



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 41 No. 4 APR 2007

A Word from the Chair by Jerry Morrissey

My spirits have been lifted by awakening vegetation as Earth begins its annual warming cycle. I love to ramble in local natural areas, especially during springtime. Try it. Choose an area to visit often and observe the flowering of the plants and the stirrings of the bees, birds, butterflies and other critters, large and small. These visits will invigorate your body, mind and soul.

This is the season for gardening. Our March speaker, Robin Bowman gave a wonderful presentation on the value of growing vegetables locally with organic techniques and producing eggs with true free range chickens. She emphasized the value of avoiding pesticides, herbicides and hormones. We hope to soon arrange an outing to her community supported farm near Sabinal.

Spring brings several opportunities to work with other Sierra Club members to advocate for a healthy Earth. Sign up for our alert list and contact your state legislators on issues like a moratorium on coal-fired power plants and in support of renewable energy projects. Work to elect environmentally friendly candidates endorsed by the Sierra Club. Get involved in our Cool Cities campaign to reduce global greenhouse emissions.

On the energy front, CPS Energy is planning one or more Energy Summits for public input into San Antonio's energy generation future. If you would like to attend the first meeting - June 13 from 1-5 p.m. — contact me ASAP at jlmorrissey@aol.com or 497-5470. Please provide your mailing address so that CPS Energy can send you an invitation.

Pizza Under the Trees

Meet-&-greet social event:

Join us!

Let's get together to ... eat and drink! Join your fellow Sierrans at Fralo's (The Art of Pizza www.fralos.com), 23651 IH 10 West, 210-698-6616 on Sunday, April 22, about 5:30 or so. It's BYOB if you want beer or wine; Fralo's is next to an elementary school, so is 'dry'. Fralo's has won awards for its pizza, has a wonderful tree-covered outdoor area, and is conveniently located near both Friedrich and Eisenhower Parks in case

anyone wants some brisk, pre-pizza exercise. If you don't have to get up early in the A.M., there's live music, too. Meet at 3:30 in the parking lot if you want to walk — Call Kim Smith at (210)872-1178, lonestarloveforever@hotmail.com for more info on that option. Call Meredith Sterling at 694-2660 or ireinventme@yahoo.com for general info on this event.

Want to be reminded about upcoming social events? Contact Meredith Sterling at ireinventme@yahoo.com to be added to our social butterflies email list.

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.

April 17, 2007: Buying land to protect the aquifer

Paul Barwick of the Nature Conservancy talks about San Antonio's Proposition 1 and discusses the rivers of western Texas.

May 15, 2007: Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve

Jeffrey Greene, in "Water From Stone," tells the story of the decades-long effort to restore "the sorriest piece of land in Blanco County." The Bambergers will attend.

Edwards Aquifer Threatened by Legislative Move

For the third time in as many sessions the Texas legislature is being asked to raise the aquifer pumping cap from the current 450,000 acre-feet permitted in the Edwards Aquifer Authority Act. House Bill 1292 is a complex bill that would allow pumping in the range of 549,000 to 570,000 acre-feet in wet years and reduce pumping in drought to 340,000 acre-feet. This very contentious issue pits water user against water user, city against city, and region against region. Such contention does little to help South-Central Texas resolve our complex water issues.

The Sierra Club has repeatedly cautioned that increasing the pumping limit has very real consequences. Water rationing will occur more

frequently. Chronically diminished springflow makes less water available for downstream users like Victoria. Increased pumping will also make it extremely difficult to cut back quickly enough in time of drought to prevent the springs from going dry, with disastrous results for the endangered species living there.

The Sierra Club believes the issue can only be resolved through science-based management of the Edwards Aquifer that balances the interests of all those competing for its water - agricultural, urban San Antonio, springflow protection, and downstream users. Such a system can best be achieved by active and open dialogue available through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Implementation Program (RIP). It makes sense to allow Edwards Aquifer management issues to be resolved

Continued on Page 2

Edwards Aquifer - Continued

through the RIP process since all stakeholders appear willing to participate.

The move to legislatively impose, without scientific justification, an increase in pumping limits may undermine the RIP process and limit any creative solutions that might come out of it. This is why the Sierra Club opposes House Bill 1292.

Some say we need to resolve the pumping cap issue now because the Edwards Act requires pumping to be reduced to 400,000 acre-feet in 2008. We recommend postponing this deadline until 2010 and allowing the RIP process to proceed unencumbered, while requiring all relevant state agencies to participate in the RIP process.

Cool Cities

The Conservation Committee is proud to announce that Shavano Park Mayor David Marne has signed on to the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. Shavano Park is now officially the first local "Cool City". Their pledge to reduce greenhouse gases in their part of the county will help us all. Hopefully, other mayors, including Mayor Hardberger, will see the wisdom in taking this step to help protect our city from catastrophic climate change. Congratulations to Mayor Marne for his foresight and wisdom.

