

GENERAL MEETING IS MOVING

Beginning in **April**, 2009, the monthly General Meeting of the Houston Sierra Club will meet on the

SECOND THURSDAY

of every month in Pecore Hall of

ST. STEPHENS EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1805 WEST ALABAMA

(at the corner of West Alabama and Woodhead). Ample parking is available behind (i.e., south of) the church. Doors open at 7:00 PM; the formal meeting starts at 7:30 PM.

See the map on this page. 🗺️

APRIL GENERAL MEETING MOVIE NIGHT: A RIVER REBORN: THE RESTORATION OF FOSSIL CREEK

The moving story of the rebirth of a biologically critical river in the Southwest is recounted in *A River Reborn: The Restoration of Fossil Creek*. The one-hour documentary describes the natural and human history of Fossil Creek, examines the ecological effects of a 100-year-old dam and hydroelectric facility, and chronicles the 15-year process that led to decommissioning. Produced by Emmy Award-winning producer Paul Bockhorst. Narrated by Ted Danson.

Fossil Creek nurtured a rich diversity of life for millions of years, but in 1908 the water was diverted for the generation of electricity to power mining operations in central Arizona. Now, in a



historic turnaround, the hydroelectric facilities are being decommissioned and the river returned to its natural state.

A River Reborn is a powerful case study in environmental restoration. It highlights a broad reassessment of rivers and dams globally, as well as the growing effort to balance fulfillment of human needs with protection of the natural systems that support human life. This includes the safeguarding of precious water resources and the protection of threatened and endangered species. As a focal point for this reassessment, Fossil Creek reveals both challenges and opportunities associated with riparian restoration. 🗺️

ANNUAL YARD SALE

Donations are needed.
See page 5.

The Sierra Club — Houston Group
P.O. Box 3021
Houston, TX 77253-3021

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HOUSTON, TX
PERMIT 8796



St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 1805 West Alabama
Enter parking lot from Woodhead.
Before 7:00 PM, left turns to Woodhead are not allowed. If you are going west on W. Alabama, turn right at Dunlavy, then left to Marshall, then left to Woodhead.

APRIL GENERAL MEETING
A RIVER REBORN
Thursday, April 9, 2009

Join us prior to the meeting for refreshments at the hospitality table and to visit the information tables for Forestry, Outings, and Inner City Outings. Find out how you can volunteer with us.

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

Page 2

Bayou Banner — Volume 33, Number 3 — April, 2009

Hike

RICHARDS LOOP OF THE LSHT

Saturday, April 4, 2009

We will hike the easy 6.5 mile Richards Loop of the Lone Star Hiking Trail (LSHT). The weather will provide spring sunshine and newly green leaves in the woods.

Bring your day pack, water, lunch, hiking shoes, clothes to fit the weather, binoculars, cameras, and field guides. Hiking time should be about 4-5 hours.

We will meet at 8:00 am in the parking lot behind the International House of Pancakes (IHOP) at I-45 North and Greens Road. Look for the green Nissan Mini-van. To reach the parking lot, enter the feeder off I-45 North, via the Greens Road exit, and then pass through the traffic signal at Greens Rd. Turn right into the first strip center you come to (look for Brown Sugar's Barbecue) and drive to the end of the strip center. The parking lot behind IHOP is on the right.

Contact Jane Prentiss at 713-201-5755 or lshttrailboss@yahoo.com for additional details. Please supply your name and contact info should we need to make changes. ☺

Trail Work

LSHT: SOUTH LITTLE LAKE CREEK WILDERNESS

Saturday, April 18, 2009

We will have a trail maintenance hike on South Little Lake Creek Wilderness Section of the Lone Star Hiking Trail (LSHT). The weather should be pleasant for a great hike. This is a wonderful way to get to know this part of the LSHT that goes near the southern part of Little Lake Creek Wilderness Area, and give back by providing service to maintain the LSHT for all walkers, hikers, and runners.

We will meet at 8:00 am in the parking lot behind the International House of Pancakes (IHOP) at I-45 North and Greens Road. Look for the green Nissan Mini-van. To reach the parking lot, enter the feeder off I-45 North, via the Greens Road exit, and then pass through the traffic signal at Greens Rd. Turn right into the first strip center you come to (look for Brown Sugar's Barbecue) and drive to the end of the strip center. The parking lot behind IHOP is on the right.

Contact Jane Prentiss at 713-201-5755 or lshttrailboss@yahoo.com for additional details. Please supply your name and contact info should we need to make changes. ☺

Class

BACKPACKING BASICS COURSE

Tentative dates:

April 8, Classroom

April 18-19, Outing

Have you ever wanted to really experience the less traveled sections of a national park or a wilderness area, miles from civilization? Or have you ever been interested in backpacking, but didn't know where to start? Now you can take the first step by enrolling in the Houston Sierra Club's backpacking course. This course has two sections: a classroom portion (with handout) and a weekend outing. The classroom instruction will focus on backpacking equipment (with

samples), clothing, water, and food preparation. Instructions on what you will need for the outing will also be explained.

The cost of the classroom portion is a donation to the Houston Sierra Club of \$30. The outing will be restricted to those who have taken the classroom portion, and will be an additional \$15 donation. Do NOT purchase equipment before the class – you may find that you paid good money for something that you don't need. This course is restricted to adults 18 years of age and over.

Instructors are Kevin Thome (who has completed the entire 2100+ mile Appalachian Trail) and Maynard Chance (veteran of dozens of Houston Sierra Club outings). For more information, please contact Maynard Chance at maynardrc@comcast.net or 713-983-0990. ☺

Forest Walk

April 25, 2009

For this month's Forest Walk, see 30th Annual Wilderness Pow Wow on Page 7. ☺

Birding

HIGH ISLAND BIRDING

Sunday, April 26, 2009

This outing will visit the Audubon bird sanctuaries at High Island. We may also visit Bolivar Flats and Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge depending on weather and route.

