

ALAMO GROUP MEETINGS

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

Tues., Mar. 20: Managing Water Supply

Dr. Robert Gulley of the Edwards Aquifer Authority will present the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Plan and the Habitat Conservation Plan. Approved by AAMN for Advanced Training (AT)

Tues., Apr. 17: Oil and Coal Production

Dr. Tad Patzek, Professor and Chair, UT-Austin Dept. of Petroleum Engineering systems will speak about latest research on oil and coal production.

Tues., May 15: Medina River Natural Area

Protecting Riparian Habitat and the Medina River Natural Area.

SIERRA SOCIALS

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

Fri., Mar 23: Hsiu Yu Chinese, 8338 Broadway, 6-8 PM.

Fri., Apr 27: La Tuna, 100 Probandt, 6-8 PM.

Fri., May 25: La Fogata, 2427 Vance Jackson Rd, 6-8 PM.

The Alamo Sierran

The Alamo Group of the Sierra Club Newsletter

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MARCH 2012



EARIP'S Plan to Protect Endangered Species

By George Rice

Doctor Robert Gulley is the manager of the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Plan (RIP). The purpose of the RIP was to devise a plan to protect endangered species (e.g., fountain darter, Texas wild rice) that depend on the flows of Comal and San Marcos springs. The RIP began meeting in 2007 and produced a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in late 2011.

Given the contention surrounding water issues in this region, few predicted that the RIP would be able to produce a plan that would both protect the species, and be agreed to by the diverse interests involved in the RIP. The RIP included representatives of municipalities, agriculture, spring interests, environmental groups, industries, fishermen, utilities, and regulators.

Under Dr. Gulley's guidance, RIP members produced a memorandum of agreement to govern the RIP process. It was an open, consensus-based process in

which any interested person could participate. Decisions were made by a 26 member Steering Committee. When 100% consensus could not be reached, decisions were made by a vote requiring a super majority of the Steering Committee. The RIP also established a Science Committee to advise it on technical issues. The Science Committee included some of the most knowledgeable hydrologists and biologists in the region.

After almost five years of work the RIP agreed (by a vote of 24 to 1, with one abstention) to an HCP to ensure that flows at Comal and San Marcos springs are maintained at levels that protect spring-dependent species. Major elements of the HCP include: 1) a program to pay farmers who sign up for voluntary pumping reductions, 2) placing additional water in SAWS's Carrizo Aquifer Storage and Recovery project for use in droughts, 3) habitat improvements at Comal and San Marcos springs, 4) municipal conservation programs, and, as a last resort, 5) Stage 5 pumping re-

strictions. Further study over the next seven years will seek to determine whether these measures are sufficient to protect the species, and if not, what additional measures will be required.

The HCP was accepted by the board of the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) in December. It was then submitted to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval. The plan is expected to cost about \$18.5 million a year. Most of the money will be raised by the EAA through increased pumping fees. Downstream interests (Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Dow Chemical, CPS Energy) have pledged to make annual contributions of \$740,000.

Of course, nothing about water in this region escapes the notice of the Malevolent Hydrologic Deity. The recent Texas Supreme Court decision that limits the ability of groundwater districts to regulate pumping could monkey-wrench the RIP deal. The full effect of the ruling is not yet known.

Upcoming National Club Elections

The Lone Star Chapter recommends a vote for Lane Boldman, Spencer Black, Arjun Makhijani, Dave Scott and Chris Warshaw in the upcoming election for the Sierra Club's Board of Directors.

VIA's Plans

Students from St. Mary's, Trinity, UTSA, and folks from two neighborhood associations, B-Cycle, League of Women Voters, and others came to the February program to hear about VIA's future transportation plans. The future has options and connectivity and walkable communities and biking and better use of space that makes more sense. The air will be cleaner too.

Keith Parker, the CEO and President of VIA, started out by telling us about the existing bus system. It is the most underfunded bus system in the state compared to Austin, Dallas, and Houston. VIA has 5/8 of a penny sales tax. Austin and the others have a full penny. VIA has increased ridership more than Dallas, Houston and Austin combined. Because VIA has participated in fuel hedging that allows a transit agency to lock in its fuel expenses for a specified peri-

od, VIA has saved nearly \$3.9 million in fuel costs since 2010.

