



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 43 No. 7 AUG 2009

A Word from the Chair by Loyd Cortez

I want to thank everyone who showed up for our annual summer Potluck Social. About 45 people attended, making it a nice cross-section of our membership. Many thanks to all who brought their favorite dish to share with fellow members. I also want to thank all the volunteers who helped in setting up for the social. Special thanks to the following: Loretta Van Coppenolle, Paula Stone, Stephanie and Christine Buckholdt. I especially want to recognize Loretta for donating some potted plants as a fundraiser.

I met a lot of new faces and saw many of our regulars. Appreciation is also extended to the Witte staff for providing the tables, chairs, and table cloths. For those of you who did not or could not attend, you still have another chance to get together with other members. Make plans to attend our Christmas Potluck. More details will be provided in a future newsletter.

We have placed an order for the 2010 calendars, so be ready to buy yours. We will make an announcement in the Alamo Sierran and at a general meeting as soon as they arrive.

I have to apologize for the noisy environment during our last social at the Bombay Bicycle Club. We still had a good time, regardless of the noise. Don't forget about our next two socials at the Blue Star Brewing Co. on August 28th and Chris Madrid's on September 25th. See this newsletter for details.

Electric Car Charging Station

The unveiling of the first public electric car charging station was announced at a June 30 press conference at the site of the station, the parking lot of Travis Park United Methodist Church, on Travis Street near the intersection of Navarro. Anyone with a plug-in hybrid or electric car may use the outlet free of charge.

CPS Energy Recommends Nuclear Expansion

At the June 29 meeting of the CPS Energy board of trustees, CPS staff recommended 2700 MW expansion of the South Texas Nuclear Project. San Antonio City Council will be asked to vote on a rate hike to support more nuclear by the end of September or early October.

CPS has given a projected capital cost of \$13 billion for the two new units it hopes to build, though other plants of this size are projected at much higher costs. Former EPA Director Christie Todd Whitman remarked while in San Antonio in July that she was surprised at the low estimate given. Independent estimates give a capital cost for a plant the size of

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The Best of the Lot

Ever wonder who the very best environmental leaders in Congress are? Well, you may be surprised at some of the names and where they're from. Absent from the list are some of the big names, and some of the states represented are surprising too. Notice, there is no mention of California below. Here, according to the League of Conservation Voters, are the best we've got in terms of environmental voting scores.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: Chris Murphy (D-CT), John Yarmouth (D-KY), Donna Edwards (D-MD), James McGovern (D-MA), Niki Tsongas (D-MA), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Rush Holt (D-NJ), and Paul Hodes (D-NH). All of these members of

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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.

August 18, 2009: Food System Sustainability: Organics, Permaculture, and Local Foods

Tatjana Walker, a registered dietician, will introduce us to the various forces converging on our food supply, implications for human nutrition and the environment, and her thoughts on solutions, which include organic methods, local foods, backyard agriculture, and permaculture methods.

Sept 15, 2009: Nuclear vs. Renewables Update

Learn why the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club wants to bypass nuclear and go straight to energy efficiency, retrofitting and solar panels. Learn about rebates available. Lanny Sinkin of Solar San Antonio will be one of three speakers.

Clean Driving Tips

1. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve a car's gas mileage by as much as 10% - saving up to 55 gallons of gasoline, or about three trips to the gas station, each year.

2. Gas mileage can be improved by more than 3% by keeping tires inflated to the proper pressure. Properly inflated tires are safer and last longer.

3. By avoiding aggressive driving (taking it easy on the accelerator and brake pedal), you can reduce your gas purchases by roughly 125 gallons a year.

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Balinsky Receives Highest Award

Andy Balinsky, former Alamo Group Chair, has been presented with the 2008 Orrin Bonney Award, the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club's most coveted recognition for outstanding service. Andy has served on the Chapter ExCom for three terms, holding positions as Chapter Conservation Chair and Chapter Chair, among many others. He also established a website for the Chapter Political Committee, and networked the computers and other office equipment in the Chapter office. Congratulations, Andy! (for more info see the summer Lone Star Sierran or Lone Star Chapter website.)

CPS Energy Continued

the STP expansion at about \$22 billion, very nearly half the record 2008 earnings of ExxonMobil, the world's largest corporation, of about \$45 billion.

The government of Ontario, Canada, has cancelled plans for two new reactors whose bid came in at \$23.3 billion. Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Corporation rejected a nuclear venture in Idaho in 2008 because it did not make economic sense.

CPS projects rate hikes of 5% every other year during construction to pay for the nuclear expansion, but has not shown how it arrived at that estimate. Former NRC commissioner Peter Bradford remarked that the likely rate increase would be more like 4.5% per year.

