



**SIERRA
CLUB**

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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club Newsletter

The Alamo Sierran April 2016, Vol 50 #3

Word From the Chair

I thank all of you who attended our Meet Up at Government Canyon the morning of Saturday March 5. It was a beautiful day and we had some good talks from our Chapter and Group leaders, and good fellowship and some good food and hiking. I strongly urge

everyone to keep coming out to our activities and get more involved. The Alamo Sierra Club offers lots of fun things to do, and many good ways to get to know people and be involved in our community. Please check our website regularly for our schedule!

Is Flint, Michigan Possible Here?

We hear the reassurances of course. Local SAWS and City officials assure us that our water is safe, and “abundant”. They tell us that Vista Ridge Pipeline is vital to our future, taking water from other people 142 miles away. They tell us this effort will not deplete water in Central Texas, will not add to sprawl over the Hill Country and along the I-35 corridor, and will be very affordable. They tell us that the Spanish company Abengoa is the perfect experienced partner to build this pipeline, worth the premium we will pay for them to take on all the “risk”. City Council twice has accepted these assurances from SAWS without asking for any independent analysis.

Over the last year, we have seen the finances of Abengoa collapse and criminal investigations begun in Spain, while the local subsidy hopes to sell off 80% of its stake in Vista Ridge, violating its contract. SAWS says not to worry, and City Council appears in the majority unconcerned about the implications of this to San Antonio.

Lately, we have learned that the Dawson family, of Pape-Dawson Engineering, the lead contractor for the project, has donated \$18000 to the Mayor Taylor campaign, starting days after the first approval vote. Mr. Dawson has also divulged that his firm has done “hundreds of thousands” of dollars of uncompensated work for this project.

Flint, like San Antonio, had good water for many years. Its problems developed when, as a poor city, its Governor was able to invoke emergency powers and appoint an “Emergency Manager” (or dictator as some would say) accountable to no one but the Governor, shutting down the local government. People had no recourse to government help because there was no transparency in government, no accountability, and no honesty.

I ask, Is our government transparent, accountable,

honest? We have seen major ethics issues with the Mayor raised previously. We have complained to no avail about the undue influence of Chamber of Commerce and developer money in our city, and Mr. Dawson has given us a prime, but hardly isolated example. We have asked repeatedly for an independent analysis of the cost and benefits of Vista Ridge. Our Council is afraid of the powerful influence of the wealthy northern districts in our city, and their financial stakeholders. SAWS BOT Chair, former Chair of the Hispanic Chamber Berto Guerra is “good friend” with Mr. Dawson, and has been instrumental in bringing Abengoa to San Antonio.

These may be the same leaders that sold Flint a lot of dirty water...

In the interest of open government, City Council should hire an independent investigation team to examine the entire scope of the Vista Ridge project. It was their fiduciary duty to do this in the first place, but now with the air of fraud and corruption hanging over the entire project, the investigation must be done as soon as possible and its scope expanded to include the full money trail as well.

Local Politics

Council and Mayoral candidates are already fundraising and gearing up for next spring’s elections. The Alamo Group sees this as a critical election for our future. The next Mayor and the composition of the next City Council will have a tremendous impact on whether we continue to be the most economically segregated city, and one of the most sprawling, and one of the most polluted cities in America. If SA Tomorrow actually adopts policies to start moving us to a more sustainable future, it will be very much up to the next Mayor and City Council to see those policies actually implemented and upheld, rather than watered down and ignored as has always happened in the past. Next spring will also be the time of a large list of important bond issues for votes on funding that will be critical to our future.

The Alamo Group needs an active Political Committee to raise the important environmental issues with candidates that we all care about. We need wherever possible to help those who support our concerns and views, and oppose those who do not.

We need a lot of members to get involved, and we can make a real difference in doing so. We owe it to ourselves, our families and our community. The only way we will keep our parks, and our Edwards Aquifer, and improve our air and our transportation, is to get better representation in local government. We don’t want to lose out like Flint!

-By Terry Burns MD, Alamo Group
Executive Committee Chair

Event Schedule

For updates on all events check the Alamo Group website, sierraclub.org/texas/alamo, under *Get Involved*.

Battery recycling! Bring your dead batteries to the EcoCentro and Lion's Field meetings below and place in the box provided. Thanks to Gay Wright for coordinating this effort.

April 19 Tuesday

General monthly membership meeting at EcoCentro, see below.

Dr. Fred Loxsom on Climate Change and Its Implications for the "Water/Energy Nexus"

In addition to Dr. Loxsom's presentation, there will be a brief report from a Conservation Committee member on San Antonio's water/energy nexus: changes over time for CPS and SAWS, challenges posed by climate change, and questions about integrating the utilities policies in the future. After both presentations, there will be a period for Questions/Answers and Discussion.

