



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 42 No. 2 FEBRUARY 2008

A Word from the Chair by Jerry Morrissey

At the January general meeting, the grandeur of the high Sierra Nevada of California was beautifully illustrated by Dave Pasley's slideshow along the John Muir Trail. John Muir, one of the founders of the Sierra Club, was a fearless explorer of the Sierra Nevada range beginning in 1868. The trail was constructed in his honor, recognizing his tireless efforts in the halls of government to promote the protection of the region from overuse by grazing and timber harvest. His most enduring legacy may be the creation of the Sierra Club, which has recruited new leaders to keep alive his passion for the protection of wilderness and the sustainable use of ecological systems.

You have an opportunity as a Sierra Club member to help address a current ecological crisis, global warming, that threatens to drastically alter or destabilize many ecosystems in the U.S. and around the world. At the heart of this problem is the non-sustainable consumption of energy and natural resources by all nations, jeopardizing the quality of life for our children and grandchildren. As John Muir recognized, we can all do our part in a world in which everything is connected. We can address our own consumption patterns, help the Sierra Club educate others about the importance of environmental protection, and participate in the election of leaders who will act to protect ecological balance.

I am stepping down as Chair but will continue to work to build the Alamo Group as a stronger organization that serves its members and the community. I encourage you to participate in our Group activities for fun and friendship, for educational opportunities, and as a means to serve the community and the planet. Although sometimes difficult to achieve, the most rewarding activities in life are good relationships with others in the act of service.

Don't Forget to Vote in the Primary!

In the midst of horserace presidential campaign coverage, issues too often take a back seat. The Texas primary election is coming up on March 4th. This is your chance to make sure that environmental issues, not personalities, get the attention they deserve. By voting in the primary, you help to increase the odds that the candidates who make the environment a top priority will be on the November general election ballot. Early voting in the primary starts on February 19th and ends on February 29th. You may also wish to attend your precinct convention after the polls close on March 4th.

The GM Volt

If General Motors can be believed, it is on the verge of producing a car that would more than make amends for its rude removal of the EV1, the car featured in the film, "Who Killed the Electric Car?" GM unveiled the Chevy Volt in 2007 but does not anticipate its mass production for a while, largely because further development is needed on its lithium-ion battery. The car, boasts GM, can run on gas, ethanol or biodiesel to recharge the battery while driving. "For someone who drives less than 40 miles a day," says the company, "Chevy Volt will use zero gasoline and produce zero emissions."

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.

Feb 19, 2008: Northside ISD Energy Conservation Program

Northside Independent School District leads the way in energy-efficient schools. Bruce Dschuden and Frank Thomas will present Northside's award-winning energy management program.

March 18, 2008: Green is the New Red, White and Blue

Interactive program: watch a DVD on Thomas Friedman and his ideas for combating global warming, then join in the discussion to follow.

Ya Gotta Let 'em Know You're Out There!

In all my years as an environmental activist, one of the things I have heard most often is "Oh, my U.S. Representative (Senator, State Rep, Councilperson, etc.) is _____. S/he's so unconcerned about the environment there's no point in contacting him/her. It's just a waste of my time." I have heard almost as often, from the kind of representative mentioned in the preceding sentences, "Well, I'm surprised about your position on this issue. You're the only one who has ever contacted me about it."

My message to all who read this is: **Write or call your political reps!** If you have the sort of rep who doesn't give a fig about what concerns you the most, that rep is the one who should get the

Continued on Page 2

CPS Meetings

CPS is holding the last of four public meetings to air its accomplishments and goals **Tuesday, March 11, 5:30-7:30 PM at Holmes High School, 6500 Ingram Road.** Citizens are urged to attend, to learn, and to challenge. Concerns about the two new nuclear units planned at the STNP site should be aired. Signage at Holmes will show where on campus the event will take place.

On **Tuesday, March 25, 6-8 PM**, CPS will hold a public hearing on the proposed nuclear additions at **La Villita Assembly Hall, Presa and Villita Streets.** This will be a more open forum with the CPS board present and comments recorded. Again, citizens are urged to attend and to participate in their city's energy future at this important crossroads of time.

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GM Volt Continued

In a December 2007 Express-News article, GM Vice Chairman Bob Lutz is quoted as saying, "If you lived within 30 miles from work (60 miles round trip) and charged your vehicle every night when you came home or during the day at work, you would get 150 miles per gallon." You could even, under the right circumstances, never burn gas during the car's lifetime. Mother Earth News calculates that it would cost an average of \$1.50 to fully charge the car using the local electric grid. This compares with \$2.50 to \$3.00 to drive a typical hybrid 40 miles.

