



# THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 44 No. 1 JAN 2010

## Now is the Time for Wilderness in Big Bend

You have the opportunity to encourage the designation of 533, 900 acres of wilderness within Big Bend National Park. "Wilderness" affords the highest level of protection for public lands.

Established in 1944, our beloved 801,163-acre park is the 15th largest in the national park system - yet none of it carries the name of "wilderness". Although the National Park Service (NPS) finalized its proposal for 533,900 acres to receive wilderness designation in 1984, no Congressional action has been taken in 25 years. Although the NPS has managed the lands as if they were wilderness, the formal designation as wilderness would cement their protected status.

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## Climatologist Speaks at General Meeting

There is no other plausible primary cause for climate change than human-induced emissions, said Texas State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon at the Alamo Group's November 17 meeting. Nielsen-Gammon, whose title goes back to the gubernatorial administration of George W. Bush, showed various models that demonstrate a coincidence between increased greenhouse gas emissions and the current rise in temperatures now being experienced.

Nielsen-Gammon said that increases in solar radiation increased temperatures in the early part of the 20th century, but have not been a factor since then. We are now getting into a La Nina phase so we

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## A Word from the Chair

by Loyd Cortez

We had a wonderful Christmas feast. There were all kinds of goodies to eat and I stuffed myself. Many thanks to all who came to the party and brought their delicious dishes. There was a good turnout of about 40 people. I saw many familiar faces and some new faces, and I was encouraged to see that our club's membership is strong and growing. I took a couple of pictures and these will be posted on the website. Thanks, everyone, for making our annual meet and mingle a success.

We will be announcing the ExCom election results in our next newsletter. I want to express my appreciation to the candidates who submitted their names for election to this important body. I also want to thank those members who made Christmas donations to the Club.

We still have a handful of 2010 Sierra Club calendars. If you cannot personally pick one up, send a check for \$18.00 (postage included) payable to Alamo Group of the Sierra Club to this address: Loyd Cortez, PO Box 40274, San Antonio, TX 78229. Be sure to indicate whether you want the wall or desk calendar, and provide the mailing address of the recipient.

I am open to suggestions on places we may want to meet for our Sierra Socials. The only requirements are that the place be reasonably quiet, have plenty of tables, and be willing to accept separate checks.

## Alamo Group of Sierra Club Wins Award

The Alamo Group was given an award on December 5, 2009, by the San Antonio Area Progressive Action Coalition. The text of the award read: "Because of your efforts, the city of San Antonio has become aware of the many clean and effective means of both reducing energy

**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.**

### 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. Please note that due to the length of the program, this meeting will begin at 6:30 pm.

### February 16, 2010: VIA's Vision for New Transportation

Keith Parker, head of VIA, will give a presentation entitled "A CEO's Vision of an Innovative Transportation System for San Antonio." Keith Parker was former chief executive officer and director of public transit for the Charlotte Area Transit System. Prior to his implementing a light rail system in Charlotte, he was CEO/executive director for Clark County Transit Authority in Vancouver, Washington.

demand and supplying energy through renewable sources such as geothermal, solar, and wind. These alternate solutions to our city's future energy needs do not compromise either the health or the finances of our citizens as other means do, and SAAPAC commends you for publicizing and promoting them. Thank you." Accepting the award was Loyd Cortez, the Alamo Group chair, who acknowledged in his acceptance speech the work of Loretta Van Coppenolle, conservation chair, and other Alamo Group members.

## PCE in Your Drinking Water

There is an EPA Superfund site in our neighborhood. A few years ago, a very high concentration of perchloroethylene, known as also as perc, tetrachlorethylene, or PCE, was found in private wells in the area of Grissom and Bandera roads in Leon Valley. The EPA has determined two sources for the PCE in the ground water: two dry cleaners across Bandera Road

*Continued on Page 2*

**Big Bend Continued**

Besides being an economic engine for surrounding rural counties, Big Bend is a refuge harboring 75 species of mammals, 67 species of reptiles and amphibians, over 450 bird species, and 1,295 species of plants.

Send an e-mail letter to Congressman Ciro Rodriguez, whose district includes Big Bend National Park. Ask him to introduce a resolution designating 533,900 acres of Big Bend National Park as wilderness, according to the recommendation of the National Park Service.

Here are some points you can note:

1. If you are a constituent, be sure to state this in your e-mail. If you aren't, state why Big Bend National Park is important to you. Note that his action would benefit all Texans and all Americans.

2. No action has been taken on the NPS recommendation to create 533,900 acres of wilderness in 25 years and now it is time to act.