The rookery at the Smith Oaks Sanctuary is a favored roosting and nesting area for thousands of waterbirds. In the spring and summer herons, egrets, cormorants and spoonbills build their nests and raise their chicks on the predator-free island.

We'll meet at 8:30am and the outing will last until late afternoon. For meeting point and other details, contact Frank Blake, frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896. ☺

Bike Ride

COLUMBIA TAP BICYCLE TRAIL

Sunday, April 26, 2009, 9:00 AM

Join us as we explore this new trail, recently finished by the City Of Houston. Starting from the Hermann Park Rose Garden at 9:00 we will explore part of Midtown, hop over 288 and explore the area east of 288. We will then take the trail to 2nd ward and go almost to Brown Convention Center. We will then go south on the Tap trail to TSU and cross over Brays Bayou and back to Hermann Park, wandering through interesting neighborhoods as we go. This is an easy 10-15 mile ride and is a good way to get warmed up for Spring.

Using this trail you can now go all the way from 2nd Ward to U of H to past Fondren & Brays all on bike trails. Trip Leader John Berlinghoffm (johnb@hal-pc.org, 713/644-8228). Reservations are NOT required but you will need a helmet and don't forget water. Join us afterwards for lunch. ☺

WILDERNESS FIRST AID CLASS

See Page 7.

Backpacking

MT. ST. HELENS, WASHINGTON BACKPACK

June 21-28, 2009

The Loowit Loop trail around Mt. St. Helens has been described as "A world class scenic adventure". This above timberline trail offers views of nearby volcanic mountains while traversing through the aftermath of one of Nature's most destructive events, the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens. Waterfalls, pockets of old growth forest, pumice plains, and lava tubes are found off the side trails. This four night 30 mile loop with a summit accent is classified as difficult. We will also spend a couple of days exploring around the Columbia River gorge area. Cost exclusive of air fare and meals should be around \$300. Limit 6. Contact Dale Stevens at dale_stevens9@yahoo.com or 281-719-7459. ☺



Cannon Beach, Oregon

National Weather Service, Portland Photo

Oregon Coast

OREGON COAST

July 11- 19, 2009

This trip will be car camping with a variety of day hikes exploring the Oregon coast from Newport north to Astoria. We will also visit the Columbia River Gorge and Mt. Hood.

The Oregon coast is noted for its scenic beaches, headlands, and sea stacks, and features a variety of state parks, historic lighthouses, and the Oregon Coast Trail. Some locations on our itinerary are Ecola State Park, Cannon Beach, Cape Falcon, Cape Lookout, and the Nature Conservancy's Preserve at Cascade Head. We will also have the opportunity to visit several historical sites related to the Lewis & Clark expedition, including Cape Disappointment and Fort Clatsop.

We will fly to Portland and travel by mini-van, camping at state parks along the Oregon coast and Columbia River Gorge. For more information, contact Frank Blake, at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896, or Lorraine Gibson, at raineygib@aol.com or 281-384-4104. ☺

The General Motors Volt is a plug-in electric automobile currently planned for introduction in 2010. Production of 1 million of these per year will require 16 new lithium-ion battery plants, at a cost of about \$5 billion. The U. S. has about 300 million automobiles.

From IEEE Spectrum, v. 46, no. 3 (March, 2009). ☺

TRIPS AND LOCAL OUTINGS

See the outings calendar at our website <http://houston.sierraclub.org> for possible additions to schedule. Click **Calendar**, then scroll down to **Quick Links**.

NOTICES

Sierra Club is a California non profit corporation, with "California Seller of Travel" registration number: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms>, or contact the Outings Department at the national Sierra Club office at (415)-977-5528 for a printed version. 🌐

CLEAR LAKE WALKERS

Every Saturday morning at 7:30, rain or shine

A group of Sierra Club members and friends in the Bay Area meet weekly for a three-mile walk, conversation and breakfast. Much of the walk is along the water and we often see a variety of shore birds.

Where: Nassau Bay, meeting in the Dollar Store parking lot across from the Post Office.
Contact: Betty Armstrong at 281 333 5693.

Editor's note: The Clear Lake Walkers have been active for 17 years. 🌐

Two trips to the Pacific Northwest!

What's that?

So?

And?

I thought there were only a few peaks.

What about the Olympic Mountains.

Where you can see the effects of plate tectonics!

As you know, the outer part of the earth is a bunch of continental plates that move around...

...and in the Pacific Northwest the Juan de Fuca plate is moving under the North American plate...

...and it gets heated so mantle rocks above it get melted into magma that rises to the surface, appearing as lava that forms the thousands of volcanic peaks in the Cascad Range.

Yes, only a few major peaks, but lots of minor ones. Mount St. Helens (what's left of it) is one of the major ones.

That's a little different. They were formed as volcanic seamounts were scraped off the plate moving under the North American plate.



Editorial

SHNF, LSHT, AND MOUNTAIN BIKES

The open letters on page 4 seem to cry out for background information, some of which this summary provides. Most of this information is available on The Internet. The U. S. Forest Service (FS) web site for the Sam Houston National Forest (SHNF) describes the Lone Star Hiking Trail (LSHT) and the Multiple Use Trail (MUT), but not the mountain biking trail. For those, see the GHORBA (Greater Houston Off Road Biking Association) web site. I would give web URLs for these, but it's easy to use your favorite web search engine (Google?) to get to them, and some tend to be very long.

Briefly, there are three kinds of trails in the SHNF: trails for foot traffic only (not including livestock, except dogs on leashes), herein called "hiking trails;" trails for several uses, not including motorized vehicles, herein called "mountain biking trails;" and trails for multiple uses including certain motorized vehicles, including ATVs and motorcycles, herein called "multiple use trails," the term used by the FS. The most significant hiking trail in SHNF is the LSHT. Two mountain biking trails of interest are the one at Double Lake Recreational Area (which I will refer to as DLMBT) near Coldspring, Texas, and the one at Huntsville State Park (HSPMBT). SHNF has a multiple use trail system near Lake Conroe.

