



### **Word From the Chair**

The year 2016 will be very challenging for the environment in San Antonio:

#### **SA Tomorrow**

The city's comprehensive planning process - "SA Tomorrow" - will be finalized this spring. This planning document may go the way of

previous efforts, resulting in much talk and little real impact. We hope an environmentally strong document can be produced, and that it will receive strong and effective implementation. San Antonio's future is very much at stake: shall we continue the decades long pattern of outward sprawl, covering the Hill Country with suburban housing tracts, roadways and small business, with consequent traffic congestion, declining air quality, lack of services etc.? Or will we finally turn to a more sustainable, multimodal, multicultural, multiethnic and mixed economic pattern of development that protects the Edwards Aquifer, wildlife habitat, and recreational open space, while providing cleaner air, better transportation options, more livable and walkable neighborhoods, etc?

#### **SAWS**

San Antonio Water Systems continues - with so far full City Council support - on its path of becoming a major water exporter from Central Texas and commercial water purveyor to support growth along and west of IH-35. Will our citizens remain silent while we are forced to pay for this unneeded commercialization of our water system?

#### **CPS**

Our city owned electric utility CPS needs to replace its visionary CEO Doyle Beneby, who did so much to move San Antonio away from fossil fuel and nuclear energy and toward clean renewable energy. Will he be replaced by a like minded individual who will continue our growth as a renewable energy leader in Texas and the US? Or will CPS turn back, as some are suggesting, to nuclear power and a new nuclear plant (South Texas Project #3 may get a permit soon)?

#### **Air quality**

Our air quality is now in "non-attainment" and on a par with Houston and Dallas. Unlike Austin, San Antonio has done almost nothing to proactively address its deteriorating air and now faces serious new federal regulations. Will we continue in denial and fight these regulations? Or will we make a serious effort to improve our air, for the health of all of us, especially our children and elderly?

### **Transportation**

A major component of our air problems is our poor transportation system, largely uni-modal rather than multi-modal. Most people have almost no effective choice other than personal vehicle transportation. Will we spend billions of dollars to add more roadway lanes all around our city, on the false theory that this will provide anything but short possible respite from our congestion? Or will we spend that money more wisely on long term solutions that also clean our air, like better mass transit, including rail; better bike and pedestrian safety; managed traffic and incorporation of real costs into driving expenses?

### **Local elections**

Important local elections will occur this year. It is not too early to start thinking about City Council elections spring 2017. The current Council, with a few exceptions, appears to give much talk and little substance to all our environmental concerns. It may be time to find new environmental champions to run for district elections and challenge the status quo.

### **Alamo Group initiatives**

San Antonians need to become more aware of their environment and more involved in protecting and enjoying the beautiful environment we have. Our media and city government are still largely following the course set for decades by the rich and powerful, the developers, the cement companies, the auto dealers etc. The Alamo Sierra Club hopes to greatly expand active participation in our outings and youth program. We hope to make this newsletter more timely and valuable for you our members and readers. We hope you will find issues and activities you care about, and become involved in the oldest and largest grass roots American environmental organization.

*-By Terry Burns MD, Alamo Group  
Executive Committee Chair*

## **Alamo Group and Community Events**

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For updates on all events check the Alamo Group website, [sierraclub.org/texas/alamo](http://sierraclub.org/texas/alamo), under *Get Involved*.

**Battery recycling!** Bring your dead batteries to the EcoCentro and Lion's Field meetings below and place in the box provided. Thanks to Gay Wright for coordinating this effort.

### **February 2 Tuesday**

#### **Central Texas Water Conservation Symposium: Conservation, Come Drought or High Water**

St Vincent De Paul Auditorium, 1345 Philomena St, Austin, 8:30 am-3:30 pm, \$35. Sponsored by the Texas Water Foundation, [here's their website](#) with a link for registration. There will be five speakers, including a

representative from the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Symposium highlights:

- Creating a culture of conservation
- Assessing the relationship between economic development and water conservation
- Engaging customers with personalized water use data
- Understanding the role of re-use in water supply
- Highlighting water efficient legislation from the 2015 Texas legislature session
- Investing in the long-term water conservation

### **February 16 Tuesday**

General membership meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays):  
*The San Antonio Comprehensive Plan 2040*

The city's Director of Planning and Community Development, John Dugan, will discuss aspects of the Comprehensive Plan 2040. Read about the plan [here](#), and see the detailed article on page 4.