Dr. Loxsom earned his PhD in Physics from Dartmouth College, and taught at Trinity University for many years. After retiring from Trinity, Professor Loxsom served for eight years as the Endowed Chair in Sustainable Energy Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Venue/time: 3rd Tuesdays, 6:30 pm at [EcoCentro](#), San Antonio College, 1802 N. Main, at the northeast corner with Locust St. Free and open to the public. [Here's our webpage](#) with map showing EcoCentro.

April 28 Thursday

A Sustainability Plan for San Antonio

Lion's Field monthly program, see below.

Students in the graduate Urban and Regional Sustainability class at UTSA will eagerly present a draft of their sustainability plan for San Antonio. The class is part of the Urban and Regional Planning Program within the UTSA College of Architecture, Construction and Planning. The graduate students have spent the semester reviewing sustainability issues as well as sustainability plans and climate action plans from various cities. Based on their research and their knowledge of San Antonio, they have developed a preliminary plan for our city.

Venue/time: 4th Thursdays, 6:30 pm, at the Lion's Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway at Mulberry. Free and open to the public. Service by bus routes 9, 10 and 14.

News and Contributions

Sierra Club national board election: please vote by noon April 27th!

By Kevin Hartley

The Sierra Club is a democratic organization with an elected National Board of Directors. Our annual election is happening NOW! It is vital to our organization that EVERYONE take this opportunity to vote for our national Sierra Club leaders.

Typically only 10% of members vote; 5% is required for a legal election. So good grief let's vote! Don't know the candidates? Let's read their bios on-line.

How to vote

The deadline really is noon April 27th. Here's the election page with candidate bios (click on their photos) and their answers to 10 questions: sierraclub.org/board/election.

You may have gotten an e-mail msg about the election with a voting link. I didn't get an e-mail, but I signed up to get one next time. I'll bet if you have the e-mail you are set. Otherwise spend a few minutes on the following, which all worked for me.

To vote (without the e-mail) via webpage esc-vote.com/sierra2016/ you'll need two numbers, the 1st is your membership #, and the 2nd you can get immediately by e-mail using your membership #. And I've pasted my membership number into my Sierra Club address book entry for future use.

Here's [how to get your membership #](#) off the mailing label on an issue of Sierra magazine.

Keep the grassroots in Sierra Club. Vote now!

Volunteers needed at info tables

Please help get the word out about Sierra Club! Man our educational tables at these upcoming fun events. Contact Tabling Chair Gay Wright, alamo.sierra@yahoo.com or 343-0222.

Fresh Air Friday:

April 1, Friday, Main Plaza, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.

Shape San Antonio's vision for the next 25 years!

Your input? VIA transportation survey

By Barbara McMillin

Please participate in the *Vision 2040/SA Tomorrow* combined survey at vision2040survey.com by April 6th.

Check out research VIA has done on which corridors have the most congestion, the most jobs, and the most ridership. Which would be suitable for light rail transit or bus rapid transit? See maps with potential routes for transportation options. Don't forget that options mean connectivity, short ride times and wait times, and bring a sense of community with more walkers and bike riders. Extra bonuses: traffic noise is reduced, and air quality is improved along corridor.

SA Tomorrow has identified activity areas in the city where housing, jobs, and shopping are clustered. Think about being able to walk to work, shop, and home. Check-out the various activity areas.

Where housing is appropriate, more housing could be added in an activity area, and/or new commercial structures. These clustered areas tend to be located along corridors which would be served by transportation options, so that would be helpful for getting around the city. And neighborhoods between the activity areas also could begin thinking about walking, or cycling where appropriate.

The idea is to think creatively, and be innovative to build in efficient ways to get around the city, and to adapt to new forms that come on line such as electric bikes. When efficient rail goes in to a corridor, it is possible that some unused parking lots could be locations for additional mixed use, which would add more riders and increased convenience. All areas of the city need to be served, and the planning thoughtful and efficient.

Major development south of Grand Canyon NP rejected

By Kevin Hartley

Just south of Grand Canyon Village, the national park development on the south rim, lies the town of Tusayan. If you have driven to the south rim you might have patronized a motel, fast food restaurants and the IMAX here. A major development had been proposed right here on Kaibab National Forest land. Here's an excellent article on this whole topic: [LA Times 3/11/2016](#), with a link to a few great pics.

A major concern was water. Where would this come from for this new development? The developers proposed renovating an old coal slurry pipeline, but what would this be connected to? The National Park Service opposed drilling additional wells as the aquifer has sharply declined in recent years.

