



Word from the Group Chair

The Alamo Group is very concerned that SAWS' board approved moving forward on negotiations for a 30 year contract with Vista Ridge Consortium to pipe in 50,000 acre feet per year of Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer water, from Burlleson

County, 142 miles away.

Unfortunately the discussions have not been inclusive enough nor challenged questionable assumptions. Water at four times current costs? Higher energy and resource demands? A doubled population by 2070? Encouraging build out over the Edwards Aquifer? This is not sustainable. San Antonio's leaders act blind to the profound changes occurring across the earth, urgent conservation needs, and the limits to growth. Instead we are still locked in a passé paradigm of unlimited growth in service to economic interests that are not balanced with equity or the environment.

Some concerns are that SAWS decisions, under City rules, permit most new developments over sensitive areas threatening our Edwards Aquifer water, extend utilities even further into adjacent counties, foster and subsidize sprawl, and discourage conservation.

Also, Vista Ridge water is projected to cost four times more than the most expensive Edward's Aquifer water and about twice that of SAWS' new large-scale desalinated water. This cost is an unfair burden, because San Antonio has one of the greatest income disparities in the nation. Costs of almost everything are rising here, but incomes have lagged behind. All the way down the income scale these costs destabilize San Antonio families. The increased price of desalinated and piped water is, in large part, due to more resources required, including energy, which also competes with other needs for those resources, further driving up prices and Green House Gas (GHGs) releases.

Limiting GHGs that are known climate disruptors is a national and global priority. San Antonio and surrounding communities have yet to develop comprehensive plans for lowering current levels, and that helps explain why intense, inefficient resource activities continue so uncritically. Without better plans and rules, Vista Ridge water will spur undesirable population growth and development that will increase environmental and social disruption.

-By Margaret Day, Chairperson,
Executive Committee of Alamo Group

Events

For updates on all events check the Alamo Group website, alamosierraclub.org.

Battery recycling! Bring your spent small batteries to the meetings (excepting the socials) below and place them in the box provided. Thanks to Gay Wright for coordinating this initiative.

Group membership meetings at the Witte

Third Tuesday each month, 6:30 pm at the Witte Museum, 3801 Broadway. Free and open to the public. Free parking in the museum lot on Avenue B. Service by bus routes 9, 10 and 14.

Lion's Field presentations

Fourth Wednesday each month, 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.

Socials

Tired from a long day of petitioning your legislators to pay attention to the environment? Feel like taking a break from tree-hugging (all that scratchy bark!) and sitting down with some like-minded folks to converse and relax?

These informal get-togethers are from 6-8 pm. Please call or e-mail Loyd Cortez if you plan to attend, 210-454-2052, loydcortez@earthlink.net. Call if you get lost on the way. Please check texas.sierraclub.org/alamo/social.htm the day of the social for cancellations due to weather or unforeseen developments.

Event Schedule

August 19 Tuesday

Witte Museum: *A Scandinavian Exploration*.

Alan Montemayor and Cheryl Hamilton will provide a wonderful exploration of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. Also included in their travels is Svalbard Archipelago, including the Northernmost Point, just 540 nautical miles from the North Pole, land of the polar bear, beluga, walrus and reindeer. This latter expedition will be on Spitsbergen Explorer.

August 22 Friday

Social: *Blue Star Brewing Company*, 1414 S. Alamo St, 210-212-5506. Good choice of cold, micro-brewed beers along with great salads, sandwiches & soups.

August 27 Wednesday

Lion's Field: *Learn about the Fundamentals of Streetcars*. Lyndon Henry and Dave Dobbs of Austin's Light Rail Now website will discuss the fundamentals of streetcars. Both are very knowledgeable about all aspects

of multimodal transit, of which the streetcar is a part, plus transit oriented development, across the country.

September 16 Tuesday

Witte Museum: *Meet the new Office of Sustainability Director for San Antonio, Doug Melnick.*

Mr. Melnick comes to San Antonio from Albany, NY. Under his leadership, Albany was recognized recently by Governor Cuomo as one of six cities in New York to have participated in the Climate Smart Communities Certification Program. To read his bio go to sanantonio.gov and search for his name. He will give an update on programs and plans. For further info see sanantonio.gov/sustainability.

September 24 Wednesday

Lion's Field: the film *The Cove*, which examines dolphin hunting practices in Japan and was awarded the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2010. For more information on this film see wikipedia.org.

September 26 Friday

Social: *Fratello's Deli*, 2503 Broadway, 210-444-0277. Good selection of sandwiches and pizza.

