

Playing the blame game —

Blaming environmentalists for New Orleans disaster popular among right wingers

There has been a recent attempt by some who stand to profit from Hurricane Katrina or who would like to shift the blame away from themselves to blame environmentalists for the disaster that struck New Orleans. At issue is the role that conservation groups played in two cases — one almost 30 years ago — involving levee projects proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers. The following is a quick summary of those projects and an accurate account of the role that those groups played.

Save Our Wetlands v. Rush - 1977

In 1977, the Army Corps of Engineers was told by a federal judge to look at the impacts of a massive levee project it had proposed. Nearly three decades later, the Corps has never done that

work and instead chose to abandon the project altogether.

The proposed project would have built a 25-mile long barrier from the Mississippi border to the Mississippi River. Communities around Lake Pontchartrain and local fisherman opposed the project because of the massive impact it would have had on the economy and environment. Those groups had advocated building higher levees as a simpler and safer alternative to the Corps' plan.

After the Corps of Engineers refused to evaluate the impacts of its proposed project and consider ways to reduce them, Save Our Wetlands filed suit and secured an injunction from U.S. District Judge Charles Schwartz, Jr.,

who concluded that the region "would be irreparably harmed" if the barrier project was allowed to continue and chastised the Corps for a shoddy job. The Judge required the Corps to properly study its proposed massive new levee construction project before moving forward.

In the 1977 case conservation groups simply asked the government to look before it leaped and to make sure that local citizens knew what their government had been planning in their backyard.

Mississippi River Basin Alliance, et al. v. H. Martin Lancaster -- 1996

The 1996 lawsuit involved levees that were 100 miles north of New Orleans, did not breach after Hurricane Katrina, and had nothing to do with the flooding.

In addition, in the suit filed by Sierra Club, American Rivers, the National Wildlife Federation, Arkansas and Mississippi Wildlife Federations, and the Mississippi River Basin Alliance, these groups did not oppose raising the levees; they opposed the destruction of wetlands for construction material.

These are the very sort of wetlands that we needed more of when Katrina struck. The impacts of the storm surge were clearly exacerbated by the loss of coastal Louisiana wetlands. Wetlands act as a buffer for coastal areas, soaking up the storm surge. According to the Corps, three-square miles of wetlands can reduce storm surge by a foot.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency and the Louisiana Legislature all urged the Corps to look at how the proposed project would have impacted the area. It refused to do so.

The case was settled, with the Corps of Engineers agreeing in 1997 to a supplemental environmental impact statement. According to a 1997 Baton

Please see PRIORITIES, Page 2

GFWSC Conservation Notes

Power plants to affect D/FW

Residents of Riesel traveled to George Bush's Crawford hometown on Aug. 24 to protest the construction of a coal-fired power plant planned for their community, located only 30 miles from the President's home and 90 miles south of Fort Worth. Representatives of TPOWER (Texans Protecting our Water and Environment and Resources), the citizen group opposing the plant, hoped to impress upon the President the flaws in new power plant pollution rules recently adopted by the EPA.

The Riesel plant is one of six planned for Central Texas which will collectively emit almost 15,000 tons of nitrogen oxides per year. North Texas officials

and environmentalists are concerned that these plants will contribute to the already serious ozone problem in the D/FW region and will be a factor in the area's attempts to come into compliance with the Clean Air Act by the scheduled deadline of 2010.

Gas drilling opposed

FwCanDo (Fort Worth Citizens Against Neighborhood Drilling Ordinance) has been organized by residents impacted by the proliferation of gas wells currently being drilled in the city. To learn more about the effect of these wells on your home and health log on to <http://www.fwcando.org> or write to FwCanDo, P. O. Box 470041, Fort Worth 76147.

We now meet in the Azalea Room of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden Center Complex. See directions, Pg. 3. The September program is "Kongakut River Adventure 2005," a trip through the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Presented by Bill Greer this program is especially topical in view of right wing attempts to use the Katrina tragedy to push drilling there.

**New
Meeting
Site**

Coming Events

October 19, Wednesday, 7 p.m.

Newsletter deadline. Submit articles, ads, letters, or other information in writing. Articles may be submitted by mail or email. B&W or color nature photos and electronic images (150 dpi or greater) will be accepted (prints returned if submitted with SASE). Photographs of

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Greater Fort Worth Sierra Club

P.O. Box 1874, Burleson, TX 76097-1874

<http://sierraclub.org/chapters/tx/fortworth/index.html>
(Phone numbers below are Area Code 817 except as noted)

Executive Committee

Chair Susan Haney 254-582-8228 srobinson@whitneytx.net

Vice-chair Todd Nichols 937-5217 toddnichols@comcast.net

Secretary Jeneanne Carson 817-860-1870 jcars@flash.net

Treasurer Todd Nichols

Bryon Haney

James Moody 295-1623 jmoody166@mac.com

Glenn Ford 469-6540 gfordfortworth@hotmail.com

Dewayne Quertermous 214-558-1407

shadowy_poet@yahoo.com

Conservation Contacts

Chair Glenn Ford 469-6540 gfordfortworth@hotmail.com

Bob Scott 282-1372 roscoth@flash.net

Outings Contacts

Acting Chair Claudia Blalock 924-6242 cpblalock@msn.com

Day Hikes Claudia Blalock

Canoeing Marilyn Turnage

Bicycling Dan Smith 410-2955 fwsieran@aol.com

Backpacking Open

Administrative Contacts

Membership Open

Programs Glenn Ford

Lone Star Chapter Delegate Tolbert Greenwood

Newsletter Staff

Editor James Moody 817-295-1623 jmoody166@mac.com

Ad director Open

Circulation dir. Steve Turner 457-7131



Mission statement

The purposes of the Sierra Club are: 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.

