



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 40 No. 2 FEB 2006

Lone Star Chapter Conservation Priorities & Goals

The Executive Committee of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club has adopted and/or reaffirmed the Chapter's priorities for conservation action during 2006 and 2007. In pursuit of these priority issues and other conservation action goals the Lone Star Chapter is committed to achieving environmental justice for all Texans and is dedicated to promoting environmental education in our schools, homes, and communities.

The Chapter conservation priorities are those issues that will receive the most significant commitment of both Chapter staff and volunteer time and resources over the next two years. In pursuing these priority issues the Chapter is working closely with a wide range of organizations and interests committed to environmental and public health protection and sustainable resource management. The four conservation priorities for 2006-2007, along with the specific goals under each priority, are as follows:

CLEAN AIR & WATER

- Reduction of toxic and other harmful emissions from industrial plants and electric power generating plants
- Prevention of air quality deterioration by a proliferation of new coal-fired power plants
- Strengthening of the state's water quality protection standards for streams and lakes and adoption of tougher limitations on wastewater discharges

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Congratulations to Our New Excom Members

We're pleased to announce the new and returning members of the Executive Committee. Tom Dukes, a long-time member and former Chair of the ExCom, is back and has been elected Chair. Jerry Morrissey another long-time member was also elected to the ExCom. John Westerhoff was reelected and Carolyn Wells was appointed to fill a two-year term. Welcome to all of you. The continuing members are: Loyd Cortez, Mary Gallatin, Hector Gonzalez, Eloise Stoker and Derek Trobaugh.

Congratulations also go to David Wells who was elected to the Lone Star Chapter Executive Committee.

You're invited to a Party!

Every month a handful of volunteers meet at the home of Jim and Ruthie Stewart to label over 2,000 newsletters. If you would like to join the fun, contact Jim Stewart [goldstewart@earthlink.net or 210-692-0727].

March Primary and Voting Records

Texas voters will go to the polls on March 7, and Alamo Group members have an important opportunity to make their wishes known by voting for candidates for office running in party primaries. The state legislature is a major part of state government, and considers many bills with implications for the Texas environment during its session. The Texas League of Conservation Voters has compiled a

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WORD from the Chair

By Tom Dukes

As I sit writing this, I can see the massive red oak outside my window, its branches bare in what passes for winter here in sunny San Antonio. Yet soon, its green, deeply lobed leaves will emerge once more, and spring will again burst upon us. I love the change of seasons, their clockwork consistency, their individuality, and their promise of renewal.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Tom Dukes, and it is an honor and a privilege to once again serve you as Chair of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club. I am merely a volunteer among volunteers, but together, we have a mighty voice.

Thanks go to Michele and the previous ExCom for their faithful guidance and leadership. Your newly elected Executive Committee is a mixture of faces old and new, but together we are determined to make a positive difference for South Texas.

The Sierra Club, like the seasons, is in perpetual change. Still, as individuals come and go, as areas of concern shift and adjust, as some victories are celebrated and some battles lost, one thing remains constant: the mission and purpose of your Club remain true to the vision of the great John Muir. Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet. If we all work together as a unified team, we will accomplish much, and the future will be better for our efforts.

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 6:45, program at 7 P.M.

February 21, 2006:

Film - The End of Suburbia:

Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream directed by Gregory Greene. The meeting will begin promptly at 7:00.

March 21, 2006:

Renewable Energy Today

by Russell E. Smith, Executive Director, Texas Renewable Energy Industries Association

Our Goals Continued

- Protection and enhancement of citizen rights in pollution control permitting
- Enhanced enforcement of pollution control laws
 - ENERGY EFFICIENCY & RENEWABLE ENERGY
- More efficient use of energy by Texas consumers, agricultural producers, businesses, and institutions
- Increased reliance on renewable energy sources to meet power needs, including the responsible promotion of solar and wind energy
 - A TEXAS LAND LEGACY
- A dependable source of funding for acquisition, maintenance, and management of Texas state & local parks to meet growing habitat preservation & recreation needs
- Responsible land use management policies to curb “sprawl” and redirect growth to the urban core while protecting neighborhood values
- Protection of public lands in Texas, including Padre Island National Seashore, Big Bend National Park, Big Thicket National Preserve, and our national forests
 - WATER FOR PEOPLE & THE ENVIRONMENT
- Preservation and provision of instream flows and freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries necessary to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations
- More efficient use of water by Texas consumers, agricultural producers, businesses, and institutions through conservation and drought management
- Management of the state’s groundwater resources on a sustainable basis

Newsletter Donations

It would be impossible to print and mail this newsletter without donations from our membership. If you have already mailed in your \$10 contribution for the newsletter, thank you. If not, please send it in now.

