



# THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 43 NO. 5 MAY 2009

## Jeremy Rifkin in San Antonio

In an opening statement that can only be described as inspiring, Jeremy Rifkin opened a two and a half day conference on sustainability at the Hill Country Resort. Close to 200 citizens, political and utility leaders, and interested parties attended the opening. The conference was sponsored by the City of San Antonio and by CPS Energy in conjunction with the city's sustainability initiative, Mission Verde.

Jeremy Rifkin is an internationally recognized expert in the areas of the economy, the workforce, society, and the environment. He currently advises the European Commission, the European Parliament, and several EU heads of state, including the leaders of Germany and Spain.

Rifkin described today's three crises: the global economic meltdown, the global energy crisis, and climate change effects

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## Sustainability Means No Nuclear Power

*Editor's Note: this article previously appeared in the Express-News*

Both CPS Energy and the city of San Antonio have come out with very impressive sustainability plans. Better late than never: Sustainability has been a global mandate since 1987. CPS' Vision 2020 statement boasts that the utility plans to change "from a company focused on providing low-cost power from traditional generation sources to a company providing competitively priced power from a variety of sustainable sources." It defines sustainable energy as energy that "meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs."

The city's Mission Verde statement echoes CPS in saying, "We cannot compromise the ability of future generations of San Antonians to meet their needs," and then puts forth one of

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## A Word from the Chair by Loyd Cortez

In our April newsletter, we made endorsements for Mayor and City Council. Hopefully, you have voted for those candidates and they have been victorious. Now it is time to contact those office holders, and insist that they protect the water we drink, the air that we breathe, and our magnificent trees. I know that these may sound like simple things to ask our elected officials to do, but it is difficult to avoid dismay when we see, for example, the devastation that is happening along U.S. Highway 281 North. I wish I could say that one just has to "follow the yellow brick road" and the Wizard of Oz will solve all our problems. The truth is that the solution lies within us. We each have the heart of the tin man, the brain of the straw man, and the courage of the lion. What is needed now is for each of us to stand up and say "we will not take this anymore."

We have about 2000 members in our local club and I thank each one of you for your support. But I would like for more of our members to become proactive in the larger community. I know that many of you have full-time jobs and family, so giving more of your time is difficult. For that reason, I am appealing especially to retired members like myself. I would like to start a volunteer list. Let's call it the Sierra Mobile Alert Response Team (SMART). Here is what I envision this team doing: a) Join our Email Alert List, b) Attend rallies and press conferences, c) Come to public and political meetings, d) Write letters and make phone calls, e) Become a member of our board (ExCom), and f) Get to know your fellow Sierrans and collaborate on conservation goals.

If you want to be a member of SMART, please send an email to me at [loydcortez@earthlink.net](mailto:loydcortez@earthlink.net). Remember, we

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**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.**

### **May 19, 2009: The Light Rail Option**

Dave Dobbs of the Texas Association for Public Transportation and publisher of LightRailNow! in Austin will speak on the basics and benefits of light rail systems, including revitalization of the city.

### **June 16, 2009: Government Canyon State Natural Area Update**

John Koepke, park interpreter, will talk about current opportunities for recreation at GCSNA and bring us up to date on park programs

## **Sierrans Pick It Up at Annual Basura Bash**

Thank you all for working the Basura Bash. With your help we were able to remove over one ton of trash from the historic river channel near the Mission Road Bridge and the flood control channel below Mission San Juan. Included in our haul were a dozen tires, several shopping carts, traffic barrels, and a lot of general trash. A huge thanks for all for the support and help. [See the website Home page for a picture of some of the volunteers.]

Krystal Fleeger  
Volunteer Program Coordinator  
San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

## **Sierra Club Video: Wild Versus Wall**

The Border Campaign of the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon Chapter has completed a 20-minute video about the environmental effects of the current border policy, entitled Wild Versus Wall. This video can be seen at [www.arizona.sierraclub.org/border/borderfilm.asp](http://www.arizona.sierraclub.org/border/borderfilm.asp) It covers the ecological effects of immigration enforcement and infrastructure in the four states that share boundaries with Mexico.

**Word from Chair Continued**

are all volunteers. There is no “someone else” to do the job. We have all joined because we want to “Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet.” Naturally, there is one condition for joining SMART. You need to be an active and continuing member of the Sierra Club. We must ensure that our mission and goals are not compromised by outside influences. I am hopeful that this new endeavor will meet favorably with the support of the membership.