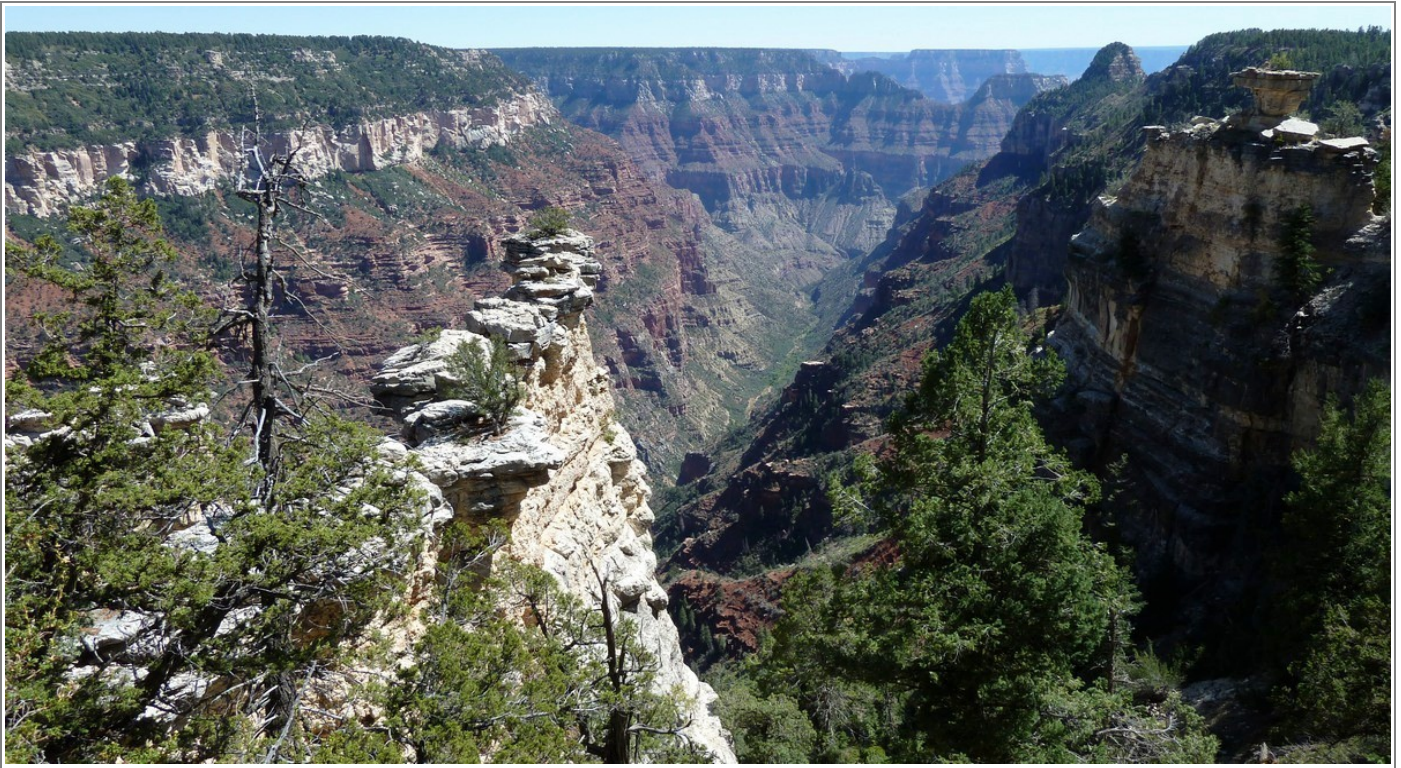
Water: what we use at Grand Canyon NP

Important background re this decision includes the fascinating history of water supply at the historic Grand Canyon National Park operations on both the south and north rims.

The trans-canyon pipeline was completed in 1966. This takes water in at Roaring Spring, 2800' below the north rim. A pump station there supplies water to the north rim operations; eg the luxurious hotel, restaurant, pub and campground we might visit. Water also goes down to the Colorado River and across, and up the to the



Grand Canyon National Park: looking N along the Bright Angel fault. From the Bright Angel trail after an early March 2010 blizzard. The south rim development is 3/4 mi behind as the crow flies. The Colorado River runs right-to-left in the gorge upper center. Indian Garden campground is in the lower shadowed area center, and the north rim is above and beyond the distant clouds. The mouth of Bright Angel Canyon is visible across the gorge, upper right center. The trans-canyon pipeline largely follows the fault line and is visible to hikers at many spots.



