



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 41 No. 9 OCTOBER 2007

Don't Forget to Vote!!

Mark your calendar for November 6 (Election Day). Proposition 4 on the statewide ballot is a crucial constitutional amendment for Texas' state parks, and will provide \$52 million in funding for state park repairs. This is the second step in getting parks funding this year; the Legislature has appropriated the money, contingent on voter approval of Prop. 4. YOU can make a difference in improving our parks by voting FOR this measure on Nov. 6 or during early voting.

Hydrogen Car May Not Live Up to Hype

The hydrogen car is wonderful in theory, but practical application of the car's technology may be the energy equivalent of a zero sum game. The car has a few problems that render it less environmentally friendly than we've been led to expect. Of these, the generation, transportation and storage of hydrogen fuel pose the biggest concerns.

If the car generates its own hydrogen - as do current prototypes - it must do so using a "reformer" that converts natural

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A Word from the Chair by Jerry Morrissey

The concept of sustainability appears to be slowly creeping into public consciousness in the U.S. My concept of sustainability is a collection of interrelated activities that can be maintained for many generations and that result in a relatively stable and livable natural world.

Limitations on sustainability are posed by the ever-increasing number of people and their desire to consume greater amounts of materials and energy. The environmental movement has worked on population issues for many years with limited success. Lately, our emphasis has been placed on conservation, efficiency, renewables and recycling to damp the effects of one of the world's highest levels of per capita consumption.

One step toward local sustainability is the development and implementation of green building concepts by the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy (MPE) that are specific to the San Antonio region. This effort is important because buildings on average represent 12% of water use, 30% of greenhouse gas emissions, 65% of waste output and 70% of electricity consumption, according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

The MPE is developing a certification program for three increasingly effective levels of residential green building. A home's rating as level 1, 2 or 3 will be based on points accumulated for the use of green building principles in site planning, water management, energy management, material use, indoor air quality, and innovation & design process. If you are planning on building a new home, visit the MPE website, buildsagreen.org/. For those who wish

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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 16 - The Trinity Aquifer

Austin hydrologist John Ashworth will discuss this lesser-known local aquifer, facing increased stress as metropolitan San Antonio grows into the Hill Country. Learn about the Edwards Aquifer's northern neighbor and its three units.

November 20 - Build San Antonio Green

Stephen Colley of AIA will introduce the Green Renovation and Remodeling Program, a part of Build San Antonio Green.

Christmas Mountains Selloff

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson wants to sell 9,270 acres of public land in the Big Bend to the highest bidder as soon as possible. Many Texans are outraged at this attempt to privatize the Christmas Mountains, located 12 miles northeast of Terlingua near Big Bend National Park. Over 3,000 people have written in protest, and many attended a hearing in Austin on September 18 to condemn the plan.

The land was donated to Texas in 1991 by the Richard King Mellon Foundation through the Conservation Fund with the intent of providing public access and protecting the Christmas Mountains as a viewshed of Big Bend National Park. The Mellon Foundation has publicly opposed the proposed sale, which would set a terrible precedent.

Continued on Page 2

Way to Go!

A way to boost energy efficiency in ordinary cars and clean up greenhouse gas emissions at the same time might be of great interest to most Americans. Unfortunately, it was not to American automakers, when the plan was presented to them by the Union of Concerned Scientists.

UCS engineers, using existing technology, came up with a car they call the Vanguard that meets California's stringent emissions standards. They did it to prove that "building cleaner, more climate-friendly vehicles does not require radical changes in vehicle design - or even hybrid technology."

The Vanguard has an improved engine with cylinder deactivation, which shuts down half its cylinders when full power is not needed. The engine also features variable valve lift and timing,

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A Word from the Chair - Continued

to upgrade or repair existing homes using green building ideas, the MPE will soon provide green guidelines for specific modules such as bathrooms, kitchens, and heating/ventilation/air conditioning.

I would also like to announce that the Great Plains Regional Office of the Sierra Club is funding and hiring a Regional Conservation Organizer for the San Antonio area to be supervised by Steve Thomas with advice from our local leadership. This person will be responsible for local outreach with an emphasis on social justice and energy issues. Office space will be leased to accommodate this person and another regional staff person who will have responsibilities in the southern part of the Great Plains Region.

