



Word from the Chair

The Mayoral Election and looking forward

We of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club congratulate Mayor Taylor on her recent election. We look forward to working with her in San Antonio's Comprehensive Planning process. We hope this process will result in a set of

policies that are used and enforced. We hope these policies will substantially change our current path of rampant sprawl, bringing real protection to the Edwards Aquifer, renewal without gentrification to inside 410, safe multi-modal means of transportation, and more diverse and healthy neighborhoods. We hope the Mayor and new City Council will be open to our concerns about the course SAWS is taking with Vista Ridge. We believe San Antonio is at a crossroads. We have the opportunity to plan for smart growth and smart efficient wise water and energy use. We can attract good new economy jobs instead of low wage water bottling companies like Niagara. Instead of last century water solutions like Vista Ridge pipelines we can be leaders in 21st century solutions like atmospheric water generation. SAWS could choose to follow our CPS lead and embrace new technology, distributed water solutions and a different income model. We hope the Mayor and City Council will help us push SAWS away from its water purveyor mindset and to more cost-effective, sustainable solutions than Vista Ridge.

By Terry Burns, Executive Committee Co-chair

Alamo Group Events

For updates on all events check the Alamo Group website, sierraclub.org/texas/alamo, under *Get Involved*.

EcoCentro programs

Third Tuesday each month, 6:30 pm at EcoCentro, San Antonio College, 1802 N. Main, at the northeast corner with Locust St. Free and open to the public. [Here's our web page](#) with map showing EcoCentro.

Lion's Field programs

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.

Event Schedule

July 21 Tuesday

You are invited! Please come to our annual July potluck party! This month in lieu of a speaker program, and 3rd Tuesday instead of 2nd.

At the EcoCentro (see above), 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Storyteller and Master Naturalist Moby Warren will share traditional stories with environmental and wildlife themes that come from different cultures. Prepare to be mesmerized! Enjoy the wonderful water wise gardens! We will provide drinks and service of plates, cups, utensils. For questions please contact Margaret Day, peggyday@hotmail.com.



Meet Moby Warren at our annual potluck

July 22 Wednesday

No Lion's Field event this month due to the potluck dinner same week.

News and Contributions

Our Water Future Is Not For Sale

By Meredith McGuire, Conservation Committee Co-chair
-Initially appeared in [The Rivard Report, June 8](#) -Ed.

San Antonio's business-as-usual is putting our water future at risk. Last week Brooks City Base sought rush-rush rezoning approval to allow Niagara Bottling to put San Antonio's water in plastic bottles to sell nationwide. This, while San Antonio Water System (SAWS) wants us to spend \$3.4 billion on the Vista Ridge pipeline to bring incredibly expensive additional water to San Antonio. City Council fortunately paused the zoning deal, but it did not kill it. It should; it is a bad deal for our community.

The first problem is the very idea of having a bottling company in San Antonio. Despite recent rains, we are not a water-rich region. No water bottling company is sustainable here, no matter how much water we pipe in from other areas. Niagara is trying to get out of the Los Angeles region precisely because of California's water crisis. Why should San Antonio allow Niagara to come

here to hasten our own?

If we are to be prepared for the impacts of climate change and the very real likelihood of severe droughts, San Antonio must protect our water supply vigilantly. We live in a semi-arid region that is going to experience, in the foreseeable future, what researchers call “unprecedented drought conditions.” New data, reported this March in the New York Times, suggest the strong probability of a 35-year-long drought before the end of this century. How can we withstand such a drought? Not by increasing consumption of water. Not by exempting existing commercial, industrial, and institutional SAWS customers from having to take appropriate measures to increase their water-efficiency. And certainly not by allowing water to new businesses whose profits come only from selling our water elsewhere.

SAWS’ “solution” to our regularly dry circumstances is the costly Vista Ridge pipeline, which would bring supposedly “excess” water from Bureson County at a much higher price than water we already have. SAWS expects current residential rate-payers to pay for that pipeline, while giving new businesses like Niagara cut-rate access to the water that is already here.

SAWS calls Vista Ridge water “drought-proof.” That is a gross misrepresentation. Water from the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer is already being over-committed and might not be there for us if drought conditions persist. Rather than encouraging increased conservation and water efficiency - especially from San Antonio businesses - SAWS and the Chamber of Commerce are promoting San Antonio as a place of “abundant” water. That is a recipe for water disaster.

