



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 42 No. 10 Nov 2008

Global Warming Press Conference

Members of the Sierra Club participated in a press conference held October 15 at San Antonio's City Hall to release a new study documenting effects on San Antonio, Texas, and the U.S. in general from climate change.

The report showed that from 2000 to 2007, San Antonio's temperature averaged 1.2 degrees F above normal, with a 1.6 degree F increase in low temperatures. Increases in night-time low temperatures rule out solar activity since the sun doesn't shine at night. They are thought to be caused by increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and

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ExCom Election

In December, the Alamo Group will hold an election for three expiring terms on the Executive Committee (ExCom). We are seeking members who can make a commitment to attend monthly ExCom meetings and participate in running the club. You need not be an expert on environmental or organizational matters. All we ask is a willingness to learn and have fun along the way as we address the many issues that affect San Antonio and its surrounding areas. If you want your children to be able to drink clean water, breathe clean air, and have trees to sit under, please consider running for the ExCom. Interested candidates should contact Jerry Morrissey (jlmorrisey@aol.com or 382-2614).

A Word from the Chair by Loyd Cortez

First, I want to thank the Executive Committee and other volunteer members who helped out with our 40th Anniversary Celebration. I especially want to express my appreciation for Paula Stone, who organized this wonderful event. She spent countless hours hitting the pavement to get sponsors to contribute services, products or funds. Paula, on behalf of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, thank you for your dedication and hard work. I also want to recognize the following individuals: Jane Ward, Scott Wolfe, Teresa Ronquillo, Margaret Carrasco, Bill Livermore, Hector Gonzalez, Judy Stanley, Ela Smith, Dave Klar, Mike Brannon, Carol Johnson, Loretta Van Coppenolle, Jerry Morrissey, Steve Waller, Sandy Redmond, Peggy Day, John Heinz, Ellen Berlfein and Stacy Berlfein. Be sure to check out the Anniversary photos on the website.

We had our second Singles Social at La Fogata last month. The weather was beautiful, allowing us to sit on a covered outside patio. There were four single gals, but only one single guy (myself) showed up. Well, you single guys missed another chance to meet that certain nice, sweet gal. Fortunately, we will be having additional Singles Socials to be announced in this newsletter and on the website.

For the coming year, I want to try something new—getting input from our membership on where they would like to meet for social events. Please send me (loydcortez@earthlink.net) your favorite watering hole or eatery. I will make a tabulation of the submissions, then announce the place that got the most votes. Later, I'll add this place to our list of sites to schedule for a Social.

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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.

November 18, 2008: Malcolm Beck, Gardenville Founder

Organic expert Beck will teach us how to create the healthiest soil for vegetable gardening. Good soil conditions can help conserve water, prevent erosion, and reduce CO₂ emissions. Lists of winter vegetables for our area will be available.

December 16, 2008: Annual Holiday Party

6-8:30 PM at Lions' Field, 2809 Broadway. Note early start time and party location.

San Antonio: Have We Come a Long Way, Baby?

On November 13, 2007, the Alamo Group held a press conference outside City Hall to announce its carefully thought out Energy Policy Recommendations for the City of San Antonio and CPS Energy. At the time, words like "sustainability" and "efficiency" and "negawatts" were seldom heard at City Hall. Green did not appear to be the favorite color of most Council people, let alone of CPS brass.

In the year since then, San Antonio appears to have come a long way. More and more Council persons have expressed doubt over the wisdom of

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Brush, Water and Global Warming: Changing Perceptions

New research suggests that juniper, mesquite and other woody brush that have overrun grasslands on the Edwards Plateau of west-central Texas aren't the water hogs that they were thought to be. Further, bulldozing this brush may not be wise, because it would remove plants that take in lots of carbon from the atmosphere, making them a potential ally in efforts to counter global warming. These are the findings of Dr. Jim Heilman, a Texas AgriLife Research scientist and professor of environmental physics in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences at Texas A&M University.

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Press Conference - Continued

heat released from manmade surfaces. The report, called Feeling the Heat: Global Warming and Rising Temperatures in the United States, also found that average temperatures for the first half of 2008 in San Antonio were 3.7 degrees F above normal. The report was issued by the Environment Texas Research and Policy Center.

Variable weather is predicted from climate disruption, and this is evidenced by recent rainfall patterns in San Antonio. In 2007, the city experienced one of the wettest years on record, with 44 percent more precipitation than normal. But 2008 thus far has seen only 28 percent of normal precipitation.

The study identified degraded air quality, wildfires, heat waves, drought and extreme rainfall with flooding as particular risks for Texas. In the United States, 2007 was the tenth warmest year on record. A recent Bush administration report has said it is very likely that more people will die in the U.S. during extremely hot periods in the future. Globally, the year 2007 tied as the second warmest on record, behind 2005.

