



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 43 NO. 3 MAR 2009

February Clean Tech Forum

Former oil company executive Michael Burke founded the San Antonio Clean Technology Forum about one year ago to further efficiency and renewable energy technologies in the local area. His February 17 forum at the Witte Museum was evidence that his idea is not only relevant, but growing.

The February event featured a panel of four pivotal Austinites who spoke about their city's sustainability initiatives and the need for a sustainability partnership between Austin and San Antonio. The four were Pike Powers, known as "Austin's civic entrepreneur" and a partner in the law

Continued on Page 2

Testing Hair for Mercury

I want to thank member Lynea Weatherly for taking the initiative to do some hair testing for mercury contamination. The following article is hers, with some edits [brackets] for clarification. It brightens my day to have great members like Lynea, who strongly believe in a cause and will devote their time and attention to advance it.—Lloyd Cortez

The mercury hair analysis was an interesting experience. Originally, we had "takers" for all 10 of the kits [provided by Greenpeace], and others who were coming just to learn more about it and how to get their own kits.

Continued on Page 2

Science Award Winners Presentations

Five Alamo Sierrans—Randy Carroll-Bradd, Peggy Day, Jerry Morrissey, George Rice and David Wells—served as special award judges in the environmental category at the Alamo Regional Junior Academy of Science and Engineering competition on Saturday morning, February 14th. Six students were chosen to receive an award package that included a certificate created by Bill Livermore, an Alamo Group 40th Anniversary t-shirt, \$50 cash, a gift student membership in the Sierra Club and an invitation to give an oral presentation on their project at our March 17th General Meeting. Students were judged on oral presentations of up to 12 minutes on their environmental science project. Winners were Serena Agrawal, Francisco Ramos and Austin Greenfield in the Middle School Division. Winners in the High School Division were Megan Abbott, Sean Lynch and Dick Gavin.

Jerry Morrissey was the keynote speaker at the Sunday awards ceremony. He had an opportunity to invite the students to consider a scientific career in an environmental field and to introduce the audience to the City of San Antonio's sustainability plan, Mission Verde. The award winners were announced and given their Sierra Club t-shirt and their invitation to speak at the March 17th meeting. Group photos were taken.

The students who can attend on March 17th will receive their certificate and cash award, and give their presentation. Topics include the impact of UV radiation on vegetation, nicotine and endocrine disruptors in wastewater effluent, the filtering of heavy metals from a riverine system,

Continued on Page 2

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.

March 17, 2009: Science Award Winners Presentations

Local high school students will give their award-winning oral presentations on an environmental topic from the Junior Academy of Science competition.

April 21, 2009: Birds of Australia

Denise Goodfellow from Australia will make a presentation on how global warming is impacting Australian birds.

Environmental Lobby Days

Several Alamo Group members participated in the Alliance for a Clean Texas' 2009 Lobby Days events in Austin. The Alliance is a coalition of statewide environmental groups including the Sierra Club. Lobby training took place Tuesday, February 17, and on the following day citizen lobbyists attended conferences and spoke to state legislators or their aides about environmental issues of concern to them.

As many as 30 bills related to the environment are expected to be brought before the legislature this session. One that is being backed by environmentalists would strengthen an e-waste recycling bill that was passed

in the 2007 session. It would expand producer takebacks to include fluorescent bulbs and thermostats that contain mercury, and it would allow not only individuals but small businesses and local governments to participate in takebacks. At least three other bills address mercury contamination, and Senator Judith Zaffirini (D-SA) is being urged to re-submit her 2007 bill which would reduce to 10 percent the total mercury compound emissions from electrical generating facilities.

Other bills address Texas's renewable energy portfolio. One would set a goal of 2000 mw of renewables in the state by 2020. San Antonio representative David Leibowitz is introducing a bill that would ban homeowner association prohibitions of

Continued on Page 2

Award Winners Continued

the genetics of the endangered Guadalupe River bass, solar distillation of saline water, and the use of invasive mussels to monitor water quality in the Guadalupe River. Please attend this first-of-its-kind meeting to encourage these students to continue their efforts in the environmental field and to become active citizens in seeking solutions to environmental problems.