Christmas Mountains - Continued

Future donors will think twice before offering land to the people of Texas if it could end up in private hands so easily. Both the National Park Service and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department refused the parcel when originally approached by the General Land Office, but that may be understandable given the funding limits under which both have been forced to operate.

The General Land Office views the property as a liability, and Commissioner Patterson has gone so far as to say "You can't have a public park and a pristine environment on this tract of land." He believes that private owners would do a better job of managing it than the state has. (Not a good reflection on the quality of our state government!)

For narrow technical reasons the School Land Board rejected the six bids received, which ranged from \$10,500 to \$652,000. John Poindexter, who almost got part of Big Bend Ranch State Park recently, was one of the highest bidders. Commissioner Patterson said that despite objections he hopes to reopen the bidding process and sell the land in November.

Write to State Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson at commissioner.patterson@glo.state.tx.us. Tell him you oppose the sale of this public land, which should be held in trust for all Texans until Texas Parks & Wildlife or the National Park Service can muster the resources needed to manage it properly.

Way to Go - Continued

stoichiometric direct injection of gasoline, and turbocharging. The Vanguard has added gears to allow the engine to operate more efficiently, and it has an automated manual transmission. The car possesses an improved air conditioning system that cuts down on pollutant leakage, an aerodynamic design that reduces drag 10-15%,

tires with low rolling resistance, and more energy-efficient electrical components.

The Vanguard would emit 43% less pollution than the average vehicle on the road today. And the changes put into the Vanguard could be made on just about any car out there. Examples given by the UCS include the Chrysler Town and Country, the Chevrolet Cavalier, the Ford Taurus, the Toyota Tacoma and the GMC Sierra, all of which, with UCS-style tweaking, could have reduced global warming emissions by at least 42%, with a payback time (on increased purchase price) of 1.6 to 5 years.

Instead of meeting the challenges of global warming, Detroit has responded to California's clean air laws with lawsuits. Until this kind of death-knell mindset is changed, ideas like UCS's Vanguard technology have little chance to save the day.

Information on UCS' greener car came from the Spring 2007 issue of Catalyst, the magazine of the UCS.

Loretta Van Coppenolle

Hydrogen Car - Continued

gas or gasoline to hydrogen. The carbon-based energy required to make this conversion is enough to neutralize the environmental benefits of using hydrogen as the car's fuel.

If the car gases up at a "fuel station," problems with transporting the hydrogen come to the fore. The preferred way to transport hydrogen is in a liquid state, but liquefying hydrogen requires enormous amounts of energy to drop its temperature to minus 423 degrees Fahrenheit. Using the existing U.S. power grid to liquefy a gallon of hydrogen releases almost 22 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere. A gallon of gasoline holds about the same amount of energy as one kilogram of hydrogen. Burning that gallon of gasoline directly releases about the same amount of CO₂ as does the hydrogen liquefaction process.

One way to avoid the enormous cost of liquefaction is to simply pressurize the hydrogen. However, pressurized containers take up more space - in fact, so much more space that a 40-ton truck could deliver only 100 gallons of hydrogen. It would take 15 such trucks to deliver the same fuel energy value as is now delivered by a 26-ton gasoline tanker. This huge fleet of trucks would itself consume large amounts of carbon-based energy - or a large percentage of the hydrogen they transport.

Pipelines, on-site generation, even home generation - all are offered as distribution solutions. Each has its own set of drawbacks, but the bottom line is this: the only way hydrogen cars can help combat climate change is if our electricity grid is fed by carbon-free sources.

Wendell Fuqua

July Press Conference

The Alamo Group of the Sierra Club participated in a July 23 press conference on climate change arranged by Austin-based Environment Texas Research and

Policy Center. Held on the steps of San Antonio City Hall, the July conference delivered a message that Alamo Group members may still find timely.