The LSHT was established about 40 years ago through cooperation between the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the FS. For more on its history, see the article "Save the LSHT" by Brandt Mannchen in the February, 2009 issue of the Bayou Banner (available on our web site: <http://houston.sierraclub.org>: click "News/Bayou Banner"). It is 129 miles long, stretching from near Richards, Texas west of Lake Conroe to its east terminus at Winter's Bayou Scenic Area near Cleveland, Texas. In the middle is 38-mile piece running between Huntsville State Park and Double Lake Recreation Area.

The HSPMBT has 21 miles of trails with trail designations for hiking, biking, and horseback riding (but not for motorized vehicles). The trail is within the park boundaries, so Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is the managing entity.

The DLMBT is 8.9 miles of trails designated and managed for bicycles. This is a relatively open trail with few obstacles. The high use and relatively

higher speeds has led to a preferred, but not mandatory, direction of travel. In the SHNF, it is the only non-motorized trail that is open to bicycles.

The multiple use trail system has 85 miles of trails. The trails are open to but seldom used for other than motorized travel.

GHORBA is an organization which aggressively promotes, develops, and maintains mountain biking trails. According to its web site, it is proud of the fact that it was formed to reestablish mountain biking trails in Houston's Memorial Park after mountain bikes were banned because of the environmental damage they were causing. It promotes mountain biking, mountain biking safety, trail etiquette, and protection of the environment. Some casual riders on Houston's hike/bike trails would learn much by looking at the GHORBA website. It also has semiannual races on DLMBT and HSPMBT. For more information, see its web site.

The FS has stated that the SHNF trail system will not be upgraded until there is a master plan for it, and it has placed the burden of preparing such a plan on the trail users. At an open meeting of users at the headquarters of SHNF on February 23, 2009, GHORBA presented its draft "Sam Houston National Forest Trail System Master Plan for Mountain Biking." This plan is not yet on GHORBA's web site, but some of the information herein was obtained from the draft.

The GHORBA plan includes the following: 1. increasing the DLMBT to 30 to 40 miles; 2. expanding the HSPMBT to include trails in adjacent SHNF lands; 3. a non-motorized trail system near the multiple use trail system. 4. linking the Double Lake Recreation Area (DLRA) in the east with the Stubblefield Recreation Area (SRA) in the west with a shared-use, non-motorized trail. In total, hundreds of miles of trails.

It is item 4 that most worries Sierra Club members. The trail that now connects DLRA with SRA is the LSHT. That connection is a main part -- the backbone, essentially -- of the LSHT. GHORBA has been saying that it would like that to be the shared-use connection.

The Sierra Club needs help from all users of the LSHT. Although there were many people at the February 23 open meeting, many users were not represented, including horseback riders, photographers, birders, trail runners, master naturalists, Boy and Girl Scouts, geocachers, and paddlers. Organizations involving such users should get involved. One way is to contact Brant Mannchen, Chair of the Forestry and Big Thicket Subcommittee (see page 8 for contact information). 🌐

Editor's Comments

LETTERS ABOUT THE LONE STAR HIKING TRAIL

Two letters appear on this page. The first one ("Letter from GHORBA") is a letter from GHORBA (Greater Houston Off-Road Biking Association), received as email by the Houston Sierra Club (HSC) on February 8, 2009. It relates to the article "Save the Lone Star Hiking Trail – Fact Sheet and Sample Letter" in the February 2009 Bayou and a December 22, 2008 HSC letter to GHORBA. The second one ("The Houston Sierra Club's Reply") is a Houston Sierra Club response. See the "SHNF, LSHT, and Mountain Bikes" on page 3 for background information. -Ed.

LETTER FROM GHORBA

We are disappointed to note the recent article in the Bayou Banner and also included on the HSC website expressing the Sierra Club's opposition to aspects of the Master Plan which were presented in a meeting in December, 2008. We are also disappointed with the letter dated 22 December 2008, written on behalf of the Sierra Club by Brandt Mannchen, which expresses opposition to almost everything that we have proposed, and do, in the Sam Houston National Forest.

Many of our members, myself included, are also members of the Sierra Club and naturally, we do not agree with Brandt's article. A number of members have approached us wanting to write letters of support for the Master Plan. However, for the moment, we are not encouraging anyone to bombard the FS with letters - this is not the time for public comment and in the end it will be an executive decision by the FS management and not a popular vote. We do feel that the opinion expressed by Brandt does not necessarily reflect the majority view of the Houston Sierra Club membership, even if the Executive Committee has approved. Accordingly, we would like the opportunity to express a counter point to the article by Brandt through the Sierra Club media.

Meanwhile, we are progressing with the expansion of Double Lake Trail and continue with preparation of the Master Plan, as required by the Forest Service. Note that the final version of the Master Plan will recognize the strong feelings held by long time users of the Lone Star Trail, and the language will be conciliatory with respect to options for establishing bicycle access on any connector trail between the proposed loop systems.

In the end it will be the Forest Service who will decide on this matter.

It is our earnest desire to work cooperatively with the Sierra Club and any other groups with interests in our trails and our environment. We have always succeeded in our trail advocacy by reaching agreement with park managers and other user groups. Conflicts over trail access and management are generally destructive to the goals of either side.

We look forward to working positively and cooperatively with the HSC and all other stakeholders in the Sam Houston National Forest, as we are doing in so many other places in the Greater Houston area. 🌍

THE HOUSTON SIERRA CLUB'S REPLY

The Sierra Club acknowledges that GHORBA is disappointed that the Sierra Club informed its membership and requested action to protect the Lone Star Hiking Trail (LSHT) via the Bayou Banner article, and on December 22 provided comments about the proposed mountain bike master plan submitted by GHORBA to the U.S. Forest Service (FS).