6:30 pm at [EcoCentro](#), San Antonio College, 1802 N. Main, at the northeast corner with Locust St. Free and open to the public. [Here's our web page](#) with map showing EcoCentro.

### **February 17 Wednesday**

Join in celebrating ten years of *Environment Texas!* From the announcement:

Can you believe it's almost been ten years since Environment Texas began fighting for clean air, clean water and open spaces in Texas? We can't either!

But, as we approach a decade of hard hitting research, tough minded advocacy and strategic organizing, we'd love for you to join us for an evening to celebrate our accomplishments, meet our staff and partners who have helped us along the way and look forward to the future of environmental advocacy in Texas!

Join us 7-9 pm at the Google Fiber space in downtown Austin. We'll have music by local Austin band Son de Rey, remarks by Texas legend Jim Hightower and Congressman Lloyd Doggett and an open bar courtesy of Hops and Grains Brewery.

There are still opportunities available to join our Host Committee as well! [RSVP and purchase your ticket today!](#)

-By Sara E. Smith, *Environment Texas Staff Attorney*

### **February 20 Saturday**

Celebrate 51 years of the *Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter!* At *The Oasis* on Lake Travis in Austin, 5:30 pm. Join us for a great evening featuring good food, Texas tunes and the company of like-minded individuals committed to the Lone Star state.

Show your commitment to our labor of love by buying your table or tickets today. With your help, we can ensure that Texas remains a healthy and vibrant place to live. Here's [our state chapter's reservation website](#) for this event.

### **February 24 Wednesday**

Lion's Field program: *Urban Agriculture and Cottage Foods in San Antonio*

Leslie Provence is a founding member and VP of the Food Policy Council of San Antonio. whose vision is "Fresh, healthy, affordable food available to all in a vibrant local food economy." On January 1, 2016, the City Council adopted Food Policy Council amendments for the Unified Development Code. Leslie will explain what the amendments cover and how folks can take advantage of them. They include the ability to grow and sell fruits, veggies, and cottage foods from your home garden or greenhouse, and the ability to farm on property other than your home. The topic of water use in sustainable vs. convention agriculture is also part of the discussion.

These programs are 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays, 6:30 pm, at the Lion's Field Adult Center, 2809 Broadway at Mulberry. Free and open to the public. Service by bus routes 9, 10 and 14.

### **March 5 Saturday**

*Alamo Group Advancement Caucus at Government Canyon SNA*

All Sierra Club members are encouraged to come out to the Group Pavilion at Government Canyon State Natural Area, 10 am. This will be an opportunity to

- Have fun in the beautiful outdoors of Government Canyon, and share in a potluck meal
- Meet and socialize with fellow club members
- Participate in round table discussions about our local environmental concerns
- Provide input into how you think the Alamo Group can more effectively improve our environment, and more effectively involve our members in the outdoors and conservation issues
- Hike the Canyon in hopefully beautiful spring weather.

The Alamo Group of the Sierra Club is a member organization, entirely composed of volunteers. It is the most comprehensive environmental advocacy group in our city, and one of the major sponsors of outdoor activities and youth programs. The Alamo Group welcomes and needs more participation from members of all ages, all ethnic groups, all economic and all geographic parts of our city. Please try to come and brainstorm about the future for our group, and for our city and region!

## **News and Contributions**

### **Alamo Group Leadership News**

By Terry Burns

The Alamo Group welcomes the newly elected members of the Executive Committee: Darby Riley, Russel Smith and Enrique Valdivia. We appreciate the votes with the ballot in the December newsletter issue. We thank Mike Mecke for his interest, and understand his reluctance to make the trip from Kerrville for meetings. As we move to more enhanced electronic communications, we hope he will once again volunteer to



serve.

Peggy Day, our long time Chair has stepped down, and Terry Burns was approved as the new Chair. Peggy has voluntarily resigned from ExCom but will remain a vital resource to me for information and guidance. David Wells was approved as replacement for Peggy's unfinished term on the ExCom, and approved as Vice-chair, as well as Treasurer. Gay Wright was approved as Secretary.

Lili Gonzalez, Stephen Colley and Alan Montemayor continue their terms on the ExCom. Much thanks goes to Libby Day and Loyd Cortez for their service as their terms expire. We appreciate their continued offers to help with occasional needs.

