



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 43 No. 9 OCT 2009

A Word from the Chair by Loyd Cortez

Currently, there are so many events and meetings happening in our community that we cannot keep you informed about all of them in a timely manner in the Alamo Sierran. Therefore, I am asking you to make a habit of visiting the Community webpage of the Alamo Group website for more current information about environmental issues that impact our city and region.

I want to thank those members who signed up for email Action Alerts. You would be amazed at the impact your emails and phone calls have had on swaying our elected officials to our point of view in the past. There are still a number of issues, including nuclear power, tree preservation, and water quality and quantity, still needing to be addressed. With your help and support, we will continue acting to safeguard the air we breathe, the water we drink, and our beautiful trees.

Please get your 2010 Sierra Club calendars if you have not already done so. The cost for either the wall or desk calendar is \$15. If you cannot make it to the General Meeting to pick one up, then I can mail either one for an additional \$3.00 to cover postage. Send me an email or call if you want a calendar mailed.

Many thanks to those who made it to our Social at the Blue Star. Our next two socials will be at the perennial favorite hangout, Candlelight Coffehouse, on October 23rd and at La Fogata on November 27th. See this newsletter for details.

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Environmentally Sensitive Area Vote This Month

City Council will vote October 29th on an ordinance to protect environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) in San Antonio and Bexar County. Because the development industry is aggressively opposing this ordinance, it is crucial that Sierrans call and email City Council and urge them to vote yes. This is an important ordinance that will help prevent pollution of creeks & our aquifer, and protect canyons that provide wildlife habitat. I want to emphasize that passage of these conservation rules is far from certain, and only a strong outpouring of support will get them on the books.

Continued on Page 2

Cogeneration: Why Not Now?

Cogeneration, also known as combined heat and power (CHP) is not a new concept. According to a publication of Public Citizen Texas, CHP "was the predominant source of electricity in the U.S. in the 19th century." Even the Romans over 2000 years ago used a form of CHP. Yet today, few Americans have heard the term and fewer are using CHP.

What is CHP? Basically, it is the capture and use of waste heat to provide greater energy efficiency. It can go far in saving energy so that new sources of energy are needed less.

Most electric generating plants lose 66% of their energy just in converting fuel to electricity. Then there's another

Continued on Page 2

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.

October 20, 2009: Have Questions about Solar?

Solar San Antonio's Lanny Sinkin will return to give us an overview of progress on solar applications. This will be followed by a brief presentation showing solar panel installation.

November 17, 2009: Climate Change and Texas

John Nielsen-Gammon, Professor in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station and Texas State Climatologist, will discuss the impact of climate change on Texas.

ExCom Elections

In December, the Alamo Group will hold elections for three expired terms on the Executive Committee. We are seeking members who can make a commitment to attend monthly Executive Committee 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 a big shade tree to sit under, then please consider running for the ExCom board. Interested candidates should contact Wendell Fuqua, 210-375-0748 at wendell.fuqua@utsa.edu

Yudelson in San Antonio

Sierrans Jerry Morrisey and Loretta Van Copenolle attended a September 2 presentation of the United States Green Building Council, "Lessons Learned from European Innovation," given by Tucson-based green professional Jerry Yudelson at the San Antonio Central Library.

Yudelson's extensive experience working with European building designers gave him insights he shared with his audience. Among them: The Europeans are 'way ahead of us in preparing for a 21st century energy economy that addresses climate change.

Britain, for example, requires that all public housing be carbon neutral by 2016, all private housing by 2018, and all

Continued on Page 2

Environ Sensitive Vote Continued

Mayor Castro initiated this ordinance to protect Camp Bullis, but the rules have been written to cover most of Bexar county and even parts of Comal & Medina counties. They require 100% preservation of heritage trees and 80% of all other trees, and associated understory vegetation, in ESAs.

ESAs are defined as:

* Riparian buffers adjacent to floodplains. Over the aquifer recharge and contributing zones, these buffers are 60 feet wide. In other areas, they are 30 feet wide.

* Slopes with a 20% or steeper grade.

* Go to www.treecoalition.org/env_areas_ordinance.htm for more info.

Please read the proposed amendments and send your additions, alterations, and comments to RootZone@treecoalition.org

What will these revisions accomplish? In environmentally sensitive areas, and a 35-foot buffer zone around those areas, no tree or vegetation removal will be allowed.

OK, but what is an "environmentally sensitive" area? Aquifer recharge features, riparian zones, steep slopes, and floodplain tributaries.

What can I do to help? I need suggestions, especially from people who have knowledge about aquifer protection, native plants, riparian zones, or environmentally sensitive areas.

When will these rules be in place? It is expected that City Council will vote in October; the rules could become effective shortly afterward.

Richard Alles

Cogeneration Continued

7% loss transporting this electricity to customers via transmission lines. CHP allows this wasted heat to be used for space and water heating, air conditioning, refrigeration, and industrial applications. CHP can increase energy efficiency by as much as 85%.

