



THE ALAMO SIERRAN

THE ALAMO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB NEWSLETTER - VOL. 43 No. 8 SEPT 2009

A Word from the Chair by Loyd Cortez

I am happy to report that we have had a steady increase in members who have signed up for our Electronic Newsletter and Email Alert lists. Currently 291 subscribe to the e-newsletter and 256 to the alert list. Thank you for your support in helping keep our monthly newsletter expenses down, and for making calls and sending emails when we asked for your help.

We can be a force to reckon with, but only if we have the numbers to show our elected leaders that they must listen to our concerns. There were times when we asked you to go to meetings and attend rallies, but I also know that for some members that is not possible. If you have a PC and an email account, please consider signing up for our Email Alert List. A simple phone call or email can have the same impact as showing up for a meeting.

We have received the 2010 calendars. The wall calendar and the desk calendar will continue to be priced at \$15.00 each. Please dig into your pockets and buy a calendar. They make great gifts, and will be available at our monthly Witte meetings.

We had a nice gathering at our last Social at La Tuna. Many thanks to all those who attended that event. Our next two socials will be at Chris Madrid's on September 25th and Candlelight Cafe on October 23rd. See this newsletter for details.

Solar Energy: Ready For Baseload

A two-page flyer, "Solar Energy: Ready for Baseload," has been compiled by Alamo Group conservation chair Loretta Van Coppenolle, giving numerous examples of what is happening in the area of solar energy. To receive an electronic copy of the flyer, which can be easily copied and distributed, please email Loretta at livewithnature@msn.com or go to the Alamo Group's website, www.alamosierraclub.org

Nuclear Vote Imminent

The CPS Energy Board of Trustees is scheduled to vote on Monday, September 28, on the CPS staff recommendation to go ahead with a two-reactor expansion at the South Texas Project (STP). Sierra Club members are urged to attend the board meeting, the time and location of which will be posted on the Sierra Club website prior to the meeting. If the CPS board approves CPS involvement in the expansion, San Antonio City Council will vote on a bond issuance for the expansion at a meeting in mid-October.

The Sierra Club and its allies have opposed the nuclear expansion for multiple environmental and financial reasons. A 2008 study found that residents of a 30-mile radius of the STP have a higher cancer rate for all cancers and all age groups than does Texas as a whole. The cancer rate in the 30-mile

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Alamo City Needs to Boost Recycling Options

It seems simple. You've gathered your cans, bottles and papers and taken them out to the curb. It's twilight, the hot day having given way to a cooler evening and you're doing your part for the environment. But for families living in the more than 140,000 multi-family apartment units in San Antonio, this simple action is not an option.

While it's true that some of us will go to great lengths to find alternatives-like the retired couple living in an apartment on Fredericksburg Road who haul their recycling on hour-long VIA rides to the dropout center-most of us aren't able to participate in recycling efforts without an option that is nearer to home.

In a recent US city ranking (Sustain Lane, 2008), San Antonio earned top marks

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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.

September 15, 2009: Nuclear, Efficiency and Solar: An Update

Learn why the Sierra Club wants to bypass nuclear and go straight to energy efficiency and renewable energy in this three-part program. Eliza Brown, Clean Energy Advocate from SEED in Austin, will speak on nuclear energy. Stephen Colley, a local architect, will inform us about energy efficiency and retrofitting of structures, and Lanny Sinkin of Solar San Antonio will update us on solar applications.

October 20, 2009: Have Questions about Solar?

Solar San Antonio's Lanny Sinkin will return to give us an overview of progress on solar applications. This will be followed by a brief presentation showing solar panel installation.

Tatjana Walker at August Meeting

Registered dietician and new mother Tatiana Walker addressed the Alamo Group at its August general meeting on "Sustainable Food Systems," giving invaluable information on the superiority of organics and the problems with products such as high fructose corn syrup. She also spoke about genetically modified organisms, which have become ubiquitous in the U.S. food supply, and the problem of antibiotics use in the meat industry.

Walker indicated that high fructose corn syrup has been linked to obesity, fatty liver

disease, and diabetes, and that high fructose corn syrup often contains mercury. Walker pointed out that one dollar in five in this country is spent just on diabetes, a lifestyle dependent disease. GMOs, according to Walker, are largely unregulated, may create food allergy problems, and are not required to be labeled. Seventy-five percent of U.S. soy and 34% of corn are genetically altered. The concern with GMOs centers around endocrine disruption. Walker stated that 70% of animal antibiotics are given to healthy animals, and that animals are given eight times more antibiotics than are humans.