We disagree with GHORBA's assertion that the Sierra Club's December 22 letter "expresses opposition to almost everything that we have proposed, and do, in the Sam Houston National Forest."

The Houston Sierra Club Executive Committee, on July 27, 2006, approved the following resolution about the LSHT:

"The position of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club (HSC) is that the Lone Star Hiking Trail (LSHT) should remain a long distance, cross country, backcountry, low impact, hiking trail in Sam Houston National Forest. The LSHT, the longest continuous hiking trail in the State of Texas, can also be used for birding, nature photography, wildlife observation, nature study, environmental education, tree identification, and other compatible recreational and educational pursuits. Mountain bikes, horses, and motorized vehicles are inappropriate with the intent of the LSHT and incompatible for use on the LSHT.

The HSC supports working with the U.S. Forest Service, organizations and individuals, including mountain bikers and horseback riders, to determine if a separate non-motorized system of trails can be constructed, operated, and maintained in Sam Houston National Forest in an environmentally sound manner."

The Sierra Club, for the past two years, has on numerous occasions requested that GHORBA work with it to find a way to link the Double Lake Mountain Bike Trail (DLMBT) to Huntsville State Park without using the LSHT. The Sierra Club has been told that because the LSHT currently exists and because GHORBA does not want to wait on the FS, GHORBA wants to use the LSHT as a mountain bike trail. The Sierra Club opposes turning the LSHT into a mountain bike trail.

In 2007 the Sierra Club worked cooperatively with GHORBA to expand the current DLMBT to include two new loops. The Sierra Club has agreed to work with GHORBA on a large further expansion of the DLMBT.

The article and letter that GHORBA questions, supports the Sierra Club statement mentioned above and the Sierra Club reiterates its support for that position. The article, letter, and position statement against turning the LSHT into a mountain bike trail express the Houston Sierra Club view and not that of one individual. For over 40 years — and currently — our membership has been supportive of our efforts to conceive, receive approval for, construct, maintain, and improve the LSHT as a long-distance wilderness hiking trail.

The Sierra Club believes that use of the LSHT by mountain bikes will result in degraded outdoor experiences by hikers. The Sierra Club's vision of the LSHT is as a single travel mode (by foot: to walk, hike, or run), but one that has multiple uses including birding, environmental education, nature study, tree identification, photography, appreciation of solitude, enjoyment of quiet and natural sounds, spiritual contemplation, backpacking, camping, Forest Watch activities, wildlife observation, and similar low impact, compatible, non-motorized and non-mechanized uses. The LSHT serves those who want to hike for a day, stay for a weekend, or through-hike over a number of days or weeks.

The Sierra Club agrees that it wants to work cooperatively with GHORBA and others in Sam Houston National Forest. The Sierra Club will continue to do so in the future, as we have in the past. But the Sierra Club does not support turning the LSHT into a trail for mountain bikes. The Sierra Club will continue our maintenance, protection, and improvement of the LSHT so that it will remain the nationally important and recognized long-distance wilderness trail that it is.

Executive Committee
Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club 🌍

FEATURES



Mt. St. Helens *before* it blew its top.

Photo by courtesy of NOAA.

I'm about to do my spring cleaning.

Good, but don't just throw out those things you are getting rid of -- take them to the Yard Sale.

Ok. I have an old stereo system and an old computer.

Wait a minute! Those need to go to a recycling center.

Why?

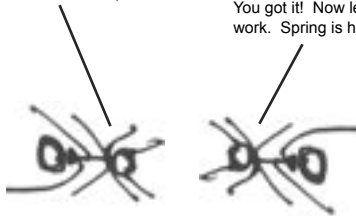
Because most people won't buy that kind of stuff at a yard sale.

Oh, ok.

You can take old computers to Techs and Trainers, a company that uses them to train people for jobs. Some of the people trained have disabilities.

I see. That helps in several ways: training people, reusing parts, reducing heavy metals in land fills, etc.

You got it! Now let's get to work. Spring is here!



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

1. Explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth.
2. Practice and promote responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources.
3. Educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.
4. Use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.



The ant seen on these pages is the fictitious *Sieromeyrmex houstonensis*, drawn for and named after the Houston Sierra Club by world-famous biologist E. O. Wilson.

ANNUAL YARD SALE

Saturday, May 16, 2009

Plan on some spring cleaning? Keep in mind the Sierra Club yard sale, and you can 'recycle' those unneeded items. The sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 16, and will take place at "Corazon - Global Fair Trade", 2318 Waugh (at the corner with Fairview). We will gladly accept most saleable items, including clothing, knickknacks, furniture, etc. We also need help the day of the sale, particularly for the morning set up and the afternoon knock-down. To donate items, either bring them to the General Meeting on May 14, or you may drop off items at Corazon (713-526-6591), during the week immediately prior to the sale (but NOT before May 9).

Please bag or box up smaller items. Large objects such as furniture would be best delivered to the site on the morning of the sale. If you have workable appliances, electronics, etc. to donate, securely attach an index card that describes the condition of the item, and any information a potential buyer would need to know. This is important! If we don't know the workability of an item, we are forced to sell it for far less than its potential value. Please DO NOT BRING broken or obsolete computers, computer peripherals, or non-working electronics. Those items should go directly to an e-waste recycling facility.

This event is one of the Houston Group's annual fundraising efforts. All proceeds go to support the Houston Group and its local conservation and educational programs. To volunteer, contact Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896. 🌍

STATE PARK RESERVATIONS

Want to make a reservation for a Texas State Park? Call 512/389-8900 instead of using the Internet. You can reserve more than one campsite at a time. .

