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Natural **OUTLOOK**

See Also:

[Past Issues](#)

Natural Outlook is the TNRCC's quarterly publication of environmental issues in Texas. Below is the Web version of the Fall 1999 issue for your viewing.

If you would like a free subscription of the hard copy edition, please e-mail us at ac@tnrcc.state.tx.us

Fall 1999 Issue

Clearing the Air

[Texas cities face deadlines on clean air compliance](#)

[Fighting to Avoid "Nonattainment" Status](#)

The Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston-Galveston, and Beaumont-Port Arthur areas are working to meet crucial deadlines in their air quality planning efforts. All



three metros, which carry the designation of "ozone nonattainment areas," must unveil detailed plans in 2000 showing how they will achieve compliance with the federal one-hour ozone standard. Failure to properly address urban smog could spell the eventual loss of highway funding.

The 1999 ozone season was a tough one for

Fighting to Avoid Nonattainment Status

Austin, San Antonio, and Tyler. Local traffic volumes, industrial emissions, and weather patterns conspired to push those cities closer to violating federal ozone standards. From April to October, when ozone typically is most concentrated, these urban centers were judged by the new (and tougher) federal eight-hour ozone standard, which is calculated on a three-year average.

Clean Air Standards in Limbo

A 1999 court ruling jeopardizes the Environmental Protection Agency's authority to upgrade air quality standards. The federal agency's decision to move from one-hour ozone measurements to a stricter eight-hour standard was struck down by a federal judicial panel. Federal environmental officials say the eight-hour standard is necessary to safeguard the health of people living in smog-prone urban areas. The EPA has appealed the decision and, in the meantime, proposed reinstatement of the one-hour standard.



Sunset Evaluation Begins

For the coming year, every program and function of the TNRCC will come under scrutiny as the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission examines the agency's performance. The TNRCC is one of several natural resource agencies going through the sunset evaluation this biennium. The Legislature will consider the Sunset Commission's recommendations in the 2001 regular session.

A New Look at the TNRCC

In 1999, the TNRCC completed a major reorganization of its divisions, which marked a final blending of the state's environmental and natural resource programs. The new framework allows the agency to conduct more cross-analyses of air, water, and waste issues. Also the newly



created Office of Permitting, Remediation, and Registration gives the public and regulated community a single point of contact for the agency's permitting functions.



[New Laws Take Hold](#)

In the aftermath of the 76th legislative session, the TNRCC has been writing and implementing rules for more than 160 new state laws affecting environmental regulation. Chief among those are laws designed to bring older facilities into the state's air permitting program. Senate Bill 766 establishes voluntary emissions reduction permits for grandfathered industrial facilities, which predate the state's 1971 clean air laws; Senate Bill 7 is a mandatory program for grandfathered electric utilities, which now must apply for air quality permits.

[Time for a Tune-Up](#)

Tired of watching cars and trucks spew smoke in your neighborhood? The TNRCC can make a difference. Just contact the agency's Smoking Vehicle Program for quick action.



The above information is also published as TNRCC print publication PD-020/99-4.

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