



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 42 NO. 6 JUN/JUL 2008

A Word from the Chair

2008 Fund Appeal

It's that time again.....our annual fund appeal. As you know we don't receive enough money from the national club to even pay for our newsletter. While they spend our dues on important national campaigns, we need funds to address important issues right here in San Antonio.

We are spending time and funds to educate ourselves, community groups and the San Antonio City Council on the need to use energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in the place of new nuclear power plants. Due to the efforts of the Sierra Club and our allies, Mayor Hardberger has advocated that the portion of the proposed CPS Energy rate hike for nuclear power plant funding be shifted to rebates for energy efficiency and renewable energy. We appreciate Mayor Hardberger's support of increased funding for these items, but realized that he and the CPS Energy staff and Board of Trustees are still seriously considering proceeding with funding for two nuclear power plants. Thus we are anticipating spending significant funds to continue our educational, fact-gathering and advocacy efforts in support of efficiency and renewables and in opposition to new nuclear power.

We are calling on our members to donate generously to our war-chest to work on this issue and on the protection of the water quality, air quality, and ecology of South Texas. For those of you who can't participate in the day to day press conferences, meetings with politicians, letter writing, phone banking, organizing, conferencing and planning, this is a perfect way for you to show your support to those unpaid and unsung heroes who carry the load. Your contribution will improve our morale and make a big difference toward our \$5000 fundraising goal. With our limited resources, you can rest assured that every dollar we receive is spent with care.

No Rate Hike For Nuclear

In a surprise move, San Antonio Mayor Phil Hardberger held a press conference Thursday, May 8, to announce that the portion of a requested City Public Service (CPS) rate increase designated for nuclear power would instead go toward efficiency. This was what the Sierra Club and its allies in the Citizens' Energy Coalition had been requesting. The mayor's move came after heavy lobbying by the coalition which opposes expansion of the South Texas Nuclear Project at Bay City. Many other San Antonio citizens also contacted their

Continued on Page 2

Vehicle Miles Traveled and Emissions:

A Presentation by Reid Ewing

It is always refreshing to get news from the north country. On Thursday, March 27, Reid Ewing, who has a Ph.D. in transportation planning from M.I.T. and is a research professor with the National Center for Smart Growth in College Park, Maryland, gave a special presentation on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and emissions reduction [at a related lecture to the 2008 Transportation Choices Forum held on

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.

June 17, 2008: The Greening of San Antonio

What is San Antonio doing to become a greener city and what else can be done? A panel discussion will look into these questions. Panelists will include Kathe Doran of CPS Energy, a representative from the City of San Antonio, Bill Barker of Solar San Antonio, Stephen Colley of the Metropolitan Partnership for Energy, and the Alamo Group's Jerry Morrissey.

July 15, 2008: Volunteer Appreciation Potluck Social

Come meet and mingle with fellow members. Bring your favorite covered dish to share. Please bring your own plate, cup, and utensils as well. Iced tea will be provided. Please note the early start time of 6:30 PM.

August 19, 2008: Kayaking Prince Williams Sound

Join Karen and Russell Seal as they present their Alaskan kayaking adventure.

Political Committee News

Anton Caputo, Express-News columnist, called me this week 25 minutes before his deadline. He asked me about the press release City Public Service (CPS) had just produced. In summary, the press release stated that the scheduled May 15 vote by City Council had been modified and that the money that was to be earmarked for nuclear power would be used for energy efficiency rebates. Mr. Caputo asked me if I thought that the City Council vote on the nuclear units would be put off until after the November elections. I replied "Yes, that seems to be what the press release indicates." Two days earlier,

Continued on Page 2

Come Celebrate Our 40th Anniversary in October!

Volunteers are needed to take part in the planning committee for the Alamo Group's 40th Anniversary Celebration. This occasion will take many volunteer hours to prepare and carry out. The Alamo Group is looking for people who are willing to join this volunteer committee. The 40th Anniversary will be a celebration of local environmental successes in our community, in addition to educating the public on the need for conservation. The Sierra Club will join with other like-minded organizations to

Continued on Page 3

Rate Hike - Continued

council representatives and the mayor to register their opposition to the rate hike, which would have paid interest on an obligation of \$206 million already committed by CPS Energy to preliminary design and engineering of two new STP units.

At first hailed as a victory, the mayor's move does not eliminate new nuclear from CPS' contemplated future energy mix. According to a memo issued by CPS following the press conference, monies to pay off the debt will come from existing capital improvement funds. The mayor is quoted in the memo as saying, "Of course, nuclear will remain as one of the options for the future energy needs for this community." In a memo issued by the mayor himself, he says, "We can't afford to wait to explore alternative forms of energy generation."

