

Chairman Christi Craddick

Commissioner Wayne Christian

Commissioner Jim Wright

Dear Commissioners:

As a concerned Texan, I am writing to strongly urge you to update and strengthen the regulations surrounding oilfield waste disposal under Statewide Rule 8. Current practices can cause significant and irreparable harm to our health, environment, wildlife and communities. Reserve pits are often located dangerously close to groundwater and pose severe risks to both human health and our state's most vital natural resource which is water. Many fellow Texans are not notified nor allowed to consent before oilfield waste is buried on their property. This completely ignores their property rights and leaves them exposed to unexpected environmental damage and also greatly reduces the value of their land.

The Railroad Commission of Texas has publicly stated your responsibility to protect our state's resources by applying critical updates to these outdated regulations that have had no changes in 40 years. The proposed changes to Statewide Rule 8 should include:

1. Requiring Landowner Consent: Ensure landowners are notified in advance and given the opportunity to grant permission or consent before any waste disposal occurs on their property to protect their rights and prevent unexpected environmental damage. Additionally, this gives them the right to refuse on-site disposal since other more responsible disposal options exist.
2. Enhancing Groundwater Protection: Mandate that reserve pits be lined and equipped with leak detection and groundwater monitoring systems similar to the standards used for commercial operations which prevent toxic chemicals from contaminating our drinking water.
3. Implementing Better Waste Management Practices: Adopt safer practices, such as closed-loop systems operators are already successfully using in other states which minimize the environmental risks associated with oilfield waste disposal and protect our land and water.
4. There should also be greater setbacks for these oilfield waste disposal pits that allow for adequate protection of pollution for people, water wells, shallow aquifers and other sensitive areas of the environment.

All Texans should urge the Railroad Commission to not routinely grant exceptions to these proposed rules as has happened in the past making the rules virtually meaningless. It is time for Texas to lead once again, not Louisiana and New Mexico, and set a higher standard that protects our environment, communities and industry for future generations from the dangers of outdated and flawed waste disposal practices.

The 45 day comment period is not enough time for people to read and understand completely the voluminous proposed new rules. We are asking for a comment period of 90 days and to hold more than the two hearings scheduled to be heard in Austin September 5th and 6th. There should be several statewide hearings to allow all Texans the ability to comment on these important rule changes.

I urge you to act now and strengthen the proposed updates to Statewide Rule 8.

Respectfully,


John Paul Lawson