Picture San Antonio in 2035 with another 800,000 residents, mainly living in sprawling suburban developments with lush mega-lawns and water-gulping landscaping. Imagine many new businesses - resort hotels with golf courses and luxurious spas, refineries, and bottling companies - all attracted by this so-called “abundant water,” subsidized by city residents.

Then severe drought hits. The city can’t get any of those profitable water-guzzling businesses to cut back their water usage significantly. Residents who have never learned how to live with drought are furious about watering restrictions. The city finds itself using more water than projected from the Edwards Aquifer, just when the amount of water coming from Vista Ridge is reduced by 50% or more, because the Carrizo-Wilcox is overdrawn.

We must not wait until we are 10 years into a mega-drought to start preparing for living with drought as our “new normal,” thanks to climate change. To deny the possibility - indeed probability - of serious, prolonged drought is to set our city up for a water crisis more disastrous than that facing Los Angeles right now. Such a drought in our community would not be a “natural disaster,” but rather a humanly caused one.

The Vista Ridge deal was a bad decision in the first place, because it puts San Antonio at serious financial risk. But more serious is the fact that the mirage of “abundant” Vista Ridge water is preventing our community from investing its effort and money in local

measures that could truly prepare us for the future. I describe some of those measures in “Re-Framing San Antonio’s Water Future,” which is in the [June issue of the Alamo Sierran](#).

Brooks City Base must not be allowed to offer Niagara Bottling access to San Antonio’s water. If Niagara is allowed to build its bottling plant, we will be stuck with a water-guzzling company that refuses to cut its production when San Antonio is in another drought. San Antonio should allow only sustainable growth. Niagara and similar businesses are certainly not sustainable.

Those of us who have studied water issues appreciate the Council’s postponement of the zoning decision about Niagara, which the Brooks staff tried to sneak through without notice. And we agree with Councilmember Ron Nirenberg (D8)’s assertion, as quoted by the Rivard Report on June 4, that “the implications for our water supply need to be discussed in full public view.” That’s a good start, but not enough.

Council must take ample time to consider the policy issue of whether to allow new so-called “development” that would gobble up our community’s precious water. Vista Ridge must be reconsidered in light of a better vision for our community’s water future.

Council must also listen to the people about this policy matter. In the past, time and time-again, our community has defended our water. We want to be part of protecting our water future.

The following weekend, the City Council announced that it would not consider the zoning request in August, because it had been withdrawn. Neither news report confirmed that Niagara would be completely off the horizon for future deals that would allow access to SAWS’ Vista Ridge water; see The Rivard Report June 14, [City Says No Thanks to Niagara Water Bottling Deal](#), nor Vianna Davila’s coverage, [Water bottling plant at Brooks is scratched](#), in the Express-News June 16.

Alamo Group letter to city officials

Subsequently the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club has sent this message to City Council Members and the newly elected Mayor, Ivy Taylor:

Dear City Council Members and Mayor Taylor,

Thank you for halting the Niagara Bottling plant. Just as it doesn’t make sense to put an ice skating rink in the jungle, it doesn’t make sense to put a water bottling plant in arid, drought-prone South-Central Texas.

This decision creates a great opportunity for you, together with SAWS and CPS Energy, to re-envision San Antonio’s business pitch. There are thriving 21st century businesses that acknowledge and embrace sustainable development. Putting our conservation-oriented Smart Growth principles at the forefront of our city’s marketing efforts will help attract those kinds of business, as well as the kinds of people who will want to stay here permanently and help make our city even better.

When a development agency like BCB touts San Antonio’s water costs as “among the lowest in the United States,” it is clearly inviting water-guzzling industries. California’s dire situation, necessitating huge mandatory cut-backs in water usage, should be a warning to us:

pipelines cannot guarantee water during prolonged drought.

The Niagara project was probably only the tip of the iceberg of inappropriate new "development" for San Antonio. It's appalling that companies like Niagara are being encouraged to locate here!

Now is the time for San Antonio to use its Sustainability Plan to evaluate our water resources and needs to develop pro-active policies and plans so that our city will be respected as a "water wise" city, not the exploitable "water abundant" city that SAWS and the Chamber of Commerce are promoting. We urge the City Council to make sure that no commitments are being made for the future that would allow any business to drain our water resources during prolonged or severe drought.

Thanks for doing the right thing and taking our community's water situation seriously.

We urge all our members to watch this situation carefully and be prepared to register your concerns quickly should any further water-guzzling, inappropriate businesses be promoted as if they are desirable parts of San Antonio's Water Future.