Many European countries are using CHP to great effect, saving money, saving energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Denmark generates 62 % of its electricity with CHP. Denmark is also, by the way, one of the world leaders in wind energy. Holland generates 53 % of its energy from CHP and Finland 36%. Britain has recently launched a heavily

funded campaign for "district heating," which is CHP by another name.

One source calculates that there is enough CHP potential in Texas to displace about 3,800 megawatts. Another gives the figure as 20,000 MW. Either way, that is a lot of energy saved.

One of the benefits of CHP is that it provides reliable power when regional utilities experience outages. When a massive blackout occurred in the northeastern U.S. in August, 2003, some 50 million people lost electric power for as long as 48 hours. But Montefiore Medical Center in New York City did not. Its CHP system was able to continue providing electricity, hot water, sterilization, and air conditioning to 12 buildings with 1.2 million square feet of space, during the outage. The CHP system cost Montefiore \$12 million. That cost was recouped in only six years.

CHP isn't for large facilities only. Micro CHP is now available for homes and mini CHP is available for small businesses. It is one of the modalities the City of San Antonio should mandate for use here, despite CPS Energy's lack of interest.

Yudelson Continued

commercial buildings by 2019. Germany's greenhouse gas reduction goal is 36% by 2020. One of Sweden's goals is to import no oil by 2020.

Most Europeans, according to Yudelson, use 6000 watts of energy per capita. The world average usage is 2000 watts. The American average is 12,000. Switzerland's goal is to reduce per capita use from 5000 to 2000 watts, which Yudelson believes should be the American goal as well.

Yudelson showed examples of European structures built for efficiency, saying they are far more efficient than their American counterparts. They have better windows and more insulation, among other things. Buildings in Europe are built to last 100 years, which is usually not the case here.

For Europeans, waste is morally wrong; all workers have a right to daylight, views, and fresh air; everyone should have access to public transportation; and climate change is an accepted reality.

Yudelson's ideas are in his book, *Europe: Green Building Trends*.

Yudelson ended his talk with a quote from Victor Hugo: "An invasion of armies can be resisted but not an idea whose time has come."

Cell Phone Warning

A recently released report reveals greater danger from cell phone use than previously indicated, and that portable phones carry the same risks, which include not only brain tumors but cellular changes; DNA, eye, and nerve cell damage; augmentation of autism and Alzheimer's Disease; sleep disruption; and headaches.

Studies funded by the telecom industry have underestimated the brain tumor risk, which is far greater for children than for older adults. A Swedish study has found that those who began cell phone use before the age of 20 had a five times greater likelihood of brain cancer than non-users.

Gerd Oberfeld, M.D., head of the Austrian Medical Association's Environmental Medicine section, has said, "The scientific data show, with a high degree of confidence, that mobile phone exposure is associated with an increased brain tumor risk. The age group below 20 years is facing the greatest risk, which for malignant brain tumors is about 400 percent, compared to non-exposed."

Nuclear Power: The Alternatives

On September 14 Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director for the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, and Matthew Johnson, Energy Efficiency Analyst for Public Citizen Texas, unveiled their alternative solutions proposal for San Antonio's energy future.

Their powerpoint presentation showed how San Antonio can meet future energy needs without reliance on new nuclear power. The alternatives they presented included the realization of Mission Verde goals; more efficiency than CPS's projected 771 MW; more on-site solar than CPS's current goals; more off-site renewables, including solar, wind, geothermal and biomass; utilization of storage for intermittent sources, including natural gas back-up for solar; and consideration of a natural gas plant or market hedging to lock in natural gas at low prices.

The presentation listed options that would replace 1080 MW of nuclear, which a 40% share in the proposed nuclear additions would represent, that would more than equal the capacity factor of

nuclear and cost less than the purported \$5.2 billion CPS would invest in nuclear.

Reed and Johnson calculated that CPS's cost estimates for efficiency and renewables are very high compared to actual data in Texas and elsewhere and said that CPS is low-balling nuclear costs. They recommended that, if San Antonio's City Council does not have the votes to stop a bond issuance for nuclear, they at least postpone any decision on nuclear for 3-6 months so that Council can hire an independent consultant to determine for itself the feasibility of implementing options that CPS has largely ignored or underused.

At this writing, Council has not yet made a decision on nuclear. A 'no' vote or, barring that, postponement would be in everyone's best interest. If the decision is made for a 20% solution, it would still mean an investment in an overpriced, unneeded facility that is likely to have delays and cost overruns. Partners to fill the void created by CPS's not going 40% may be hard to find, given other utilities' awareness of the other options now available to them. If CPS goes with 40% it will have invested heavily in a very high risk venture that could jeopardize CPS's credit rating and overburden a generally low-income population. If Council votes against the \$400 million bond issue CPS is requesting, it will force the utility to look seriously at other options and find solutions that are at once less expensive and far more sustainable than nuclear.

