

Austin Sierran

Vol. 36, No. 1

Newsletter of the Austin Regional Group



*Rage and love have transformed this Austin Brownfield
(see article on page 6). Photo by Donna Hoffman.*

General Meeting

LCRA Hancock Bldg, 3700 L. Austin Blvd
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; program at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, February 1st

Program: It's 2005 - "Whadda ya wanna do?"

Presenters: Donna Tiemann, Sierra Club,
Colin Clark, SOS Alliance, Harold Daniel,
Save Barton Creek Association, George
Cofer, Hill Country Conservancy

Tuesday, March 1st

Program: To be announced

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1,000,000 acres...
and still counting

In 1879, when John Muir visited southeast Alaska, he was struck by the beauty of the Tongass. Since 1964, the Forest Service's plan for the Tongass has called for clear-cutting 95% of the ancient forest as soon as possible.

Today, if the Forest Service has its way, nearly 2.5 million acres of old-growth rainforest in roadless areas of the Tongass will be open to timber companies for more road building and logging.

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SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT/LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose check and mail to: **Sierra Club,**
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Volunteer of the Year
2004

JOHN YARBER

For years of outstanding
outings' leadership

Volunteer of the Month
November

SWATI AVASHIA and
SUSAN KOTARA

Great job !

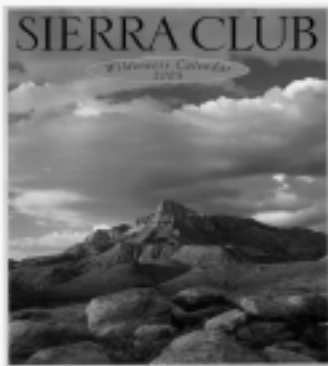
Volunteer of the Month
December

BECKY PATTERSON

Great job !

SIERRA CLUB 2004 CALENDARS

**Sierra Club 2004 Engagement
Calendar** - Week-by-week format,
featuring 57 spectacular photo-



**Sierra Club 2004
Wilderness Wall
Calendar** - Week-by-
week formaSpiral
bound, month-by-
month format,
featuring 12 majestic
North American

**Available at our General Meeting, or by
contacting Robert Young at
ryoung512@earthlink.net.**

**All proceeds benefit the Austin group and
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Chair's Column

SANDRA GRIMES

As this is my final column as your Chair, I want to use this opportunity to remember some of the good work that was done to fulfill our Mission of enjoying and protecting our environment. I am grateful for the chance to serve the Sierra Club in this capacity.

We began 2004 with a January general meeting program: "Padre Island Buyout - the Battle Has Just Begun" by Maggie Goodman. The January issue of the newsletter also featured a photo of an oil field service truck on Padre Island National Seashore beach and an article about the drilling on Padre Island by Rusty Middleton. This campaign, headed by Chris Wilhite at our Southern Plains office, has drawn in many of our members, including Hilary Mears and Felicia Kongable who have been collecting signatures on a petition for our president. To find out more about the Save Padre Island Campaign contact chris.wilhite@sierraclub.org or phone 512-472-8710.

In February we looked at economic aspects of protecting our environment with, "NAFTA at Ten - Not Again" presented by Lesley Ramsey of the Fair Trade Coalition. This was an analysis of the costs and benefits of the North American Free Trade Agreement for the U.S., Canada and Mexico. ExCom attempted to get our own affairs in order by beginning a process of evaluation and review of our various committees and agendas. This process, facilitated by Jim Steffens, a volunteer with Wisconsin Sierra Club, has continued throughout the year. During that time we have given additional support to some aspects of the work, such as the Inner City Outings Program. We have eliminated some aspects of the work, such as the Population Committee. The ExCom continues to be interested in your input into these decisions and welcomes volunteers who wish to support the work of the Club.

"Making new Urbanism Happen" was presented by Scott Polikov. March outings reflected this urban theme with an Inner City Bike Ride, a day hike at Roy C. Guerrero Colorado River Park, a tour of the Breaux's 'off the grid' solar home and an afternoon of rowing on Town Lake. We supported and celebrated the victory of Lloyd Doggett in the Congressional primary for District 25. We recognized Volunteer of the Month, Cindy Schwake for her contribution to our Outings program.

April's program, "Major Outings of 2004" was as beautiful as it was informative. We were treated to photos of the White Mountains Wilderness of New Mexico, the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, Navajo Country (the four corners adjoining New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado), Big Bend National Park, and the San Juan Mountains of Colorado. Outings Chairs Chuck Byrd and John Yarber coordinated this effort with contributions

from the various Outings leaders.

In May Phillip Russell was given the Volunteer of the Month award for his work as Club Secretary, host of the Outings meetings and many other contributions to the life of the Club. Karin Ascot, our own Political Committee Chair, presented "Sustainability: Will Austin Achieve It?" Her talk covered key issues related to our current ability to live on this planet, and specific actions that are likely to help us sustain life. Karin gave us so much to think about that we did not have a presentation in June and instead enjoyed a pot-luck picnic in Zilker Park. The Progressive Pot-Luckers joined us for this very refreshing meal. Some of us even managed a swim after the meal. Austin is a great place to live. It is easy to find beautiful surroundings, good food, good company and good exercise all in one place. And on the topic of good exercise, Nagla Elerian was awarded Volunteer of the Month (April) for leading many conditioning hikes to get us ready for the major outings.

We returned to the environmental education theme in our July meeting with Mike Sloan of Virtus Energy, who presented "Making Austin the Clean Energy Capitol of the World," and in August with "Habitat Restoration Begins at Home" by Mark Klym of Texas Parks and Wildlife Diversity Program. Dick Kallerman, local and state transportation guru brought us up to date on "What is and is not Happening in Central Texas Transportation" at our September meeting. Dick received our Volunteer of the Month Award (July) for his dedicated efforts as an advocate for public transportation in Central Texas. Andy Balinsky, Chair of the Lone Star Chapter, visited us in October to bring us up to date on various statewide Sierra Club campaigns. Andy and wife Julia also set up a table and registered voters at our meeting. Thanks for supporting democracy.