On another note, don't forget about our next Sierra Social at Candlelight Coffeehouse on May 22nd. See this newsletter or our website for more details. Remember that I am always open to suggestions on where to hold our socials. If you have a favorite gathering place that you would like for us to check out, let me know.

**Jeremy Rifkin Continued**

on agricultural infrastructure. He stated that, with all things factored in, global oil production will peak between 2010 and 2020, with a supply crunch evident by about 2014. Rifkin said that when oil goes up in price, gas will follow it, and then coal.

Rifkin said, “We got it all wrong,” when scientists estimated the speed at which climate change would occur. Rifkin went on to describe the latest evidence of its acceleration, which caused Texas PUC chair Barry Smitherman to later remark that he had trouble sleeping after hearing Rifkin's description.

During the two days that followed Rifkin's opening comments, sessions were held on Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction, Renewable Energy, Buildings as Positive Power Plants, Hydrogen Storage, and Smart Grids and Plug-in Vehicles. Panelists for each segment were from Rifkin's team, and from the city and CPS. Rifkin's team included energy experts from around the world and from companies including CH2M Hill, General Electric, IBM, KEMA, Philips Lighting, and Siemens. Rifkin team members spoke of and showed, via Power Point presentations, what is being done in more progressive places in the world to become more economically sustainable through energy initiatives.

A member of the Rifkin team at one point quoted Rocky Mountain Institute chairman Amory Lovins as saying, “Only

one nuclear reactor designed with care and conveniently placed at a safe distance of 150 million kilometers from the Earth is more than sufficient to give us the energy we need.”

In a release published shortly after the conference, CPS Energy indicated that the utility plans to “transform from an organization focused on providing low-cost power to one that provides competitively-priced power from a variety of sustainable sources,” and one that transitions to distributed energy as well as smart grids, and other technologies. But the document also indicated that CPS plans to continue, “in the decades ahead,” to rely on conventional, centralized power plants as well as on renewable energy.

Within seven weeks, Rifkin will submit a summary on the conference with a listing of steps San Antonio should take to advance sustainability efforts. Citizen input will be invited.

**No Nuclear Power Continued**

the most glowing pictures of the city's energy future imaginable. But CPS and city leaders have largely missed the boat on what sustainability is and means.

While making headlines about sustainability, the city and the utility are constructing an obsolete coal plant with high carbon dioxide emissions and contemplating billions for nuclear plants that routinely emit radioactive particles and continuously pile up radioactive waste, condemning the community to responsibility for damages from cradle-to-grave toxins for countless generations to come. Neither technology is deemed sustainable in global compacts.

The concept of “negawatts,” frequently bandied about on City Council, means reducing energy demand so that new generating capacity is not needed. That's how sustainability works financially. But if the city goes ahead with new generation anyway, especially with the cost of new nuclear (estimated at 25-30 cents per kilowatt hour plus distribution costs, according to the Energy Bulletin) those benefits are totally nullified.

Ratepayers will be dealt a double whammy: Pay for extensive efficiency measures and renewables, and also pay for new coal and nuclear. With affordable energy a thing of the past, ratepayers will be hard put to pay their utility bills.

The city plans a \$100 million venture capital fund to enable Mission Verde. That sum is dwarfed by the \$276 million already committed to new nuclear plants we are assured may not be built. Those millions, plus untold billions more for nuclear power if it is built, would otherwise pay for the energy efficiency of many existing buildings.

There is a very disturbing probability that sustainability measures will be abandoned once major nuclear expenditures have been made, as with CPS' first nuclear commitments decades ago, which suppressed conservation and renewable energy investments. And with abandonment of sustainability measures would come the loss of countless local green jobs on which our economy will depend.

The truth is the mayor and others on the CPS board don't really believe that efficiency and renewables will provide all the energy needed for a sustainable future because they operate under obsolete paradigms and have not done their homework adequately nor explored all the possibilities.

CPS' “aggressive” sustainability program aims for just one-third of the potential conservation outlined in its own conservation study and two-thirds of that in the 2008 Institute for Energy and Environmental Research report.

CPS regards as experimental the concept of wind and solar energy storage, but it is already used on a small scale elsewhere. Storage would free up Texas' great wind and solar capacity to easily meet peak energy demand.

CPS has committed to only 100 megawatts of solar by 2020. California's PG&E utility has already built or contracted 24,000 megawatts, or 240 times more. Spain has 81 of the world's 100 largest solar photovoltaic installations and requires solar installations on new buildings.

