



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 44 NO. 5 MAY 2010

Austin Goes Even Greener

The Austin City Council, after months of debate about where the city should turn for its electricity in the future, adopted a plan last month to get significantly more power from wind, solar and other sources that do not emit greenhouse gases.

The plan calls for Austin Energy to obtain 35 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020, up from 12 percent now. After more than an hour of public discussion - some speakers spoke in favor of the plan, some against it - the council gave a unanimous thumbs-up.

"I believe that Austin has in the past shown leadership on environmental

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Dirty Air Acts

A series of bills that would weaken the Clean Air Act, offered by both Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. House, prompted a press conference and meeting with Texas Congressman Charles Gonzalez Tuesday, Apr. 6.

Peggy Day, Alamo Group Chair, and Eva Hernandez, Sierra Club Regional Representative, spoke for the club at the press conference, held outside Gonzalez' office. Other speakers represented Public Citizen, Energia Mia, and a University of Texas at San Antonio student environmental organization.

Speakers emphasized the need for continued enforcement of the Clean Air Act, whose 40-year track record has successfully protected human health

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Word from the Chair

We are fortunate to have two new, young members in leadership positions: Fundraising Chair Denali Endicott and Membership Chair Karen Kimbell. Sadly, another is moving away: Publicity Chair Teresa Ronquillo.

Denali is a recent military transplant from Alaska with a B.A in English who has thrown herself headlong into our group. As I write this, she is on her first trip to San Francisco for a club fundraising training. The week before, she attended our campus green fund training to learn how to assist in future student events.

Karen, who joined our Executive Board in January, is employed with our ally, the San Antonio River Foundation, whose mission is to support the river's beauty, recreational use, and appreciation. We are sure that we will benefit from Karen's expertise and the Foundation will benefit from her experience with Sierrans.

Finally, Teresa will be decamping to Massachusetts this summer to pursue graduate studies. We will miss her cheerful energy. Before she leaves we would like to identify someone to take on this key task and learn from Teresa.

Saturday, Apr. 10, Alamo Sierrans partnered with ReEnergize Texas and the Sierra Student Coalition (SSC) to offer a student training program on campus green fund campaigns. Hosted at Trinity University by Student's Organized for Sustainability (SOS), ten students were led through the process by three SSC trained activists out of Austin: UT students Rachel Aitkens and Michelle Camp, and veteran Anna Pierce, supported by Austin Climate Protection Program's Jake Stewart. The event was dominated by UTSA students, including Student Government President Derek Trimm, pushing for adoption of the fee

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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.

Tuesday, May 18: Bicycle to Conserve Energy

Lydia Kelly, Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Planner at the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization, will discuss bicycling in San Antonio. Discussion will include programs offered by the MPO, recent bicycle related studies, as well as safety tips for both motorists and cyclists sharing common roadways. The program will also provide examples from the Internet of bike amenities in other countries, intended to generate interest and expand our perspectives on cycling.

Tuesday, June 15: New Research About the Edwards Aquifer

George Ozuna of the Dept of Interior, USGS, San Antonio office, will give an introduction to hydrogeology of Edwards Aquifer in general and in San Antonio area, presenting new research. In particular, Ozuna will present new research about an underground volcano from the area's geological past, located near Uvalde that may be causing water to move south instead of east, as experts had always assumed.

TCEQ Sunset Review

The state's environmental protection agency, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, is currently undergoing review by Texas lawmakers, who will recommend improvements to the agency that will change the way TCEQ operates for the next ten years. This presents Texans with a huge opportunity to increase protection of our health and natural resources.

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New EPA Head Welcomed

Dr. Al Armendariz, the new U. S. Environmental Protection Agency administrator for Region 6 (which includes Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and 66 Indian nations) was feted at a reception put together by the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance and sponsored by several organizations and individuals, including

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Word from Chair Continued

to support green projects in an election on Earth Day. UTSA and UTEP green funds were adopted on those campuses in the Earth Day vote.

Sunday, Apr. 11, thirteen of our leaders got together for a strategic planning session. We met in the San Antonio Botanical Garden's conservatory-like, sunlit Education Center. Not only did we enjoy a beautiful natural area and good food, but got to better know some great folks. We still need to draw up action plans, based on our decisions, so if its action you're after, let us know to include you.

Austin Greener Continued

initiatives," said Mayor Lee Leffingwell, whose office timed the vote to coincide with Earth Day. "And I think that we should keep ourselves in the forefront, recognizing that global climate change is the environmental challenge of our time. This is a global problem, but the sum of local policy is global policy."

Complete article at: <http://www.statesman.com/news/local/austin-renewable-energy-plan-sails-easily-through-council-603923.html>.