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support the Sierra Club’s effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Voting Records Continued

scorecard of record votes for the 2005 legislative session. The following is a list of those scores, based on 7 bills and 13 record votes. Each candidate is listed by surname, followed by the Texas House of Representatives district they represent, and the percent of pro-environment votes cast. No comparable information was available for the 6 members of the Texas Senate representing the Alamo Group area. For more information, see www.tlcv.org/ (As of press time, the Club had made no endorsements in the Alamo Group area.)

Representative	District	Score
Casteel	73	8%
Castro	125	100%
Corte	122	15%
Gallego	74	83%
Gonzalez Toureilles	35	64%
Hilderbran	53	23%
King	80	23%
Kuempel	44	0%
Leibowitz	117	100%
Martinez Fischer	116	100%
McClendon	120	100%
Menendez	124	85%
Puente	119	85%
Straus	121	15%
Uresti	118	100%
Villarreal	123	92%

Stop the Private Gun Range in Kerrville

A group, Friends of Cypress Creek, has recently been formed with the goal of protecting Cypress Creek (a tributary to the Guadalupe) from a new shooting range trying to get established. The environmental concern is 158 tons of lead moving into Cypress Creek. Golden Cheeked Warblers are in the immediate vicinity. This will be the largest shooting range in the U.S. not on a military base.

The NRA has found a way in Austin and Washington to exempt private gun ranges from many laws and regulations that apply to most businesses.

Jerry Ahrens (8 year board member at Upper Guadalupe River Authority), 830-257-2827 or ahrens@ktc.com.

NOTE: If you are concerned about this issue; get in touch with Mr. Ahrens for more information via email or phone call. If our Kerrville members decide that they want the Alamo Group to take a position against this gun range; they should contact me, so I can have Mr. Ahrens make a presentation to the Executive Committee.

Loyd Cortez
loydcortez@earthlink.net

**Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club
 Position Statement on Radioactive Waste**

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club reaffirms its historic commitment to promoting reduction in the generation of radioactive waste and safe & proper management of those wastes remaining and to opposing efforts to make Texas a dumping ground for the nation’s radioactive wastes.

The Lone Star Chapter recommends that management of radioactive wastes in Texas incorporate the following principles:

- A publicly accountable state agency, not a private company, should be licensed to manage any radioactive wastes (although the State may contract with private companies to operate management sites).
- No new states should be added to the existing radioactive waste compact (Texas and Vermont), and the compact “loophole” - allowing the Texas Compact Commissioners to contract with any state, group of states, or company to import unlimited amounts of radioactive waste to be disposed of in Texas - must be closed.
- Radioactive wastes should not be buried below ground. Aboveground storage of waste in “assured isolation” facilities has the potential to avoid the health hazards of below-ground burial and avoid the high cost associated with remedial action that inevitably will be required if below ground disposal is used. If assured isolation is pursued, it must be statutorily defined so as to require inspection and monitoring on all sides of the facility, environmental

Radioactive Waste Continued

monitoring, easy access to the waste canisters and ability to repackage the waste as leaks are detected, preventative maintenance, adequate financial assurances to repair damage or degradation, and "zero-release" as a design objective.

Radioactive waste should be kept as near the site of generation as possible, with sites of the largest generators (the nuclear power plants) used for management of waste from other locations, in order to minimize the risks of accident or injury from transportation of such wastes.

All decisions on the management, siting, storage, and transportation of radioactive waste should be made with full and effective public participation so that decision-makers and the public have a full range of information on which to base decisions.

Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club at its meeting in Austin, Texas on January 22, 2006.

Volunteer Opportunities

Spring is just around the corner, and so are our annual tabling events. These are important events, which allow us to engage the general public in conversation about our environment and introduce them to the Sierra Club. Consider volunteering at our Sierra Club table at the following events:

EARTHWISE LIVING DAY

February 25, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Leon Valley, Contact Marsha Meredith at 675-4097 or marsha1205@sbcglobal.net

BASURA BASH

March 25, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., San Antonio River, contact Hector Gonzalez at 226-6069 or hjgonzalez@aol.com

EARTH DAY

April 22, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Woodlawn Lake, contact Loyd Cortez at 674-9489 or loydcortez@earthlink.net

KING WILLIAM FAIR

April 29, 9:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

SOLAR FEST

June 17, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Maverick Park

OUTINGS

NOTE: No dogs, radios, recreational drugs, or unescorted children are allowed on Sierra Club outings. Public consumption of alcohol is prohibited during scheduled activities. Outings are usually suitable for the whole family; check with the leaders about details and to verify dates. All fees will go fully to offset trip and administrative costs and to support the conservation efforts of the Alamo Group.

