

Environmental Exchange

A publication of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition

January 2003
Newsletter &
Calendar

The Houston-Galveston area's most comprehensive listing of environmental activities and events.

NAACP fights to localize environmental justice

by Erika McDonald

Harris County is home to a significant portion of the nation's oil refining and petrochemical industries – a large part of it located in the county's eastside. Also located in the eastside are some of the county's poorest neighborhoods.

Gene Collins, chair of the environmental justice committee of the NAACP Texas chapter, said that in Houston, low-income communities and communities of color bear a disproportionate amount of the burden from environmental problems like air and water pollution and inadequate waste management.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is pursuing legislation in several states, including Texas, to require all state agencies that play a role in evaluating development permits to consider issues of social impact in their environmental assessments.

An executive order signed in 1994 by then-president Bill Clinton required all federal agencies to consider the effects on minority and low-income communities when evaluating environmental impacts. Subsequently, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee was formed to make recommendations to the Environmental Protection Agency's administrator on federal environmental justice efforts.

Collins said that it makes sense to impose the same requirements at the state level because state agencies administer federal environmental programs and permitting processes for new development. Currently, no state agency is required to include an environmental justice component in their permitting process.

As a result, the needs of some communities get ignored, according to Collins. "The people who feel the social impacts of envi-

ronmental pollution the most are the people who have the least amount of resources to fight," he said.

Warren Arthur, an administrator with the EPA office of environmental justice, agreed that the executive order has little impact at the state level. He said that legislation would be a necessary step in improving the

Neighborhood crushes concrete plant in court

by Erika McDonald

A four-year battle ended in victory for residents of the Sunnyside neighborhood who took on Southern Crushed Concrete, which planned to move its facilities there.

In November, the company withdrew a permit application that was approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (then TNRCC) in 1999 to relocate its concrete crushing plant to the 1500 block of Alameda.

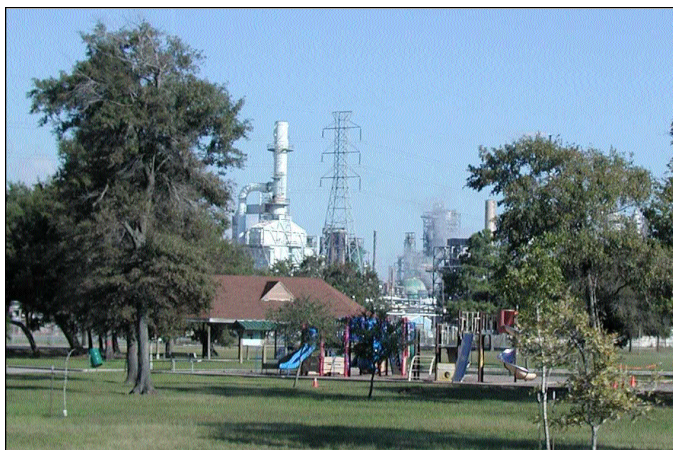
Martina Cartwright, who represented the residents, is a lawyer with the Environmental Justice Clinic at the Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law, which assists environmentally impacted low-to-moderate-income minority communities.

She said TCEQ agreed to hear plaintiffs' motion to overturn the permit because it violated distance restrictions on the plant's proximity to recreational areas, residences and facilities. The property on Alameda where Southern Crushed Concrete planned to relocate to was within one quarter mile of Sunnyside homes and churches. This posed a public health threat, according to residents who were concerned about breathing in fine particulate matter generated by the massive concrete crusher and piles of crumbled cement.

Residents were granted a contested case hearing after TCEQ received more than 3,000 letters requesting the permit be overturned.

Bessie Swindle, President of the Southeast Coalition of Civic Clubs, attributed the vic-

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Industrial plant looms behind a playground in Mancheser. Photo courtesy GHASP.

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Environmental Exchange

The Environmental Exchange is published by the Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC), an information clearinghouse and communications network for environmental issues in the Houston/Galveston area.

The CEC mission is to improve the quality of life and health in the region through education, dialogue and collaboration.

CEC serves the general public by bringing many diverse groups together to build awareness and stimulate discussion about environmental issues in the region.