Parker told us a number of all-electric buses will arrive soon as a result of a national competition which VIA won. They will be powered by Windtricity and will definitely reduce emissions.

Also, ten to eleven year old buses will be rehabbed with new engines, becoming more energy efficient.

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Save A Tree...:)

Please help our club offset our newsletter paper copy printing and postage cost by considering receiving the newsletter electronically by email.

Contact loydcortez@earthlink.net to make the switch.

Make Your Voice Be Heard!

City council decisions, regulatory actions, legislation in Austin; we need to be ready to act at a moment's notice to support the good and stop the bad.

Sometimes all it takes is a simple phone call or email message to sway the opinion of our local elected leaders and officials.

Contact loydcortez@earthlink.net to add you to our club's action alert list.

Our Facebook site is up and running again. Check it out and "like" us at: www.facebook.com/pages/Sierra-Club-Alamo-Group/

Outings: Hikes That Lead Us Into Spring

General Requirements: *Wear clothes and shoes appropriate for hiking. Bring water and a snack. Minors allowed only when accompanied by parent/guardian or with Consent Form and Medical Authorization. Dogs not allowed unless specified, and must be leashed and socialized. Donations to Sierra Club always welcomed.*

Full descriptions of these outings are found at <http://texas.sierraclub.org/alamo/Outings.htm>

And Also At

<http://www.meetup.com/Alamo-Sierra-Club-Outings/>

Participants are encouraged to read the full descriptions and contact the Outings Leader.

SATURDAY MARCH 24TH: HIKE AT ENCHANTED ROCK STATE NATURAL AREA

9:00 AM, Parking lot, Park Entrance at Enchanted Rock Experience the beauty and wildflowers of one of most popular state parks

4.1 miles: MODERATE/

DIFFICULT, Contact leader Terry Jermolajevs (414-1125)

SUNDAY APRIL 1ST: LANDA PARK/COMAL SPRINGS HIKE

10:30 AM, Parking Lot near Founder's Oak, Landa Park in New Braunfels Experience an ecological jewel with the largest springs in Texas

2 miles: EASY, Contact leader Bill Rogers (830 885-2523)

A Call For Volunteers

Come help the club. Table at the following upcoming events. If you are interested, contact peggyday@hotmail.com

March 17, Saturday, Kendall County Outdoor Family Fair, 10 – 1, at Boerne Main Plaza.

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

March 31, Saturday, Native San Antonio, sponsored by the Native Plant Society, 10 to 2, at the Land Heritage Institute, 1065 Neal Road,

April 12, Thursday, NW Vista College Earth Day, 9 – 1, at 3535 North Ellison.

April 12, Thursday, Earth Day Kickoff Expo, sponsored by the Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment and the Air Force Real Property Agency, 10 to 2, in Bldg. 171 at Port San Antonio.

Rain to Drain

Have you ever wondered where the water your drink comes from? Have you thought about how it is cleaned and treated before it comes out of our faucets? If you're interested in learning more about where your drinking water comes from and where it goes "after the flush", consider joining SAWS Education Team for the *Rain to Drain Experience*. Requirements for attending the trip:

The "Rain to Drain" field trip is FREE for San Antonio residents ages 18 and older. Anyone under the age of 18 cannot be accommodated. (*To find out more information about field trips for those under 18, please contact the SAWS Education Department at www.saws.org*). Each trip can accommodate a maximum of 50 guests. San Antonio Water System reserves the right to cancel a trip at any time due to attendance, weather or security reasons. San Antonio Water System will provide charter transportation to all locations. If special accommodations need to be made, advance notice of at least 72 hours is required. No personal transportation will be allowed. San Antonio Water System will provide a FREE lunch to all those in attendance. If special dietary needs are required, please notify us at the time of registration. SAWS will also provide water for your enjoyment throughout the day.

