

JULY-AUGUST
2006

NOTE:
Two new
meeting places

July Meeting

- Topic:** Dirty Ol' Town:
What Gas Drilling Is Doing to
Our Neighborhoods
- Speaker:** Don Young,
Fort Worth Citizens Against
Neighborhood Drilling
Organization (FWCanDo)
- When:** Wednesday, July 12,
7:00 pm (Social 6:30 pm)
- Where:** West Police Service Center,
2060 W. Green Oaks Blvd

August Meeting

- Topic:** Water Conservation
- Speaker:** Mary L. Gugliuzza
Public Education Coordinator,
Fort Worth Water Department
- When:** Wednesday, August 9,
7:00 pm (Social 6:30 pm)
- Where:** George W. Hawkes Central
Library, 101 E. Abram St

Red Ozone Days Prompt Red Postcards

Ideas really can take on a life of their own. For some time one ACC member has been sending red postcards (with appropriate messages) to Representative Joe Barton every time we experience a red ozone alert day. Concerned people talked about this here and there—at Bonnie Bowman's monthly meetings and at MPAC meetings. Someone then expanded the idea by buying lots of red card stock, printing mailing labels and offering red postcards for sale at cost. We heard about it at the June ACC picnic, and suddenly Donna Piercy and Molly Hollar took it on and began offering their red postcards to anyone who wants to do something—*anything*—about the seemingly untenable condition of our dirty air.

The latest possibility: Send even more cards; mail some to other elected officials, especially to Governor Perry, who seems only too happy to accommodate every dirty coal-fired power plant that crosses his path.

Want to mail some red postcards? Make your own or pick some up at the next meeting. The more we send, the better the chance that someone will notice and act—after years of futile fiddling.

Here's some of Donna's summary for June: Thanks for your interest in clean air, and thanks to everyone who's participating in the red postcard campaign... Since we started our campaign I have noted 2 red ozone forecast days, June 10 and June 14 and at least 3 orange forecast days.

The IMPORTANT thing to realize is that there were 13 days in Fort Worth and 14 days in Dallas when ozone exceeded the 85 ppm the EPA has established as our national air quality standard for an 8 hour average. Holy smokes.

Please let me know of any comments you have regarding this effort. And please post any responses [on the ACC Yahoo site] you receive from Rep. Barton's office.

Thanks,
Donna



Molly Hollar and Donna Piercy are doing something about our bad air.

From the President Wayne Halliburton

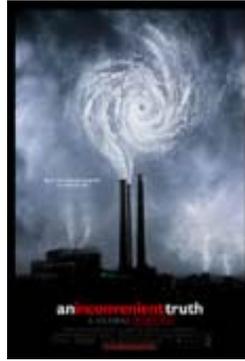


Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," has been shown at Sundance and in Cannes, and was briefly available at

several local theaters. Environmentalist Laurie David (wife of Seinfeld writer Larry David) and Pulp Fiction producer Lawrence Bender, inspired by PowerPoint presentations by the former Vice President, convinced Gore that his message could reach a wider audience by turning his presentation into a documentary film.

In the film Gore explains in dramatic fashion the effects of global warming and the time frame (about 10 years) he and the majority of the world's scientists think we have left to avert an ecologic catastrophe. If global warming is not

taken into account and controlled SOON, they believe our existence will be threatened and the earth's ecosystem will be beyond repair. Extreme weather patterns will become commonplace. Droughts, heat waves, and hurricanes will intensify, and flooding caused by glacial melting will submerge significant areas of the United States and large portions of countries around the world.



You can read a study of the destructive changes global warming can cause in Texas at environmentaldefense.org/article.cfm?contentid=5239. The study shows different flooding scenarios and the effects of increases in temperatures in various regions of the state.

The film is not ALL gloom and doom, however. Gore explores sustainability and seeks to inspire individuals and groups to become proactive. (And there are a few light moments like the frog in the pot analogy.) Just by attending the movie you are contributing environmentally, as Paramount Classics is donating 5% of its domestic theatrical gross (minimum \$500,000) to The Alliance for Climate Protection. The agreement runs the entire length of the film's release.

