



**SIERRA
CLUB**
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BAYOU BANNER

Newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club

Volume 38, Number 5

June-July, 2014

houston.sierraclub.org — facebook.com/HSCenvironment — www.meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings

Editorial

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

by George Batten

As of May of this year, I have been editing and laying out the *Bayou Banner* for nine years. While there have been some frustrating encounters, I have enjoyed most of the challenges and opportunities that have arisen in those years.

Not surprisingly, there have been several changes in my situation. Our family has increased by 75 percent (with the addition of

See **NOTHING LASTS FOREVER** on Page 3

JUNE GENERAL MEETING (JUNE 12, 2014)

WILLOW WATERHOLE: NAVIGATING POTHOLES TO RESTORE AN URBAN PRAIRIE JUSTICE

Hear about the fine art and science of restoring a degraded prairie in a corner of the Willow Waterhole Stormwater Detention Basin in the Brays Bayou watershed. This may well be a signature restoration project of the Harris County Flood Control District. Although the prairie is still a work in progress, the project involves more than finding an ecological balance between the open prairie and the trees and brush that gradually began to dominate. Its success hinges upon cementing a supportive relationship with the residents of the adjacent community.

See **WILLOW WATERHOLE** on Page 5

JULY GENERAL MEETING (JULY 10, 2014)

To be determined

A description of the July meeting was not available at press time.

**HELP SAVE BUFFALO BAYOU
SEE PAGES 8 AND 9.**

GET ON THE EMAIL ALERT LIST

See pages 4 and 12.

HELP!!

Are you handy with writing the English language? Have you ever done any desktop publishing, or would you like to learn how to? Would you like to be a volunteer supporting efforts to maintain our environment?

If the answers to any of these questions is "yes" (or even if it is "sort of") the *Bayou Banner* really needs your help.

Editing and layout take time and effort. Anyone doing the editing should have good English writing skills and be willing to change the text submitted by authors. It would be great to have one or more editors who had been English teachers.

For laying out the *Banner*, someone needs to use a desktop publishing computer software package. Previously the *Banner* was published using InDesign by Adobe, but this issue has been done using the free package Scribus (see www.scribus.net). This is an opportunity for you to learn desktop publishing.

Contact George Batten at
bayoubanner@gmail.com, 713-665-1505. 🌐

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The Sierra Club — Houston Group
P.O. Box 3021
Houston, TX 77253-3021

St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1805 West Alabama

Enter one parking lot from Woodhead, the other from Sul Ross. Before 7:00 PM, left turns to Woodhead are not allowed. If you are going west on W. Alabama, turn right at Dunlavy, then left to Marshall, then left to Woodhead.

GENERAL MEETINGS: 2ND THURSDAYS

7:30 PM

June 12, 2014

July 10, 2014

Doors open at 7:00 PM

Join us prior to the meeting for refreshments at the hospitality table and to visit the information tables for Forestry, Outings, and Inner City Outings. Find out how you can volunteer with us.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS



CYPRESS CREEK CANOE/KAYAK

Sunday, June 1, 2014

Along its path through the forested areas of northern Harris County, Cypress Creek passes by several parks and other points of interest. As a significant source of drinking water for the Houston region, it also illustrates some of the water quality issues posed by increasing urbanization. The creek responds rapidly to local rainfall, so it will be important to monitor conditions, and it may be necessary to move today's trip to an alternative location in the event of unusually high or low flows. Because this trip is farther inland than many of our other paddles, it begins to take on many more of the characteristics of a river trip. There is likely to be a noticeable current, so that good boat control and some experience with paddling in moving water will be very helpful. Being farther inland, the river banks are also steeper and higher than we usually encounter in coastal trips. Lowering boats down to river level may be a new experience for some. We highly recommend sturdy shoes that will provide good traction. Participants must provide their own canoe or kayak, life jackets (required to be worn), and paddles. The trip leader can help you with advice regarding gear rentals from Houston area outfitters, if needed. Paddling time: 4-5 hours, plus breaks for sightseeing and lunch. Difficulty: moderate to strenuous. Recommended donation to the Houston Sierra Club: \$10. Trip size is limited. To register, contact Tom Douglas at baymail@sbcglobal.net or (713) 869-6026. A detailed trip information sheet will be sent by email to registered participants. 📧

Hike

LITTLE THICKET NATURE SANCTUARY

Saturday, June 14, 2014

Join us to hike in the beautiful Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary (LTNS). This private nature sanctuary is owned by the Outdoor Nature Club

and has been protected from logging for over 60 years. Diverse American Beech forests, spring-fed creeks, and a wildflower hilltop are just some of the fascinating plant communities that we will see on our hike.

Bring your daypack, hat, at least three quarts of water, lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, long pants, and short-sleeve shirt. It will be hot so dress cool. We will meet to carpool/caravan at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (look for Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side of Beechnut, near the West Loop South). Look for a Silver Honda Civic with lots of bumper stickers.

If you would like to come call Brandt Mannchen at 713-664-5962 or email him at brandtshnfbt@juno.com and leave your name, address, phone number, and email. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will either email or call you. 📧

Beach Cleanup

NORTH JETTY BEACH CLEANUP

Saturday, June 21, 9:30am-12:30pm

The Houston Group has adopted this stretch of beach as part of the Texas "Adopt-A-Beach Program". The North Jetty is a popular fishing, crabbing, and birding spot on the Bolivar Peninsula just south of the Audubon Society's Bolivar Flats Sanctuary. Because this site is heavily used, trash and litter have become a problem. Much of the trash, such as discarded fishing line and plastics, are hazards to area wildlife.

The ferry crossing to Bolivar is usually a great opportunity to observe dolphins and brown pelicans. It is interesting to visit the jetty in different seasons. To sign up, contact Frank Blake, frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896 (e-mail preferred). Additional details will be emailed to participants. 📧

Trail Work

TRAIL MAINTENANCE HIKE IN SHNF

Saturday, June 21, 2014

Enjoy a trail maintenance hike on the Lone Star Hiking Trail in the Sam Houston National Forest. The part of the trail to be maintained will be chosen based on current trail conditions. Bring your daypack, two quarts of water, lunch,

hiking shoes, hat, insect repellent, and clothes to fit the weather. And don't forget to bring your sense of camaraderie, humor, and adventure!