Clean Tech Continued

firm Fulbright and Jaworski; Brewster McCracken, chairman of the board of Austin Energy and Austin's leading mayoral candidate; John Halton, an associate dean at UT Austin's College of Engineering; and Michael Webber, associate director of UT Austin's Center for International Energy and Environmental Policy.

Texas' missing out on solar opportunities was one of the leading themes of the discussion. While Texas has more solar potential than any other state, it is well behind such states as New Mexico and New York in solar implementation. But the now-curtailed semi-conductor industry in Austin can be the basis for an even greater, more sustained boom in green, clean technology. Powers suggested going to the website newyorkklovesnanotech for several pages on green technology.

San Antonio and Austin are, according to the speakers, uniquely situated in the country for renewable energy advances because both cities have municipal utilities (the largest and 4th largest respectively) which are not on the national grid, enabling greater freedom for innovation and research.

One problem cited was storage for intermittent renewables like solar and wind, and another is location of manufacturing. It was emphasized that manufacture of efficiency/renewable equipment needed to be in the area where the equipment would be marketed, and not trucked in from some faraway place.

Webber cited the need to switch from alternating to direct current for better transmission. He also spoke of the interrelationship between saving energy and saving water. This month's

issue of Texas Monthly magazine will have an article written by Webber on why Texas should be the center of the solar industry.

McCracken wanted to see San Antonio join Austin as part of the nation's largest renewable energy consortium, modeled on the Research Triangle in North Carolina and on the San Antonio Toyota model. He also indicated, in response to a question, that nuclear power was not needed by Austin and that it was too expensive.

Testing Hair Continued

We scheduled the date for the Monday after Martin Luther King Day, but the hair stylist got sick. So, when we rescheduled for Wednesday the 4th, we lost an amazing number of people as everyone else was getting sick. In an effort not to drag out the time frame, we finally settled on just seven people willing to take the analysis.

Crystal Thigpen, a 23-year-old student at the Aveda Institute, approached the instructors at her school about the project and they were only mildly interested. They were willing to have me teach a class about it, but the earliest first available opening was early March.

Crystal came to my house, where we did the cuttings, and then took the extra kits with her to work the next day. One of her clients was very interested in having the analysis done, but all of the rest were shocked when they learned they had to have some of their hair cut in order to do the analysis and they were not willing to part with it! Even the instructors were not very interested, and this is a place that teaches the dangers of the use of chemicals and tries to leave a very green footprint on the planet!

If the research study did not prefer the hair samples to be from ages 19-49, we would have had a waiting list, for there were many who were older than 49 who wanted the sample done.

The research study was initiated and funded by Greenpeace. The goal is to ascertain the levels of mercury in people's bodies across the U.S. Mercury is a toxic metal that can do a great deal of damage to the organs in the body.

The study wants to determine whether mercury exposure levels in the U.S. are exceeding standards set to protect public health.

In addition to educating those who had the analysis, I created a facts sheet about mercury toxicity, how it happens, what causes it, and what you can do to avoid, identify and/or correct the problem. Participants will have the results of the survey mailed back directly to them. The age range we sampled was from early twenties to late forties.

I will be mailing in the hair samples, along with the unused kits, which I am chagrined to return. It never occurred to me that mercury hotspot Texas would get sick at the time we could provide some real help, both to individuals and to the nation.

Thanks, Nithin [Nithin Coca, Grassroots Media Coordinator, Sierra Club], for all you did to make this happen.

Blessings,
Lynea Weatherly

Lobby Days Continued

rooftop solar collectors.

Throughout the day on February 18 speakers addressed environmental issues in the auditorium of the State Capitol. State Senator Rodney Ellis stated that "The moral issue of our lifetime is what we do about climate change." He urged the involvement of minorities in environmental issues.

Keynote speaker was nationally known energy advocate Van Jones, a 1993 Yale law graduate, author of *Green for All*, founder and president of the Green for All organization, and a member of the Obama transition team. Jones spoke rivetingly of the need for the green movement to go from inspiration to implementation, from hope to change, from breakdown [of our economy] to breakthroughs in sustainability.