In November we learned more about green building with Lee Gros of Austin Energy, "Austin - Greening as it Grows." Mauri Rex was awarded Volunteer of the Month (August) for her ongoing work as treasurer. Celeste Padilla was Volunteer of the Month (October) for her work in the Outings program. Donna Tiemann kept us informed about the protection of the Edwards Aquifer, including the efforts to stop Lowe's from building in the area. To stay current on this issue, visit www.stoplowes.com. Sierra Club also supports the efforts of Southwest Trails and Greenbelts to help the public enjoy and protect this area. To support this effort visit www.swgreenbelt.org. To stay informed about conservation issues or any activities of the local Sierra Club, please visit <http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/austin>.

Continued on page 13

Conservation Column

DONNA TIEMANN

Where have we been? What do we want to do for 2005?

It's the New Year. We had all hoped for better leadership in the coming year, and some relief from the seemingly endless barrage of "BAD" news and "BAD" environmental stewardship. Alas, no relief in sight . . . "So what is our strategy? What should we, as a group, focus on this year?" It's a question I've been asking myself and others in conversations over the past month. My solution to overcoming the feeling of helplessness at how big the problems and obstacles are, and at how much there is to do in the coming year is to concentrate in my own little world of Austin, Texas. The movie, "It's a Wonderful Life" reminded me about the difference one person can make in his or her community. I want to live in a town like Bedford Falls....not a "Pottersville". So now I want to ask you all to join me in this strategy too.

We will continue to support Sierra Club National and State campaigns, through letter writing opportunities, etc. But I believe now is the time to focus much of our energy at our own local issues. With all the projected growth targeted for our Central Texas area, the development pressures of more Wal-Marts, more Lowe's Stores, and Mini-Mansion subdivisions being built over the Recharge Zone and up against the backyards of our neighborhoods. With all the projected Toll Road Construction and highway extensions, lack of adequate Mass Transit options, and few if any hike and bike trails as part of these transportation plans ... folks, it is time to roll-up our sleeves and dig in and work for our own community's benefit and future quality of life. Now is the time. Big changes and opportunities from our local leadership are about to be announced and I want us all to work together to make a better, more vibrant future possible. Fortunately, we have lots of informed, talented and motivated members that I believe can and want to be plugged into local efforts to make visible differences in our community. We also have many local clubs and groups we can work with in concert to generate the momentum needed to make things happen!

As we start 2005, I want to extend this invitation to encourage you to start your participation by filling out our 2005 Membership Survey. The survey is designed to help our conservation committee establish

what our group's priorities are for the coming year, by ranking topics and allowing you to choose your level of participation.

The survey can be found on page 12. Mail to:
Donna Tiemann
Sierra Club Conservation Chair
3203 Cupid Drive
Austin, Texas 78735

Or faxed to: 444-0603 Attention: Conservation Chair
The survey is also available at our club's homepage <http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/austin/>
Another opportunity to participate... please consider joining the Lonestar-Austin-Alerts e-list for latest local campaign alerts. A link is provided at the bottom of our homepage.

Our February General Meeting will have kicked-off the 2005 Conservation Membership Survey and an introduction to other local environmental groups' work and goals. Together let's continue this exploration in the coming months, through the re-establishment of regular Conservation Meetings on the 4th Tuesday of each month (1st meeting set for 2005-February 22nd, 7 to 8 pm, at Artz Rib House on South Lamar). Also, by continuing to invite other groups and individuals to share their efforts and insights on local issues and elevating our group's participation in local campaigns and initiatives, actively working to make a better community for all.

Looking forward to making a difference with you in 2005.....

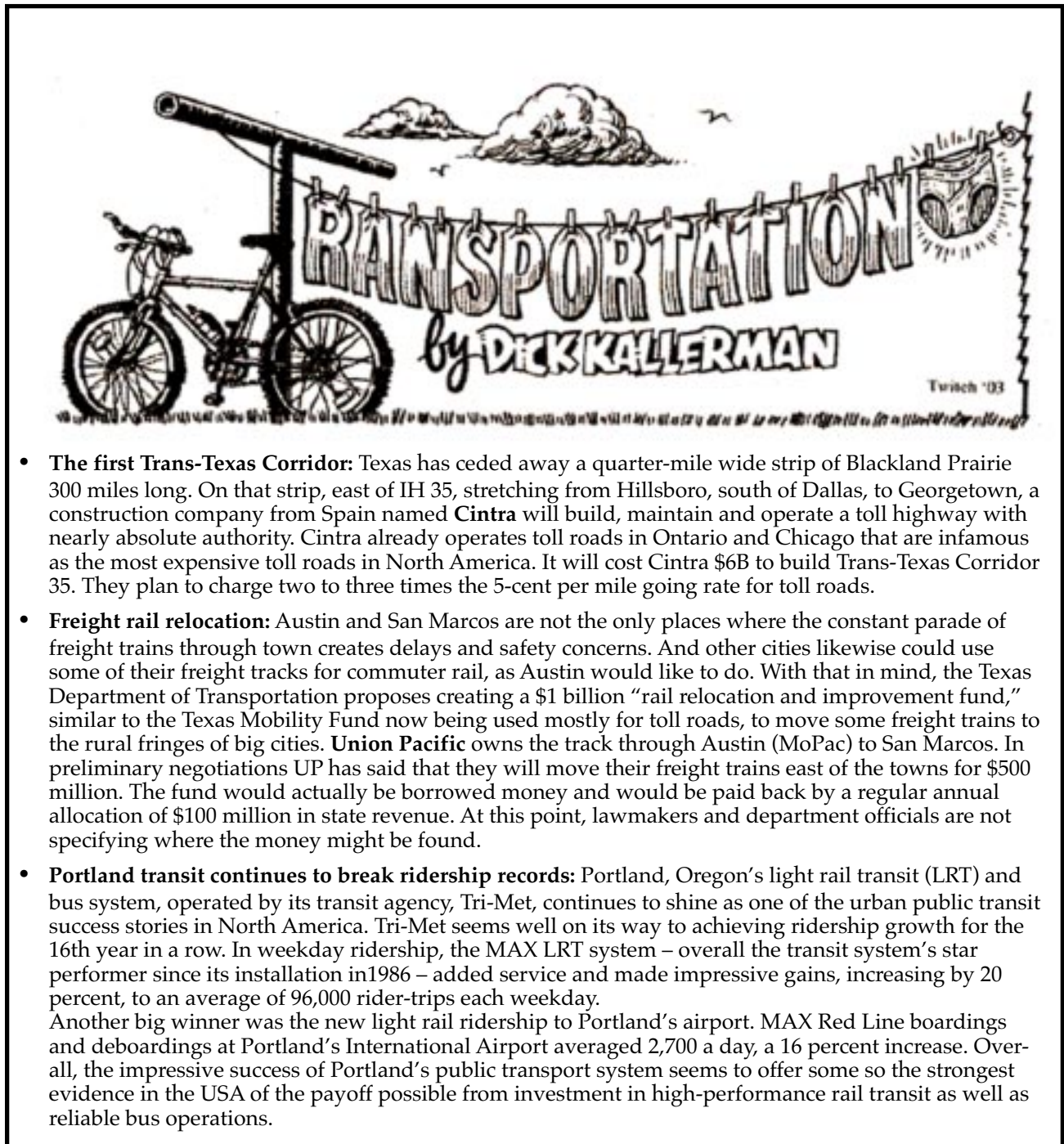
Join us at the General Meeting and help us set our Conservation Goals for the year and hear from other groups about the work they did in 2004 and what's in store for our community in 2005.

