

ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 6

JUNE 2007

Special
meeting place:
West Police Service
Center

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

June Meeting

The Viridian Development

Howard Porteus,
Project Manager, Huffines Communities



Wednesday, June 13, 7:00 pm

West Police Service Center
2060 West Green Oaks Blvd

The large planned development
in far north Arlington
will include a constructed wetland
and wildfowl habitat.
Come learn about it.

Bits & Pieces

True or False?

"A sensible palette takes a global ethic...You never want to do anything potentially damaging to any habitat. But if we are going to keep spaces green around the world, we can't restrict the garden to plants that existed before anybody touched it." - James Darke, former Curator of Plants, Longwood Gardens, Pennsylvania. See the provocative article in the May 31st *New York Times*.

Help Our Float

We're working hard on the July 4th float, but we need your help to get it done. We need old broomsticks and lots of green paper scraps at least 4x6 destined for the recycling bin. They don't have to be solid green; printing or pictures will work. We also need members to carry signs on foot and on the float. And one more little thing: a hybrid SUV to pull the float. Let Marian Hiler know if you can help. Her contact information is on the back page.

Eastern Comma?

ACC member Dick Schoech took a great shot of this butterfly feeding on his elephant garlic plant. If you know what it is, please let us know.



The Wrong Stuff

"I have no doubt that ... a trend of global warming exists. I am not sure that it is fair to say that it is a problem we must wrestle with. To assume that it is a problem is to assume that the state of Earth's climate today is the optimal climate, the best climate that we could have or ever have had and that we need to take steps to make sure that it doesn't change." - NASA Administrator Michael Griffin on NPR's Morning Edition, May 31.

From the President John Darling



It's the first ozone alert day of the year and the gulf between normality and me just keeps growing. The mainstream voices go on and on

about things that are irrelevant, frivolous, or downright detrimental to the things I care about.

The latest meeting of the Tarrant Coalition for Environmental Awareness was a welcome relief. President Bonnie Bowman's message of cooperation among local environmental groups feels like just the right thing. What's the answer to that feeling of being hopelessly overwhelmed by huge anti-environmental forces? It has to be the strength in numbers that we could see if local groups work effectively together.

It's never a done deal, of course. In one afternoon a guy on a bulldozer

can wipe out years of struggle. But there are times when that guy doesn't get the chance to knock down trees. It's important to try to focus on those rare victories.

That's tough to do in Arlington, especially when someone like Ulrich Herrmann shatters the peace with his fierce questions about our mad desire for unending population growth. And he's right: What sense does it make for our local governments to keep offering incentives for development? Haven't we reached a point where we realize that enough is enough?

I know nothing about economics (not allowed even to touch the checkbook), but I keep wondering if our system requires growth. Can we have a healthy economy without growth? I don't know, but I can't see a sustainable alternative. Can our city council members?

2008 Bond Election

Bonnie Bowman

Arlington Parks and Recreation Department is gearing up for another bond election in 2008. Staff have created a priority list of projects that they propose for this election. This list is currently being discussed by the parks board and, once approved, will be given to a parks bond committee that will be appointed by the Mayor and City Council sometime this summer. On the list are some of the parks that ACC advocated to create in years past, such as Crystal Canyon, which APARD hopes to restore to its former lush hillsides before the off-road bicycle enthusiasts created their own playground; Julia Burgen Park, where road and sewer infrastructure remaining from the homes that were once there will be removed; and the Southwest Nature Preserve, where APARD wants to start building trails and perform other park development.

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller



What a difference a year makes! Well, not just the calendar, but lots of rain and 'seasonable' temperatures. The New York Avenue prairie is already taller than it

was during all of 2006. The wildflower show continues, now featuring gaillardia (firewheel or Indian blanket),



Maximillian sunflower, monarda (horsemint), claspig leaf coneflower, Indian plantain, rosinweed, basketflower and just a few late larkspur. The

butterflies accompanying this display are also quite spectacular this year.

Plans are underway for a fall wildflower tour at the prairie and restoration efforts will resume this fall. To volunteer or for more information, contact jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net.

For summer reading, check out *Water from Stone, The Story of Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve* by Jeffrey Green. This interesting biography of David Bamberger and his family details his restoration of "the sorriest piece of land in Blanco County" to functioning habitats with flowing springs and creeks and their dedication to species preservation and education. Or check out their website at www.bambergerranch.org.

