

Newsletter

The Alamo Sierran e-Newsletter - October, 2013

* General Meetings *

Tuesday, October 15th: The Latest Climate Science

Bruce Melton is a professional engineer, environmental researcher, author and climate science outreach specialist from Austin. His [internet resource](#) for the Climate Change Now Initiative contains nearly 400 reports on climate science findings, 50 popular press articles, two documentaries, several shorts and much more.

Topics he will review are: the new IPCC report, how oil is responsible for 2.5 times more warming than coal in short-term climate time frames; how Greenland and Antarctica are poised to far exceed sea level rise projections; sea level rise so far on Padre Island National Seashore, and how the Amazon is emitting (not absorbing) greenhouse gases at a rate that is 70 percent of total annual U.S. emissions. Melton will also emphasize the good news about climate change with details of how the solutions will be far less troublesome and costly than commonly understood. The Climate Change Now Initiative became a nonprofit corporation in July 2013.

This program is approved for Advanced Training by Alamo Area Master Naturalists.

Times, maps and speaker bios are on our Events page.

A Word from the Alamo Group Chair

Currently the Alamo Group's conservation priorities list has at least fifteen issues. Most of these concerns fall into the nexus between energy and water, but all are ultimately linked. Both agencies of these basic resources, CPS Energy and SAWS, have been scrambling to get more money to pay higher costs and are now requesting more rate hikes. Let's take a more detailed look at the water cost increases.

SAWS has requested a 5.1% increase for 2014, or \$2.87 per month for the average customer, that will go toward wastewater, new water and delivery system projects. 47% is dedicated to two new water provision projects, a desalination plant and a pipeline, both in the Carrizo Aquifer. 39% is for sewer system upgrades to help prevent pollution. 14% is for distribution pipelines. SAWS also wants a 5.3% increase for 2015. Like many of you, I believe that Texas can't build its way out of water shortage. More reservoirs, desalination and pipeline transfers to enable growth will be costly, inefficient and entail other inflammatory resource problems. Sierrans are concerned that still not enough is being done to conserve water and too much is being done that encourages sprawl and growth and threats to sensitive areas.

Landscape water use should be a big focus of reforms by the City and SAWS. Next to agriculture, urban water use is the second largest category of use in Texas, and landscape use is the highest portion of urban water use—about half. While we believe that urban landscapes are very beneficial, with proper planning and maintenance they can be done well with much less or minimal water use.

There are innumerable reports about Texas urban outdoor water use and how to conserve it. These solutions are neither new nor controversial. One such study by the Sierra Club and National Wildlife Federation is "Sprayed Away: Seven Ways to Reduce Texas' Outdoor Water Use" (see [Sprayed-Away Report](#)). Another is "An Evaluation of Urban Landscape Water Use in Texas," at texaswaterjournal.org, and a summary brochure, "Urban Landscape Water Use in Texas," at twri.tamu.edu/publications. These are Texas A&M AgriLife publications by research scientists at the Texas Water Resource Institute.

The AgriLife article helps us understand just how important water miser landscapes may become. Landscaping is a huge economic generator. In 2011 the impact of this industry in Texas was estimated to be \$17.97 billion, plus \$10.7 billion in value added, and employing 200,303 people. This study also found that landscape irrigation in Texas uses 46.6% of urban water, adding that about half of this water is wasted due to over-watering or runoff. Another key factor is, "Population growth in Texas, largely in urban areas, is expected to increase 82 percent in the next 50 years, and likewise, demand for municipal water over the same period is also expected to increase by 71.4 percent."

Enlightened Texans understand that we cannot continue with these landscape customs and business as usual. Water conservation could increase with greater habitat and soil protections, lawn reductions, irrigation systems and practices changes, and limits on water guzzling plants and lawn grasses. The sooner we transition to new development codes, ordinances and incentives built into taxes, rates and rebates that promote more sustainable landscape practices, the less future pain there will be.

Sierrans and our partners are conferring with SAWS and San Antonio City Council about these concerns and others. There will be a public meeting Nov. 5, 6 pm, at SAWS Headquarters, 2800 US 281 North. SAWS' rate increase request is scheduled to go before City Council for a vote on or after November 21.

Please contact your city councilpersons and ask that they enact stricter codes and ordinances to promote greater water conservation. Let me know if you are interested in going with us to visit your council member at one of our upcoming meetings.

Margaret "Peggy" Day, ExCom Chair

Lion's Field Events

Monthly films and presentations for your edification and enjoyment

Wednesday, October 23rd: **Great Hikes in West Texas: Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park**

Kevin Hartley will talk about some of the best hikes in these parks, plus planning resources and challenges. Some route map images and a few of Kevin's favorite pictures from these parks will be shown. Kevin is a Sierra Club outings leader and Wilderness First Responder.

Our Lion's Field events are **free** and open to the public. They occur on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Lion's Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway @ Mulberry. Programs begin at **6:30 p.m.**

Visit our Lion's Field Events page for a map and additional information.

Executive Committee candidates needed

The Alamo Group will hold elections for three expired terms on the Executive Committee. We are looking for members that can commit to monthly ExCom meetings and participate in running the club. You need not be an expert on environmental or organizational matters. This is about teamwork and leadership towards the goals of the Sierra Club. We need people that show up with a willingness to learn and have fun along the way as we address the many issues that affect San Antonio and the region.

If you are interested in being a candidate, please contact Libby Day 602-568-0308, Dave Klar 485-6880, or Margaret Day 829-5632. Could you please send a biographical statement max 100 words stating why you would like to be considered a candidate for the ExCom to peggyday@hotmail.com. Deadline October 31st please.

Let's Party!

meet and greet your Sierra Club friends at the last Fourth Friday social of 2013

- **October 25th, 6-8 PM — Candlelight Coffeehouse.** One of our favorite places, it features good food and a nice quiet atmosphere. 3011 North Saint Mary's Street, 738-0099. This will be our last Social get together for the year. Come join us at the Candlelight Coffeehouse.

Visit our Social Events page for maps, times and more information about these gatherings. If you're not busy on these days, then get out of the house and join us for a meal and a chance to "meet and greet" some of your fellow members.

If you would like to be reminded about our upcoming Socials, email [Loyd Cortez](mailto:Loyd.Cortez). Then one week before the next Social, you will receive an email notice reminder.



Mobi Warren and other Keystone XL protestors smash a pinata at the September 21st *Draw the Line on Keystone XL* event at San Pedro Park

Proposition 6 on November Ballot

On the November 5 ballot for approval by Texas voters is Prop 6, to create new Texas water funds. [A resolution of support for the water ballot measure](#) was unanimously adopted by the Chapter's executive committee this summer. "The Sierra Club supports passage of Prop 6 because of the commitment that state legislators have made to water conservation and to prioritization of water projects in the administration of the new state water funds," informed Ken Kramer, state Sierra Club Water Resources Chair, adding, "Everyone understands that building new water infrastructure is not the total answer to assuring our state's water future. Conservation is a big part of meeting Texas' future water needs. The implementation of Prop 6 requires that not less than 20% of the funding goes to conservation or reuse projects, including agricultural water conservation."

"In addition to proposing Prop 6, the Texas Legislature this year enacted numerous other bills to promote water conservation, curb water loss in water supply systems, and respond more decisively to drought," continued Kramer. "Moreover, legislators seem to understand that regional and state water plans must be revised to provide a more realistic road map to meeting future water needs – as shown by the project prioritization provisions in House Bill 4, the bill governing use of the new state water funds. All of this underscores the fact that state legislators are increasingly committed to a more comprehensive water management approach."

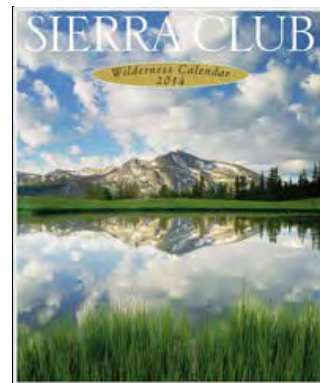
"Even if the voters approve Prop 6, much more work will need to be done to address all of the state's water needs, including environmental water needs. It is important that the commitments to conservation are honored in the implementation of Prop 6," concluded Kramer. "But voter approval of Prop 6 will be an important first step toward meeting the state's water needs, and we urge Texas voters to cast their ballots for Prop 6."

2014 Sierra Club Calendars On Sale Now

Support your local Sierra Club's Inner City Outings group by purchasing your 2014 calendars from us. The

engagement calendar is \$15 and the wall calendar is \$14.

These will be available at our meetings and events until they are sold out. Contact Gay Wright 210-343-0222 or Anne Pearson 210-408-6321.



Sign Up for Action Alerts

The Sierra Club is all about citizen action on critical issues. Quick citizen input often spells the difference between victory and defeat for important measures at the local and state levels. Sign up now to receive our local e-mail Conservation Action Alerts and let your voice be heard. **Call (674-9489) or email Loyd Cortez** and we'll add your name to our growing list of environmental activists.

Outings: Cooler Fall Weather Beckons

Visit the [Alamo Sierra Club Outings page](#) on Meetup for detailed information about **all** of our upcoming Sierra Club Outings.