

**JUNE
2006**

**NOTE
Special Meeting
Time and Place**

Special June Meeting

- Topic:** Potluck in the Park
- Speakers:** ACC and members of other local environmental groups who'd like to talk about what's happened so far this year and what's coming up.
- When:** Saturday, June 10,
5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Where:** Veterans Park, main pavilion.
Enter at first parking lot off Spanish Trail.
- NOTE:** Bring some food and we'll bring beverages and utensils. There's electricity, so think about bringing a fan.

Conversing with Our Congressman Julia Burgen

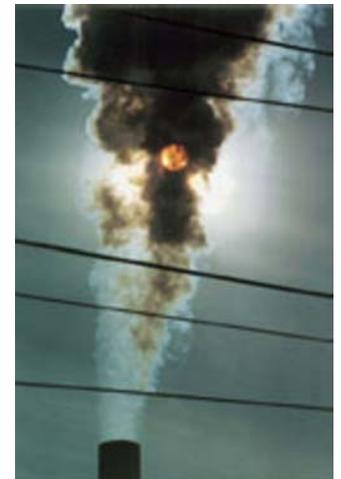
On Saturday May 13, as I worked outside an Arlington polling place, a large black car drove up and parked a bit away from most other vehicles. A man and woman walked by on their way to vote. The man was our own Congressman Joe Barton, US Representative for District 6 and Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. So I screwed up my courage, tried to gather my baked-brain thoughts (it was a hot day), and spoke to him on his way out. To the Congressman's credit, he did not avoid walking by our group, as many other people did that day.

I thanked him for coming to vote in our city election and told him how I was one of many who think we need to move to somewhere with better air quality for health reasons. His response was that air quality is much better than it was five years ago. I mentioned power plants, and he replied that he is responsible for legislation requiring East Texas power plants to clean up. I think he tried to take credit for the new plants also being cleaner.

Turning to autos as a source of much of our pollution, he said his car got 22 mpg and mentioned how important GM is to Arlington, just as I was asking why he and Congress didn't improve fuel efficiency standards long ago. Then they were walking on to their car, so I thanked him for speaking with me.

I probably had less than two minutes with him. I wonder if he will remember me? Probably not, yet I am reminded almost daily of him, of the decisions he makes and how utterly demoralized I feel as his constituent. Would some other congressperson please adopt me?

Representative Barton voted as follows in the week after my conversation with him:



Texas Mayor's Climate Meeting

(Editor's note: Around the end of June, Mayor Robert Cluck will host a meeting of 20 Texas mayors to discuss climate change. The information below came from the city.)

ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) will work closely with UTA and Public Citizen to lead the organization of the June meeting. As the agenda for the meeting is finalized, roles for securing funding, speakers, and pursuing participation/attendance by mayors will be agreed upon. All decisions will be made in direct consultation with Mayor Cluck. Additionally, ICLEI and Public Citizen will work with Austin, San Antonio, Denton and Dallas who have all engaged in some level of climate protection work. Their progress should be showcased at the event.

Meeting Objective: To launch the Texas Cities for Climate Protection Campaign Network with Mayor Cluck's leadership.

Project Scope: In November 2005, Mayor Cluck and the sponsors convened a meeting of 13 Texas cities represented by senior staff to discuss the issue of climate change and the priority needs for cities in the State. It was agreed unanimously that a network on climate action should be launched to provide an organized forum for Texas cities to participate in. The purpose of the network will be to exchange best practices and lessons learned, also to jumpstart cities that have not yet engaged specifically in policy and/or operational changes that will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions portfolio.

This will be an open, inclusive group of cities working together to advance climate protection in their communities and the State of Texas. Cities that do join the CCP will become members of a growing organization that currently works with 172 cities across the US.

Recently Mayor Cluck commented on this important event:

"I am trying to approach this from a public health standpoint (both NOX and carbon dioxide). I have a strong feeling about what all of this does to our health, but my evidence is highly anecdotal. We are searching for a medical school authority who can lend some science to my thinking, and that has been the challenge. I believe we are getting close, however. I have been working with 15 large city mayors over the past year to inform everyone of the impending disaster and also to educate each other. We are quite disturbed that Australia and the good old USA are the only major countries that have not signed the Kyoto Accord. Since the President does not seem to be engaged on this issue, we thought that a group of mayors might help to move all of us along. We will lead the Texas effort and hopefully will have regular meetings on this subject. Since it's the first time, we are not at all sure about the interest and attendance, but the worst that could happen is that we try."



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P.O. Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216
Direct all newsletter correspondence to:
John Darling, Editor
1316 S. Pecan St.
Arlington, Texas 76010
817-274-1077 1darling@sbcglobal.net

Contributors
Wayne Halliburton, Molly Hollar, Jan Miller

Proofreader Grace Darling
Mailing Specialists Peg and Tom Kennedy



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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller

The proposed warehouse development north and east of the park is still pending. No pre-existing right-of-way was determined on the park's north side, so for now the park's north boundary is not likely to be substantially affected by the development. Instead, a longer median opening on New York Avenue will probably provide the needed access to the development. Parks staff have been working with the developer to create a satisfactory buffer between the properties.