See the action and information site at www.climatecrisis.net. And learn more about the movie at www.participantproductions.com. If you missed it during its brief local run, watch for the video; it's well worth it.

THE POST OAK

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Direct all newsletter correspondence to:

John Darling, Editor
1316 S. Pecan St.
Arlington, Texas 76010
817-274-1077 1darling@sbcglobal.net

Contributors

Julia Burgen, Grace Darling, John Dycus, Wayne Halliburton, Molly Hollar, Jan Miller

Proofreader Grace Darling
Mailing Specialists Peg and Tom Kennedy

Thanks, A.C.C. for working to conserve Arlington's natural resources!

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**THE LAW OFFICE
OF SHANE GOETZ**

715 WEST ABRAM ST. ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76013

Ebby Halliday
OF ARTISTS
Joanne Stewart
Voice Mail.....(817) 654-8424
Office.....(817) 654-3737
Fax.....(817) 654-1888
Email.....joanne-stewart@comcast.net

New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller

Summer on the prairie

What great weather we had for a workday! June 17 was breezy, with temps in the mid 80s, overcast with just the slightest cooling sprinkles of rain and a distant murmur of thunder. And great volunteers too: Many thanks to Molly Hollar, Diana Kunde, Donna Piercy, Mary Roberts Turner, and John Darling! The day's task was to begin eliminating Johnson grass, an invasive exotic. We found it mainly along the fence near New York Avenue, but lightly scattered elsewhere. We bagged the seedheads (now R.I.P. at the landfill) and cut the rest of the plant down to the ground to let the brutal drought sap the rest of its strength. Another workday might be planned for later this summer if it comes back with a vengeance. Some of the 'woodies' need a recut, but that will wait until fall. Stay tuned, more prairie activities when it turns cooler!

What's blooming? Lots of basket flower (*Centaurea americana*), a good prairie indicator, it looks like a lacy basket *after* it blooms; a yellow rosinweed (*Silphium* sp.); loads of rich purple ironweed (*Vernonia baldwinii*), a few wand milkweed, and with a little rain, the pitcher sage (*Salvia azurea*) may yet be beautiful. Grasses seem shorter than normal and sedges fewer, but it's interesting to see a swath of ironweed as it follows a depression down slope, seeking out a scant bit of moisture. But, a walk on the *other* side of New York Avenue shows only faint traces of what was the downhill side of the same prairie remnant. It's developed now and more frequent, too-short mowing has pretty much killed off the native bunch grasses. A few gilgai remain, others conveniently filled in with construction debris. The rest of the site is subdued with verdant lawn grass, thanks to irrigation. But on the native side of New York, scissor-tailed flycatchers dance through the air after bugs, while mourning doves and painted buntings sing their songs and wait for rain.

Naturalist note:

Available to anyone via e-mail is "Jim's This and That," Jim Varnum's "personal communication to individuals interested in the natural world — primarily in the Dallas, Texas area," with many news items, meetings, etc. of local interest. Contact him at jevvarnum@aol.com to request addition to his e-mail list. The latest issue reminds us of the following opportunity in Fort Worth:

August 15 - North Texas Stream Team and NCTCOG - Restoration and Management of Riparian Corridors Seminar, Sid Richardson Bldg, Texas Christian University. Free, but register early. For more information, see nctcog.org/envir/features/2006/jun/streamteam_seminar.asp.

League of Conservation Voters Julia Burgen

As promised last month in my article on "Conversing with Our Congressman," here is an overview of the organization that tracks environmental votes of members of Congress.

The League of Conservation Voters is a national, non-partisan political action committee formed in 1970 by national environmental leaders following the first Earth Day. Their goal was to help elect and re-elect conservation-minded candidates to office. To fund its efforts, LCV solicits memberships and donations exclusively from individuals for cash campaign contributions, field organizing, and get-out-the-vote drives in certain races. The organization takes no money from corporations, foundations, or interest groups.