Speakers: Donna Tiemann, Sierra Club Austin Group Conservation Chair. Donna was raised on the southeast side of Houston in the shadows of the Shell oil refineries. She attended UT's School of Architecture and works with Barley & Pfeiffer Architects designing energy efficient, sustainable homes and rainwater collection systems.

Colin Clark, Save Our Springs Alliance Communications Director. Colin was born and raised in Austin and has worked full time for Save Our Springs Alliance for over three years. He graduated from Amherst College in 2000 with a degree in American Studies.

Harold Daniel, Save Barton Creek Association President. Harold was raised on the Texas Coast in Port Lavaca. He came to Central Texas to study at Southwest Texas State University and landed in Austin in 1994. He was active in the efforts to try to halt the Longhorn Pipeline construction and in the recent "Stop Wal-Mart" and Lowe's campaigns.

George Cofer, Hill Country Conservancy Executive Director. George is a sixth-generation Austinite. His love of the great outdoors and conservation of the natural environment come from spending his childhood summers on a working cattle ranch along the Frio River.



- **The first Trans-Texas Corridor:** Texas has ceded away a quarter-mile wide strip of Blackland Prairie 300 miles long. On that strip, east of IH 35, stretching from Hillsboro, south of Dallas, to Georgetown, a construction company from Spain named **Cintra** will build, maintain and operate a toll highway with nearly absolute authority. Cintra already operates toll roads in Ontario and Chicago that are infamous as the most expensive toll roads in North America. It will cost Cintra \$6B to build Trans-Texas Corridor 35. They plan to charge two to three times the 5-cent per mile going rate for toll roads.
- **Freight rail relocation:** Austin and San Marcos are not the only places where the constant parade of freight trains through town creates delays and safety concerns. And other cities likewise could use some of their freight tracks for commuter rail, as Austin would like to do. With that in mind, the Texas Department of Transportation proposes creating a \$1 billion “rail relocation and improvement fund,” similar to the Texas Mobility Fund now being used mostly for toll roads, to move some freight trains to the rural fringes of big cities. **Union Pacific** owns the track through Austin (MoPac) to San Marcos. In preliminary negotiations UP has said that they will move their freight trains east of the towns for \$500 million. The fund would actually be borrowed money and would be paid back by a regular annual allocation of \$100 million in state revenue. At this point, lawmakers and department officials are not specifying where the money might be found.
- **Portland transit continues to break ridership records:** Portland, Oregon’s light rail transit (LRT) and bus system, operated by its transit agency, Tri-Met, continues to shine as one of the urban public transit success stories in North America. Tri-Met seems well on its way to achieving ridership growth for the 16th year in a row. In weekday ridership, the MAX LRT system – overall the transit system’s star performer since its installation in 1986 – added service and made impressive gains, increasing by 20 percent, to an average of 96,000 rider-trips each weekday. Another big winner was the new light rail ridership to Portland’s airport. MAX Red Line boardings and deboardings at Portland’s International Airport averaged 2,700 a day, a 16 percent increase. Overall, the impressive success of Portland’s public transport system seems to offer some of the strongest evidence in the USA of the payoff possible from investment in high-performance rail transit as well as reliable bus operations.

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Address Changes: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder,

CO 80321 or email address.changes@sierraclub.org
DO NOT SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE EDITOR

Newsletter Policy: All newsletter inquiries should be made to Judith Clarkson at 462-9823. Submitted articles should be limited to 350 words. Longer articles may be shortened at the editor’s discretion. Advertising rates and terms are available from Beverly at 837-4448.

Deadline: all newsletter contributions must be submitted by THE 10th OF THE MONTH either:

- 1) by e-mail to judithclarkson@cs.com or
- 2) mail to Judith Clarkson, 1909 Hether Street, Austin, TX 78704; (512) 462-9823.

Brownfields to Green

DONNA HOFFMAN

“Never doubt that [MANY] small group[S] of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
~Margaret Mead [EDITED]

Friends of east Austin’s Rhizome Collective are bursting with pride at the fact that this Fall the consensus-based permaculture group won from the Bush Administration’s lean and usually mean Environmental Protection Agency a \$100,000 contract for pollution remediation and creation of a park in southeast Austin. The Rhizome Collective certainly was surprised.

In November of 2003, I dropped into the Rhizome’s warehouse home, a showcase of organic gardening and green building on Allen Street, just east of Pleasant Valley and south of East 5th Street. In an office room artfully crafted from the large interior, I found Stacey Pettigrew dressed in warmly layered clothing going easy on the heating fuel. She was graciously patient, despite her that-day deadline to send off an EPA grant application for funds to clean up a 9.8 acre brownfield in the Montopolis neighborhood along the southeast bank of the Colorado River.

I was impressed at how high the Rhizome was aiming and then I mostly forgot about it — as did Stacey, and her housemates Scott Kellogg, Lyndon Phelps, Theresa Gorman, Simone Sedillo and Andrew Toelle. Over six months later, in June 2004, Stacey and Scott on their annual visit to family in upstate New York received an email from the EPA saying they would award the contract for the Rhizome Collective to do the restoration work and make that park.