Locking itself into a huge, long-term commitment like new nuclear will make it difficult for CPS to benefit from new emerging technologies and decreasing costs of renewable energies like solar. There will also be a disincentive for efficiency measures that will reduce energy demand if a commitment to nuclear is made.

It has been estimated that if CPS's STEP program were expanded to 1080 MW (the equivalent of a 40% share in the STP), the same amount of energy could be gained with an investment of a mere \$1.2 billion, with the added bonus of job creation in San Antonio.

The high cost of solar is often cited as a reason not to invest more in that modality. CPS Energy announced in July a contract for 27 MW of solar thermal energy. Investment in small solar projects of necessity cost more, as companies must make a large capital investment for a short term project without promise of future revenues. A U.S. Bureau of Land Management solar plan for utility-scale solar projects totaling 100,000 MW would cost 7 or 8 cents per kWh with natural gas assist for continuous power. CPS' most optimistic estimate of nuclear costs is 8 cents per kWh.

The lack of storage for wind and solar is also cited as a reason not to consider them baseload sources, but storage is available or will soon be available using compressed air, molten salt, pumped hydro, or other methods. A plant in Alabama is successfully using compressed air for storage and another facility will soon be added at the site.

Nuclear energy is the most water-intensive of any energy generating source. The current units at the STP evaporate more than 37,000 acre-feet of water, on average, every year. This amount would be doubled with two additional units. The STP additions are guaranteed water from the Colorado River except in times of drought of record, like the one we are now experiencing. Multiple nuclear reactors in the U.S. and Europe have been taken off line due to increased cooling water temperatures, including 1/3 of France's nuclear reactors.

CPS is holding a series of meetings in council districts across town to get citizen input on nuclear. Citizens may sign up to speak at 5 pm with the program beginning at 6 pm. The remaining meetings are as follows:

Tuesday, August 25 (District 9)
Alzafar Shrine Temple (Terrace Room)
901 North Loop 1604

Tuesday, September 1 (District 10)
My Father's House
3131 Nacogdoches Road, Suite 105

Wednesday, September 2 (District 3)
Holy Name Activity Center
6618 Fairlawn

Tuesday, September 15 (District 4)
Knights of Columbus
5763 Ray Ellison Blvd.

The Best of the Lot Continued

Congress scored 100 percent for 2008, 2007, the 110th Congress, and in their congressional lifetimes.

In the SENATE, there was just one across-the-board 100 percenter: Senator Bob Casey, Democrat of Pennsylvania.

If you ever run into one of these people, you may want to give him/her special thanks.

Which states came out the best for environmental votes of their Congressional representatives? The top state was Vermont, followed by Maine, then Connecticut, then Rhode Island. Where was Texas? Sadly, eighth from the bottom, just above Georgia. The state with the lowest Congressional environmental voting score of all was Wyoming, home of former vice president Dick Cheney.

Clean Driving Tips Continued

4. Removing unnecessary items, especially heavy ones, from your vehicle improves gas mileage. Removing an extra 100 lbs in the trunk improves a typical car's fuel economy by 1-2 percent.

5. Placing baggage in the trunk rather than a roof rack is a good idea because a loaded roof rack increases aerodynamic drag and decreases fuel economy by about 5 percent.

6. If everyone replaced their gas caps securely after refueling, the amount of gasoline that escapes into the air through vaporization would be reduced by about 147 million gallons annually in the U.S. [Yep, that's correct.]

7. Gas mileage usually decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 mph. Driving a typical passenger vehicle at 65 mph uses 18% less gasoline than driving at 75 mph.

8. If the wait in a drive-through lane is going to take one minute or more, you'll save gas by parking the vehicle, turning off the engine and walking inside the building rather than using a drive-up window. And you get much needed exercise at the same time.

9. Refraining from overfilling a fuel tank is a good idea because spilled gas is like throwing money on the ground.

10. The Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) maintains a free website - www.RiverCitiesRideshare.com - that helps commuters find potential carpool partners.

11. More money saving tips that help your wallet and our environment can be found on AACOG's website at www.CleanAirDrive.com.

**France Imports UK
electricity as Plants
Shut Down**

France is being forced to import electricity from Britain to cope with a summer heat wave that has helped to put a third of its nuclear power stations out of action. With temperatures across much of France surging above 30C (86F) this week, EDF's reactors are

generating the lowest level of electricity in six years, forcing the state-owned utility to turn to Britain for additional capacity. Fourteen of France's 19 nuclear power stations are located inland and use river water rather than seawater for cooling. When water temperatures rise, EDF is forced to shut down the reactors to prevent their casings from exceeding 50C (122F).