Paula Stone

Environmental Excellence Award to Mayor Hardberger

On March 13 Mayor Hardberger was presented with the Alamo Group's Environmental Excellence Award for the many contributions he has made in protecting our city. A delegation of club members including Loretta Van Coppenolle, Jerry Morrissey, Tom Dukes, Olivia Eisenhauer, and Paula Stone braved the drizzly weather to take the award to City Hall. The mayor graciously took time out of his busy schedule to discuss San

Antonio's environmental issues with us.

With pleasure, he noted the city's recent victory in its lawsuit against Continental Homes for callously dozing thousands of trees to build homes on barren lots. The city won a 15 million dollar judgment which is under appeal, but more importantly established its right to control environmental degradation in its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Mayor Hardberger spoke proudly of the city's purchase of 107 acres for Voelker Park. It was easy to see that the new park was a favorite project for him. He reminded us that if the May bond issue passes, the remaining 2/3 of the ranch will be purchased for a total of 311 acres, making it almost the same size as Brackenridge Park.

The bond issue includes a total of 78 million dollars for parks and park improvements. Voelker Park and its improvements would make up a large portion of this amount but the balance will be used to maintain and improve existing parks throughout the city.

Paula Stone

SAWS Crafts New Drought Plan
New surcharge structure an improvement

In February, San Antonio's City Council approved changes to the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) Drought Management Plan (DMP) that include a drought surcharge structure both more inclusive and equitable than the one it replaces.

The new DMP limits landscape irrigation by sprinklers to one day every two weeks in Drought Stage 3. It establishes a surcharge that more than doubles the cost for residential water usage above 12,717 gallons and for commercial landscape usage above 5236 gallons in Stage 4. There will be variance procedures for requesting more water for large landscapes.

Stages 1, 2 and 3 are triggered by Edwards Aquifer levels of 650, 640 and 630 ft above sea level at well J-17 in Bexar County or by reduced flows at Comal and San Marcos Springs. These stages trigger reducing SAWS aquifer water usage by

certain percentages mandated by the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA). Stage 4 begins when Stage 3 reduction quotas set by EAA are not being met after a 30-day monitoring period. SAWS and the City can move to higher drought stages sooner than specified by aquifer levels or springflows. This past year, later drought stages were delayed due to available Edwards Aquifer water that had been stored during wet years in an Aquifer Storage and Recovery facility in southeast Bexar County.

Although the new surcharge structure is an improvement, a surcharge will be applied only in extreme drought - a situation where an outright ban on landscape irrigation would likely be more effective. Implementation of the surcharge much earlier was advocated by the Sierra Club's Jerry Morrissey, who served on the drafting committee.

Jerry Morrissey

Guajardo Endorsed for City Council

The Alamo Group has once again endorsed Councilwoman Elena Guajardo for the District 7 position. Guajardo received our Environmental Hero award this past December, and has consistently voted with the Sierra Club. We want to give her all the help we can — she has a tough opponent in Justin Rodriguez. You can help even if you don't live in her district; call John Pruder, campaign manager, at 389-2961.

Fun at Lost Maples

The cool, crisp weather on the weekend of February 23-25 was perfect for a camping trip to Lost Maples State Natural Area — provided that you could spend the night snuggled into a warm sleeping bag. A joint outing between the Austin and Alamo Groups of the Sierra Club was attended by Steve Funderburg and Oliver Reynolds from Austin and Ellen Clegg and Olga Crespín from San Antonio. The group arrived Friday evening to a nearly empty campground but awoke the next day to a sea of tents as Boy Scouts from Houston had descended upon the park in the wee hours. These young men and their dads

soon moved on to one of the primitive camping areas for an overnight backpacking expedition.

Lost Maples is one of Texas' most scenic areas. Loop trails wind through canyons and creekbeds and over the tops of ridges and really let you know you're in the Hill Country. Oliver and Steve hiked the 7 1/2 mile West Loop Saturday morning, and the whole group hiked the 4 1/2 mile East Loop that afternoon.

Saturday dinner was potluck. Steve had planned to grill chicken, but the strange smell emanating from the opened bag suggested it might be best to reconsider. The hit entrée was Ellen's dutch oven sloppy joes, -made even more interesting by the fact that she had inadvertently brought canned pizza dough instead of canned biscuits, thus creating a new dish: sloppy upside down pizza! Olga's fruit salad rounded things out, especially the papaya that she cut up and served as individual slices with lime and salt.

Saturday night was brisk, but Sunday was cool and clear; a perfect day for a leisurely walk up the Sabinal River canyon before the group parted ways and returned to city life.