3. Although the lands in question are being managed as wilderness, formal designation as such would provide the highest level of protection permanently.

4. Wilderness will assure the highest quality habitat for wildlife and protected species. Several species in Big Bend National Park are federally protected, including the black-capped vireo, Mexican long-nosed bat, Big Bend gambusia, and Chisos hedgehog cactus. After a 40-year absence, black bears have re-established a foothold in the park after migrating from northern Mexico.

5. Thank Congressman Rodriguez for his introduction and support of the Trans-Border Peace Park (H.Res.695) and suggest that designation of wilderness in BBNP is another step in providing high quality recreation and wildlife habitat.

Send your e-mail to Congressman Rodriguez to the attention of Ms. Robin Lloyd, the Legislative Assistant for environmental issues, at Robin.Lloyd@mail.house.gov . You can fax a letter to his Washington, D.C. office at 202-225-2237 or in San Antonio at 210-923-8447.

If you have any questions, please contact Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club.

**Climatologist Speaks Continued**

can expect more drought. The climatologist stressed that the climate system is relatively sensitive and that the albedo effect, which is being lost with the melting of snow and glaciers, is particularly important. He mentioned that land use is a significant unnatural driver of climate change and that the oceans are showing a large anthropomorphic effect. Nielsen-Gammon posited that aerosols are important in the climate change picture because every droplet in a cloud forms around an aerosol. According to the speaker, all scenarios demonstrated by science show that temperatures will continue to rise until at least mid-century. He admonished that we should try not to go above an average of 2 degrees above pre-industrial temperatures.

Focusing on Texas, the speaker made the following predictions:

- Global warming will bring Texas into uncharted temperature territory
- Future precipitation patterns are unknown
- There will be greater water demand and smaller supply
- Sea levels will rise
- It is unknown what severe storm and hurricane changes will occur.

John Nielsen-Gammon received both his master's and PhD degrees from MIT (His PhD is in earth, atmospheric, and planetary science). He has taught at Texas A & M University for 17 years.

**PCE Continued**

from each other had spills or dumpings of this carcinogenic chemical, which is used throughout the country for dry cleaning. EPA's concern is that the PCE will migrate to the three public wells within a mile of the source area.

When we received the federally mandated 2009 SAWS water quality report (available online), I noticed that PCE was reported at the level of .1 parts per billion of water. I asked SAWS whether this was related to the Superfund site. The SAWS representative explained that .1 is the average amount of PCE in all of SAWS wells throughout Bexar County. In other words, those two dry cleaners in our neighborhood are not the only sources of PCE. Only a few dry cleaners in Bexar County (Brite Star is one) don't use PCE. While EPA's maximum drinking water limit for PCE is 5 ppb, scientists

recommend that there be no PCE in drinking water.

Question: Why hasn't Congress banned PCE, which is responsible for contamination events all over the country?

Question: Shouldn't SAWS report the quality of the customer's specific drinking water from each area public well, rather than issuing a county-wide report which says nothing about what you are drinking?

If you too have questions about PCE, please contact me (work phone: 225-7236, x 13) and together maybe we can do something about it.

Darby Riley

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**CPS, Nuclear in State of Flux**

At this writing, the fates of both CPS Energy and the nuclear option are up in the air. On October 27, San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro announced the postponement of a major bond issue for the proposed nuclear addition at Bay City because of a \$4 billion cost estimate hike that had been kept from City Council by CPS personnel. Since then, two high level CPS employees were suspended and later reinstated, one in a different position than previously held; the utility's interim general manager resigned, effective immediately; a vice president later resigned, the mayor called for the resignations of two prominent CPS board members, one of whom has resigned; a lawsuit has been filed by CPS against NRG, its partner in the nuclear plant, and there is public clamor for the immediate resignation or dismissal of Milton Lee, CPS's CEO.

Mayor Castro has expressed his wish that San Antonio's participation in the nuclear plant no longer be an option but has said that more money needs to be put into it in order to increase its salability. The bond issue that is currently scheduled to take place January 15 may yet take place, with the money going either to nuclear or to shore up CPS's finances, which are said to be in poor condition.

Throwing good money after bad has never been a wise financial move. The lawsuit filed by CPS indicates there is lack of clarity on whether or not CPS can remove itself from the deal without

financial penalty. This lack of clarity is beyond belief, given CPS's assumed experience in writing contracts.

