

SEPTEMBER
2006

Note
meeting place:
Central Library

September Meeting

Topic: Arlington's
Strong Neighborhood
Initiative

Speaker: City of Arlington Neighborhood
Coordinator Regina ("RJ") Blair.

When: Wednesday, September 13,
7:00 pm (Social 6:30 pm)

Where: Central Library,
101 E. Abram St.
Downstairs meeting room

Field of Dreams?

Opinion by John Darling

People tell me things. For the last couple of months several people have told me that even our tiny hopes for Johnson Creek in CowboyLand are much too high. That the once fine habitat will be reduced to little more than a drainage ditch. That maybe it's already happened. And that our motto has changed from "Fun Central" to "Whatever Those Rich Guys Want."

I don't know, of course. I've peered at the wasteland from Sanford Street and felt sick at the losses. But I can't see enough to tell about the creek. A month ago my wife asked an influential councilman to see about visiting the site; he said he'd work on it, and she hasn't heard a word since.

We want to think the best about this bad situation, but we need information and it's nowhere in sight.



Above, looking NE from Sanford. Left, view to the SE (image from Cowboys Stadium Scoreboard Web site, Vol. 1 No. 4).



Above, looking NW from Sanford. Right, a bit of green where Johnson Creek crosses Sanford.



From the President Wayne Halliburton



Recently Candy and I saw the film, "Who Killed the Electric Car?" With gas prices nearing an all-time high (though they have fallen back over

the Labor Day weekend), leaks in the BP Alaskan pipeline, and Middle East supply lines in question, this seems like a good time to look into alternatives. A better time would have been during the Carter administration.

Several ACC members have hybrid cars. The Prius and Camry are both attractive options, though for all-out mileage, the Honda Insight still leads the pack. This is great, especially for the type of stop-and-go driving we do most of the time. By adding a battery pack, hybrids can become true plug-in cars, getting 120 mpg for the life of the battery charge. Plug-in hybrids, which

use just battery power for the first 60 miles and then run on fuel are also available. Check out www.pluginpartners.org for more on this technology.

Diesel cars that can run on biodiesel and the new green line from US manufacturers, such as the GM SUV pulling



our float at the 4th of July parade, also offer already available technology to take the pressure off the oil pipelines. Both biodiesel and ethanol can fit into the existing infrastructure, making them a readily available short-term solution.

Natural gas and fuel cell cars also offer low-emission alternatives. The problem will be in establishing a supply chain. Fuel cell technology is years away, and the supply chains will have to be established for widespread use.

This brings us back to the electric car. The technology is already here, and batteries are improving all the time. The EV1, the car featured in the film, was emission free and cost the equivalent of about 60 cents per gallon to operate. These cars were quiet but still could achieve speeds of up to 70 mph, to run on the freeways. With few moving parts, maintenance revolved around tires and brakes. They got 100 miles per charge, so they would accommodate about 90% of the average driver's daily needs. GM leased the cars and made the owners turn them all back in at the end of the lease, although most of the owners would have gladly extended the lease or

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THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Jan Miller

Beautiful rain! Sweet relief at last, rain and cooler temperatures just in time for fall prairie activities. This brutal summer blasted the prairie and everything else, but with recent rains, it will be interesting to see what rebounds as we venture outside again. Many local prairie activities are scheduled, including a field trip at New York Avenue Blackland Prairie on Saturday, September 30. Hope you can join us! Here's a listing of other activities in the area:

Saturday, September 23 - **Plant Sampling Techniques Workshop**. 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, University of Dallas, taught by Dr. Marcy Brown-Marsden. Limited enrollment, RSVP ASAP to 972-243-4098. Learn several methods for tracking plant growth and succession. Classroom presentation and hands-on field experience includes an introduction to GPS.

Saturday, September 23 - **Holistic Resource Management of Texas (HRM of TX) Field Day**. Bear Creek Ranch (near Weatherford and Aledo). Learn how the design of a "green" community can work with holistic land management to benefit the water cycle and promote sustainability. Speakers include Howard Garrett, David Flato, Courtney White, Hugh Aljoe, Walt Davis, and others. Registration, which includes a catered lunch, is \$35 for non-members. Register online at www.hrm-texas.org.

Saturday, September 30 - **Prairie walk at New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park**. 10:00 am – noon. We'll walk and talk prairies at this 10-acre Blackland Prairie remnant. Topics will include prairies, maintenance, restoration, grasses, wildflowers, and more. We'll be on the watch for fall wildflowers and migrating birds. Free. Call 817-988-9341 for more information.

Saturday, October 7 - **3rd Annual Fall Prairie Tour**. Hosted by Jim and Stephanie Varnum. Includes tours of the Nature Conservancy's Clymer Meadow, Varnums' Ranch, Austin Moseley's bison, and Parkhill Prairie, all northeast of Dallas. RSVP to Jim at 972-243-4098.

Saturday, October 7 - **Fall Bureson Prairie Tour**. Bell County (north of Temple, Tx) The Bureson's project includes hundreds of acres of restored and remnant blackland prairie. Contact Jason at 512-736-4199.