Telephone numbers and email addresses for Council are listed on the back page of this newsletter. Please call and let your Council person know it is not too late to vote against nuclear and for a more rational energy future for San Antonio.

OUTINGS

SAT, OCT 17: LOST MAPLES DAY HIKE

Enjoy a fall hike through one of the nicest parks in central Texas. This will include a 5-mile hike up and down hills through the west side of the park, including a search for the elusive Madrone trees. Pack a lunch, water, good hiking boots or shoes, sunscreen, and, optionally, a hiking stick and a hat. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot for Blockbuster Video on the right side of Bandera Road just outside Loop 1604 (11820 Bandera Rd,

Helotes, TX). Alternatively, meet us at the Lost Maples ranger station at 10:10 AM. Difficulty: moderate. Fees: park admission; donations to Sierra Club accepted. Sign up with leader Lee Dodge, lsg999@earthlink.net or 275-3355.

SUN, NOV 8: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is along paved trails and roads along the San Antonio River 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 9:00 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 accepted. Sign up with leader Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net or 275-3355 as start times might change.

SAT, NOV 21: ALL OF FRIEDRICH PARK DAY HIKE

It's back by popular demand. Walk them all. Route follows Main Loop to Vista Loop, and includes Fern Dell and even Juniper Barrens and the Water Trail. Meet at 8 AM in the parking lot at 21935 Milsa. Difficulty: moderate. Length is about 4 miles including a couple of steep sections on the Fern Dell trail, so wear sturdy hiking shoes. Bring water and join us (optional) for coffee afterwards at Starbucks in Leon Springs. Donations to Sierra Club accepted. Call leader Stan Drezek at 493-0939.

Sierra Socials

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

OCTOBER 23th, Candlelight Coffeeshouse, 301 N St. Mary's, 738-0099, 6-8 PM.

*One of our favorite places, it
features good food and a nice quiet
atmosphere.*

NOVEMBER 27, La Fogata, 2427 Vance Jackson Rd, 6-8 PM.

*Join us on he patio for good
Mexican food and a margarita.*

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. The Alamo Sierran, 2. Publication No. 0018-475, 3. Sep. 21, 2009, 4. Monthly (except July), 5. No. of issues published annually: 11, 6. Annual Subscription Price \$10.00, 7. 615 Willow, San Antonio, Bexar, TX 78202-1247, Contact Person: Hector J. Gonzalez, 210-226-6069, 8. Same as 7, 9. Publisher: Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 6443, San Antonio, TX 78209-0443, Editor: Fred Wills, P.O. Box 6443, San Antonio, TX 78209-0443, Managing Editor: N/A, 10. Owner: Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 6443, San Antonio, TX 78209-0443, 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: None, 12. Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: A. Total No. of Copies (Net Press Run) : Average No. Copies Each Issue During the Preceding 12 Months (Avg.): 1828, No. Copies of Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date (Sept.): 1775; B. Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541: Avg. 488 Sept. 466; 2. Paid In-County Subscriptions: Avg. 1274 Sept. 1209; 3. Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; 4. Other Classes Mailed Through USPS: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15B 1, 2, 3, & 4): Avg. 1762 Sept. 1675; D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution 1. Outside-County: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; 2. Outside-County: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; 3. Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; 4. Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means): Avg. 66 Sept. 100; E. Total Free or Nominal Distribution (15D 1, 2, 3, & 4): Avg. 66 Sept. 100; F. Total Distribution (15C and 15E): Avg. 1828 Sept. 1775; G. Copies not Distributed: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; H. Total (15F and G): Avg. 2100 Sept. 1800; I. Percent Paid (15C divided by 15F times 100): Avg. 96.68 Sept. 94.37. 17. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Hector J. Gonzalez, Assistant Treasurer 9/22/2009

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.	Scott Wolfe	724-2707
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
Peggy Day & MaryEllen Garcia	Secretary	
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
Teresa Ronquillo		844-8720
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	Scott Wolfe	724-2707
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: 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: Phillip 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

The Alamo Sierran published monthly (except July) by the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, 615 Willow, San Antonio, TX 78202. Members support the Sierran and receive the publication as part of membership. Nonmember subscriptions \$10.00/year. Periodical postage paid at San Antonio, Texas. Publication No. 018475

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sierra Club Member Services, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322 or email to address.changes@sierraclub.org

Alamo Group website address
www.alamosierraclub.org

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

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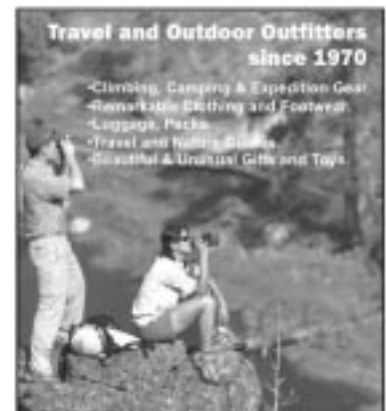
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