

## Newsletter

The Alamo Sierran e-Newsletter - December, 2014

### \* General Meetings \*

#### **Tuesday, December 9th: Holiday Party Features Special Venue, Music, and Silent Auction**

Mark your calendars now. Join our annual *Holiday Party and Potluck Dinner* on Tuesday, December 9th from **7 to 9 p.m.**. Discover and experience the unique mixology and ambience of [Dorcol Distilling Company](#), the Latin fusion music of [Los Nahuatlitos](#), and celebrate with our member and partner collaborators.

Be prepared to find some great holiday gifts in our silent auction. We have auction certificates from many new donors such as Tribeca, 5 Guys Burgers, Arcade Mid-Town Kitchen, Capital Genealogy, and Chris Madrid's, and past donors such as Fleming's Steakhouse, Soluna Mexican Restaurant, K. Charles Salon, John Hertz Architectural Design, Hearthstone Deli and Bakery, La Madeleine, Vegeria, Half Price Books, Trader Joe's, and Paesanos. Among donations will be great food from Bird Bakery and Panera Bread, among others, and tasty potluck dishes from generous members. Auction items will be posted on our website's *Events* page by Sunday the 7th, so you can bid on them via email in case you can't make it to the party.

Find us at 1902 South Flores Street. There will be a tour of the distillery at 7 pm. There will be a \$10 cover charge at the door. All proceeds go towards our worthwhile cause. There is free parking on the streets. Bring your friends and family. The public is welcome.

Please contact [Margaret Day](#) if you have any questions, would like to help, or wish to donate to our auction.

**Times, maps and speaker bios are on our Events page.**

### **A Word from the Alamo Group Chair**

This year has been quite a roller coaster of never ending conservation campaigns. In 2014, Alamo Group volunteers have educated and advocated on many issues-- water, waste, transit, air quality and climate change, land use planning, development codes, and wildlife preservation.

While we still have much unfinished business, the following are some achievements the Alamo Group contributed to and for which we are thankful.

It still needs some private contributions, but apparently a deal is done that preserves the land adjacent to Bracken Bat Cave owned by Galo Properties, once slated for more than 1,500 homes. See [Property purchase has bats flying free](#).

The City of San Antonio appears to be finally moving forward on banning toxic coal tar sealants. For more than two years the Alamo Group has lobbied the City, after a report prepared by Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee Member Steven Kale. We had expected a ruling in December, but City staff has been directed to study a prohibition on coal tar-based asphalt sealants as part of a comprehensive water study for action next spring. See [Councilman Nirenberg Seeks City and Industry Leadership in Restoring Water Quality](#).

When we met with Doug Melnick, the new director of the Office of Sustainability, one concern we expressed was the 2040 Comprehensive Plan's siloed subcommittees and lack of sustainability leadership. The City later announced that the update structure will have an overarching sustainability committee with representation from all the other committees. This is a step in the right direction. We pray experienced, influential sustainability experts will sought out for these appointments.

CPS Energy's initiative to leverage its renewable energy investments and boost the local clean energy economy was just reported to have increased its economic impact by 29% in the last four months, to a total of \$808 million. Because San Antonio's energy utility has this focus, we now receive high levels of recognition for leadership in clean energy and jobs creation, most recently from the Pew Charitable Trust and, on Forbes.com, the Environmental Defense Center. Alamo Sierrans should be proud that, without our energy campaign, CPS Energy would not be in this enviable position of accolades and respect. See Monica Maeckle's CPS Energy post, [New Energy Economy impacts increase to \\$808 million](#), for details.

On behalf of the Alamo Group, I would like to thank all of our dedicated volunteers who help make this progress possible. Some of you are the bedrock of our organization and have served for decades, others only for a few years. Special thanks goes to those who chair our committees, with recognition to new volunteers Meredith McGuire and Terry Burns, who co-chair our Conservation Committee, and Publicity Chair Lili Gonzales. Architect Dan Cancilla's term on our Executive Committee comes

#### **Food for Thought**

We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road, the one less traveled by, offers our last, our only

to an end. Thanks Dan. We will miss you.

With all the administrative duties and conservation commitments of the group, there is rarely time to think deeply about issues. I am really looking forward to relaxing during the holidays. A stack of new reading waits on my nightstand—Nassim Nicholas Taleb's *The Black Swan*, Bill McKibbin's *Oil and Honey*, Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. the Climate*, and John Templeton's *Wisdom from the World's Religions*. I hope to begin anew with greater insight and energy to meet the challenges that face us.

Thanks and best wishes to each and every Sierran and ally. May you enjoy this period of thanksgiving, reflection and closure.

by Margaret Day, Executive Committee Chair

chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth.  
- Rachel Carson, from *Silent Spring*, 1962

## Building Sustainable Communities One Block at a Time

The Alamo Sierra Club is recognized by the South San Antonio Independent School District for its \$500 donation to the South San Main Street Project (SSMSt) and Dwight Middle School Learning and Community Garden project. The SSMSt Project partnered-up with Dwight Middle School to build a Learning Garden for the students and Community Garden for the residents of the Quintana Community. The idea originated from the competition by the Texas Public Radio 2012 Lighter! Quicker! Cheaper! Neighborhood Revitalization Project, which the SSMSP was the runner-up.