GM claims it is serious this time about making a car that people can actually keep. It has two companies under contract to develop the large battery the Volt will need to successfully operate. The technology is expected to be ready in the next 3 to 5 years. Stay tuned, folks.

Loretta Van Coppenolle

Let Them Know! Continued

most contacts. If enough of his/her constituents needle him/her, some very rigid stances may change, even with vested interests calling a lot of the shots. In the end a political leader has to win votes, and votes come from individuals, not corporations. If the leader believes there is a groundswell about a particular issue-let's say, global warming-that leader just might come around sooner rather than later.

You have a voice-use it! Your message to the rep doesn't have to be long or involved. Postcards to Congress don't have to go through the screening that letters do, and there are always phone calls and e-mails. But the contact has to be made, and made as often as possible. And don't forget to write letters to newspaper editors!

*Loretta Van Coppenolle,
Alamo Group Conservation Co-Chair*

CPS Meetings Continued

The Sierra Club opposes nuclear power because of safety and cost considerations and believes more sustainable and cost-effective alternatives should replace the nuclear option. For more information call Loretta Van Coppenolle at 492-4620.

Global Warming Ignored

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) conducted a survey of TV's top political journalists to determine how often the term "global warming" or "climate change" was used in questions to presidential candidates. Wolf Blitzer (CNN), Tim Russert (NBC), Bob Schieffer (CBS), George Stephanopoulos (ABC), and Chris Wallace (Fox) asked candidates a total of 2484 questions in 2007. Global warming was mentioned only three times in all that questioning.

It is ludicrous that the most critical issue confronting our country and world today is being almost totally ignored by these extremely influential opinion makers. Others of course are guilty as well, but a message sent to these five may have an impact on other TV environmental reporting. And there is nothing to stop you from sending a letter to any other journalist you feel is giving short shrift to climate imbalance. Let your voice be heard, for the sake of the planet.

LCV has launched a petition drive calling on the journalists to publicly acknowledge the man-made threat of global warming and demanding that they make the issue a priority in future questioning. The petition can be accessed online at www.whataretheywaitingfor.com. Of course, the more who sign, the more impact the petition will have. Even better, a letter to each journalist (or his boss) can be sent.

Loretta Van Coppenolle

**Wind or No Wind
not all wind projects
are created equal**

While the Sierra Club supports wind development as clean, reliable, and safe, we recognize that certain projects create problems that cause us to remain neutral or act in opposition. Last month we reviewed the national Sierra Club's wind policy and explained why we opposed a wind farm briefly slated for the Hill Country near Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. You can read the article in the newsletter archives on our website: <http://AlamoSierraClub.org>.

Most Texas wind farms, including those supplying CPS Energy's WindTricity, are on the open plains and plateaus of West Texas and the Panhandle, where bird mortality, scenic views, parkland, and agricultural use are not compromised. Farm and ranch work continues while the turbines turn, with one Texas rancher quoted as saying, "Yep, they make some noise, but that's the soothing sound of money being made." We fully endorse such appropriate wind farm sites. However, West Texas winds tend to blow strongest at night and during the spring and autumn, while Texas electricity demand peaks in the afternoon hours of July and August. Wind speed and availability along the coast vary little during the year, and there's the rub.

Recently, two wind farms with over 600 megawatts of capacity were approved for the Laguna Madre in Kenedy County, south of Corpus Christi. Developers Babcock & Brown Ltd. of Australia and PPM Energy, a subsidiary of Spain's Iberdola, expect to generate first power by the end of 2008. The area is sparsely populated, but the Texas coast constitutes America's largest bird migration flyway. These projects were opposed by the King Ranch and a coalition of local bird conservation and Audubon groups, but approved in the fall of 2007 by the Texas Public Utilities Commission. Biologists for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) reviewed the plans and declined to file objections, although the head of TPWD stated, "If we go to losing birds there we will get involved, I'll tell you that right up front." Unfortunately, because Texas has no siting guidelines or requirements for wind farm projects, inappropriate projects are difficult to stop.

The developers of one of the wind farms, Babcock & Brown, claim to have conducted more environmental studies on this site than almost any other in the world. The company says they are even pioneering a radar-based system for the project that can shut down the turbines within a minute in the event of a massive bird run-in.

After much discussion we remained neutral on this project, located in the territory of the Coastal Bend Group of the Sierra Club, yet we will continue to monitor it and further coastal wind developments closely. Even the most promising new energy sources, if wrongly applied, can have far-reaching consequences.

Tom Dukes

OUTINGS

SUN, FEB 24: COMANCHE LOOKOUT CITY PARK MORNING HIKE

Get out and enjoy a brisk morning hike (about 1 1/2 miles) at this Northeast side city park. There is a great view of the city from the top. Meet in the library parking lot at the corner of Judson and Nacogdoches Rd at 9:30 AM. Difficulty: EASY. Cost: donations accepted. Contact David Klar, dklar63162@aol.com or 495-2148.

