



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 41 NO. 6 JUNE/JULY 2007

Tea Time with the Sierra Club

A Sierra Social Event

Madhatters Tea House in the King William historic district is always a fun spot for a Sierra Club gathering. Join us on Thursday, June 28 from 5:00 - 8:00 pm to visit and relax. Choose from over 50 teas by the pot, a broad range of beer and wine, and a fresh and unique menu. Madhatters is located at 320 Beauregard, and can be reached at 212-4832. Contact Valeria Lopez at 478-0545, valo.4@netzero.net, or Sharon Dukes at 828-3721, sdukes@grandecom.net for details.

Summer Fund Appeal

This has been an exciting year of growth for the Alamo Group: Cool Cities success and increased conservation activism, expanded outings and social gatherings, a bigger, better website (<http://AlamoSierraClub.org>) and enhanced action alert system. There have been many positive changes, with more to come. But effective conservation advocacy costs money. Our Cool Cities victory on Earth Day triggered several spontaneous donations, and we ask you to give what you can, too.

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A Word from the Chair

We are living in a period when monumental changes will soon occur in our society.

The environmental community, including the Sierra Club, has a great opportunity and responsibility to help develop a more sustainable society based on renewable energy, recycling of materials, and reduced consumption of water and power.

At the local level, the Club has been advocating these principles to city and county governments and resource agencies such as CPS Energy, San Antonio Water System (SAWS), VIA Metropolitan Transit, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). As a result of our efforts, we have seen progress in water and energy conservation, and in the use of renewable energy. CPS Energy plans to announce subsidies for the installation of photovoltaic systems to capture solar energy and the City of San Antonio is negotiating to buy cleaner, more efficient natural gas vehicles for trash pickup.

The up and coming generations in our organization will most dramatically experience the predicted environmental changes due to global warming and will need to provide the leadership to meet the resulting challenges. The Alamo Group needs to reach out to and mentor our younger members, and to expand their participation in our group activities on the outings, social, and conservation fronts. Thus I would like to propose having a social event this summer or early fall for younger Alamo Group members and potential members to get to know each other. If you would like to participate in planning a fun event, please contact me at jlmorrisey@aol.com or at 497-5470.

Jerry Morrisey

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.

Note: Please keep this combined June-July issue of the Alamo Sierran for two months. You won't receive another issue until August.

June 19, 2007: San Antonio River Basin Parks

Lauren Minarcik, Park Projects Specialist for the San Antonio River Authority (SARA), will present an overview of SARA's nature-based park projects in the San Antonio River Basin. The plan seeks to identify special historical and natural resources for parks in south Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties. Come view her Power Point presentation and see how your community fits into the regional plan.

July 17, 2007: Volunteer Appreciation Potluck 6:30 PM

Come socialize at the potluck! This year our annual summer potluck will include recognition of those who have helped with various projects and events over the past year. Bring your favorite covered dish to share and your own plate, cup, and utensils. Iced tea and live acoustic music will be provided. Let's have a little fun! (note the early start time)

August 21, 2007: Gravel Strip Mines on the Guadalupe River

Kayce Kovacs of the Guadalupe River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) of Center Point will explain the threats to the river.

Recycling Computers & e-Waste in San Antonio

* Every year, over 20 million personal computers become obsolete, and only a small percentage are reused or recycled.

* Electronic circuit boards, batteries, and cathode ray tubes (CRTs) contain hazardous materials such as lead, mercury and hexavalent chromium. If improperly disposed, these toxins escape into the environment through landfill leachate or incinerator ash.

* Over 112 million pounds of valuable materials are recovered from used electronics each year for recycling. That amount needs to increase.

In San Antonio, you can find recycling options for computers and other e-waste at the City's website. Go to www.sanantonio.gov/enviro/solidwaste/

Continued on Page 2

Summer Fund Appeal - Continued

This past year was our most expensive ever. We purchased a laptop computer and media projector for Cool Cities presentations. We printed many thousands of postcards, brochures, and newsletter conservation inserts. We improved our positive name identification in the community through activities like Earth Day, SolarFest, neighborhood meetings, and even parades. Thanks to you, the scope of our conservation outreach has grown considerably, but so has the cost. The Alamo Group supports itself. During the past year we received less than \$400 from the national Sierra Club, so we must raise everything else locally. Cool Cities activities are expensive, and shifting our attention to outlying towns means greater costs loom for postage, printing, and telephone.

Please contribute what you can today. We remain focused and frugal with our finances, but we need your continuing support to maintain and expand our advocacy in San Antonio and south-central Texas. We are all unpaid volunteers united by a common goal - to explore, enjoy, and protect the local environment on which we all depend. Thank you for being part of this goal-oriented team.

Tom Dukes

Recycle Computers - Continued

RecyOptionsComp.asp for a list of options. Corona Visions (521-7612) is perhaps the only business in San Antonio that will take your old television and recycle it properly. Vandell Norwood of Corona Visions says that if they're unable to recondition electronic equipment, they de-manufacture it into component parts to recycle safely. "Our goal," says Norwood, "is a landfill-free environment."