Grand Canyon National Park: looking SE along The Transept. This is a side canyon off Roaring Spring Canyon, which is a side canyon off Bright Angel Canyon, which is a side canyon of the Grand Canyon itself below the north rim. View from the Widforss Trail; 4000' elev change visible. The north rim development is out of sight to the left, and the trans-canyon pipeline Roaring Spring intake is up from the canyon junction (upper middle) to the left. The Colorado River is 11 miles down Bright Angel Canyon to the right from the junction.

south rim. Stayed in a hotel on the south rim? All that water came from the north rim via 19 miles of pipeline. We might think twice next time, before taking that long hot shower or wasting water at Mather campground!

Prior to the pipeline, water for the south rim hotels came from Williams AZ in rail tank cars. And may again (or facilities will be partly closed) in the event of pipeline failures, which are prone to happen in the future with increasing frequency due to the state of the pipeline. A couple of my relevant pictures are included below.

More info about the trans-canyon pipeline

Here's an issue of [Grand Canyon Views](#), the newsletter of the Grand Canyon Association, with a pipeline article on pg 6. And a [Facebook video by NPS](#), *Pipeline on the Precipice*. And, a Northern Arizona University [webpage](#) on the trans-canyon pipeline and water treatment. Here's an [NPS article](#) regarding the perpetual maintenance challenges with the trans-canyon pipeline.

We might wonder why the pipeline is so problematic. The elevation difference between the Roaring Spring intake and where the pipeline crosses the river on the Silver Bridge is 3000'. Therefore the pressure at the bottom of this water column is a very high 1300 psi; therefore failures due to corrosion and other damage are becoming more common.

But: another proposed development

There is a tramway and related development proposed mostly on Navajo reservation land at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers, just east of Grand Canyon National Park. The tramway would take people from the rim to the river. The resulting enormous increase in usage would be greatly detrimental to the protected river corridor experience and habitat.

The project is opposed by the Navajo, Pueblo and Zuni tribal leadership; here's an article in [Navajo Times](#). And there was an NPR [Diane Rehm show 6/17/2015](#).

For further reading

Two books by by [Colin Fletcher](#): *The Man Who Walked Through Time* and *River*. Fletcher was the first person to hike in one trip along the Colorado River below the rim entirely through Grand Canyon National Park in 1963. In 1989 he traveled down the Colorado solo from its source to the Gulf of California by raft.

Here is [The Essential Grand Canyon Reading List](#) by National Geographic, and another book list at [grandcanyontreks.org](#).

News from Sierra Club national

Along with the raft of news articles on the [national website](#), just for example, there are...

Blogs!

Had a look at the [blogs on the national website](#) lately? There are ten blogs (on-line discussions) there.

Here's a little sample:

From [Coming Clean](#), Exec Director Michael Brune's blog, about [three new national monuments in the Mojave Desert](#).

In the [The Planet](#) blog, "Sierra Club stories from the front lines": [Open letter regarding the murder of Honduran environmentalist Berta Cáceres](#)

[Sierra Club Radio](#), after nine years, regrettably is no longer doing new programming. But they have compiled a list of featured interviews which include Jane Goodall, Michael Pollan, Tom Friedman and Barbara Kingsolver.

Note at the bottom of the webpage you can click through 15 pages with 10 episodes on each. You can listen to these on your computer or download them for listening on your phone (if you click on an episode and get to the audio control bar, click on the bar and you can "save audio as" an MP3 file.)

Sierra magazine

Members get a subscription to [Sierra magazine](#), but anyone can read it on-line also. In the [March-April](#) issue

for example, there is an [article on five particular national wildlife refuges](#). NWRs are administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which is part of the Dept. of the Interior.

News from Sierra Club Texas

We can get to any chapter's website by clicking on the [Near You](#) button at the top of the [national webpage](#). At the bottom of the resulting page note the map; click on any red blob or links in the list below. Texas is the [Lone Star Chapter](#) is based in Austin.

Fracking plans in Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, and Sabine National Forests

In the [February issue of Lone Star Sierran](#) there is an article about the US Forest Service protecting 31,000 acres from fracking operations. But there is an additional 5,700 acres under consideration. Sierra Club and other environmental organizations filed a formal protest. In the article there is [this link, with additional information](#), for petitioning the Bureau of Land Management to prohibit fracking on this land also. Please take a moment to submit your input on this issue.

Sierra Club Membership

Are you a member? Please [join or renew!](#)



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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club

Website: alamosierraclub.org

The Alamo Group is one of 13 regional groups within the Lone Star (Texas) chapter of the Sierra Club. Our national website: sierraclub.org.

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Food for thought

Instead of controlling the environment for the benefit of the population, perhaps it is time to control the population to allow the survival of the environment.

-David Attenborough

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