SUN, MAR 2: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is on paved trails and roads that are along the San Antonio River and that lead from mission to mission in the SE part of San Antonio. We will stop to take quick walks through some of the missions along the way. Distance may be up to 18 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 AM in the grass parking lot SE of the paved parking lot in front of Mission Concepción on Mission Road. Difficulty: MODERATE. Cost: donations accepted. Leader: Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net or 647-0216.

SAT, MAR 8: DOG-FRIENDLY DAYHIKE AT GOVERNMENT CANYON

Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome on a 3-5 mile hike in the front country of Government Canyon State Natural Area. Start time: 9:30 AM. Enjoy hiking the relatively flat trails of the SNA with or without a dog as the first signs of spring appear. Call to reserve a slot, since participation is limited. Difficulty: EASY to MODERATE. Cost: donations accepted. Leaders: Jerry Morrissey, jlmorrissey@aol.com or 382-2614 and Ben Morrissey, 382-6214.

SAT-SUN, MAR 22-23: EASTER AT CHAPARRAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Join us for spring flowers and fragrant blooming shrubs in this South Texas wildlife area. The brushy environment is home to a variety of birds, mammals, and reptiles, including roadrunner and Harris' hawk, javelina and whitetail deer, and Texas horned lizard and Texas tortoise. Trails include a 2.5-mile nature trail, an 8.5-mile road loop, and a wheelchair-accessible 0.5-mile nature trail.

Difficulty: EASY. Cost: donations accepted. Camping is free. Leaders: Fred Wills, fredwills@att.net or 673-9566 and Jerry Morrissey, jlmorrissey@aol.com or 382-2614.

SAT, MAR 29: TOUR OF BAMBERGER RANCH ("SELAH")

On this 3 1/2-hour tour of the ranch (located near Johnson City, about 60 miles north of San Antonio) you will see the results of 37 years of habitat restoration, projects that demonstrate principles of good stewardship. You may also see dinosaur tracks, fossil beds, a herd of endangered Scimitar-horned Oryx, and the "Chiroptorium." You'll walk the nature trail and then enjoy Madrone Lake as you watch "The Rain Machine." Transportation is on the Bluebonnet, an open-air trailer with a shade bonnet. Dress for the weather, and don't forget a hat! Difficulty: EASY. Cost: \$15 for ranch; donations to Sierra Club also accepted. Contact leaders for reservations, which are limited. Leaders: Peter Allen, 682-0612 or pallen76@gmail.com and Lee Dodge, 647-0216 or LSG999@earthlink.net.

SAT, APR 5: GOVERNMENT CANYON SNA WILDFLOWER WALK

We'll start early and hike 7-13 miles, weaving in and out of small canyons and dry creeks typical of the eastern boundary of the Balcones Escarpment. The rocky terrain is not very steep but requires sturdy hiking shoes (lots of limestone rocks and small boulders in the drainages). Exiting the drainages provides the welcome contrast of typical Hill Country woodland and an occasional meadow. A brief picnic with snacks might be in order about halfway through. Entrance fees are the responsibility of each hiker (limit of six hikers). Children 12 and over welcome with parent. Difficulty: MODERATE to DIFFICULT. For information and reservations, contact Scott Wolfe, papawolfe@sbcglobal.net or 724-2707, or Peter Allen, pallen76@gmail.com or 682-0612.

SAT, APR 12: SPRING WILDFLOWER HIKE AT MCKINNEY ROUGHS

Enjoy the wildflowers on a 5-7 mile day hike at McKinney Roughs on the Colorado River north of Bastrop. This park has trails in diverse habitats on the bluffs and along the river. Hike starts at 10:30 AM at the park. 70+ mile trip each way. Participants can make carpool arrangements. Difficulty: MODERATE. Cost: donations accepted. Leader: Jerry Morrissey, jlmorrissey@aol.com or 382-2614.

SUN, APR 20: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is on paved trails and roads that are along the San Antonio River and that lead from mission to mission in the SE part of San Antonio. Wildflowers should be out. We will stop to take quick walks through some of the missions along the way. Distance may be up to 18 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 AM in the grass parking lot SE of the paved parking lot in front of Mission Concepción on Mission Road. Difficulty: MODERATE. Cost: donations accepted. Leader: Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net or 647-0216.

Sierra Socials

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MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Executive Committee:	4th Friday, 7 p.m.	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter Submissions deadline	3rd Thursday (Thursday before ExCom) ...	Fred Wills	fredwills@att.net
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	488-7787
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	Linda Higby.....(585)	330-1890
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 Co-Chair ..	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Co-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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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
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Membership

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