### **Peggy Day given the Alamo Group's highest award**

Outgoing Alamo Group Chair Peggy Day was not expecting to receive the group's highest award at the club's annual holiday party December 15. Making the award was Loretta Van Coppenolle, longtime Alamo Sierran, who urged Day to join the Alamo Group in 2008.



*Peggy Day and her husband John, without whom she says she could not do this volunteer work.*

Day joined that year and was immediately asked to join the executive committee, subsequently becoming Vice Chair. The following year she succeeded Loyd Cortez as Chair and remained in that position until a few days ago. During the past year, Day was Co-Chair with Terry Burns, who has now succeeded her.

Prior to her service to the Alamo Group, Day lived in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where she helped found the Puerto Rican Chapter of the Sierra Club in 2002. She then became a member of the Puerto Rican Chapter's executive committee, its treasurer, and its first outings and program chairs until 2006, when she returned to her previous home, San Antonio.

Day recalls that in the 1990s she supported the Sierra Club financially

and was a speaker on nuclear waste disposal at one of the group's general meetings. It was not until 2002, however, that she became a Sierra Club activist.

Asked if she feels that she accomplished anything during her tenure as Chair, she answered in the affirmative, stating that accomplishments can be measured by comparing how San Antonio is today with how it was 15 or 20 years ago. Progress has been made.

The award given Day read, "The Alamo Group of the Sierra Club bestows upon Margaret (Peggy) Day the Stoker Extended Service Award with great appreciation for many years of outstanding service. December, 2015."

Day's recent comment on receiving the award was, "I was very surprised and honored to receive this award. It's always nice to be recognized for doing work that is above and beyond the call of duty."

Indeed, Day's commitment has been above and beyond the requirements of Chair. And Day plans on continuing her work with the club, lending her assistance where needed.

Thank you, Peggy Day.

### **Alamo Group outings**

Been to one of our outings lately? Check our [Meetup.com](http://Meetup.com) page for the schedule. Attendees often post pictures afterwards; below is one from the December 20<sup>th</sup> outing at Guadalupe River State Park.

### **Sierra Club outings history**

Outings have always been a core Sierra Club function since 1892, when the Club was founded by John Muir. The Club published a book on the outings in 1988, [History: Origins and Early Outings](#); you can read extracts from each chapter at this link. There is a picture of John Muir at the Merced River in Yosemite. From chapter 1: "The advice to 'climb the mountains and get their good tidings' has been followed by Sierra Club members since the organization's start, and the pursuit of this goal has



*Hikers at the Alamo Group Guadalupe River State Park outing December 20<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Linda Gober for this photo.*

played a key role in shaping the Club's history.”

Also in chapter 1, John Muir is quoted: "I have run wild. As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can.

“This was my 'method of study ... I drifted about from rock to rock, from stream to stream, from grove to grove. Where night found me, there I camped. When I discovered a new plant, I sat down beside it for a minute or a day, to make its acquaintance and hear what it had to tell... I asked the boulders I met, whence they came and whither they were going.”

### **Volunteers needed at info tables**

Please help get the word out about Sierra Club! Man our educational tables at these upcoming fun events. Contact Tabling Chair Gay Wright, [alamo.sierra@yahoo.com](mailto:alamo.sierra@yahoo.com) or 342-0222.

*Earthwise Living Day:*

March 5, Saturday, Leon Valley, 9 am to 2 pm.

*SAWS Spring Bloom:*

March 12, Saturday, SAWS Headquarters, 9 am to 1 pm.

*Fresh Air Friday:*

April 1, Friday, Main Plaza, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.

### **The San Antonio Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan 2040**

*By Barbara McMillin*

John Dugan, Planning and Community Development Director, will discuss the San Antonio Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan on February 16<sup>th</sup> at our February general membership meeting at EcoCentro (see the details in *Events*, on page 2).

It is a good idea these days to look ahead at least 25 years to anticipate changes and plan for them. The Paris climate change conference just ended, and we would like to do our part to have our city be one where people enjoy living here. Sustainability has not always been figured in to a plan in the past, at least as much as it is needed now. We need now to know what our carbon footprint is and what things we can do to improve it. In the city and in the community.

We also have the trends from the past to consider - will more than a million new people be living here? Will the city have 500,000 new dwellings, and 500,000 new jobs? What new ideas, or old ideas, are out there to create a city that addresses the needs of the future?

