

February 17, 2023

Number 5

Into week six of the 88th Legislative Session and committee assignments in both the House and Senate have been made. This means that bills can be assigned to those committees for discussion and decisions to be made. So far, only one issue related to parks and recreation has come up in committee: the Senate Finance Committee hearing on the Legislative Appropriations Request from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

Senate Finance Committee Hearing on TPWD Funding

On Monday, February 13, the Senate Finance Committee heard statements and asked questions of several state agencies regarding their appropriations requests, or what funds they are requesting for the next biennium. The Legislative Budget Board covered these requests and then staff, to include new TPWD Executive Director Dr. David Yoskowitz, Ph.D., had the opportunity to discuss key items and answer questions from committee members.

TPWD recommends including a total of \$464.4 million in revenue for the 24-25 biennium from the Sporting Goods Sales Tax (SGST). The Local Parks Grant, Boating Access Grant, and other Grants programs are recommended to receive \$72 million in all funds (\$48.1 million in SGST transfers, \$23.3 million in federal funds, and \$0.7 million in General Revenue funds) for the biennium.

Texas Land & Water Conservation Fund Bill

In the coming weeks, it is expected a bill will be filed that would create a Land and Water Conservation Fund at the state level. TRAPS joins nearly 50 other conservation and recreation organizations across the state in advocating for this incredibly vital legislation. Texas is one of only 14 states without a fund dedicated to land and water conservation, and this bill would create a constitutional amendment that allocates 4% of the net oil production tax annually (up to \$200 million) to this fund. The fund would provide a significant, long-term state funding source for enhanced conservation efforts across Texas, to include allocating up to 25% of these funds for public land access projects (i.e., Local Parks Grant).

More information on this initiative will be available soon so that TRAPS members can advocate for this game-changing piece of legislation.

Bill Watch

See the Bill Watch on the Legislation & Advocacy page of the TRAPS website. If there is a bill that your agency is interested in, please contact Jeff Achee at jachee@harkerheights.gov.

For our legislative efforts to succeed, we will need the entire parks and recreation community. That includes your staff, parks board members, council members, citizens, friends, family, and anyone else that loves their parks. For more information on the legislative process and how to get involved, visit the TRAPS Legislation and Advocacy page.

TRAPS member cities may use the material herein for any purpose. No other person or entity may reproduce, duplicate, or distribute any part of this document without the written authorization of the Texas Recreation and Park Society.