Programs include forums that give a balanced perspective on environmental issues, and information vehicles that enhance understanding.

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Perspectives Light rail provides opportunity for environmentally sound, transit- oriented development

by Barry Goodman

The Main Street corridor represents the most diverse and economically important corridor in the entire Houston-Galveston region. Major institutions such as the Texas Medical Center, Rice University, University of Houston, Museum District venues, Houston Community College and downtown's vibrant employment/ civic area are linked by this corridor. Creating a great Main Street whose many activities are served by a light rail system is an attractive opportunity for the city to create mixed use transit-oriented development, which results in economic revitalization, better community linkages and environmental benefits.

The legislation from which Houston Metro was created provides one of the strongest transit development tools in the nation. Metro has the authority to purchase or condemn property within 1,500 feet of any rail station. This authority is matched on the federal level by the Federal Transit Administration, which provides funding to support acquisition or condemnation of property and mixed-use development by transit authorities around the country. Unfortunately, Houston Metro has not taken advantage of this opportunity to develop areas around station sites and create community linkages, both of which are vital to the success of the Main Street rail line. Historically, Houston Metro has been reluctant to utilize



Photo courtesy Houston Metro

its land assembly powers, perhaps fearing that such an approach would bring about negative reaction from the community and business sectors.

During the early stages of Metro's Main Street rail development, along with the efforts of the Main Street Coalition, Inc. to revitalize the corridor, several economic development studies indicated the significant potential for transit-oriented development around Metro's light rail stations. Using its legislative abilities and the 1,500 foot standard of development potential around rail stations, Metro would have the ability to redevelop about 3.5 million square feet of land around the five most commercially oriented rail stations. This type of development initiative by Metro would represent a substantial return on the taxpayer's current investment in the Main Street rail line. However, for Metro and the community to realize these gains the city must exercise powers it has been unwilling to exercise during the course of growth and development in Houston.

Maximum transit-oriented development would require incentives for developers and strong land use controls or zoning around stations, to ensure high density development and the type of land use appropriate. The city has long been reluctant to utilize strong land use controls throughout most of its history and recent growth periods. It now seems appropriate for Houston to take the lead from other large cities that have developed rail systems with strong land-use controls, and reap the resulting benefits. More important, however, are the long-term environmental and social benefits that can be gained from transit oriented development through the reduction of vehicle miles traveled on our highways, reduced energy consumption, reduced pollution and increased transit riders. This translates into better quality of life which Houstonians, in increasing numbers, are beginning to demand.

It is time that Houston matures into a city focused on its future viability, providing taxpayers the "best bang for the buck" possible on large capital investments. Accordingly, Houston Metro and the City of Houston have the ability to create great transit-oriented development and community linkages around Metro's developing Main Street light rail line. Whether these tools are utilized or not depends on strong leadership, the existence of which still remains a question mark for Houston's future.

Public art project to focus on environment

by Erika McDonald

This month, children in southeast Houston will begin work on the beautification of a toxic dump that blights their neighborhood.

The Many Diversified Interests Superfund site, which stored more than 5000 barrels of used chemicals from refineries and chemical plants, occupies 36-acres in Houston's Fifth Ward. More than 100 families live within close proximity to the site and Bruce Elementary School is located directly across the street. The property is surrounded by a chain-link fence which, upon completion of a public art project sponsored by The Museum of Cultural Arts Houston, will be adorned with a 1,920-foot mural painted by area children.

Reginald Adams, the museum's executive director and Fifth Ward resident, said the culmination of the year-long project will coincide with the site's scheduled clean-up in January 2004. In the meantime the museum, a non-profit organization Adams calls "a museum without walls," will recruit children from neighborhood elementary schools and community centers to participate in the project.

At each location, a guest speaker will address children about the impacts of environmental pollution on communities and individuals. The recruited children will then work with a visual artist to design a picture

based on what they learned. The pictures will then be painted on 240 four-by-eight-foot wood panels that will dress the fence around the site.

Adams said that, in addition to designing the visual element, the children will also be encouraged to write a poem or story about the environment to accompany the picture.