The prairie is still green and looking good. *Silphium* is beginning to bloom and there has been a good showing of prairie larkspur this year. Plans are moving forward to begin recording plant species and surveying the effects of restoration efforts.

It's a good time to appreciate and steward this gem we still have. Our neighbors in Fort Worth are struggling to preserve over 1900 acres of tall/mixed-grass prairie slated for development. The site at 10700 Old Granbury Road on the east side of Lake Benbrook is owned by Texas General Land Office, which plans to develop a mixed-use development at the site.

Down in Austin, prairie advocates are urging preservation of prairie remnants (including blackland) on the rapidly developing east side of Austin. If approved by their city council and approved by voters this fall, a recommended \$5 million would purchase 15% of known remnants in the Austin area.

For your summer reading pleasure: *Prairie Time: A Blackland Portrait*, by Matt White, TAMU press. This local author describes his own explorations, the natural and man-made forces that have influenced the Texas blackland prairie over historic time, the plants, animals and people that it has sustained, and both its destruction and the efforts to preserve what remains.

June workday: The timing should be right for an attack on Johnson grass: it's in bloom and can be easily identified. We'll start earlier to beat the heat: 8:00 am on Saturday, June 17. Water will be provided. Call 817-988-9341 for more information, directions, etc.



July 4th Parade: Help Wanted

Assemblers, marchers, and riders are needed for our float. And recycling fans will be busy after the parade. Contact Stephen Smith or Marian Hiler (see back page) if you can help.

Congratulations, John Davis!

Our own Texas Parks & Wildlife Urban Biologist has completed a UTA Master's degree in Urban Planning with emphasis on Environmental Planning. We are so proud.

Conversating with Our Congressman *continued from page 1*

- 1. Offshore drilling ban:** Voted to open US coasts to oil and gas drilling. Failed 217-203.
- 2. Oil and gas royalty relief:** Voted to exempt companies seeking new drilling leases on the outer continental shelf from paying royalties to the Treasury. The waivers would cost taxpayers an estimated \$7 billion over five years. Defeated 252-165.
- 3. Tongass National Forest timbering:** Voted to fund more logging roads in this Alaskan rainforest. Failed 237-181.
- 4. 2007 U.S. budget:** Voted with the Republican majority for a budget that projects spending of \$2.73 trillion and a deficit of \$348 billion in fiscal 2007. Approved 218-210.

In the next issue of the *Post Oak* I will tell you about the League of Conservation Voters and how they rated Congressman Barton on environmental issues during 2005.

Parks Officials Meet with ACC Grace Darling

The word is in: The substitute 90+ acres will come from the area north of Division Street and east of Dottie Lynn Parkway. At a meeting with ACC members last Tuesday, representatives of Arlington Parks and Recreation Department explained the rationale for the decision and outlined the proposed land acquisition, which encompasses portions of Village Creek and Rush Creek floodplains.

Attentive readers will remember when city officials, working through Rep. Joe Barton in Washington, removed 90 acres along Johnson Creek from control by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to give the city "maximum flexibility" in its negotiations with the

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Wildscape Update John Dycus



“In wilderness is the preservation of the world.” Henry David Thoreau said that. Wonder what he’d think of a world that loses a little more wilderness every day

through cleared forests, increasing paved roads and highways, pollution from burning fossil fuels, and scorched-earth stadium construction. Global warming is melting glaciers, destroying coral reefs and accelerating endangerment and extinction of species. All this loss of habitat has greatly reduced biodiversity. Sure, there’s traditional landscaping, but this approach — water-guzzling St. Augustine lawns, fewer trees and little understory — is said to have about the same value as the Sahara desert for wildlife.

What can you do? First, quit going down to Jerryville and grieving the loss. It’s making you crazy. Second, you can create an oasis in your backyard. It’s a small step but proactive and healthier for you than cursing the thoughtless, insensitive land developments for which Arlington is known. Plus the critters will love you for it.



Photo by Dick Schoech.

Wildlife needs are the same as people needs: water, food, shelter and space. Water is the most important element and can be provided as simply as a garbage can lid turned upside down to form a birdbath. Change the water often to discourage mosquito breeding. Berries, nuts and seeds of native plants — wildlife food — come next. Then there’s shelter, which is best created by maintaining continuous foliage from the ground to the tops of trees, descending from shade trees to understory trees, large shrubs, smaller shrubs, grasses and, finally, to groundcovers and wildflowers. This edge of foliage can be at the back of your open area of buffalo grass or native groundcovers and will provide shelter where birds and other wildlife can hide from predators and raise their young. The edge is most often the crucial piece missing from traditional landscapes. Replacing your manicured lawn with a wildscape benefits people, too. You can save up to 75 percent in water and maintenance after your wildscape is established (usually about two years). In



addition to flower color, you will be entertained with birdsong, dancing butterflies, birds nesting and feeding their young, the hummingbird’s amazing helicopter-like flight and tremendous speed, anoles blowing their red “bubbles” and amusing squirrel antics. Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson says connecting with nature is essential to our physical and mental well-being. Trees clean the air we breathe, and being surrounded by nature is definitely therapeutic. So for your health, pleasure and to help preserve the world, convert your property to a sanctuary of “wilderness” — a wildscape. To learn how, consider volunteering at the Molly Hollar Wildscape in Veterans Park, 3600 W. Arkansas Lane, on Tuesday mornings from 8:00 to 11:00 am or on the first Saturday of the month. For more info, call Molly Hollar at (817) 319-6924.