A Call to Action: Concerned Citizens Fighting Asphalt Plant in Comal County

By Nancy P. Wofford

Just to the north of San Antonio, in Comal County, lies an unassuming rural area not claimed by any local municipality, but home to farms, churches, and schools that are, in many instances, still owned and farmed by the descendants of the German settlers who first called the area "Comal Settlement." This length of Old Nacogdoches Rd, between FM 2252 and FM 482, just north of the 3009 intersection, is also a rich and fertile wildlife habitat, for along with the chickens, goats and cattle that many of the area residents keep, and the hay and cotton grown in their fields, the acreage provides environment for a wide variety of wild native Texas species. Along this narrow two-lane road, there also runs a creek, an unnamed tributary that feeds into the Dry Comal creek system, and from there into the Comal river and New Braunfels' famed Landa Park with its tube chutes, paddle boats, and wading pools.

In April of this year, Hanson Aggregates, a German-owned corporation, leased a large plot of this land to Industrial Asphalt, LLC for the purpose of constructing an asphalt plant. Resident Jennifer McGovern, whose property is adjacent to the planned plant site, in an [article in SA Current](#) June 17, describes the speed and stealth with which Hanson and Industrial Asphalt have moved with this project:

"...the company literally appeared overnight and out of nowhere. Neither she nor anyone else in the area had a clue that a new plant was in the works at the previously unused lot. 'We were taken by surprise,' McGovern told the Current. 'They came in the dark of the night.'"

Industrial Asphalt has already begun clearing the land in preparation for the construction of the plant which will belch toxins into the air all day, every day. In so doing

they have already destroyed known Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat. The acreage was also home to the Black-capped Vireo. In addition, the plant will operate within just a few miles of the famed Bracken Bat caves, the largest bat nursery in the world. Not just the state. The world. And, although the Bat Conservancy is not able to intervene due to the site not lying directly in the bat's flight path, the noxious fumes of the plant will definitely impact the environment in which they feed. Greg Mims, whose home dates to the 1800's, and whose front door will lie within 500 feet of the plant's main entrance, has often observed the bats flying over his property.

Mr. Mims and his wife, Susan, along with Jennifer McGovern, and Nancy Wofford, whose property on Old Nacogdoches Road was purchased by her great grandfather in 1902, well before Hanson Aggregates opened their quarry in 1936, are among the many concerned citizens who are fighting to preserve this precious piece of wildlife habitat, and prevent the contamination of the air and natural waterways that surround the site.

As of this writing, the cities of Garden Ridge, Schertz, and New Braunfels have all drafted resolutions in support of the citizens' opposition to this plant. Superintendent Kim, of the Comal Independent School District, which has plans to build two new schools within sight of the plant, and the pastor of the Bracken Methodist Church, established 1872, have also expressed opposition to the construction of this plant.

An appeal to State Representative Doug Miller requesting a contested hearing with TCEQ on the construction of the plant has been filed, and granted, but no date has been set.

The greatest challenge facing the citizens who are fighting the placement of this plant in this environmentally sensitive area is the fact that, as Greg Mims states in SA Current's article: "The entire community, and all the surrounding smaller towns and cities are in full support of our opposition to the plant, but everyone lacks teeth... No one has authority to stop this."

As the Hanson Corporation and Industrial Asphalt are well-aware, the acreage sits in what SA Current describes as "no man's land." No local municipality has jurisdiction. That means that the area is subject only to county regulation. And county regulation is notoriously weak.

So, what can be done? We can continue to express our outrage to those in power who are failing to act in the best interests of their citizens, while promoting the cause of a foreign-owned corporate subsidiary. We can write letters, send e-mails, and continue to make officials at every level--state, county, and local--aware that this encroachment on our natural resources by a rapacious and environmentally careless corporation will not be accepted.

Please express your support for our cause by contacting the owners and operators of this company and telling them that you support the citizens of Schertz, Garden Ridge, and New Braunfels in opposing the construction of this asphalt plant.

