

BLUEPRINT TO CHANGE WAY COMMUNITIES APPROACH FUTURE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Jacob Wolinsky - May 26, 2021, 12:01 am

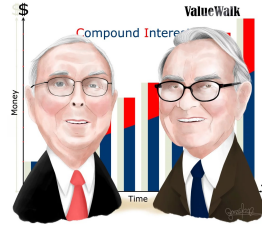


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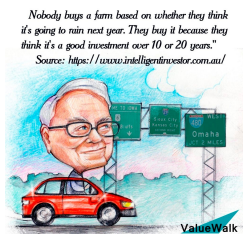
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ALPINE, TEXAS (May 26, 2021) — The Respect Big Bend Coalition today released summary and technical reports which reflect more than two years of intensive community engagement and analysis on energy development in the Big Bend Region of West Texas.


This area is iconic Texas, a vast and storied country west of the Pecos River. It's home to one of the most biodiverse deserts in the world and is a place of wide-open skies, native grasslands, diverse [wildlife](#), breathtaking mountain vistas and, most important, self-reliant communities. It's also the most energy-intensive region in America, according to the [Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin](#).

The Respect Big Bend Coalition came together in 2019 to do something unprecedented in Texas history: chart a path forward that balances future possible energy development —oil and gas and renewables alike—with conservation planning and community input and leadership.


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At the heart of the Respect Big Bend effort is a 14-person local stakeholder advisory group. Members of this group include landowners and community members from the Big Bend Region counties of Brewster, Jeff Davis and Presidio.

Conservation Values and Recommendations

Working with a team of conservation scientists and [energy](#) industry experts, the local advisory group developed a set of conservation values to guide future possible energy development. These values are

outlined in the [summary report](#) and [technical report](#).

These reports provide a roadmap for conserving the unique resources and iconic communities of this region, a blueprint that could change the way communities in any geographical region approach future energy development.

The group also distilled four key recommendations for future energy development in the Big Bend Region. As with the conservation values, there is more detail on each of these recommendations in the reports.

1. Obtain stakeholder input to avoid negative impacts of energy development

The RBB project is a useful model for engaging stakeholders to identify the resources and attributes that local communities' value—in short, a conservation vision.

2. Establish a center for landowner and community resources

Housed at Sul Ross State University, a regional Center for Land Stewardship and Community Engagement would provide technical resources and function as a conservation convener for community members, landowners and energy operators in Far West Texas.

3. Support programs to keep large tracts of land intact, to preserve the values that they provide to all the citizens of the state

Large, intact working lands are critical for maintaining most of the recognized values of the region.

4. Restore land disturbed by energy development

The natural resource values of the land should be restored by energy operators to their original condition as rapidly as possible after

disturbance.

The Austin-based [Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation](#) began [developing the initiative in 2017](#). The objective of this diverse group of scientists, landowners, community members, conservation organizations and energy industry representatives: figure out how best to conserve the unique resources and protect these independent communities while developing energy responsibly.

Data Visualization Tool

In addition to releasing this special report, a preview of an interactive data visualization tool was presented. The technology takes the conservation values identified through the coalition's stakeholder engagement process—along with projected energy development—and depicts their geographic footprint on the landscape.

"We designed our approach to explore how decisions about energy development in the Big Bend Region—or any region anticipating future energy sprawl—can be made while weighing the potential impacts on the local communities and the environment," Melinda Taylor, a professor at the University of Texas Law School and leader of the initiative, said. "We're confident that local stakeholder engagement, informed by rigorous scientific analysis, can minimize negative impacts and encourage responsible development."

At the same time, coalition scientists analyzed information to estimate the impacts energy development could have on the land and communities across the Trans-Pecos, a broader 18-county study area that includes the Tri-County Region.

The result of the initiative is a science-based, qualitative and quantitative decision framework that maps the values identified by the stakeholder advisory group to the landscape. The model can be used to guide future development decisions, as well as identify priorities for long-term conservation and restoration.

