



# THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 42 No. 1 JANUARY 2008

## *Enchanted Rock Wind Farm Blown Away*

In November plans were revealed that could have resulted in a wind farm sprouting within two miles of the boundary of Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. By early December, the plan was dead. The Alamo Group of the Sierra Club strongly opposed this scheme.

A new Gillespie County organization called Save Our Scenic Hill Country sprang up to fight it. They contended

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## *The Sierra Club's Wind Policy*

The Sierra Club strongly supports increased development of renewable wind-generated electricity because it reduces the need for dirty coal plants and dangerous nuclear facilities. Wind power is a clean, reliable, consistent and safe way to combat global warming. Texas has become the nation's leader in wind energy, with over 2000 operating turbines generating 2,800 megawatts, or 3% of our state's electricity.

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## *A Word from the Chair*

The December holiday party and silent auction provided a great opportunity for Alamo Group members to visit with old friends and get acquainted with new friends. We missed those of you who were not able to attend. Thanks to everyone who helped with setup, recruited items for the auction, ran the auction and assisted with cleanup. Special thanks to Paula Stone, Tom Dukes, Mike Brannon, Meredith Sterling and Hector Gonzalez for the many hours they contributed.

We invite all of our members to participate in the varied activities of the Alamo Group: outings, social events, general meetings, newsletter mailing parties, writing for the newsletter, committee activities and action alerts. They provide unparalleled opportunities for personal enjoyment and the satisfaction of helping the Alamo Group enjoy and protect a healthy environment.

This year will bring many new ways for the Alamo Group to work on conservation issues and in the political arena. We will be advocating for energy efficiency and renewables for meeting our energy needs, instead of nuclear power. We will continue to support protection of the Edwards Aquifer from contamination resulting from inappropriate development, lobby for tree protection and tree planting, and advocate for recycling at apartments. We will be able to endorse and actively support candidates in federal elections.

For the first time in Alamo Group history, we will be working with a regional staff member, Ana Paredes, to develop new relationships with other groups in the local community. Ana has been hired as a community organizer who will help make contacts in the eastern, southern and western sectors of San Antonio where we have fewer members and lower visibility. Your help will be needed in outreach activities.

I am optimistic that with your support we will chalk up great accomplishments this year.

**General Meeting: 7:00 P.M., 3rd Tuesday each month at the Witte Museum located at 3801 Broadway just south of Hildebrand Ave. Socializing begins at 6:40, program at 7 P.M.**

### **January 15, 2008: 17 Days on the John Muir Trail**

Explore our Club's namesake Sierra Nevada through the lens of San Antonio's Dave Pasley. Join Dave and his son as they walk in the footsteps of John Muir, the Sierra Club's founder. They begin in the Yosemite Valley and end on the summit of Mount Whitney.

### **February 19, 2008: Northside ISD Energy Conservation Program**

Frank Thomas will speak on the school district's program to save energy through lighting retrofits.

## *CPS Quadrant Meetings*

CPS Energy is holding a series of meetings for citizens to learn of the utility's coming energy plans, which may include a commitment to 2700 mw of additional nuclear power. The meetings are basically tabling events where citizens can ask questions one-on-one of CPS staff. All those concerned about the direction CPS Energy is taking are urged to attend, ask questions, let their views be known, and fill out a survey. You don't have to live in a quadrant to attend its meeting. The first quadrant meeting took place December 11 in southwest San Antonio.

The southeast quadrant meeting will take place Tuesday, January 15, 5:30-7:30 PM., at Legacy Middle School cafeteria, 5903 SE Loop 410 (south of Rigsby). The northeast quadrant meeting will be February 12 at MacArthur High School and the northwest quadrant meeting will

*Continued on Page 2*

## *Christmas Mountains: Light at the End of the Tunnel?*

State Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson reopened bidding on the 9,269 acre Christmas Mountains tract in October. The School Land Board then voted on November 6 to table for 90 days the two bids received from private individuals in order to give the National Park Service time to submit a proposal for acquisition of the property. Except for one of the bidders, all public testimony favored keeping the land in the public domain.

In the past, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and the National Park Service (NPS) have declined to acquire the land, in the case of NPS due to concerns about feasibility and the fact that the area is already under a conservation easement. In mid-October, William Wellman, Superintendent of Big Bend National Park (BBNP), wrote to

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**Enchanted Wind Farm Continued**

that subsidies and tax breaks for wind development were behind the idea, rather than wind quantity or quality. Studies suggest the location has insufficient wind to justify a wind farm, and Gillespie County ranks low in a statewide survey of wind energy sites.

