

**JANUARY
2006**

**NOTE:
Special Meeting
Day, Time and Place**

**January Meeting
Annual Potluck Supper
Business Meeting and
Planning Session**

Topic:

**Environmental priorities for our city
and how ACC can help us meet them.**

Speakers:

**Everyone with something to say. This will
include guest Rita Beving, who will speak
to us about the new clean air plan—see
page 3 for details.**

Materials & Methods:

**Bring your ideas and some food; we'll
provide the drinks.**

When:

Saturday, January 21, 5:00 pm

Where:

**Epworth United Methodist Church,
1400 S. Cooper Street. It's just north of
Park Row on the west side of Cooper.
Drive to the back and follow the signs.**

2005: A Look Back

In retrospect it seems like a lot of last year involved waiting, working, and wondering about the big (and small) issues that would affect our city's environment strongly one way or another. Some of those issues were resolved for good or ill, but others remain, sources of worry and still more work.

Among the issues: Would we have a huge Wal-Mart? Could we ever get rid of all the invasive saplings in the New York Avenue Prairie Park? (Ditto for privet in the Molly Hollar Wildscape.) Would City Council lease our landfill? How would the remaining natural area along Johnson Creek be affected by the stadium/town center project? Would the Cowboys stadium have even the tiniest green tinge? Could we find a spot trashy enough to win another Litter Challenge? Would the Parks bond election pass? Would our members save enough recyclables for our 4th of July parade float? Could we hope for a half-decent landscape ordinance? And what about the new animal shelter? Would we be smart enough to somehow make it a green building? Would our city somehow contribute to fixing our filthy air? And the biggest question of all: What would Molly Hollar do to us when she saw her face on the new wildscape sign?

The end of 2005 saw the resolution of some of our questions; we praised some decisions and deplored others. Many of the biggest issues will continue to engage—or plague—us in 2006. Some, like dirty air and mass transit, will take years to resolve. Unfortunately, our struggles to conserve Arlington's natural resources must take place against the backdrop of excessive population growth. This means that every battle takes on added significance and must be fought, regardless of the odds. The saying is true: For many environmental issues, the bad guys have to win only once, while the white hats must keep picking themselves up and get back in the ring.

Here's an incomplete list of things we noticed and events our members helped with last year. It doesn't include the ongoing efforts at the Molly Hollar Wildscape, which just keeps getting better and better. May there be even more good things in 2006.

February: City Council voted to lease our landfill.

March: Had a prairie workday and went birding at Tierra Verde Golf Club.

From the President **Wayne Halliburton**

In environmental news, 2006 is the year that might finally bring fuel cell technology to the streets. The ENV (emissions neutral vehicle) is a motorcycle with a top speed of 50 mph (may not be suitable for Texas), that can run up to 4 hours or 100 miles on a tank of compressed hydrogen. The cost of a fill-up is about \$4.00. The ENV makes no more noise than a home computer and only emits heat and water. It is expected to cost \$6000-\$8000.

Biodiesel costs may come down. The Tokyo Institute of Technology has discovered an inexpensive way to convert the fats in vegetable oils to esters. Our national biodiesel board reports a tripling in the production of biodiesel in 2005 over previous years, with 45 plants in the United States. Cogeneration Technologies, a Houston-based company, is planning a 50-million-gallon facility that will essentially double the country's production when completed. The EPA has determined that biodiesel emits one third of the unburned hydrocarbons and one half of the carbon monoxide and particulates. Unlike its petroleum-based competitor, biodiesel has no sulfur oxide or sulfate emissions that contribute to acid rain.

"Existing air pollution devices may be enough to clean big city air, if they are put into place," says John Walke of the National Resources Defense Council. "It's not rocket science." Existing devices include scrubbers that which use chemicals or water to remove sulfur from gasses produced in coal-fired power plants. High-temperature incinerators also destroy toxic pollutants. Baghouses are cloth bags used to filter gas streams to remove particulate emissions from smokestacks. "Selective catalytic reduction" uses chemicals like ammonia to remove nitrogen oxides from tailpipes and smokestacks. These technologies have been in existence for years, but political will is lacking. "Merely requiring uncontrolled (coal-fired power) plants to adopt technologies that have been in place for 10-20 years would solve air pollution problems in this country, at least as far as smog and soot are concerned."*

Finally, some news closer to home and heart. Fire ants can be naturally controlled by a phorid fly, a study reports. The fly swoops down on an ant and lays its eggs in the ant's skin. Within days the fly maggots are born and release an enzyme that decapitates their host, which the flies then use as a safe hideaway. Three varieties of the flies have already been introduced in almost all southwestern states since 1997, and a fourth should be introduced next month. The flies are no danger to people or animals, and we should see a reduction in fire ant populations over the next five years.