Respect Big Bend Leadership Quotes

"From the start, we envisioned a process of engagement and cooperation involving all stakeholders—landowners, communities, conservation organizations, and energy companies—one that focused on our shared values rather than our differences," said Billy Tarrant, associate director of stewardship services for the Borderlands Research Institute, a Respect Big Bend Coalition partner.

"The goal of the Stakeholder Advisory Group was to develop a set of values that focused on the region's way of life and natural resources, while maximizing the benefits of responsible energy development. Through an open and ongoing dialogue, we accomplished what we set out to do."

"As Texas and other regions of the United States and the world continue to be focal points of energy development, the phenomenon of 'energy sprawl'—widespread energy infrastructure development—will continue to be one of the most fundamental challenges we face," said Dr. Michael Young, Senior Scientist at the Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas at Austin.

"Energy resources vital for [economic activity](#) can be produced without widespread damage to the environmental resources vital for communities and wildlife, but this does not happen by itself or by accident. It is a deliberate activity that requires forethought and collaboration."

And the tradeoffs between energy development and conserving the natural resources is especially challenging in Texas, where 95 percent of the land is privately owned. Decisions about energy development in Texas are made by private landowners and energy companies, in a state with few regulatory requirements to govern the siting of new energy facilities.

"The coalition took a holistic view of how future development in the

Big Bend region could affect the area's natural systems. The group's collaborative, science-based approach explored solutions that can meet the needs of people, our economy, as well as species and ecosystems," said Dr. Joe Kiesecker, lead scientist for The Nature Conservancy's conservation lands team, a Respect Big Bend Coalition partner.

"We're confident our framework enables governments, companies and communities to use and share space, protect natural areas, improve [resource management](#) and invest in infrastructure more wisely for a sustainable future."

Additional Resources

Respect Big Bend Coalition Partners

The Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation

Averitt & Associates

Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University

Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin

Environmental Defense Fund

Texas Agricultural Land Trust

The Nature Conservancy

SAG Members	
Terry Bishop	Farmer/Rancher, Presidio County
Eleazar Cano	Judge, Brewster County
Craig Carter	Rancher, Brewster County

Krysta Demere	West Texas Diversity Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department,
Leo Dominguez	VP University & Student Services, Sul Ross State University
Michael Janis	Wildlife District Leader, Texas Parks and Wildlife
Rainer Judd	President, Judd Foundation
John Karges	Associate Director of Field Science, The Nature Conservancy – Texas (Retired)
Michael Logan	Community Member, Fort Davis
Albert Miller	Rancher, Jeff Davis and Presidio Counties
Mo Morrow	Rancher, Brewster County
Robert Potts	President and CEO, Dixon Water Foundation
Janna Stubbs	Rancher, Brewster County
Jan Woodward	Community Member, Alpine

SAG Advisors	
Castlen Kennedy, Fay Walker	Apache Corporation
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Colin Meehan	First Solar
Gina Eddy, Emily Jolly, Kristian Koellner	Lower Colorado River Authority
Jamie Gentile	NextEra Energy Resources
Constance Wyman, Rebecca Zerwas, David Smithson, Therese Harris	Public Utility Commission/Electric Reliability Council of Texas
Representative	Rio Grande Joint Venture
Charlie Hemmeline	Texas Solar Power Association
Matt Gilhousen	Wind Energy Consultant

The Respect Big Bend Coalition was launched and funded by the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation with additional funding from the Meadows Foundation, Permian Area Foundation and the Still Water Foundation.

Additional Links

[The Respect Big Bend Coalition](#)

Summary Report

Thinking Differently about Energy Development: A Balanced Approach

Technical Report

Development by Design in West Texas: Mitigating Energy Sprawl Through Cooperative Landscape Planning

[Texan by Nature Video About Respect Big Bend](#)

[Presentation on Public Attitudes Toward Energy Development in Texas](#)

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Jacob Wolinsky

Jacob Wolinsky is the founder of ValueWalk.com, a popular value investing and hedge fund focused investment website. Jacob worked as an equity analyst first at a micro-cap focused private equity firm, followed by a stint at a smid cap focused research shop. Jacob lives with his wife and four kids in Passaic NJ. -

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