



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 42 No. 8 SEP 2008

Border Wall Fight Continues

On June 23 the U.S. Supreme Court announced that it would not give the Sierra Club and Defenders of Wildlife a chance to argue that the border wall is unconstitutional. The groups contend that because the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security unilaterally waived 36 federal laws to expedite construction of the wall, this violates the Constitution's separation of powers clauses.

The Supreme Court's decision not to hear our challenge is unfortunate because it leaves one man with the extraordinary power to ignore any and all of the laws

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Political News

The Sierra Club Political Committee's 2008 Endorsements

For President, Barack Obama; US House District 23, Ciro Rodriguez; State Senate District 26, Leticia Van de Putte; Texas House 116 Trey Martinez Fischer; 117 David Leibowitz; 118 Joe Farias; 121 Joe Straus III; County Commissioner District 3, Chip Haas.

We endorse in contested races. We compare the candidate only to the competitor in that race. We look at who has the best environmental record as well as who responds best to our questionnaire

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A Word from the Chair *by Loyd Cortez*

We had a good turn out of about 10 people for our August Social get together at La Tuna. It was hot and humid but the cold beers quenched our thirst. My thanks to all who showed up to meet and mingle with their fellow members.

Sometimes we have some important news or announcements that do not make the newsletter, so be sure to visit the website frequently so that you do not miss out on what is happening. I want to thank all those members who have signed up to receive the newsletter by email rather than by postal mail. My thanks for saving a tree and for helping to keep our postal and printing expenses down. I also want to thank those members who have signed up for our Email Alert List. Again I want to stress how important it is that you inform us whenever your email address changes. I have already gotten a couple of return emails from a couple of members who signed up to receive the newsletter by email. So, if you have signed up for the electronic newsletter, but did not receive your copy by email for August, then please let me know, so that I can follow up why. Remember that you can always go to our website to read the newsletter online.

There is a website on the National Sierra Club that has environmental action alerts similar to our own local community alerts, but more on a national/global scale. I highly recommend that you visit and give your support to these worthwhile appeals. Rather than navigate through the National website, use ours. From the Homepage, scroll down to the image with the guy with the bull horn and click on "Take Action Alerts". Then on the Action Alerts webpage, click on the scrolling "Protect America's lakes and rivers" banner which will take you to National's Sierra Club Action Center. There are a lot of action alert requests, so please take your time to read each one, and then decide which one you want to participate in. I hope you will sign up for as many as you can because your club needs your help and support on these environmental issues.

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.

September 16, 2008: Border Wall Fight Continues

Cyrus Reed from the Austin Sierra Club Chapter office will present an update on the Border Wall fight in the Courts, in Congress, and on the ground in the Valley Westward up the Rio Grande.

October 21, 2008: New San Antonio Parks

Come hear about our new parks, Voelker and linear park program, from Crystal Strong and Brandon Ross of San Antonio Parks & Recreation.

Friends and Sponsors Still Needed!

It's not too late to sign up as a Friend or Sponsor of our big 40th Anniversary Celebration. With over 2000+ members in our club, we should have dozens and dozens of event sponsors. If you own a business, consider sponsoring our event as part of your community outreach. If you work for someone else, please ask them to consider being a sponsor. This is a quick and easy way for general members to help the handful of members who actually do all the work in this club. Go ahead, get involved! Sponsorship includes several advertising opportunities as shown below:

Platinum \$1,000 includes a Commemorative booklet - outside back or inside back or inside front cover; Company presenter at Founder's Ceremony;

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How Do You Save Energy at Home?

The Alamo Group would like to hear how you have been saving energy at your home or business. We believe that local examples of successful demand reduction can be used as important tools in our campaign to promote energy efficiency as one of the alternatives to new nuclear power plants. If you need help in writing up your activities for our local newsletter or for our website, contact Jerry Morrissey at 210-382-2614 or jlmorrissey@aol.com.

Would you like to help reduce the energy consumption that results from attending our general meetings? Would you like to have some time to make new friends or visit with old friends? If the answer is yes, consider carpooling. If you need assistance giving or receiving a ride, leave a message at least a day prior to the meeting for Jerry Morrissey at 210-382-2614.

