

# 2023-2024 PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM AND PRIORITIES



## Protect and Enhance our Investments in All Public Parks & Open Spaces

### Sporting Goods Sales Tax

In 2019, Texas voters approved a constitutional amendment (88.02% voted yes) that allocates all sporting goods sales tax (SGST) revenues to Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Texas Historical Commission. TRAPS supports the proper allocation of funds to the Texas Recreation and Parks Account, which funds TPWD grant programs.

- Opposes appropriation riders to the Texas Recreation and Parks Account, as these riders subvert the competitive grant process. Riders typically allocate more to specific projects than the maximum amount allowable through the grant process. Over \$38 million was allocated to the TPWD grants programs in 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature, but nearly \$18 million in appropriation riders passed, as well.
- Opposes exemptions on sales tax for sporting goods. For example, tax-free weekends on sporting goods.

### Creation, Conservation, Preservation, and Access of Public Lands

TRAPS supports funding acquisition, conservation, and, when necessary, development and enhancement of public lands for use by Texas residents now and for future generations.

- Supports additional land acquisition by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the protection of public lands for our growing population.
- Supports investing state funds towards lowering deferred maintenance of Texas State Parks and Natural Areas (est. \$781 million in 2019)
- Supports the Trust for Public Land's 10-Minute Walk to a Park campaign, ensuring that Texans have public spaces to enjoy nature nearby.

### Funding

Many local budgets face issues related to the financing of public projects that can enhance the quality of life for citizens, TRAPS supports finding innovative funding sources for parks and recreation projects.

- Supports funding for additional acquisition or conservation of parks and open spaces in Texas.
- Supports additional funding for Texas Parks and Wildlife grant programs.
- Supports funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Supports funding from the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the Great American Outdoors Act.
- Supports funding from the US Department of Transportation Recreational Trails grant program.
- Supports utilizing Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues for parks and recreation projects.

### Municipal Legislation

Municipalities are the key to strengthening local economies, enhancing quality of life, creating vibrant communities, and improving resident well-being.

- Opposes exemptions that substantially erode the tax base.
- Opposes any legislation that would erode municipal authority, impose an unfunded mandate, or otherwise be detrimental to cities and their ability to provide public services to their communities.

## Improve Health & Wellness by Supporting Parks & Recreation Amenities and Services

### Inclusion

Parks and Recreation facilities and services provide opportunities to benefit all citizens, including those who have been historically underserved by public service providers.

- Supports funding for the connection of communities to nature and the outdoors.
- Supports funding for services and programs that ensure access for people with disabilities.

### Health and Wellness

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a light has been shone on parks and recreation facilities and services regarding their ability to provide benefits beyond providing opportunities for fun and socialization. Parks and recreation provides affordable access to services that enhance mental and physical wellness, prevent chronic disease, and reduce obesity, and expand opportunities for development of community networks.

- Supports legislation that assists in reducing the obesity and diabetes epidemics.
- Supports funding for programs and services that improve mental health through parks and recreation providers.
- Supports identifying underserved populations and promoting programs and facilities in those communities.

Approved by TRAPS Board of Directors on August 9, 2022