FEB 17-20, FRI-MON: BIG BEND RANCH BACKPACK

The best time to hike the desert is during cool weather. Car camp the first night then spend 3 days and 2 nights on the trail in the beautiful desert scenery of the largest Texas state park. This is an unusual Big Bend trip in that there will be water available each night on the trail. This is a strenuous trip of experienced backpackers. Limited to 10 participants. Cost \$12 members/\$15 non-members. Leaders: Bill Rogers (830) 885-2523, rogers@uthscsa.edu, and Terry Platt (210) 695-9570, taplatt@earthlink.net

FEB 25, SAT: TOM SLICK PARK HIKE

Join us for a visit to this relatively new park, a piece of countryside within Loop 410. Features include a hidden lake, trickling stream through a forested corridor, and open grasslands. Off the main loop trail, some minor routes wind rough thorn woodlands. Meet @9:00 AM near the east entrance of Westlakes Mall, located in the NW corner of the intersection of Loop 410 and Marbach Road. Difficulty: EASY. Cost: \$2 for members; \$3 for non-members. For more information contact Fred Wills (210) 673-9566 or (210) 296-6013 (cell), or user261695@aol.com

MAR 17-1, FRI-SUN: ENCHANTED ROCK STATE NATURAL AREA CAR CAMPING TRIP

Sign up to camp, or join us for a Saturday hike around and/or up the Rock. We'll share a potluck dinner Saturday night. Space is limited for camping. Difficulty: EASY to MODERATE. Cost: \$2 per day for members, \$3 for non-members plus entrance and camping fees. Leader: Marsha Meredith, 675-4097 or marsha1205@sbcglobal.net.

APR 1, SAT: GOVERNMENT CANYON SPRING HIKE

Come out for a 2 to 5 mile hike on the Front Country Trails. Bring your wildflower books and we'll identify what we find. Difficulty: MODERATE. Cost:

Donations to our local club's conservation efforts. Leader: Marsha Meredith, 675-4097 or marsha1205@sbcglobal.net

MAY 6-7, SAT-SUN: DEVILS RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA CAR CAMPING

Experience the dark skies and bright stars of West Texas at this unique State Natural Area. We'll leave early Saturday morning for this one night camping trip. We'll hike to the river and have a potluck dinner Saturday night. The sites are primitive, but you can bring the kitchen sink in your car. Leaders: Marsha Meredith at 675-4097 or marsha1205@sbcglobal.net and Fred Wills, user261695@aol.com.

GCSNA

Government Canyon

Workdays at Government Canyon State Natural Area are the second Saturday of the month. Call 688-9603 to sign up for a work crew. For more information contact Marsha Meredith [marsha1205@sbcglobal.net].

FEB 18, 2006 - EXPLORE THE CANYON

Interested in the flora, fauna, natural and cultural history of Government Canyon? Willing to court a little mystery? This walk may be for you. Meet at the Visitors Center by the rainwater-harvesting tower. Open to all ages; group size limited to the first 10 people. No pets please. Dress appropriately; bring water, snack and sturdy hiking shoes. 8:30 a.m.-till; donations to the Friends of Government Canyon accepted; subject to cancellation, call to confirm (210) 688-9055.

FEB 18, 2006 - THE GEOLOGY OF GOVERNMENT CANYON

Learn about the Balcones Fault, the Glen Rose Formation and the Edwards Limestone. Geologist Bill Ward will give a captivating presentation on how and when they were formed, complete with a slide show and fossils to handle. Afterwards we'll take a hike to see the local geology first-hand. Bring water, sunscreen, hat and sturdy shoes. Group size limited; participants must be 18 or older. 9 a.m.-noon; suggested minimum donation of \$10 per person includes entry permit and benefits the Friends of Government Canyon; reservations required and may be made beginning at 7:30 a.m. February 8. Please include your name, e-mail address and telephone number for each reservation. E-mail educmte@hotmail.com or call (210) 688-9055.