*(source: National Geographic Online Magazine Pulse of the Planet news special series)

ACC Business Notes

Here are some pieces of business for your consideration before the annual potluck/business/planning meeting on January 21:

The nominating committee has come up with the following slate of officers and board members:

President	Wayne Halliburton	Treasurer	Marian Hiler
First Vice President	Jo Ann Duman	Secretary	Jo Briggs
Second Vice President	Roy Milner	Editor	John Darling

Board Members: Dale Denton, Candy Halliburton, Marianne Herrmann, Molly Hollar, Jan Miller, Stephen Smith, and Grace Darling

THE POST

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ACC Bylaw Change Proposal

The ACC board is proposing a change in the Bylaws to facilitate amendments to the bylaws in a more timely manner if necessary. The article in question now reads:

Article X Other Provisions

Section 1. Amendment. These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at the **Annual Meeting** or by a mail-ballot election established at the Annual Meeting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been duly given in writing in accordance with the notice provisions.

Here is the proposed change:

Article X Other Provisions

Section 1. Amendment. These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at **any regular business meeting of the organization** or by a mail-ballot election established at the Annual Meeting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been duly given in writing in accordance with the notice provisions.

2005: A Look Back continued from page 1

April: Worked for the Parks bond election and cut saplings at the prairie park. Picked up trash and we won first place in the Litter Challenge. Began planting the erosion control area at Veterans Park. Helped with the spring plant sale. Held a Walk on the Wildside. Appeared at UTA Earth Day and Arlington Community Fair. Busy month, as always for April.

May: Helped with the new Wimbish Elementary School garden. Had a prairie workday. Cheered the result of the parks bond election. Were relieved when UTA postponed construction of a parking lot.

June: Enjoyed the improvements at the Veterans Park compost site and spread the word at AOGC's Urban Living Fair.

July: Showed our civic spirit at the 4th of July parade with our float and collected and sorted lots of recyclable bottles.

August: Cheers when City Council passed an improved landscape ordinance just before deadline.

September: Another successful native plant sale.

October: More cheers when the Molly Hollar Wildscape was officially dedicated. Returned to the prairie, hacking at hackberries.

November: Learned that the new Tarrant County subcourthouse will have some green features. Got a first look at the SW Nature Preserve while gathering loads of trash.

December: Johnson Creek, the Cowboys stadium, and the town center development dominate our environmental concerns. We are told that the original Eastern Star Home building will be preserved, that the city has hired a LEED certification expert, and that the stadium parking lot will include some porous paving. Bits of hope here and there.

Air Matters

A special guest at the January potluck supper will be Rita Beving, the Citizen's SIP organizer whose job it is to work on the new clean air plan (State Implementation Plan, or SIP). She will speak to us about the proposed plan and how we can help promote it. The Citizen's SIP Campaign is an effort of many environmental, civic, and congregational groups in our area, including the Dallas and Fort Worth Sierra Clubs, ACC, the League of Women Voters, and others

The deadline is approaching in May for the North Central Council of Governments, along with elected officials, to submit a new SIP with measures to meet EPA's goals for clean air in our region. At risk are highway funds, our health, and more..

Clean Air Meeting

The next meeting of the North Central Texas Council of Governments Clean Air Steering Committee will be on Friday, January 13, 10:00 am, at COG headquarters, 616 Six Flags Drive in the third floor conference room. This is the committee that is designing the next clean air plan for our region. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Our November Speakers

We are grateful to Mark O'Leary, stream consultant for the town center project, for sharing with us the plans for the proposed town center and its effects on Johnson Creek. Mr O'Leary, Mayor Pro Tem Ron Wright, and Parks Director Pete Jamieson spent lots of time answering our many questions, and we appreciate their time and expertise on this important and complex topic.

All Memberships Expired Last Year

We don't want to lose you, but this will be your last issue of the *Post Oak* if you haven't renewed your membership. Please don't put it off. If you want a better Arlington, renew today—and consider giving a gift membership to anyone who values the quality of life in our city. We're only limited by the number of concerned people who realize that we can work together to make real changes. The bigger we are, the better the changes will be. If you've already renewed, thank you very much!

Wildscape Update John Dycus

What a year! The worst drought in 50 years, but to offset that, many positive things are happening at the wildscape.

The Arlington Parks and Recreation Department continues to assist big time. After completing the rail fence in the newly planted erosion control area, workers did a superb job of readying the soil for wildscape volunteers to plant. The most visible area between the walk and the fence was planted with native ornamental wildflowers, ground covers and shrubs. The soil was so compacted, Martin Sanchez had to attack it with a pickax before it could be rototilled. Then Martin and his crew rototilled it a second time to incorporate compost into the soil, thus making it easy to dig and plant in. The compost will also give the new plants an added boost.

Early in December on our gorgeous, springlike workday, 17 volunteers planted this area with hundreds of native plants. Wildscape propagation volunteers grew these plants from locally gathered seed and cuttings in the parks greenhouse over the last several years.



Mike Warren goes well beyond supervising his kids; he shows them how it's done.

These indigenous plants are better adapted to local rainfall and cold than plants grown in other areas of the state.