We opposed the plan because not only does the location possess minimal wind potential, but any wind development within sight of Enchanted Rock would mar the exceptional views from this significant and extraordinary parcel of our state's limited public land. Enchanted Rock is unique among Texas parks, being the second largest freestanding granite dome east of the Rocky Mountains. (See the adjacent article on the Sierra Club's wind policy for more background.) Bat Conservation International also opposes wind turbines in the Hill Country because of serious potential harm to bat populations.

California-based AES Wind Generation initially approached some Gillespie County landowners about allowing turbines on their property, but withdrew in August, citing concerns about local opposition. AES was replaced by Padoma Wind Power LLC, a subsidiary of New Jersey-based NRG Energy Inc. NRG is the same corporation seeking to add two reactors to the South Texas Nuclear Project and sell the power to San Antonio's CPS Energy. While AES had shared its plans to build within two miles of Enchanted Rock, Padoma declined to make any of its plans public. In addressing its withdrawal, NRG's Dave Knox admitted that "[b]ased on environmental and economic data, there are more promising sites." Unfortunately, there are no siting guidelines or requirements for wind farm projects in the state of Texas, making inappropriate projects very difficult to stop.

**S.C. Wind Policy Continued**

The Sierra Club considers it "extremely important for the Club to support responsible wind development proposals where the sites are appropriate." Yet some controversial Texas wind projects have been proposed recently, and more will surely follow. A closer look at the Sierra Club policy will explain why the Alamo Group may

support, remain neutral, or even oppose specific wind projects. National Sierra Club discusses wind power in two detailed documents: the 2006 Energy Resources Policy (<http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/energy.pdf>) and the Wind Siting Advisory ([http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/wind\\_siting.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/wind_siting.asp)).

According to the Club's 2006 Energy Resources Policy:

"Wind energy systems may have noticeable visual impacts and can disturb sensitive or endangered plants and wildlife. Existing wind energy systems with significant impacts on avian and bat populations should be modified to mitigate those impacts; if modifications prove to be ineffective, turbines should be curtailed or dismantled. Locations with lesser impacts should be sought for new projects. Offshore sites may have access to a superior wind resource, but may disturb coastal and marine environments. In general, the environmental impacts of wind energy systems should be reduced through careful technology choice, siting, reliable pre-construction monitoring, and operations. The Sierra Club supports further research, both general and site specific, and development of new technologies, to minimize and mitigate impacts of wind energy systems."

The Wind Siting Advisory recommends detailed steps to minimize harmful impacts regardless of site or project size, and ranks the appropriateness of potential sites. Those considered most appropriate include agricultural or already disturbed lands. Moderately appropriate sites have "acceptable wildlife / habitat impacts ...and extremely good wind potential, without strong negative concerns." Less appropriate sites may "significantly impair important scenic values," and all protected lands such as parks and wildlife areas are deemed not appropriate. Generally, purely scenic complaints are given low priority, because global warming is far more serious than aesthetic concerns.

*Tom Dukes*

**CPS Quad Meetings Continued**

take place March 11 at Holmes High School. Please save those dates and plan on attending one or more of the meetings. For more information call Loretta Van Copenolle at 492-4620.

**Christmas Mountains Continued**

Commissioner Patterson requesting that the sale be postponed to allow reevaluation of the idea of adding the mountains to BBNP. Under the School Land Board agreement, NPS now has time to prepare a proposal to match the best bid (on elements, not price) and get congressional authorization and funding. For more information, see the winter 2007 issue of Lone Star Sierran, pp. 6-7.

*Fred Wills*

**Alamo Group's Energy Plan: Part 2**

City leaders should embrace our suggestions as an alternative to building more nuclear plants in South Texas. The Alamo group's major recommendations for the City of San Antonio are listed below.

For the city: 1) Make energy conservation a policy priority within city operations (establish specific energy reduction goals for each city department, install a City Energy Manager, assign R&D recommendations to Office of Environmental Policy). 2) Recognize that energy efficiency measures help the economy. 3) Support energy efficiency gains through building codes, land use rules, zoning, and point-of-sale energy efficiency requirements. 4) Enhance city economic development through leadership in energy technology. 5) Provide linked system of light rail, street cars, bus, bike, and walking paths. 6) Support plug-in hybrid vehicles when available. 7) Support eco-roofs (green roofing). You can learn more or view the entire Alamo Group energy policy on the Conservation page of our website, <http://AlamoSierraClub.org>

