

ALAMO GROUP MEETINGS

General membership meets 6:30 p.m., third Tuesday each month, Witte Museum, 3801 Broadway.

Tues., Mar. 15: Frac'ing Effects

Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, will discuss the potential impacts to San Antonio and surrounding areas of hydraulic fracturing in the Eagle Ford formation in south Texas.

Tues., Apr. 19: Risks of Fluoridated Water

Water Fluoridation: Its Risks Outweigh Its Benefits is the title of the presentation by our own Alamo Group activist Loretta Van Copenolle. Loretta has explored the issue of water fluoridation for more than a decade. Join us to learn why we would be better off without fluoride in our water than with it.

SIERRA SOCIALS

Drinks, food, fun. If planning to attend, contact Loyd Cortez, 674-9489, loydcortez@earthlink.net.

Fri., Mar 25: Blue Star Brewing Co., 1414 South Alamo, 6-8 p.m.

Fri., Apr 22: La Foga, 2427 Vance Jackson Rd, 6-8 p.m.

Fri., May 27: La Tuna, 100 Probandt, 6-8 p.m.

The Alamo Sierran

The Alamo Group of the Sierra Club Newsletter

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MARCH 2011



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Pfeiffer Offers Home Energy-Saving Solutions

Award winning green architect Peter Pfeiffer presented his low cost, low tech solutions to designing energy efficient homes to a crowd of about 200 at the Alamo Group's monthly meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 15, at the Witte Museum.

Pfeiffer, whose Austin firm Barley and Pfeiffer designed the first net zero energy home to be built in Texas, begins a design by situating the house properly for best solar protection in Texas's near-tropical climate. In one award winning home, Pfeiffer oriented the garage to provide afternoon shade for the house. To further enhance shading, he designs wide overhangs on roofs and he uses awnings to block windows from receiving direct sun. A light colored roof and north facing windows also help cut down on air conditioning requirements in our climate, said Pfeiffer.

After proper solar orientation, Pfeiffer uses common sense design elements to further reduce power needs. These include creating a "compact and vertically

zoned" living space that uses less energy than the same square footage spread out. Such a design allows for shorter ducting runs from a single, centrally located air conditioning unit, and shorter plumbing runs from a single, centrally located, high

efficiency water heater.

Other design techniques that pay energy saving dividends include infiltration control (building the house tightly, including tight fitting

(Story Continued on Page 2.)

Volunteers Needed for Outreach

We need volunteers for our outreach tables at these events. Check the dates and contact Peggy Day, 829-5632.

Saturday, Mar. 26, 10-2: Native San Antonio, Native Plant Society, Land Heritage Institute, 1065 Neal Road.

Friday, Apr. 1, 11:30-1: Fresh Air Friday, Main Plaza.

Saturday, Apr. 9, 10-4: Earth Day, Woodlawn Lake Park.

Saturday, Apr. 9, 10-2: Viva Botanica (formerly Walk Across Texas), San Antonio Botanical

Gardens Fiesta/Earth Day Event.

Saturday, Apr. 16, 10 a.m. start: King William Parade, with theme of "King William: A Place of Restoration, Renovation and Reinvention." To volunteer, call Mary Ellen Garcia, 344-1581.

Tuesday, Apr. 19, 11-2: Earth Day UTSA, University Center at University of Texas at San Antonio.

Thursday, Apr. 21, 9-1:30: San Antonio College Earth Day Celebration, Loftin Student Center.

Saturday, May 7, 9-4: Solar Fest, Maverick Park.

Jerry Morrissey (right), co-chair of the Alamo Group Outings Committee, leads a turnout of 18 hikers on a walk through Stone Oak Park in far north San Antonio. The dog-friendly outing took place Sunday morning, Feb. 27, and although the hike started in the mist, it ended with the sun breaking through and the day turning out warm and clear. For information on upcoming outings that you could enjoy, turn to page three in this newsletter.



“It’s better to reduce unwanted infiltration than to add more insulation.”

“Retailers are not required to put much effort into this project. If past behavior is any indication, they won’t.”