Stay tuned for details: The first fall New York Avenue Prairie workday of 2006 will be scheduled for early to mid October.

Congratulations to Arlington Parks & Recreation Department

Great news! We were awarded a TPWD Trails Grant for our nature trail project at MLK. We received \$90,734 in a very competitive grant cycle. APARD's Gordon Robertson says, "We're very excited to have received state funding at a time when parks funding may be at an all-time low. We're happy to highlight the beautiful natural features around Tierra Verde and the MLK Sports Center with this project." There will be a crushed granite trail, trailheads, and interpretive signs on natural features and Tierra Verde's participation in the Audubon International certification program.

From the President *continued from page 2*

bought the cars outright if they had been given the chance. In the end, the EV1s were taken to the GM testing grounds and crushed. Though the film shows that there is plenty of blame to go around, the most difficult thing to understand is why these cars can't be built again now. The electric cars available today pale in comparison. Chrysler sells an all-electric car now (the GEM), available in Texas, that has a top speed of 25 mph and a range of 30 miles. Locally, a club in Richardson converts members' cars using standard batteries. And a couple of foreign manufacturers are planning full electric models in about 5 years. But the EV1 is apparently off the market for good.

Thanks to Our Recent Speakers



In July Don Young (left) of Fort Worth Citizens Against Neighborhood Drilling showed "Dirty Ol' Town," his fascinating video about local gas drilling issues. A large audience kept him busy with lots of questions. Our August speakers were Fort Worth's Mary L. Gugliuzza (left), and Arlington's Travis Andrews (center) and Julie Hunt. They discussed our water situation in this time of drought.



Wildscape Update John Dycus



These 100-degree days have kept the wildscape volunteers scrambling. Hauling hoses to connect to the soaker hoses hidden under the mulch, trying to finish watering before the city's cutoff at 10 a.m. and then watering by hand has taken everyone's time just to keep the plants alive. Weeding, pruning and other garden chores have been put on hold. Even the propagation volunteers have postponed greenhouse work to come help water, and a couple of hard-core types have returned in the really hot afternoon to finish watering critically stressed plants that are not yet established. These volunteers have managed to stay relatively cool by moving into the shade as the day starts to sizzle and sometimes purposely getting sprinkled along with the plants.

Meanwhile, if you're still clinging to your St. Augustine grass like a bad marriage, how much more incentive do

you need to go down a new path? Dr. Phil would tell you to find a love without a drinking problem (a St. Augustine lawn uses four times as much water as indigenous native plants). Come January, you could plant more trees, too, to increase the shade. And for crying out loud, use soaker hoses, drip irrigation or one of those underground root-feeder spikes to put the water where it's needed and quit broadcasting precious droplets into the scalding sky with high-pressure sprinklers.

The wildscape will soon be home to more drought-tolerant plants, including some from western areas of the state. Desert willow has flowers like miniature orchids, and the Mexican redbud tolerates the summer better than its eastern redbud cousin. Possumhaw has red berries that are spectacular in the winter, and the evergreen Texas mountain laurel sports wisteria-like blooms and smells like grape Kool-Aid.

More choices. Littleleaf sumac turns vivid in the fall, and skeleton leaf goldeneye delights with yellow daisy

blooms all summer and is nearly ever-green. Black dalea is a lovely, low-growing shrub with purple flowers in late summer. Texas lantana provides color while attracting butterflies. Hummingbirds hover over red yucca and flame acanthus. Golden yellow zexmenia and coralberry are great groundcover that tolerate scant rainfall.

Blackfoot daisy blooms from spring until frost, violet ruellia has purplish blooms in the summer, and chocolate daisy smells like its name. Low-growing snakeherb, horseherb, pink evening primrose and frogfruit require little water.

Nearly all of these plants do need good drainage and about an inch and a half of water weekly until established. It may take three years for the roots to grow deep enough to resist drought. After that, 3-6 soakings during a (normal) summer will keep them spry. Once established, some will go dormant but survive to reappear the following spring.

Need To Know

The 2006 Smart Yard Contest is open until September 29. 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.

Hearing on the Draft State Water Plan 6:00 pm, Wednesday, September 20, Bob Duncan Center, Main Hall, 2800 S. Center Street, Vandergriff Park.

State Parks Crisis Walt Dabney, head of Texas Parks and Wildlife, 7:00 pm, Fort Worth Botanic Garden Center.

TCEA general meeting September 16 at 11:30 at Care-A-Lot Inn, Fort Worth. More information from Bonnie Bowman, 817-266-8569.

Arlington League of Women Voters meeting: **Gas Drilling in Arlington**, Monday, September 11; 7:00 pm, Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1330 S Fielder Road. Guests George Kidwell, former president of FW Association of Neighborhoods, Arlington Councilman Ron Wright, and Lee Hitchcock, Director of Community Services, City of Arlington.

Facts and Issues, Cable 16, 7:30 pm most nights, September 11-24, Steve Smith, Vice President of Operations for Harding Oil.