Changing Perceptions - Continued

"People have this idea that trees are suction pumps, that if you have all of this landscape and big trees, much more water is used," he said. "Not true. What drives water use is the energy supplied from the sun and the atmosphere." Heilman's data show only "small increases in the amount of water used due to brush encroachment." "It's not because the trees are extracting large amounts of water that the grasses can't reach, but because trees trap and absorb more sunlight than grasses," he said. Juniper is considered a "water thief" because of the belief that its deep roots are tapping into large amounts of water stored in the limestone bedrock. However, Heilman's study of a live oak-juniper woodland area found the live oak used more water than the juniper. "Juniper roots are actually shallower than oak roots, and the internal plumbing of juniper greatly restricts the amount of water that can be taken up," Dr. Heilman said. "We found no evidence that deep roots were extracting significant amounts of water," he said. "Limestone bedrock in the Edwards Plateau is not capable of

storing large amounts of water in the deeper zones for roots to tap into."

Heilman's research project is being conducted on the Freeman Ranch near San Marcos with funding provided by the National Institute for Climatic Change Research-U.S. Department of Energy. Data on the ranch have been collected using a network of meteorological towers, recording measurements such as carbon dioxide exchange, evaporation and wind speed, Heilman said. Sensors are mounted on towers at three locations - one in a grassland, one in a grassland in the process of being overtaken by juniper and mesquite, and the other in a dense forest of juniper and oak. He said the forest represents the most extreme case of woody encroachment where water use should be the highest. "The site being overtaken by juniper and mesquite is representative of sites that typically are subject to brush removal," Heilman said.

Not disputing that brush encroachment is "a world problem," Heilman's research has him questioning the recommendation of brush removal in some instances. Removing woody species reduces the capability of capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, he said. "The juniper and other woody species are sequestering a lot of carbon," he said. "We've seen up to a six-fold increase [in carbon sequestration] with the encroachment of juniper. So, if we remove brush, we might have a marginal savings of water, but we're losing a heck of a lot of carbon. If we get into carbon trading markets, that carbon could be very valuable."

Overall, Heilman said, the idea of brush removal to save water is a case of where "policy gets ahead of science." "It's what we think we know that just ain't so that gets us into trouble," Heilman said, quoting Mark Twain.

Blair Fannin, Texas AgriLife Research

Long Way - Continued

committing to new nuclear power plants in Bay City for the generation of electricity. The Council is increasingly called a "green" Council.

In March, former oil company executive Michael Burke founded the San Antonio Clean Technology Forum, whose mission is to advance local sustainability practices and clean energy investment.

In May, CPS Energy announced the coming formation of a Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee on Efficiency, which had its first meeting October 22. CPS' June 2008 Energy Summit focused on distributive energy, and the visionary Jeremy Rifkin was a principal speaker. At the Summit, CPS announced an ambitious plan to achieve a cumulative energy demand reduction of 771 MW of energy and a goal of 20 percent of peak demand met by renewable energy by 2020.

Also in June, Mayor Phil Hardberger announced the City of San Antonio's Sustainability Plan and since then committees have been formed to address structural and transportation issues. In July, an Environmental Policy Director was finally hired by the City to implement the sustainability plan.

San Antonio has been awarded a major solar energy grant and is applying for at least one other. At an August City Council meeting Steve Bartley, CPS Deputy General Manager, announced CPS' nationwide search for a contractor to deliver 100 megawatts of solar energy to CPS, with a revving up to 200 or 300 MW if the deal looked especially promising and other entities were willing to go in on it. At that meeting, Mayor Hardberger declared, "The next plant built by CPS should be a solar plant."

The question now remains, How soon will the promises begin being met? When will action - visible, meaningful action - replace words? Mayor Hardberger will leave office in seven months, after four years in office. The groundwork is being laid, but what has actually changed? And what is being done to ensure that the mayor's vision will be preserved and delivered by his successor?

San Antonio is so far blessed with an economy that has been less impacted by current financial woes than other major American cities. Its air quality remains less seriously compromised than that of other cities. It has a city government and a locally owned utility that are talking the good talk, and the business community is rallying around sound energy solutions. All it needs now is to implement the myriad ideas that are being bandied about to bring real change to a city that could, as the mayor has expressed, be one of the most

progressive sustainable cities in the U.S.

Citizens are urged to call the mayor and their Council representatives to encourage more moves - concrete moves - in the right direction: stronger building codes, point of sale efficiency upgrading for pre-owned buildings, massive tree plantings and better tree retention, more extensive mass transit, plug-in stations for hybrids, retrofitting of inner-city buildings for energy efficiency, rooftop and parking lot solar, vegetated roofs, cogeneration, recycling expanded to apartment complexes, and so forth.

Trip Report: Rocky Mountain National Park Backpack

Participants included Scott Wolfe and Les Imboden (Stillwater, Oklahoma). An unusual late summer snowfall (12" @ 12,000 ft) necessitated that the trip be re-routed. Long's Peak was no longer a non-technical climb due to ice and snow. Fortunately, cancellations opened up some coveted backcountry sites, and we were able to redesign our trip without compromise.