Goodwill Industries and Dell have partnered in a program called Reconnect San Antonio, a free drop-off program for recycling unwanted computers. Goodwill accepts donated computer equipment from residents at their many retail stores and donation centers in San Antonio. Goodwill (1-800-483-9455) will sort it for reuse or recycling, and equipment that meets certain standards will be refurbished and resold at Goodwill's computer store at 4914 NW Loop 410. All proceeds from Goodwill's computer

sales support its non-profit job training and community programs.

For the sake of the community - and the planet - dispose of your electronics in an environmentally friendly, safe way.

Meredith Sterling

**King William Parade
Kudos**

A big Thank You to everyone who made the King William Parade a success!

It was fun and I think we presented a very appealing face to the public.

I was inspired by the people in the crowd who called out encouragement to us,

"Yea Sierra Club" and such. I heard several adults explaining to their children what the Sierra Club is!

Thanks especially to all who took the extra time to make fancy hats for the occasion.

Ellen Clegg had the most elegant one, Loretta Van Coppenolle had the most thematic one, Jerry Morrissey had the most natural one, Tom Dukes had the funniest one, Barbara McMillin had the most classic one, Randy Carroll-Bradd had the most electric one, and Paula Stone had the most flamboyant one.

And of course a really big thank you to Tom Dukes who worked above and beyond

the call of duty making all the signs, car decorations and backpacks.

Thanks also to our drivers, Chris Brown & family and Anne Alexander.

Thanks also to our sign toting foot soldiers and candy passers:

Hector Gonzales, Loyd Cortez, Dave Klar, Lee Dodge, Sharon Dukes,

Mike Brannon, Gina Pelligrino, and Al Kaufman. Thanks everyone!!

Mike Brannon

Legislative Report Card

The Texas Legislature adjourned in late May with mixed success on environmental issues. The Lone Star Chapter will soon release an in-depth analysis, but here is our quick take on several important issues.

Parks Funding: a qualified victory. Parks received 90% of the funding initially

recommended by the State Parks Advisory Committee. The cap on the sporting goods tax was lifted, but some of the money needed for parks repair depends on voters approving a state bond this November. In an unfortunate move, 18 historic sites were stripped from Parks and Wildlife and handed over to the State Historical Commission, which has no site management experience.

Energy Efficiency and Renewables: a major step forward. HB 3693, by

Rep. Joe Straus of San Antonio, immediately doubles from 10 to 20% the requirement that utilities meet increased demand with energy efficiency programs. It requires state agencies, political subdivisions, and school districts to analyze their energy use and reduce it by 30% within 6 years, and includes a host of other positive efficiency measures.

Water: a mixed bag. SB 3 offers some protection for instream flows and provides for more water conservation, but reserves sites for future reservoirs, including one, Fastrill, which has already been designated a National Wildlife Refuge. This could get interesting.

Tom Dukes

**Solar Towers: Hot
Alternative to Coal/
Nuclear**

*Texas has greatest solar power
potential*

When you think about solar power generation, solar panels or photovoltaic arrays most likely come to mind. A net-zero photovoltaic array system (PV) that converts sunlight directly to electricity can take a household "off the grid" for about \$25,000.

Although PV systems are becoming more efficient, they are still relatively expensive. Large PV farms are not a popular idea because the energy created is low per square foot of real estate. An alternative to large PV systems is the Solar Power Tower.

A Solar Power Tower is a boiler atop a tower, heated by the sun's rays bounced off a series of ground-level flat mirrors that track the sun across the sky. The heated liquid, molten salt, is pumped through a holding tank and the

heat is transferred into water - creating steam that drives a turbine generator.

Power output can be as high as a gas, coal, or nuclear plant without the drawbacks of pollution, environmental degradation, safety, or radioactive waste. A Solar Power Tower is not as complex as a nuclear plant, so the construction and running costs are about 1/3 less, and utilities can use existing electrical distribution systems. Solar Power Towers produce electricity at about \$0.05/per kilowatt, a cost similar to coal.

Solar Power Towers have been successfully tested; for example, a 10-megawatt (Mw) prototype near Barstow, California was still 80-90% effective on cloudy days, and the holding tank allowed uninterrupted electricity production 24 hr/day. Implementing towers has languished, though, because of inertia, ignorance about climate change, and inexpensive gas and oil power plants.

Spain, a Kyoto Treaty signatory, intends to be the power supplier to Europe, and has contracted for a 300Mw plant, expandable to 500Mw. Meanwhile, the US waits and watches.

Texas has the greatest potential in the U.S. for exploitable solar power; yet, ironically, it also leads the country in CO2 pollution. As citizens of Texas, we must demand this alternative to dirty coal and dangerous nuclear electrical generation.

Randy Carroll-Bradd

Action Alerts Make a Difference in EAA Vote

The Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) board strongly supported common sense protection of our water in an important May 8 vote, and the Alamo Group's email action alert system was part of the reason why.