The field trips are **Sat. Apr 14th; Fri. May 18th; Sat. Sept 15th; Sat. Oct 20th; Sat. Nov 10th; & Fri. Dec 7th**. To get more details or to register for the event, call Greg Wukasch at (210) 233-3631 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays or send an e-mail to gwukasch@saws.org. so the forms can be sent to you. Their fax number is (210) 233-5043.

Dirt

If you care about food, water, and air, see the film *Dirt*.

On Wed, Mar 28, the film *Dirt* will be shown at 6:30 pm at Lion's Field Clubhouse on Broadway at Mulberry. The film is a humorous and substantial look into the history and current state of soil. Inspired by a book *Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth* written by Wil-

liam Bryant Logan, the film discusses the sustainable relationship between humans and dirt through profiles of visionaries who are concerned about repairing damage to the soil. It also discusses soil levels and productivity and more.

A Word from the Alamo Group Chair

By Margaret "Peggy" Day

I am always perplexed how humans can remain so passive in the face of activities known to cause deadly pollution.

Take the example of lead. It is a heavy metal—atomic number 82—symbolized as Pb, from its Latin name, plumbum, from which "plumbing" is derived. Most lead is a product of decayed uranium. Lead is especially useful, but insidiously toxic and fatal. Humans have prospered and poisoned ourselves (and other animals) with lead for at least 8,000 years.

Lead poisoning is one of the oldest known work and environmental hazards, documented by many ancient cultures. Throughout history humans have tried to minimize the damaging effects, but today we understand there is no safe threshold for lead exposure. All lead causes bodily harm. Children are most affected. Lead is a neurotoxin that causes nervous system, brain, and blood disorders and affects many other organs and tissues including the intestines, kidneys, reproductive system, and bones—where it accumulates. In addition, lead intoxication causes abdominal pain, confusion, headache, anemia, irritability, and in the worst

cases can cause seizures, coma and death.

Lead is one of the oldest metals known and used by man. It is so common it has been used in a vast number of products. They include all kinds of pots, pans, pitchers, food condiments, folk remedies, makeup, weights and sinkers, pipes, solder, roofs, cladding, glazes, glass, toys, jewelry, typeset, paints, fuels, pesticides, radiation barriers, coolant, electrodes, superconductors, metal alloys, and more. Today most lead is used in batteries. Some lead uses have been banned, but many more uses are developed as the industry expands.

Today lead is ubiquitous. For millennia it has accumulated and spread through the air, water, and soil, and into the food chain and material world through mining, processing, and these consumer products. Think of all that peeling lead-based paint on the 60% or so of San Antonio homes, the six decades of lead-based gasoline exhaust settled into the soil, lead shot and fishing sinkers, lead soldered water pipes, and all the junked batteries. Even processed fruits and fruit drinks for children now commonly contain lead levels exceeding some safe drinking water levels.

In 2010, about 9.6 million tons of lead were produced globally, with the U.S. as one of the largest producers and users. It has been documented that the U.S. produces and uses ten times the lead used by Romans in antiquity. Since lead has often been attributed to Rome's decline and fall, could the crazy socio-political scene in America today be a symptom of lead damage? Even though the average American blood lead level has dropped dramatically, and the body does eventually reverse most, but not all, of the damage, studies recommend halving the safe level for children. After all, low level lead exposure leads to hyperirritability, poor memory, and sluggishness and higher levels to gloomy, cynical, taciturn, confused behavior..

Why do we allow such pollution? Maybe, like lead-addled Emperor Nero, who drank his lead-laced wine, wore his protective lead breast-plate, and played music while Rome fell, we Americans cocoon in our material wealth and escape in entertainment to avoid facing our Faustian bargain with the age-old god of lead, the malefic titan Saturn, who devours children, causes sadness and darkness, and destroys the universe.

(Continued from Page 1)

The Bus Rapid Transit to the medical center and UTSA will be ready at the end of 2012. Innovations include distinctive new 60 foot long Compressed Natural Gas buses and solar-powered transit stops with a Nextbus information system.

VIA's comprehensive plan will have 5 miles of streetcar, 39 miles of Light Rail Transit and 57 miles of BRT. See Final Plan at www.smartwaysa.com.