SA2020 looked forward ten years. Now the San Antonio Comprehensive Plan 2040 can move us forward again. Part of the effort to create a well-functioning and well-lived city is doing research, coming up with data from which to make decisions, establishing goals and policies, and modifying them as we go along.

To move forward, we have to ask new questions to get new answers.

We need a city where a new balance becomes more significant, and new equalizing opportunities are

encouraged citywide. Read about the San Antonio Comprehensive Plan 2040 [here](#). Read about Planning Director John Dugan [here](#).

### **Happy New Year, Mayor Taylor and San Antonio City Council!**

*Follows is a joint letter from the [Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance](#) (GEAA) and the Alamo Group to the mayor and city council of San Antonio*

As we move forward into 2016, we the undersigned request a firm commitment from you to accomplish the following during this calendar year:

- Adopt [SAWS Stage 1 Water Restrictions](#)<sup>1</sup> to become permanently effective as the baseline regulation for all water use in San Antonio and its ETJ.

### **Recommendations drawn from the Cities of San Antonio and Fair Oaks Ranch Water Policy Analyses**

- Commit to protecting 35% of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone through the acquisition of conservation easements.
- Ban the use of [Coal Tar Sealants](#)<sup>2</sup> within City Limits and in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).
- San Antonio has demonstrated a commitment to preserving our waterways through support for Proposition 2 funding for Creek-way Hike and Bike Trails and the San Antonio River Enhancement projects. Further enhancing water quality in streams and rivers by banning the use of Coal Tar Sealants is consistent with these goals.
- Develop a regional collaboration to create legislation, Best Management Practices (BMP's), cooperative agreements and other necessary activities to protect the Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone using Low Impact Development
- Under Identified State Legislation and Local Ordinance Opportunities, we strongly endorse item 3, "Consideration of a San Antonio ordinance change to remove the reward of relaxed EARZ development rules for areas annexed into the city jurisdiction." We will strongly oppose any annexation plan that does not maintain the impervious cover restriction of 15% that currently applies to the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction.

### **Not over our water, not with our money!**

- The San Antonio Water System (SAWS) shall amend the following Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (Water CCN #10640 and Sewer CCN #20285) to exclude the entirety of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge and Contributing zones within this area where SAWS is designated by the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality as the sole service provider for water and sewer service.

We believe that this action is consistent with the Recommendations in the Water Policy Study and urge you to take action immediately to amend the aforementioned SAWS CCNs. We have no doubt that additional water supplies will be needed to serve this area. Given that the citizens of San Antonio have



repeatedly demonstrated support for protection of this fragile area, it is not fair to require SAWS rate payers to subsidize additional water supplies required for SAWS service on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone.

- The San Antonio Water Systems Board shall direct the San Antonio Water System to establish a policy prohibiting applications for extension of Certificates of Convenience and Necessity into areas eligible for Proposition 1 funds dedicated to the protection of the Edwards Aquifer.
- The San Antonio Water System shall require, as condition of approval of service contracts for service in jurisdictions other than the City of San Antonio, compliance with conditions no less stringent than San Antonio's Water Quality ordinances, or in the event that the jurisdiction has ordinances to protect water quality, the application of whichever ordinance provides greatest protection.
- Both the City of San Antonio (CoSA) and Bexar County should adopt the same LID (Low Impact Development) ordinances for ALL new development, especially for new development over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge zones. Require developers to incorporate prevention of storm-water runoff by using rainwater catchment off roofs and making it standard to landscape for slowing, spreading, and sinking rainwater, thus preventing erosion and creek flooding.
- Both CoSA and Bexar County should integrate their storm water management with their water development and management plans, as well as the fees needed for both functions, in order to create realistic incentives for commercial/industrial buildings with large rooftops and parking lots to engage in large-scale storm-water capture and use.
- Both CoSA and Bexar County should require - for the sale or resale of all residential and commercial real estate - water (and energy) efficiency audits with results to be disclosed as part of the multiple listings and sale.
- Direct SAWS to be proactive in detecting indoor leaks (not just outdoor leaks) that account for about 14% of water usage in single-family homes.<sup>3</sup> In low-income neighborhoods with old housing stock, SAWS should cover the cost of leak-repairs of owner-occupied houses as a conservation measure.