We will meet at 8:00 am in the parking lot behind the International House of Pancakes (IHOP) at I-45 North and Greens Road. Look for a maroon and silver F-150 truck. To reach the parking lot, enter the feeder off I-45 North, via the Greens Road exit, and then pass through the traffic signal at Greens Rd. Turn right into the first strip center you come to (look for Brown Sugar's Barbecue) and drive to the end of the strip center. The parking lot behind IHOP is on the right.

Contact Darrell Matula at 281-667-7024 or drmatula@verizon.net for additional details.

Please supply your name and contact information in case we need to contact you.

One can also check the Houston Sierra Club Meetup site on the web for possible updates and sign up there. 📧

Hike

HIKE BLACKLAND PRAIRIES AND VIEW WILDFLOWERS

Saturday, July 12, 2014

Join our annual visit to see blackland prairies in Sam Houston National Forest (SHNF) and enjoy blooming wildflowers. These prairies are unique to SHNF and are indicative of prairies found farther west.

Bring your daypack, hat, at least three quarts of water, lunch, binoculars, hiking shoes, camera, field guides, long pants, short-sleeve shirt. It will be hot so dress cool. We will meet to carpool/caravan at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot just west of Starbucks (look for Becks Prime) in Meyerland Plaza. Starbucks fronts the 4700 block of Beechnut (south side of Beechnut, near the West Loop South). Look for a silver Honda Civic with lots of bumper stickers.

If you would like to come call Brandt Mannchen at 713-664-5962 or email him at brandtshnfbt@juno.com and leave your name, address, phone number, and email. In case of trip cancellation Brandt will either email or call you. 📧



CANOE/KAYAK TURTLE BAYOU APRIL 12, 2014

by Tom Douglas

On a day when the weather could hardly have been better, a large group of paddlers met up at White Park. The focus of our morning's itinerary was to follow along the waterfront of the new Turtle Bayou Protection Project, which protects habitat and water quality on more than 500 acres of land along the bayou's western shore. As a contribution to the Project's educational component, our group made a number of additions to the list of plants and animals that have been observed on or near the bayou. Down at the mouth of Turtle Bayou, near Lake Anahuac, we gathered data on invasive



Paddling Down Turtle Bayou

by Linda Shead

aquatic plants for submission to a state-wide database. Heading back north toward the Highway 563 bridge, we stopped for lunch under the shade of Eastern red cedar trees at the future site of the Turtle Bayou Protection Project's canoe/kayak launch. Our route back past White Park made it easy for several of our paddlers to depart early, in time to meet late-afternoon commitments back in the city. Then, we were off on the northern loop of the trip, which was of roughly the same length as the southern loop.



Completing Our Paperwork in the Field

by Tom Douglas

Beyond Interstate-10, Turtle Bayou becomes narrower, more winding, and more shaded by the riparian forest. Many of us felt as if we were getting to take a second river trip on the same



3-Spider Lilies

by Tom Douglas

day. Blue flag iris and spider lilies were in bloom along the banks in several different places, and the carcass of a remarkably large snake floated back among the tree trunks. Even though the bayou continued to beckon, we eventually calculated that we would need to turn back



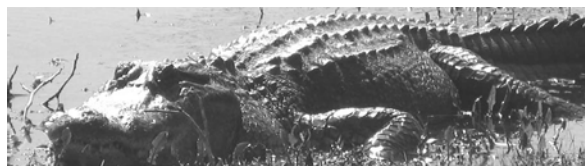
Nearing the Northern Turnaround Point

by Linda Shead

toward our take-out point at White Park if we were to complete this outing on time. As we drove home, we knew there would still be much more to see on future trips to Turtle Bayou.

For more about the Turtle Bayou Protection Project, see pages 122-124 of the Texas Coastal Impact Assistance Program Plan at

www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/caring-for-the-coast/_documents/grants-funding/ciap/2009-2010-ciap-third-amendment.pdf. 🌐



NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

Continued from Page 1

three grandsons, two of them a pair of twins); I became the science/engineering part of a small business venture with its own challenges and opportunities (I hope); and recently I have again become involved in medical research, something I have wanted to do for a long time.

Within the Sierra Club, Lorraine Gibson is restoring Inner City Outings (or whatever name it goes by now); and I want to work with that operation. It is obvious that the Houston Group needs more outings, and I would like to work back into leading some of those.

There's never a good time to make a change, but one can try to pick a reasonable one. I have thought about this for quite a while. Since communication to club members and the public is changing in this (almost) new world of electronic communication, and especially since the *Bayou Banner* may need to take on a new format, this seems to be a reasonable time to pass the torch to a younger person or, preferably, I think, to younger persons.

Therefore, as I notified the Executive Committee some months ago, effective May 31, 2014, I have resigned as editor of the *Bayou Banner*.

Please do not think the decision to resign is because the general mail-out of paper copies will be terminated. That is not the case, the decision was already forthcoming, but the change of Bayou Banner distribution does make this a reasonable (if not good) time to make a change.

I do hope that others in the Houston Sierra Club will step forward to take over editing and laying out the *Bayou Banner*. As an aid to such persons, I have taken some steps to make it easier for them to get started. This issue of the Banner has been set up using the available-for-download-at-no-cost desktop publishing program Scribus, and I am in the process of collecting some hints about using that. I will also act as an in-house consultant to whomever does the layout.