Walker recommended the site www.whatsonmyfood.org/index.jsp for more information regarding food quality and food

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Nuclear Vote Continued

radius was 4.5% lower than the state average prior to the STP's commencement of operation.

CPS staff says that drought is not considered to be a problem for the plant's water availability (nuclear is the most water intensive of all generating sources) and that there is no current drought in the Bay City area. Two Alamo Group members went to Bay City in mid-August and found that it had not rained there in 3 months, that much vegetation was brown, and that a burn ban was in effect. They reported that the Colorado River, which will be the plant's source of water, in that area is now largely filled with sea water and had been for some time. Area fishermen were catching sharks 20 miles up the river from the coast. The STP is built to use fresh water, not sea water.

A Congressional Budget Office report predicts the default rate for new nuclear plants as well above 50%. CPS could be in a good position to default because its total worth is \$6.3 billion, a figure lower than the total 40% STP expansion investment would be if the STP costs \$20 billion (a figure higher but more realistic than what CPS is claiming). Even at 20%, CPS's investment would be \$4 billion, a figure close to its total worth. And CPS still owes about \$1 billion on the first nuclear plants. In the case of default, CPS executives, any attorneys involved, etc. would all continue to receive their pay, but ratepayers would be left without reimbursement.

CPS claims that its contract for construction of the expansion exempts it from responsibility for cost overruns. But contracts of this kind often include clauses that require owners to pay in part for overruns or contractors sometimes threaten to walk off the job or work less well if their demands for overrun payment are not met. This may or may not be the case with the CPS contract.

CPS claims that electricity generated by nuclear costs 8.5 cents/kWh, wind 12.5 cents, and solar 21 cents. An August 2009 graph published by the Christian Science Monitor shows nuclear-generated electricity averaging 14 cents/kWh and rising, and wind at 7 cents/kWh. The cost of solar generated electricity is rapidly falling. A contract recently signed by Pacific Gas & Electric assures it of solar electricity at no more than 13.3 cents/kWh through the next 25 years. A vast Bureau of Land Management initiative will provide 100,000 MW of solar energy with gas backup to 6 Western states at an estimated cost of 7 to 8 cents/kWh.

CPS also claims that solar and wind can generate electricity only when the sun is shining and the wind is blowing. Storage for solar and wind are becoming increasingly available, particularly as smart grid technology advances. A solar plant in Spain is being built with 15-hour storage, and at least 3 plants, in the U.S. and in Spain, are being built with 6-hour storage.

CPS dismisses geothermal energy as inappropriate for Texas, but Texas is considered to be the number one U.S. state for geothermal potential, particularly in binary application. Geothermal costs in Texas are predicted to be lower than elsewhere due to already-dug spent oil and gas wells that can be used for geothermal piping. Geothermal feasibility will be discussed at the San Antonio Geothermal Symposium to be held Saturday, September 19, at Trinity University.

Please mark your calendars to participate in the following nuclear issue activities:

Tuesday, September 15, 6-8 PM, District 4 town hall meeting on nuclear, Knights of Columbus, 5763 Ray Ellison Blvd.

Wednesday, September 16, SA Clean Tech Forum (SACTF) hosts a luncheon entitled "A Nuclear Power Forum," 16 from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at the Pearl Brewery Stables. Speakers include Dr. Patrick Moore, a supporter of nuclear power, Dr. Arjun Makhijani, author of Carbon-Free and Nuclear-Free: A Roadmap for U.S. Energy Policy, among other works, and Craig Severance, author of Business Risks and Costs of New Nuclear Power. Go to the following site for more info:

<http://www.sacleantech.org/events?eventId=75587&EventViewMode=EventDetails>

Wednesday, September 16, 7 - 9:30 PM, UTSA Energía Mía host talks by Dr. Arjun Makhijani and Craig Severance, Riklin Auditorium, Frio St. Building (West side), UTSA downtown, parking by I10 Freeway.