Adams said he believes the visual impact of what will be the largest mural in Texas will inspire Fifth Ward residents to become more involved in environmental issues that impact their neighborhood. He said taking an interest in the environment is particularly important for people in under-served communities.

"Whether they choose to get involved or not, they have to see it. Right now (the Superfund site) just looks like an empty lot, the paintings will serve as a powerful reminder of what went on in our neighborhood," he said.

Adams said he thinks it is important for the community to get involved with the site now because after its remediation next year, it will be an attractive location for developers.

"Parents, youth, school administrators need to take greater ownership now," he said. "When we don't make an effort to be informed and aware, that's when the wool gets pulled over our eyes and commercial industries can come in and do whatever they want."

Adams said that even when communities are engaged, children still get left out.

"They can't vote or pay taxes yet," he said, "but if we're going to raise citizens who understand the importance of volunteerism, we need to plant the seed now so that community service and stewardship of the environment won't be foreign concepts later."

To get the project off the ground, Mothers for Clean Air, Fifth Ward Chapter secured a \$20,000 grant from the federal Weed and Seed program, which helps fund neighborhood beautification projects. So far, Bruce Elementary School and the Julius C. Hester Community Center have agreed to take part in the project.

A 1998 Texas Department of Health, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry study concluded that 22 percent of the children in the Fifth Ward had elevated levels of lead in the blood compared to the 9 percent average for the rest of Texas. The elevated levels may be linked to the children's proximity to the MDI site. The site is contaminated with lead and other metals from a steel casting operation that operated there decades ago. Although the buildings that once occupied the site were demolished and the barrels were removed, the soil is still dangerously contaminated.

MDI is one of five Superfund sites in the Fifth Ward community. 🌱

Resource Corner

Helpful hints for CEC member organizations

Web site for the idealist

Wouldn't it be nice if you could make the world a better place? That's an idealistic thought, perhaps, but it is possible to aim toward that goal. IdealsWork, at www.idealswork.com, is a site created by three friends who wanted to establish a way to empower people who are thoughtful about social and environmental issues. The interactive Compare

Brands section allows

you to get a list of companies, ranked by their position or activities on the environment, labor, the workplace and many other important issues. Brief and relevant articles are located throughout the site for quick reference and informational tidbits. There is even a section that allows you to contact companies with environmentally irresponsible practices and tell them what you think. A tip on how to get removed from junk mailing lists is another example of the helpful hints offered by this thoughtful and thought-provoking site.



Barrels of toxic chemicals stored across the street from an elementary school in southeast Houston. Photo courtesy MCAH.

Justice

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quality of life for underrepresented people.

“Environmental justice should probably be carried out at the state level and in order for the state to have an effective environmental justice program, it would need to be codified by state law,” he said.

Until such legislation becomes a reality, the EPA is currently retooling its administrative approach to environmental justice at the regional level. According to Arthur, the Agency recommended in 2000, that regional EPA offices take on NEJAC’s mission and work in the spirit of the executive order.

Since that time, regions have been working to increase public participation, Arthur said. Most recently, the regions began hosting environmental justice listening sessions, workshops where individuals can engage in dialogue with state agency officials to address specific problems facing their communities. The region 6 listening session was hosted in Houston in November.

Arthur said EPA officials are also considering the formation of a state-level interagency working group, based on the NEJAC model. The group would be tasked with coordinating the efforts of all state agencies responsible for evaluating development permits. The committee would, like NEJAC, provide specific guidelines for the state agencies to examine issues of social impact before approving permit applications. He said the idea was “purely conceptual at this point.”

Arthur said he believed that the formation of regional working groups would be an important step toward state agencies considering social impacts and providing some relief to overburdened communities.

“When communities are affected by industry, the problem is not just environmental, it’s economics, it’s health, it’s transportation—these problems aren’t solved just because you solved the environmental problem,” he said.

Adria Dawidczik, a spokesperson for the TCEQ said the commission would be willing to cooperate with such a working group, but insisted that it already has a strong policy on addressing issues of environmental justice.