(Continued from Page 1: Pfeiffer Offers Energy-Saving Solutions)

windows); enhanced natural ventilation (screened porch, stair tower to allow heat to rise), installing high efficiency heating and cooling units and programmable thermostats, and using energy efficient fluorescent lights.

Regarding insulation, Pfeiffer said it’s easy to reach a point of diminishing returns. R-40 rated insulation is just a little more effective than R-7 rated insulation, he said. And, it’s not the thickness of wall insulation that’s important, but how carefully you insulate the wall and what insulation you use. For instance, spray foam insulation is tighter and doesn’t allow sweat to collect inside walls. You can build a phenomally well insulated home even using the standard building technology of 2x4 wooden studs, Pfeiffer said, adding that “It’s better to reduce unwanted infiltration

than to add more insulation.”

The most effective design elements in terms of reducing energy use, said Pfeiffer, tend to be the least expensive. He does not believe, for instance, in placing expensive solar arrays atop homes that are not, themselves, energy efficient, or in using solar water heaters when a smaller, energy efficient water heater can serve a homeowner’s needs quite well. He noted that the first Net Zero home he built for the Dallas Parade of Homes in 2004 still sits empty because it used “expensive gizmos” to achieve its efficiencies.

More recently, Pfeiffer designed the first LEED Platinum rated house in the United States built strictly for speculative sale. It was built for the Parade of Homes in Austin last year and sold within two

months. It had a screened porch for air circulation, a detached garage on the west side to block the sun, and a carport that serves as a shaded area for outdoor entertaining. It has a light colored roof and shaded windows, and it needs only a small solar array on the roof because the house uses less energy to begin with. It was not expensive to build, said Pfeiffer, and the energy bills it generates average only about \$68 a month.

“Most people don’t want to be slaves to their homes,” said Pfeiffer. A home designed to meet the needs of the owner, a home with a smaller footprint and built using simple, energy-saving design techniques, will need less maintenance, use less energy, and in the long run be more satisfying. (To listen to an interview with Pfeiffer, go to <http://www.tpr.org/environment/index.html>.)

(Continued from Page 3: Word from the Chair on Plastic Bags)

an arm of the American Chemistry Council committed to fighting plastic-bag reduction with recycling campaigns.

Retailers are not required to put much effort into this project. If past behavior is any indication, they won’t. For example, I have noted, as a frustrated, avid participant observer for several years, that HEB/HEB Central Market have had a couple of green bag “rewards” programs that were ill conceived and run, inadvertently abused responsible customers, and demonstrated little commitment to reducing plastic bag use.

I have heard untrue excuses and red herrings from project participants. The most egregious is concern for the “poor.” Yet the system now disproportionately penalizes

the poor, as all are charged for bags through higher prices—no free bags means lower prices. “People need time to learn and change.” We’ve already had decades, but if voluntary, with no costs or incentives, many will never learn, change, or pay their fair share.

People managed before plastic bags. Shoppers use artful cane, bamboo and wood slat baskets or string bags, and later, colorful, plastic mesh bags and reused paper for wrapping, as well as wheeled carts. I’ve used most of these during my peripatetic life and collected canvas shopping bags, starting with one from Whole Foods, more than twenty years ago.

Paper bags are also environmentally costly. Biodegrad-

able bags compete with food supplies. Nothing degrades well in landfills. Some reusable bags are poorly constructed, reducing their benefit. We need to minimize, if not eliminate, single use containers for many packaging needs, and contribute to proven worldwide alternatives.

City regulators please do not be content with such a narrow plan and such limited goals. Send SWMD back to work on a more inclusive, comprehensive plan, with graduated goals that can actually meet our 2020 targets, which are behind existing benchmarks.

Our Group supports open review of all the options: bans, fees, deposits, or taxes, but not dead end voluntary programs like this.

A Word from the Alamo Group Chair

By Margaret "Peggy" Day

The City of San Antonio's Solid Waste Management Department, with representation from Keep San Antonio Beautiful, the Progressive Bag Affiliates, the Texas Retailers' Association, and major area retailers HEB, JC Penny, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, and Target, will soon initiate a voluntary plastic bag reduction initiative aimed at reducing plastic bags distributed by 25 percent and increasing plastic bag recycling by 25 percent, over 18 months. This project required no action from City Council, and business participation in the bag take-back program initiative is voluntary, and, to protect trade secrets, businesses will each determine their results.

