



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 43 No. 11 DEC 2009

Truth found in Aqua Veritas

In Italy, where 40 gallons of bottled water are consumed per person per year, city officials are promoting "Aqua Veritas" (tap water or "the mayor's water"). Here in the U.S., which remains the world's top consumer of bottled water—and where consumption has doubled in the last decade—we must also reduce the use of plastic bottles. If we did, we could help keep the estimated 60 million plastic bottles out of landfills and incinerators that wind up there every day. When we do use plastic bottles, San Antonians need better options to get them to the recycling bin. You can help by joining the Sierra Club Recycling Committee, and by signing or spreading the word about the Sierra Club recycling petition. To learn more,

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Transportation a Hot Topic

Changes in San Antonio's transportation scene are looming, if the flurry of public activity means anything. In October and November several meetings highlighting transportation issues took place. Both VIA and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) held a number of hearings to obtain public input on transportation alternatives.

Three October transit-focused meetings on three successive days are of particular interest. The October 26 meeting of the MPO Transportation Policy Board took place at the Alzar Shrine Auditorium in order to accommodate the large crowd expected for a vote on toll roads, widely opposed in San Antonio. MPO chair Tommy Adkisson was disappointed when the majority of the board, in front of several hundred very vocal toll-

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A Word from the Chair

by Loyd Cortez

I want to apologize to any members who may have shown up for the Rivermen Christmas Party at the VFW on Saturday, December 5th. Due to an oversight on my part, the correct date should have been Friday, December 4th. I truly hope that no one was inconvenienced by this blunder on my part.

We will not be having our monthly general meeting at the Witte. Instead we will gather for the annual Alamo Group Christmas Party at Lions Field Hall, 2809 Broadway. It will be a potluck, so bring that special dish of yours to share with fellow Sierrans. The festivities will start early, so make note of the time: 6:00-8:30 pm.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I want to wish you and your family a joyous holiday and a safe and wonderful new year. Let's hope that 2010 will bring peace and friendship to all the peoples of our planet. Nothing in this world is more precious than our children. It is for them that we strive to protect the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and enjoy the trees that shelter people, soil, and wildlife.

We still have plenty of 2010 Sierra Club calendars. As you know, they make great Christmas gifts for family and friends. The cost for either the wall or desk calendar is \$15. We will be selling the calendars at the potluck, so dig into your pockets and buy a few. If you cannot make it to the party to pick one up, I can mail either one for an additional \$3.00 to cover postage. Send me an email or call if you want a calendar mailed to you.

Thanks to those who made it to our last Social at La Fogata. Due to the Christmas holidays, we have decided not to hold an official Social for December.

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.

December 15, 2009: Christmas Party/Potluck Supper

Please join us at the Lions Field facility on Broadway just south of Mulberry for a potluck. Bring own plate and utensils to save resources and reduce the waste stream. **← ← ← Please note that the event begins at 6:00 PM.**

January 19, 2010: Geothermal Energy - A Gift from the Earth

Charles Lonsberry of Southwest Mechanical Services, Howard Rogers, geothermal aficionado, and green engineer Randy Carroll-Bradd will present an evening of geothermal energy, one of the least known of the clean energy alternatives. <Brad: bold this:>Please note that due to the length of the program, this meeting will begin at 6:30 pm.

Nuclear Still an Option?

CPS top leadership returned from Japan in mid-November without a new, lower cost estimate for the South Texas Nuclear Project expansion, but with a promise from Toshiba, the general contractor and a partner, that a new figure would be available by December 31. The new figure is expected to be revealed at a CPS board meeting January 15.

With the yen more solid than the dollar, it appears unlikely Toshiba will give a significantly lower cost figure. The multitude of companies and executives involved in the STP expansion, the need for security and redundant safety features, the importation of materials and equipment as well as

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We Need Your Support

We are fortunate that we have volunteers that write, edit, and publish your newsletter, but unfortunately the expenses of printing, paper, and postage for the newsletter, just keeps going up. Will you give your club a Christmas gift this year of a small donation of \$10 or whatever you can.

Please send your donation to Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 6443, San Antonio, TX 78209. You can use the enclosed envelope for both your donation and ballot for the Executive Committee elections. We thank you for your continuing support.

Truth Continued

visit <http://texas.sierraclub.org/alamo/Recycling.htm> or follow our blog <http://alamocityrecycling.blogspot.com/>

Committee meetings generally take place the 2nd Saturday of the month at Panera on Basse.