These are some of the people you can contact:

- Mr. Daniel Harrington, President and CEO, Lehigh Hanson
- Mr. Henner Bottcher, Sr Vice President, Lehigh Hanson
- Mr. Tom Chizmadia, Sr. VP, Government Affairs, PR and Sustainability, Lehigh Hanson
- Ms. Kelly Bennet, VP, Strategy and Development, Lehigh Hanson
- Mr. John Morrish, President, South Region, Lehigh Hanson, 300 E. John Carpenter Fwy, Ste 1465, Irving TX 75062
- Steve Geiger, Vice President, South Texas, Lehigh Hanson, Steve.geiger@heidelbergcement.com, 713-396-9376
- John Ramming, Ramming Companies (Owner of Industrial Asphalt) John.ramming@Rammingcompanies.com, 512-657-7960
- Scott Haag, Comal County Commissioner, Precinct 2, haagsc@co.comal.tx.us, 830-221-1102
- [Doug Miller](#), Texas State Representative
- [Donna Campbell](#), Texas State Senator
- Andreas Schaller, Heidelberg Cement (Hanson Aggregate's Parent company in Germany), Andreas.Schaller@Heidelbergcement.com
- Stefanie Kaufmann, Sustainability Communications Manager, Heidelberg Cement, Stefanie.Kaufman@Heidelbergcement.com

For additional information, visit our Facebook page, [Garden Ridge Speaks](#), or contact us at: stopasphaltplantcomal@gmail.com.

From [SierraClub.org](#)

Go local

On the national organization's website, we see this link center of initial page. I got a popup "do you wish to share your location?" I confirmed yes, and now under *Go Local*, I see "See What We are Doing in: [Lone Star Chapter](#)". That's a link to our state organization's website.

Sierra Club Radio

From the national website initial page there is a link to [Sierra Club Radio's most popular interviews](#). Along with others are included Jane Goodall, Michael Pollan, Tom Freidman, Barbara Kingsolver, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

At [Sierra Club Radio's web page](#) there is a program on [Pope Francis' new encyclical on the environment](#), June 20. And there is the June 13 program which included an [interview with Naomi Oreskes](#), author of *Merchants of Doubt*, about the right-wing campaign to sow seeds of

doubt around climate science.

We can [subscribe to the programs](#), which are podcasts, on a computer, phone or tablet. There are many podcast applications including iTunes and others for Android.

Our Wild America

From the initial page clicking on Preserving America gets you to the [Our Wild America](#) page. Four specific topics are listed here, which are each links to pages with more information: *Keeping Dirty Fuels in the Ground*, *National Monuments and Wilderness*, *Nearby Nature*, and *Protecting and Restoring Forests*. Below is included a list of campaign updates.



Agave weberi in full flower, very popular this day with bees and hummingbirds (lower right). The specks are bees. In Kerrville.

From our Alamo Group website

...Which is at sierraclub.org/texas/alamo. Many topics are covered that we are concerned about locally and also nationally and globally. For example...

Food for thought

At the end of the day, no amount of investing, no amount of clean electrons, no amount of energy efficiency will save the natural world if we are not paying attention to it - if we are not paying attention to all the things that nature give us for free: clean air, clean water, breathtaking vistas, mountains for skiing, rivers for fishing, oceans for sailing, sunsets for poets, and landscapes for painters. What good is it to have wind-powered lights to brighten the night if you can't see anything green during the day? Just because we can't sell shares in nature doesn't mean it has no value.

-Thomas L. Friedman,
from *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*

Air Quality

Under [Issues/Air Quality](#):

Fascinating real-time air quality monitor station statistics. With a list of tips for what we can do. At time I looked, Texas looked ok except for El Paso, good that there are a bunch of stations there. Though there are no stations shown for the Eagle Ford shale oil/gas play to the SE of San Antonio.

Some other countries don't look so good. Some spots in China, as we have heard, are very unhealthy. Likewise India, though there are few stations there. Japan has some problem spots.

Wildlife

Read about the [Habitat Conservation Plan](#). This actually is a habitat destruction plan.

About this newsletter

Due to the high costs for this paper newsletter, beginning 2016 it will be available

only by e-mail and on the website. The e-newsletters have been produced eight times annually anyway, and the paper editions only four times a year.

So if you wish to continue to receive this newsletter we must have your preferred e-mail address. Please update your info if necessary by e-mail to Loyd Cortez at lcc227@earthlink.net. Provide your name, address, and membership id if possible.



Brown pelicans at Padre Island National Seashore. Photo by the Editor.



Alamo Group of the Sierra Club

Website: alamosierraclub.org

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

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Sierra Club Membership

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

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 Rep. Henry Cuellar 271-2551
 Rep. Will Hurd 202-225-4511
 Rep. Lloyd Doggett 866-916-5921

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Ivy Taylor 207-7060

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 Dist 4: Rey Saldana
 Dist 5: Shirley Gonzales
 Dist 6: Ray Lopez
 Dist 7: Cris Medina
 Dist 8: Ron Nirenberg
 Dist 9: Joe Krier
 Dist 10: Mike Gallagher