Arlington Environmental Meetup: noon- 2:00 pm, Thursday, September 21, Tierra Verde Clubhouse, 7005 Golf Club Drive Contact: Bonnie Bowman 817-266-8569. Michael Bennett from Gideon-Toal will discuss their proposal to city council for development and zoning in the area around Tierra Verde Golf Course.

Local Odds and Ends Grace Darling

Jo Ann Duman reports that several ACC members and friends, including *Sharon Schoech* and *Beverly Fogleman*, attended the **Restoration and Management of Riparian Corridors** workshop held at TCU on August 15. The day-long free course was offered by the Interagency North Texas Stream Team and encompassed a broad array of topics, such as

- an overview of regional growth and land transformation in the DFW region over the past 20 years and the runoff effect on streams
- an introduction to stream restoration methods based on natural evolution
- channel design, erosion control, and roadway stream crossings
- streambank stabilization approaches using living and inert material that becomes stronger in time to facilitate the natural and self-healing process
- bioengineering in high-risk situations
- design, construction, and recovery phases of USDA/NRCS stream restoration projects

Jo Ann says, "I especially found Ken Mayben's case studies of actual stream restoration efforts combining engineering measures and native plants to be a breakthrough in restoring streams. I sure would like to get him before our city staff, especially the Stormwater Management Committee and the Public Works folks." Will someone make a phone call or two?

On July 24 there was a public meeting of concerned citizens at the **Fort Worth Prairie Park**, the site of yet another conflict between the Texas General Land Office and environmentalists. This 2,000-acre parcel of virgin prairie in far southwest Fort Worth is on the auction block and slated for development. Against this plan are a few state representatives, at least one Tarrant County commissioner, and local neighborhood and environmental activists led by Jared Manos of the Great Plains Restoration Council. They have asked Land Office Commissioner Jerry Patterson to place a moratorium on any plans to sell the land until local officials have had the opportunity to consider its future value as a park. For more information, visit www.fortworthprairiepark.org or www.gprc.org.

Duped by our own state government, again. By now we all know that the extra \$30 we've been paying every year for those **horned lizard and bluebonnet license plates** has not been going to Texas Parks and Wildlife, as we were led to believe. A TxDOT flyer dated February 2006 accompanying the specialty-plate renewal form makes it clear: "Fees paid annually for personalized plates are credited to the General Revenue Fund, and a portion of specialty plate fees collected are credited to the sponsoring organization, if applicable." What's not clear is the size of the portion or why TPW has not been allowed to spend the credit amount it has accumulated in the years since the program's inception—an estimated \$40+ million—at a time when state parks and fisheries are in desperate need of a cash infusion. It may not be fraud, but it sure feels like it. It may be legal, but it ain't right.

The battle over **Eagle Mountain Lake** continues. In 1980 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department bought 400 acres of lakeside bluffs in northwest Tarrant County for \$3.9 million to preserve as a future urban park. Then the priorities changed in Austin, TPW's budget got smaller and smaller, and Eagle Mountain Lake State Park was never developed as promised. Now state officials are poised to sell the land for commercial and residential development, keeping the mineral rights and the Barnett Shale gas revenue. Their reasoning? The land is not being used! (That bit of voodoo logic reminds me of the pundit's reply when asked why the U.S. poverty rate had not declined despite a growing economy: "Too many people are on welfare," he said. It's not that there are too many poor people who need welfare to survive; goodness me, no.) A coalition of concerned Fort Worth residents, spearheaded by State Rep. Charlie Geren and Tarrant Co. Commissioner J. D. Johnson, has asked the General Land Office's Commissioner Jerry Patterson to postpone the sale for at least 120 days to give park proponents a chance to come up with the estimated \$13 million for the property. The Tarrant Regional Water District has already offered to spend \$10.5 million to buy the land and keep it as a park, but the *Star-Telegram* reports that Governor Perry has "worked aggressively behind the scenes to facilitate the auction of the 400 acres to the highest bidder." As quoted in the *Azle News Online*, Rep. Geren encourages phone calls to state legislators: "Let your voice be heard," he said. "The park is important for your children."

Closer to home, the **residential tree ordinance** that was approved by the Arlington City Council barely a year ago is under attack. Developers claim that some sections of the ordinance are in direct conflict with other sections in the City Code of Ordinances, forcing them to either preserve trees or comply with code, not do both. At a recent meeting of the Development Issues Group, Arlington Public Works Director Bob Lowry reviewed apparent conflicts with code requirements for a maximum 8% pavement grade, concrete flumes, and tree canopy minimum. Lowry offered common-sense, affordable fixes to these perceived problems and encouraged the development community to come up with innovative alternatives in partnership with the city. Still, prominent DIG members express a desire for more latitude with regard to tree mitigation—not primarily preservation, as they see it—which would result in a net loss of tree cover we can ill afford. The next meeting of the DIG is on September 19 at 2:00 PM.

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

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Don't Forget!

September 13
Regina ("RJ") Blair

*Arlington's
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