In response to the mayor's statement, Alamo Group conservation chair Loretta Van Coppenolle responded, "We are very disappointed that the mayor does not recognize the inappropriateness of nuclear in our future energy mix. To say that we can't afford to wait to explore alternative forms of energy means the mayor and CPS have failed to do their homework on efficiency and renewables. These are far more readily available than nuclear and can handle our future energy needs, even with continued population expansion." According to CPS, a proposed nuclear plant involves a lead time of 12-15 years. Efficiency brings almost immediate benefits in terms of demand reduction. Renewables such as wind and solar have far shorter construction periods than nuclear and do not have to undergo the scrutiny of nuclear as they are far more benign generating sources. They are also far less expensive. Data produced by the Rocky Mountain Institute indicate that nuclear is the most expensive option compared to the cost of coal, gas, wind, cogeneration and efficiency for new delivered electricity. According to Amory Lovins and others in the report Forget Nuclear, "Nuclear power, being the costliest option, delivers less electrical service per dollar than its rivals, so, not surprisingly, it's also a climate protection loser, surpassing in carbon emissions displaced per dollar only centralized, non-cogenerating

combined-cycle power plants burning natural gas. Firmed windpower and cogeneration are 1.5 times more cost effective than nuclear at displacing CO₂. So is efficiency at even an almost unheard of seven cents per kilowatthour. Efficiency at normally observed costs beats nuclear by a wide margin...."

The capital costs alone of the two units CPS and its partner NRG propose for the STNP will be between \$12 and \$18 billion according to calculations by nuclear expert Arjun Makhijani. Moody's Investor Service gives a cost within the same range, of \$16.2 billion. NRG has given unrealistically low estimates as to cost, ramping them up periodically. Their current estimate of \$9.9 billion is about half what the cost will more likely be.

Utilities and others who profit from nuclear energy have historically underestimated costs in order to win contracts. A 1986 Department of Energy review found that, "for those plants that began construction between 1966 and 1969, the utilities were underestimating the final cost of the nuclear plants by an average of 63% prior to construction beginning and were still underestimating their final cost by 22% when the plants were three-quarters complete" The first two units of the STNP were first estimated to cost \$974 million and wound up costing 5-6 times as much (\$5.5 billion). The Comanche Peak nuclear plant wound up costing 12 times its original estimate.

The Sierra Cub opposes nuclear power on the basis not only of cost but of health, safety and environmental degradation.

Vehicle Miles Traveled - Continued

Friday, March 28.] The American Institute of Architects (AIA) sponsored the Thursday lecture.

Ewing's goal is to reduce emissions by 60% by 2050. The problem is that VMT has been growing three times faster than the population because of urban development (sprawl). Also, the U.S. has one third of the world's automobiles, drives bigger cars, and drives further due to development patterns that increase distance driven.

"What effect would reduction of VMT have on CO₂ levels and how can we get there," Ewing asks. He suggests that up to now leapfrogging growth, low density, strip commercial centers that are auto-

dependent, and discontinuous transportation networks hamper emissions reduction. Portland, Oregon has a 25% lower VMT per capita than San Antonio. Why? Portland is more dense. The city has transit-oriented development or concentrations of population along transportation routes. Street connectivity is also better in Portland.

Ewing recommends that planning organizations use 2050 as their time horizon for future transportation and land use planning. Increasing density with infill and transit-oriented development would produce more walkable areas. Increasing density can reduce VMT by 33%, according to Ewing.

Ewing also asked us to look at future demographics of the U.S. that show an aging population. An older population values walking and wants to walk, so communities need to provide this option.

The federal government will more than likely shift funding from highways to transit in the near future, according to Ewing. That means more livable communities with services that are close in, that are walkable, and that have more transportation options such as rail transit. Infill, local streets, and a focus on "complete streets" (planning that recognizes that diverse transportation options need to be reflected in our streets) will be more important. That means more bike lanes, sidewalks, transit lanes, and lanes for autos driven by a wide range of ages must be available on many streets. High-performance roads won't be the only goal in the future, according to Ewing.

Barbara McMillin

Political News - Continued

members of the Sierra Club, along with representatives from other environmental groups, met with Mr. Zenn, chief of staff for Mayor Hardberger. We had a very passionate discussion about the upcoming City Council vote. We told Mr. Zenn that we did not oppose the rate increase and, in fact, Sierra Club member Dr. Beck Steiner had spent 18 months on the CPS City Advisory Committee working on the rebate and conservation issues. We did, however, strongly oppose the expansion of the South Texas Nuclear Project. We asked Mr. Zenn to go back to the mayor and ask him to separate the two issues.

Cleaning up the Dealy coal-fired power plant and conservation were the right things to do. Nuclear was not. As a group, we let Mr. Zenn know that we would openly oppose the rate increase if the nuclear option was part of the package. Mr. Zenn seemed firm in his stance that the separation would not happen. I suggested giving the mayor another option. He could put off the nuclear question until after the election when a new national energy policy would address the most important issue of our time-rising CO2 levels in our atmosphere. The mayor accepted our challenge and the press release was issued.