Jones cited the three great fallacies of our time: that consumption rather than production can run our economy, sending our jobs overseas and depending on "selling lattes and shopping online;" that we could go on forever depending on credit and debt

rather than on thrift; and that we can continue endlessly destroying our environment rather than restoring it. He said that our current ways will cost us the whole planet - a real market failure.

Jones stressed the need to go back to local production, thrift, and ecological restoration. He said that the U.S. needed to become the "Saudi Arabia of wind and solar," and forecast that wind, solar and efficiency will create 4 to 8 million jobs in the U.S. He lamented the misperception during the last 40 years that you could do right by the economy or by the environment but that you couldn't do right by both. He said that consumer energy bills could be cut by 30 to 40 percent with existing efficiency technology, using double-paned glass for windows, non-toxic insulation made from blue jeans or old magazines and newspapers, and tight-fitting doors and efficient boilers and furnaces.

In Jones' vision of a green economy, people don't just spend more money, they earn and save more money as well. Texas can be a leader in this regard. "We need to decide to build a green economy in Texas that includes everybody. We want a green wave in Texas that lifts all boats. We can beat pollution and poverty at the same time," said Jones.

OUTINGS

SAT, MAR 14: CANYON LAKE GORGE TRIP

A lecture/tour of Canyon Lake Gorge with the Sierra Club and the Canyon Lake Gorge Preservation Society (GPS) guide and docents, weather permitting. Hike from 9:00 AM - noon, 1.5 miles one-way downhill along the gorge. It is moderately DIFFICULT with slippery conditions going down limestone layers. COST: \$10 per person, cash or check only for the GPS. A donation to the Sierra Club is also requested. Pre-registration and confirmation is required; maximum for the tour is 18. Contact: Christine Anderson (838-1952) Sierra Club leader, for hike sign-up and waiver form, GPS requirements, carpooling, and parking information. Optional lunch at nearby restaurant following outing.

SAT, MAR 21: FRIEDRICH PARK HIKE

Meet at 8:00 AM in the Friedrich Park parking lot (21395 Milsa St) and walk the most beautiful trails: Main Loop, Vista Loop, Fern Dell, Juniper Barrens, and Water Trail. This will be about a 3-hour walk, with some short sections being steep and slippery. DIFFICULTY: Moderate. COST: Donations to Sierra Club encouraged. Leader: Stan Drezek (493-0939).

SUN, MAR 29: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is along paved trails and roads that are along the San Antonio River and that lead from mission to mission in the SE part of San Antonio. We may stop to take quick walks through some of the missions along the way. Planned distance is 15 miles round-trip, depending on participants. Pace will be "no riders left behind." Minimum age is 12. Helmets are required. Be ready to ride by 8:30 AM in the grass parking lot southeast of the paved parking lot in front of Mission Concepcion, 807 Mission Road. DIFFICULTY: Moderate. COST: Donations accepted. Sign up with leader Lee Dodge (647-0216) as start times might change.

SAT, APR 4: LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA DAY HIKE

This might be a good time to catch the Texas Mountain Laurel in bloom along the mesa on the East Trail at Lost Maples. Meet at 8:15 AM in the parking lot that includes a Blockbuster Video just outside Loop 1604 on Bandera Rd. on the right hand side, 11820 Bandera Rd., to carpool. You can also meet us at the ranger station at the entrance to the park at 9:50 AM. This will be about a 5-mile hike taking about 4 1/2-hours (including lunch), with about 3 hours of driving (round trip) from the carpool spot. Bring water, lunch, and hiking boots. DIFFICULTY: Moderate. COST: Park fees plus contribution to Sierra Club. Register with leaders Lee Dodge (275-3355) or Terry Platt.

SAT, APR 11: LEON CREEK DAY HIKE (DOG FRIENDLY)

Meet at 8:45 AM at Bamberger Nature Park (122401 Babcock Road) to enjoy the spring wildflowers along Leon Creek. We will walk about 3 hours along the creek and its banks. DIFFICULTY: Moderate. Hiking boots recommended. Cost: Donations to the Sierra Club accepted. Contact leader Jerry Morrissey (382-2614) for further details.