Dirty Air Acts Continued

while spurring innovation and economic growth. Texas could see 100,000 new clean energy jobs by 2020 by cracking down on big polluters, according to one speaker. But the "dirty air acts" could prevent the U.S. from becoming a global leader in the clean energy economy.

The acts in question are seven pieces of legislation that would either weaken Environmental Protection Agency authority to enforce the Clean Air Act, particularly the authority to control carbon dioxide as a pollutant, or they would weaken the act itself. One bill would freeze implementation of the Clean Air Act for two years.

The group delivered a letter addressed to Gonzalez and signed by representatives of 37 environmental and other groups urging Gonzalez to oppose any attempts to gut the Clean Air Act.

Alamo Group conservation chair Loretta Van Coppenolle discussed health issues related to the Clean Air Act while conservation committee member Christel Villarreal pointed out that both the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and the United Auto Workers Union

oppose efforts to weaken the Act. David Wells stressed that the Clean Air Act targets large polluters, not homes or small businesses, and Peggy Day urged the Congressman to oppose the dirty air acts so the U.S. can show the world that it is serious about its commitment to clean energy.

The dirty air acts are H.J. Res. 76 (Reps. Skelton, Peterson, Emerson), H.J. Res. 77 (Rep. Barton), H.J. Res. 66 (Rep. Jerry Moran), H.R. 4396 (Rep. Pomeroy), H.R. 4572 (Reps. Skelton, Peterson, Emerson), H.R. 391 (Rep. Blackburn), and H.R. 4753 (Rep. Rahall). Skelton, Peterson, Pomeroy and Rahall are Democrats; the others are Republicans.

TCEQ Continued

TCEQ now often falls short of its mission. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has declared TCEQ's air pollution system violates the federal Clean Air Act and fails to allow significant public input. TCEQ recently proposed rules that would increase the amount of E. coli bacteria in Texas waterways before considering them polluted. Rather than requiring new landfills to meet federal standards, TCEQ now allows trash facilities to expand atop old landfills, frequently over sites without protective liners. TCEQ's enforcement of pollution violations is so weak that paying the fine often costs less than cleaning up the problem. In other words, IN TEXAS IT OFTEN PAYS TO POLLUTE.

The Alliance for a Clean Texas is a coalition, of which the Sierra Club is a member, dedicated to improving TCEQ. To sign up for ACT's sunset action alerts and learn about their postcard/letter campaign go to www.acttexas.org/signup.

EPA Continued

the Sierra Club.

Armendariz, an El Paso native, was appointed November 2009 by President Barack Obama. He holds an undergraduate degree from MIT, an M.E. in Environmental Engineering from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering from the University of North Carolina.

Armendariz spoke to the 100 or so attendees at the reception, citing EPA head Lisa Jackson's commitment to a climate crisis solution as her number one priority. Armendariz said unequivocally that carbon dioxide levels today are

higher than at any time since humans have been on earth. He indicated that particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, lead, and carbon dioxide will all have new standards within the next year or two. The ozone standard has already been increased and will take effect in August.

To communicate with the EPA region 6, go to www.epa.gov/region6/r6comment.htm.

New State Building Codes

The State Energy Conservation Office has proposed new minimum energy efficiency standards for industrial, commercial, and residential buildings. All commercial, industrial and multi-family residential buildings would have to meet the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code by Jan. 1, 2011. All single-family homes would have to meet the less-stringent 2009 International Residential Codes by Jan. 1, 2012.

The Sierra Club believes that single-family homes should comply by the same date as other buildings and that SECO should strengthen the proposed 2009 IRC by adding a few Department of Energy recommended amendments that would make homes even more efficient for hot-weather states like Texas.

Please go to <http://action.sierraclub.org/site/R?i=YSHsTtPAHz8SDqvoGnPGvA> to send a message of support for the above to SECO's Dub Taylor.

Tuesday, Apr. 17: Water Contamination in the Edwards Aquifer

Geary Schindel, chief technical officer for the Edwards Aquifer Authority, described to the club why "we have serious water quality issues in some areas." The Edwards Aquifer - which supplies most of San Antonio's water — is a karst type aquifer, Schindel explained, which allows rapid flow of largely unfiltered water from one area to another.

In a karst aquifer, water flows from the surface into a series of caves and emerges at a spring or in a well. Dye tests in the Edwards Aquifer, Schindel said, show flow rates of up to one mile per day, allowing water to move quickly

across long distances, say from a contaminated area into wells that are far from the source of contamination.

As an example of such contamination, Schindel described a disease outbreak in Waterton, Ontario, Canada, that was traced to the town's karst aquifer. E. coli bacteria from cow manure were carried a great distance through the aquifer to contaminate the town's water supply. In the resulting outbreak of disease, two thousand people became ill and seven people died.