According to my information, the Bayou Banner is in its thirty-eighth year of publication. Even though paper copies will no longer be mailed, the it will continue to be published in some form, mostly electronic. I hope it continues to support the Bayou City's — that is, Houston's — community of people interested in environmental protection and environmental justice, both locally and world wide. 🌐

FEATURES



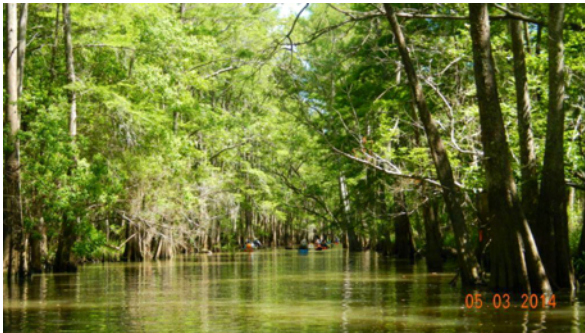
Gateway to the Cypress Wonderland

by Richard Cunningham

CANOE/KAYAK THE CYPRESS WONDERLAND MAY 3, 2014

by Tom Douglas

Our large group of paddlers was greeted by clear skies, a temperature of 70 degrees, and low humidity that would drop even lower as the day progressed. The water level, which held fairly



Approaching the Lake Miller Cut

by Linda Shead

constant at a little less than 8.3 feet on the Lake Charlotte gauge, made for an easy launch at the Interstate-10 bridge, and gave us ready access to many parts of the swamp system. After a relaxed paddle up to the mouth of the Lake Pass, we left the riparian forest of the Trinity River



Pushing Toward Shore for Lunch

by Kent Walters

behind, and headed eastward into the largest cypress swamp on the Texas coast. At the entrance to the old channel into Lake Miller, we

paused to recall the nearby site of an early French trading post and the Spanish response to remove it. Spectacular rows of slender cypress trees along both sides of the channel ushered us on to the small cut that leads south into Lake Miller. Crossing that lake was relatively easy, except for the last 50 feet or so, which was blocked, first by a floating mat of water hyacinth, then by a mat of giant salvinia, and finally by a myriad of small cypress knees standing in the water near the bank. During our lunch break on



Story Time During Lunch

by Kent Walters

the south shore of Lake Miller, we introduced ourselves, traded stories, and thanked our lucky stars for the remarkable absence of mosquitoes. Crossing the lake again, we continued northeast up Lake Pass to Lake Charlotte. The moderate breeze from the west to southwest provided perfect conditions for us to paddle among the trees along the west side of the lake, and then out to Buzzard Roost to observe a water bird rookery. For many of us, the view of a flock of bright pink roseate spoonbills was a highlight of the day. Being careful to keep a safe distance back from the nesting birds, we circumnavigated Buzzard Roost and headed back toward home, retracing the route that we had traveled earlier in the day. As we emerged from Lake Pass back onto the main stem of the Trinity River, we knew



Dave Kitson - Trip Scout

by Kent Walters

that we had been fortunate to visit a very special place. Although this was one of our longer paddles, at 9.7 miles, even the beginning paddlers in the group came through in good spirits. Chances are that no one had any problem getting to sleep that night, though. Many thanks to Dave Kitson and Joe Coker for scouting the route for this outing ahead of time, and to Richard Cunningham, Tom Douglas, Linda Shead, and Kent Walters for providing photos. 🌐



HOUSTON SIERRA CLUB EMAIL

ALERT/ANNOUNCEMENT LIST

Since the Houston Group will not be mailing out the Bayou Banner after this issue, one option for getting information on Club activities is the Houston Group EMAIL ALERT LIST. We use this list to send out periodic announcements on Group activities and to post conservation action alerts. Instructions for subscribing to this list are located on the **back page of the Bayou Banner**, and on the **homepage of the Houston Group website** under the "Get Involved" heading. If you should want to drop from the list at any time it is easy to unsubscribe yourself—those instructions are included at the bottom of each message sent out on the list. If you need assistance in locating the instructions or in signing up for the email list, please contact Frank Blake at

frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.

Note: There is the possibility that we may produce some sort of periodic newsletter in the future that could be mailed out to those members specifically interested in subscribing.

But we won't be able to offer this option until we have volunteers to work on a regular newsletter. 🌐



Did you know that a remnant of Brays Bayou is in the Texas Medical Center? The Bayou itself runs alongside TMC, but this is in tt. Search for "Abandoned Braes Bayou,"

Note: "Brays Bayou" is also spelled "Braes Bayou." 🌐

FEATURES

WILLOW WATERHOLE

Continued from Page 1.

There are six excavated detention basin sites on the two sides of South Post Oak Blvd. The map to the right shows the prairie conservation area on the east side.

A population of the endangered Prairie Dawn plant (*Hymenoxys texana*) lies within the conservation area. It will take years for the prairie around this population to recover, but the removal of invasive yaupon and other woody species is allowing that for prairie grasses. In the development of this project, the HCFCD had to balance the neighbors' desire to maximize the number of trees remaining at the site with the need to prevent encroachment in the prairie.

Two speakers will discuss this project. Carolyn White is a Project Manager for HCFCD's Environmental Services Division. She currently manages projects under the water quality and revegetation programs, including wetland planting for water quality enhancement, prairie management, detention basin layout, water quality monitoring, and preparation of landscape and planting plans for capital improvement projects. She holds a Masters Degree in Landscape Architecture/Environmental Planning from The University of California – Berkeley and a B.A. in Geology from Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota.

Stephen Benigno is the Revegetation and Site Stabilization Coordinator for HCFCD's Environmental Services Division. He currently supports and manages projects under the water quality and revegetation programs, including wetland planting for water quality enhancement, prairie management, water quality monitoring, endangered species monitoring, and vegetation enhancement and soil stabilization studies. He earned a PhD in Restoration Ecology from the University of Western Australia, where he used ecophysiological techniques to aid in the restoration of post-mine sites. He holds B.S. degrees in Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, and Plant Biology from the University of Texas at Austin. 🌐



WillowWaterholePrairieRestorationMap by Harris County Flood Control District

References on the Internet:

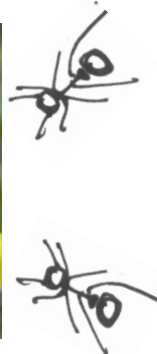
Concept drawing: <http://www.projectbrays.org/docs/WillowWaterholeDetention.pdf>.