Mr. Caputo called me, not because of my position as Political Chair, but as a direct result of the Alamo Group's 2000-plus members and the many activists who have worked many months to influence this decision. The newspaper and the Mayor know that our members vote. I implore you again this month-Do your part as a Sierra Club member and help recruit members to this very important organization.

As a final thought, you should know that we only won a battle. The war against the assault on our planet by CO2 and nuclear waste still looms before us.

Russell Seal

40th Anniversary - Continued

bring this unique, fun event to San Antonio. If you are interested in helping to plan the 40th Anniversary Celebration, please contact Paula Stone at paula@PaulaStoneInteriors.com or 393-7351.

OUTINGS

SAT, JUN 21: GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA (SNA) FRONT COUNTRY

We'll start early and hike the Lytle Loop and possibly the Savannah Loop (depending on the temperature). The front country trails are flat and pleasant and support more wildflower growth than the back country. On May 3rd, I saw no less than 20 wildflower species of which I identified about 15 on these trails. Park entrance fees are the responsibility of each hiker. Fees: donations accepted. Leader: Scott Wolfe at papawolfe@sbcglobal.net. Co-

leader is Marsha Meredith, who devotes considerable time and energy to this SNA.

SAT, JUN 28: SAN MARCOS RIVER CANOE/ KAYAK TRIP

We'll enjoy a 4 to 7-mile paddle down the beautiful San Marcos River, its banks lined with Elephant Ears and other interesting plants. Bring your own canoe or kayak, or make reservations with TG Canoe Livery at (512) 353-3946.

SAT, JUL 12: CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE BAT FLIGHT IN AUSTIN

Join us for dinner at the Magnolia Café on Congress Avenue at 5:30 PM, followed by a short walk, then see the bat emergence from the Congress Avenue bridge in Austin. To carpool, meet in the NW corner of the HEB parking lot at the corner of U.S. Hwy 281 and Loop 1604, about 3:45 PM, and be ready to leave by 4:00 PM. We'll take a scenic drive up 281 into Austin. Fees: donations accepted. Leaders: Jerry Morrissey 382-2614 or jlmorrissey@aol.com, and Lee Dodge LSG999@earthlink.net or 647-0216.

JULY 20-27: BACKPACKING IN THE GILA WILDERNESS

The 560,000-acre Gila Wilderness in southwestern New Mexico is our oldest wilderness area. We'll hike through 27 miles of it on the Redstone-Baldy Loop near the Arizona border. There, we'll experience riparian to alpine environments while passing through the land of the ancient Mogollon people. We'll hike four days and spend one day camping to relax in the wilderness, fish and day-hike. After hiking out, we'll stay at the Palace Hotel in Silver City to clean up and visit this historic mining town. This is a strenuous trip for experienced backpackers. Fee: \$275 (includes transportation and one night at the Palace Hotel; food not included). Leader: Steve Funderburg 317-4186 or sfunderburg@rkci.com

SUN, JUL 27: MISSION TRAIL BIKE RIDE

This bike ride is along paved trails and roads beside the San Antonio River 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. 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 8:00 AM in the grass parking lot southeast of the paved parking lot in front of Mission Concepcion on

Mission Road. Difficulty: moderate. Fees: donations accepted. Leader: Lee Dodge, LSG999@earthlink.net, or 647-0216.

THUR, AUG 14: MOONLIGHT HIKE IN EISENHOWER PARK

Meet at 7:00 PM for a brown bag supper, or just come at 7:30 PM for the hike. Meet at Eisenhower Park on NW Military, 2 miles north of Loop 1604. Fees: donations accepted. Leader: Jerry Morrissey 382-2614 or jlmorrissey@aol.com. Assistant Leader: Chris Anderson 838-1952.

AUG 16-20: ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK MULTI-DAY BACKPACK

For experienced and well-conditioned high country backpackers only (this must be demonstrated before leader approval). This trip requires individuals to make their own travel arrangements, bring their own equipment and food, and arrive in time to acclimate to the altitude (as well as wind down after the road trip). We will meet the afternoon of August 16 at a reserved car camping site (Glacier Basin) and start the 4 day, 3 night journey the next morning. We will begin and end at Long's Peak Trailhead. Total distance including side trips is 32 miles. Do not spend money on travel arrangements until leader approves your participation. To discuss trip details and experience required, contact leader Scott Wolfe at papawolfe@sbcglobal.net.

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MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Executive Committee Meeting:	3rd Friday, 7 p.m.	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter Submissions:		Fred Wills	fredwills@att.net
Political Committee Meeting:	2nd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russel Seal	289-9008
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	283-5045
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 Chair	L. Van Coppenolle	492-4620
Assistant 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
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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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