Laurie Posner, Recycling Com Chair

Transportation Continued

road opponents, voted in favor of tolling large sections of Loop 1604 and Hwy. 281. Among those who voted for toll roads were Bexar County Commissioners Chico Rodriguez and Kevin Wolff, State Senator Jeff Wentworth, and San Antonio City Councilmen John Clamp and Ray Lopez.

Toll opponents cite numerous reasons why Loop 1604 and U.S. Hwy. 281 should not be tolled. Tolling would more greatly impact the environment than other remedies to traffic congestion, which include overpasses and mass transit options. The tolling of existing roadways in Texas is a violation of the state's constitution. Opponents question the Texas Department of Transportation's motives for tolling when other, less costly alternatives are available, including the more equitable raising of gasoline taxes.

On October 27, KSTX Radio held a town hall meeting on transportation issues, with a panel featuring State Representative Ruth Jones McClendon, UTSA Professor of Public Administration Heywood Sanders, VIA President and CEO Keith Parker, Office of Environmental Policy Senior Management Analyst Julia Diana, and Michael Miles, Senior Manager of Government Relations for the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Authority. Their dialogue cited the issues that confront San Antonio, including the fact that 90 percent of San Antonians go to work by car, with 12 percent carpooling and only 2 percent using public transit.

Sanders pointed out that Texas is handicapped because a large amount of the Texas Department of Transportation's budget must be spent on roads. Parker stated that San Antonio is challenged because its downtown area is not the economic center of the city, with only 25,000 employers downtown compared to 45,000 in the medical center area and even more in the airport area.

Miles noted that DART now has 47 miles of light rail, which has given the downtown area new vitality and encouraged new business relocation.

DART moves 70,000 people a day in Dallas.

Parker noted that, through a grant, San Antonio will get three fully electric buses, rechargeable in 15 minutes, that will begin running here within a year.

The audio of the 10/27 KSTX town hall meeting is available at <http://www.tpr.org/programs/townhall.html>.

On October 28 the city's newly expanded Office of Environmental Policy held a luncheon meeting with electric vehicle and charging experts Robert F. Babik, General Motors' Director of Vehicle Emissions Issues, and Guy Mannino, President and CEO of Verdek-EV, a company that manufactures electric-car charging stations.

Babik, citing statistics that show increased future energy demands globally, spoke about the GM Volt, due out by the end of next year, which will get 40 miles on a charge from a 120 or 240 volt outlet and can use E85 gasoline for backup. GM is working to accelerate electric vehicle use by collaborating with the Electric Power Research Institute and utilities, including CPS Energy, to provide the infrastructure needed.

Nuclear Continued

personnel at nuclear plants are among the reasons nuclear is expensive compared to other modalities. High grade uranium ore is becoming increasingly scarce, with lower grade ore more expensive and more energy-intensive to refine, which may increase operating costs, as may decommissioning and waste disposal costs, which may or may not be borne by the federal government.

Cost figures given before 2012, when licensing is decided, are largely moot. Cost overruns that may occur after construction begins may have to be borne by owners, despite fixed-price contracts, if the contractor refuses to shoulder them.

Both the CPS Board of Trustees and the San Antonio City Council have expressed the wish that the CPS share be reduced from 50% to 20-25%, but despite a long search, other partners have not come forward. The likelihood some will is not great, given the extraordinary costs for nuclear and the uncertainty of need for it in the ten years it takes to bring a nuclear plant on line.

CPS has indicated that if the nuclear option is eliminated, CPS has five years before it will need to look into other electricity sources. During that time, solar

and wind will have reached a level of maturity and cost parity that are becoming increasingly evident. Geothermal is already a mature modality whose costs are low. According to a recent New York University study, "Geothermal is the cheapest source of alternative electricity and shows the fastest improvement per dollar invested" (Emma Ritch, CleanTech.com, 8-25-09). The kind of geothermal that is eminently suitable for South Texas is dry hot rock geothermal. The report indicated that "The U.S. has enough hot dry rock resources to serve as the primary energy source for 30,000 years" (ibid).

CPS has been criticized for underestimating the costs for nuclear while overstating those for efficiency and renewables. The CPS projected cost for efficiency is \$1102/kW of energy saved. The Texas average cost for efficiency is \$200-\$400/kW, and CPS's own experience indicates a cost of \$276/kW (when CPS spent \$11.5 million to save 40 MW of energy). CPS figures for solar and geothermal are likewise higher than recent investment has shown them to be elsewhere.

**Executive Committee Election
Candidate Bios**

The following Club members are candidates for positions on the Alamo Group Executive Committee (ExCom) this year. The ballot appears on page three.