TCEQ’s environmental equity program operates through its office of public assistance, which Dawidczik said helps affected citizens participate in the Commission’s permitting process by coordinating and publicizing public hearings on permit applica-

tions. There is also a toll-free number citizens can use to report complaints of environmental justice violations.

Dawidczik also said that the Commission works under the same environmental justice guidelines as the federal government.

There are some federal laws administered by state agencies that could provide a basis for addressing environmental justice issues through permitting. For example, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act authorizes the EPA to consider social impacts in establishing priorities for hazardous waste management facilities. There are also authorities provided by the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act under which the EPA could address social concerns.

Under each law, the state’s program must be at least as stringent as the federal program. None of these laws provides a legal basis for rejecting a permit application based solely on alleged social impacts to the community.

Still, Collins said that without legislative mandate, TCEQ’s and other state agency’s commitment to environmental justice is purely discretionary.

“We’ve seen this before in Texas with the voluntary reporting (of toxic emissions by industry) and look how well that worked,” he said. “We can’t count on the agencies to follow federal guidelines just because they should – lawmakers need to make it a requirement.”

One legislator, State Representative Garnet Coleman of Houston, said he would vote in favor of legislation that mandated the state’s responsibility to uphold environmental justice.

“Historically, communities of color in Houston’s eastside have paid the heaviest price for (negative) environmental impacts,” he said. “I think (passing such a bill) would give a voice to people who don’t have the political power to fight industries with deep pockets.”

Collins said he hopes to present the bill to the Texas legislature in 2003. 🗳️

Concrete

Continued from page 1

tory to heavy community opposition. Swindle is also a Sunnyside precinct judge and resident. Though residents had the visible backing of elected officials such as Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, State Representative Al Edwards and Houston City

Councilmember Ada Edwards, Swindle said community involvement was the key factor in Sunnyside’s victory.

“There’s no doubt we would not have won if not for the community coming together to make this our number-one priority,” she said. “We decided we didn’t want (the plant) here and we said ‘no.’”

Swindle said that, in addition to the 3,000 letters, residents also packed public meetings on the contested permit application and raised thousands of dollars.

At one public hearing hosted at Worthing High School in southeast Houston, more than 650 residents flooded the auditorium in opposition of the proposed plant location.

“That’s when they knew we meant business,” Swindle said.

Sunnysiders also raised more than \$4,000 to pay for legal fees and the cost of an environmental inspection. Swindle said the \$2,500 leftover from the expenses would be donated to the Environmental Justice Clinic.

According to Cartwright, the Clinic will investigate, at the request of Sunnyside residents, other concrete crushing facilities that are located in low-income, ethnic-minority neighborhoods.

Swindle said that Southern Crushed Concrete still owns the property on Almeda and she suspects the company will attempt to refile their application. Cartwright said Texas law allows the company to reapply.

“We’ll be ready for them,” Swindle said. 🗳️

EcoNotes

Congress steps up pipeline regulation

The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation in November to strengthen federal safety programs for the 1.6 million miles of pipelines that transport oil, petroleum products and natural gas across the United States. The measure requires more safety inspections of pipelines and boosts penalties for inadequate maintenance.

The bill would require pipelines to be inspected within the next 10 years to prevent leaks and ruptures. More problematic pipelines would be inspected within the first five years. All pipelines would then be re-inspected every seven years. The legislation

also increased the fine against companies that violate the pipeline safety rules from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per day. The penalty cap would double to \$1 million per incident.

An average of four pipeline accidents causing death, injury or major property damage occur each week, according to the General Accounting Office. But environmental groups say only one in 25 pipeline violators are ever given fines.

There are more pipelines buried under the Houston area than any other region in the country. Nearly one fifth of the nation's oil refining takes place within 100 miles of downtown Houston. A similar percentage of U.S. chemical manufacturing takes place in Harris, Brazoria and Galveston Counties. Though most lines are located in eastern Harris County, no area in the county is pipe free.

City strikes deal with county water authority

Houston City Council approved a \$75 million water contract in December to supply water to more than 400,000 people in unincorporated north Harris County. The deal is the largest of its kind in city history.

Instead of charging a flat rate to north Harris County residents – as with city water customers – the city will charge the North Harris County Regional Water Authority a one-time fee of \$75 million.