October 15 Tuesday

Witte Museum: program to be determined. Please check alamosierraclub.org for updates.

October 22 Wednesday

Lion's Field: program to be determined.

October 24 Friday

Social: *Candlelight Coffee House*, 3011 N St Mary's St, 210-738-0099. One of our favorite places, it features good food and a nice quiet atmosphere.

News and Contributions

Our Poetry Potluck Event

Our July 15 poetry pot luck was a well-attended and moving event. Many thanks to our emcee and program organizer Mobi Warren and to the poets, see the photo below. We would also like to thank members of the Chef's Cooperative Tyler Horstmann, Kathy Pullen, and Chris Cook for the creative and tasty dishes they contributed and promotion of the Farm to Market Movement.

Request for a Moratorium on SAWS Utility Service Agreements

Press Conference Statement

-By Meredith McGuire, Conservation Committee Co Chair

On July 21, members of the Alamo Sierra Club joined forces with the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance and other partners at a press conference in support of GEAA's call for the San Antonio Water System to adopt a moratorium on the utility service agreements for service



Our poets at the Poetry Potluck, from left: Lahab Assef Al-Jundi, Carol Reposa, Kamala Platt, Bryce Milligan, Mobi, and Jim LaVilla-Havelin. Not shown is Carmen Tafolla.

to any new developments that would threaten the quality and quantity of water from San Antonio's aquifer. The Vista Ridge project or other massive acquisitions of water should not even be considered until an effective and enforceable set of regulations and restrictions to protect all parts of the aquifer system is put in place.

We are not at all convinced that the extremely expensive Vista Verde project is necessary. As recently as last January, SAWS staff determined that, with the addition of the desalination plant, the City would have adequate and flexible sources of supply. What accounts for the turnabout?

- Are the growth projections based on developers' dreams of new high density development over the Aquifer Recharge, Transition, and Contributing Zones, including new annexation of land in the City's extra territorial jurisdiction?
- Do the plans to sell water wholesale from this pipeline project to other communities outside this county indirectly promote their poorly regulated, rampant development over our aquifer or harming the watersheds?
- Are the assumptions about increased demand for water in the City based on net increases in household water usage - as implied by a SAWS spokesperson who touted the Vista Verde project as a way to avoid stage 3 and 4 water restrictions? What if three-fourths of the households and businesses were to continue to cut their water usage at the same rate as the last decade? Who would pay for the Vista Verde water?

The Sierra Club believes that the best interests of the people of San Antonio will be served by dramatically increasing the protection of the Edwards aquifer and by stepping up water conservation measures among all residents and businesses, alike.

SA is Moving Forward in the Transportation Sector

-By Barbara McMillin

San Antonio is on the map as a progressive city with its moves in the direction of solar and wind energy to reduce emissions. VIA is moving us forward to reduce emissions in the transportation sector. VIA's plans include a seamless multimodal transportation system based on the idea of making connections reliably and quickly in the future. The streetcar is a part of this multimodal plan. With new transportation options, the downtown has the potential to become a lively center of shopping, arts and crafts shows, art galleries, music venues, and new cultural events. Imaginative events are already occurring. Artpace's Rooftop Jazz on several Friday nights come to mind.

To encourage and support VIA's exciting plans to reduce emissions in the transportation sector is the new advocacy group called Move SA Forward. The Rivard Report has an interesting article on Move SA Forward, dated July 17. See therivardreport.com.

For more information see Move SA Forward's website at movesaforward.com, Facebook page at facebook.com/movesaforward, or Twitter, twitter.com/movesaforward.

What Really Are Greenhouse Gases?

-By Kevin Hartley

This article is the second in a series about global climate change: the real science, the actual mechanisms, summarized. This one is about greenhouse gases: what they are and how they work. An [article in the July issue](#) talked about global warming.

The key factor in the current global warming trend is greenhouse gases. And greenhouse gases are the key factor in global climate change happening right now. Greenhouse gases are increasingly acting like an actual greenhouse and trapping Earth's radiated heat within the atmosphere.

Which gases?

Greenhouse gases are the components of our atmosphere that absorb much more of the Earth's infra-red radiation than the others. See the July article for a discussion about Earth's radiation. [There is a good Wikipedia article](#) on greenhouse gases, which is the source of the table below.

