speak out against legislators' assault on local self-determination in Texas by sending a message to your State Senator and State Representative.

Take action now by visiting [www.localcontroltexas.org](http://www.localcontroltexas.org) to tell your elected officials that our local governments should retain the right to solve problems—and find solutions—locally.

## JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING...

Every year, TCE hosts a gathering for members and staff to discuss the previous year and plans for the future. And we cook food. Lots of food. Bring a dish if you wish, but definitely come on out!

**McKINNEY ROUGHS  
NATURE PARK  
MARCH 29TH  
1:00 - 5:00 P.M.  
1884 Hwy. 71 West  
Cedar Creek, TX 78612**

## ...THEN LOBBY WITH US AT THE STATE CAPITOL!

On Monday, March 30th, meet up with TCE staff and TCE supporters for a day of advocacy at the legislature. If you've never been to the Capitol, or if you're a veteran citizen lobbyist, this is a great opportunity to make your voice heard. *E-mail [zac@texasenvironment.org](mailto:zac@texasenvironment.org) or call 512.326.5655 to RSVP for one or both of these events.*

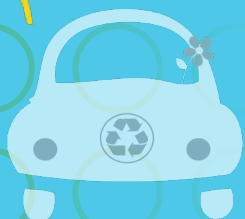


## SUSTAINABLE GRASSROOTS SUPPORT

As you may already know, TCE is not funded the way most other non-profit organizations are. We don't get government grants or political party support. We don't have slick marketing campaigns or million dollar donors. But we do have something unique and profoundly effective: TCE can boast the broadest base of grassroots supporters giving individual contributions of any environmental group in Texas. In other words, you. Thanks for your generosity. You make this happen.

## WE ACCEPT VEHICLE DONATIONS!

If you have a car (or truck...or boat...or hovercraft...) you're ready to get rid of, donate it to TCE Fund and get a tax deduction. It's like recycling, and we get the money! All you have to do is go to [www.texasenvironment-cardonations.org](http://www.texasenvironment-cardonations.org) for more details or call (844) 837-GIVE to schedule a pick-up.



TCE builds power throughout the state thanks to the generous support of Texans like you. In 2014, 9 out of every 10 dollars came from grassroots, individual contributions. We work for the people, so we're funded by the people. Simple. Effective. Our financials are below:

### Where we got the funding in 2014

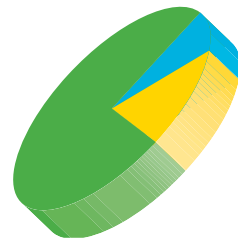
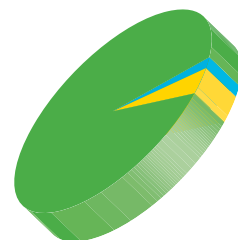
**Revenue Total: \$1,435,038**

- 93% Grassroots contributions from individual Texans
- 2% Special projects funding
- 5% Reimbursed expenses, miscellaneous

### How we used the funding in 2014

**Expense Total: \$1,443,477**

- 75% Environmental advocacy, community organizing & public education
- 11% Managing TCE
- 14% Fundraising to sustain TCE



SOURCE: TCE FINANCIAL STATEMENT, 2014



**TEXAS CAMPAIGN  
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

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# VICTORY!



*TCE pirates preparing for action at the Clean Lakes Festival in Madison, Wisconsin last July*

In July 2014, a merry band of TCE organizers embarked on a journey from Texas to Madison, WI on a mission to convince Rayovac to support battery recycling programs. Other major battery manufacturers such as Duracell and Energizer had already agreed to support recycling efforts, but Rayovac was the last holdout. So we generated over 25,000 letters to Rayovac's parent company, Spectrum Brands. We organized social media campaigns and spearheaded direct actions in several U.S. cities on America Recycles Day. For the finale, we traveled to Madison and staged a pirate protest at the company-sponsored "Clean Lakes Festival." Activists came by land and sea to celebrate the three *ARRRs*—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—and to remind officials that clean lakes means corporate responsibility. It worked exactly as planned: Rayovac changed its position to support battery recycling and pledged to help pass legislation in key states. Thanks to your support, we are one step closer to recycling for household batteries not just in Texas, but all over the country!