General Meeting Wednesday, October 19

7:00 Azalea Room of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden Center Complex. Going north on University, take the 2nd entrance into Botanic Gardens. The Garden Center is straight ahead. Program notes on Pg. 1.

outing or other club activities encouraged. Identify subject of photo and state photographer's name. Do not write on the back of photos. Mail submissions to Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 1874, Burleson, Texas 76097-1874, bring to the ExCom meeting, the general meeting, or email jmoody166@mac.com.

October 28, Friday

Noon meeting for Sierrans unable to attend the evening general meeting. This group meets the last Friday of each month at 2 p.m. in the Red Room at the Tin Cup, 1025 W. Abram, Arlington. Bonnie Bowman will be head-

Sign up for Big Bend trip by Nov. 1

If Todd Nichols September program on this year's Nov. 9-13 trip to Big Bend didn't have you rushing to sign up, then you're definitely a hard sell.

Nichols presented a series of slides illustrating the beauty and diversity of the park and gave a brief description of the options that are available.

"We'll leave early Wednesday morning (Nov. 9) and camp that night in the Basin Campground," he said.

Mike Seal will lead a car (van) camping trip from the Chisos Basin campground and James Moody will take the more adventurous folks onto the more remote hiking trails.

Mike will be hiking the Lost Mine Trail, the Window Trail, and to the top of the park to Emory Peak. Additionally, Mike will be visiting other trails around the park, such as Santa Ele-

ing up this meeting.

October 31, Monday

Newsletter folding party at Braum's, 6770 Bridge St. at 6:30 p.m. Call Steve Turner, 457-7131.

November 1, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

Fort Worth Sierra Club ExCom Meeting, 6:30 p.m., at Spiral Diner, 1314 W. Magnolia. For more information, contact Susan Haney, 254-582-8228.

November 1, Tuesday

Outings Meeting immediately following the ExCom meeting to plan new outings and reminisce about old trips. See location above. Contact Claudia Blalock, 817-924-6242.

Conservation Committee Meeting

The Conservation Committee meets on an as-needed basis. All members are welcome. For meeting information, contact: Chair Glenn Ford, 469-6540, Earl Burnam, 244-2328, or Bob Scott, 282-1372.

na Canyon, Mule Ears Trail and the Homer Wilson Ranch.

James will be taking his group on the Marufa Vega Trail, one of the most scenic backpacking trips in the park.

"We'll have some water cached along our route to cut down on the weight each of us will have to carry," he said.

The trip is entirely within the Dead Horse Mountains and features close-up views of the Sierra del Carmen and two ascents to the Rio Grande within Boquillas Canyon.

Additional trip details will be put on the group's web page. Cost is still \$160 per person. Send checks, payable to Fort Worth Sierra Club, to Todd Nichols, 200 Hibiscus Dr. Arlington, Texas 76018.

Please have registration submitted by Nov. 1.

Priorities, not environmentalists, to blame FROM PG. 1

Rouge Advocate article, 'Corps officials said it will take them 30 years to finish the levee work. That much time is required because funding is lacking for the projects -- not because of the new environmental study, called an environmental impact statement.'

These accusations mistake efforts to ensure good government decisions with a tragedy that had everything to do with bad judgment on the part of

our government leaders. In each of the legal cases cited so far, conservation groups simply asked government agencies to look before leaping into projects that would have had major impacts on people and the natural systems on which they depend and to give local communities what our democracy requires: a say in projects coming out of Washington. That isn't just common sense; that's also the law.

The Greater Fort Worth Group of the Sierra Club

No pets, firearms or radios are allowed on Sierra Club outings. All children (17 years or less) must be accompanied by a parent on any outing. All overnight trips require preregistration with the trip leader. A donation of \$5 per person to the Fort Worth Sierra Club is requested for all overnight trips.

October 14-16, Friday-Sunday

Canoe and camp at Caddo Lake. We will camp at Caddo Lake State Park near Marshall in east Texas about 3 hours from Fort Worth on Friday night. On Saturday, we canoe about 1 mile to a nearby island to enjoy the seclusion and beauty of Texas' only natural lake. Saturday night meal will be a potluck affair complete with campfire and ghost stories. Canoe rentals are available through Pine Needles Lodge (903-665-2911) and are limited so contact immediately to reserve your canoe. Call Texas State Park Reservations at 512-389-8900 or email www.tpwd.state.tx.us to reserve your campsite for Friday night. This trip is open to families. Trip ends with a catfish lunch at noon on Sunday. Leaders: Tolbert Greenwood, 817-737-8698 (email tgreenwood@canteyhanger.com) and Marilyn Turnage, 817-491-2382, (email marilynturnage@msn.com).