The 2005 LCV Scorecard represents the consensus of experts from 20 respected environmental and conservation organizations that selected the key votes on which members of Congress should be graded. Those votes came on issues of energy, environmental health and safety, resource conservation, and spending for environmental programs. The selected votes are discussed in detail in the annual publication. Other covered topics included renewable energy, global warming, natural gas facilities, oil company tax credits, fuel economy, MTBE liability, air pollution and oil refineries, farm conservation programs, stormwater cleanup, mercury emissions, public lands sell-off, endangered species and water projects.

LCV claims to have defeated 23 of 37 targeted anti-environmental candidates since 1996. In 2000 its efforts helped defeat two of the worst senators on environmental issues: Slade Gorton of Washington and Spencer Abraham of Michigan in a very tight race.

So how do our Texas senators and our congressman rate? Pretty much at the bottom. On a percentage ranking of zero to 100, Senator John Cornyn came in at zero and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison at 5%. Congressman Joe Barton was a zero. Senator Hutchison's single pro-environmental vote was in a bill about human pesticide testing. You can go to www.lcv.org and download the 52-page document and read the details. I have all copies of the LCV Scorecard for the years that these three have been in Washington and will research their lifetime records and report on them in the next issue.



Wildscape Update John Dycus



If these dry, 100-degree days are tough on you, what are they doing to your plants? At least you can come inside for a Coke float. Actually, most of the Texas native plants in

the Molly Hollar Wildscape fare better than you might think.

They will need watering only 3-6 times a year once they're established, or about two years after planting. Infrequent watering to a depth of six inches promotes stout roots. Frequent, shallow watering keeps the roots near the surface, and the plants can't survive droughts. Native plants often have three times as much below ground (deep roots) as what you see above ground.

Up the hill, our friends at Arlington Parks and Rec have added an erosion control area to keep dirt and debris from



smothering a restored section of the wildscape. Volunteers helped plant this minimum-care acre with sea oats and Canada wild rye to anchor the soil. Another indigenous native, coralberry, is on the park's schedule for adding this fall. A curving, mulched trail now winds through this wooded stretch, with a bench in the shade provided by APRD. Here visitors can stop to enjoy the scenery and the wildlife in a beautiful setting where no noisy mowers intrude. To add a little more pizzazz, wildscapers agreed to plant and water native ornamentals in the four-foot strip between the sidewalk and the rail fence. They recently installed soaker hoses and about four inches of mulch in preparation for July and August. A good part of this strip gets the hot west sun and is on a slope, so plants here — gayfeather, with roots going 18 feet; cutleaf daisy with its four-foot roots; little bluestem grass and snake herb — have to be among the toughest in the wildscape. These plants were in the wildscape before people were, so they're accustomed to the elements.

Because even drier conditions are predicted in the future, the volunteers — they never stop, these people — are integrating plants from the western part of Texas, such as constantly blooming skeletonleaf goldeneye, blackfoot daisies and black dalea. These beautiful plants are largely unknown, since they have not been available from local nurseries.



Speaking of volunteers, dedicated worker Josephine Keeney's web site, www.TexasStar.org, shows beautiful Texas native plants accompanied by music and organic gardening info. Something else not to miss is the Fourth of July parade and the ACC float featuring a mini-wildscape complete with live tree, shrubs, blooming Texas native flowers, birdbath, arbor, garden seat and real-looking butterflies, birds and even recorded birdsong. Insert exclamation point here.

Due to the holiday weekend, the Saturday wildscape volunteer day will be the second Saturday, July 8, starting at 8 a.m. and stopping before it gets too hot. Same hours for the Tuesday-morning sessions. Plenty of cool water will be provided, and everyone moves to the shade as the land turns toasty.

Don't Forget

Blue Skies Alliance meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the West Police Service Center, 2060 W Green Oaks Blvd. at 7:00 pm. Meetings are open to everyone and are a great source of information for anyone concerned about our air quality.