At a community meeting in December to celebrate and to call for volunteers and assistance, Diane Chapa from the City of Austin’s Brownfields Redevelopment office, told how the Rhizome contacted her office about the damaged 2-acre lot next to the Collective’s own home. Chapa pointed them instead to the owner of the Montopolis lot who wanted to donate his property. With its piles of tires and

some toxic debris, it was worth more to him as a tax write-off for gifting than income in a potential sale. The Rhizome Collective decided to take on the clean-up and, with the support of Chapa’s office, applied for the funds.

The Rhizome design includes the cleanup of 5000 cubic yards of illegally-dumped debris, much of which they will recycle and reuse. They plan to build an environmental education park using the recovered materials. For example, they will construct information kiosks for the park out of recovered wood, metal and tires filled with rammed earth, and will use recovered, non-pressure treated wood chips to create a hike and bike trail linking to the adjacent Colorado River Park.

At the December gathering at the Rhizome’s warehouse, also called the Rhizosphere Educational Center, Amber Howard-Perry from the Dallas office of the EPA’s Brownfields team explained that it was their innovative, holistic approach that made their application stand out. Howard-Perry pointed out that the Rhizome contract was only one in eight such awards in the EPA’s Region 6, which includes Texas and all adjoining states. Her apology that Brownfields is one of the few environmental programs that the Bush Administration has not cut altogether was not lost on the eastside environmental activists, including Daniel Llanes, present at the party.



Beauty shining through at a wetland portion of Grove Brownfield cleanup site

While pleased and thankful for the Rhizome's excellent initiative, Llanes and others noted that there are Superfund sites and other toxic acreage all over Texas that lie unchanged and desperately calling for attention. That includes the ground that lies below, and fans out from, the former Tank Farm petroleum storage facilities just north of the Colorado from the Montopolis brownfield. Although the Tank Farm was shut down through the concerted efforts of another intrepid citizens' group PODER (People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources) in 1993, the soil remains contaminated and endangers the health of people living in adjacent neighborhoods. PODER's Llanes asked, "What about finishing the job at the Tank Farm? There has been some removal of the soil, but its not over. If we left it up to the agencies, it would never get done."

Neither the Rhizome nor PODER have sat back to wait for what might flow downstream. The Rhizome website states the perspective that informs their activities:

The prevalence of abandoned lots filled with garbage, or land contaminated by dumped chemicals, polluting industries, etc., in poorer neighborhoods, especially where people of color live, is appalling. We believe everyone deserves to live in healthy, clean neighborhoods. It is our hope that this land will be used to strengthen the local neighborhood, rather than as a tool for development and gentrification.

To learn more about other projects of the Rhizome Collective, see their website www.rhizomecollective.org or phone the Rhizome for more information at 385-3695. You can join their email list by signing-up at events@rhizomecollective.org.

If you would like to become involved in what the Rhizome presently calls the Grove Brownfield cleanup, come to the first scheduled volunteer day on February 26.




Collective member Theresa Gorman (r) works on a straw slip wall with Rhizome friends Dave and Julie

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Outings

In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy prior to the outing please use the link on our website's outings page, national's URL at <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call (415) 977-5630.

In the interest of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel.

Unless otherwise indicated, a \$2 donation (\$3 for nonmembers) is requested on all outings.

WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2-6: LAKE TAHOE CROSS COUNTRY SKI TRIP
Come join your fellow XC Ski enthusiasts for three unforgettable days of XC skiing in the Sierra Nevadas near Lake Tahoe. We will be staying at the Sierra Club's rustic mountain retreat, Claire Tappan Lodge, in Soda Springs, California (located at 7,000 feet at Donner Pass.) This trip is open to novices, intermediates and experts. Equipment rental and lessons are available. The low trip cost of \$375 includes all transportation from Reno, 4-nights accommodations, and three meals per day. The trip is limited to 10 participants. See ad on page 9 for a complete trip description. Contact: Doug Strange, doug.strange@alumni.utexas.net.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5 - PEDERNALES FALLS DAY HIKE - Moderate Difficulty
An 8-mile hike in the hill country. Bring lunch, water, and park admission fee (or conservation passport). Meet at 9 am in parking lot of Albertsons at the 290/71 intersection. For more information, contact adonfelipe@aol.com.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6 - MORNING CONDITIONING HIKE - Moderate Difficulty
These ongoing hikes are designed to help you prepare for upcoming major trips. Get ready for a great workout and enjoy a rendezvous with friends. We will meet at 10:15 am and start at 10:30 am for a 3- to 5-mile hike. This hike will be led by either Philip or Nagla. Contact Nagla via e-mail (nagla.e@att.net) or phone 659-8145 for hike location.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12 - BRIGHT LEAF WORK DAY
Trail maintenance and non-native plant removal at Bright Leaf State Natural Area. Sandwiches and water furnished. Bring work gloves. Meet at park at 9 am. For more details and directions, see announcement on page 10, or contact adonfelipe@aol.com

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13 - MORNING CONDITIONING HIKE - Moderate Difficulty
These ongoing hikes are designed to help you prepare for upcoming major trips. Get ready for a great workout and enjoy a rendezvous with friends. We will meet at 10:15 am and start at 10:30 am for a 3- to 5-mile hike. This hike will be led by either Philip or Nagla. Contact Nagla via e-mail (nagla.e@att.net) or phone 659-8145 for hike location.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16 - CHILLY HILLY TASTE OF ITALY HIKE
Starting at 6:30 pm from Mangia Pizza, 8012 Mesa Drive (SW corner of Mesa and Spicewood Springs, next to Randalls). Join us for a brisk 5-mile hike on quiet residential streets, up one of the steepest hills in Austin, and past a nature preserve. No reservations needed. Join us for food and drink afterwards. Niles Seldon 346-8073 nseldon@ix.netcom.com

OUTINGS MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The next Outings Committee meeting and pot-luck will be Thursday, January 27th, at 6 pm at Philip Russell's place, 1502 W. St. Johns, to plan March outings. Bring a dish to share. Note the new time. Call 458-4518 (Adonfelipe@aol.com) for info. Meetings are usually the Thurs. before the meeting.