Loyd Cortez

It is an honor for me to run for another term for ExCom. As Chair, I have been given the opportunity to see our membership numbers stay about the same, even though many of our members, for whatever reason, do not renew their membership. This tells me that for all those members that drop off our rolls, new members join our ranks. One of my goals is for retention of our membership and to bring on board young faces to pick up our banner to "explore, enjoy, and protect the planet". I will always strive for our children to have the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and have a big shade tree to sit under.

Hector J Gonzalez

I joined the Sierra Club in 1974 and began my volunteer activities in 1978 when I signed up for a service outing at Enchanted Rock. Since then I have served

My newsletter contribution of

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100
 Other \$_____ is enclosed.

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support the Sierra Club's effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Executive Committee Ballot

Please vote for three (3) candidates. If you have a joint membership, both you and your spouse may vote.

	Individual	2nd (Joint) member
Loyd Cortez	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hector J Gonzalez	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
David Wells	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Vote for no more than three candidates.
Must be postmarked on or before January 4

water as none is available. Donations to Sierra Club accepted. Call leader Stan Drezek 493-0939.

FEB 15-19: MESA DE ANGUILA, MARFA, GUADALUPE PEAK

This will be an extreme event for those who want to push themselves to the limit. The rewards promise to be spectacular. Expect to spend one night up on the Mesa. The Mesa de Anguila extends and becomes the Northern Rim of Santa Elena Canyon. There are numerous options, including, but not limited to, hiking southeast cross-country to the rarely visited Rim of Santa Elena Canyon as well as a cross-Mesa route past five tinajas down Bruja Canyon and out the other (eastern) side. Then it's off to Guadalupe Mountains National Park to summit Guadalupe Peak (at 8749 ft the highest point in Texas) as a dayhike, weather permitting. It's 8 1/2 miles round trip, 3000 ft of gain, and takes 6-8 hours. If weather doesn't cooperate, we'll do something different. Expect to hike through snow on the Guadalupe Peak hike. Expect cold temps in the teens on the Mesa. Added bonus: Dinner in Marfa on way to Guadalupe! For information, contact the Leader, Scott Wolfe, at papawolfe@sbcglobal.net

Candidate Bios Continued

in various volunteer positions including outings leader, treasurer at both the group and chapter levels, and as chair of the Alamo Group. If reelected to the Executive Committee, I will continue to help manage our Group's affairs and resources in a manner that will ensure the Club's long term health and improve its ability to act as a positive force in protecting the environment in our community.

David Wells

I became a local environmental activist in the Sierra Club almost from the time I joined twenty years ago. I broadened my participation to include national committees and have been a National Board member. I have experience in local conservation issues. I also have organizing strength in communication and person relation skills. I worked effectively with people who possess strongly differing perspectives on issues. If elected, it is my intention to utilize my management skills and knowledge- gained both within and outside of the Club - to build organizational strength and make our conservation efforts as effective as possible.

OUTINGS

SUN, DEC 20: MUSEUM REACH WALK

Forget Christmas shopping! Come hike the new museum reach of the river. See the lights on the river. Also, flying fish, Neptune's Grotto, the new SAMA landing, locks (just like in Panama!), the lost VFW post, and more. Meet at the Pearl Brewery complex at 5 PM in the parking lot next to the river entrance (off Grayson). We'll walk approximately 2 miles to the main riverwalk area and take the river taxi (\$10) to some as yet undetermined place for dinner (bring \$\$). After dinner and light observation, we'll take the yellow river taxi again (included in the original \$10 ticket) as far as it goes and walk the rest of the way back to Pearl Brewery—getting back to our cars about 9 p.m. Leaders Ellen Clegg (eclegg@els.edu) and Marsha Meredith (marsham@satx.rr.com).

SAT, JAN 23: MEDINA RIVER NATURAL AREA (DOG FRIENDLY)

Return engagement. Walk the paved Chaparral Trail that is six miles round trip. Meet 8AM in parking lot off SH 16 just before the Medina River crossing for an 8:15AM sharp departure. Difficulty: MODERATE. Bring

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

JAN 22 on Friday, Azuca Nuevo Latino, 713 S. Alamo, 6-8 PM
Join We met here before in January. Good Mexican cuisine and if it is not too cold, we may try to sit outside...

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
Dist. 6: Ray Lopez; 207-7065;	district6@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez; 207-7044;	district7@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 8: W. Reed Williams; 207-7086;	district8@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 9: Elisa Chan; 207-7325;	district9@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
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 San Antonio, Texas 78209

PERIODICAL

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.

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
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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