If San Antonio is serious about getting out of the nuclear deal, it should cut its ties now and take a loss of the \$376 million already spent, and not further obligate its ratepayers in a losing proposition. It is better to lose \$400 million than twice that amount. Buyers for the CPS share and for a portion that NRG has available are not coming forth, despite rumors that the plant will be built to 3000 MW of capacity and not 2700 MW as now proposed.

The bond issue may not even be necessary for other needs, if the nuclear deal is cancelled. CPS can find a way of increasing income through efficiency and distributed energy, as per the Rifkin plan, decoupling formulae, and other initiatives that are surfacing. The city can likewise reduce its energy demands and otherwise become more efficient in its operations, so that less money from CPS is required. These are directions that both the city and CPS are beginning to take. They could be the salvation of both entities, and at once address climate change and the looming threat of non-compliance with air quality standards. Efficiency measures alone, including old-fashioned conservation (learning to live well with less), can reduce this city's energy demands by up to 50 percent. Distributed solar and geothermal can go far in further reducing demand. These options will allow CPS to meet its energy delivery requirements at a much lower cost than for nuclear.

### Casa Verde Launched

On Saturday, December 12, the city's Office of Environmental Policy in conjunction with CPS Energy launched Casa Verde SA, a stimulus-money-backed plan for weatherization of homes in targeted areas of San Antonio. The aim is to increase energy efficiency of structurally sound homes primarily in the Dignowity Hill, west central, and Roosevelt corridor areas. Within the next 2 years, 1400 homes will be upgraded with insulation, weatherstripping, caulking, more energy-efficient refrigerators, etc., using federal funds.

Eligible residents must be at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, with priority given to families with young children, the elderly, the disabled, and people whose energy bills are inordinately high. Outreach will be through kick-off events like the December 12 event at the Carver Center, door-to-door contact, other agencies, etc.

CPS Energy has begun accepting applications. Rehabilitation of Dignowity Hill homes will begin in February and the west- and southside rehabilitation will begin later. An expenditure of about \$6500 per home is anticipated, with upgrades expected to last, on average, 15-20 years. Similar projects are available to qualifying residents of Bexar County and surrounding counties.

For additional information, call the Casa Verde hotline at 210/353-CASA.



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

#### MON-FRI, FEB 15-19: MESA DE ANGUILA AND MARFA

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 two nights 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. Expect cold temps in the teens on the Mesa. Added bonus: Dinner in Marfa! For Information: papawolfe@sbcglobal.net

#### AUG 23 THRU (AUG 30 OR 31) GRAND TETONS AND YELLOWSTONE (NORTHERN ROCKIES SAMPLER)

This will be a 4 day backpack in The Grand Tetons called Teton Crest plus a 1 or 2 days of hiking in Yellowstone. Teton Crest begins near Jackson Hole (after a tram ride to 10,450 ft) and has an 11 mile stretch from Marion Lake, along the Death Canyon Shelf, over Mt Meek Divide, through Alaska Basin, and up to Hurricane Pass that is one of the best anywhere. Then, off to Yellowstone for a very long day hike (over 20 miles) called Sky Rim (up in the High Country of the Gallatin Range), a hike along The Black Canyon of the Yellowstone (an all downhill 18 miler along

the mighty Yellowstone River the whole way), or Union Falls (a 15.2 mile out and back to one of the best waterfalls in the Park). This trip can be done the other way as well, starting in Yellowstone and then going to the Tetons. All this fun begins Aug 23 and lasts 7-8 days. For Information: papawolfe@sbcglobal.net

### Member Receives Recognition for Photo

One of Scott Wolfe's photographs received an honorable mention at the Ansel Adams Gallery Photo Contest. There were 1250 submissions. The photo was entitled "First Rae of Light" and was taken in the Sierra Nevada.

It can be viewed at: [http://anseladamsgallery.smugmug.com/Other/Contest-Winners/10654107\\_Zgq3h#705715892\\_FZi58](http://anseladamsgallery.smugmug.com/Other/Contest-Winners/10654107_Zgq3h#705715892_FZi58)

### Sierra Socials

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

#### JAN 22 on Friday, Azuca Nuevo Latino, 713 S. Alamo, 6-8 PM

We met here before in January. Good Mexican cuisine and if it is not too cold, we may try to sit outside...

#### Friday, FEB 26, Blue Cactus Cafe at Wetmore Store, 13525 Wetmore Road, 6-8 PM

BBQ, chicken-fried steak, and they claim to have the best onion rings.

# 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 website address*  
[www.alamosierraclub.org](http://www.alamosierraclub.org)

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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club  
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San Antonio, Texas 78209

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## Membership

**Yes**, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

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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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