

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POST OAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 10

**NOVEMBER—
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The 2030 °Challenge Grace Darling

Texas is at the forefront of the battle against climate change. If the Mayors' Coalition is successful, it will change the world.

So said Edward Mazria, distinguished architect and prophet of sustainable design, to a packed auditorium at UTA last Wednesday evening. In an excellent presentation of the causes of global warming and its solution, Mazria developed his theme coolly and objectively, at first frightening his audience and later inspiring it to take corrective action.

Two events are converging to create a planetary crisis: rising energy consumption and dwindling supplies of oil and natural gas. Worldwide, buildings of all kinds use 48% of all available energy, followed by 27% for transportation and 25% for industrial consumers. In the U.S., buildings account for 76% of all electricity consumption. At the same time, we are down to the last 25% of projected oil production from all sources, and 70% of the world's oil and natural gas reserves are located in a strategic ellipse spanning the Middle East, from Saudi Arabia in the south to the Baltic republics and Siberia in the north.

Not only are fossil-fuel deposits disappearing fast, their uncontrolled burning has poisoned the air and set in motion a pattern of global warming. The net gain of greenhouse gases has already raised the average global temperature 0.7°C compared to preindustrial levels. At this rate, by the year 2050 the temperature will be 2°C higher, and by 2100, a full 3°C. The consequences of this warming are catastrophic, such as the drowning of coastal cities from an expected 25-meter rise in sea levels.

To avert this impending crisis, the goal is to decrease fossil-fuel energy consumption steadily and progressively—the 2030 °Challenge. “Action must be prompt, otherwise CO₂-producing infrastructure will be built that will make it impossible to reach [our objective],” said Dr James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute, in 2005. Through legislation designed to curb pollution, California is already carbon-neutral, proving that the challenge can be met. Mazria says we can do it through smart, innovative building design; technology (e.g., efficient on-demand water heating); and the purchase of renewable energy. On its own, the transportation industry is already shifting to more environmentally friendly vehicles, and the industrial sector will come around when public and shareholder pressure becomes untenable. Locally, Mazria recommends simple modifications of building codes to incorporate green practices.

Hopeful signs for the future: Arlington joined the Mayors' Coalition earlier this year and recently signed on to the Kyoto protocol. Maybe together we can still save our city, and the planet, for future generations.

November Meeting

Topic: Protecting Our Prairie Earth
Speaker: Jarid Manos, Executive Director,
Great Plains Restoration Council
When: Wednesday, November 8,
7:00 pm (Social 6:30 pm)
Where: East Police Station,
2001 New York Avenue

December Meeting

Topic: Potluck Social
When: Saturday, December 9,
5:30 pm
Where: 905 Ridgewood Terrace
More Info: Contact Candy Halliburton or
Stephen Smith

From the President Wayne Halliburton



At the risk of driving everyone crazy, this column is about the vacation my wife, Candy, planned as my 50th birthday celebra-

tion. First we went to Austin to see an art fair. We liked it, but the point is where we stayed: The Habitat Suites (www.habitatsuites.com) is in north Austin and well worth the trip. They have 1- and 2-bedroom suites with all the amenities: separate bedroom and living areas, a kitchen with a full-size fridge and range, plus dishes, cookware, and utensils. They also serve a full breakfast and have tea and coffee all day. In addition, on weeknights they serve hors d'oeuvres



(in large quantities that served as dinner for the three of us) with complimentary beverages, including wine.

If you are not already intrigued, let me tell you that Habitat Suites is listed in Co-op America's *National Green Pages* and is built with environmental concerns in mind. The grounds have native plants, which include a herb spiral and several other gardens with art sculptures, ponds, and archways. They use natural fertilizers, phosphate-free cleansers, and water conservation methods on the grounds and in the rooms. They are chemical-free inside and out and use non-toxic water-based paints in the rooms, so they are ideal for the chemically sensitive guest. They also have

banks of photovoltaic cells to produce electricity for the hotel during the daylight hours, radiant barriers, and extra insulation in the attics.

