



# THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 40 No. 5 MAY 2006

## Save A Tree

The Alamo Sierran is now available via e-mail (dare we call it The E-lamo Sierran?). If you wish to receive our newsletter electronically, there are two ways to do it.

One is to visit our website, where the Sierran is always available in pdf format. The address is [www.sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/alamo](http://www.sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/alamo). Use the free, readily available Adobe Acrobat Reader to view pdf pages on your computer.

A second way to get the newsletter electronically is have the pdf version sent to you as an e-mail attachment every month. To sign up for this option, contact Loyd Cortez at [loydcortez@earthlink.net](mailto:loydcortez@earthlink.net). Try the electronic Sierran for a few months, and if you like this approach, we can make it permanent and stop your paper copy, saving resources in the process.

Ready to permanently switch from paper to e-mail delivery? Give Loyd your name, street address, and membership number (the 8 digit number on the top of the mailing label on this newsletter). We then will have national Sierra Club stop printing your Alamo Sierran mailing label, so it is important that we always have your updated e-mail address. We don't ever want to lose you!

## Sierrans Invade King William

A smiling band of Alamo Sierrans marched in the King William Parade on April 29, publicizing the virtues of energy efficiency to a huge cheering crowd. We had two giant wind turbines, a bright yellow sun, a couple of hybrid Priuses decked out in full parade regalia, and lots of festive signs and waving banners.

Our thanks to the Sierra Club marching crew: Paula Stone, Twyla Arthur, Mary DiGiacomo, Richard Alles, Al Kaufman, Carolyn Wells, Dave Wells, Ned Allen, Lee Dodge, Emily Arnold, Derek Trobaugh, Jerry Morrissey, Dave Klar, Loretta Van Coppenolle, Barbara McMillin, Loyd Cortez, Meredith Sterling, Steve Shepard, Sharon Dukes, Tom Dukes, and Hector Gonzalez, the Samba King of Baja King William.

## SA Tree Ordinance Under Assault

*At press time, we learned that the City Council is scheduled to vote on Tree Preservation Ordinance changes in early June, although that date might change. This critical issue needs your immediate action. Please visit the Alamo Group website, ([www.sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/alamo](http://www.sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/alamo)), for the latest information. We urge you to call or write ASAP.*

San Antonio's Tree Ordinance is under assault yet again and we need your help to prevent it from being weakened even more than it already is. Please call, write or email your councilperson and

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## WORD from the Chair by Tom Dukes

The old adage about volunteer organizations is that ten percent of the people do ninety percent of the work. After a couple of months back at the helm of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, I can ruefully say that I wish it were true. Boy, do I wish.

We are an organization of 2000 environmentally concerned individuals, so, whipping out my trusty solar powered calculator, I rapidly conclude that we should have perhaps 200 active volunteers doing the work of the local Sierra Club. Even making allowances for my admittedly poor math skills, I can only ask, "Uh, where are you?"

If we had 200 volunteers, we would be the most energetic, effective conservation organization this town has ever seen. Parks would sprout like weeds, unscrupulous developers would mend their evil ways, the air would never display a trace of smog, and the aquifer would be forever safe. If only we had 200 volunteers...

Edward Abbey, brilliant author and lifelong lover of all things wild, once observed, "Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul." It's obvious you care, because, otherwise, you wouldn't be reading this. So, let there be action!

Quite honestly, we need you. We need your help in any way you can: folding newsletters, welcoming new members, leading outings, writing articles, attending meetings, assisting with conservation issues, even bringing the snacks to a general meeting. It's fun, it's rewarding, and it's important. We need you. Yes, you.

Unsure of where to start? Right now, call one of the contacts listed on page 4 of this newsletter, or talk to one of us at the monthly meeting. We don't want all your time, only a little bit. Because every little bit helps.

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.

### May 16, 2006: The Headwaters Project

The Incarnate Word Community presents a new project for the ecological restoration of the San Antonio River Headwaters area in the Olmos Basin.

### June 20, 2006: The Edwards Aquifer

by George B. Ozuna, Hydrologist

**SA Tree Ordinance Continued**

the mayor today and simply say you do not support weakening San Antonio's tree ordinance through the city arborist's proposed amendments.