As the spring season glides into summer, here's notice of a new prairie organization:

June 25 - First Meeting of the Texas Prairie Coalition, 1:00 pm, Elm Fork Project Office of US

Army Corps of Engineers, Lewisville. Proposed as a forum for groups actively involved or interested in native prairie conservation, restoration and/or education in Texas. RSVP appreciated but not required to Jason_spangler@texasprairie.org or 512/736-4199.

Also, Dr. Ken Steigman will provide a guided tour of local native prairie remnants before the meeting. Please RSVP to Ken at steigman@unt.edu or 972/822-0320.

(Editor's note: The new head shot has been approved by this contributor as the only acceptable photo.)



2008 Bond Election *continued from page 2*

Money is also requested for some neighborhood park land acquisition, linear park extensions, and other park restoration and development projects. The total request is about \$20 million dollars. Missing from the list is "our" Blackland Prairie where a fence and parking lot would help define the area as a park vs an open vacant field.

At a special meeting of the Parks Board to discuss this list, the most controversial item was a rebuild of the Hugh Smith Recreation Center. The only indoor pool, and one of only a few remaining deep water pools in Arlington, is in serious need of repair. The

center itself needs enough work that staff recommends starting over rather than trying to make repairs. This is expensive. Staff requested \$8 million, and hence the controversy. The Parks Board will probably resume discussion of this list at their next regularly scheduled meeting on June 11 at 6:30 pm. The public is welcome to come express their thoughts on what needs to be included or not included on the project list.

Members of ACC who are not currently appointed to a city board or commission are needed to volunteer to serve on the Bond Committee. If you

can, please consider going to the city Web site, downloading the volunteer application form, and sending it in. Be sure to list your committee of interest as the Bond Committee. This committee has the distinct advantage of being relatively short-lived. Your involvement would start in late summer and be over in early May. If you have questions about what is involved, there are many ACC members who have served on past park bond committees and on the parks board who can probably answer your concerns.

Wildscape Update John Dycus



In all the hype and hoopla surrounding Earth Day at the Wildscape on April 22, did we overlook the latest Walk on the Wildside just 19 days later? Pity. Supremely

orchestrated by Ann Knudsen and with another cast of thousands (wildscape volunteers are the best volunteers in the world), the grade-school info tour was a smash hit.



“This was the best field trip I have ever been on,” Auda Freeman, a fifth-grade teacher at Goodman Elementary School, wrote in a thank-you note. “I learned that Veterans Park is beautiful and that wonderful people can make a difference.” From lead teacher Phyllis Smith, you’ll love this: “The Walk on the Wildside was better than the River Legacy field trips. I was very impressed with the agenda, the speakers and the volunteers.”

The students had their own bouquets to offer, in the form of telling what they learned. “I learned that erosion washes away money and trash.” “Bobcats only come out at night and opossums live



in their mom’s pouch.” “What I learned about the forest was for the forest to exist you need a bunch of trees.” “We were all very excited, especially when the butterfly came out of it crylissalis.” That’s OK, kid, I have trouble with chrysalis, too. And the best compliment of all: “It felt like High School.”

“They are brutally frank,” Mrs. Smith says of young people this age, “so their praise is totally sincere and the best indicator of what a successful day it was.” She added that the students can’t wait to come back. Sixty Goodman fifth-graders, including the students in longtime supporter Carrie Donovan’s class, trooped through the wildscape in groups of eight



or nine, each little crowd with its own wildscape guide. The learning accelerated at the six information stations, with volunteers educating on a variety of topics:

- Ann Mayo at the bioswale, on erosion.
- Julia Burgen on birds, her talk complete with bird nests, eggs, sounds and pictures for a delighted audience.
- Lisa Marshall on invasive exotics, showing privet takeover at the LTV bridge.
- John Darling on the post oak woodland of the Eastern Cross Timbers.



- Josephine Keeney on the original wildscape, by the small pond.
- Nora Green with a hands-on display of caterpillars, eggs, pupae and live butterflies nectaring on wildflowers.
- Hester Schwarzer describing mosquito larvae as seen in magnified containers.

Carrie led the students in the popular environmental game “Oh, Deer!” At tour’s end, they tossed the seed balls they made with wildscape volunteers who visited Carrie’s classroom earlier in the week.

It’s so easy to get cynical these days. Maybe we all need a Walk on the Wildside with a scampering platoon of wide-eyed fifth-graders.



Green Building Danny Kocurek

In case you are wondering when we are going to actually build our “green home,” you are not alone. We have been wondering that for quite a while. This month I will discuss some of the problems we have encountered in our process thus far.