The South San Main St Project and residents carrying soil for the garden beds on a Sunday, showing their dedication to the project

Co-Founder of the SSMSP Gilbert Morales said the motivation to pursue the gardens arose from the need he saw in the community to become more sustainable and the opportunity to revitalize it. "The Quintana neighborhood has been historically underserved of public green spaces and grocery stores are few and far between," Morales said. "We felt a community garden would accommodate both of these needs."

The learning garden will be part of the Middle School's seventh grade science curriculum teaching students about the advantages of growing local and seasonal fruits and vegetables, and having the opportunity to sell the produce to the community to help sustain it.

Andy Castillo, co-founder of the South San Main Street Project, said projects like this one help create stronger-more educated communities. "The idea is to get the community involved and to educate the students at Dwight Middle School of a healthy way of living," Castillo said. "Small projects like this unite and educate communities of healthier lifestyles, creating neighborhoods its residents can be proud of."





**Community leader and advocate Mrs. Olvera believes the gardens will bring the community closer together**

The catalyst that got the project rolling was the Lowe's Toolbox Grant the Middle School received along with the amp support from the community, organizations and public officials, District 5 Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales and District 4 Councilman Rey Saldana. "We are very fortunate and grateful for the Alamo Sierra Club's contribution. The money helped us complete the first phase of the project, which is the foundation," Morales said.

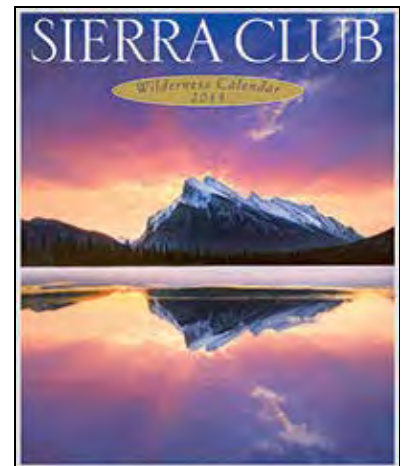
The garden beds are completed, and the project is entering its second phase of building a structure for the students. Cinder blocks, soil, mulch, seeds and many, many volunteers are among the many things needed to build the learning and community garden, if you would like to donate, volunteer or receive more information contact Andy Castillo, 210-393-4285 or [follow South San Main Street on Facebook](#).

*by Lili Gonzalez, Publicity Chair*

### **Get Your 2015 Sierra Club Calendars**

Support Sierra Club Youth Outdoors San Antonio (formerly Inner-City Outings) by purchasing your 2015 calendars from us. Anne Pearson will be handling the sale of these beautiful calendars.

Contact Anne at 408-6321 or just bring your money to the holiday party. Remember, you can't go wrong with a Sierra Club Calendar as a gift. The engagement calendars are \$16, the wall calendars \$15.



### **Lost Maples State Natural Area Outing**

Among the outings of the Alamo Group in November there was one to Lost Maples State Natural Area, west of Kerrville, on the 19th. Thanks to Jerry Morrisey for organizing this.

This was on a Wednesday to avoid the weekend crush of people like ourselves wanting to look at the fall color of the maples. The color was really excellent, a few trees had already dropped their leaves but many were vivid reds and oranges. Twelve people attended. We hiked up the Maple Trail to see the largest group of maples in the park, and then did the West Trail loop. The weather was truly excellent!





Sierra Club hikers on the Maple Trail at Lost Maples SNA

See our web page for more information on Alamo Group outings. There please note the link to [meetup.com/Alamo-Sierra-Club-Outings](https://www.meetup.com/Alamo-Sierra-Club-Outings) where we manage our sign-ups for outings. For more information on this park, see the Texas Parks and Wildlife web page for [Lost Maples State Natural Area](#).

by Kevin Hartley, Newsletter Editor

### Sign Up for Action Alerts

The Sierra Club is all about citizen action on critical issues. Quick citizen input often spells the difference between victory and defeat for important measures at the local and state levels. Sign up now to receive our local e-mail Conservation Action Alerts and let your voice be heard. **Call (674-9489) or email Loyd Cortez** and we'll add your name to our growing list of environmental activists.

### Outings: The Call of the Wild

Visit the [Alamo Sierra Club Outings page](#) on Meetup for detailed information about **all** of our upcoming Sierra Club Outings.



### Lion's Field Events

Monthly films and presentations for your edification and enjoyment

The next event will be in January due to the holidays. Please check the Lion's Field Events page for updates.

Our Lion's Field events are **free** and open to the public. They occur on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Lion's Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway @ Mulberry. Programs begin at **6:30 p.m.**

**Visit our Lion's Field Events page for a map and additional information.**