Steve Funderburg

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.

APR 15, SUN: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

Springtime ride and tax-day celebration! This will be a ride of about 18 miles or so, depending on the desires of the group. We'll start at Mission Concepcion and ride down to Mission Espada and back. We'll stop and take short tours at some of the missions along the way. This ride is all on paved paths and roads, and is suitable

for street bikes. Children 10 years and over accompanied by at least one of their parents are welcome. Difficulty: moderate. Minimum requested donation: \$2 per adult. There will be an optional lunch stop for some Mexican food after the ride. We'll meet in the unpaved parking lot just southeast of the main parking lot at Mission Concepcion at 9 AM. Contact Lee Dodge, lsg999@earthlink.net, or 647-0216, or Ned Allen, NO1RVRMAN@yahoo.com, or 830-393-1127 (home), 210-347-4768 (cell) to register.

APR. 22, SUN: WALKER RANCH CITY PARK HIKE

Enjoy a morning hike thru this historic landmark park that sits next to Salado Creek on the North side of San Antonio. Meet at 9:30 AM at the main pavilion. Please contact David Klar at dklar63162@aol.com, or 495-2148 for more information.

MAY 5, SAT: LEON CREEK GREENBELT HIKE

Explore Leon Creek from Babcock Rd. to Schnabel Park. Meet at 8:30 AM. Two hiking options offered: 1) A slower hike of 2 miles or less to observe the native plants and birds of Leon Creek; 2) a faster paced hike of 4 miles for fitness. Difficulty: Easy to moderate. Hiking boots recommended for rough trails. Limited to 10 besides leaders. Must sign up by Wednesday, May 2. \$2 or \$3 donation requested. Contact leader Jerry Morrissey, jlmorrissey@aol.com, 382-2614 for further details. Additional leaders: Terry Platt, 210-695-9570, or taplatt@earthlink.net; and Scott Wolfe, papawolfe@sbcglobal.net, or 724-2707.

MAY 11, FRI: GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA

The days are beautiful and not hot yet so it is time to get out for an afternoon as we explore our own state natural area, Government Canyon near Helotes. We will hike around 7 miles looking for wildlife. We will hear about the area's past and perhaps view some of the artifacts. Bring your binoculars to search for wildlife. The trail is rocky with some elevation gain, so

sturdy hiking shoes are a must along with two quarts of water. Entrance fees are the responsibility of each hiker. Limit of 6 hikers. Children 12 and above are welcome with parent. For information and reservations, contact Terry Platt, taplatt@earthlink.net.

Volunteer Opportunities

Meet the public and help our Sierra Club present a positive image. Volunteering is a great way to get to know your fellow club members. To find out more, contact the event leader.

Earth Day: Wednesday, April 11, San Antonio College; Loyd Cortez [loydortez@earthlink.net, or 674-9489]

Earth Day: Thursday, April 12, NW Vista College; Carolyn Wells [cjacobswells@hotmail.com, or 271-0640]

Step It Up (a national day of climate action): Saturday, April 14, Tom Dukes [tdukes@grandecom.net or 828-3721]

Earth Day: Saturday, April 21, Woodlawn Lake; Loyd Cortez [loydortez@earthlink.net, or 674-9489]

King William Parade: Saturday, April 28, Join the parade and show your support for clean energy with an energy-themed hat of your own design. A prize will be given for the most outlandish and Fiesta appropriate hat. For details call Paula Stone, 393-7351 [pstone001@satx.rr.com]

Government Canyon State Natural Area

Every Saturday, beginning at 8:30 AM, park staff and/or volunteers lead a guided hike at Government Canyon State Natural Area. Not all hikes are suitable for young children, so check the Texas Parks and Wildlife Website at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar/> for descriptions; or call (210) 688-9055 for more information.

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: 4th 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 Marsha Meredith 675-4097
 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

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
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Thanks to Dave Hammeren of The Printed Word, 6502 Bandera Rd Suite 205, San Antonio, Tel 520-5700 for our nominal newsletter cost.

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

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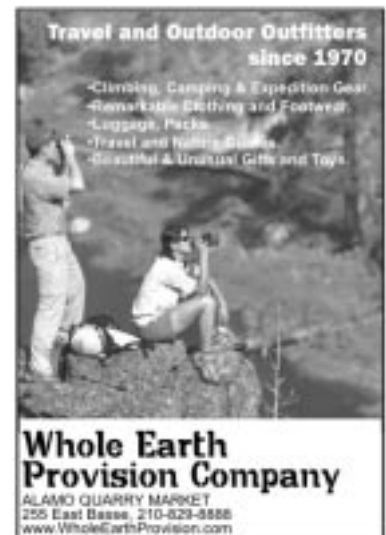
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REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
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LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
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