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

The Houston Sierra Club gets a small part of your membership renewal fee (the rest of it is used by the National Sierra Club and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club). The amount passed to the Houston Sierra Club is more if you use a credit card and renew on line through our website than if you mail a check.

Advertisement



Seabrook Island Waterview--Overlooking Wetlands, on a cul de sac, this new custom home by Masterpiece Custom Homes is a kaleidoscope of light, space and line. Courtyard entry - 2 bedrooms down- Outdoor kitchen - Exercise Room - Wonderful floor plan with top of the line kitchen. MLS#6436161

JANICE OWENS

281-333-JANO DIRECT

PRUDENTIAL GARY GREENE

281-639-7702 CELL

17250 EL CAMINO REAL

281-486-9201 FAX

HOUSTON, TX 77058

KROGER NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR PROGRAM

If you shop at Kroger you can help support the Houston Sierra Club financially by linking your Kroger Card to support the Houston Group. This year Kroger re-organized their community giving process, and to participate in the new program shoppers need to get the Houston Sierra Club 'bar code' and have that scanned and linked to their Kroger c+ard. This can reportedly be done by any Kroger cashier in a check out line.

You can obtain a copy of the instructions and the Houston Sierra Club bar code (in a PDF file) by contacting Frank Blake, frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896; or Lorraine Gibson, raineygib@aol.com or 713-436-1833.



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

BAYOU BANNER

Newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club

Volume 33, No. 2

<http://houston.sierraclub.org>

March, 2009

The Bayou Banner is the newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. It is published 10 times a year by the Houston Sierra Club.

Circulation is 5,000 issues that are mailed to members and distributed through various outlets.

EDITOR: George Batten

Email: BayouBanner@gmail.com

website: <http://houston.sierraclub.org>

Opinions stated are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Houston Sierra Club.

Copyright © 2008, Houston Sierra Club. All rights reserved.

Reprinting in whole or part is expressly forbidden, except by written permission of the publisher.

The Sierra Club — Houston Group • P.O. Box 3021 • Houston, TX 77253-3021

A NEW TRAIL IN TOWN

Communicated by John Berlinghoff

If you are a bike rider, there is a fabulous new trail. It connects the trails along Brays Bayou to the historic 2nd ward, north of I-45. Now you can go all the way from near the Brown Convention Center to cross Brays Bayou on a bridge built just for the trail. I will be leading a trip on Sunday, April 26 [see page 2] leaving from the Hermann Park Rose Garden at 9:00 that will explore this new trail. See the outings section for more info. John Berlinghoff: johnb@hal-pc.org

The following article is from Dan Raine, City of Houston Bicyclist-Pedestrian Coordinator.

The Columbia Tap Trail is a Rails-to-Trials conversion project which consists of over 4 miles of a 10-foot wide, concrete, multi-use hike and bike trail along the old Columbia Tap railroad. The trail corridor extends from Dixie Drive past Polk Street and into downtown, along the former Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way creating a greenway corridor in the Third Ward and downtown area. The project is bound by Dowling Street on the west and Scott Street on the east. The trail is located in Key Map grids 493 V,Y & Z and 533 C, F & G.

Once completed, the trail will connect the neighborhoods along the tap with the bikeway network's existing designated Polk bike lanes, McGowan and Alabama bike routes, Brays Bayou Trail, and the Dixie bike route which includes a bicycle and pedestrian bridge across Highway 288.

These bikeways add east and west connections to the greenway adding to its transportation benefits. The trail offers residents and visitors improved mobility and connectivity to major employment centers; community centers; churches; art studios in the warehouse district; schools such as Debakey High School; and universities such as Texas Southern University and University of Houston; recreational facilities like Hermann Park and McGregor Park; the Houston Zoo; the Museum District; as well as the Texas Medical Center and Minute Maid Park.

The greenway also includes pedestrian crossings at intersections, landscaping with native trees and standard lighting throughout the public trail corridor.

The grand opening will be on March 7 at TSU. For more info see the following link http://documents.publicworks.houstontx.gov/documents/divisions/planning/bikeway/columbiatap_ribboncutting.pdf

Dan Raine AICP LCI
(713) 837-0136 office ☎

SAN JACINTO RIVER NEEDS HELP for the Sand and Gravel Mining Water Pollution Control Bill

by Brandt Mannchen

Texas State Senator Tommy Williams has introduced Senate Bill (SB) 800 which creates a pilot program to control water pollution from sand/gravel mining operations on the San Jacinto River (East and West Forks) and Spring Creek. The San Jacinto River is the original Big Thicket stream and feeds 12,000 acre Lake Houston, the City of Houston's main surface water drinking supply lake.

SB 800 requires that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), from 2009 through 2029, operate a pilot program that regulates sand/gravel mining in designated water quality protection areas; prepares performance criteria and general permits for these operations; sets-up closure requirements to reduce water pollution once sand/gravel mining has ceased; has financial responsibility requirements; and implements a plan of action for restoration of the area that was mined.

This water quality issue is particularly important for fish, whose gills and breeding sites are clogged by dirty water (turbidity and bacteria), and also for human health. Recent research suggests that blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) emit cyanotoxins that may be chronically harmful to humans. Blue-green algae may be enhanced due to nutrients that come from or adhere to water pollution generated by sand/gravel mining.

In addition, due to poor water quality in Lake Houston, the City of Houston has had to spend millions of dollars to keep our water clean from taste and odor problems at our Northeast Water Purification Plant. These taste and odor problems have been traced to, in part, blue-green algae.

Please write or email your state senator and ask him/her to support clean water and co-sponsor SB 800 (Texas Senate, P.O. Box 12068, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711, for email it is: first name.last name@senate.state.tx.us). Write or email Senator Tommy Williams and thank him for introducing SB 800 (tommy.williams@senate.state.tx.us).