Luke Metzger spoke for Environment Texas (ET), announcing that San Antonio ranked fourth in the U.S. among cities with excess heat days in the summer of 2006, tying with Austin. Examining temperature data for the years 2000-2006, ET found that in 2006 San Antonio had 151 days of 90 degree F or greater temperatures, 38 days more than the historical average. The study also found that San Antonio's average maximum temperature in 2006 was 4.2 degrees F above normal. Nighttime temperature rises, a sure indication of human-caused heat, were in evidence in 2006, with the average low temperature 2.6 degrees F above normal. Metzger addressed the unusual rain patterns we have seen in 2007, saying these were consistent with climate disruption. Annalisa Peace also spoke at the press conference, addressing water issues relative to global warming.

Metzger indicated that two bills before Congress are "the only bills that would reduce pollution to levels that scientists say

are needed to prevent the worst effects of global warming." These bills are the House's Safe Climate Act and the Senate's Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act. Metzger suggested citizens urge their political leaders to vote for these two bills.

Loretta Van Coppenolle spoke for the Alamo Group, pointing out that while San Antonio might currently be enjoying a more positive weather pattern in the rain and cooler temperatures that have been abundant so far in 2007, people should have a broader perspective on the abnormal climatic conditions in the nation and the world. She spoke of the extreme heat in southern Europe and the 2000 wildfires then raging in Greece, earlier wildfires in Spain, the deaths of 15,000 people in France alone in the summer of 2003 due to an enduring heat wave, and fires in Utah, Georgia, Florida, and elsewhere which all add up to extraordinary situations for the regions in question.

Loretta Van Coppenolle

Meet at 9:00 AM. Difficulty: EASY. Cost: donations accepted. Leader: Sharon Dukes, tdukes@grandecom.net, or 828-3721.

OCTOBER 20-21, SAT-SUN: PEDERNALES FALLS BACKPACK FOR BEGINNERS

Have you ever had the desire to go backpacking but did not know if it really was for you? Our annual beginners' backpacking trip provides novices with instruction from veterans and a first backpacking trip at a park close to home. This will be a short trip designed primarily for the novice, but all are welcome. The leaders will have a required orientation for all inexperienced participants on Friday, October 12. Minimum age for participants is 13 with parent. Park entrance and camping fee will be shared by all. Difficulty: MODERATE. Suggested donation: \$6 members/\$8 non-members. Co-leaders: Terry Platt, taplatt@earthlink.net and Bill Rogers, 830-885-2523 or rogers@uthscsa.edu.

NOV 3, SAT: GOVERNMENT CANYON DAY HIKE

Join us for a nice long day hike to the far reaches of Government Canyon State Natural Area (SNA). This site is part of a longer historic route ("Joe Johnston Road") built in about 1850 connecting San Antonio and Bandera. We'll start early and hike all the way to the Protected Habitat Area (only open seasonally) to explore Black Hill Loop and Cave Creek trails. Expect to hike 10 or more miles weaving through small canyons and dry creeks typical of the eastern edge of the Balcones Escarpment. The rocky terrain is not very steep but does require sturdy shoes. We'll picnic about halfway through. Contact Scott Wolfe soon to reserve your space. Leaders: Scott Wolfe, papawolfe@sbcglobal.net, 724-2707 and Peter Allen, pallen76@gmail.com, 682-0612.

NOV 16-18, FRI-SUN: LOST MAPLES CAR CAMPING, BACKPACKING, AND HIKE

Fall is the perfect time of year to enjoy the outdoors in Texas, and Lost Maples with its beautiful trees and trails is certainly one of the best places for camping and hiking. Lee Dodge will lead a small group of backpackers to one of the primitive campsites while the rest of us set up camp in the campground. On Saturday we'll take a 6 to 7 mile hike and have a potluck dinner that evening. Space is limited. Difficulty: MODERATE to DIFFICULT. Suggested donation: \$4 per adult. Participants pay their own entrance fee and share the cost for campsites. Car-pooling is encouraged. Leaders: Marsha Meredith [MarshaM@satx.rr.com or 675-4097] and Lee Dodge [LSG999@earthlink.net].

