



January, 2021

Dear Texas Leaders,

Water is special here in Texas. From Barton Creek to Galveston Bay, our waterways provide the water we drink, the irrigation for our crops, and the banks along which we play. But unfortunately, our waterways and drinking water are under threat. The combined forces of expanding development, skyrocketing water demand, diminishing aquifers, and aging water infrastructure are pushing our water systems to the limit. Texans are turning to nature-based infrastructure, like rain gardens, land conservation, and managed wetlands, to address those issues, but need the support of the Texas Legislature to prioritize these projects in the grants and loans given out by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB).

As droughts come more frequently and ever increasing rainstorms inundate our communities, concrete infrastructure prevents rainwater from soaking into the ground, forcing it to run over roofs and roads, picking up oil, toxic chemicals, litter, and animal waste. When this polluted water reaches our waterways it makes us sick, threatens the habitat of our wildlife, endangers our cropland, and causes flooding in communities downstream. To fix these pressing issues, stormwater managers can incorporate nature-based features to mitigate flooding, prevent water pollution, recharge our aquifers, reduce urban heat, prevent erosion, and save hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure costs.<sup>1</sup> We support creating a dedicated funding program to fund nature-based infrastructure projects through interest rate breaks on Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loans as described below.

The TWDB has endorsed nature-based infrastructure, but because the funding structure is biased to grey infrastructure, very little of their funds are actually used on nature-based projects. Since 2018, the TWDB's CWSRF has financed only two green infrastructure projects, both of which were water reuse projects that are not nature-based, and therefore do not contribute to reducing water pollution, fighting flooding, or enhancing groundwater recharge.<sup>2</sup> We propose that the legislature address this issue by creating a "sponsored project" program within Texas' CWSRF like the one used in Iowa. Since Iowa implemented this program in 2008 they have seen an enormous return on investment: they have financed 99 nature-based infrastructure projects in 81 communities throughout the state. A significant number of Iowa's projects are rural focused: aiming to reduce agricultural runoff in communities that could not afford such projects any other way. These projects not only contribute to preventing water pollution and flooding, but also help to manage the growth in water demand and increase aquifer recharge.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/gw\\_recharge\\_benefits\\_final\\_april\\_2016-508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/gw_recharge_benefits_final_april_2016-508.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2018-2019 Annual Reports from the Texas Water Development Board



This solution works by giving communities the chance to fund two projects for the price of one: a simple interest rate reduction on CWSRF loans for large wastewater projects provides the community with around \$100,000 per million dollars of loan for a smaller nature-based project. Money the ratepayers would have paid in interest is instead used to invest in the community's water quality and flood mitigation efforts. Because the money comes from a portion of the loan interest revenues, it is revenue neutral on the part of the legislature and can be implemented by the TWDB independently.

We support the creation of an Iowa-style Sponsored Project program within Texas's CWSRF. Doing so will create opportunities for Texans to protect their communities and water supply, incentivize public-private partnerships, support Texas agriculture, and protect our parks and wildlife.

Sincerely,

**Elected Officials**

Mayor and City Council  
City of Kyle, TX

*Support approved through unanimous council vote*

**Stormwater Managers**

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