For more information contact Brandt Mannchen at 713-664-5962 or brandtshnfbt@juno.com. ☎

OUTINGS NOTICES

If you are interested in getting reminder notices of the bike rides and other outings please email John Berlinghoff at johnb@hal-pc.org. ☎

ACRONYMS

Sometimes the acronyms and abbreviations appearing in the Bayou Banner seem overwhelming, so this list is included to help our readers (and the editor). -Ed.

Specific to this Banner issue

| | |
|--------|---|
| DCNF | Davy Crocket National Forest |
| DLMBT | Double Lake Mountain Bike Trail |
| DURA | Double Lake Recreation Area |
| HSPMBT | Huntsville State Park Mountain Bike Trail |
| SB | Senate Bill |
| SRA | Stubblefield Recreation Area |
| TCA | Texas Conservation Alliance |

General

| | |
|-------|---|
| ExCom | Executive Committee |
| FS | U. S. Forest Service |
| HSC | Houston Sierra Club |
| LSHT | Lone Star Hiking Trail |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| PDF | Portable Document Format (computer file) |
| SHNF | Sam Houston National Forest |
| TCEQ | Texas Commission on Environmental Quality |
| TPWD | Texas Parks and Wildlife Department |
| TTC | Trans-Texas Corridor |
| TxDOT | Texas Department of Transportation ☎ |

WANT BREAKING NEWS?

Check our website:
<http://houston.sierraclub.org/>.

Since the print copy of the Banner takes several weeks from editorial deadline to members' mail boxes, some late-planned activities appear only on the web site.

JOIN THE SIERRA CLUB

Just go to our web site
<http://Houston.sierraclub.org/>
and click on
Join or Give/Membership Benefits

For a limited time:

Only \$25
Get a FREE rucksack
See it online

Part of your payment
comes back to support the
Houston Sierra Club

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPIRITUAL SYMBOLS FOR PEACE Saturday, April 4, 2009

Sierra Club members are invited to a fund-raising art exhibit for the Houston Peace and Justice Coalition, of which the Houston Sierra Club is a member. The exhibit, entitled *Spiritual Symbols for Peace*, will be on display at Las Manos Mágicas Gallery, 4819 Blossom Street, from Friday April 3 through Saturday May 16. It will include work by more than a dozen artists in a variety of media.

The opening reception for the exhibit will be Sat. April 4, from 1 to 4 PM. Everyone is invited. One third of the proceeds from sale of works in the show will be donated to HPJC to further their work such as the *Environmental Injustice in Texas* Conference held this March which featured Sierra Club speakers Evelyn Merz and Cyrus Reed.

For more info, contact Madeleine Crozat-Williams, Las Manos Mágicas Gallery, 4819 Blossom at Durham, 713 802-2530, magicas@pdq.net.

“BOOMING ‘N BLOOMING” ATTWATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE April 4-5, 2009

This will be the 15th Annual Prairie Chicken Festival out at the Refuge. A variety of tours will be offered during the two day event, including van tours, bird walking tours, native plant walking tours, and early morning tours to view the prairie chickens. These tours will be offered on both Saturday and Sunday, and all tours depart from the Refuge Headquarters/ Visitor Center. For tour schedule visit the website by searching for “Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR”, or phone the Refuge office at 979-234-3021.

The Refuge protects over 10,000 acres of endangered coastal prairie habitat. Attractions for visitors are the five mile auto tour route, two walking trails, and a Visitor Center with bird collection mounts and videos of the Attwater's prairie chickens. The Refuge is located west of Houston, a little past Sealy, and south of I-10. Driving directions are available at the Refuge website.

MIGRATION CELEBRATION SAN BERNARD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Saturday-Sunday, April 18-19, 2009

The 15th Annual Migration Celebration will take place at San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge on the weekend following Easter. Free Admission. This family oriented event includes hands-on activities for kids, guided van tours of the Refuge, animal tracks, talks, birds of prey presentations, and other exciting events.

For more information on activities, directions and schedule of events, visit the Friends of Brazoria Refuges web site at www.refugefriends.org or call 866-403-5829.

TEXAS NATURE PROJECT GALA Saturday, May 2, 2009, 7:00 PM

Texas Nature Project will have a Texas Tea Gala at the Junior League of Houston Tea Room, 1811 Briar Oaks Lane. The gala will feature creative writing teacher Dr. Marsha Recknagel, author of *If Nights Could Talk* and will also include a silent auction.

Texas Nature Project is a Texas 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit organization partnering with universities across the state to offer students place-based environmental education, and is home to the state's largest environmental laboratory for college students.

For further information contact Sherra Theisen, CEO, theisensn@aol.com or visit the Texas Nature Project website.

MARYSEE PRAIRIE WORK DAYS First Saturdays during spring, April 4, May 2

The Marysee Prairie is one of the last remnants of tallgrass prairie in the Big Thicket region. Come assist the Big Thicket Association in this ongoing effort to revive and maintain the native grasses and wildflowers on this site near Batson, Texas. Work tasks vary by month, but usually involve removal of tallow seedlings, and controlling the regrowth of woody species. Tools and gloves provided. For more info, contact Susan Schinke at sruth@consolidated.net or 936-829-5204, or Frank Blake at frankblake@juno.com or 713-528-2896.

GREEN BUILDING EXPO RELIANT PARK April 17-19, 2009

Free & Open to the Public

Gulf Coast Green and the City of Houston will present the second Sustainable Energy and Green Building Consumer Expo featuring certified green products and building materials, renewable energy, energy efficiency tips, and green vehicles. It will be free and open to the public on April 17th (Friday) from 1:00-4:00 and April 18/19 (Saturday and Sunday) from 10:00-5:00, at Reliant Park.