WALKING GROUP

The Sunday morning walking group meets at 8 am at the Austin High School tennis courts for one hour of exercise followed by breakfast/ social hour at a nearby restaurant. Contact Bonnie for further details at 445-6223 or merleandbon@earthlink.net.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19 - TURKEY CREEK DOG WALK - Easy/Moderate Difficulty

Join the Sierra Club for a 4- to 5-mile hike through Turkey Creek. We will meet at 2 pm at the Turkey Creek parking lot, two miles from the park entrance sign. Take 2222 west beyond loop 360. At first traffic light, turn left onto City Park Road. Continue straight for 4.4 miles, through the yellow gates. Cross the bridge over Turkey Creek and at 4.8 miles turn right into the parking lot (right after a sharp turn in the road). Bring water and good walking shoes/boots. For more information contact Becky via e-mail rpatterson16@austin.rr.com or phone 913-5990. Also check out the web site for more information: <http://www.austinexplorer.com/hiking/HikeDetail.asp?HikeID=295>

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20 - MORNING CONDITIONING HIKE - Moderate Difficulty

These ongoing hikes are designed to help you prepare for upcoming major trips. Get ready for a great workout and enjoy a rendezvous with friends. We will meet at 10:15 am and start at 10:30 am for a 3- to 5-mile hike. This hike will be led by either Philip or Nagla. Contact Nagla via e-mail (nagla.e@att.net) or phone 659-8145 for hike location.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26 - KAYAKING ON TOWN LAKE

Meet at 2 pm at the Texas Rowing Center, located on the north side of Town Lake, on the walking trail, just east of the Mopac Bridge, across from Austin High School playing fields. Bring your own kayak or rent one at the Center. Let me know you are coming by February 24, and you can get a group-rate discount on kayak rental. We will cruise around Red Bud Island and Barton Creek area. Contact Jack Graham, 346-4887 or jgg@io.com

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27 - MORNING CONDITIONING HIKE - Moderate Difficulty

These ongoing hikes are designed to help you prepare for upcoming major trips. Get ready for a great workout and enjoy a rendezvous with friends. We will meet at 10:15 am and start at 10:30 am for a 3- to 5-mile hike. This hike will be led by either Philip or Nagla. Contact Nagla via e-mail (nagla.e@att.net) or phone 659-8145 for hike location.

Cross Country Ski Trip

February 2-6, 2005

Come join your fellow XC Ski enthusiasts for 3 unforgettable days of XC skiing in the Sierra Nevadas near Lake Tahoe. We will be staying at the Sierra Club's rustic mountain lodge, Claire Tappaan Lodge in Soda Springs, CA (located at 7,000 feet at Donner Pass.) The Lodge accommodates 130 persons in bunk bed accommodations. Bring your own towel and sleeping bags.

This trip is open to novices, intermediates and experts. Equipment rental and lessons are available. We will ski at Royal Gorge Cross Ski Resort, North America's largest groomed track system XC Ski resort with over 90 trails and 300 km of groomed track, and Donner Cross Country.

The trip low-cost of \$375 (Sierra Club membership required or a \$25 fee to join) includes all transportation from Reno, 4-nights accommodations, and three meals per day. Extra expenses include R/T airfare from Austin/Reno, ski rentals and trail passes (\$38/day), ski instruction, a night out on the town, souvenirs, and maybe an expedition to Reno to try our luck at one of the Casinos.

The master plan is to arrive Reno by 7 pm on Wednesday night, load up the vans and head out to the lodge (a short 45 minute drive away.) We will stop for dinner on the way (your expense.) After a good night's sleep, a hearty breakfast, and packing your lunch, we will start our adventure for the next three full-days of unforgettable XC skiing. A side trip out to dinner or to a Reno Casino will be considered. Sunday morning we will pack up, say farewell to the snow capped high Sierras until we meet again, and drive into Reno to make afternoon flight connections back to Austin.

The trip is limited to 10 participants. Leader: Doug Strange, doug.strange@alumni.utexas.net.

Sierra Club Social Events

These events will bring together Sierra Club members and potential members, both singles and families, in order to learn about, enjoy and discuss the outdoors, our environment and issues related to both. Sierra Club Social Events may be led by a Sierra Club member who is not a certified Outings Leader.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5 - ALIENS OF THE DEEP - 3D AND RIVERWALK

Join us for a viewing of the Aliens of the Deep at the San Antonio IMAX theater. This is a film by James Cameron and is an exciting journey to the bottom of the ocean that is sure to open the eyes of the most extreme adventurers. Ticket prices (excluding tax) are Adults (ages 18-64) - \$8.95; Seniors (age 65+) - \$7.95; Youth (ages 12-17) - \$7.95; Children (ages 3-11) - \$5.50. We will go to the 10:10 am show (no late seat allowed). After the show we will go to the Riverwalk for a stroll followed by lunch. We will meet locally and car pool. Reservation for your ticket is recommended (210-247-4629). For more information on this film, check out this web site: <http://www.imax-sa.com/Coming%20Attractions.html>. For meeting site and any other information, contact either Nagla (nagla.e@att.net, 659-8145) or Gail (gshevick@yahoo.com, 293-0388).

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25 - MEET AND GREET

Join us for a food, drink and live music at Central Market (40th and North Lamar). We will meet at the area inside or outside the Cafe at 6:30 PM. Look for the green balloons. This will give you the opportunity to meet fellow Sierra Club members and potential members. Come with suggestions on future activities which you would be interested in seeing the Sierra Club pursue. For more information contact either Nagla (nagla.e@att.net, 659-8145) or Gail (gshevick@yahoo.com, 293-0388).

Bright Leaf Work Day

On Saturday February 12th, from 9 am until 1 pm, there will be a non-native plant removal and trail maintenance work day at Bright Leaf State Natural Area. The park encompasses 216 acres and has about 4 miles of trails.

Sandwiches will be provided at 1 pm. Water and snacks will be provided throughout the day.

The event is sponsored by Friends of Bright Leaf State Natural Area. The Central Texas Trail Tamers will be on hand with their expertise and specialized tools to lead us in trail maintenance. Jeff Hershey, the Park manager, will explain what we need to do related to non-native plant removal.