Park Officials Meet with ACC *continued from page 3*

football team. This acreage was part of the JC Flood Control and Ecological Restoration Project, which had been funded and more than half paid for (at the usual 65:35 federal:local split) when Arlington voters said Yes to the Cowboys. Once the stadium site was selected, the fate of Johnson Creek was sealed. Though everyone is at great pains to tell us that **only** 23 of the 90 acres will be paved over for parking, prime habitat designated as Category 2 by U.S. Fish and Wildlife—meaning of high ecological value—has already been bulldozed and the remaining bottomland hardwoods, containing some ancient trees and exceptionally rich in biodiversity, will be converted into some sort of parkland.

In lieu of the 90 acres of JC drainage, Arlington citizens can hope to gain a mixture of some heavy forested land adjacent to Dottie Lynn and large denuded tracts farther east, at the sites of a former golf course and salvage yard and an existing TESCO easement. This property is now in private hands and the owner does not appear motivated to sell, though as a floodplain the land cannot be developed. Hoping to persuade him, APRD will use some 1997 bond money and has assigned a value of \$1.9 million to the 23 “lost” acres, which will be credited to the city’s share of the Cowboys’ project and included in the Johnson Creek Conservation Plan currently awaiting congressional consideration. Funding for the JCCP is one of hundreds of earmarks within a huge appropriations bill and passage is uncertain.

Green Dallas Building on Tour Grace Darling



The announcement was forwarded by a friend at the last minute: the North Central Texas Council of Governments would be sponsoring tours of green buildings, sustainable development, and CLIDE award winners for 2006. (Note to COG: You should beef up your publicity department.) With little time to spare, we registered for one of the few evening choices at the closest facility, which happened to be Hensley Field. (COG: People work during the day; have pity.) So, with a stout heart but low expectations, we headed east on Abram Street through Grand Prairie to just past the Vought Aircraft plant. At the next gate we entered a vast fenced area, a prairie scattered with large and mostly derelict buildings, hangars and



runways. This is Hensley Field, home of the former Dallas Naval Air Station and current site of the Texas Air National Guard, Texas Army Guard, and TXU Electric. After leasing the land for nearly 100 years, the Navy moved its

operations to Fort Worth and the property reverted to the city of Dallas, which plans to develop it for both public and private use.

We wound south along a narrow road to a totally unprepossessing-looking structure, and there the surprise began. This vehicle maintenance facility, where the city of Dallas fleet is converted to compressed natural gas vehicles, is 80,000 square feet of smart design and green construction practices, the second LEED Gold building in Texas and the first in the Metroplex. Our guide was Architect Michael Kawecki, a LEED Accredited Professional now in private practice and Vice Chair of the North Texas Chapter of the US Green Building Council, who was project manager for Dallas and oversaw the renovation of the facility. Mike is a green building prophet who also walks the walk; he knows every aspect of the building intimately: the choices, the suppliers, the battles, the costs. By the end of the evening, we'd learned the following facts about the facility:

- Its highly efficient plumbing fixtures reduce water usage by an estimated 50% over a conventional building of similar size.
- Its daylighting strategies (skylights everywhere; shaded north-facing low-E glass windows) and highly efficient lighting fixtures reduce electricity consumption by an estimated 25%.
- The stand-alone (not roof-mounted) photovoltaic array is capable of generating up to 7 kw of electricity in real time—no batteries—to offset approximately 3% of the building's power needs.
- Interior plants are irrigated with rainwater collected in a roof-top

cistern and delivered by gravity flow, aided by a double-pot wicking system that cuts the watering schedule to about once a month. No potable water is used for indoor irrigation.

- Native, drought-tolerant plants are used for landscaping.
- A geothermal well cooling system drastically reduces equipment size, maintenance, and cost.
- Almost 25% of construction materials have recycled content, e.g., terrazzo floors in the lobby, VET flooring in hallways and offices, painted 20" concrete squares on a raised floor with utilities running in space underneath (no AC ducts).



- Low-emitting VOC materials were used throughout to minimize indoor air problems.
- Over 80% of construction materials were manufactured locally and more than 40% were extracted regionally.

In short, it was a terrific tour of a magnificent building (COG: Thank you!). There was so much to see and learn, I wish we had other opportunities and more people would come (COG: Hint, hint).

Natural Urban Living Garden Show is June 10

Don't forget the big annual event brought to us by Arlington Organic Garden Club. The free show will be held at Bob Duncan Center in Vandergriff Park from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Exhibitors include area non-profit groups and vendors of natural and organic products and services. Come ready to shop for soil amendments, garden supplies and accessories, nature-related gifts, natural bath & body products, and more!

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

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

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Arlington Conservation Council
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Potluck in the Park
June 10
Main Pavilion
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5:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Bring Some Food!

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