Thursday, September 24, 6 - 8 PM, District 10 town hall meeting on nuclear, My Father's House, 3131 Nacogdoches Road

Monday, September 28, 2:30 PM, CPS board meeting decision on the nuclear proposal, 145 Navarro (may be changed to La Villita Auditorium)

For questions call Cindy Wheeler (210) 367-5180 or Peggy Day (210) 829-5632, and check out the websites energiamia.org and nukefreetexas.org

Recycling Options Continued

for housing affordability, ranking first out of the fifty most populous cities. But in solid waste diversion, the city ranked 37th and was designated as significantly "challenged." When taken together, these bookend rankings call on us to take a more pro-active course.

Fortunately, change is afoot in the Alamo City. Curbside recycling rates are on the rise for San Antonio homes. And the city's Solid Waste Management Department has conducted a pilot project to consider possibilities and is convening a series of focus groups to identify strategies for multi-family recycling. These efforts deserve our support.

To build on the momentum, we as residents can take action by:

- * Signing and circulating the Sierra Club petition at <http://texas.sierraclub.org/alamo/Recycling.htm>.

- * Contacting your property manager, if you are a renter, to find out what plans are underway to put recycling in place.

- * Calling upon our City Council members to commend efforts underway and to urge them to make apartment recycling a reality.

- * Joining the Alamo Sierra Club Recycling Committee to lend more voices to the call.

In promoting this new course of action, we are recognizing that recycling is not an isolated issue. It fits into a broad plan for making our cities more sustainable now and long into the future. According to the U.S. EPA, "aside from reducing GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions, which contribute to global warming, recycling also reduces air and water pollution associated with making new products from raw materials" (2007).

To find out more, contact Laurie Posner, Chair, Recycling Committee (lposner@sbcglobal.net).

Tatjana Walker Continued

safety. She also recommended the films Food for the Future and Food, Inc.

Here are some other links that may be of interest to Sierrans:

LOCAL EVENT:

August 30th Texas Public Radio and the Greenspace Alliance "Grow Food Right in Your Own Backyard (or Someone Else's)" http://greenspacesalliance.org/involved/events/083009_grow_food/

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:

Above the Fold. - Daily news bulletin with links to top stories in environmental health including many on agriculture, backyard gardening, and the food supply.

<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/subscribe.html>

USEFUL WEBSITES:

What's On My Food? - Searchable database that links pesticide and herbicide residues measured in different foods with information about the health effects of those foods. Allows you to compare organic and conventional products.

<http://www.whatsonmyfood.org/>

Seafood Watch - A Consumer's Guide to Sustainable Seafood

<http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx>

Shopper's Guide to Pesticides (The Dirty Dozen and The Clean Fifteen)

<http://www.rawfoodnation.org/2009/dirtydozen>

The Organic Center

<http://www.organiccenter.org/about.join.html>

Permaliving teaches permaculture classes in San Antonio

<http://www.permaliving.com/>

Spiral Seed - great permaculture website - amazing art!

<http://www.spiralseed.co.uk/>

RELATED WEBSITES:

Paul Hawken's Commencement Address in Portland (inspiring)

<http://www.charityfocus.org/blog/view.php?id=2077>

High Sierra Backpack

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of guiding three enthusiastic and determined hikers on a 7-day, 60-mile hike in the Sierra Nevada range. This tremendous cross-Sierra trek certainly lived up to its reputation as rugged and spectacular.

We crossed the backbone of the Sierras in both directions, first west, punching into the range via aggressive Bishop Pass at 12,000 ft. Some of us truly felt the pain of the climb and altitude that first cold night in Dusy Basin at 11,300 ft. Stories of rescues and ominous winter weather dominated hiker talk over the next 2-3 days as we continued west thru Leconte Canyon, around the north shoulder of the Black Divide, over Muir Pass and into stark Evolution Basin (not

a single tree can be seen looking west from the Pass), and then lush and flower-filled Evolution Meadow. The Goddard Divide and the Ionian Basin were some other landmarks in the area.

Our easterly turn involved climbing 3400 ft out of the depths of Goddard Canyon (South Fork of the San Joaquin River), up Piute Canyon via the kaleidoscopic Hutchinson's Meadow. We spent our final night in barren Humphrey's Basin, near the drainage from Upper and Lower Desolation Lakes, watching storm clouds over Piute Pass, and the alpenglow on Mt. Humphrey.

Tim Tellgren helped me on some of the tough decisions. Sheila Ryan, you defined the meaning of "reaching deeper." Patti Gonzalez took minimalism to a new level. Thanks to you all.

Scott Wolfe

Sierra Socials

(Contact Loyd Cortez 674-9489 or loydcortez@earthlink.net if planning to attend.)