Notes: Wear hiking boots or sturdy shoes. No special training is required beyond what will be given that morning when we gather in the parking lot. Bring water bottle, shovels, loppers, tree saws, if you have them.

Directions: Take RR 2222 west from Mopac. Go one block west of the traffic light at Mesa. Go left (south) onto Creek Mountain. When it dead-ends in two short blocks, turn right onto Old Bull Creek. The parking lot is on the left.

For more information, contact Beck Runte at 512-894-0182 or rmrunte@yahoo.com

Educational Opportunities

Splash! Into the Edwards Aquifer exhibit at Barton Springs Bathhouse in Zilker Park. Sheffield Education Center will host the following evening events this spring on the second Thursday of the month at 7 pm.

February 10th: "Purple Martin Homesteads" Just in time for the arriving scouts, learn all about the Purple Martins from Robin Doughty, author and professor. Quiz neighborhood martin-landlord, Laura Joseph, on the best methods for this area. There will be gourds available for those planning to have a Purple Martin condo.

March 10th: "Barton Springs Stories on Screen" will have a showing incorporating the interviews with Austin citizens about Barton Springs and their favorite memories. This premiere recognizes the student filmmakers and interviewees with a red carpet and reception.

April 14th: "Down Stream: Contributions of Barton Springs Flow" features a presentation by National Wildlife Federation's Texas Living Waters Project outreach coordinator Jennifer McMahan and a visit to a USGS river gauge on Barton Creek with hydrologist Raymond Slade. Hear a recent assessment on inflow contributions to Matagorda Bay by the Colorado River and learn about the agencies involved in that work.

Admission is free. For more information call 481-1466 or 478-3170

Fun ways to protect federal land in Texas

In 2005 Sierra Club is leading a campaign to protect our federal recreation and wildlife lands from industrial development. Most of the campaign in Texas this year will focus on the drilling on Padre Island National Seashore, but Sierra Club is dedicated to fighting for protection on all our federal lands, including Big Thicket National Preserve, Sam Houston National Forest and the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

We will ramp up our Campaign to Stop the Drilling on Padre by building broader coalitions, educating our Congressional delegates, and stepping up our outreach program. We will also have a whole lot of fun doing it. We'll have pizza parties, house parties, camp-outs and crab-boils. And there will be multiple volunteer and leadership opportunities in the coming year. If there was ever a time to make the decision to be more active, this is it! This year, the Southern Plains Regional Office is sponsoring two events on Padre Island National Seashore and one on Sam Houston National Forest. If you would like to volunteer to help lead in these events, please contact Chris Wilhite at 512-472-9094 or chris.wilhite@sierraclub.org. Below are some volunteer job descriptions for our spring events.

Padre Celebration and Lunada!

On April 23, or thereabouts, Sierra Club will host a great event on Padre Island National Seashore to honor all the volunteers who have worked on this campaign and to get everyone who has signed the petition together. When I was growing up near South Padre Island and Boca Chica Beach, folks around there would have things called "Lunadas," which vaguely means moon light party in Spanish and which always included a big 55 gallon drum of boiling blue crabs. While our event is still in the planning phase, there will be some fun components: Crab (and vegetarian alt.) boil and moonrise watch with live music and a beach cleanup in the morning. We'll need some lead volunteers to pull this off and make it a really good time. The following are some volunteer job descriptions:

Volunteer Coordinator: Organizes volunteers for phone banking events (pizza parties) and delegates tasks to volunteers at the event, like trash collection, kitchen help, etc.

Outings Leaders: We'll need two certified Sierra Club outings leaders to co-organize the camp out. Specific duties include coordinating the canopy, latrines, and first-aid.

Food Coordinator: With the use of Sierra Club funds, will purchase all the food (blue crabs and vegetarian options, drinks, etc.), coordinate plates and utensils, and coordinates the crab boil.

Steering Committee: Committee of about 5 volunteers that will collectively guide and organize the activities during the event, including promotion, logistics, etc. This committee should include the above volunteer leaders.

Alternative Spring Break 2005

Sierra Club will host its second Alternative Spring Break at Padre Island National Seashore. This event will probably be a three-day event, like last year's during the week of March 14 and will include various programs, such as birding, natural history, grassroots organizing, and a daily dose of the Padre Campaign to stop the drilling. It will take some great volunteers to make this event fun and successful. The following volunteer jobs are needed:

Volunteer Coordinator: Organizes volunteers for phone banking events (pizza parties) and delegates tasks to volunteers at the event.

Outings Leaders: We'll need two certified Sierra Club outings leaders to co-organize the camp out. Specific duties include coordinating the canopy, latrines, first-aid, and guided hikes and/or bike rides.

Student Coordinator: This person will be in charge of recruiting students from College Campuses nationwide. A solid connection with the Sierra Student Coalition is recommended.

Program Coordinator: Coordinates the various activities of the event each day. Schedules speakers to talk on issues.

Steering Committee: Committee of 5-10 volunteers that will collectively guide and organize the activities during the event, including promotion, logistics, etc. This committee should include the above volunteer leaders.

***Austin Regional Group Membership Survey -
Local Campaign Issues and Concerns:***

Please rank all that are important to you by placing a # 1 next to the issue that is most important to you, #2 to the second ranking, and etc. Suggestions for new categories are welcome!.

- Clean, Renewable Energy
- Water Quality/Quantity
- Transportation/Traffic
- Sprawl/Land Use
- Air Quality
- Natural Space Preservation
- Farmland Preservation
- Sustainable/Green Building Practices
- _____ optional write-in
- _____ optional write-in

Yes, I am interested in signing up for Conservation Email alerts concerning local issues!

Yes, I am interested in attending Conservation Meetings and participating in local issues!

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Skills you would like to contribute to the groups activities:

Neighborhood Group, Associations, and/or area of City you reside:

Please subscribe to our email alert list to be informed about our groups latest Conservation activities at www.texas.sierraclub.org/austin/ Go to the bottom of our homepage to find a link to the Sierra Club's email lists.

