

From the Commission

The fact that Texas has much to offer is obvious, as seen by the impressive number of people and companies moving here. Our burgeoning population and booming business base are testament to a can-do spirit that thrives in every region.

At the same time, the state's growth streak presents major challenges. More people translate into additional vehicles in areas already dealing with elevated levels of ozone. New homes and schools need a reliable water supply, as do existing and expanding industry and agricultural interests. Increased manufacturing activity brings more industrial operations affecting air and water quality. A bigger population also places greater demands on waste disposal.

Protecting human health and natural resources in Texas is a responsibility that grows more complex. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has shown the ability to meet this challenge. Our employees across the state are dedicated to ensuring that Texans have clean air and water and safe management of waste.

The last two years brought new challenges. While Texas is no stranger to dry spells, 2011 became the driest 12-month period on record. With all parts of the state suffering, the TCEQ worked with other agencies to coordinate the state's response. Staff provided technical assistance to public water systems and helped identify alternate water sources.

In addition, the state experienced a rapid upswing in oil and gas production. The TCEQ played an important role in these activities, including air and water quality monitoring and surface water and waste management.

Meanwhile, the agency took a stand in opposition to some regulations imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency. We contended these federal measures were unlawful, damaging to the economy, and without measureable environmental benefit.

The TCEQ also saw internal changes. With the departure of Commissioner Buddy Garcia, we welcomed Toby Baker as a new commissioner. Executive Director Mark Vickery retired after a distinguished career at the TCEQ. Filling the top management post is Zak Covar.

Finally, the TCEQ went through a rigorous Sunset review in which all aspects of the agency were evaluated. The result was a sizable package of legislative measures that created new agency programs and broadened or fine-tuned many existing ones. With gratitude, we watched lawmakers extend TCEQ operations for another 12 years.

Drawing on that vote of confidence, all three commissioners will continue to apply the law and sound science, as well as common sense, to environmental regulation. We consider it a privilege to serve in this capacity at the TCEQ. We want to ensure that Texas remains a state we are all proud to serve.



Carlos Rubinstein, *Commissioner*



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



Toby Baker, *Commissioner*