The 2006 Smart Yard Contest is now open. It is "...an event to recognize Arlington residents who have incorporated environmentally friendly yard management and design into a 'smart yard' using the design concepts from Texas SmartScape™ and similar sources." Get more information at ci.arlington.tx.us/environmentalservices/. And enter! ACC yards ought to win every category.

Second Site for Community Gardens Stephen Smith

Community Gardens of Arlington is pleased to announce the site of its second garden project. Arlington Historical Society recently voted to allow CGA to develop an heirloom garden on their property at Knapp Heritage Park, located on Front Street by the railroad tracks in central Arlington. This is also the location for the Middleton Tate Johnson cabins that were the earliest residences in Arlington, so this is a very high-profile location. Plans are currently being formulated to clean out the grass and amend the bed to be ready for some fall planting. If this idea and location suit your need to work your green thumb, please contact me about details. Don't let moss grow under your tools! Happy gardening, Stephen Smith, 817-275-7469.

Another Fourth, Another Fine Float



This was our third year to enter a float in Arlington's 4th of July parade, and we continued our distinctively different green pattern with a marvelous mobile wildscape. A number of ACC members and friends worked hard on this one, but we are especially indebted to Marian Hiler, Stephen Smith, and Molly Hollar for their fine efforts. And we owe thanks to Ruth Kinler's Redenta's for the blooming flowers, to John Snowden's Bluestem Nursery for native grasses, to Vandergriff Chevrolet for the alternative fuel Tahoe, and to Randy and Anne Alderfer for the use of their trailer for the third year. Of course, it wouldn't have been complete without the green-clad riders and marchers. If only they had a prize for Most Chlorophyll, we would have won hands down. Maybe next year.



Meanwhile look for more photos at arlingtonconservationcouncil.org.



State Parks in Peril Grace Darling

If you've been out of town or otherwise out of touch, you may not have heard that the Texas state park system is in dire straits. An article by R. A. Dyer on the front page of the Star-Telegram for July 2 graphically describes the miserable conditions that exist at many of our most popular facilities and explains how we got to this point. Some shame-making statistics:

- Between 1990 and 2003, state government increased spending for services by 68% but decreased spending on parks by 34%
- Since Governor Rick Perry took office in 2000, the state budget has grown 42% while the parks budget has gone down
- The upcoming biennial budget calls for an additional cut of 10% from all state agencies
- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department operates on an annual budget of \$54 million, and the parks division receives approximately one-fourth of that (\$13.5 million) with which it staffs and cares for 120 parks
- TP&W generates most of its budget revenue through camping fees and a sales tax on sporting goods
- The sporting goods tax raises \$100 million annually, but in 1995 the Legislature capped the parks' share at \$32 million and then appropriated even less—only \$15 million annually—for state parks
- In the last 5 years voters have approved more than \$100 million in bonds for parks, but much of this money has remained unappropriated by the Legislature
- Gov. Perry's solution to this fiscal crisis is a recommendation that TP&W sell off some parks to pay for maintaining others
- Texas ranks 49th among the 50 states in per capita spending on parks

A recent visit to Arlington by Walt Dabney, state parks director, underscored the urgency of the situation and begged for support from the public to turn the tide of neglect. Our parks and natural areas should be a source of pride to all Texans, to be enjoyed now and by our children and grandchildren. Please contact your legislator to help ensure the future of our Texas park system.



Mayor Bob Cluck visits with TP&W Director Walt Dabney after Dabney's recent presentation in Arlington.

Free: Two compost bins (plastic perforated cylinders). Contact Charles Mitchell at charlesmitchell@sbcglobal.net.

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.

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817-274-1787 *caneriway@sbcglobal.net*
First Vice President Jo Ann Duman
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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
PO Box 216
Arlington, TX 76004-0216

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't Forget!

July and August meetings will be at two new and different places. See page 1 for details.

Be sure to visit us at arlingtonconservationcouncil.org