

VII. Guide to Agency Programs

This Section VII provides a discussion of the offices that comprise TCEQ. Following the discussion of each office is a description of the programs that report to that office. To facilitate an overall understanding of where the following described programs reside within the agency, here is a high-level overview of the commission: The commissioner's office is headed by a chairman and two commissioners. This office includes four divisions, Office of General Counsel, Chief Auditor's Office, Office of the Chief Clerk, and Public Interest Counsel. The executive director's office includes an executive director and executive staff. The executive office includes three divisions: External Relations; Toxicology, Risk Assessment and Research; and Intergovernmental Relations, as well as the Border Affairs team. Six program offices report to the executive director, including, Office of Legal Services, Office of Administrative Services, Office of Air, Office of Water, Office of Waste, and Office of Compliance and Enforcement.

Office of the Commissioners

The governor appoints three full-time commissioners for six-year staggered terms to establish overall agency direction and policy. The commissioners meet at public agenda throughout the year to make final determinations on contested permitting and enforcement matters. The governor also names the chairman of the commission. The following four divisions report to the commissioners.

General Counsel

The general counsel is the chief legal advisor and the chief ethics advisor for the agency. The general counsel provides legal assistance to the commissioners for their review of permits, proposed enforcement actions, rules, and other matters, in addition to managing the administrative affairs of the commissioners' office. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) staff under the general counsel assist permit applicants and persons opposed to the applications resolve their differences informally, if possible, to avoid the time and expense of a contested public evidentiary hearing. ADR is voluntary, and participation in ADR does not forfeit a person's right to a hearing if ADR does not result in a settlement.

Chief Auditor

The Chief Auditor's Office provides assurance and advisory services that help the commissioners and management meet agency goals and objectives. The office provides independent and objective information, analyses, and recommendations to assist management in effecting constructive change, managing business risk, and improving the compliance and accountability of the regulated community and business partners.

Office of the Chief Clerk

The Office of the Chief Clerk issues required notices of applications, public hearings, and public meetings. They also prepare and maintain the agendas and backup material for commission agenda meetings and work sessions, transmit final decision documents (issued by the commission and the executive director) as required, and maintain the official records of pending commission proceedings. The chief clerk tracks the status of all matters pending before the commission and executive director for approval after notice is issued. These include enforcement cases, rules, permit and license applications, registrations, and actions involving water districts. The Office of the Chief Clerk schedules and conducts public meetings and hearings where the public may obtain information and provide comments on pending permitting

actions. The Office also serves as an agency contact for environmental equity discrimination complaints regarding TCEQ programs and activities.

Public Interest Counsel

The Public Interest Counsel was created by the legislature to ensure the public's interest is represented in issues considered by the commission. The counsel makes recommendations to the commission on cases and rules before the commission. The counsel does not formally represent individuals at commission proceedings. However, citizens who have questions about the legal aspects of dealing with TCEQ, its hearing process, and its rules can obtain help from the Public Interest Counsel. Assistance is available to anyone who is affected by a particular permit application or other agency authorization. The staff of the Public Interest Counsel also helps people with questions about enforcement proceedings.