SAT, APR 25: KING WILLIAM PARADE

What a great way to get some exercise, while parading your Sierra Club colors! Local organizations and businesses will be showcasing their festive side with a fun and funky parade. The parade will begin on E. Guenther Street at Eagleland Drive at 10:00 am, but participants will assemble by 9:00 am. Wear your Sierra Club t-shirt, hat and comfortable shoes suitable for pounding the pavement along a 1.5-mile parade route. Sierra Club contact: Loyd Cortez at 674-9489 or loydcortez@earthlink.net

Volunteer Opportunities

Alamo Area Council of Govt Fresh Air:

Fri, Apr 3, 11:30am to 1:30pm

Northwest Vista Earth Day:

Thu, Apr 9, 9:00am to 2:00pm

S. A. Zoo Party for the Planet:

Sat, Apr 18, 10:00am to 3:00pm

Woodlawn Earth Day:

Sat, Apr 18, 10:00am to 4:00pm

New Braunfels Earth Day:

Sat, Apr 25, 1:00pm to 5:00pm

City of Seguin Earth Day:

Sat, Apr 25, 9:00am to 4:00pm

King Williams Parade:

Sat, Apr 25, 9:00am to 10:00am

S. A. Zoo International Migratory Bird Day Celebration:

Sat, May 9, 10:00am to 3:00pm

If you would like to volunteer for any of these events, contact Loyd Cortez at 674-9489 or loydcortez@earthlink.net.

Sierra Socials

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

MAR 13, Broadway 50/50, 5050 Broadway, 6-8 PM

New place to check out that is known for its burgers and live music.

APR 24, La Fogata, 2427 Vance Jackson Rd, 6-8 PM

Join us on the patio for good Mexican food and a margarita.

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.	Lee Dodge	647-0216
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
Ellen Clegg	Secretary	283-5045
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
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	Lee Dodge	647-0216
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: Phil Hardberger; 207-7060;	mayor@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 1: Mary Alice P. Cisneros; 207-7279;	district1@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 2: Sheila McNeil; 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: Lourdes Galvan; 207-7043;	district5@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 6: Delicia Herrera; 207-7065;	district6@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez; 207-7044;	district7@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 8: Diane G. Cibrian; 207-7086;	district8@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 9: Louis E. Rowe; 207-7325;	district9@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

The Alamo Sierran published monthly (except July) by the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, 615 Willow, San Antonio, TX 78202. Members support the Sierran and receive the publication as part of membership. Nonmember subscriptions \$10.00/year. Periodical postage paid at San Antonio, Texas. Publication No. 018475

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sierra Club Member Services, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322 or email to address.changes@sierraclub.org

Alamo Group website address
www.alamosierraclub.org

Thanks to Dave Hammeren of The Printed Word, 6502 Bandera Rd Suite 205, San Antonio, Tel 520-5700 for our nominal newsletter cost.

Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 6443
 San Antonio, Texas 78209

PERIODICAL

Membership

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club

Mastercard Visa Exp Date ____/____/____

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

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

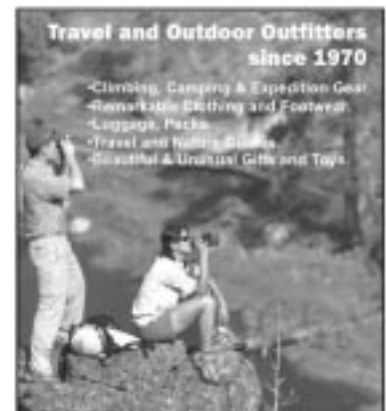
	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$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

F94Q **W 1913** -1  **SIERRA CLUB**
 FOUNDED 1892
Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO, 80322-2968

Join Online!

Join online today and receive a free Expedition Pack! Just go to our website at <http://alamosierraclub.org> and click

Join the Sierra Club



Whole Earth Provision Company
 ALAMO QUARRY MARKET
 255 East Base, 210-629-8586
www.WholeEarthProvision.com