

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Elizabeth Jones](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Friday, September 18, 2020 9:40:45 AM

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From: sunset@sunset.texas.gov On Behalf Of Texas Sunset Commission  
Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 9:40:39 AM (UTC-06:00) Central Time (US & Canada)  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS DEPARTMENT AGRICULTURE

First Name: Cyrus

Last Name: Reed

Title: Conservation Director, Lone Star Chapter, Sierra Club

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State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed: The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is in general support of the statutory and management recommendations of the Sunset staff. We agree that many programs within the Department of Agriculture lack clear rules and guidance and have been particularly concerned with the lack of guidance or policy on enforcement. The fact that the same types of violations are repeatedly found with pesticide application and licenses without sufficient risk-based approaches or escalating penalties is a problem. While we agree with the recommendations to require TDA to assess its inspection and enforcement data in determining its risk-based inspections, we would recommend a more focused recommendation that would require TDA to gather, and publish inspection and enforcement data, and produce an annual strategic enforcement plan with data and public input, similar to what other regulatory agencies like TCEQ and RRC are required to perform.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

In addition to the recommendation on a more focused enforcement plan with data collection, we believe there are two areas where the TDA could use additional focus. First, we believe that TDA should take a more aggressive approach in advancing non-toxic approaches to the management of pests and work on a certified program for non-pesticide pest management.

Second, we believe that TDA should be directed to begin a "healthy soils" program that emphasizes regulations and incentives to encourage farmers and ranchers to use practices that maintain healthy soils that have a positive

impact on keeping carbon in soils, and helping take carbon dioxide out of the air. We believe there is a way to encourage producers and ranchers to be a positive solution to our climate crisis, that will also create wealth in Texas. Such "healthy soil" programs have been adopted in a number of states, both through legislation and administrative action and Texas is uniquely positioned to take advantage of such programs with our vast lands and diverse ecosystems and crops. We will be submitting more specific recommendations on this healthy soils approach in the future to the Sunset Commission.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree