

Newsletter

The Alamo Sierran e-Newsletter - September, 2013

* General Meetings *

Tuesday, September 17th: Wildlife Conservation Issues in Texas - What Does the Future Hold?

There are many issues today that threaten the great wildlife diversity of our state, but the conservation community has faced seemingly insurmountable challenges before and rose to the challenge. Texas is blessed with a vast array of habitats and species. However, complex and daunting issues like emerging diseases, climate change, urbanization, insufficient land use planning, emerging energy production industries, declining conservation funding, etc. are putting intense pressures on our state's wildlife populations. Judit Green, Urban Wildlife Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, will be the presenter. For more information, visit the Wildlife Diversity Program's [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).
Approved for Advanced Training by Alamo Area Master Naturalists.

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.

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

A Word from the Alamo Group Chair

The Alamo Group is getting back in the saddle and preparing to ride into battle. In collaboration with our usual band of suspects and new professional and business partners, we are gearing up for a multifaceted climate change campaign. Plans are moving on many fronts. We are upping our public education outreach by preparing PowerPoints to use or loan out, adding more speakers, tabling events, and movie offerings. We are highlighting the climate connection as we move forward on our many other local conservation activities. We wholeheartedly support [imagineSanAntonio's](#) joint government, non-profit, business, and professional conference, proposed for February 2014, to create local solutions to climate change. We are helping with national climate change awareness events, such as 350.org's Keystone XL Pipeline "Draw the Line" protest on Saturday, September 21, at San Pedro Park. Finally, we are reorganizing on many levels to boost our lobbying efforts and effectiveness.

A major push **now** is to evaluate and address CPS Energy's rate hike request of 4.75% for 2014-2015. The increase is expected to cost customers using the average Texas residential gas/electricity consumption, 1500 kWh, \$5.19 more per month. While it may not seem like much, it would mean raising that bill from \$136.79 to \$142.03. CPS Energy has drafted a request that was presented to its board on July 31. In addition to public education, working with staff, and presentations before City Council, a series of public comment events is planned by CPS. The rate increase request is projected to go before the City Council October 31 and to become effective next February 1.

A coalition calling ourselves Re-energize San Antonio has been reviewing CPS' reports and rate justifications. We think we can do better and have adopted our own counter requests to CPS and City leaders. Take a look at our 12 points, listed in this newsletter. If you would like to review details, check out the [CPS Energy Rate Request](#).

We need all of our Alamo Group members to jump into action during the next weeks. Please contact your neighborhood associations, church, workplace, family and friends about this important opportunity to lobby for CPS to adopt more ways to save energy, cut waste, reduce pollution, and be more equitable.

CPS is taking public comments Monday, September 9th, at the Tri Point Center, St. Mary's St. at Hwy 281. The registration period (to speak for three minutes) is from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. The meeting is from 6:30 to 8 pm.

Margaret "Peggy" Day, ExCom Chair

Lion's Field Events

Monthly films and presentations for your edification and enjoyment

Wednesday, September 25th: *The Fruit Hunters*

This documentary from 2012 travels across culture, history and geography to show how intertwined we are with the fruits we eat.

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.

Re-energize San Antonio Campaign

The Re-energize San Antonio Coalition thinks we can design rates and programs to increase energy savings on bills, reduce pollution and cut waste with this 12-point plan:

Save Energy and Money

1. **Reduce consumer costs by increasing the energy efficiency goal to 1200 MWs by 2020.** As found in the 2004 KEMA study San Antonio could increase its energy efficiency goal to 1200 Mw from the current STEP goal of 771 mw. This can be achieved by factoring in savings from **updated distributed solar programs**, including incentives, rebates, and **community solar**. CPS should also support the immediate **adoption of the 2012 IECC building energy codes** for new residential and commercial construction and CPS Energy should upgrade their rebates for developers that go from 15 to 30% above the 2012 IECC codes through Build San Antonio Green.
2. **Update the energy efficiency study.** The KEMA study will be 10 years old in 2014. It's time to perform a new study to include advances in technology and leverage the program knowledge that it has gained over time.
3. **Ensure adequate funding for the new goals in the STEP program.** To ensure success of the new program goals it is important to ensure a steady funding stream for the program.
4. **Have the current energy efficiency and weatherization programs integrated with a residential home repair program.** Many low income customers wish to participate in the weatherization program but are unable to because of the requirements that the physical structure must meet. Many times these consumers are unable to perform these required upgrades and a program needs to exist to help the structure meet the guidelines (new roof may be needed) so they can participate in the programs.
5. **Investigate the potential for a tiered-rate structure in San Antonio, such that those homes that use more than twice the average amount pay slightly more for any energy needed above that amount.**
6. Existing customers should not have to shoulder the burden of increasing system growth by paying for the connection of new developments. CPS Energy should revise their interconnection policy and charge more for large commercial and residential development – particularly those that are not energy efficient – so that most of the cost of new growth is borne by those promoting the growth.

Reduce Pollution and Promote Cleaner Energy

1. **CPS Energy must have a formal adopted policy for the shutdown of the Deely coal plant.** CPS Energy has not installed the emission control devices on the Deely coal plant and instead has made some announcements that it will instead shut down the Deely power plant. While we applaud and support this announcement, the Deely Power Plant continues to negatively impact the air quality of San Antonio. The board of CPS Energy and the city council need to initiate a binding, enforceable document to ensure that the plant is closed on or before 2018.
2. **Pollution from fracking is harming the health of citizen's in San Antonio – so CPS should only buy gas from the those producers following best practices and reducing pollution, waste and water.** CPS Energy purchases 15% of the natural gas consumed by electric utilities for its power plants and to supply natural gas to the ratepayers of San Antonio. It is the largest consumer of gas in San Antonio. By establishing standards to ensure that the gas it purchases, uses and sells is produced with the least polluting technologies all the way back to the well head, CPS can help establish new standards for the industry and reduce smog-forming ozone.
3. **Investigate the future of the South Texas Nuclear project, rather than extending its license now.** The plant has been experiencing increasing problems, costs and risks as it ages. In fact, one of the units did not even operate for much of 2012 because of continued issues. Rather than continuing to operate and repair the aging facilities, CPS Energy should initiate a plan to retire it at the end of its original operating permit life.
4. **Investigate and procure geothermal energy production as a source of base-load renewable energy to meet the growth needs.** Significant deep geothermal resources exist near San Antonio. CPS Energy should help develop these renewable and low-emission sources of energy for its generation portfolio. CPS Energy should update its generation plan and incorporate geothermal energy as part of its renewable contracts along with its large-scale investments in wind and solar energy.

Eliminate Waste

1. **Pay CPS execs no more than those of similarly sized utilities.** CPS is always being compared to private utilities and if CPS is to be compared with those utilities we need to pay competitive salaries. Along with these competitive salaries, however, executives' salaries and any potential bonuses must be based on actual performance – keeping CPS Energy a leader in fuel diversity, renewable energy, energy efficiency and demand

response and most of all, keeping rates and bills affordable.

2. **End high dollar meals.** CPS execs should be limited to the same per diem rates for meals and entertainment as other city employees. If they want a high dollar dinner they should pay for excessive costs- and if they are well paid, they can afford it.

Draw the Line Against Keystone XL and Toxic Tar Sands

Here's a message from Michael Marx, the Sierra Club Beyond Oil Campaign Director:

"Remember when President Obama surprised everyone by drawing a clear line in the sand on Keystone XL? He pledged to reject Keystone if it would "significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution." We're holding him to that. That's why we just released a new report, with our friends at Oil Change International, which provides a crystal-clear answer to the president's climate test: KXL FAILS. We have the momentum, and the facts, on our side. " Here's the [link to that report](#).

We can all help build that momentum and spread the facts by joining a nation wide day of action, "Draw the Line" on September 21st that is being organized by 350.org and allied groups. Locally, 350SanAntonio.org with partners that include Alamo Chapter Sierra Club, Energia Mia, and the Peoples Power Coalition is holding an event at San Pedro Springs Park to raise community awareness on the connection between tar sands and climate change. And we're going to do it San Antonio style with a big piñata in the shape of a pipeline! Only our pipeline will spew wild flower seeds not toxic tar sands.

September 21st

10 a.m. to noon (piñata burst at 11)
San Pedro Springs Park

We expect media coverage so the bigger the crowd the better -- gather friends and family and help our community make the connection between tar sands and climate change, between a sustainable future for our children or a future of drought, water scarcity, and wild fires. And come in a mood to celebrate the strength of community in saying a big NO to tar sands.

Mobi Warren, Climate Change contact and 350SanAntonio.org

Let's Party!

meet and greet your Sierra Club friends at these Fourth Friday socials

- **September 27th, 6-8 PM — Little Italy Restaurant.** Great Italian food from real Italians. 824 Afterglow Street, 349-2060.
- **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](#). Then one week before the next Social, you will receive an email notice reminder.

Climate Change Brought Home to Lamar Smith

Several Alamo Group members participated with others in a climate action at the San Antonio office of U.S. Congressman Lamar Smith on August 13. The action was organized by the Organizing for Action group, 350San Antonio, and Public Citizen. About 25 people attended.

Mobi Warren, head of 350SanAntonio and the Alamo Group's climate point person, gave Lamar Smith (in absentia) a unicorn award at the event because of his consistent denial of climate change through the years. Other Congressional deniers throughout the country were given similar awards on the same day.

Below is the text of an address given by Matthew Haertner from the Public Citizen Texas office during the San Antonio event:

"Congressman Lamar Smith (R-TX), who chairs the House Committee on Science, has recently said he didn't want to act on climate change because of 'uncertainties on how much human activity is causing climate change.' He should hold hearings in Texas to hear from scientists and citizens about how the 'uncertain climate' is affecting his home state.

"There is no longer any uncertainty over climate change. Ninety-seven percent of the credentialed scientists who have studied this issue recognize the clear linear relationship between increased carbon emissions and human activity.

"A blanket of carbon dioxide keeps our earth warm enough to live on, but when that blanket is thickened by carbon emitted by our power plants, factories, cars and trucks, the earth overheats, resulting in increased uncertainty for Texans due to more severe droughts, heat waves, wildfires, tornados, and hurricanes.



"The 'uncertainty' now centers on how much or how fast the climate will change. No responsible scientist is saying we shouldn't act now to reduce carbon.

"Changing our energy sources is the fastest and cheapest way to do that. Two public utilities in the Congressman's district, CPS and Austin Energy, are leading the nation in renewable energy and energy-efficiency programs that work, reducing carbon and costs.

"Also, Congressman Smith should stop promoting the Keystone Pipeline and acknowledge that emissions from mining, refining, and using this tar-like substance are far more damaging than conventional crude, and will affect south central Texans.

"We ask Congressman Smith to hold hearings in Austin and San Antonio, away from the oil and coal company lobbyists of Washington, D.C., so his constituents and local scientists can tell him how climate change is creating uncertainty in their lives and livelihood.

"As some of Congressman Smith's fellow Republicans expressed in a New York Times op-ed piece on August 1, 2013, "The only uncertainty about our warming world is how bad the changes will get, and how soon. What is most clear is that there is no time to waste. Mr. Obama's plan is just a start. More will be required. But we must continue our efforts to reduce the climate-altering pollutants that threaten our planet."

If you would like to convey to Lamar Smith your own message about climate change, his San Antonio phone number is 210-821-5947 and his web address is www.lamarsmith.house.gov.

Loretta Van Copenolle, *Energy Contact*, 210-492-4620

Upcoming Opportunities

Linear Creekway Trails Public Meeting #2 for Martinez & Alazan Creeks - September 10, Tuesday, 6-7 pm, at the Young Women's Leadership Academy, 2123 West Huisache St. The City of San Antonio and San Antonio River Authority will present preliminary plans and take public comments.

Trinity University International Studies Colloquium on Global Climate Change. The following lectures are free and open to the public, 3:50 to 6:30 pm, in Northrup Hall, Room 040.

September 9, 2013 *Introduction to Course*

September 16, 2013 Glenn Kroeger, Ph.D., Dept. of Geosciences, Trinity University
An Introduction to the Science of Climate Change

September 23, 2013 Alfred Montoya, Ph.D., Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Trinity University, *The International Health Effects of Global Climate Change*

September 30, 2013 Julio Sanchez, Ph.D., The Humboldt Center for Biodiversity, Managua, Nicaragua, Video Conference: *The Effect of Climate Change on Nicaragua's Biodiversity*

October 7, 2013 Ana Unruh Cohen, Ph.D., Deputy Staff Director of the House Natural Resource Committee, Democratic Staff, *U.S. Environmental Policy and Climate Change*

October 14, 2013 Dennis Ahlburg, Ph.D., President, Trinity University

October 21, 2013 Richard Reed, Ph.D., Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Trinity University
Deforestation, Urban Migration and Environmental Justice in Paraguay

October 28, 2013 Heather Sullivan, Ph.D., Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures, Trinity University, *Global Climate Change in Contemporary International Fiction*

Preparing for the Effects of Climate Change: Communicating, Organizing, Adapting, a talk by Alamo Sierran Darby Riley, September 16, Monday, 7 to 9 p.m., The Sol Center, 300 Bushnell Avenue at Shook, RSVP by September 9, 210-732-9927 or upcsa@upcsa.org.

Free showing of the movie *Gasland II*, September 26th at Santikos Northwest 14 theaters, featuring a discussion with Josh Fox. Don't miss it! Discussion after. Limited tickets--all free--but you have to sign up at <https://gasland2sanantonio.eventbrite.com/>

Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategies: A Capital Area Symposium, October 4, LBJ School of Public Affairs, UT Austin, keynote speakers [Katharine Hayhoe](#), director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University, and [Vicki Arroyo](#), executive director of the Georgetown Climate Center in Washington, DC. \$40, \$10 for students. 8:30 to 5:30, with reception following. Go to: <http://www.txclimadapt.com/>

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 [Lloyd Cortez](#)** and we'll add your name to our growing list of environmental activists.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for tabling events. We go to many "green" events and distribute information about the Sierra

Club and provide petitions about environmental concerns to be signed by the events' participants. These are the upcoming events we plan to attend.

Sept. 12, Thursday, **UTSA Volunteer Opportunities Fair**, UTSA Downtown, 11:00-1:30 (parking pass)

Sept. 19, Thursday, **UTSA Volunteer Opportunities Fair**, UTSA 1604, 9:00-1:30 (\$5.00 food voucher, parking pass available)

Sept. 22, Sunday, **Think Green Fair**, City of Boerne, Main Plaza Park, 10:00-3:00

Sept. 28, Saturday, **The Renewable Energy Roundup & Green Living Fair**, Fredericksburg, Main Plaza, 9:00-6:00

Sept. 29, Sunday, The same event, 9:00-3:00

Sept. 29, Sunday, **Siclovía**, SA YMCA, Lion's Field, 10:00-3:00

Oct. 12, Saturday, **Solar Fest**, Solar San Antonio, Olmos Basin Park, 10:00-3:00

Oct. 19, Saturday, **9th Fall Wildlife Festival and Plant Sale**, Mitchell Lake Audubon, 10750 Pleasanton Rd, 9:00-3:00

Gay Wright, Tablings Chair, contact her at alamo.sierra@yahoo.com or 210-343-0222