Though never stated, the program seems like Austin's 2008 initiative, but our goals are low, half that in Austin. There are no consequences for failing and no next stages.

What good does a 25 percent voluntary reduction and recycling plan achieve if it is foreordained that a few selfless citizens will step up? The other 75 percent, composed of "free riders", will continue to use and impose on others. Currently Americans throw away 100 billion polyethylene plastic bags a year and only recycle 6/10th of one percent, according to the Worldwatch Institute. Even if 25 percent were eliminated and 25 percent properly "recycled", as is San Antonio's goal, that would still result in many tens of billions of

bags that landfills can't contain or are improperly disposed of that go airborne—caught up in fences and vegetation, clogging gutters, sewers, and waterways, thus eyesores and poisoning the biosphere. Also, what good is bag recycling with no viable market?

As has been the long time strategy of Keep America Beautiful and its bottle manufacturer founders and supporters, the aim continues to deflect responsibility and costs onto the public—by promoting guilt and taxpayer subsidies (San Antonio will pay \$250,000 for the advertising campaign, and pays for bag litter)—and deflecting producer responsibility and regulation. PBA is

(Story Continued on Page 2.)

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Alamo Group Outings: Something for Everyone

Saturday, Apr. 9: Hike the Canyon

Join the Friends of Government Canyon and the Sierra Club for a jointly-led guided hike on one of the many trails at Government Canyon State Natural Area. Length of the hike will range from 4 to 7 miles depending on the group.

Open to ages 13 and over; minors must be accompanied by an adult; group size limited to the first 12 people; no pets please. Dress appropriately and wear sturdy shoes for hiking over rough terrain; bring two liters of water and a snack. GCSNA is located at 12861 Galm Rd (Take FM 1560 west from Helotes to Galm Rd). There is a \$6 entrance fee (\$3 seniors). Meet at the Visitors Center by the rainwater harvesting tower by 8:15 am for an 8:30 am sharp departure with finish by noon.; subject to cancellation. Difficulty: Moderate (some steep/rocky sections). Contact Sierra Club co-leader Stan Drezek (493-0939) if you require additional information.

Saturday, Apr. 30: The Best of Eisenhower (Dog Friendly)

Meet at 8:00 AM in the far left of the natural area parking lot (19399 NW Military) at the trailhead entrance. We will walk a loop along the Hillview, Red Oak, Live Oak, and Yucca trails. Minors must be accompanied by a

parent or guardian unless Liability Waiver and Medical Treatment Authorization forms are provided. Dogs must be leashed and socialized.

Difficulty: Moderate. This will only be a 3 mile trip but should take about 2 hours due to some short but very rocky, difficult, steep sections. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes, bring one liter of water and a snack.

Experience with us a beautiful slice of the Texas Hill Country right here in town. Donations accepted. Please contact Master Naturalist and Sierra Club leader: Stan Drezek (493-0939) to reserve a place on this popular trip. Assistant Leader will be Ellen Clegg.

Saturday, May 7: Brackenridge Park Walk: History, Art, and Nature

A 3-mile walk exploring beautiful Brackenridge Park, with information on the history of the park, and discussion of its art and vegetation. This will be an easy walk, but do wear comfortable walking shoes, and prepare for the heat (sun screen and hat recommended.) Bring water to supplement the water fountains in the park.

Meet at 8:45 a.m. on the ground level of the new Brackenridge Park parking garage, which is on the south side of the Witte Museum. (Turn off Broadway onto Tuleta Rd, then immediate left on Avenue B. The garage is on the right.) We will

finish at about 10:30 or 11:00 a.m.

For those who are interested, we can have an early lunch afterwards in a nearby café.

Donations to the Sierra Club are welcome. For further information and to sign up for this enjoyable and informative walk, contact the leader Nancy Anderson, (210) 370-9459. The co-leader is Chris Anderson.