I previously mentioned that our first problem was finding an architect and a builder. There are still only three builders and two architects willing to work in Arlington who are capable of this type of project. The closest one has an office in Lewisville. With all of the talk about green building, you would think that this would have changed, but most people still just want to talk about it. There are no developments in our area that are sustainable or green so we were stuck with designing and building a custom home. “Custom,” when used to describe a house, is actually a code word for “expensive.”

On the topic of expensive, the next step was finding a way to finance our project. Green homes are always going to be more expensive than typical homes. The goal is to recoup all of the costs and then some in energy savings down the road. Unfortunately, banks don’t understand this at all. The house appraisal business is quite amazing even if you aren’t building green. For example, we chose to build on a 1-acre lot covered with post oak woods, adjacent to a park. We honestly didn’t think twice about paying more for it compared to other properties. However, in the appraisal process, our lot was valued the same as treeless lots one third the size with views in all directions of the neighbors’ fences.

When it comes to green building issues, it gets even worse. A simple example is our roof. We chose a standing seam metal roof because of its durability and energy efficiency. It is essentially fire- and hail-proof and

receives a home insurance discount in Texas. It is extremely energy efficient and should save thousands of dollars over the years in energy costs. It should also last at least twice as long as a composition roof. Despite all of this, the appraisers don’t value it any more than a roof with composition shingles. Likewise, better insulation, windows, doors, appliances, and construction methods do not receive any more value than using the cheapest available materials, products and methods. Items like rainwater harvesting tanks and solar hot water heaters are given no value whatsoever in the appraisal process.

At times it seems like we are battling the world in an attempt to do what seems logical and foresighted. Hopefully the world isn’t right. Despite all of this, we are actually financed and ready to start. I am sure it will be smooth sailing from here.

ACC T-Shirts Available Soon

Remember how incredibly cool we looked at the last July 4th parade? Now you can be this hip, too, for only \$15.00. By popular demand, the now-classic ACC treefrog-green t-shirt will soon be available again. Don’t fail to catch this opportunity: Contact Marian Hiler (info is on the back page) and let her know how many and what sizes.



Computer Takeback

The Texas Legislature is the fifth in the nation to pass a bill holding computer companies accountable for taking back their old products, known as producer takeback. Thanks to everyone who has supported Texas Campaign for the Environment’s efforts and made this tremendous victory possible. Read the press release at texasenvironment.org/ewaste.cfm.

The final step is for Governor Perry to sign, veto or let the bill go into law without his signature. While a veto is not anticipated, please write a letter to Governor Perry. You can download a sample at the Web site and mail or fax to (512) 463-1849. Or call his Opinion Line at (800) 252-9600. Here’s the basic message: “Please sign HB 2714 into law and voice support for producer recycling of televisions in the next legislative session.”

Our May Speaker

Thanks to Shirley Theriot, Director of UTA’s Center for Community Service Learning for speaking at last month’s general meeting.

Dr Theriot spoke on the service learning partnership program, and we learned how UTA students and ACC might mutually benefit from working together.

We also learned how a dedicated, enthusiastic speaker can captivate an audience.



Electric Cars of Austin Wayne Halliburton

Candy and I recently went on a road trip to Austin (always a great time—good music, good food, and a band of some sort at almost every corner during First Thursdays on South Congress Street). While we were driving by REI on Lamar Street, we saw Electric Cars of Austin, and I decided to pay them a visit. (Candy, of course, went to try on clothes at REI.)

Looking around the lot, it seemed like most of their production cars were little more than street-legal golf carts. This is apparently exactly what they are. Originally intended for gated communities, these LSVs (low speed vehicles) are now street legal for any road where the posted speed limit is 35 mph or under.

Classic Golf Cart Company makes two models, the EV-2 and the EV-4. They are considered neighborhood vehicles, and have a wide variety of options and appearances. The downside is their range and speed. They

have a range of 55 miles and a top speed of 25 mph. All this for a whopping \$19,500.

The Dynasty Electric Car Corporation produces the IT 4-passenger sedan that looks a little like a small Volks-



wagen Beetle. It has a top speed of 25 mph, and a cruising range of just 30.4 miles but claims that it costs just \$5.10 to charge, or just 17 cents per mile. The IT costs \$15,000. It doesn't go fast or far, but you look great.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the car with my favorite name—the B.I.G. Man "Barton." The

car is made in Oklahoma by Barton Investment Group Manufacturing. This is the most popular model on their lot, and not only because of its name. The Barton goes just 25 mph, but the battery system is much better and you can get up to 75 miles between charges, making it one of the longest-range LSVs to date (not counting the no-longer-with-us EV-1 from "Who Killed the Electric Car?" fame). The Barton is also the most affordable, at \$11,750. Between the name, price, and its extended range, the Barton is selling well. Check out all these cars, and hopefully others soon at www.electriccarsofaustin.com.