We have made it easy for you to take action on this very important conservation issue. First, on your newsletter (back page) and on our web site ([www.sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/alamo](http://www.sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/alamo)) you can find a list of phone numbers and email addresses for our mayor and city council members. At the very least, email and phone in a message that you do not support any of the city arborist's proposed amendments which would weaken the city's tree ordinance. You can also locate on our web site, under conservation, a letter that the Alamo Group has sent to the city arborist expressing our opposition to weakening the tree ordinance. The letter also includes our own recommendations, which you can use if you write a personal letter or email to the mayor and council members. The most effective way we can protect the tree ordinance from being weakened is for YOU, as a concerned individual, to make your wishes known by contacting the mayor and council members.

Please take this positive step for San Antonio's future generations and for the environment. Call today.

David Klar, Conservation Chair

**Comment on Toll Roads**

*The following eloquent and insightful letter was written by local Sierra Club member Steven Kellman in response to our recent call for comments to TxDOT concerning the proposed 281 toll road. It so lucidly argues for a more logical and environmentally sound approach, that, with the author's permission, we include it here for all to read. Thank you, Mr. Kellman, and all the other Sierrans who are taking the time to make their voices heard on this issue. - Ed.*

Dear Ms. Camarillo:

I write in strong opposition to the proposal to build a toll road along Highway 281, as well as elsewhere in

the San Antonio area. The project is unnecessary, expensive, and destructive.

Gasoline taxes, without further financial burdens on drivers, have already produced sufficient revenue to build additional lanes on 281. However, because they generate increased traffic, more highways are only a temporary solution to current congestion. We need what sensible urban planners elsewhere in Texas and the rest of the United States have long ago created: comprehensive, efficient public transportation. In particular, a light rail system would alleviate much of the problem caused by the increased use of single-passenger cars and trucks.

Building more highways-and thus encouraging more automobile traffic-increases our dependency on foreign oil. At a time when Bexar County is verging on non-compliance with federal air quality standards, it is utterly irresponsible to pave over the county. Additional roads increase pollution, while also causing destruction of trees and other vegetation and a threat to animal species, probably including some endangered ones. Such devastation has negative consequences not only for the aesthetics and physical well-being but also for the economy of the region.

Public transit, in coordination with bicycle as well as automobile routes, would, while respecting the natural environment, strengthen community bonds and allow for safe, healthy, and efficient movement of residents within Bexar County. I urge you to oppose toll roads for 281.

Sincerely,  
Steven G. Kellman

**Endangered Species Act  
93% Successful**

It seems like the more things change, the more they stay the same. Congressman Richard Pombo (R-CA) has tried a variety of tactics over the years to destroy the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

His latest ploy is to "improve" it because he claims it just doesn't work. The basis for that bogus claim is that very few listed species have ever

sufficiently recovered to be removed from ESA protection. Never mind that it takes many years to revive a species with only a few surviving individuals perched on the brink of extinction. In Pombo's view, lack of instant success equals failure.

But critics of the ESA are wrong. Looking specifically at the northeastern U.S., researchers recently found that no endangered species have gone extinct in the region and that 93 percent have increased their population size or become stable since being protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"The Endangered Species Act has been remarkably successful," said Kieran Suckling, policy director for the Center for Biological Diversity and author of the report. "Humpback whales, bald eagles, brown pelicans, green and Kemp's ridley sea turtles, piping plovers, roseate terns, red-bellied turtles, and dwarf cinquefoils are just a few of the species that are recovering quite nicely."

Titled *Measuring the Success of the Endangered Species Act: Recovery Trends in the Northeastern United States*, the report is the first ever attempt to document long-term population trends of all endangered species within a region. The 125 page study covered eight states: Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. It examined population trend data for all 53 species listed as endangered for at least six years.

"There is considerable rhetoric surrounding the Endangered Species Act," said Suckling, "but very few efforts to gather and scientifically study real data. The data are now in and it's clear that the Endangered Species Act is effective."