The payment covers the water authority's share of the cost of getting the water from city-owned lakes to a water-treatment plant on Lake Houston, testing and treatment systems and an 84-inch pipeline from the water plant to US 59. The water authority also will pay its share of water system operations and maintenance costs.

The water authority will then sell the water for \$1.80 per 1,000 gallons to more than 160 municipal utility districts that deliver and sell water from wells to residents.

The Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District requires that area residents stop relying on subsurface well water and switch to a regional surface water system over the next 25 years. (*Houston Chronicle*)

Bush signs wetlands protection bill

Last month, George W. Bush signed legislation that extends for five more years a program under which the federal government

helps leverage donations from sportsmen, state wildlife agencies, conservationists and land owners who pledge to protect wetlands, particularly those that are home to migratory waterfowl.

Under the program, the government has contributed \$462 million since 1991, matched by \$1.3 billion from other entities. The money was used to restore waterways, plant native trees and acquire land that is home to endangered species – more than 960 wetlands in all 50 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

But some environmental groups said the legislation was in contrast to other moves by the administration that threaten wetlands. Millions of acres of wetlands remain in regulatory limbo as the Bush administration has yet to clarify its approach to wetlands regulation.

The confusion stems from a Supreme Court ruling last year in a developer's challenge that said the Clean Water Act's authority over navigable waters does not extend to isolated wetlands (wetlands that are adjacent to floodplains).

This issue is of particular concern in flood-prone Harris County. John Jacobs, a Texas A & M University expert on wetlands, said that while there is no precise formula for how much loss of wetlands would affect drainage, there is no doubt that the impacts would be dramatic.

Houston Audubon Society President Jeff Mundy said that protection of natural wetland habitats was the "most critical factor" in the conservation of endangered and threatened migratory bird species.

County gets additional ozone monitors

This year, the University of Houston's Environmental Institute of Houston and Harris County Pollution Control will install 10 new ozone monitors in public spaces such as schools, libraries, senior centers and nature centers in Harris County. The monitors will be installed by March 2003 and the data will appear on the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality web site at www.tceq.org and will be included in the ozone e-mail alert system.

The HPCPD monitors will have a public digital readout that will display the outdoor ozone concentration every minute, along with printed information that will explain

what the numbers mean. EIH's and HPCPD's ten new monitors will bring the number of sites in the eight-county ozone non-attainment area ozone warning network to 32. Currently, 23 monitors are scattered over five counties. Fort Bend, Liberty and Waller counties do not have ozone monitors. An additional seven monitors near the Houston Ship Channel are operated by the industry-funded Houston Regional Monitoring Corporation, but are not part of the warning network.

The new monitors are funded through state and county Supplemental Environmental Projects grants. SEP money comes from fines levied against polluters who choose to pay a reduced amount to be used for environmentally beneficial projects.

To subscribe to the email ozone alert system visit www.hcoem.org. (Mothers for Clean Air) 🌱

President's Letter

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environmental issues yet the leading medical center, perhaps in the world, refuses to engage in any serious research on the subject? Why do we have mercury in flu vaccines? Why did the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality roll back emissions requirements on industry? Wouldn't it be terrific if more people, when finding out such negative news, would stand up and express their anger, frustration and fear? Are you angry yet? Are you doing anything about it yet? 🌱

January Calendar

For the most complete current listing of environmental happenings in the Houston-Galveston region, visit CEC's website at www.cechouston.org and click on Calendar.