Saturday, May 14: Hike the Canyon

Join the Friends of Government Canyon and the Sierra Club for a jointly-led guided hike on one of the many trails at Government Canyon State Natural Area. Length of the hike will range from 4 to 7 miles depending on the group.

Open to ages 13 and over; minors must be accompanied by an adult; no pets please. Dress appropriately and wear sturdy shoes for hiking over rough terrain; bring two liters of water and a snack. GCSNA is located at 12861 Galm Rd (Take FM 1560 west from Helotes to Galm Rd). There is a \$6 entrance fee (\$3 seniors). Meet at the Visitors Center by the rainwater harvesting tower by 7:45 am for an 8:00 am departure with finish by noon; subject to cancellation. Difficulty: Moderate (some steep/rocky sections). Contact Sierra Club co-leader Nancy Anderson, (210) 370-9459, if you require additional information.

Meeting Dates and Contact Information

General Meeting	3rd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.	Peggy Day	829-5632
Executive Committee Mtg.	3rd Thursday, 6:30 p.m.	Peggy Day	829-5632
Newsletter Submissions	Deadline, 8th of each month	Wendell Fuqua	734-8281
Political Committee Mtg.	2d Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russell Seal	289-9088
Newsletter Mail Party	2d Tuesday, 7 p.m.	Jim Stewart	692-0727
Outings Committee Mtg.	1st Wed., every odd month., 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Conservation Committee Mtg.	1st Thursday, 7 p.m.		

**Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
Executive Committee Officers & Members**

Margaret (Peggy) Day, Chair Person	829-5632
Loyd Cortez, Vice Chair Person	674-9489
Mary Ellen Garcia, Secretary	344-1581
Wendell Fuqua	373-0748
Hector Gonzalez	226-6069
Dave Wells	271-0640
Scott Wolfe	724-2707
Denali Endicott	629-2434
Karen Dalglish Seal	289-9008
Sharon Dukes (non voting), Treasurer	828-3721

Administrative Contacts

Programs	Barbara McMillin	734-4170
Fundraising	Vacant	
Publicity	Vacant	
Mailings	Jim Stewart	692-0727
Membership	Vacant	
Newsletter	Wendell Fuqua	373-0748
Website	Richard Alles	494-2088

Committee Contacts

Outings	Jerry Morrissey	382-2614
Co-Chair	Stan Drezek	493-0939
Political	Russell Seal	289-9008
Outreach & Education	Carolyn Wells	271-0640

Conservation Contacts

Conservation Chair	Randy Carroll-Bradd	216-6125
Assistant Chair	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Endangered Species	Fred Wells	673-9566
Flouridation	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Organic Gardening	Dave Klar	495-2148
Recycling	Carolyn Wells	271-0640
Tree Conservation	Richard Alles	494-2088
Volunteer Coord.	Vacant	
Water Issues	Jerry Morrissey	382-2614

U.S. Congresspersons	City Council (Continued)
Charlie Gonzalez 472-6195	Dist. 2: Ivy R. Taylor 207-7278
Lamar Smith 821-5024	Dist. 3: Jennifer Ramos 207-7064
Henry Cuellar 271-2851	Dist. 4: Philip A. Cortez 207-7281
Francisco Canseco 561-8855	Dist. 5: David Medina, Jr. 207-7043
	Dist. 6: Ray Lopez 207-7065
	Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez 207-7044
	Dist. 8: W. Reed Williams 207-7086
City Council	Dist. 9: Elisa Chan 207-7325
Mayor Julian Castro 207-7060	Dist. 10: John G. Clamp 207-7276
Dist. 1: M. A. Cisneros 207-7279	

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

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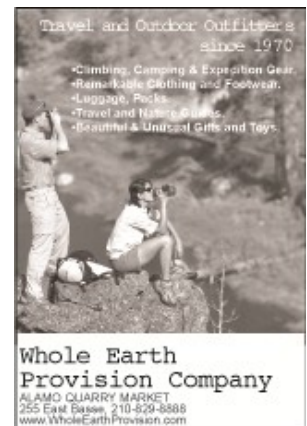
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**Alamo Group website address
www.alamosierraclub.org**

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