It takes commitment to have cleaner air. We assume all the people who are up for this have already signed on with a green electricity provider. Austin proper has its own hydroelectric green utility, and yes, it is cheaper than anything we are paying).

Johnson Creek Update

On May 24, Pete Jamieson, Arlington Parks & Recreation Department Director, addressed a special ACC meeting. Pete brought us the latest information on plans for the troubled portion of Johnson Creek that will be squeezed between a Cowboys parking lot and the Glorypark development.



Pete Jamieson, Wayne Halliburton, and Steven Smith.

Pete drew a full house, even though many of us were not expecting good news. And we weren't disappointed: The basic message hasn't been altered in the last few months. Studies on the massive flow of floodwaters confirm the inevitable: It will require large changes to move too much water through too small a space. The creek, already severely damaged by so many recent decisions, will not resemble anything we once knew.

The one remaining bright spot is Pete's assurance that only native plants will be used to revegetate the affected area.



There's one other positive feature, and that's the fact that Pete would take the time and trouble to keep us informed, even though he knew this audience would not enjoy his message. We're indebted to Pete and his staff for their continued stewardship in these difficult times.

Guest Column: Gas Drilling in Our Backyards Linda Yarbrough



Well, not exactly in our backyards, but very, very close. UTA's contract with Carrizo Oil and Gas drilling hit a big nerve with a number of local citizens who could be impacted by this newest urban drilling effort. At a May emergency meeting of about 75 residents immediately surrounding UTA, concerns were voiced about the lease-

signing process and the possible environmental impact.

Individuals from at least two different land services companies walk door-to-door attempting to get individual land owner's signatures for land, water AND mineral rights. Residents later learn these are very one-sided contracts—not in the residents' favor, of course. Two reps from Cheaha Land Services did not have licenses from the city to perform door-to-door solicitation, causing further concern.

At the meeting, residents heard about some of the possible environmental impacts. After speaking with the manager from Carrizo Oil & Gas assigned to the UTA project, with aides of Chris Harris and Kim Brimer, staff of US Geological Survey, and Earthworks, FWCanDo, and Environmental Defense Fund, I conclude that only the gas companies think urban drilling makes sense. The noise, light pollution, and air pollution from diesel fumes, and safety issues do not outweigh most residents' wish for gas lease money.

Each well can use up to 3.5 million gallons of water. Whether the water is taken onsite from local aquifers, with the potential for depleting local water wells, or trucked in using large diesel tankers, the quantity of water use is extraordinary. One Representative's aide said "This just doesn't make any sense while we are all under water restrictions in our cities. This (urban drilling) just isn't working out like we thought it would. Residents are coming out of the woodwork complaining..." The Carrizo project manager was not sufficiently acquainted with our community to know that his water trucks would have to travel on two-lane residential streets to reach at least one proposed UTA well site.

Our neighbors cannot believe UTA is willing to put gas wells next to our kids, our homes, a private school, and a public elementary school; it is just unthinkable.

The City and UTA officials plan to meet on June 7 to discuss the neighbors' concerns. Residents have asked for a public hearing where all questions can be answered.

The Smart Yard Contest is Back

The 2007 Smart Yard Contest was launched in May, and it's a natural for ACC members. Find all the information at ci.arlington.tx.us.

Group Meets at UTA for Transit Solutions and Green Roofs

The Student Planning Association in the School of Urban and Public Affairs hosted a kick-off meeting for the UT Arlington Green Roof and UTA-DFW Shuttle projects last week. Attendees included representatives from the City of Arlington and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, students from the master of city and regional planning program, landscape architecture, and earth and environmental sciences programs, and faculty from SUPA, landscape architecture and mathematics.

The meeting resulted in vision discussions and the seeding of steering committees for each project. The goals for this summer include formation of project organizations, development of detailed project plans and preliminary research. To learn more about or joining either project, please contact Amanda Popken (UTA Green Roof project) at amanda.popken@yahoo.com, Surupa Sen (UTA-DFW Shuttle project) at surupahere@yahoo.com, or Kent Hurst (either project) at klhurst@uta.edu.

Parks Property Blooms

The big lot at Pecan Street and Park Row is colorful for the first time in at least 30 years, thanks to the efforts of Parks staff who labored through the drought to start wildflowers and native grasses here. Now, despite the efforts of some neighbors, our Parks people are continuing to manage this project intelligently. Thanks, APARD.



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

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