List of plants in the management plan:

<http://www.projectbrays.org/docs/reports/PrairieManagement%20Plan.pdf>



Prairie Dawn



Current numbering of Bayou Banner issues uses odd numbers to correspond, approximately, to the monthly numbering used previously. 🌐

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

1. Explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth.
2. Practice and promote responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources.
3. Educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.
4. Use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.



BAYOU BANNER

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Volume 38, Number 5

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houston.sierraclub.org • [facebook.com/HSCEnvironment](https://www.facebook.com/HSCEnvironment) • www.meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings

The Bayou Banner is the newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. It is published 6 times a year by the Houston Sierra Club. Circulation is 5,000 copies: about 2,500 are mailed, and 2,500 are delivered electronically to members; some are distributed through other outlets.

EDITOR: George Batten

Email: BayouBanner@gmail.com Website: <http://houston.sierraclub.org>

Opinions stated are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Houston Sierra Club.

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The Sierra Club — Houston Group • P.O. Box 3021 • Houston, TX 77253-3021

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

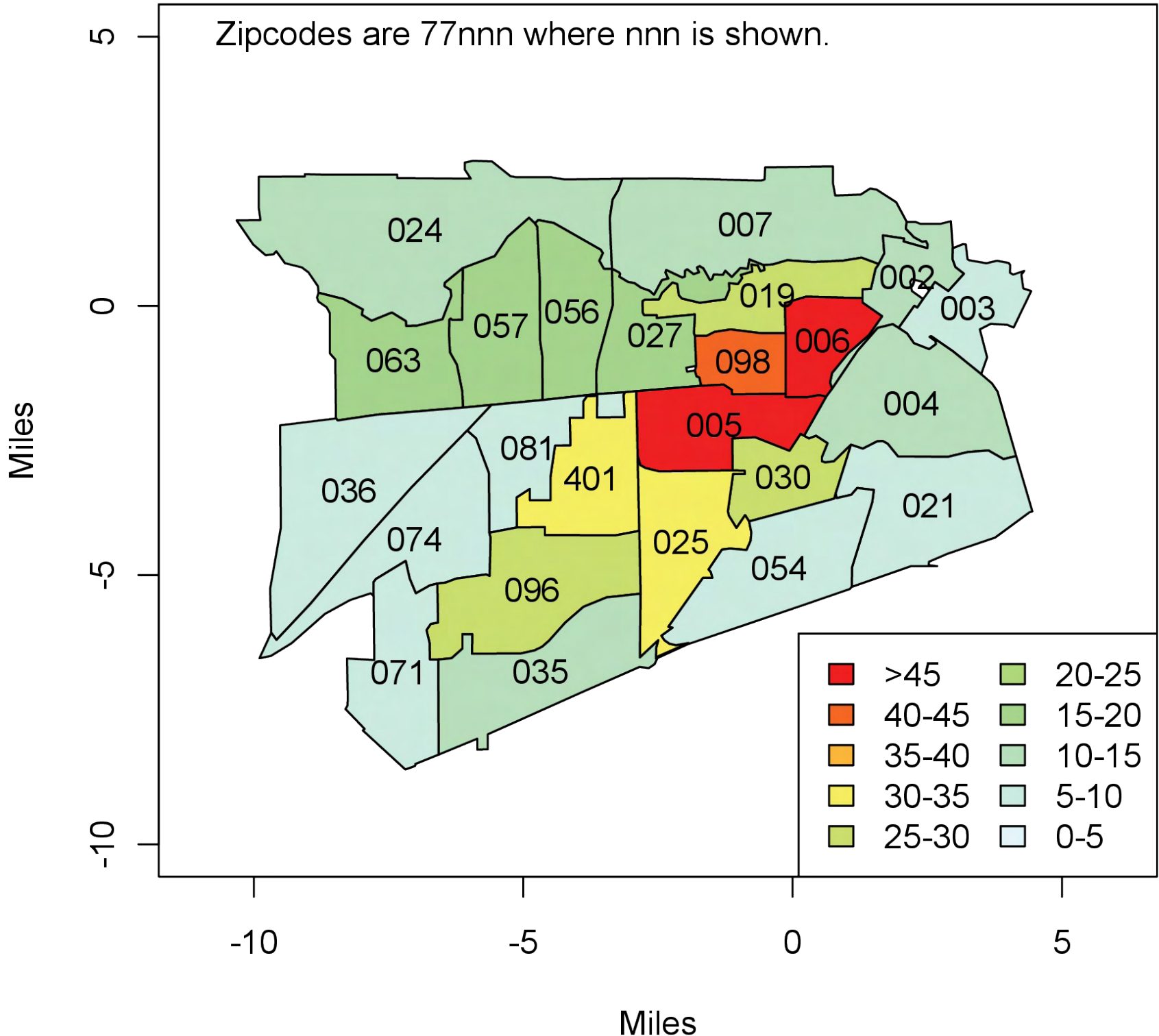
The Houston Sierra Club gets a small part of your membership renewal fee (the rest of it is used by the National Sierra Club and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club). The amount passed to the Houston Sierra Club is more if you use a credit card and renew on line through our website than if you mail a check.

SUPPLEMENT

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SUPPLEMENT

Houston Sierra Club Member Density (members per square mile)



Some west Houston zipcodes: member count = 1400 out of 4969 (28%).

FEATURES

Houston Regional Group Sierra Club

THE SECOND BATTLE TO SAVE BUFFALO BAYOU CONTINUES

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied the fast-tracked nationwide permit application from the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) because of tremendous public response. Now, HCFCD has returned to request an individual permit from the USACE to construct the Memorial Park Demonstration Project on Buffalo Bayou.

The USACE has issued a public notice extending the deadline to receive comments to June 30, 2014.

We need letters asking for (1) a denial of the permit based on the current HCFCD design, (2) an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate alternatives, and (3) a request for a public hearing by USACE and a public meeting on water quality impacts by the TCEQ.

This plan design is just as bad as it ever was. The HCFCD has ignored requests from bayou supporters to maximize the amount of undisturbed area and focus repair efforts on the eroded areas.