Gas	Current concentration	Greenhouse effect contribution
Water vapor, H ₂ O	0-4%	36-72%
Carbon dioxide, CO ₂	400 ppm (0.04%)	9-26%
Methane, CH ₄	2 ppm (0.0002%)	4-9%

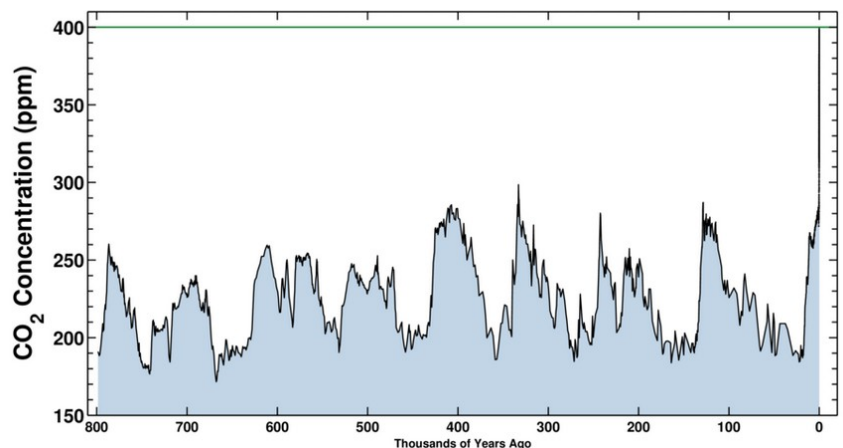
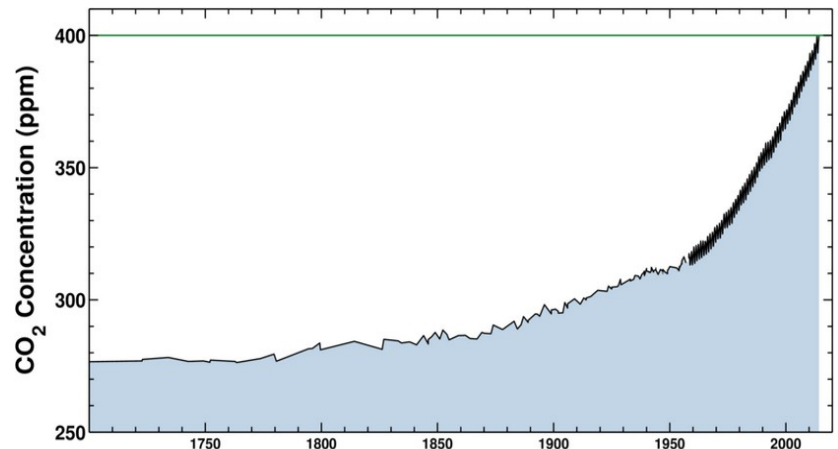
Table: Key Greenhouse Gases

The atmosphere exclusive of water vapor is 99% oxygen and nitrogen, O₂ and N₂. These are simple diatomic molecules and absorb very little of the Earth's radiation.

In comparison, greenhouse gases are more complex molecules with several modes of vibration and so can absorb much more of Earth's radiation. The chart above lists the key greenhouse gases.

Water vapor is the biggest contributor to the greenhouse effect, but its concentration is mostly only dependent upon location, pressure and temperature. So the effect of water vapor hasn't changed since the beginning of the industrial revolution, around 200 years ago.

What has changed in the last 200 years are the concentrations of the other greenhouse gases, largely due to the burning of carbon-based fuels and deforestation. The concentrations of all of them have about doubled.



Source: Scripps Inst. of Oceanography, UCSD

Additional greenhouse gases that have increased due to our activities are ozone, nitrous oxide and the chlorofluorocarbon compounds like Freon. The latter have no natural sources at all.

The worst: carbon dioxide

We hear a lot about the carbon footprint of our activities; for example how many pounds of CO₂ result from the creation of a hamburger or driving a car for a mile. So let's look at the real data about our total cumulative carbon footprint.

The charts above show how much the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere has increased with time. The sharpest increase has been in the last 40 years and there is no sign of this slowing down.

It is startling to realize that the entire time scale of the upper graph is compressed into the thin vertical line at the far right of the lower graph. This shows that the concentration of CO₂ is now nearly 60% higher than at any time in the past 800,000 years.

A quote that comes to mind, by astronaut Ulf Merbold, Federal Republic of Germany: "For the first time in my life I saw the horizon as a curved line. It was accentuated by a thin seam of dark blue light our atmosphere. Obviously this was not the ocean of air I had been told it was so many times in my life. I was terrified by its fragile appearance."

Next month's article: coal versus natural gas as fuel.

Sierra Club Membership

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

Thanks!

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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club

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

Food for thought

Everyone needs beauty as well as bread,
places to play and pray, where nature heals
and gives strength to body and soul alike.

-John Muir

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