### ***Stop Growing the GDP at the Expense of Middle- and Low-Income Households!***

- City Council must take responsibility for monitoring and reversing all damage caused by SAWS' regressive fixed charges for residential accounts. Council must require a better way of calculating bills in neighborhoods with high proportions of low-income families who may (due to large households) fail to qualify for the Lifeline rates.
- Direct SAWS to be proactive in identifying households eligible for Affordability Discounts and eliminating all the barriers to their full ongoing benefiting from all possible SAWS and public aid. By the end of 2016, SAWS

should cover 90+% of those eligible (not the pathetic 24% coverage of 2014).

- Raise the eligibility rate for Affordability Discounts by increasing the threshold to at least 150% of federal poverty line.<sup>3</sup>
- Direct SAWS to halt water cutoffs as a routine threat in parts of the county where median per capita income is less than 80% of the county median. Water is a human right; water cutoffs cause public health problems and increase inequality.
- Require SAWS to prepare and make public bi-annual reports on all measures of "affordability" of water (e.g., number of new applications for discounts, emergency aid, need for subsidized plumbing work, delayed payments, overdue bills, threatened cutoffs, etc.) - both numerically on spreadsheets and geographically pinpointed by GIS on maps that indicate City Council district borders, overlaid with data about median per capita income of each census tract. City Council should consider these and other data about household incomes to ascertain that SAWS rate hikes are not worsening the city's already-critical lack of affordable housing.

We the undersigned call on you to include these items in your agenda in a timely manner. We look forward to working with you during 2016 in enacting these reforms to ensure that San Antonio's approach to and regulation of our water resources is progressive, fair, sensible, and sustainable.

Sincerely,

*Annalisa Peace, Executive Director Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance*

*Terry Burns, Chair of the Executive Committee, Alamo Group of the Sierra Club*

### **Notes:**

1. Link to: [saws.org/conservation/DroughtRestrictions/StageOne.cfm](http://saws.org/conservation/DroughtRestrictions/StageOne.cfm)
2. [GEAA white paper](#) on coal tar sealants
3. According to SAWS conservation plan narrative, 2014-2021 p 7.
4. In comparison with other cities with comparable proportions of needy residents, San Antonio has one of the stingiest cutoff levels for affordability assistance. See pp. 60-62 of K. Bealer's (consultant) report (online at [saws.org](http://saws.org)).

### **Dark skies, or not?**

By Kevin Hartley

From [darksky.org](http://darksky.org), the website of the International Dark Sky Association:

- What would happen if we couldn't see the stars?
- Did you know light pollution can harm ecosystems of nocturnal animals?
- Millions of children will never see the Milky Way
- Valuable resources are wasted every night due to bad lighting.



- Millions of migrating birds die each year from light pollution.

Per their [About](#) page, “IDA’s work includes initiatives to protect the night skies and fragile ecosystems in parks and protected areas worldwide.”

### Resources

They have a good short video, [Losing the Dark](#), on the impact of light pollution. There are [other videos](#) also. And a page on [light trespass](#) and lots of [FAQ](#) topics.

At their page on [dark sky places](#), we can see that in Texas now there are two dark sky communities, Dripping Springs and Horseshoe Bay. And there are four dark sky parks: Big Bend National Park, Copper Breaks State Park, Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, and a new site certified in January, [UBarU Camp and Retreat Center](#) west of Kerrville.