Letters referencing Permit Application No. SWG-2012-01007 should be e-mailed, mailed, or faxed immediately to the address below with a copy to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ):

TO: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:	SEND A COPY TO: TCEQ
Mr. Dwayne Johnson	Ms. Lili Murphy
Regulatory Branch, CESWG-PE-RB	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Water Standards Team 401 Coordinator
P.O. Box 1229	MSC-150
Galveston, TX 77553-1229	P.O. Box 13087
swg_public_notice@usace.army.mil	Austin, TX 78711-3087
409-766-6301 FAX / 409-766-6353 Ph	401certs@tceq.texas.gov

Ask the Corps to deny the permit based upon the following concerns regarding the HCFCD project design:

- HCFCD's claims regarding improvement of stream conditions, wetland impacts, benefits to the riparian buffer and water quality lack proof.
- Probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, must be compiled to be considered by the Corps. Cumulative impacts to bayou habitat will result from multiple projects including the ongoing Sabine to Shepherd segment, this proposed 1.25 mile segment through Memorial Park and 800 feet of the Hogg Bird Sanctuary, the TIRZ 16 project at Woodway/Loop 610 West, habitat eradication by the unpermitted Houston Country Club project, and HCFCD's proposed project at Briar Forest (tree survey in progress).
- The proposed design will have major impacts on Memorial Park. The Corps should consider comments that are being developed regarding the potential eligibility of Memorial Park for the National Register of Historic Places.
- The proposed design will have major environmental impacts upon riparian habitat because of the physical removal of vegetation from about 80% of the stream length. The removal of shading canopy will raise the stream temperature and impact the ability of the stream to support wildlife. The Corps is required to consider least damaging practicable alternatives under Section 404(b)(1) guidelines.
- Critics of the HCFCD design have recommended that a design incorporating a reduction in the amount of linear feet of vegetation removal, a lesser amount of bank disturbance, and a greater focus on areas of documented bank failure be adopted.

Request that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared, including discussion of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

Request that the Corps hold a public hearing due to the significance of the impacts upon Buffalo Bayou. Neither of the two public meetings claimed by HCFCD allowed public comment. The first meeting was only a general presentation on Natural Channel Design hosted by Bayou Preservation Association. At the second meeting, the public could only submit written questions and HCFCD chose the ones to answer.

By copy of your letter to TCEQ, request that TCEQ hold a public meeting in Houston to consider impacts of the proposed project upon water quality due to massive bank disturbance and increased water temperature due to canopy removal.

Contact Evelyn Merz at 713-644-8228 or elmerz@hal-pc.org for more information. 🌐

TEMPLATE LETTER

Please be sure to

cc: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
401 Coordinator
MSC-150
P.O. Box 13087
Austin, TX 78711-3087

May [Insert Date], 2014

Mr. Dwayne Johnson
Regulatory Branch, CESWG-PE-RB
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, TX 77553-1229

Or via Email: swg_public_notice@usace.army.mil

RE: Comments regarding Permit Application No. SWG-2012-01007, HCFCD for Buffalo Bayou

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I am writing to submit comments regarding the Harris County Flood Control District Permit Application No. SWG-2012-01007. I have many concerns about the appropriateness of the HCFCD design for this segment of Buffalo Bayou and the major impacts it will have upon water quality and wildlife. However, this letter is intended to supply initial comments and specifically make several points which should be considered by the Corps in making a decision on the application. These points are:

[AT THIS POINT INSERT SOME POINTS SUCH AS THE BULLETED ITEMS IN THE ARTICLE TO THE LEFT. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LIST ALL FIVE. YOU CAN SELECT 3 OR 4, AND YOU CAN MODIFY THEM OR ADD TO THEM. THEN INCLUDE ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FOR AN EIS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS; THESE CAN BEGIN LIKE THE FOLLOWING.]

Furthermore, I request that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared, including discussion of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. It is well known ...

I request that the Corps hold a public hearing on this application due to the significance of the impacts upon Buffalo Bayou. Neither of the two public meetings claimed by HCFCD allowed public comment...

By copy of this letter to the TCEQ, I request that the TCEQ hold a public meeting...

Sincerely,

[Your name] & [Your contact information – Address, E-mail, Telephone]

FEATURES

The following letter was sent from the Houston Sierra Club to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. It has been reformatted to fit in the available space. The associated photos on the

right were taken by Evelyn Merz. They show the damage described in the letter. In the first one you can see some of the undisturbed vegetation on the bank opposite Houston Country Club. 🐜

Houston Regional Group Sierra Club
P.O. Box 3021
Houston, TX 77253

May 1, 2014
Colonel Richard P. Pannell
District Engineer
USACE Galveston District
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, TX 77553-1229

Letter also sent via e-mail to swgpao@usace.army.mil
RE: Discharge of fill material into Buffalo Bayou by Houston Country Club project

Dear Colonel Pannell:

The Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club would like to draw your attention to a situation that concerns us greatly on Buffalo Bayou and to request that you take appropriate action. The Houston Country Club (HCC) has undertaken a project on the edge of its golf course along Buffalo Bayou. The project extends up the slope from the toe of the water and completely around one of the bayou meanders. We have heard that the project consulting company is AECOM. The address of the Houston Country Club is: 1 Potomac Dr, Houston, TX 77057.

We wish to inquire about the regulatory status of this project. We believe that there was and there continues to be significant discharge of fill material into waters of Buffalo Bayou. If the work was done under authority of a nationwide permit, we believe that this project has violated the general conditions of such permits, based upon our understanding of the general conditions. If the Corps issued an individual permit, the permit should prohibit the environmental degradation that has occurred and which is continuing. If the HCC did not obtain a permit, then we believe that past and current discharges are in violation of the Clean Water Act.

I have personally seen the project area and it is a disturbing sight. There is significant erosion along the slopes of the project area from beginning to end. The actual toeline at the bayou's edge appears to be stable, but all the slopes are marked by eroded gullies and exposed construction material that was supposed to stabilize the slope, such as coir-like fabric and plastic netting. Even the flat bench areas are bare with exposed construction material.