Sat, Jan 4

Crape Myrtles

Where: Mercer Arboretum

When: 9-11 am

Contact: 281-443-8731

Fee: Free

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Calendar

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Backyard Orchard 2: Peaches, Plums, Pomegranates, & Other Fruit

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 9:30 am-12 noon

Contact: 713-880-5540

Fee: \$10 for member, \$20 for non-member

Mon, Jan 6

Ornithology Group Meeting – Birds of South Africa

Steve Matherly, Speaker

Where: Bayland Community Center,
6400 Bissonnet

When: 7 pm

Contact: Skip Almony at 713-524-4285

Fee: Free

Wed, Jan 8

Lunch Bunch: Texas Trees

Where: Mercer Arboretum

When: 12 noon-1 pm

Contact: 281-443-8731

Fee: Free

Houston Audubon Society January Membership Meeting – Nongame and Rare Species Conservation in Texas

John Herron, Speaker

Where: Cullen Hall, University of St. Thomas

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: 713-932-1639

Fee: Free

Thu, Jan 9

Backyard Orchard 3: Care of Fruit Trees

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 6:30-8:30 pm

Contact: 713-880-5540

Fee: \$10 for member, \$20 for non-member

Fri, Jan 10 or Sat, Jan 11

Here Kitty, Kitty

For ages 2 1/2-3 + an adult. Learn about lions, tigers, cheetahs, & other felines.

Where: Houston Zoo

When: 9:30-10:30 am or 11 am-12 pm

Contact: 713-533-6550

Fee: \$6 for member, \$8.50 for non-member

Sat, Jan 11

Garden Tour: Winter Tree Identification

Where: Mercer Arboretum

When: 9-11 am

Contact: 281-443-8731

Fee: Free

Project Wild Aquatic Educator Workshop

Where: Armand Bayou Nature Center

When: 9 am-4 pm

Contact: 281-474-2551

Fee: \$15; Pre-registration required

Naturalist Explorers Class – Extreme Rats and Mice (ages 5-12)

Where: Houston Arboretum & Nature Center

When: 9 am-12 noon

Contact: 713-681-8433

Fee: \$9 for member, \$15 for non-member

Under the Sea

For ages 5-9 + an adult.

Where: Houston Museum of Natural Science

When: 9:15-11:30 am

Contact: 713-639-4629

Fee: \$15 for members, \$25 for non-members

Backyard Orchard 5: Apples, Pears, & Persimmons

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 9:30 am-12 noon

Contact: 713-880-5540

Fee: \$10 for member, \$20 for non-member

Mon, Jan 13

How to Start a Community Garden

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 4-6:30 pm

Contact: 713-880-5540

Fee: Free; Pre-registration required

Tue, Jan 14-Thu, Jan 16

Galveston Bay Estuary Program Sixth Biennial State of the Bay Symposium

Where: South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center, League City, TX

Contact: Scott Jones at 281-316-3007

Fee: Please call

Wed, Jan 15

Permaculture: Gardening for a Sustainable Texas – An Introduction

Learn about sustainable gardens, landscapes, ecosystems, environments, buildings, and societies. Pre-registration required.

Where: 3015 Richmond

When: 7-9 pm

Contact: Urban Harvest at 713-880-5540

Fee: Orientation is free, but Pre-registration required. Fees for the 4 classes.

Fri, Jan 17

Audubon Docent Guild Owl Prowl

Where: Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

When: 7 pm

Contact: 713-464-4900

Fee: \$5; Reservations required

Fri, Jan 17 or Sat, Jan 18

Houston Zoo Docent Orientation

Where: Brown Education Center,
Houston Zoo

When: 10 am

Contact: Andrea Anders at 713-533-6549;
Reservations requested

Fee: Free

Sat, Jan 18

Bugs in Disguise

For ages 5-9 + an adult.

Where: Houston Museum of Natural Science,
Cockrell Butterfly Center

When: 8:45-11:30 am

Contact: 713-639-4629

Fee: \$15 for members, \$25 for non-members

Underwater Wonders Educator Workshop

Where: Moody Gardens, 1 Hope Blvd.,
Galveston, TX

When: 9 am-4 pm

Contact: 1-800-582-4673, ext. 4231

Fee: \$35 (lunch included)

Urban Harvest 2003 Fruit Tree Sale

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 9 am-2 pm Sale; 8 am Lecture

Contact: 713-880-5540

Fee: Free; bring money to buy trees

Arbor Day Celebration

Where: Houston Arboretum & Nature Center

When: 10 am-4 pm

Contact: 713-681-8433

Fee: Free

Arbor Day Celebration

Where: Nature Discovery Center

When: 11 am-5 pm

Contact: 713-667-6550

Fee: Free; bring money for food/purchases

Rockin' Raptors

Various classes for ages Pre-K through 5th grade. Learn about falcons, eagles, & other raptors.