The wonderful 4 day, 3 night, 30 mile canyon-hopping journey took us past Fern Lake, Lake Odessa, The Loch, Andrews Glacier, Glass Lake, Sky Pond, Glacier Gorge, Mills Lake, and Black Lake, to name a few of the features we encountered. More than 35 different wildflowers were photographed as we climbed through conifer forests, sub-alpine timber, and then alpine tundra in the north and east facing canyons pressing against the Continental Divide. Animals spotted included the Golden Eagle, White-tailed Ptarmigan, and Yellow-bellied Marmot.

A fine trip indeed!

Scott Wolfe

Word from Chair - Continued

Keep in mind that it has to have ample tables suitable for a group. We will check out the venue to make sure it will meet our needs. I also want to hear specifically from singles so that we can plan another designated Singles Social down the road.

Be sure to state in your email whether the suggestion is for a regular Social or Singles Social.



FRI-SUN, NOV 14-16: ENCHANTED ROCK SNA CAR CAMPING AND HIKE

Camp at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area and enjoy a fall weekend of hiking and communing with nature in the Texas Hill Country. The moon will be near full, so there should be lots of light to help as you set up camp and cook. There will be a potluck dinner on Saturday night. Bring your own breakfast, lunch, and Friday dinner. Difficulty: MODERATE. Cost: park entrance fee, plus a share of camping fees. Donations accepted. Space is limited. Contact Leader Marsha Meredith (MarshaM@satx.rr.com or 675-4097) for info or to reserve your place on the trip. Assistant Leader: Ellen Clegg, eclegg@els.edu

SAT, NOV 22: LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA DAY HIKE

This is a great time of year to hike one of the nicest parks in central Texas. We'll meet around 8:15 AM and LEAVE promptly at 8:30 AM from the parking lot just outside of the loop at Hwy. 1604 and Bandera Road on the right side leaving San Antonio. Alternatively, meet us at the park ranger station at 10:05 AM. We'll hike about 4 miles, with an option to extend to about 7 miles. Difficulty: MODERATE. Cost: donations to Sierra Club accepted, plus park fees. Leader: Jerry Morrissey, 382-2614 or jlmorrisey@aol.com. Assistant Leader: Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net or 647-0216

SAT, DEC 6: FRIEDRICH PARK DAY HIKE

In lieu of a cup of coffee join us for an invigorating three plus miles on the Main Loop, Fern Dell, and Vista Loop Trails. Meet at 8 AM at the park, 21935 Milsa (Camp Bullis Exit off IH-10, under expressway, north along access road, west on Heuermann, north on Milsa). Difficulty: MODERATE, but some very steep, slippery, rocky, potentially ankle-busting sections. Wear boots or sturdy hiking shoes. Optional real coffee at Starbucks in Leon Springs after the hike. Cost: Donations to Sierra Club accepted. Leader: Marsha Meredith, MarshaM@satx.rr.com or 675-4097. Assistant Leader: Stan Drezek, 493-0939

Sierra Socials

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

NOV 14, Casbeers, 1150 South Alamo (lower restaurant), 6-8 PM

If you are familiar with Casbeers on Blanco, then come see their new upscale location at a remodeled church! They are known for their great burgers, so come join us for a beer and a round sandwich. The club/restaurant can be reached at 271-7791.

DEC 12, Candlelight Coffee House, 3011 N. St Mary's, 6-8 PM

We had such a good response last time at this place that we decided to hold another social event here. Hopefully the weather will be pleasant enough to sit outside. The good food and quiet atmosphere make CCH a great place to get together.

JAN 16, Azuca Nuevo Latino, 713 S. Alamo, 6-8PM

We have not held a social here before. If you like Mexican cuisine, and have not tried Azuca, check it out. If it is not too cold, we may try to sit outside. The restaurant can be reached at 225-5550.

THE ALAMO SIERRAN is available FASTER by e-mail * save time and resources * Subscribe electronically Contact Loyd Cortez at loydcortez@earthlink.net

2009 Sierra Club Calendars

You can pick up calendars at our monthly meeting. The price for either will be \$15. Fill 2009 with beautiful photos of our natural heritage, while contributing to its preservation. These calendars make great gifts. If you can't attend the general meeting, contact loydcortez@earthlink.net or 674-9489 to make other arrangements.

MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Executive Committee Meeting:	3rd Friday, 7 p.m.	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter Submissions:		Fred Wills	fredwills@att.net
Political Committee Meeting:	2nd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russel 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
Jerry Morrissey		497-5470
Sandy Redmond		872-5390
Jane Ward		829-5575
Hector Gonzalez		226-6069
Paula Stone		393-7351
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
Membership	Sandy Redmond	872-5390
Publicity	Teresa Ronquillo	844-8720
Mailings	Jim Stewart	692-0727
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	Patricia Martinez	454-5920
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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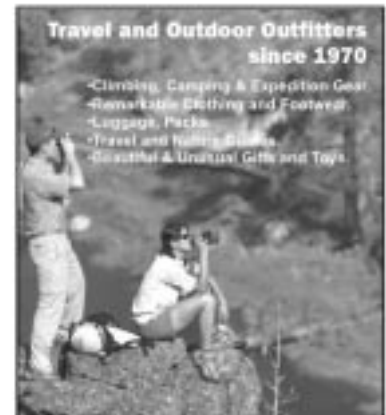
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