



ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE FAIR AND CONFERENCE HITS THE 20-YEAR MARK

Features drought planning, classes on oil and gas

Almost 3,000 people made their way from around the country to the Austin Convention Center for the 20th Environmental Trade Fair and Conference on May 1–2. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality hosts the two-day event aimed at educating the public about the latest in environmental strategies, rules, and best practices, as well as providing continuing education on environmental issues to professionals in various fields.

In addition, some 1,100 exhibitors, as well as TCEQ employees, staffed booths taking up two of the convention center's

exhibit halls. The conference culminates in a banquet honoring winners of the annual Texas Environmental Excellence Awards.

Drought discussed at luncheon

The 2011 drought will go down in history as the worst ever in a single year. At the luncheon on the first day of the trade fair, this topic took center stage in a video presentation and subsequent discussion featuring all three TCEQ commissioners. Again and again the commissioners emphasized that managing and planning for drought is currently one of the TCEQ's top priorities.

“We’d better bank the water we have. We’d better bank the time we have now—and be

planning and moving forward with infrastructure, with conservation plans, with plans to have water supply as our demands increase,” Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., told the audience of roughly 1,000. “We need to always consider ourselves either in a drought or on the verge of a drought and plan appropriately, because it’s too late once the drought is upon us.”

Water rights in Texas are honored on a priority basis during times of shortage. This doctrine is based on the legal premise that those water-rights holders with older rights are senior to those with

newer ones and can make a “priority call”—which may



TCEQ personnel staffed the information area where they offered Trade Fair attendees information on a wide variety of subjects.

TCEQ photo by Douglas Falls

restrict diversion by upstream junior water-rights holders.

Commissioner Carlos Rubinstein negotiated water rights on an international scale in his former role as Rio Grande watermaster, and explained the

challenges faced by TCEQ staffers when managing water rights during a drought.

“In 2009, we had one senior call and we thought that was pretty bad. In 2011, we had 15 senior and superior calls within the state,” he said. Rubinstein

went on to explain that, during 2011, an unprecedented 1,200 water rights were curtailed.

This year’s trade fair was the first for Commissioner Toby Baker, who jumped enthusiastically into the discussion. Baker

Texas Environmental Excellence Awards Banquet

One of the highlights of the trade fair every year is the presentation of the prestigious [Texas Environmental Excellence Awards](#). Nine winners from around the state were selected by the governor’s blue-ribbon panel for their projects demonstrating excellence in resource conservation, pollution prevention, or waste reduction. Winners met with Gov. Rick Perry at a capitol reception earlier in the day. Perry also addressed banquet attendees via video to extend his congratulations to the winners for their innovation and commitment to preservation.

Two of this year’s honorees focused on water conservation. Anheuser-Busch in Houston reduced water consumption by more than 500 million gallons in a year, thanks to a comprehensive approach to plant-wide water use. The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District raised 200 bushels of corn with only 12 inches of irrigation water per acre using a targeted, computerized irrigation system.

Several award winners represent a team effort. The Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership’s 700 members work on projects to improve and protect water quality in the Arroyo Colorado, which runs 90 miles from Mission to the Laguna Madre. Chester Jordan Elementary School in El Paso has a student-led team that launched a number of conservation activities and raised environmental awareness.

Two companies, Nucor Vulcraft Group and Century Industrial Coatings, worked together to develop and test an innovative coating for steel that reduces air emissions and is becoming an industry standard. The City of Coppell has a comprehensive environmental plan, developed by employees at all levels, that makes good environmental practices part of its routine operations.

Looking to the future, the City of Dallas Water Utility saves money by addressing issues with fats, oils, and grease through

preventive maintenance to wastewater lines and educating the public on proper disposal. Hannah Jordan Bevers, a high school student in Sugar Land, started a recycling program for her school’s cafeteria and wrote a manual that other schools have used as a model for their programs. Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center inspires tourists from around the world, students, and teachers to preserve nature while giving hands-on training.

The people of Texas are accustomed to challenges—from persistent drought to those related to growth. The Environmental Trade Fair recognizes excellence, educates the public, and offers a forum for sharing innovative ideas that will turn challenges into opportunities for a cleaner, stronger state for future generations. 🌱



Photos by Bob Daemrich

Children from the Chester Jordan Elementary School in El Paso were on hand to collect the Youth Award for their efforts aimed at reducing energy, saving water, and protecting the environment.

previously served as an adviser to Gov. Rick Perry on environmental issues and was able to give the audience a glimpse of what was happening behind the scenes at the governor's office.

"I've never heard from stakeholders like I did this past year. [There was] just this general cry for help—'What do we do?'" said Baker.

Baker detailed how the emergency resulted in the governor issuing a disaster proclamation for wildfire and drought, which gives state agencies some latitude in enforcement and the ability to expedite several processes. He also praised state agencies for working together in a coordinated response.

Classes include expansion of oil and gas offerings

TCEQ experts and other distinguished guests gave more than a hundred classes, covering a wide range of topics, including permitting, enforcement, ethics, environmental quality on the border, lab practices, management of waste, water availability and supply, remediation, and an introduction to environmental regulations.

This year the number of classes on oil and gas were expanded over two days, reflecting increased interest in the topic. Representatives from the Texas Railroad Commission updated attendees on the latest shale plays, reviewed field operations, and addressed waste-management issues. Dan Hardin, Ph.D., director of water-resources planning for the Texas Water Development Board, talked about water use in oil and gas exploration.

As a percentage of total water use, amounts used for oil and gas are small. However, local impacts can be significant



Nearly 1,000 people attended the Trade Fair luncheon where they had a chance to pose questions to the TCEQ's top leadership. From left, Commissioner Toby Baker, Chairman Bryan W. Shaw Ph.D., and Commissioner Carlos Rubinstein.

and need to be factored into projections of future water use.

The TCEQ's Bob Gifford, Ph.D., talked about upcoming rules on reasonable available control technology, explaining that regulations on storage tanks take effect one year from publication.

Danielle Nesvacil, a researcher in the agency's Air Quality Division, gave an overview of the results from the [Barnett Shale Special Inventory](#), a study of air emissions, sources, and constituents related to the 15,700 wells in the Barnett Shale. The study results have been used to refine TCEQ oil and gas emissions inventory estimates and support investigations and the development of a state implementation plan. As a direct result of the study data, the TCEQ reduced its emissions inventory estimates of volatile organic compounds from oil and gas operations by 44 percent in

the nine-county Dallas–Fort Worth ozone nonattainment area.

TCEQ experts fleshed out specifics on surface and groundwater rights, and both federal and state air permitting requirements applied to oil and gas, for the well-attended classes. In addition, geologists from the Bureau of Economic Geology gave talks on managing water use when drilling in tight geologic formations and the evolution of gas drilling technologies over time.

Mark your calendar for next year's Environmental Trade Fair and Conference, April 30–May 1, 2013, at the Austin Convention Center. 🗺️

Watch these videos at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/outlook-0612:

- TCEQ Commissioners Addressing Ongoing Drought
- Quick Overview of Exhibit Hall
- Highlights of TEEA Winners
- Governor Perry Congratulating TEEA Winners



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