Habitat acts as caretaker of the creek that borders its property and has planted deep-root natives and used river rock for erosion control. Best of all—the most unusual sight I have ever seen in a hotel—each suite is equipped with its own recycling bin. I have to admit I end up carrying a ton of newspapers and water bottles home with me after every vacation because I refuse to throw this stuff away, and our car looks like a rolling recycling bin at the end of a trip. So I am especially impressed with a business that is environmentally astute AND helps to declutter my car!

Austin, by the way, has an annual green resource publication that covers the gamut of environmental concerns

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THE POST OAK

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

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller

Arlington Parks & Recreation Department installed a spiffy new split-rail fence across the New York Avenue side of the prairie in early October. Very nice job and it really shows off the prairie as being something special. Many thanks to APRD!

It's an in-between season at the prairie: There's fall-blooming sage and aster, but also fresh new growth from grasses and the occasional flowers of prairie verbena, plus new rosettes of ironweed and ferny yarrow. Despite the drought, pitcher sage is still blooming, but otherwise the



color palette is gold and yellow. Lots of white from heath aster, which has been blooming since September, and mostly gold from Maximilian sunflower and goldenrod. Big and little bluestems are just beginning to bloom even though they're only about knee-high. Usually they would be 4-6 feet tall.

Thanks to those 'just in the nick of time' early fall rains, the grasses look more robust than they have all year. Their peak bloom time should be in another two weeks or so.

Prairie critters, seen and unseen: A smashed toad or frog of some sort on the road seemed incongruous, considering the drought. And a probable coyote had marked his territory on top of a pile of fast food containers (a specific comment on the brand of burger or something on humans in general?). On the wing, there was an officious male kestrel overseeing the prairie and its newly arrived winter sparrows, which are so confident of their cover that they stay hidden until you're within a step of them. Butterflies still find the prairie attractive: There are many Monarchs and buckeyes.

Stay tuned: The first fall NYABP workday of 2006 will be scheduled for November or early December. We'll survey

grasses and cut back tree re-growth. If you're interested in participating, contact me at jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net or 817/483-0579.

Prairie notes:

Our neighbors to the west, Don Young and Friends of Tandy Hills Nature Area, are supporting the City of Fort Worth's plans to restore Tandy Hills to its native prairie state. For more information, contact Don at donyoungglass@earthlink.net.

Since invasive exotics are the #2 reason for habitat loss and a major problem in many of our natural areas (think KR bluestem at the prairie, privet at the Molly Hollar Wildscape, tamarisk and buffelgrass at Big Bend, etc.), please consider participating in this new program:

November 13, 9:00 am–5:00 pm, Invaders of Texas Citizen Science Program — become a Citizen Scientist.

Do you want to help slow down the spread of harmful invasive species and reduce their ecological and economic damage? The first step is to locate where invaders have arrived and get that information to those who can do something about it. That's where citizen scientists come in. Citizen scientists are volunteers who receive expert training to identify and track important invaders in our area.

Location: Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth. For more info and to register: www.texasinvasives.org/Citizen_Science/become.html. Sign-in and morning refreshments starting at 8:30 am. Registration fee includes lunch.



Air Update Marianne Herrmann

At its last meeting, the North Central Texas Clean Air Steering Committee passed several resolutions designed to solve our air pollution problems. Our mayor, Dr. Cluck, was instrumental in getting these resolutions passed and deserves our thanks. Now we have to influence the TCEQ to incorporate them into our Texas State Implementation Plan. This was Wendy Hammond's focus at the recent Blue Skies Alliance meeting. She would like us to send frequent letters or e-mails to the commissioners and to our state and local elected officials and convince them of how important all these measures are to clean up our air. TCEQ Commissioners are required to listen to elected officials. While all the resolutions need to be incorporated, emphasis must be placed on the following:

Resolutions Supporting the Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP) and Low Income Repair and Replacement Program (LIPAP), Resolution on Existing Electric Generating Units (EGUs), Resolutions Supporting Selective Non-Catalytic Reduction (SNCR) Technology for Cement Kiln Emissions Reductions and Supporting LoTox and/or Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) Technologies for Additional Cement Kiln Emissions Reductions.