Sierra Club Social

Good food and a nice quiet atmosphere where our members can meet and mingle. Come join us at Candlelight Coffee House, 3011 N. St Mary's, 738-0099 on Friday September 19th, 6-8pm. Contact Loyd Cortez at loydcortez@earthlink.net or 674-9489 so we can get a head count

Border Wall - Continued

designed to protect the American people, our lands, and our natural resources.

The government has paid only lip service to public processes and to integrating environmental protection into border security efforts. We remain hopeful that the Court may yet reach and resolve these important constitutional issues in a pending case brought by El Paso County, Texas.

Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) has introduced a bill in the House of Representatives that would secure America's border with Mexico while reducing the negative impact of border security operations on local communities and resources. The Borderlands Security and Conservation Act of 2007 (H.R. 2593) would provide the Department of Homeland Security flexibility to choose its border security strategies-rather than mandating an ineffective border wall-while also ensuring protections for wildlife, local communities and federally protected lands.

The Sierra Club supports Congressman Grijalva's legislation and calls on Congress to correct the unconstitutional authority that the Bush Administration has flagrantly abused. In doing so, it would ensure protection of our borderlands, wildlife and communities at risk from this ineffective and destructive wall. The bill is gaining co-sponsors all the time, and we are hopeful that Congress will address it.

Here in Texas, we know that the border wall fight will be a long one. The construction of the wall has moved from West to East because of the challenges from local residents and property owner that the federal government predicted in the Lone Star State. A vocal coalition including landowners, environmentalists, ecotourism business owners, and public officials has made it clear that they oppose the border wall. Individual civil lawsuits against the border wall are pending in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere in the state.

Beyond that, the logistical challenges to the Department of Homeland Security are enormous. While the border wall in Arizona has been built in largely unpopulated desert areas, the Texas sections often go through university campuses, wildlife refuges and private property. Large waterfront sections of Texas property might end up on the Southern side of the wall under the current map, and Texans are organizing to prevent that from happening.

The Sierra Club has been actively involved for decades in helping to establish the wildlife refuges and protected areas of Texas. The border wall is the worst thing that the federal government could do to the borderlands regions. The Sierra Club takes its obligation to border communities and to border wildlife seriously and will continue in this challenge. We all have a stake in advancing human rights, fair trade, and environmentally sustainable development around the world.

Background information on the potential impacts of the proposed border wall on wildlife and wildlife habitat may be found on the Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter website at www.texas.sierraclub.org.

Political News - Continued

and interview. We like it when we have to make hard choices between two good candidates but sometimes we are comparing two less than ideal candidates. However, we carefully consider and balance the positive and negative aspects of each candidate before making our recommendations. The Alamo Group Political Committee asks you to please give your support to these candidates and let friends and relatives know how important it is to vote. See all the Texas races at <http://sierravote.com>. Remember the last day to register to vote is October 6th. You can register online at: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/index.shtml>

Russell Seal

Recent Solar Breakthroughs

You wouldn't know it by listening to or reading conventional news media, but a third industrial revolution is taking place in the area of alternative energy, and much of the revolution centers around solar power.

To give an idea of what is happening, on what seems to be an almost-daily basis, here are three recent discoveries in solar technology that greatly enhance its practicality, bringing closer the day when solar could be the dominant means of electrical generation in this country and the world.

In May it was announced that a group of Australian and Chinese researchers used nanotechnology to make solar more cost effective and more easily produced. The team grew the world's first titanium oxide single crystals with large numbers of reactive surfaces, a feat that had previously been considered nearly impossible. The researchers said the highly efficient miniature crystals they created would be useful not only in solar technology but would be "fantastic" for air and water purification.

The technology is expected to be commercially available within five to ten years.

A second major breakthrough was announced in mid-July by a team of MIT engineers who have designed windows that have solar cells that transform sunlight into electricity. The windows would replace expensive rooftop solar cells, giving a clear view and illuminating rooms while collecting solar energy around their edges. Because the technology is simple to manufacture, the MIT team expects it to be marketable within three years, and it can be added to existing solar panels to increase efficiency by 50 percent.