DEC 2, SUN: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This is a bike ride on paved trails and roads that go between the historic missions of San Antonio. Total trip length will range from 18 to 27 miles, depending on participants. No child (or adult) left behind. Meet at Mission Concepcion in the grass parking lot SE of the paved parked lot at 9:00 AM. Must bring and wear helmet. Difficulty: MODERATE. Suggested

donation: \$2. Contact leader Lee Dodge at LSG999@earthlink.net, or 210-647-0216.

DEC 31, MON: FROZEN CHOSEN CAMPOUT

Leaders: Ellen Clegg, eclegg@satx.rr.com, 210-488-7787, Marsha Meredith, MarshaM@satx.rr.com

Sierra Club Calendars Coming!

2008 Sierra Club engagement and wall calendars will arrive soon. Support the Alamo Group by purchasing your calendars from us!

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. The Alamo Sierran, 2. Publication No. 0018-475, 3. Sep. 27, 2007, 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.): 2100, No. Copies of Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date (Sept.): 2125; B. Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541: Avg. 528 Sept. 516; 2. Paid In-County Subscriptions: Avg. 1472 Sept. 1432; 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. 2000 Sept. 1948; 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. 100 Sept. 177; E. Total Free or Nominal Distribution (15D 1, 2, 3, & 4): Avg. 100 Sept. 177; F. Total Distribution (15C and 15E): Avg. 2100 Sept. 2125; G. Copies not Distributed: Avg. 0 Sept. 0; H. Total (15F and G): Avg. 2100 Sept. 2125; I. Percent Paid (15C divided by 15F times 100): Avg. 95.2 Sept. 91.7. 17. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Hector J. Gonzalez, Assistant Treasurer.

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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.

OCT 13, SAT: BRACKENRIDGE PARK DAY HIKE.

Explore Brackenridge Park, near the heart of San Antonio. Rediscover this urban jewel, with its upgraded trails, fanciful artwork, and fascinating history. Optional brunch at a funky eatery nearby.

MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting: 3rd Tuesday 7 p.m. Jerry Morrissey 497-5470
 Executive Committee: 4th Monday, 7 p.m. Tom Dukes 828-3721
 Newsletter Submissions deadline 3rd Thursday (Thursday before ExCom) . Fred Wills user261695@aol.com
 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 Monday, 7 p.m. Paula Stone 393-7351

ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS & MEMBERS

Jerry Morrissey Chair Person 497-5470
 Loyd Cortez Vice Chair 674-9489
 Carolyn Wells Secretary 271-0640
 Tom Dukes 828-3721
 Hector Gonzalez 226-6069
 Eloise Stoker 828-0919
 Paula Stone 393-7351
 Fred Wills 673-9566
 Sharon Dukes (non voting) Treasurer 828-3721

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs Eloise Stoker 828-0919
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 Newsletter Fred Wills 673-9566
 Website Tom Dukes 828-3721

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Outings Chair Lee Dodge 647-0216
 Political Committee Beck Steiner 342-6694
 Outreach & Education .. Carolyn Wells 271-0640

CONSERVATION CONTACTS

Conservation Chair Paula Stone 393-7351
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 Genetically Modified Organisms Michele Petty 490-4133
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 Tree Conservation Richard Alles 494-2088
 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: Roland Gutierrez; 207-7064; district3@sanantonio.gov
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 Dist. 5: Lourdes Galvan; 207-7043; district5@sanantonio.gov
 Dist. 6: Delicia Herrera; 207-7065; district6@sanantonio.gov
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 Dist. 9: Kevin Wolff; 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.

Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 6443
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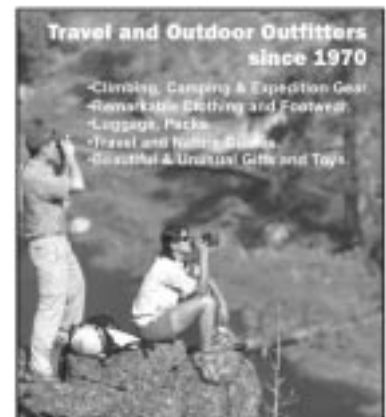
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