Such contamination - whether from disease-bearing farm waste, oil and gasoline spills, or from other sources - is a real problem in our own aquifer, according to Schindel. That is why supporting tighter controls over the recharge area of the Edwards Aquifer is so important.

Van Coppenolle to Speak at OASIS

Alamo Group conservation chair Loretta Van Coppenolle will speak to OASIS members 10:30 a.m., June 9, at the OASIS Center, on "Renewable Energy: Its Time Has Come." The talk will cover geothermal, wind, and solar energy as well as efficiency, co-generation, and conservation. The class is open to members of OASIS at a cost of \$3. For more information contact OASIS at 647-2546



Sierra Socials

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

**Fri., May 28. La Tuna, 100
Probandt, 224-8862, 6-8 p.m..**
*Good assortment of food to wash down
with a beer. Join us outside and enjoy
our beautiful weather.*

OUTINGS

SATURDAY, MAY 29: SAWS RAIN-TO-DRAIN EDUCATIONAL DAY

Join fellow Sierrans for a full-day educational program learning about and traveling to components of our water system. For this unique opportunity, SAWS has graciously set aside a limited number of slots for our club. Report to SAWS Central Office, 2800 U.S. Hwy 281 North, at 8:30 a.m.. You will return there at 5 p.m. Difficulty: EASY. For information, contact facilitator for Sierra Club, Stan Drezek, 493-0939 or stanwendre@earthlink.net, and provide your e-mail or home delivery address. You will be sent a description of the day and a registration form. Both must be completed and sent directly back to SAWS. This is on a first-come first-served basis with a very limited number of slots, so call in early.

Aug. 23 through Aug. 30 or 31, Grand Tetons and Yellowstone

(At press time, this hike was fully booked, but you can add your name to a waiting list.)

This will be a four-day backpack in the Grand Tetons, called Teton Crest, plus one or two days of hiking in Yellowstone. For Information: papawolfe@sbcglobal.net

May 15, Saturday: Walk, Roll & MPO Rally

Will take place 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. under the Arches at the HemisFair Park at South Alamo and Nueva, free. Join this 14th annual festival of the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization, promoting healthier modes of transportation, for a healthy community, with bicycling, walking, exhibits, and door prizes. (cyclists/bikes ride free on VIA, May 15). MPO Contact: Lydia Kelly, (210) 230-6911, kelly@sametroplan.org. Contact Peggy Day, 829-5632, to volunteer, no volunteers yet.

May 15/16, Sat./Sun.: Hardberger Park Grand Opening Celebration

Will take place 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, and 12 to 4 pm, Sunday. Exhibits, educational activities, talks and walks. Official Park contact: Gail Dugelby, 912-7509, Gail.Dugelby@sanantonio.gov. Contact Peggy Day, 829-5632 to volunteer, no volunteers yet.

MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Peggy Day	829-5632
Executive Committee Meeting:	3rd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Peggy Day	829-5632
Newsletter Submissions:		Wendell Fuqua	jaleyd@grandecom.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.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Conservation Committee Meeting:	1st Thursday, 7 p.m.	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620

ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS & MEMBERS

Margaret (Peggy) Day . Chair Person	829-5632
Loyd Cortez, Vice Chair Person	674-9489
Wendell Fuqua	373-0748
Hector Gonzalez	226-6069
MaryEllen Garcia	344-1581
Karen Kimbell	365-3174
Dave Wells	271-0640
Scott Wolfe	724-2707
Teresa Ronquillo	844-8720
Sharon Dukes (non voting) Treasurer	828-3721

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs	Barbara McMillin	734-4170
Fundraising	Vacant	
Publicity	Teresa Ronquillo	844-8720
Mailings	Jim Stewart	692-0727
Membership	Vacant	
Newsletter	Wendell Fuqua	373-0748
Website	Richard Alles	494-2088

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Outings Chair	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
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	Carolyn Wells	271-0640
Tree Conservation	Richard Alles	494-2088
Volunteer Coordinator ...	Vacant	
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: Julian Castro; 207-7060;	mayor@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 1: Mary Alice P. Cisneros; 207-7279;	district1@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 2: Ivy R. Taylor; 207-7278;	district2@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 3: Jennifer V. Ramos; 207-7064;	district3@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 4: Philip A. Cortez; 207-7281;	district4@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 5: David Medina, Jr.; 207-7043;	district5@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 6: Ray Lopez; 207-7065;	district6@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez; 207-7044;	district7@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 8: W. Reed Williams; 207-7086;	district8@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 9: Elisa Chan; 207-7325;	district9@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

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