The MIT researchers are so confident of their find they have started a company, Covalent Solar, to develop and market their product.

The third breakthrough involves storage of solar energy, previously considered to be problematic. Again, MIT researchers were responsible, this time for a simple, low-cost, and efficient process for solar energy storage. Inspired by the natural process of photosynthesis, these researchers developed a means of splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen, using solar power, to later recombine the two elements inside a fuel cell to create clean electricity for buildings and electric cars, at any hour of the day or night.

More work is needed on this research to integrate it into existing photovoltaic systems, but the team is confident their discovery will eventually transform energy supply systems around the world.

For more information on these discoveries, please contact Loretta Van Copenolle at 210/492-4620.

Arjun Makhijani Efficiency Study

Preliminary data from a study on San Antonio's energy efficiency potential were released at a press conference and luncheon August 11 by energy expert Arjun Makhijani. The Alamo Group and Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club helped fund the study.

Makhijani says, "The overall affordable economic potential for San Antonio is about 2,000 MW if all buildings could be retrofitted or built for efficiency. With vigorous and visionary leadership, about half of this potential can be achieved by 2020."

The 2000 MW figure greatly exceeds what CPS Energy would gain with investment in two new units of the South Texas Nuclear Project, at up to a \$3 billion saving.

New homes can achieve up to 50 percent energy use reduction at almost no cost with bottom-up site-specific design, said Makhijani, adding that very efficient homes can now be built for under \$100 a square foot.

Makhijani also emphasized the need for larger investment in solar technology to further decrease energy demand from conventional sources. He cited the need for concentrating solar power plants, onsite solar (photovoltaics and water heating), and solar from parking lots. In the last scenario, solar collectors would be placed above cars in parking lots, of which San Antonio has an abundance, shading the cars and drawing energy that would be fed into the power grid.

The advantages of solar, according to Makhijani, are that it supplies power especially during summer peak hours and that heat storage for concentrating solar, now becoming commercial, can meet 90 percent of peak demand in a sunny place like San Antonio.

An aide of Councilwoman Mary Alice Cisneros read a statement in support of efficiency at the press conference. Architect Tenna Florian, representing the San Antonio Green Building Council, also spoke, giving examples of efficiency in building design. In attendance at the luncheon were several prominent San Antonians, representatives of CPS Energy, and members of the business community.

For more information about the Makhijani study, please contact Loretta Van Copenolle at 210-492-4620.

OUTINGS

2008 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS

We will be selling our beautiful calendars again this year. This year, to facilitate handling the money to make change, we decided to sell either calendar for the same price of \$15. Plan now to fill 2009 with beautiful photos of our natural heritage, while contributing to the preservation of our local environment. Don't forget, these lovely calendars make great gifts.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 21: DOG-FRIENDLY/PEOPLE FRIENDLY DAYHIKE ALONG LEON CREEK

Well-behaved dogs on leashes and well-behaved people with or without dogs are welcome on a 3 to 5 mile hike along the Leon Creek Greenbelt. Start time: 9:00 AM. Enjoy hiking the relatively flat trails along Leon Creek with or without a dog. Call to reserve a slot, since participation is limited. Difficulty: Easy to Moderate. Fees: Donations accepted. Contact Jerry Morrissey by email or phone (382-2614) for further details.

SAT, SEPT 27: GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA DAY HIKE

We'll start early and hike anywhere from 7 - 13 miles, weaving in and out of small canyons and creek drainages typical of the eastern boundary of the Balcones Escarpment. The rocky terrain is not very steep but requires sturdy hiking shoes. Lots of limestone rocks and small boulders in the drainages. Exiting the drainages provides the welcome contrast of typical hill country woodland and an occasional meadow. A brief picnic with snacks might be in order about halfway through. Entrance fees are the responsibility of each hiker. Limit of six hikers. Children 12 and over welcome with parent. Difficulty: MODERATE to DIFFICULT. For information and reservations, contact Scott Wolfe, papawolfe@sbcglobal.net, 724-2707.