Several months ago the parks crew, assisted by wildscape volunteers, planted thousands of inland sea oats and Canada wild rye shoots into the near acre enclosed by the fence. These ornamental native grasses root deeply to anchor the soil and prevent further erosion. Soil had been washing down into the plantings on the other side of the sidewalk, smothering many of them.

Next, to facilitate foot traffic, wildscape volunteers marked an inviting, curving trail through the trees, and the Parks Department provided stones to edge the pathway. Mike Warren of Tarrant County Juvenile Services brought some of his young people to move the stones into place. They also wheelbarrowed and spread mulch. Young student volunteers from the neighboring Montessori Academy, along with their parents and teachers, spent several work sessions mulching to complete the trail.

In the last week of December the Parks Department moved four large boulders with a front-end loader to add finishing touches to the area. In January several Texas redbuds, a Mexican plum and a possum haw will be planted on the north side, and in the spring the Parks Department plans to plant hundreds of coralberry to fill the area within the fence. Some wildflowers and native ground covers are coming to the open, sunny area in the middle. The Parks Department plans to add several benches so visitors can rest and enjoy the scenery. This new acre, planted in



A Parks Department crew places boulders in the erosion control area.

indigenous native material, adds to the approximately 3.3 acres of official wildscape to make about 4.3 acres of native planting within Veterans Park. Pluperfect landscape architect Rosa Finsley provided her expertise in making design recommendations.

Although the Parks Department has always supported the wildscape, it has



Parks guys having fun as they construct planting pockets on the wildscape precipice.

really accelerated the progress this year. In a huge undertaking, four-man crews worked nearly a dozen days removing the remaining privet.

City workers have added irrigation to much of the wildscape, greatly reducing the time spent carrying hoses

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Wildscape Update continued from page 4

and hand-watering. Martin, Steve and Santos even moved and then anchored heavy tree trunks across the steep bank below the overlook bench. This provided planting pockets for more than 100 rescued coralberry, which will prevent the bank from washing out. Since coralberry is almost evergreen, it will be beautiful as well as functional. By the time the tree trunks rot, the coralberry will be well-rooted and covering the hillside with a blanket of green.

Not long ago a large parks crew moved the storage vault into the wildscape compost area, and before that provided several men to move one of the kiosks. Without their tremendous help with these heavy-duty jobs, the volunteers would have been years longer getting everything done.

Parks director Pete Jamieson leads a stand-up team, including Jay Falgout, supervisor of southwest area parks; Martin Sanchez, who's in charge of Veterans Park; greenhouse guru Heather Dowell and her assistant, Lucy King; Yvonne Sandas, who has worked 10 years getting the city golf course, Tierra Verde, 80 percent native; and Steve Harrison, Santos Vasquez, Estella Flores, and many others who have significantly improved the wildscape. They're all on our side, and that makes us very fortunate indeed.

New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller

Many thanks to all who came out for the November workday. We continued steady progress on removing 'woodies' along the south boundary. What had seemed a solid barrier of sapling trees is beginning to yield prairie, most notably a swath of big bluestem struggling in the shade and drought conditions. We are leaving the largest tree and a few trees of various species that would have fringed early blackland prairies to provide shade for future prairie site visitors. We will try for one more workday in January* before the Parks Department mower arrives, likely in February. This will allow the heavy growth of many years to be mulched and allow better growth of prairie species. With most of the area now mowable, twice a year mowing will allow the site to be better managed as a native prairie site. Now if we could just get some rain!

This week the city of Austin is holding public hearings on an initiative to increase funding for acquisition of their native blackland prairies as part of their open space program. There is the same blackland prairie as our site, a soil type that runs from just north of Arlington to just east of Austin. Austin is trying to acquire and restore fragments of this rare and rapidly disappearing environmental resource: Less than 0.01% of it remains! For a fine article on the prairies and Austin's current efforts, see an *Austin Chronicle* article at www.austinchronicle.com/issues/dispatch/2005-12-23/pols_feature.html. I especially like the quote from Lee Stone of the Native Prairies Association of Texas: "Five acres of exquisite prairie—one acre—is not to be walked away from. There's so little left! How dare we say, 'Oh, that part's too small to save,' when their seeds are there, and there could be fauna on it that aren't any place else. It would be arrogant for us to turn our noses up at an acre." What a treasure Arlington has in its ten acres of New York Avenue Blackland Prairie!

***Next workday: Saturday, January 21, 9:00 am - 12:00.**

Please contact Jan Miller at jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net or 817/483-0579 if you are interested in participating.

Thanks To Shane Goetz for supporting our efforts. If you'd like to help ACC and publicize your business, call any board member for details.

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THE LAW OFFICE OF SHANE GOETZ

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Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

Membership Information

Please circle membership category.

Name _____

Individual/Family \$24.00

Address _____

Student \$12.00

Supporting \$36.00

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Sponsor \$100.00

E-mail _____

How did you hear about us? _____

Make checks payable to Arlington Conservation Council. Mail to ACC, Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216.
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Don't forget!

**Annual Potluck
Business and Planning
Meeting
January 21
5:00 pm
Epworth United
Methodist Church**

**Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org**



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