



PUBLIC CITIZEN Texas Office

Global Warming and Texas

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Global Warming in the 81st Legislature

The debate on climate change is largely over. Science shows that we are warming and that this warming is due to greenhouse gas emissions. Climate disruption will have an immense economic impact on Texas if we do not work to solve it, but the good news is we can create more jobs by moving to clean energy.

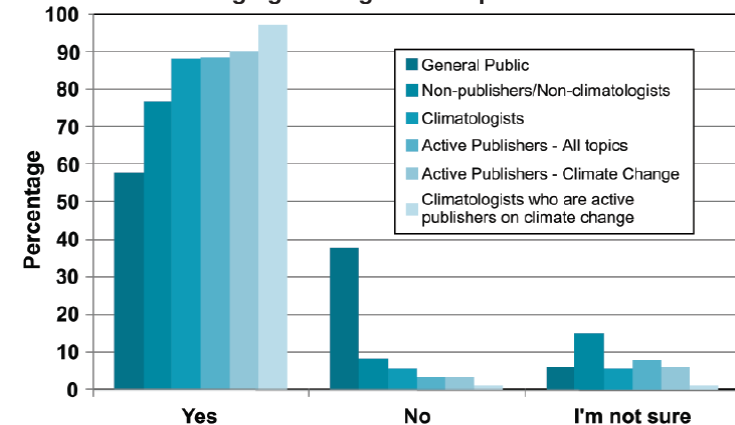
A political consensus has also developed. Congress will likely pass a bill by summer, and Texas needs to get ready to deal with the realities of new federal mandates.

We can **get ahead of the curve** by enacting a greenhouse gas registry and no-regrets type efficiency measures and expanding our incredibly successful Renewable Portfolio Standard.

The vast majority of scientists agree that manmade greenhouse gas emissions have warmed the planet¹. Despite the fact that temperatures are cooler than last year, 2008 was still the 9th hottest year on record².

Texas was a part of this trend. We saw more than 50 days over 100 degrees in Austin, the hottest in over 80 years.³ Meanwhile, Dallas-Ft Worth set a record with the second highest average temperature ever⁴.

Do you think human activity is a significant contributing factor in changing mean global temperatures¹?



Inside:

Federal Legislation is coming, like it or not

What Federal Legislation might look like—and how to get ahead of it!

The price of inaction

Successful policies that have reduced emissions in Texas

And how to expand them!

This warming has also correlated with the extension of severe drought through most of Texas and an incredibly destructive hurricane season.

This has also affected our political "climate" in Washington. The 2008 elections replaced many outspoken critics of climate change with voices who advocate strong actions.

House Democrats replaced Chairman John Dingell, long an

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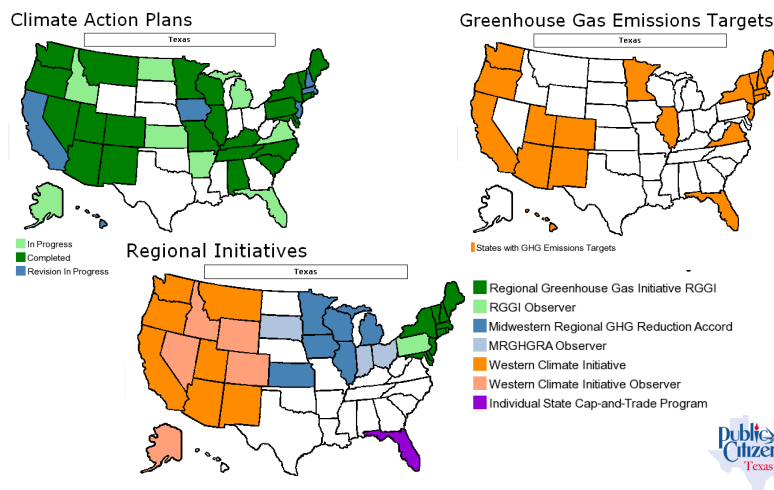
Chairman Henry Waxman has proposed a set of principles around which a climate bill will be based and has promised this bill to be out of his committee by Memorial Day. His goals include:

- *25% cut in emissions by 2020 and 80% by 2050 (below 1990 levels)*
- *Full auctioning of carbon credits with few offsets or allocations*
- *Revenue auction to be spent on efficiency, jobs, and helping affected low-income populations.*
- *States will have the right to experiment to find ways to meet and exceed the federal cap*

advocate of moderate action on climate, with Henry Waxman, who supports a national cap and trade program that would cut greenhouse gas emissions 25% emissions by 2020 and 80% by 2050⁵. **Waxman has promised a bill by Memorial Day.** President Obama has also stated that if Congress does not act, he will instruct the EPA to regulate emissions under the Clean Air Act, possibly by the end of the year⁶.