### Heard of this national park?

By Kevin Hartley

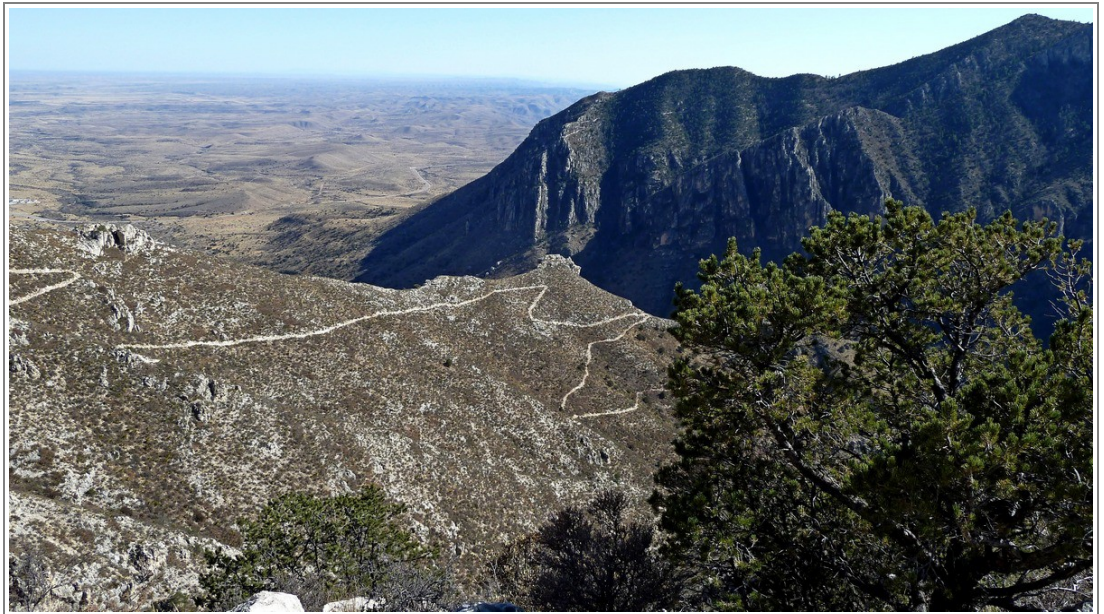
The Nature Conservancy's website has an article [10 Great National Parks You've Never Heard Of](#). #7 on the list is *Guadalupe Mountains*, one of the two national parks in Texas. Many of us have likely heard of it or been there, unlike others on the list. In the November issue of this newsletter we looked at #8, *Great Sand Dunes* in Colorado.

### Guadalupe Mountains National Park

This park is centered around an outcropping of the [Capitan Reef](#), which is the Permian age carbonate reef which Carlsbad Caverns was dissolved out of. Rather small as

national parks go, Guadalupe is east of El Paso, southwest of Carlsbad New Mexico, and about six hours drive from San Antonio.

There are a few great day hikes at Guadalupe, particularly Guadalupe Peak and McKittrick Canyon, and a couple campgrounds. There are some challenging backpacking opportunities. And Carlsbad Caverns is just down the road, which has some hiking opportunities itself in addition to the caverns, though no camping excepting backcountry. Alamo Group might do a 4 or 5 day outing at Guadalupe Mtns in the future.



*Guadalupe Mountains National Park: the east end of the Tejas Trail, approaching Pine Springs Campground, which is to left in the canyon below. Guadalupe Peak is upper right. Looking ESE.*



*Guadalupe Mountains National Park: the southern end of the mountains and the Capitan Reef from the west. This vista is from the Salt Basin Dunes, a day-use area on the west side of the park. The rightmost peak is El Capitan; the 2nd rightmost is Guadalupe Peak, 8 miles away, at 8749' the highest elevation in TX.*



Want to know more? Here is the [NPS web page](#), and another at [American Southwest.net](#).

Here are a few of my pics, for those who may not already be familiar with the park.

### And, the others?

Also on the list are several others not much more than a day's drive from San Antonio:

#1-Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Colorado, #2-Petrified Forest in Arizona, #4-Great Basin in Nevada, and #6-Capitol Reef in Utah. Maybe we can visit those in future articles.



*Guadalupe Mountains National Park: view to the NE looking down Dog Canyon from near the west end of the Tejas Trail. The Dog Canyon campground and north entrance to the park is in the canyon, visible upper center. Guadalupe Peak is 6 mi directly behind, to the SSW.*

## Sierra Club Membership

Are you a member? Please [join or renew!](#)

## Food for thought

Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children.

Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.

*-Theodore Roosevelt*



SIERRA  
CLUB

## Alamo Group of the Sierra Club

Website: [alamosierraclub.org](http://alamosierraclub.org)

The Alamo Group is one of 13 regional groups within the Lone Star (Texas) chapter of the Sierra Club. Our national website: [sierraclub.org](http://sierraclub.org).

### Executive Committee Officers and Members

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Rep. Joaquin Castro 684-6896

Rep. Henry Cuellar 271-2551

Rep. Will Hurd 202-225-4511

Rep. Lloyd Doggett 866-916-5921

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Ivy Taylor 207-7060

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Dist 2: Alan Warrick

Dist 3: Rebecca J. Viagran

Dist 4: Rey Saldana

Dist 5: Shirley Gonzales

Dist 6: Ray Lopez

Dist 7: Cris Medina

Dist 8: Ron Nirenberg

Dist 9: Joe Krier

Dist 10: Mike Gallagher