We will have more info at the November meeting. The address for TCEQ Commissioners can be found at www.TCEQ.com. Of course, the permits for the new coal plants are also very important (19 proposed now!) and our elected officials should work against them too. We are being forced into a terrible power plan if they are built as proposed.

Learn more at the next Blue Skies meeting on the 4th Wednesday in January at 7:30 pm at the West Police Center.

Wildscape Update John Dycus



October embraced the Molly Hollar Wildscape like a lost love. Organic guru Lucy Harrell, a specialist on demanding environments, awarded scholarships

for her prized gardening classes to Jean Hiler, Josephine Keeney, Hester Schwarzer and Kay Sekio, all tireless volunteers.

Devanie Fergus, Pat Lovejoy and Anne Alderfer also were in the scholarship derby but had time conflicts. A true wildscape friend from the very beginning, Lucy has taught wildscape volunteers much that they can now apply at their own homes. Her continuing generosity and support mean so much.

It was another red-letter day when David Hopman, ASLA, an assistant professor in UTA's School of Architecture, brought his class to tour the



Lucy Harrell, longtime wildscape friend.

wildscape. He pointed out the advantages of using native plants — water conservation, elimination of chemicals, minimal maintenance, attracting wildlife — and suggested a meeting to discuss cooperation between the landscape architecture classes and the wildscape. Several of the students said they come to the wildscape often and are interested in volunteering for a little hands-on learning.

The emphasis on Texas native plants, water conservation, etc. is very different from earlier years in landscape architecture. The wildscape faithful cheer this exciting development and look forward to a growing relationship with these students and their professor.

On Oct. 27 the Rotarians who recently worked as volunteers had their regular noon meeting at Veterans Park so they could tour the wildscape after their picnic lunch. A big thanks to these great people for planting more than 100 plants and moving countless wheelbarrows of wood chips to mulch the trails.

The next day, John Davis, urban biologist supreme at Texas Parks and Wildlife, brought the latest graduating class of about 25 new Master Naturalists for the annual tour. Four in the class live in Arlington, and three of them are already frequent wildscape volunteers. When the tour ended at noon, the Master Naturalists

joined the Saturday regulars for lunch at Mijo's to celebrate a great October.

Back in the trenches, volunteers worked every Saturday in October to finish planting all the perennials and groundcover plants large enough to go in the ground. October is the only really good month for planting in this part of Texas to maximize water conservation.



After the regular first-Saturday wildscape workday Nov. 4, the only perennials and groundcovers remaining in the greenhouse will be the ones that need to get larger before being planted.

Wildscape volunteer schedule:
9:00 am-noon Saturdays through Dec. 2 and Tuesdays through Dec. 19.

Green Building Danny Kocurek

An early decision when building a "green home" is choosing where to place the home on the lot. Probably the most important consideration is solar orientation, which involves minimizing solar gain (heat from sunlight) in the summer and harnessing it in the winter. Optimally the house should be oriented so that the majority of the windows face north or south and very few face east or west. Shading of the southern facing windows has to be precisely designed so that no direct sunlight comes through in the summer when it would heat the house but as much sunlight as possible comes through in winter when the heat is needed. This is possible because the sun is lower in the horizon in winter and can get under the overhangs or awnings which prevent it from entering in the summer. East and west windows are difficult if not impossible to shade when the sun is low in the horizon and therefore should be minimized. The placement of the house on the lot should also minimize vegetation loss. Unfortunately, compromises often have to be made due to limitations of the site. In our case, in order to preserve trees and avoid easements, our house had to be oriented with the majority of windows facing east and west. We had to use large overhangs and a west facing porch to compensate.

The options for the walls and roof, the thermal envelope, are numerous and generally become more expensive as their thermal protection increases. They also become more energy efficient and save more money in the long run. On the low end is "stick framing," using 2x4 or 2x6 studs and insulating between them.

Structured Insulated Panels (SIPs) consist of panels of styrofoam sandwiched between two sheets of oriented strand board (OSB), which is made of compressed wood scraps. The panels are assembled in a factory and joined together on site. OSB

From the President *continued from page 2*

and is quite comprehensive; find it at www.austingreenpaper.org.