In one form or another, regulation is coming from Washington. Texas, as the largest greenhouse gas polluter in the US and the **7th largest in the world**⁷, stands to lose a great deal by sticking with business as usual.

39 Other States Are Taking Action to Reduce Global Warming - Where is Texas?



We have fallen behind other states that have enacted climate plans, greenhouse gas registries, “no regrets” efficiency measures, and other comprehensive actions to reduce pollution levels. This 81st Legislature gives us the chance to change that.

We have been successful in our policies supporting wind power and planning for future growth through efficiency measures.

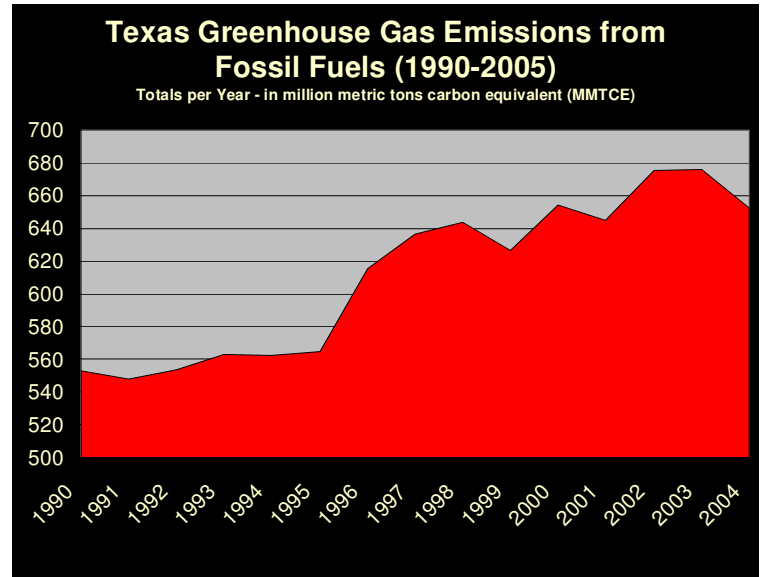
- The **Renewable Portfolio Standard** has created thousands of jobs statewide in the wind industry and millions in economic activity.
- A recent PUC study has also stated that we can **decrease our statewide energy consumption by 23% through energy efficiency**⁸.
- We can build on that goal by expanding renewable energy and even further efficiency measures.

Continuing our leadership in renewable energy will not only help us get ahead of federal legislation, but also stimulate our economy, create thousands of new jobs, and save us from the worst effects of global climate disruption.

Through renewable energy and efficiency measures, Texas has been able to slow and even decrease its CO2 emissions over the past decade.

Throughout the same period we have seen economic growth and relative stability, even during a national economic downturn. This goes to show the falsehood of claims that decreasing CO2 emissions will ruin our economy.

However, we will fail to capitalize on the gains we have already made **unless we do a greenhouse gas inventory and set a baseline year from when we will be attempting to make reductions.** Inaction will mean that **the federal government will set the terms, not us.**



Global warming deniers often point out that the science of global warming is still developing, and that there is still much that climate scientists do not understand. However, the more they learn, the more the scientific evidence points to manmade global warming. As economist Gary Yohe, an expert on economic impacts of environmental policy, recently stated,

Uncertainty is ubiquitous. There are some fundamental conclusions that we now know: that the planet is warming; that humans are the cause of it. We've seen the climate signal and changes in global mean temperature ... But there's some uncertainty that simply will not be resolved in a timely fashion.