Projects funded are two streetcar routes of two and a half miles each, the Westside Multimodal Transit Center, the Robert Thompson Transit Center, two Park and Rides, and downtown amenities.

At the Westside Multimodal, connections to Amtrak and commuter rail to Austin may become a reality.

The core plan calling for streetcars running north/south and east/west routes is necessary because rising ridership means buses will soon overwhelm downtown. Streetcars mean

cleaner air and safer streets as each one carries three times more riders than a bus.

One person asked if BRT is cheaper to build, then why not just use them? Parker told us that there is little evidence that BRT had any positive impact on property values, but enormous data existed that US developers were investing heavily around streetcars and other urban rail lines.

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 last day of month	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Political Committee Mtg.	2d Thursday, 7 p.m.	Dave Wells	271-0640
Newsletter Mail Party	2d Tuesday, 6-8:30 p.m.	Whole Foods	
Outings Committee Mtg.	1st Wed., every odd month., 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	382-2614
Conservation Committee Mtg.	1st Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russell Seal	289-9088

Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
Executive Committee Officers & Members

Margaret (Peggy) Day, Chair Person	829-5632
Loyd Cortez, Vice Chair Person	674-9489
MaryEllen Garcia, Secretary	344-1581
Karen Dalglish Seal	226-8101
Hector Gonzalez	226-6069
Dave Wells, Treasurer	271-0640
George Rice	737-6180
Alyssa Burgin	381-4021
Mobi Warren	496-4942

Administrative Contacts

Programs	Barbara McMillin	734-4170
Fundraising	Vacant	
Publicity	Gay Wright	343-0222
Editor	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Membership	Vacant	
Mailings	Vacant	
Website	Richard Alles	494-2088

Committee Contacts

Outings Co-Chairs	Jerry Morrissey	382-2614
	Stan Drezek	493-0939
Political	Dave Wells	271-0640

Conservation Contacts

Conservation Chair	Russell Seal	289-9088
Assistant Chair	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Green Buildings	John Hertz	413-4100
Education	Ken Clifton	646-6833
Fluoride Issues	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Organic Gardening	Dave Klar	485-6880
Recycling	Carolyn Wells	271-0640
Tree Conservation	Richard Alles	494-2088
Transportation	Barbara McMillin	734-4170
Water Issues	George Rice	737-6180
Climate Change	Mobi Warren	496-4942
Drought	Alyssa Burgin	381-4021
Endangered Species	Mobi Warren	496-4942

U.S. Congresspersons

Charlie Gonzalez	472-6195
Lamar Smith	821-5024
Henry Cuellar	271-2851
Francisco Canseco	561-8855

City Council (Continued)

Dist. 2: Ivy R. Taylor	207-7278
Dist. 3: Leticia Ozuna	207-7064
Dist. 4: Rey Saldana	207-7281
Dist. 5: David Medina, Jr.	207-7043
Dist. 6: Ray Lopez	207-7065
Dist. 7: Cris Medina	207-7044
Dist. 8: W. Reed Williams	207-7086
Dist. 9: Elisa Chan	207-7325
Dist. 10: Carlton Soules	207-7276

City Council

Mayor Julian Castro	207-7060
Dist. 1: Diego Bernal	207-7279

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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
P.O. Box 6443
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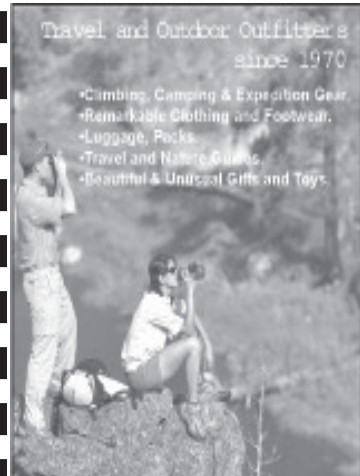
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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

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Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041

or visit our website www.sierraclub.org **F94Q W19131**

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Join online today and receive a **free Weekender Bag**
Go to our website at <http://Alamosierraclub.org>



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ALAMO CLARRY MARKET
255 East Basin, 210-520-8888
www.WholeEarthProvision.com

Alamo Group website address
www.alamosierraclub.org

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