After a couple of days in San Marcos visiting our daughter at Texas State (I'm happy to report that their dorms have a recycling program), we went to Bastrop. Just west of Bastrop on highway 71 is McKinney Roughs Nature Park, which is well worth your time. There is a small gift shop stocked with a variety of books on environmental topics, a hands-on learning center for the kids, demonstration gardens with a pond, another garden for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds,

and a trail with additional gardens for different environments, and a total of about 17 miles of hiking trails.

We took our lunch to the Colorado River at a point where it flowed modestly and was surprisingly high and wide. There we sat on the rocks and enjoyed our lunch and the gentle breeze. We walked 5 miles in the tranquility of the park and never saw another human being.

On the final day, Candy arranged a bike ride through a couple of state parks. My host, Paul Uhl, took me from Smithville through Buescher State Park,

onto Park Road 1 to Bastrop State Park and back. It was quite hilly, and Paul, who regularly rides this area with his club, was really quite patient as I puffed up the hills behind him. It was a beautiful day, and there was virtually no one on the narrow, heavily wooded road except for a few deer. After lunch in Smithville, I took Candy back over the same road, so she could see the path we took. While it seemed somewhat flatter in the car, it was still a winding, hilly drive that took about 30 minutes. A great way to kick off the downhill slide.

New Garden at Knapp Heritage Park Stephen Smith

A new site for use by Community Gardens of Arlington has been completed at the Knapp Heritage Park. Chip Atwell, Eagle Scout candidate, Troop 205 in Keller, has completed his Eagle Project by constructing a wagonwheel-shaped raised bed at the park. Chip reports that approximately 70 hours went into planning, obtaining materials, digging, filling the hole, and cleanup work.

Congratulations to Chip and BSA Troop 205 for their efforts and to Geraldine Mills and The Arlington Historical Society for providing the opportunity for young adults to work to benefit our community in this manner.

An heirloom garden is planned for this site. Those interested in volunteering can contact Stephen Smith at 817-275-7469 for details.



Green Building *continued from page 4*

sheathing makes them stronger than a stick-framed building. SIP walls also provide better insulation than stick framing because wood studs are poor insulators and the continuous insulation of the styrofoam in SIPs (no studs) has no thermal breaks. In the end, we decided to go with SIPs, since they met our price/benefit ratio best. Insulated concrete forms (ICFs) are even more thermally protective and more costly. They consist of hollow forms of various insulating materials that are secured together and then filled with concrete. ICFs, unlike SIPs and sticks, cannot be used for roofs.

Straw bale construction is considered one of the most environmentally friendly building techniques. Bales of straw are stacked to make the walls and are covered with adobe or concrete. They are extremely durable, energy efficient, and relatively cheap if the homeowner does the manual labor and the interior finish is minimized. Straw bales are gaining increasing acceptance and are approved by building codes in Tucson, Boulder, Austin and other cities. It is also possible to use various forms of soil to make walls, such as cob, rammed earth, adobe, pise and soil blocks. They are generally very thick and highly energy efficient.

Modern insulating materials come in many forms. Traditional fiberglass is still commonly used but there are some more environmentally friendly alternatives. Cellulose insulation is made from approximately 80 percent post-consumer recycled paper treated with fire retardants and insect protection; slag wool is an industrial waste product. With our SIP construction, there is no need for additional insulation.

The final key element in the thermal barrier is sealing. Energy-efficient building practice mandates that every hole be sealed. Every plumbing and electrical penetration of the walls and roof has to be caulked or sealed. Windows and doors must be caulked and weather stripped and a seal has to be placed between the exterior walls and the foundation. Competent builders will perform a "Blower Door Test," in which a device is attached to a doorway after all the windows and other doors are shut. The device has a fan that blows air into the house and then measures pressure changes in the house to determine how much air leaks out through openings in the thermal envelope. There is no such thing as a perfectly sealed house no matter how diligent the builder is, but the leakage rates in a well-built, modern home should be miniscule.

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November 8

Jarid Manos

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