The Expo will feature five themes showcasing product and retail booths, government and non-profit initiatives, and a full roster of educational presentations running throughout the two-day event. The themes - green building, energy efficiency, renewable energy, alternative transportation, and Youth Green Zone - will address strategies and technologies critical to Houston's and the Gulf Coast region's future.

An innovative set of Green Guidelines will govern the types of products and services exhibited at the event. For more information visit the website at www.gulfcoastgreen.org

Gulf Coast Green is the leading green building conference on the Texas Gulf Coast. A two-day green building symposium targeted to design and construction professionals - Gulf Coast Green: Innovations in Building for Hot and Humid Climates - will immediately precede the consumer Expo.

30TH ANNUAL POW WOW Davy Crockett National Forest Saturday, April 25, 2009

This month's Forest Walk will be to celebrate the 30th Annual Wilderness Pow Wow in Davy Crockett National Forest (DCNF) as presented by the Texas Conservation Alliance (TCA).

Headquarters of the Pow Wow is Ratcliff Lake Recreation Area in DCNF. You can enjoy a Neches River canoe trip, short or long morning or afternoon guided walks in Big Slough Wilderness or other areas in DCNF, a 3 pm afternoon program, and enjoyment and fun in company of many like-minded forest lovers.

For information about the Neches River canoe trip (cost \$15) contact TCA at 902-592-0909 or alliance@tcateexas.org by April 21st. Entrance to Ratcliff Lake Recreation Area is \$3/car for parking for the day. Camping is on a first come, first served basis. If you want to stay overnight the cost is \$10/non-electrical campsite and \$15/electrical reserved campsite (call 877-441-6777 for a reservation).

If you would like to carpool to the Pow Wow for the day call Brandt at 713-664-5962. It is about a 2 1/2 hour drive to DCNF so we will have to leave early on Saturday morning to arrive at the Pow Wow in time for the hikes. For a map and directions to DCNF go the following website: <http://www.tcateexas.org> (click “Hot Topics”).

INFORMATION FOR ADVERTISERS

The Bayou Banner is the newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club (also known as the Houston Sierra Club). It is published 10 times per year, with single issues for July-August and December-January. All advertising must be compatible with the mission of the Sierra Club, and it must be approved by the Executive Committee of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. The circulation is over 5,000 per issue.

Discounts are applied only if an order for all issues is made in advance. Back page and preferred pages may not be available in some issues.

Contact George Batten, Editor:
BayouBanner@lonestar.sierraclub.org
713-665-1505

Rate Schedule

| | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| 1/3 page | \$160.00 per issue |
| 1/4 page | \$125.00 “ “ |
| 1/8 page | \$ 75.00 “ “ |
| 1/18 page | \$ 45.00 “ “ |

(1/18 page is business card size)

Discounts

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| 2 issues | 3% |
| 3 issues | 5% |
| 4 issues | 6% |
| 6 issues | 10% |
| 10 issues | 15% |

Additional

| | |
|---|------|
| Back page (if available) | +50% |
| Preferred page (other than front or back page) | +25% |

WILDERNESS FIRST AID CLASS Saturday and Sunday, June 13 and 14, 2009 Monday and Tuesday, June 15 and 16, 2009

Houston Sierra Club is hosting two two-day Wilderness First Aid classes, one on a weekend, the other on weekdays. Course completion provides wilderness first aid certification.

Location: Lake Houston State Park. Cost: \$150.

If you are interested, please contact Angie Langolf at 713-467-6875 or email on the.go@sbcglobal.net.

SEMIANNUAL BEACH CLEANUP Saturday, April 25, 2009

The Houston Sierra Club normally participates in the semiannual beach clean up at Crystal Beach on the Bolivar Peninsula. But this area was devastated by Hurricane Ike last fall, and clean up plans at this location had not yet been announced at press time.

If we are able to schedule a clean up at Crystal Beach or an alternate site, that information will be posted to the Houston Sierra Club website in April.

Some activities shown on this page are not managed by the Houston Sierra Club.

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

MONTHLY MEETINGS

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING:

Second Thursday monthly in Pecore Hall of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 West Alabama. Enter parking lot from Woodhead. The meeting opens at 7:00 PM, and the program starts at 7:30 PM. Everyone is welcome.

Before 7:00 PM, left turns are not allowed at Woodhead.

If you are going west on W. Alabama, turn right at Dunlay, then left to Marshall, then left to Woodhead.

CONSERVATION:

Third Tuesday monthly, 7:00 PM. Call for new location. Contact Evelyn Merz, 713-644-8228, elmerz @ hal-pc.org.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Fourth Thursday monthly, 7:00 PM, Houston Clayton Library, 5300 Caroline. Contact Jim Williams at ezz @ pdq.net.

INNER CITY OUTINGS (ICO):

Normally the second Tuesday every month, 7:00 PM, at a place to be determined. Please contact Angie Langolf at 713-467-6875 or on.the.go@sbcglobal.net for more information.

OUTINGS:

Usually the third Monday of the month, 7:00 PM, at the Whole Foods store on Bellaire near Wesleyan. Help us plan regional day outings, weekend trips, and air/bus trips to exciting outdoor destinations across the country. Please call to confirm meeting date. Frank Blake, 713-528-2896, frankblake@juno.com.

AIR QUALITY

The Air Quality Subcommittee will meet on the third Wednesday of each month, 7:30 pm, at 5431 Carew.

RECYCLING RESOURCES

CITY OF HOUSTON RECYCLING

The City of Houston has several drop off sites (note: some are specialized for certain items), and provides curbside recycling in many neighborhoods. Principal drop off locations are the Westpark Consumer Recycling Center at 5900 Westpark, and the self serve site at 3602 Center Street in the Heights. For other locations and a complete list of recyclable items, consult the City's recycling web page. One can also phone the City's 311 hotline with recycling questions, or connect to

www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/recycling.html

BELLAIRE, TX RECYCLING CENTER

4402 Edith, Bellaire Tx 77401

Open for drop offs: 8am-5pm, 7 days a week Accepts a good range of items, consult web page for details: www.ci.bellaire.tx.us/index.asp?SID=289.