EAA rules wisely forbid fuel storage tanks greater than 600 gallons on the recharge zone, and no exceptions are allowed. Recently, Methodist Hospital representatives appeared before the EAA's Management and Planning Committee seeking a rule change so the EAA board could grant exemptions. They hoped to install a 4,400 gallon diesel tank for emergency generators at the new Methodist Stone Oak Hospital. The hotel at PGA Village also informally expressed

an interest in a similar variance for their generators.

Sierra Club Action Alert participants quickly contacted their elected EAA board members, and on May 8, in an 11-3 voice vote, the board maintained the current rule - no fuel tank exemptions for anyone, even hospitals, over the recharge zone. Thank you to the EAA directors for their wisdom, and to all the Sierrans who made a difference. You too can become part of our growing band of environmental activists.

Sign up for email Action Alerts by contacting Tom Dukes at tdukes@grandecom.net, or visit our website: <http://AlamoSierraClub.org>.

Shop With Reusable Cloth Bags

Next time you go shopping and you hear the inevitable question at the checkout counter—"will that be paper or plastic?"—rub your chin and say "neither." You have made a decision to use a more environmentally friendly way of bagging your goods. Paper and plastic waste resources, burden our landfills, and litter our world. Cloth or canvas bags, preferably organic, are rapidly becoming the smartest choice. Cotton, hemp or other natural fibers used in these bags have a much longer life than paper or plastic. Sure, it will be hard to break old habits, but once you obtain your cloth tote bags you will never go back to paper or plastic. Just keep them in your car so they are always available.

Some nations, including Australia, Ireland, Denmark, Bangladesh, South Africa and Switzerland, have banned plastic bags, imposed fees, or forged

agreements with retailers to reduce their use. San Francisco was first city in the USA to ban them. Now communities nationwide are taking a look at banning plastic bags.

HEB already offers long-lasting, reusable fiber bags for a nominal fee. Here is a great web site that offers cloth bags at reasonable prices: <http://www.ecobags.com/>.



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.

JUN 30, SAT: OLD TUNNEL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Combine bat watching and railroad history in the Hill Country on this short drive to the Comfort area. Old Tunnel WMA is the smallest of Texas' wildlife management areas, yet it boasts the largest population of mammals found on any WMA in the state. Plan to share dinner in Comfort at Guenther's Biergarten & Grill, then drive to the tunnel in time for the program, followed by the bat emergence around 8:30-8:45 PM. Contact leader Fred Wills, 673-9566 or User261695@aol.com for details.

JUL 21, SAT: CANOE TRIP - SAN MARCOS RIVER

Cool off in the beautiful, spring-fed San Marcos River. We will put in at City Park just downstream of the springs. Canoe rentals will be available through a commercial outfitter. Contact leaders for details: Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net or 647-0216, and Terry Platt, 695-9570 or taplatt@earthlink.net.

AUG 11, SAT: TUBING TRIP

Take advantage of the Texas sunshine by joining us for a tubing trip. Contact leader for details: Terry Platt, 695-9570 or taplatt@earthlink.net.

SEP 21-22, FRI-SAT: ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEANUP

What can be more fun than joining with other Sierrans in this international event? We'll camp at Padre Island National Seashore south of Corpus Christi Friday night. Saturday morning we'll spend 3 hours (9-noon) picking up and cataloging debris from a particular section of the beach. After that we'll swim and picnic. Those who want to camp a second night can do so. Difficulty: EASY: Cost: FREE. Contact Marsha Meredith, 675-4097 or marsha1205@sbcglobal.net for more information.

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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 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
 Saul Wilen 692-1268
 Fred Wills 673-9566
 Sharon Dukes (non voting) Treasurer 828-3721

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs Eloise Stoker 828-0919
 Membership Loyd Cortez 674-9489
 Publicity George Windrow 408-1988
 Mailings Jim Stewart 692-0727
 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
 Saul Wilen 692-1268

CONSERVATION CONTACTS

Conservation Chair Paula Stone 393-7351
 Co-Chair Dave Klar 495-2148
 Endangered Species Fred Wills 673-9566
 Fluoridation L. Van Coppenolle 492-4620
 Genetically Modified Organisms Michele Petty 490-4133
 Organic Gardening Dave Klar 495-2148
 Recycling L. Van Coppenolle 492-4620
 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
 District 1: Roger Flores Jr.; 207-7279; district1@sanantonio.gov
 District 2: Sheila McNeil; 207-7278; district2@sanantonio.gov
 District 3: Roland Gutierrez; 207-7064; district3@sanantonio.gov
 District 4: Richard Perez; 207-7281; district4@sanantonio.gov
 District 5: Patti Radle; 207-7043; district5@sanantonio.gov
 District 6: Delicia Herrera; 207-7065; district6@sanantonio.gov
 District 7: Elena Guajardo; 207-7044; district7@sanantonio.gov
 District 8: Art Hall; 207-7086; district8@sanantonio.gov
 District 9: Kevin Wolff; 207-7325; district9@sanantonio.gov
 District 10: Chip Haass; 207-7276; district10@sanantonio.gov

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Alamo Group website address
www.alamosierraclub.org

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Alamo Group of the Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 6443
 San Antonio, Texas 78209

PERIODICAL

Membership

Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
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LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
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