The most seriously eroded area is above an outfall pipe, although the outfall area at the toe appears stable. However, the flexible pipe above the slope is completely exposed due to slumping and erosion. The material that is supposed to stabilize layers of the slope all around the pipe is hanging like drapery because there is a hole where the soil has washed out.

It is our understanding that the situation described above has existed for months, with the bare soil continuing to erode over that period of time.

The Houston Sierra Club assumes that the HCC did not intend for their project to have this outcome. However, neither in the past nor at this time have we observed any remedial or stabilizing measures being implemented. Certainly, the habitat along this project reach of Buffalo Bayou has been eliminated. Riparian vegetation is non-existent in much of the project area and the water quality is diminished by increased and continual erosion due to this failed project.

Furthermore, since we are assured that this situation has existed for some time, there is the additional possibility of a violation of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) guidelines.

We have pictures which will illustrate our concern. The pictures document the destructive erosion at the Houston Country Club site better than our words. We request that you review these pictures, which we have stored at www.dropbox.com and then investigate the situation. The link to Dropbox is:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9lid5b3gd7y6p3s/PkmKeBaH2X?n=244426283>

I can also share the link to the pictures via an e-mail message. If you have any difficulty accessing the Dropbox storage or any other questions, please contact me at 713-644-8228 or via e-mail at elmerz@hal-pc.org. Also, If you would prefer to receive the pictures by some other avenue, please let me know.

Thank you for your attention to this unfortunate development.
Sincerely,

Evelyn L. Merz
Conservation Chair
Houston Regional Group Sierra Club

cc: Mr. Ron Curry
Regional Administrator
Region 6, Environmental Protection Agency
1445 Ross Avenue
Suite 1200
Dallas, Texas 75202
ATTN: Mr. David Gray @ gray.david@epa.gov



CLEAR LAKE AND GALVESTON BAY AREA

CLEAR LAKE WALKERS

Every Saturday morning at 7:30, rain or shine

Some Bay Area Sierra Club members and friends meet weekly for a three-mile walk, conversation and breakfast. Much of the walk is along the water and we often see a variety of shore birds.

Where: Nassau Bay, meeting in the Dollar Store parking lot across from the Post Office.

Contact: Betty Armstrong at 281-333-5693.

Editor's note: The Clear Lake Walkers have been active for 21 years. 🌍

GBASCH APRIL GENERAL MEETING (JUNE 18, 2014)

Program to be determined.

GBASCH APRIL GENERAL MEETING (JULY 16, 2014)

Program to be determined.

NOTICE

Galveston Bay Area Sierra Club Houston (acronym GBASCH) is part of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club (also called the Houston Sierra Club — acronym HSC). HSC is so large - over 100 miles in diameter - that it is useful to provide local organization of activities for members in outlying areas. GBASCH does that by planning activities and holding general meetings in the Galveston Bay area. These are open to all HSC members. 🌍

BIKE TRAILS COMMITTEE

A bike trails committee was started to explore enhanced hike and bike trail connectivity in the Bay Area. Initially three folks doing this are Debra Goode, Richard Lee, and Doug Peterson. They are brainstorming and investigating breaks in existing trails and systems where it is hazardous to travel by bike, and identifying some of the variables for implementation, other interested parties, local government, sources of funding, etc). Contact Debra Goode at 281-280-9944 if you are interested in participating. 🌍

Houston Sierra Club VOLUNTEER NEEDS

Bayou Banner (Urgent!)

In June, the editor position will be open. We need volunteers to edit the material and layout the document for printing. Contact Art Browning 281-728-6327 or George Batten 281-381-4990 if you can help.

Website Help:

We need a couple of people to assist the webmaster with posting material to the Houston Group website. This normally requires a few hours per month. For more information, contact the webmaster at houston.webmaster@lonestar.sierraclub.org. 🌍

Galveston Bay Area Sierra Club Houston
GENERAL MEETINGS: 3RD WEDNESDAYS
Clear Lake Park - 5002 NASA Parkway
Bay Area Community Center (Blue Roof)

June 18, 2014
July 16, 2014
6:30 -9:00 PM

MAP OF BUFFALO BAYOU PADDLING TRAIL From Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. Get your own copy as a pdf file: search for "Buffalo Bayou River" and choose "TPWD."



Photo courtesy Harris County Flood Control District.

Water Access Locations; GPS Coordinates

1. Hwy 6	95° 38' 36.106" W	29° 46' 9.750" N
2. Terry Hershy Park (Memorial Mews)	95° 37' 24.00" W	29° 46' 24.00" N
3. Dairy Ashford Road	95° 36' 23.00" W	29° 45' 42.00" N
4. West Sam Houston Parkway	95° 33' 30.00" W	29° 45' 44.00" N
5. Briar Bend Park	95° 30' 25.76" W	29° 44' 45.76" N
6. Woodway Memorial Park	95° 27' 25.00" W	29° 45' 53.00" N
7. Hogg Bird Sanctuary	95° 25' 18.00" W	29° 45' 30.00" N
8. Eleanor Tinsley Park (Buffalo Bayou Park)	95° 22' 42.00" W	29° 45' 42.00" N
9. Sabine Promenade (Buffalo Bayou Park)	95° 22' 25.00" W	29° 45' 44.00" N
10. Allen's Landing Park	95° 21' 33.00" W	29° 45' 53.00" N

Float Times

Depending upon water levels and flow rates the paddling time can vary. Due to the length of the trail, it is too long to paddle in one day. Estimated float times for each trail segments are:

- Hwy 6 to Terry Hershy Park ~1 hour
- Terry Hershy Park to Dairy Ashford ~1 hour
- Dairy Ashford Road to West Sam Houston Parkway ~2 to 3 hours
- West Sam Houston Parkway to Briar Bend Park ~3 to 4 hours
- Briar Bend Park to Woodway Memorial Park ~3.5 to 4.5 hours
- Woodway Memorial Park to Hogg Bird Santuary ~2.5 to 3.5 hours
- Hogg Bird Santuary to Eleanor Tinsley Park ~2 hours to 3 hours
- Eleanor Tinsley Park to Sabine Street ~15 minutes
- Sabine Promenade to Allen's Landing Park ~1 hour

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE BAYOU BANNER IS ENDING...