*Barbara McMillin*

**2007 Renewable Energy Roundup: Part 2**

Rick Piltz achieved national recognition in 2005 when he resigned from a prominent U.S. government position to protest the Bush administration's attempts to politicize and manipulate climate science research. He blew the whistle in a front-page New York Times story based on internal

documents Piltz supplied to the newspaper. In early 2007, Piltz testified before a newly Democratic Congress on political interference with the work of federal climate scientists. Piltz's message to a packed tent at the Energy Roundup was that though there is more Congressional oversight now, it is doubtful any meaningful energy legislation will come out of Congress given current circumstances. "We need strong national policy, state and local action, and strong international agreements," said Piltz. "The problem is greater than having individuals changing light bulbs and driving Priuses. Washington has to be involved." At a more personal and optimistic level, Piltz stated, "I have to think there's hope - I have a 14-year-old daughter." Rick Piltz's website, [www.climatesciencewatch.org](http://www.climatesciencewatch.org), is a source of analysis and documentation of global warming issues.

*Loretta Van Copenolle*

### Lost Maples: Comets and Campfires

Perfect weather was ordered for this outing, and participants were not disappointed. Gail, Mike, Linda, Fred, Lee, and Marsha were treated to chilly nights, clear skies, and great hiking weather the weekend of November 16-19. It wasn't the best year for maple leaf color, but there were a few trees that were a beautiful gold, even in the campground. On Saturday everyone hiked the West trail, arriving at the pond, otherwise known as the "grand central junction of trails," just as the scouts were setting up camp. It was good to see so many young people out enjoying nature. "Hiking Mike" went on to hike every trail in the park while the rest of us went back to the campsite. Way to go Mike! Perhaps the best views came after dark. We were lucky enough to see Comet Holmes, a large fuzz ball, in the constellation Perseus. It was quite impressive. Thanks to Lee, we were also able to see the Andromeda galaxy. We huddled around a modest campfire waiting for the Leonids meteor shower, but only saw a couple meteors before we all called it a night. The weather changed on Sunday, but we had had our fun and went home satisfied.

*Marsha Meredith*

## OUTINGS

### FRI-SUN, JAN 11-13: LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA FREEZERIE CAMPOUT

Join us for a freezerie campout at Lost Maples with members of the Austin Group. Hot chocolate, warm campfires, comfort food, and hiking will be the themes of this trip to one of our most spectacular state parks. Potluck dinner on Friday night. Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner and Sunday breakfast will be furnished by the Club. Fees: \$30 per person (includes camping and specified meals), plus park entrance @ \$5 per vehicle per day. Contact Steve Funderburg (317-4186 or [sfunderburg@rkci.com](mailto:sfunderburg@rkci.com)) for more information or to reserve your place on the trip.

### SUN, JAN 13: MUD CREEK DAY HIKE.

10 AM start. A brisk 2-hour hike in a Hill Country setting in north central San Antonio is a great way to keep the winter blahs away. Difficulty: MODERATE. Lunch at a nearby restaurant after the hike is an option. Donation requested. Contact Jerry Morrisey at [jlmorrisey@aol.com](mailto:jlmorrisey@aol.com) or 382-2614 for details.

### SAT-SUN, JAN 19-20: PEDERNALES FALLS STATE PARK CAR CAMPING AND HIKING

Enjoy winter hiking and camping at Pedernales Falls S.P. Meet at 9 AM We'll set out on a 4-mile hike on Saturday after lunch and will take 8-mile Wolf Mountain trail on Sunday morning. Optional bike ride in afternoon. Difficulty: MODERATE. Suggested donation: \$4. Everyone pays their own entry fee and we'll split the cost of campsites. Leader: Ned Allen 347-4768 or [no1rvrman@yahoo.com](mailto:no1rvrman@yahoo.com)

### SUN, JAN 27: MISSION TRAIL WALK

Winter is often a great time for walks and day hikes in South Texas. This one will be a 4+ mile round trip to Espada Aqueduct from San Jose Mission. Learn a bit of San Antonio colonial history along the way. Meet in main parking lot on San Jose Drive near San Antonio Missions National Historical Park visitor center at 9 AM. Wear good walking shoes. Difficulty: EASY. Suggested donation \$2. Leader: Fred Wills 673-9566 or [fredwills@att.net](mailto:fredwills@att.net)

### SAT, FEB 9: GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA DAY HIKE

We'll start early and hike 7-13 miles, weaving in and out of small canyons and creek drainages typical of the Balcones Escarpment. Exiting the drainages provides the welcome contrast of typical hill country woodland and an occasional meadow. The rocky terrain is not very steep but requires sturdy hiking shoes. A picnic might be in order about halfway through. Entrance fees are the responsibility of each hiker. Limit six persons. Children 12 and over welcome with parent. Difficulty: MODERATE to DIFFICULT. For

information and reservations, contact Scott Wolfe, [papawolfe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:papawolfe@sbcglobal.net) or 724-2707.