Climate Change Facts

1. The upper safe limit for atmospheric carbon dioxide is 350 parts per million; the level has now reached 400 parts per million.
2. The earth is warming faster now than it has in 11,000 years.
3. The polar ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica are now melting three times faster than they did in the 1990s.
4. The U.S. is still the number one *per capita* contributor to climate change in the world.
5. Thirteen of the hottest years on record have come in the last 15 years, according to NASA data.
6. The year 2012 was the hottest on record in both the contiguous United States and in the State of Texas. The previous hottest year in recorded Texas history was 2011, preceded by 2009.
7. Texas State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon predicts that 2013 will be the (new) hottest year on record.
8. Texas agriculture suffers multi-billion dollar losses each year because of heat and drought. The 2011 drought alone cost Texas farmers an estimated \$8 billion just in crop losses.
9. Postponing addressing climate change will cost far more than addressing it now. Animal food products, processed foods, and restaurant fare will increase in price. Health costs and insurance fees will rise exponentially as will the costs of repair of damage caused by adverse weather events.
10. Climatologists have isolated three carbon isotopes that can only come from fossil-fuel combustion, i.e., from burning oil, coal, and gas. These isotopes account for one-fourth of all the carbon dioxide now in the atmosphere. If these isotopes were removed from the atmosphere, carbon levels would return to their historic norms.
11. Warm nighttime temperatures indicate human causality. When the sun goes down in a natural environment, nighttime temperatures plummet because solar radiation is gone. Manmade surfaces and actions that keep temperatures high at night indicate human involvement. San Antonio's summer nighttime temperatures as late as the 1990s were in the mid-60s. They are now in the upper 70s.
12. Methane gas is up to 100 times as potent at capturing heat energy as carbon dioxide. Arctic permafrost, frozen for 40,000 years, is now melting, releasing huge amounts of methane and other greenhouse gases previously held captive. Some scientists believe all the currently held methane could be completely free by the end of this decade. "The release of just 1% of the methane held in the Arctic permafrost could have a warming effect as large as that of all the human-induced greenhouse emissions so far" (*Sierra* magazine, March-April 2013).

Loretta Van Copenolle, Energy Contact

Outings: Cooler Fall Weather Beckons

Saturday, September 14th: Hike the Canyon

Experience the beauty of this San Antonio area gem and its trail system. Join the [Friends of Government Canyon](#) and the Sierra Club for a jointly-led guided hike on one of the many trails at Government Canyon State Natural Area. Length of the hike will range from 4 to 7 miles depending on the group.

Open to ages 13 and over; minors must be accompanied by an adult; no pets please. Dress appropriately and wear sturdy shoes for hiking over rough terrain; bring two liters of water and a snack.

GCSNA is located at 12861 Galm Rd (Take FM 1560 west from Helotes to Galm Rd). There is a **\$6 entrance fee** (\$3 seniors). Meet at the Visitors Center by the rainwater harvesting tower by **7:45 am** for an 8:00 am departure with finish by noon; subject to cancellation. **Difficulty**: Moderate (some steep/rocky sections).

Contact Sierra Club co-leader [Terry Platt](#), (210) 487-9974, if you require additional information.

Saturday, September 28th: Oak Loop Nature Walk - Annual Fall Grass



Walk

This event is jointly sponsored by the [Phil Hardberger Park Conservancy](#), the [SA Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas](#), the [Alamo Area Master Naturalists](#), and the Sierra Club. The purposes include appreciating the beauty of the natural area, observing how nature changes through the seasons, and learning on the topical focus, grasses of PHP. It will be presented by **Floyd Waller** whose expertise in grasses is only exceeded by willingness to share his knowledge. This will give you a chance to see more grasses and more fully developed grasses than was possible in the April walk as well as see developments on the expanded savanna area.



Please **meet by 8:00am** to sign up for a 8:10am sharp departure from the sidewalk in front of the Children's Playground in [Phil Hardberger Park West](#) (8400 NW Military---about 0.2 miles SE on Military from Alon Market i.e. closer to Loop 410). We will walk along the Savanna Trail to the savanna restoration area with a brief explanation there and then proceed to the Oak Loop Trail. There will be stops along the trail where certain plants and points of ecological interest will be explained with ample time for participant questions.

Minors only when accompanied by an adult parent/guardian. Dogs allowed if leashed and socialized. **Difficulty:** Easy, definitely suitable for families. Flat terrain, slow-paced. This will only be a 1.5 mile walk and last about an hour and a half to end back at the playground around 9:45am.

The trail is a natural surface so be sure to wear sturdy shoes and, dependent on the weather, bring water, sun protection, and dress appropriate for the day and season. Suggested, not required, \$3 individual or \$5 family **donations** to the PHP Conservancy to support the park.

Contact [Wendy Drezek](#) (493-0939) for additional information or questions.

Saturday, October 12th: Hike the Canyon

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Contact Sierra Club co-leader and Texas Master Naturalist [Stan Drezek](#), (210) 464-1365, if you require additional information.

Visit our Outings page for other planned outings or go to the [Alamo Sierra Club Outings page on Meetup](#).