...distribution by conventional mail. This issue (June-July, 2014) is the last issue for which paper copies will be mailed to members.

Some form, probably in a changed format, will be available at the website of the Houston Sierra Club

(<http://lonestar.sierraclub.org/news/>).

Also, outings, trips, and other activities are posted on our Meet Up site

(meetup.com/Houston-Sierra-Club-Outings),

and we have a facebook page for discussion of environmental issues

(facebook.com/HSCenvironment).

The primary reason for abandoning mailed paper copies is the cost. For the last few months the cost of printing, addressing, and mailing paper copies to about half of our members (the others get it on the Internet) is over \$1,000 per issue. Since the Houston Sierra Club gets nothing (that's "zero") from dues paid to the National Sierra Club, all funds supporting local operations must be raised by local activities (outings, trips, the yard sale, the auction, etc.), but the amount these activities bring in has fallen in recent years, so it seems best to cut expenses such as mailing paper copies of the *Bayou Banner*.

If you do not receive email notices of the availability of the *Bayou Banner* on line, you should sign up on the Email Alert/Announcement List. See page 4 for information about this list. 🌐

EXCOM ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER

Although paper copies of the Bayou Banner will no longer be mailed bimonthly to members, club bylaws require ballots to be mailed in December. Therefore, it is likely that a paper version of the December-January issue of the *Bayou Banner* will be mailed to members.

That issue will have ballots for election of members of the Executive Committee of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. Candidates can be suggested by any member of the club. Until a Nominating Committee Chair has been established, you can submit suggestions for candidates and petitions to Art Browning (art.browning@gmail.com, phone 281-728-6327). Petitions for candidacy must be received in time for publishing in the *Bayou Banner* December issue. 🌐

What a mess!

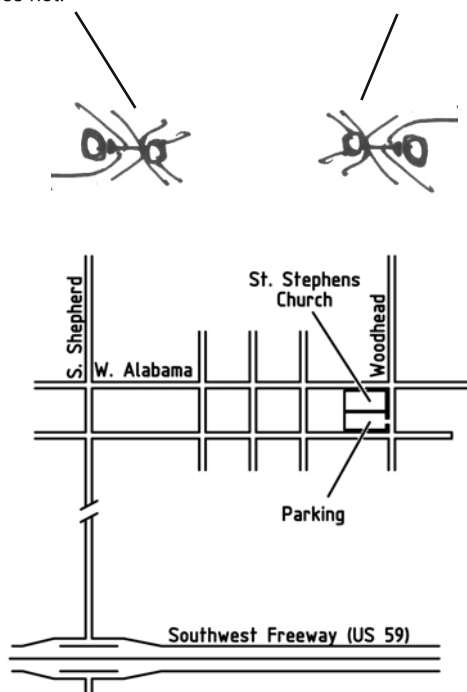
Well, first the Harris County Flood Control District is trying to get approval for major work on Buffalo Bayou.

That's right.

I saw that on a 1915 map! At least for the part west of Shepherd Drive.

Yes, and recently the Houston Country Club tried to stop erosion with work on the upper part of the Bayou — you can see pictures on page 9.

I guess not!



MAP: GETTING TO THE GENERAL MEETING

CREDITS

Some photos in the Bayou Banner are public domain photos provided by the National Park Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The clip-art canoe is from 1st Lancaster Baptist Scouts, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada (<http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/3246/index.html>). All photos are used by permission.

What are you talking about?

Oh, in which they want to remove all the vegetation along the banks for most of a mile!

You know, the vegetation has held the Bayou to its course for at least a hundred years.

The part east of Shepherd (the part that goes through downtown Houston) was straightened some years ago, and of course the lower end was dredged to make the Ship Channel.

What are people thinking? Don't they know the value of trees and undergrowth in preventing, or at least reducing, erosion?

JOIN THE SIERRA CLUB

Just go to our web site
<http://Houston.sierraclub.org/>
and click on

Join or Give/Membership Benefits

For a limited time:

Only \$15
Get a FREE rucksack
See it online

Part of your payment
comes back to support the
Houston Sierra Club

Some activities shown on the Announcements pages are not managed by the Houston Sierra Club.



The station with much for Sierrans:

Explorations, Tuesdays, 5:00 AM
Eco-Ology, Wednesdays, 3:00 PM
Democracy Now (with Amy Goodman),
7:00 AM and 5:00 PM, weekdays.
Progressive Forum (with Wally James)
Thursdays, 7:00-9:00 PM

Of course there is news:
BBC News, 6:00-7:00 AM and 8:00-9:00 AM
KPFT local news, weekdays, 4:00-5:30 PM
Bird Note, 9:58 AM... at the end of
Open Journal, 9:00-10:00 AM

And lots of music, especially on the weekends.

You can see the program schedule at

www.kpft.org
RSS and ATOM web feeds, and
PODCASTS are available.

Revised March 31, 2014



The ant seen on these pages is the fictitious *Sieromeymex houstonensis*, drawn for and named after the Houston Sierra Club by world-famous biologist E. O. Wilson.

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

MONTHLY MEETINGS

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING:

Second Thursday monthly in Pecore Hall of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 West Alabama. Enter parking lot from Woodhead. The meeting opens at 7:00 PM, and the program starts at 7:30 PM. Everyone is welcome.

Before 7:00 PM, left turns are not allowed at Woodhead. If you are going west on W. Alabama, turn right at Dunlavy, then left to Marshall, then left to Woodhead.

CONSERVATION:

Second Tuesday monthly, 7:00 PM. Meet in the H-E-B food court at West Alabama and Dunlavy. Contact Evelyn Merz, 713-644-8228, elmerz@hal-pc.org. Come early (6:30) and grab a bite to eat.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Fourth Thursday monthly, 7:00 PM.
Contact Frank Blake frankblake@juno.com.

