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**DESPITE DISAPPOINTING LEGISLATIVE SESSION, TEXANS FOR RESPONSIBLE
AGGREGATE MINING CONTINUES WORK TO PROTECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES**

AUSTIN, TEXAS – During the 88th legislative session more than 50 proposed bills addressing the aggregate industry were introduced to committees but few advanced. Of the bills that made it out of committees, two were steps in the right direction, one was lost to a Governor veto, and two were designed to muzzle local dissent and authority.

“I can sum up this past legislative session in one word: disappointing,” said Milann Guckian, President, Preserve Our Hill Country Environment and member of Texans for Responsible Aggregate Mining (TRAM).

Our legislative summary includes:

Steps forward:

- **HB 1688** designates and preserves 21 miles of the South Llano River in Kimble County as part of the newly created Coke Stevenson Scenic Riverway, subjecting aggregate operators who mine this area to more effective regulations than elsewhere in Texas.
- **SB 1397**, relating to the continuation of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), was signed by the Governor. Unfortunately, it is a watered down version of what advocates had hoped to accomplish. It leaves many structural and cultural inefficiencies within the agency unaddressed, but does direct the TCEQ to develop voluntary best management practices for aggregate production operations. TRAM plans to participate in that process.

Disappointing loss:

- **SB 1399** relating to the renewal and review of standard permits for concrete batch plants passed both chambers. It was ultimately vetoed by the Governor, who said in a proclamation that it “appears to add more bureaucracy and cost.” His claim is unsubstantiated and fails to acknowledge that the bill would have protected neighbors from harmful air pollutants caused by concrete manufacturing.

Steps backwards:

- **SB 471** relating to TCEQ investigations of citizen complaints, is the most alarming of all the bills. This legislation muzzles Texans without solving fundamental problems within the agency, especially the lack of staff to address and investigate citizen complaints. This bill

gives the TCEQ a free pass to avoid investigating the environmental and health concerns of Texans.

- **HB 2127** limits municipal and county authority where existing and future ordinances go beyond state laws. Experts anticipate that this bill will result in lots of litigation due to its possible unconstitutionality.

Over the course of the Legislative Session, TRAM strengthened its presence at the Capitol by advising legislators and staff in both the House and Senate on regulatory initiatives and proposed bills, as well as initiating dialogue with industry representatives at the Texas Aggregates and Concrete Association (TACA).

“It’s great that TRAM has earned a place at the negotiating table,” said Mark Friesenhahn, TRAM co-founder and member of the Comal Environmental Education Committee, referring to TACA dialogues. “However, legislators had a real opportunity to better the lives of so many Texans, but instead chose to allow aggregate companies to continue the status quo of operations within a deficient regulatory environment. These same companies meet health and environmental standards when working in other states but do not do so in Texas because it isn’t required. It makes no sense, especially given the domino effect this has on our water, air, and land quality.”

While TRAM earned respect and recognition from senior Representatives, Senators, and the aggregate industry, solidifying its presence in important discussions, the stark reality remains that state leadership has done little to balance the needs of Texans with the excesses of the aggregate industry. Though some legislators are beginning to recognize the need for industry reform, it will take continued pressure from voters to make meaningful changes to Texas’ regulations.

“The only way this is going to change is when more people get involved in protecting their environment,” Friesenhahn says, “We have to continue to put pressure on state leaders to do the right thing and protect Texans.”

TRAM will continue to raise public awareness about the aggregate industry and work to establish more protective standards and practices. TRAM is eager to work with TCEQ on establishing aggregate industry best management practices as outlined in SB 1397.

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About TRAM

The coalition, composed of member groups across the state, seeks to work with lawmakers, state agencies, and good-faith industry operators to create state standards for BMPs in the APO industry and to adopt those standards into law. Its 23 member organizations represent 40 counties, roughly 40% of Texas population, where APOs have dramatically expanded to meet the region’s rapid growth. Stay informed by visiting www.TRAMTexas.org and following our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages for news updates.