The study also found that recovery is a long-term process and it will take decades of continued work to recover and remove all Northeastern species from the endangered species list. Federal recovery plans exist for most species and require an average of 42 years to achieve recovery. On average, however, Northeastern species have only been protected by the Endangered

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Species Act for 24 years. The recovery plans expected 11 species to have recovered by 2005. The actual record shows that nine have been downlisted from "endangered" to "threatened" status, delisted, proposed for delisting, or are under consideration for delisting in whole or in part.

"It is important to have rational expectations of how long recovery will take and how much work is involved. Declarations by Richard Pombo that the Endangered Species Act is failing because most species have not yet recovered are nonsense," said Suckling. "Pombo is like a man who starts a ten-day antibiotic treatment then complains that he's still sick on the third day. Recovery takes time. The good news is that 93 percent of species are on the recovery track."

The report and summary slideshow can be seen at [www.esasuccess.org](http://www.esasuccess.org).

## San Antonio's Bright Idea

With developers taking down seemingly every tree in sight, parking lots springing up over the recharge zone almost overnight, and toll proponents clamoring for more and wider ribbons of pavement, it's hard to visualize San Antonio as an environmentally astute city.

However, did you know that our town was an early adopter of a technology that greatly decreases energy use and reduces greenhouse emissions while saving taxpayers money? Last year, San Antonio converted all its traffic signals to Light Emitting Diodes, (LED's), changing out the bulbs at almost 1,100 intersections.

LED's use 82% less electricity, so the change has already prevented several million tons of greenhouse gases from entering the local atmosphere. And since LED's operate for many years before they fail, maintenance costs will be considerably lower.

In fact, fuel and maintenance savings will soon offset the initial expense of the conversion, a winning situation for both taxpayers and the environment.

Way to go, San Antonio.

## Thank You, Basura Bashers!

Muchisimas gracias to the volunteers who participated in the 2006 Basura Bash. On March 25, Estela Castro, Dian Degan, Patti and Eden Gonzalez, Dave Klar, Pat Stanchak, Meredith Sterling, Derek Trobaugh, Gerry Waller, John Westerhoff, Fred Wills, Loyd Cortez, Jack Elder and Hector Gonzalez picked up trash and recyclables along the banks of the San Antonio River by Mission San Juan. This year the volunteers split into two groups with one group cleaning along the Corps of Engineers channel and the other cleaning along the original river channel that runs behind the Mission.

We also want to thank Greg Mitchell, NPS biologist, who fished tires and other trash from the old channel, and provided staff and vehicles to haul the trash collected by the volunteers.

The visitors to Mission San Juan will enjoy a much cleaner view of the river as a result of our volunteers' work.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Conservation Committee Meeting, May 16, 6 p.m., Picante Grill

Park clean-up, June 3, 9 a.m. - noon Southside Lions Park - contact Christel Villarreal, 210-333-9437 or 210-861-5630, [christel.villarreal@gmail.com](mailto:christel.villarreal@gmail.com)

Solar Fest, June 17, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Maverick Park - contact Hector Gonzalez, 210-226-6069 or [hjgonzalez@aol.com](mailto:hjgonzalez@aol.com)

Outings Leader Training - mid-July

## 25 Year Member Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Executive Committee, we want to extend a joyous acknowledgement of the following members on their 25 year membership with the Sierra Club:

Barbara A Brooks, Priscilla and James Stanley, Steve Haffner and Holly Cassells, and Beckwith Steiner.



## GCSNA Saturday Hikes

Three recurring monthly hikes are offered.

### NATURALLY FIT HIKES:

Enjoy the outdoors while getting fit with beginner-to-intermediate, 2-4 hour hikes on the first and last Saturday of every month.

### HIKE THE CANYON:

Unfamiliar with the trails at Government Canyon or just want to go hiking there with other people? Join the Friends of Government Canyon Volunteers on the second Saturday of every month for a guided, 5-7-mile hike on one of the many trails at the state natural area.

### EXPLORE THE CANYON:

Interested in the flora, fauna, natural and cultural history of Government Canyon? Willing to court a little mystery? "Explore the Canyon" interpretive walks on the third Saturday of every month may be for you!