October 21-23, Friday-Sunday

Texas Sierra Celebration. This year is the 40th Anniversary of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and we are

Club Outings

celebrating with Sierrans across the state at Canyon of the Eagles Resort near Marble Falls (www.canyonoftheeagles.com) or 800-977-0081. Activities may include hikes and outings to see local Bald Eagles. Reservations will be necessary. Check the *Lone Star Sierran* summer issue for details or contact the Lone Star Chapter (512.477.1729).

October 29, Saturday

It's a party! Come celebrate Halloween with the Sierra Club. Enjoy an informal dinner with like-minded earth people who are making a sustainable difference in the DFW area. Costumes are optional-but fun! 6 pm. Spiral Diner, 817 332-8834, 1314 W. Magnolia Av, Fort Worth. From I-30, take the Summit-8th Av exit and turn south on 8th Av, then left on Magnolia. Spiral Diner is on the NE corner of 6th and Magnolia. Tarrant Mapsco 76M. Leader Terry Jensen Metro 972 988-8687, ext 3104.

October 29-30, Saturday-Sunday

Beginner Backpack to Big Brown Creek Trail The trail is located within the Fairfield State Park near Fairfield (100 miles from Dallas). Saturday af-

ternoon we will hike through 3 miles of wooded and swampy areas. Some bluffs along the trail offer excellent views of the lake. The campsite has water and flush toilets, so it is not very primitive. Sunday we will hike out on the same trail. Optional lunch afterwards. Leader: Wendy Lambert 817-251-0016 (H) or wlambert@concretepipe.org

November 9-13, Wednesday-Sunday

Annual Fall Van trip to Big Bend National Park Join us for a long weekend in one of the nation's most scenic national parks, about 9 hours away from Fort Worth. We'll travel by van, leaving early Wednesday morning and arriving before sunset. Mike Seal will lead a car camping (van-camping) trip from the Chisos Basin campground and will lead day hikes to Emory Peak, Lost Mine Trail, and the Window as well as to other scenic areas of the park. James Moody will lead a backpack into the Dead Horse Mountains on the beautiful Marufa Vega Trail (for details on this trip contact him-817-295-1623). The cost remains at \$160 per person - a real bargain with the price of gas. Mail checks prior to Nov. 1, payable to Fort Worth Sierra Club, to Todd Nichols, 200 Hibiscus Dr. Arlington 76018. For more information contact Todd at 817-937-5217.

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Conservation call should apply to automotive, oil industries

By Dave Hamilton, Director, Sierra Club Global Warming & Energy Program

"In response to potential disruptions in gasoline supplies caused by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, President Bush has asked the American people to conserve energy by not driving unless it is necessary. It is important to ask Americans to do their part to conserve energy but at a time when the president is asking individuals to sacrifice, he is refusing to ask the same from the oil and automobile industries.

"The Republican leadership in Congress is already using the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina and Rita as an excuse to advance their narrow political agenda and renew calls for another polluting Energy Bill that would allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and our fragile coastlines.

"The fact is that the United States can never drill its way to energy independence. The US consumes 25% of the world's oil, with less than 3% of world oil supplies. The Energy Information Administration has estimated the effect of oil drilling in the Arctic Refuge

on the price of gasoline would be less than \$0.01 per gallon in 2025.

"Gasoline supplies are in critical condition because of the intentional action of oil companies to increase market power and profits by reducing refinery capacity. They succeeded in increasing profitability – Exxon is now the most profitable company in the world, making a record \$7.84 billion last quarter.

"Some environmental regulations may be temporarily waived in order to address immediate problems. But environmental laws were created to protect the health and safety of Americans. Now – at a time when people's health and safety is the paramount concern – is not the time to suspend or weaken these laws.

"The answer isn't on the supply side of the equation - it is on the demand side. By using more efficient engines, smarter transmissions, and better materials automakers can make all vehicles average 40 miles per gallon within 10 years. This would save more oil than we import from the Persian Gulf or could ever get from the Arc-

tic National Wildlife Refuge. It would also save consumers money at the gas pump and curb the heat-trapping pollution that causes global warming."

Ways to save at the pump

1. Drive Smart! When you drive aggressively, you waste gas and put others at risk. Observe the speed limit, avoid rapid acceleration and braking, and maintain a constant speed.
2. Keep Your Car In Shape. A well-tuned car burns less gasoline. Change your oil and air filters regularly and see that your tires are properly inflated.
3. Change Your Commute. In rush hour traffic, you are burning gas and going nowhere. Try to adjust your work schedule to avoid rush hour traffic. Think about telecommuting.
4. Use Public Transportation. Look into these options in your area, and use them as much as possible.
5. Combine Your Errands. According to the Department of Energy, several short trips taken from a cold start can use twice as much fuel as a longer, multipurpose trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.

The Greater Fort Worth Group of the Sierra Club