BELLAIRE RECYCLING COMMITTEE

This group has a useful website, with a variety of info on recycling activities in the Houston area. Committee phone line is 713-662-8173. bellairerecycles.org/index.html.

HUNTSVILLE

The City of Huntsville's recycling facility — north of town on the I-45 access road — takes cardboard, paper, tin and aluminum cans, glass, used oil, plastics, and has a warehouse for reusable donated construction materials (doors, windows, tile, wood etc). One employee is available Monday-Friday to help you unload; it is self-service on Saturday. The web site is http://www.huntsvilletx.gov/residents/trash_and_recycling/recycling.asp.

PEARLAND RECYCLING CENTER

5800 Magnolia Road in Pearland, Texas, 77584, 281-489-2795. Takes most recyclable wastes: PC's, TV's, plastics, bottles, cans, paper, etc.

WEST UNIVERSITY RECYCLING CENTER

5004 Dincans (just south of Westpark near Kirby)

Open for drop offs 24/7; www.westu.org.

More available at <http://www.h-gac.com/>, especially at <http://www.h-gac.com/community/waste/resources/>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2009

- 9 General Meeting
NEW DATE AND LOCATION!! See Page 1.
8 Backpacking Class: Classroom
18-19 Backpacking Class: Outing

May 2009

- 14 General Meeting
16 Annual Yard Sale

June 2009

- 11 General Meeting

Houston Sierra Club E-MAIL ALERT LIST

Subscribe to the Houston Sierra Club's E-mail alert list to get timely alerts on Houston area conservation issues, and occasional announcements of interest to Houston Sierra Club members. (*Whenever you want to drop from the list it is easy to unsubscribe yourself—those instructions will be included.*)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Send FROM the E-mail address to which you want to direct the messages. Subscribe by sending to:

LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG

Subject: [this line may be left blank]
Message Body:
SUBSCRIBE
LONESTAR-HOUSTON-ANNOUNCE
YourFirstName YourLastName

(Insert YOUR name in place of "YourFirstName YourLastName")

That's it. You will receive confirmation messages. from the listserve. Thanks for your interest. If you have any difficulty, contact frankblake@juno.com.

The Bayou Banner is the newsletter of the Houston Regional Group of the Sierra Club. It is published 10 times a year, with single issues for July-August and December-January. Circulation is 5500 issues that are mailed to members and distributed through various outlets.

EDITOR: George Batten
email: BayouBanner@gmail.com

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Telephone 415-977-5633 or send address changes to Sierra Club Membership, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322, or via email to address.changes@sierraclub.org.

Include both old and new addresses and allow 6 weeks for delivery of the first issue. Please DO NOT CONTACT THE EDITOR FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

SUBMISSIONS: The deadline to submit articles is the last Thursday of the second month before the month in which the articles are to run. All submissions must have the author's name, and contact information (including phone number) even though it will not be printed. Articles may be edited for clarity, accuracy, and space considerations. Opinions stated are those of the author and not necessarily that of the Houston Sierra Club. Send articles via email to BayouBanner@gmail.com; if sent as attachments, the preferred format is RTF. Preferred formats for pictures are PDF, JPEG, and TIF (300 dpi or greater resolution). No MS Publisher (PUB) files, please.

HOUSTON REGIONAL GROUP 713-895-9309 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Jim Williams | ezz @ pdq.net |
| (Chair and Lone Star Chapter Delegate) | |
| George Batten | BayouBanner @ gmail.com |
| (Vice-chair and Bayou Banner Editor) | |
| Lorraine Gibson (Treasurer) | raineygib @ aol.com |
| John Sims (Secretary) | JohnSimsJr @ sbcglobal.net |
| Tom Ivy | TomIvy @ swbell.net |
| (Alternate Lone Star Chapter Delegate) | |
| Frank Blake | frankblake @ juno.com |
| Ronald Hayden | rhayden7 @ comcast.net |
| Evelyn Merz | elmerz @ hal-pc.org |
| Doug Peterson | dougpeterson @ earthlink.net |

REGIONAL GROUP LEADERSHIP

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Banner Editor | George Batten | BayouBanner @ gmail.com |
| Beach Cleanup | Rita Davis | 281-486-4462 |
| Conservation | Evelyn Merz | elmerz @ hal-pc.org 713-644-8228 |
| Conservation Subcommittees | | |
| Air Quality | Brandt Mannchen | 713-664-5962 |
| Coastal Issues | Page Williams | page.williams @ gmail.com |
| Energy and Global Warming | Ronald Hayden | rhayden7 @ comcast.net |
| Forestry and Big Thicket | Brandt Mannchen | 713-664-5962 brandtshnft@juno.com |
| Recycling | Frank Blake | frankblake @ juno.com |
| Watershed | Evelyn Merz | elmerz @ hal-pc.org 713-644-8228 |
| Classes | Angie Langolf | on.the.go@sbcglobal.net 713-467-6875 |
| Hospitality | Carol Lee | 713-523-2294 |
| Inner City Outings | Angie Langolf | on.the.go@sbcglobal.net 713-467-6875 |
| Lone Star Chapter Delegate | Jim Williams | ezz @ pdq.net |
| Membership | Arlene Diehl | arlenediehl @ peoplepc.com |
| Outings | Frank Blake | frankblake @ juno.com |
| Political | Doug Peterson | dougpeterson @ earthlink.net |
| Programs | Tom Douglas | 713-869-6026 |
| Webmaster | houston.webmaster @ lonestar.sierraclub.org | |

See the Bayou Banner on the club website:
<http://houston.sierraclub.org/news/index.htm#banner>