### SUN, FEB 24: COMANCHE LOOKOUT CITY PARK MORNING HIKE

Get out and enjoy a brisk morning hike (about 1.5 miles) at this Northeast side city park. There is a great view of the city from the top. Meet in the library parking lot at the corner of Judson and Nacogdoches Rd at 9:30 AM. Difficulty: EASY. Suggested donation \$1. Contact David Klar [dklar63162@aol.com](mailto:dklar63162@aol.com) or 495-2148.

## Sierra Socials

### FEB 15, BLUE CACTUS CAFE AT WETMORE STORE, 13525 WETMORE ROAD, 490-7330, 5-8 PM.

Wonderful food. Historic building. Live music some nights. B.B.Q., chicken fried steak, and other entrees. Best onion rings in S.A. Contact Loyd Cortez at [loydcortez@earthlink.net](mailto:loydcortez@earthlink.net) or 674-9489 so we can get a head count.

## Subscription Reminder

Don't forget to send in your subscription for the paper newsletter. Though we are moving into the electronic age, there are still significant costs associated with printing the paper version.

### Last Chance for Sierra Club Calendars

Support your local Sierra Club group by purchasing your 2008 calendars from us. Only a few engagement calendars are left, but you can get one for only TEN bucks. Contact Loyd Cortez at 674-9489, or just bring your money to the next General Meeting.

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# MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting: .....	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m. ....	Jerry Morrissey .....	497-5470
Executive Committee: .....	4th Monday, 7 p.m. ....	Tom Dukes .....	828-3721
Newsletter Submissions deadline .....	3rd Thursday (Thursday before ExCom) ...	Fred Wills .....	fredwills@att.net
Newsletter Mail Party: .....	2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m. ....	Jim Stewart .....	692-0727
Outings Committee Meeting: .....	1st Wednesday every 2 months, 7 p.m. ....	Lee Dodge .....	647-0216
Conservation Committee Meeting: .....	1st Thursday, 7 p.m. ....	L. Van Coppenolle .....	492-4620

### ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS & MEMBERS

Jerry Morrissey .....	Chair Person .....	497-5470
Loyd Cortez .....	Vice Chair .....	674-9489
Carolyn Wells .....	Secretary .....	271-0640
Tom Dukes .....		828-3721
Hector Gonzalez .....		226-6069
Eloise Stoker .....		828-0919
Paula Stone .....		393-7351
Fred Wills .....		673-9566
Sharon Dukes (non voting) Treasurer .....		828-3721

#### ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs .....	Eloise Stoker .....	828-0919
Membership .....	Loyd Cortez .....	674-9489
Publicity .....	Linda Higby.....(585)	330-1890
Mailings .....	Jim Stewart .....	692-0727
Newsletter .....	Fred Wills .....	673-9566
Website .....	Tom Dukes .....	828-3721

#### COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Outings Chair .....	Lee Dodge .....	647-0216
Political Committee .....	Beck Steiner .....	342-6694
Outreach & Education ..	Carolyn Wells .....	271-0640

#### CONSERVATION CONTACTS

Conservation Co-Chair ..	L. Van Coppenolle .....	492-4620
Co-Chair .....	R. Carroll-Bradd .....	216-6125
Endangered Species .....	Fred Wills .....	673-9566
Fluoridation .....	L. Van Coppenolle .....	492-4620
Genetically Modified Organisms	Michele Petty .....	490-4133
Organic Gardening .....	Dave Klar .....	495-2148
Recycling .....	Patricia Martinez .....	454-5920
Tree Conservation .....	Richard Alles .....	494-2088
Water Issues .....	Jerry Morrisey .....	497-5470

#### U.S. CONGRESSPERSONS

Charlie Gonzalez (210) 472-6195  
 Lamar Smith (210) 821-5024  
 Henry Cuellar (210) 271-2851  
 Ciro Rodriguez (210) 922-1874

#### CITY COUNCIL

Mayor: Phil Hardberger; 207-7060;	mayor@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 1: Mary Alice P. Cisneros; 207-7279;	district1@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 2: Sheila McNeil; 207-7278;	district2@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 3: Roland Gutierrez; 207-7064;	district3@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 4: Phillip A. Cortez; 207-7281;	district4@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 5: Lourdes Galvan; 207-7043;	district5@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 6: Delicia Herrera; 207-7065;	district6@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez; 207-7044;	district7@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 8: Diane G. Cibrian; 207-7086;	district8@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 9: Kevin Wolff; 207-7325;	district9@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

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 P.O. Box 6443  
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## Membership

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

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STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
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