INNER CITY OUTINGS (ICO):

Meeting times and place to be determined. Please contact Lorraine Gibson at 281-384-4104 or raineygib@aol.com for more information.

OUTINGS:

Usually the third Monday of the month, 7:00 PM, at the Whole Foods store on Bellaire near Wesleyan. Help us plan regional day outings, weekend trips, and air/bus trips to exciting outdoor destinations across the country. Please call to confirm meeting date. Frank Blake, 713-528-2896, frankblake@juno.com.

RECYCLING RESOURCES

CITY OF HOUSTON RECYCLING

The City of Houston has several drop off sites (note: some are specialized for certain items), and provides curbside recycling in many neighborhoods. Principal drop off locations are the Westpark Consumer Recycling Center at 5900 Westpark, and the self serve site at 3602 Center Street in the Heights. For other locations and a complete list of recyclable items, consult the City's recycling web page. One can also phone the City's 311 hotline with recycling questions, or connect to

www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/recycling.html

BELLAIRE RECYCLING COMMITTEE

This group has a useful website, with a variety of info on recycling activities in the Houston area. Committee phone line is 713-662-8173. bellairerecycles.org/index.html.

HUNTSVILLE

The City of Huntsville's recycling facility — north of town on the I-45 access road — takes cardboard, paper, tin and aluminum cans, glass, used oil, plastics, and has a warehouse for reusable donated construction materials (doors, windows, tile, wood etc). One employee is available Monday-Friday to help you unload; it is self-service on Saturday. The web site is http://www.huntsvilletx.gov/residents/trash_and_recycling/recycling.asp.

PEARLAND RECYCLING CENTER

5800 Magnolia Road in Pearland, Texas, 77584, 281-489-2795. Takes most recyclable wastes: PC's, TV's, plastics, bottles, cans, paper, etc.

More available at <http://www.h-gac.com/>, especially at <http://www.h-gac.com/community/waste/resources/>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 2014

12 General Meeting - Willow Waterhole

July 2014

10 General Meeting - TBD

August 2014

14 General Meeting - TBD

September 2014

11 General Meeting - TBD

October 2014

9 General Meeting - TBD

Houston Sierra Club

E-MAIL ALERT LIST

Subscribe to the Houston Sierra Club's E-mail alert list to get timely alerts on Houston area conservation issues, and occasional announcements of interest to Houston Sierra Club members. (Whenever you want to drop from the list it is easy to unsubscribe yourself—those instructions will be included.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Send FROM the E-mail address to which you want to direct the messages. Subscribe by sending TO:

LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG

Subject: [this line may be left blank]

Message Body:

SUBSCRIBE LONESTAR-HOUSTON-ANNOUNCE FirstName
LastName

(Insert YOUR name in place of "FirstName LastName")

That's it. You will receive confirmation messages. from the listserv. Thanks for your interest. If you have any difficulty, contact frankblake@juno.com.

The Bayou Banner is the newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. It has been published 6 times a year, in odd-numbered months, but that is changing. See the Group's web site for the latest information (<http://houston.sierraclub.org>). Current circulation is 5500 issues sent to members and distributed through various outlets.

CURRENT EDITOR: George Battem (until May 31, 2014).

SUBMISSIONS: The deadline to submit articles has been the fifth day of the month before the date of the issue in which the articles are to run (for example, articles for the September issue must be submitted by August 5) — this will change (currently, submissions are not being accepted); again, see the Group's website for information.

All submissions must have the author's name, and contact information (including phone number) even though it will not be printed. Articles may be edited for clarity, accuracy, and space considerations. Opinions stated are those of the author and not necessarily that of the Houston Sierra Club.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Telephone 415-977-5633 or send address changes to Sierra Club Membership, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322, or via email to address.changes@sierraclub.org.

Include both old and new addresses and allow 6 weeks for delivery of the first issue. Please **DO NOT CONTACT THE EDITOR FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS.**

HOUSTON REGIONAL GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Art Browning (Chair)	art.browning@gmail.com
(Lone Star Chapter Delegate)	
Jim Williams (Vice Chair)	ezz@pdq.net
Lorraine Gibson (Treasurer)	raineygib@aol.com
Page Williams (Secretary)	page.williams@gmail.com
George Batten	BayouBanner@gmail.com
(Bayou Banner Editor)	
Frank Blake	frankblake@juno.com
Grace Martinez	gracemartinez@earthlink.net
(GBASCH Director)	
Evelyn Merz	elmerz@hal-pc.org
(Conservation Committee Chair)	
Jen Powis	jenniferpowis@yahoo.com
(Alternate Lone Star Chapter Delegate)	

REGIONAL GROUP LEADERSHIP

Banner Editor	George Batten	BayouBanner@gmail.com
Beach Cleanup	Frank Blake	frankblake@juno.com
Conservation	Evelyn Merz	elmerz@hal-pc.org 713-644-8228
Conservation Subcommittees		
Air Quality	Brandt Mannchen	brandtshnft@juno.com 713-664-5962
Coastal Issues	Page Williams	page.williams@gmail.com
Energy and Global Warming	Jim Williams	ezz@pdq.net
Forestry and Big Thicket	Brandt Mannchen	brandtshnft@juno.com 713-664-5962
Recycling	Frank Blake	frankblake@juno.com
Watershed	Evelyn Merz	elmerz@hal-pc.org 713-644-8228
Hospitality	Carol Lee	713-523-2294
Inner City Outings	Lorraine Gibson	raineygib@aol.com 281-384-4104
Lone Star Chapter Delegate	Art Browning	art.browning@gmail.com
Membership	John Berlinghoff	johnb@hal-pc.org
Outings	Frank Blake	frankblake@juno.com
Political	Doug Peterson	dougpeterson@earthlink.net
Programs	Joe Lengfellner	thatsjoesmail@yahoo.com
Webmaster	houston.webmaster@onestar.sierraclub.org	
Galveston Bay Area Sierra Club Houston	Grace Martinez	gracemartinez7@earthlink.net

See the Bayou Banner on the club website:
<http://houston.sierraclub.org/news/index.htm#banner>