Mail completed survey to:

Donna Tiemann
Sierra Club Conservation Chair
3203 Cupid Drive
Austin, Texas 78735

Or fax to: 444-0603 Attention: Conservation Chair

The survey is also available at our club's homepage <http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/austin/>

Chair's Column

Continued from page 3

Thanks to Mark and Melanie McAfee for hosting our Winter Holiday Party at the lovely Barr Mansion. The party gave us an opportunity to celebrate the end of the year and to thank some of the folks who have worked so hard through the year. We awarded John Yarber Volunteer of the Year for his great service to the Outings Program. John and Chuck have both served us well as Outings Coordinators and have both decided that it is time to step down. We are very pleased that Becky Patterson has accepted their request to fill this position. Becky has been a capable and dedicated outings leader for many years and brings a wealth of talent to this position.

We said good bye to ExCom members Rusty Middleton and Catherine Hawkins with thanks for their service to the club. Welcome to new ExCom members Nagla Elerian and Roy Waley. Many thanks to Lisa Anderson for all her help with the Winter Holiday Party and the gift wrapping at REI during the Saturdays in December. We rapped up the year with a gathering to look at favorite slides and photos. Thanks to Chuck Byrd for navigating us through slide projectors, several laptop computers and our power point projector.

The last activity of 2004 was a camp out at beautiful Garner State Park. What a great way to end the old year and begin the new. Thanks to Judith Clarkson, Editor for the newsletter which keeps us all informed about the political issues, the environmental concerns, the outings and the social activities. If you are at all interested in these activities, please call or visit the website. You are also encouraged to simply show up for one of our meetings. We have lots of easy ways for you to get involved. It is fun and it really does make a difference in the Club's ability to advocate for the protection of the environment. Please congratulate your new officers, Chris Lehman, Chair and Elizabeth Engle, Vice Chair. Thank you,
Sandra Grimes

Newsletter Ad Person Needed

We need someone who is interested in soliciting ads for the newsletter. You will receive a small commission based on the revenues received. Please contact Chris Lehman at 444-4495 /lehmanck@aol.com for more details.

Sierra Club

Austin Regional Group
P.O. Box 4581, Austin 78765-4581
472-9094

<http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/austin>

Executive Committee

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<i>Vice-Chair</i>		
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Committee Chairs

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<i>General Meeting Programs</i>		
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<i>Treasurer</i>		
Mauri Rex	301-3276	maurirex@yahoo.com
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>		
Judith Clarkson	462-9823	judithclarkson@cs.com
<i>Advertising</i>		
Open		

Our Mission: To explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

It Happened at the ExCom

Minutes of the December 13th Meeting

Present: Sandra Grimes, Chris Lehman, Chuck Byrd, Elizabeth Munger Engle, Felicia Kongable, Catherine Hawkins, and Roy Waley

Inner City Outings Treasurer/Outings leader Ann Clift visited to ask for financial support for ICO as they are nearly out of funds and have limited outings for children because of the financial constraints. Funding was provided for this work, as it is so important to educate young people about the importance of the outdoors.

It was suggested that ICO send promotional material to City Council, and in other ways make public officials aware of the work this group is doing with Austin youth. It was also suggested that we get more public awareness of this work.

Volunteers of the Month for November: Swati Avashia and Susan Kotara for leading kayak outings for ICO.

We reviewed donation forms from Catherine and Felicia prior to formatting for approval in January.

Donna Tiemann, Conservation Chair, visited to discuss conservation strategies for 2005.

Armory Lovins, energy expert, will talk at UT March 23, 2005. Ann Drumm of the Dallas Sierra Club is organizing.

Local conservation agenda and will be further developed at our strategic planning session in January.

Start you Engines Conservation Agenda: Donna has put together a Conservation Survey, which will be used to help understand the group's conservation priorities.

Letter writing table will continue at general meetings as this allows people to quickly become involved in the change process.

Minutes of the January 10th Meeting

Present: Chris Lehman, Elizabeth Munger Engle, Felicia Kongable, Nagla Elerian, Roy Waley, Sandra Grimes

Election of officers for 2005: Chair Chris Lehman and Vice Chair Elizabeth Munger Engle, congratulations to both.

VOM for December is Becky Patterson for her work on the Big Bend Outing, New Year's Eve Outing, webmaster work, and accepting the position as Outings Chair. Great job, Becky!

We have agreed to work the Fine Arts Festival booth April 2 and 3. This will involve selling water and alcoholic beverages at the event. TABC training will be required for at least one person on each shift. Felicia agreed to find a place for the training. We will also need two shift leaders per day. We need a person willing to take responsibility for this fund raising event.

We reviewed donation forms from Felicia. These were approved, and Chuck will be asked to add them to our web site.

Membership/volunteer issues were reviewed with Robert Young. Goals in this area include: increasing membership, increasing retention of members and increasing ways for members to become actively engaged in the Club. Suggestions included making more of a point of greeting new people at the meetings and inviting them to the social hour that follows the meeting; provide orientation for the new members; giving door prizes or other incentives for those attending meetings; and offering an annual discussion of what Sierra Club has to offer. Elizabeth will contact the Goodlife to see about more coverage of our activities.

It was suggested that letter writing table/other activities take place at every general meeting. Felicia to shop for portable tables to ensure that we always have adequate table space for these activities.

Political Committee appointments for spring elections, pending participant acceptance, Karin Ascot, Pol Com Chair, Judith Clarkson, Dick Kallerman, Roy Waley, Chris Lehman, Chuck Byrd and Donna Tiemann.

We have a request for a presenter at the Activism and Spirituality workshop. Karin Ascot has volunteered to do this, thank-you Karin.

Congratulations to these Volunteers

Swati Avashia and Susan Kotara, our Volunteers of the Month for November, lead a Kayak outing for Sierra Club - Austin ICO on the 1st Saturday of each month. The AICO agencies they lead outings for are the City of Austin's St. John Community Center, Pan Am Recreation Center and Zaragoza Recreation Center.

Each outing is between 4 - 6 hours and consists of Swati and Susan as leaders, 2 - 4 other AICO volunteers, 1 - 2 agency representatives, an AICO Junior Leader and 6 - 10 youth participants.

Swati and Susan have been two of our most dedicated and consistent volunteers over the past 2 years. They not only lead the kayak outings, but also participate in ICO's Steering Committee, hikes, trainings, meetings and volunteer orientations.