SUN, SEPT 28: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is along paved trails and roads that are along the San Antonio River and that lead from mission to mission in the SE part of San Antonio. We will stop to take quick walks through some of the missions along the way. Distance may be up to 18 miles round-trip, depending on participants. Pace will be "no riders left behind." Minimum age is 12. Helmets are required. Be ready to ride by

8:30 AM in the grass and gravel parking lot southeast of the paved parking lot in front of Mission Concepcion on Mission Road. Difficulty: Moderate. Fees: Donations accepted. Leader: Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net, or 647-0216.

SATURDAY, OCT. 4: VOELKER PARK SHORT WALK

Join us for a short 1.25-hr hike through this new park-to-be. Meet NW Military Drive just south of Wurzbach Parkway at 8am. Difficulty: EASY. Donations to the Sierra Club accepted. Contact Stan Drezek, 493-0939, to sign up.

SAT-SUN, OCT. 18-19: PEDERNALES FALLS BEGINNER BACKPACK

Have you ever wanted to try backpacking and never had the time or opportunity? Then this trip is for you. No prior experience is necessary for this trip, only a willingness to camp out overnight in a tent. We will be backpacking at Pedernales Falls State Park during the cooler fall. We will backpack to the primitive camping area overlooking the river, a distance of about four miles in order to get away from the crowds. This will give you ample time to adjust to your equipment and get a good taste of how much fun backpacking can be. Experienced backpackers will assist you and share their many years of backpacking experiences. As we sit around the campfire on Saturday night we will hear the many tales of outdoor adventures. The trip will start early Saturday morning and end early Sunday afternoon. A mandatory meeting will be held on Wednesday evening, October 8, to go over equipment and supplies needed as well as the trip plans. Individuals provide their own food. (Easy) Suggested donation is \$6/members and \$8/non-members plus park entrance and camping fees. Signup deadline is October 6. Leaders are Bill Rogers (rogers@uthscsa.edu) and Terry Platt (taplatt@earthlink.net).

SAT., OCT. 25: GOVERNMENT CANYON HALF-DAY HIKE

Join us for a long (10+ miles) but slow (4.5 hrs) hike into the lower half of the protected habitat area. Arrive at GCSNA (12861 Galm Rd) at 8am, \$6 GCSNA registration, bring water and snack. Leaving from headquarters at 8:30 AM promptly. Difficulty: Moderate (speed) Hard (length). Assistant Leader Chris Anderson, anchorpt11@yahoo.com. Contact Leader Stan Drezek (493-0939) to sign up, or for questions.

MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Executive Committee Meeting:	3rd Friday, 7 p.m.	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter Submissions:		Fred Wills	fredwills@att.net
Political Committee Meeting:	2nd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russel Seal	289-9008
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

Loyd Cortez	Chair Person	674-9489
Ellen Clegg	Secretary	283-5045
Jerry Morrissey		497-5470
Sandy Redmond		872-5390
Jane Ward		829-5575
Hector Gonzalez		226-6069
Paula Stone		393-7351
Fred Wills		673-9566
Scott Wolfe		724-2707
Sharon Dukes (non voting)	Treasurer	828-3721

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs	Eloise Stoker	828-0919
Fundraising	Paula Stone	393-7351
Membership	Sandy Redmond	872-5390
Publicity	Linda Higby	(585) 330-1890
Mailings	Jim Stewart	692-0727
Newsletter	Fred Wills	673-9566
Website	Richard Alles	494-2088

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Outings Chair	Lee Dodge	647-0216
Political Committee	Russell Seal	289-9008
Outreach & Education	Carolyn Wells	271-0640

CONSERVATION CONTACTS

Conservation Chair	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Assistant Chair	R. Carroll-Bradd	216-6125
Endangered Species	Fred Wills	673-9566
Fluoridation	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Organic Gardening	Dave Klar	495-2148
Recycling	Patricia Martinez	454-5920
Tree Conservation	Richard Alles	494-2088
Volunteer Coordinator	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Water Issues	Jerry Morrissey	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: Jennifer V. Ramos; 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: Louis E. Rowe; 207-7325;	district9@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

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PERIODICAL

Membership

Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

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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.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
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LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
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STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
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