A spokesman for National Grid said that electricity flows from Britain to France during the peak demand yesterday morning were as high as 1,000MW (megawatts) - roughly equivalent to the output of Dungeness nuclear power station on the Kent coast. Nick Campbell, an energy trader at Inenco, the consultancy, said: "We have been exporting continuously from this morning and the picture won't change through peak hours, right up until 4pm."

EDF warned last month that France might need to import up to 8,000MW of electricity from other countries by mid-July - enough to power Paris - because of the combined impact of hot weather, a ten-week strike by power workers and ongoing repairs. EDF must also observe strict rules governing the heat of the water it discharges into waterways so that wildlife is not harmed. The maximum permitted temperature is 24C. Lower electricity output from riverside reactors during hot weather usually coincides with surging demand as French consumers turn up their air conditioners.

One power industry insider said yesterday that about 20GW (gigawatts) of France's total nuclear generating capacity of 63GW was out of service. Much of the shortfall this summer is likely to be met by Britain, which, since 1986, has been linked to the French power grid by a 45km sub-sea power cable that runs from Sellindge in Kent to Les Mandarins. A statement from EDF played down the heat problems, saying that the French system continued to meet customer demands - but similar heat waves have caused serious problems in France in the past.

In 2003, the situation grew so severe that the French nuclear safety regulator granted special exemptions to three plants, allowing them temporarily to discharge water into rivers at

temperatures as high as 30C (86F). France has five plants located by the sea and EDF tries to avoid carrying out any repairs to them during the summer because they do not suffer from cooling problems.

Robin Pagnamenta, Energy and Environment Editor, The Times

OUTINGS

SAT, OCT 24: GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA DAY HIKE

The walk of a lifetime. Reserve your spot before all the slots are gone. Arrive at park headquarters (12861 Galm Rd) by 8:00AM for an 8:15AM sharp departure. Moderately paced walk on the beautiful Wildcat Canyon route up to the protected area, then along Cave Creek and part of the Black Hill loop. State Park pass or \$6 entrance fee required. Donation to Sierra Club suggested. Difficulty: HIGH due to length (12-13 miles). Bring at two quarts of water, lunch, snack, hat, and sunscreen. Contact leader Stan Drezek (493-0939) for further details and to review directions. Assistant Leader: Chris Anderson

FRI-SUN, NOV 13-15: HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA BEGINNER BACKPACK

Have you ever wanted to try backpacking, but never had the time or opportunity? Then this trip is for you. No prior experience is necessary, only a willingness to camp out overnight in a tent and complete a short hike with pack. We will backpack to one of the primitive camping areas, a distance of about three miles. 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 virtual campfire on Saturday night we will hear many tales of outdoor adventures. The trip will start early Saturday morning and end early Sunday afternoon. A mandatory meeting will be held the week prior to go over equipment and supplies needed, as well as the trip plans. Individuals provide their own equipment, food and water. Difficulty: EASY. Participants pay own park entrance and camping fees. Donation to Sierra Club suggested. Signup deadline is November 1. Leaders are Bill Rogers (rogers@uthscsa.edu) and Terry Platt (taplatt@earthlink.net).

Sierra Socials

(Contact Loyd Cortez 674-9489 or loydcortez@earthlink.net if planning to attend.)

AUGUST 28th, Blue Star Brewing Co., 1414 South Alamo, 212-5506, 6-8 PM.

Good choice of cold, micro-brewed beers to complement the food.

SEPTEMBER 25th, Chris Madrid's, 1900 Blanco, 735-3553, 6-8 PM.

A good place to have a tasty burger, salads, cold beer, and wine.

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MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Executive Committee Meeting:	3rd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter Submissions:		Fred Wills	fredwills@att.net
Political Committee Meeting:	2nd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russell 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.	Scott Wolfe	724-2707
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
Peggy Day & MaryEllen Garcia	Secretary	
Margaret (Peggy) Day		829-5632
Wendell Fuqua		373-0748
Hector Gonzalez		226-6069
MaryEllen Garcia		344-1581
Fred Wills		673-9566
Scott Wolfe		724-2707
Teresa Ronquillo		844-8720
Sharon Dukes (non voting) Treasurer		828-3721

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs	Eloise Stoker	828-0919
Fundraising	Paula Stone	393-7351
Publicity	Teresa Ronquillo	844-8720
Mailings	Jim Stewart	692-0727
Membership	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter	Fred Wills	673-9566
Website	Richard Alles	494-2088

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Outings Chair	Scott Wolfe	724-2707
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	Laurie Posner	510-917-0097
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: Julian Castro; 207-7060;	mayor@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 1: Mary Alice P. Cisneros; 207-7279;	district1@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 2: Ivy R. Taylor; 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: David Medina, Jr.; 207-7043;	district5@sanantonio.gov
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Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez; 207-7044;	district7@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 8: W. Reed Williams; 207-7086;	district8@sanantonio.gov
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Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

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