

# **Transcript of Interviews with the TCEQ Commissioners for the Sept. 1, 2011, Issue of *Natural Outlook***

## **Chairman Bryan Shaw, Ph.D.**

This session, both the Texas House and the Texas Senate unanimously approved the TCEQ Sunset bill. So we appreciate that, and we view it as a great vote of confidence. We think it shows a couple of things. First, we think it shows that the legislature gave this agency a lot of attention during this very challenging legislative session, which shows they recognize the importance of this agency's mission. That they approved it unanimously suggests that they approve of the job that we've been doing, that they recognize that we have been making advances in air quality, in water quality, and in the safe handling of waste. And that they recognize... that they approve of what we've done, as well as the future that we've laid out through this process. Secondly, I think they recognize that we've been making these environmental strides during a very fragile national economy; we've done it in a way that Texas has actually weathered that fragile economy fairly well. And I think the reason that they supported that, is that they recognize that in order to attract businesses and families to Texas, that we have to have a strong environment, so people want to have this healthy environment, and want to live and work here, but also in order to make future advances in clean air, and clean water, we have to have a strong economy, so we can afford to continue making those investments.

## **Commissioner Buddy Garcia**

We owe a great deal of thanks to the Texas Legislature for giving us the confidence that they did. This session was a very difficult session, budget cuts across all agencies, and ours was no exception. Our workforce is going to be reduced by some 235 employees, and we will make do, and make every effort to provide the same service and satisfaction, and safety to the public, but ultimately the Legislature's confidence in this agency, I think reflects hard work – that this agency takes nothing for granted. Quite honestly every decision we make as Commissioners includes opinions on both sides that require very difficult, painstaking decisions to be made, hopefully dispassionate of the arguments on both sides, based on the law and science. And I think the Legislature understood that, understood the nature of our business and the fact that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality does an outstanding job of trying to weigh out the benefits of not only for the environment, but for the economy of Texas.

## **Commissioner Carlos Rubinstein**

You know, during this session, the Legislature gave us some new, important, tools in the area of water management during drought and water emergencies. As the population grows here in Texas, water management becomes even more crucial, especially when nature turns off the water tap, and the rains don't come, as we have seen this summer. And of course here in Texas we also know that we can expect this to happen every few years. When necessary, the agency will now not only temporarily suspend water rights, but we also have the authority now to adjust the actual diversion rates of water. We can also now require water right holders to provide monthly water right reports to us, in areas not served by a watermaster, to help us better manage water. And the agency will now periodically evaluate the rest of state for the need of watermasters in water basins, which currently are not served by watermasters. Anyone needing information about drought management, can call our hotline at 800-447-2827, during business hours, or check our agency website regarding suspensions and resources for the public and for public water systems.