Sustainability has a “triple bottom line” intersecting economic development, environmental protections and social justice. This requires new thinking, perceptions and values that do not include nuclear power.

Margaret (Peggy) Day

## Sierra Club Opposes HB 2339 - Weakening Standards for Landscape Irrigation

The Sierra Club is opposed to HB 2339 by Rep. Sid Miller, which was on the agenda for the House Licensing & Administrative Procedures Committee on Wednesday, April 22. The bill would undermine new standards for landscape irrigation in Texas that are aimed at promoting water conservation.

The Texas Legislature in 2007 passed HB 4, SB 3, and HB 1656, with water conservation highlighted as one of their main themes. All three included identical provisions that promote water conservation efforts by landscape irrigators, and those provisions were supported by the vast majority of those irrigators through a professional association and individual companies.

Based on this legislation, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), with input from stakeholders, including the Irrigators Advisory Council (whose members conducted public meetings around the state to inform people about the new law and the opportunity to comment on proposed rules to implement the law), developed and adopted revised standards to improve management practices for the landscape irrigation business. The Sierra Club, which strongly supports water conservation efforts, supported the passage of the legislation in 2007 and supported the adoption of these new standards.

The 2007 legislation delegated implementation of these standards to cities with populations over 20,000. Since approval of the standards by TCEQ in June 2008, cities have passed ordinances to implement the programs, and implementation is underway.

The proposed HB 2339 would weaken or eliminate several of the standards, and it would make other unnecessary changes in the Irrigation Advisory Council at TCEQ. Thus far there have been so significant problems in the implementation of the standards, which are important to conserving water where irrigation systems are installed. Implementation of the new standards should be allowed to continue. No changes should be made without a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the standards, and

such an evaluation should only be done after at least two to three years of experience with the standards.

## Bastrop State Park Day Hike

Ten people and three dogs set off a few Saturdays ago on a very pleasant nine-mile stroll in the Lost Pines forest. I was one of them. My name is Lucky and I'm a Bull Terrier Mix.

As I began, engulfed by Loblolly Pines and Post Oak, the early morning sun cast long and angular shadows. These knobby and decrepit illusions helped kick-start my escape from city life. My canine buddies were experiencing the high life as evidenced by their incessant frolicking and prancing along the trail. And the people seemed to be enjoying the moment as they took it all in.

We hiked the entire loop and the people spent four or more hours getting to know each other. I think we had a couple from Austin as well as a lady from New Braunfels. Some of the conversation had to do with the environment. "Humans sure have a hard time taking care of the environment," I thought to myself.

After the hike, some of us gathered at a trendy eatery on Main Street to continue the fun. Thanks for taking me.

Lucky Wolfe



### SAT, MAY 16: BRACKENRIDGE PARK DAY HIKE

Meet at 9 AM at the main parking lot next to the train station for a leisurely walk through the park. DIFFICULTY: easy. After the hike we will have brunch at a nearby restaurant. Leader: Jerry Morrissey, 382-2614 or jlmorrissey@aol.com

### SUN, MAY 17: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is along paved trails and roads along the San Antonio River and that lead from mission to mission in the southeast 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 8:00 AM in the grass parking lot southeast of the paved parking lot in front of Mission

Concepcion, 807 Mission Road. DIFFICULTY: moderate. Fees: donations to Sierra Club encouraged. Sign up with leader Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net or 647-0216 as start times might change.

### AUG 3-12: HIGH SIERRA BACKPACK TRIP

This will be a 7-day backpack (Aug 4-10), but including travel days it will cover August 3-12. It will cover over 60 miles in the southern Sierras. Only experienced backpackers should consider this hike as we will go over three mountain passes (Bishop, Muir, Piute), totaling over 7000 ft of elevation gain. We will travel through Dusy Basin, LeConte Canyon, Evolution Valley, and McClure Meadow. Those considering this hike must be self-sufficient in the art of high-altitude wilderness travel and all the preparatory work involved. Everyone is responsible for their own travel and food. Limited to 6-8 people. For information, call Scott Wolfe 724-2707.

## Sierra Socials

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

### MAY 22, Candlelight Coffehouse, 301 N. St. Mary's, 6-8 PM

*The good food and quiet atmosphere make it one of our favorite palces to get together*

### JUNE 26, Bombay Bicycle Club, 3506 N. St Mary's, 6-8 PM

*Adjacent to Brackenridge Park, its notable menu items are burgers and chicken salad.*

# 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

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

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