These hikes are limited to the first 10 people who show up. Participants meet at 8:30 a.m. at the visitor center by the rainwater harvesting tower. Bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen or hat and wear good, protective hiking shoes or boots. Age limits vary for these hikes so please check. Entry fees apply; donations to the Friends of Government Canyon are gratefully accepted. These hikes are subject to cancellation; call to confirm (210) 688-9055. For more information you may also visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/govcan/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/govcan/) and click on the Calendar of Events link.

## A Job That Matters

TexPIRG and the other state Public Interest Research Groups form a nationwide network of state-based citizen-led progressive advocacy groups.

This year they are hiring 150 graduating college students to help determine where this country is going: solving energy problems, preventing pesticide tests on people, reforming the campaign finance system, making refineries safer, and having an impact on many other public interest issues.

If you or someone you know is graduating college this spring and wants a career with real results on the profound issues of our time, consider a position with the state PIRGs.

You can learn more by visiting <http://www.pirg.org/jobs>.

# MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting: ..... 3rd Tuesday 7 p.m. .... Tom Dukes ..... 828-3721  
 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: ..... 2nd Tuesday every 2 months, 7 p.m. .... Lee Dodge ..... 647-0216  
 Conservation Committee Meeting: ..... 4th Thursday, 7 p.m. .... David Klar ..... 495-2148

## ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS & MEMBERS

Tom Dukes ..... Chair Person ..... 828-3721  
 Loyd Cortez ..... Vice Chair ..... 674-9489  
 Hector Gonzalez ..... Treasurer ..... 226-6069  
 Mary Gallatin DiGiacomo .. Secretary ..... 244-3239  
 Jerry Morrisey ..... 497-5470  
 Eloise Stoker ..... 828-0919  
 Derek Trobaugh ..... 824-7915  
 Carolyn Wells ..... 271-0640  
 John Westerhoff ..... 494-9475

### ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs ..... Eloise Stoker ..... 828-0919  
 Membership ..... Loyd Cortez ..... 674-9489  
 Publicity ..... Michele Petty ..... 490-4133  
 Mailings ..... Jim Stewart ..... 692-0727  
 Newsletter ..... Marsha Meredith ..... 675-4097  
 Website ..... Loyd Cortez ..... 674-9489

### COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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

### CONSERVATION CONTACTS

Conservation Chair ..... Dave Klar ..... 495-2148  
 Co-Chair ..... Derek Trobaugh ..... 824-7915  
 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 Morrisey ..... 497-5470  
 Population ..... John Westerhoff ..... 494-9475

### U.S. CONGRESSPERSONS

Charlie Gonzalez (210) 472-6195  
 Lamar Smith (210) 821-5024  
 Henry Cuellar (210) 271-2851  
 Henry Bonilla (210) 697-9055

### CITY COUNCIL

Mayor: Phil Hardberger; 207-7060; mayor@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 1: Roger Flores Jr.; 207-7279; district1@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 2: Sheila McNeil; 207-7278; district2@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 3: Roland Gutierrez; 207-7064; district3@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 4: Richard Perez; 207-7281; district4@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 5: Patti Radle; 207-7043; district5@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 6: Delicia Herrera; 207-7065; district6@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 7: Elena Guajardo; 207-7044; district7@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 8: Art Hall; 207-7086; district8@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 9: Kevin Wolff; 207-7325; district9@sanantonio.gov  
 Distric 10: Chip Haass; 207-7276; district10@sanantonio.gov

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 San Antonio, Texas 78209  
 Info Line: (210) 222-8195

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

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INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
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
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

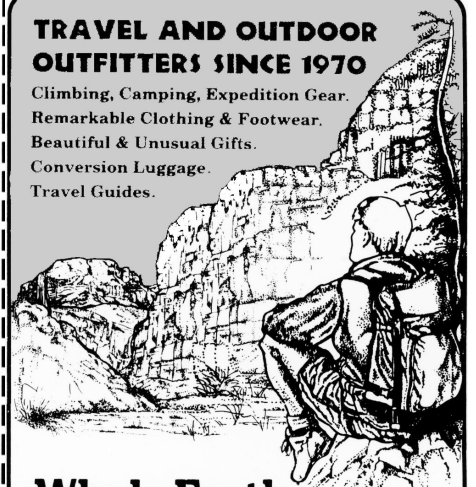
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