The Year Ahead

CHRIS LEHMAN

By now you've noticed we've had some changes in the Austin Regional Group. The combination of new and old members of the Executive Committee (ExCom) and other standing committees means we are looking forward to a great year. As the newly elected Chair of ExCom I could not ask for a better team. Chuck Byrd and Sandra Grimes still serve and both are past Chairs. In a few months, when Chuck heels from his recent knee replacement, he plans to build on his decade-plus experience as outings leader and recently retired Outings Co-Chair to bring us more exciting outings to far-off places. New ExCom members Nagla Elerian and Roy Waley are both long-time club members with previous experience as executives of other organizations. Elizabeth Munger brings her professional environmental credentials as an energy and transportation consultant to ExCom. And Felicia Kongable brings her seemingly infinite patience and long standing dedication to environmental education.

Whether informing the general public or helping us educate politicians with letter writing campaigns, Felicia sets a great example of the sweet and considerate tone I hope we can all embrace for the coming year. Having met and worked with several politicians over the years, I know they sacrifice much for the opportunity to serve us. I've seen a need expressed to Senator Gonzalo Barrientos, almost in passing, result in dramatically expanded protections for public safety volunteers. A few minutes pointing out the consequences of sprawl to Judge Sam Biscoe have resulted in years of anti-sprawl coordination with the City of Austin. They do need to hear from us. Without the voices of reasonable citizens volunteering our time there will only be the paid representatives lobbying for the short term profit and unintended consequences. We have the right Executive Committee to help our politicians see the way to do great things for our community. You can help.

We need folks who will monitor City Council, planning commission, the environmental board, and the County Commissioners meetings to help us stay proactive instead of reactive.

Whatever your interests we have a committee for you. Becky Patterson has recently taken over as Chair of Outings for Chuck Byrd and John Yarber who had served for 10 and 14 years respectively. Donna Tiemann is the Conservation Committee Chair and looks to bring much enthusiasm to that committee. If you have an interest in getting involved quietly or

publicly please look at our many committees and contact the chairs or ExCom. And don't forget to respond to our membership survey on page 12.

I want to recognize some absolutely key people. Judith Clarkson has been doing a fabulous job editing and sometimes writing our newsletter forever. If you have an idea for a newsletter article of 400 to 1,200 words, please write it and email it to her at judithclarkson@cs.com. Our Treasurer, Mauri Rex, is absolutely the best and has been for almost ten years, not counting the years she was Houston's Treasurer. If you have some money to donate she knows where to put it for your charitable deduction or to fuel our political efforts. Thank-you.

California Tackles Global Warming

State air regulation officials have unanimously approved new rules that will result in a 30 percent reduction in tail pipe emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants by 2016. The standard will take effect for new cars and light trucks starting in 2009. The new rule enjoys enormous public support in California, where about 1.7 million new cars and light trucks are bought each year. However, its impact could reach far beyond the state's boundaries.

In the 1960s air pollution in California was so severe that California was given the right to set its own emissions' standards. Other states do not have this right, but they may choose to adopt either federal standards or the stricter California standards. When California adopted standards for low emission vehicles in 1990 and 1998, other states were able to follow suit. Now seven other states, including New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts, as well as Canada, have announced that they will adopt the new global warming pollution standards. This could triple the number of cars (to one third of all new cars) required to cut global warming emissions.

In December nine automakers filed suit in an attempt to block the new standard. Meanwhile the public is voting with its wallet. Toyota, Honda and Ford are struggling to keep up with demand for their advanced hybrid cars. Also, GM has announced it will idle five truck plants and lay off 9,000 workers in four states. It is offering rebates as high as \$6,000 per vehicle on some of its SUVs.

Source: *Nature's Voice*, Jan/ Feb 2005 (newsletter of the National Resources Defense Council)

AUSTIN REGIONAL GROUP
 LONE STAR CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB
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 AUSTIN, TX 78765-4581

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Austin Group Committee Meetings

Executive Committee

Second Monday. Next meeting: February 14th, 6.30 pm at Austin History Center, 810 Guadalupe.

Outings Committee Meeting/Potluck Dinner

Thursday before the general meeting, 6 pm at Philip Russell's house, 1502 W. St. Johns. Next Meeting January 27th and February 24th. Call 458-4518 for more details. Bring a dish to share. Note new time.

Conservation Committee Meeting

Fourth Tuesday, February 22nd, 7-8 pm at Artz Rib House on S. Lamar. Call Donna at 358-7076 for more details.

Environmental Education Committee Meeting

Meets with the Conservation Committee.

Inner City Outings Meeting

Monthly on last Tuesday, at REI in the Bat Cave. Email vlcdavis@yahoo.com for info.

Other related area meetings...

Travis Audubon Society

Monthly on the 3rd Thursday, 7 pm. Call 926-8751 for info. and meeting location.

Austin Paddle Club

Monthly on the 2nd Thursday, 7 pm, BMC Software, 10415 Morado Circle.

Austin Metropolitan Trails and Greenways

For details of meetings, contact Jebb Boyt, 475-3786, or go to www.austrails.org.

Austin Butterfly Forum

Meets 4th Monday, 7 pm, Zilker Garden Center. Contact: John Kelly, 331-8693/www.main.org/abf/

Austin Organic Gardeners

Meets 2nd Monday (exc Dec.), 7.30, Zilker Botanical Garden. Contact: Yates Barreda, 448-1276.

Texas Outdoors Woman Network

Meets 4th Tuesday (exc Nov. and Dec.), 6 pm, at Town Lake YMCA, See www.townaustin.org/ 257-3460.

Bastrop County Audubon Society

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7.30 pm, First National Bank, Main St., Bastrop. Contact: Priscilla Jarvis, 281-2762.

Native Plant Society

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 pm (except Dec.), Wild Basin. For more info: <http://npsot.org/Austin/>

Oak Village Commons

Building a sustainable neighborhood in Oak Hill. Meets 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 4:30. Contact Debbie Dyson, 371-7612/www.oakhillcohousing.org for info.

For any changes in above information, send to: judithclarkson@cs.com or call Judith Clarkson at 462-9823