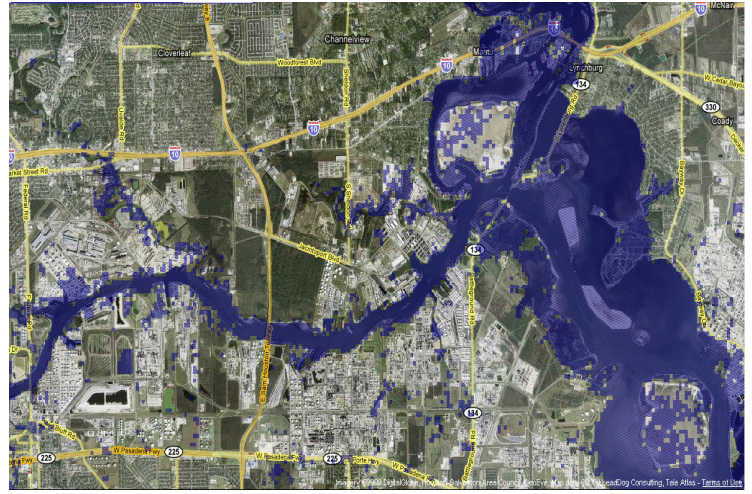
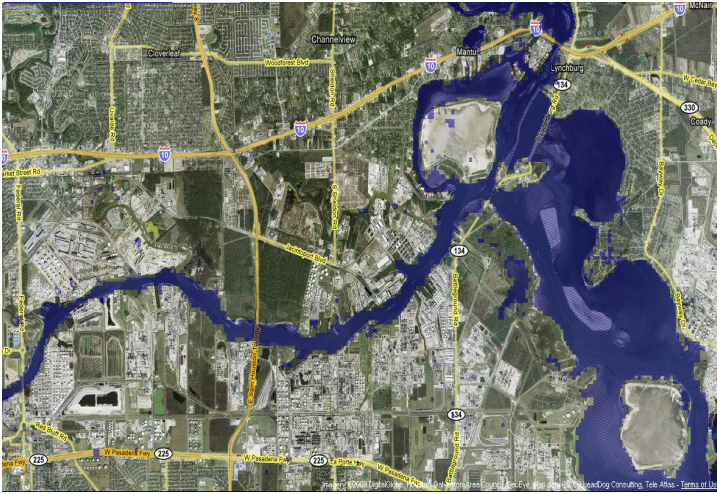
Yet once you adopt a risk-management perspective, then uncertainty becomes a reason to do something rather than a reason not to do something. And people who argue against doing anything then have to guarantee that humans aren't changing the climate. They can't do that, so they can't argue against enacting some climate policy.

At the same time, though, uncertainty is something we need to recognize will be persistent. We have to learn how to make decisions under uncertainty.

Any good economic analysis must always include **the price of inaction.** A recent analysis by Union of Concerned Scientists and supported by the opinions of over 1800 scientists and economist states that **global warming stands to decrease national GDP by 20% by 2050 if we do nothing⁹.**

According to the consensus opinion of 13 US government agencies, **Texas stands to lose as much as 35% of agricultural output** from only two or three degrees of warming¹⁰. We have already warmed the atmosphere by nearly 2 degrees, and under a business as usual approach will likely warm another 2 or 3 degrees by mid century.

This warming would speed glacier melt in Greenland and Antarctica at faster than expected rates. With sea level rise of as little as three feet, major economic centers along the coast, including refineries, ports, power plants, and heavy manufacturing face disruption. Major economic arteries



Houston Ship Channel, 1 meter and 5 meters of sea level rise. Notice the areas affected first: Industry, refiners, even I-10 like the Houston ship channel could be extremely hurt. Furthermore, sea level rise has the potential to turn as much as **50% of inland aquifers** brackish and useless for residential and commercial purposes¹¹.

What Should We Do?

Set up a Greenhouse Gas Registry and set a baseline year to get ahead of federal legislation

Use efficiency to reduce our energy needs 20% by 2020

- **Enact “No Regrets” efficiency programs that will save the state money**
- **Better building codes, and make all new homes “solar ready” by 2030**
- **Demand management- consumers can choose what power to consume and when**

Expand the Renewable Portfolio Standard so we can replicate the success of wind with solar, geothermal, and energy storage

- **5% (2000 MW) of state’s energy from solar by 2020**
- **Develop storage with capacity to store 5% of state’s energy by 2020**

¹ Doran, Peter T.; Maggie Kendall Zimmerman (January 20, 2009). "Examining the Scientific Consensus on Climate Change". *EOS* **90** (3): 22-23. http://tigger.uic.edu/~pdoran/012009_Doran_final.pdf.

² http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2009/20090113_Temperature.pdf

³ <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ewx/html/wxevent/2008/jantosep2008.htm>

⁴ January 2, 2009, Michael E. Young, *Dallas Morning News*, “Warm weather in 2008 quietly sets record” <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/010209dnmetweather.37be03c.html>

⁵ http://www.globalwarming.house.gov/mediacenter/pressreleases_2008?id=0047#main_content

⁶ Bloomberg.com, Oct 16, 2008, “Obama to Declare Carbon Dioxide Dangerous Pollutant” http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=a2RHIj_6hvV0&refer=home

⁷ Feb 28, 2008, Matthew Phillips, *Newsweek*, “Texas produces more carbon emissions than most countries, but the state government and business community don't seem too concerned” <http://www.newsweek.com/id/116784>

⁸ http://www.puc.state.tx.us/electric/reports/misc/Electricity_Saving_2009-2018_122308.pdf

⁹ Quote from Geoff Heal, economist, Columbia University, http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/top-us-scientists-and-0120.html

¹⁰ U.S. Climate Change Science Program; *Synthesis and Assessment Product 4.3: The Effects of Climate Change on Agriculture in the United States*, 2008.

¹¹ Science Daily; *Climate Change Threatens Drinking Water, As Rising Sea Penetrates Coastal Aquifers*; Ohio State University Study; Nov. 2007.