SEPTEMBER 25th, Chris Madrid's, 1900 Blanco, 735-3553, 6-8 PM.

A good lace to have a tasty burger, salads, cold beer, and wine.

OCTOBER 23th, CCandlelight Coffeeshouse, 301 N St. Mary's, 738-0099, 6-8 PM.

One of our favorite places, it features good food and a nice quiet atmosphere.



SAT, OCT 24: GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA DAY HIKE

This will be the walk of a lifetime. Reserve your spot before all the slots are gone. Arrive at park headquarters (12861 Galm Rd) by 8:00AM for an 8:15AM sharp departure. Moderately paced walk on the beautiful Wildcat Canyon route up to the protected area, then along Cave Creek and part of the Black Hill loop. State Park pass or \$6 entrance fee

required. Donation to Sierra Club suggested. Difficulty: HIGH due to length (12-13 miles). Bring at two quarts of water, lunch, snack, hat, and sunscreen. Contact leader Stan Drezek (493-0939) for further details and to review directions. Assistant Leader: Chris Anderson

FRI-SUN, NOV 13-15: HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA BEGINNER BACKPACK

Have you ever wanted to try backpacking, but never had the time or opportunity? Then this trip is for you. No prior experience is necessary, only a willingness to camp out overnight in a tent and complete a short hike with pack. We will backpack to one of the primitive camping areas, a distance of about three miles. This will give you ample time to adjust to your equipment and get a good taste of how much fun backpacking can be. Experienced backpackers will assist you and share their many years of backpacking experiences. As we sit around the virtual campfire on Saturday night we will hear many tales of outdoor adventures. The trip will start early Saturday morning and end early Sunday afternoon. A mandatory meeting will be held the week prior to go over equipment and supplies needed, as well as the trip plans. Individuals provide their own equipment, food and water. Difficulty: EASY. Participants pay own park entrance and camping fees. Donation to Sierra Club suggested. Signup deadline is November 1. Leaders are Bill Rogers (rogers@uthscsa.edu) and Terry Platt (tplatt@earthlink.net).



MEETING DATES AND CONTACT INFO

General Meeting:	3rd Tuesday 7 p.m.	Jerry Morrissey	497-5470
Executive Committee Meeting:	3rd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter Submissions:		Fred Wills	fredwills@att.net
Political Committee Meeting:	2nd Thursday, 7 p.m.	Russell 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.	Scott Wolfe	724-2707
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
Peggy Day & MaryEllen Garcia	Secretary	
Margaret (Peggy) Day		829-5632
Wendell Fuqua		373-0748
Hector Gonzalez		226-6069
MaryEllen Garcia		344-1581
Fred Wills		673-9566
Scott Wolfe		724-2707
Teresa Ronquillo		844-8720
Sharon Dukes (non voting) Treasurer		828-3721

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Programs	Eloise Stoker	828-0919
Fundraising	Paula Stone	393-7351
Publicity	Teresa Ronquillo	844-8720
Mailings	Jim Stewart	692-0727
Membership	Loyd Cortez	674-9489
Newsletter	Fred Wills	673-9566
Website	Richard Alles	494-2088

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Outings Chair	Scott Wolfe	724-2707
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	Laurie Posner	510-917-0097
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: Julian Castro; 207-7060;	mayor@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 1: Mary Alice P. Cisneros; 207-7279;	district1@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 2: Ivy R. Taylor; 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: David Medina, Jr.; 207-7043;	district5@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 6: Ray Lopez; 207-7065;	district6@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 7: Justin Rodriguez; 207-7044;	district7@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 8: W. Reed Williams; 207-7086;	district8@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 9: Elisa Chan; 207-7325;	district9@sanantonio.gov
Dist. 10: John G. Clamp; 207-7276;	district10@sanantonio.gov

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

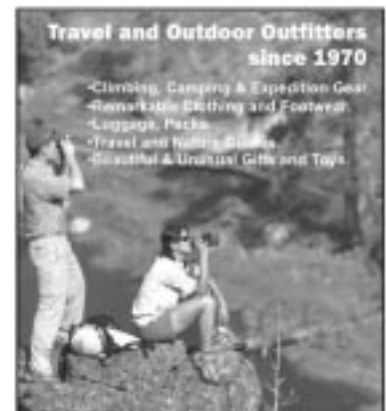
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