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WRONG STATE, WRONG INDUSTRY: SIERRA CLUB USES NORTH CAROLINA TURKEY FARM STOCK PHOTO TO ATTACK TEXAS PRODUCED WATER REUSE

BY MADDIE BERTRAND JUN. 12, 2026

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Once again, the Sierra Club has attacked the oil and gas industry, and this time, the group is using misleading stock imagery to prop up its false claims. Back in April, the organization [published](#) a highly critical report on Texas' produced water industry. Then, the Sierra Club decided to double down on their aggressive claims with a misleading [story](#) on Texas' produced water treatment, opening with a striking image and alarming warning: "[Do you want oilfield wastewater watering our crops, running through our rivers, or in our children's water bottles?](#)"

There's just one problem – the photo featured in the story is not from a Texas oilfield; rather, it is from a turkey farm in North Carolina.

Setting the Record Straight

Given their long history of misinformation campaigns and anti-industry attacks, the Sierra Club's targeting produced water is no surprise, but this latest campaign raises concerns not just about the portrayed narrative, but about the materials used to falsely support it. The image featured suggests that contaminated produced water is used for a variety of applications outside of the oilfield, such as irrigation, land restoration, and even municipal drinking water systems. Yet, the photo itself depicts an agricultural facility hundreds of miles away from the Permian Basin and completely unrelated to Texas' produced water management and the wider oil and natural gas industry.

This latest attack also takes [Senate Bill 1145](#) completely out of context. The legislation does not authorize untreated oilfield wastewater to be used in agriculture processes or municipal water systems. Instead, it transfers oversight of produced water from the Railroad Commission to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and ensures that any potential reuse project is permitted, monitored, and held to regulatory standards before treated water is ever put to a new use.

At this year's 36th Annual Produced Water Society Conference in Texas, State Senator

Charles Perry [emphasized](#):

"Science has shown produced water is cleanable, it's usable (...) I remind everyone this is not new, that this has been done elsewhere. It's just not been done on the scale of 26 million barrels of water a day."

A Pattern of Misinformation

Unfortunately, this is not the first time an organization has relied on propaganda to further their environmentalist agenda and mislead the public. In 2011, Penn Environment [posted](#) a photo of a submerged offshore drilling rig in Pakistan across its social media channels in an attempt to criticize fracking operations in Pennsylvania.

The group supplemented the stock image with a comment that read: *"Here's more evidence Marcellus Shale drilling pads should NOT be allowed in floodplains."* The report's misleading nature was subsequently criticized by industry experts such as Josh Karns of the Pennsylvania Organization for Watershed and Rivers (POWR) who [commented](#):

"I think it's important to have visual representation that matches the facts in the document."

The next year, the same organization [used](#) a Shutterstock photo of a pipe inside a treatment plant – that was not located in the U.S. – to depict industrial pollution into our nation's waterways.

According to recent research from the State Geologist of Texas and current Director Emeritus of the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin Dr. Scott Tinker, water desalination technologies would enable oil and gas companies to produce [hundreds of millions of gallons of freshwater daily](#) from oilfield wastewater that would otherwise be injected underground. In fact, during peak cotton growing season, daily irrigation demand [exceeds](#) the volume of produced water generated each day by West Texas oilfields. Desalinated produced water could be stored during the off-season and reused in the following season, which would help preserve the Ogallala Aquifer by reducing withdrawal volumes, effectively helping to protect residents' drinking water, not threaten it.

Bottom line: Texas regulators vet every project before treated produced water reaches a new use. The Permian [already recycles](#) roughly 11 of every 14 million barrels it produces each day and operators have kept more than 99 percent of the water spill-free over the past decade. As Texas confronts real water scarcity, responsible reuse is a solution. Ultimately, this debate deserves facts and science, not a stock photo from turkey farm in another state.

TAGS: [Produced Water](#), [sierra club](#), [Texas](#)

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