Where: Houston Zoo

When: Please call

Contact: 713-533-6550

Fee: \$12

Mon, Jan 20

How to Start a Community Garden

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 1-3:30 pm

Contact: 713-880-5540

Fee: Free; Pre-registration required

Tue, Jan 21

Naturalist Certification Program – The Ethics of Environmentalism

Where: Houston Arboretum & Nature Center

When: 7-9 pm

Contact: 713-681-8433
Fee: \$15 for member, \$20 for non-member

Tomatoes

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane
When: 6:15-8:15 pm
Contact: 713-880-5540
Fee: \$10 for member, \$20 for non-member

Houston Audubon Society January Sanctuary Seminar: Diurnal Raptors of the Upper Gulf Coast

Dick Benoit, Speaker
Where: Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary
When: 7:15 pm
Contact: 713-932-1639
Fee: \$5 donation; reservations requested

Wed, Jan 22

RDA Spring Lecture # 1 – Swiss Made

Gigon/Guyer, Speaker
Where: Brown Auditorium, MFA Houston
When: 7:30 pm
Contact: 713-348-4876
Fee: Please call

Fri, Jan 24 or Sat, Jan 25 or Mon, Jan 27

Tadpole Troopers – From Acorn to Log

For ages 3-5 + an adult.
Where: Houston Arboretum & Nature Center
When: Times vary; please call for details
Contact: 713-681-8433
Fee: \$6 for member, \$10 for non-member

Sat, Jan 25

Arbor Day Celebration

Where: Mercer Arboretum
When: 9 am-12 noon
Contact: 281-443-8731
Fee: Free

Ornithology Group Field Trip - Sparrows of West Harris County

Contact: Glenn Olsen at 281-345-4151
Fee: Free

Boy Scout Merit Badge Day

Where: Moody Gardens, 1 Hope Blvd., Galveston, TX
When: Please call
Contact: 1-800-582-4673, ext. 4325
Fee: Yes; Please call

Wed, Jan 29

RDA Spring Lecture # 2 - Swiss Made

Kurt W. Forster, Speaker
Where: Brown Auditorium, MFA Houston
When: 7:30 pm
Contact: 713-348-4876
Fee: Please call

Regular Meetings

Meetings are monthly unless otherwise indicated. Call to verify before attending a meeting. To list meetings, call 713-524-4CEC or fax 713-524-3311.

American Institute of Architects Environmental Committee 2nd Tues at noon. AIA office 3000 Richmond, Ste 500. 713-520-0155.

American Institute of Chemical Engineers 1st Thurs, Sheraton Astrodome, 610 Loop S. & Kirby Matthew Kolodney, 713-767-3752.

American Planning Assoc. 1st Tues, 11:45 am, The Court at St. James Place. Bret Keast 713-785-0080.

Bayou Preservation Assoc. 2nd Monday of Jan, March, May, Sept & Nov, 12 noon, Houston Center for the Arts, 713-529-6443.

BikeHouston last Tues, 6:30 pm, 3015 Richmond 713-652-2555.

Citizens' Environmental Coalition Board meeting 1st Tues, 6 pm, Houston Environmental Center, 3015 Richmond. 713-524-4CEC.

Electric Auto Association, Houston Chapter. 3rd Thurs, 6:30 pm, HEC 3015 Richmond, Suite 280. Ben Chamberlin, 713-975-7744.

Environmental Educator's Exchange 1st Wed of Feb, May, Aug, Nov, 5 pm. Sites vary. Kelly Drinnen, 409-683-4233.

Friends of Texas Wildlife, 2nd Sat, 10 am, Samuel Matthew Park, 1728 E. Hufsmith Road, Tomball, 281-255-8885 or Lynda Guertin, cell 713-825-4095.

Galveston Bay Estuary Program Quarterly. Call for specific dates: 281-332-9937.

Galveston-Houston Assoc. For Smog Prevention (GHASP) 3rd Thurs, 7:30 pm, 3126 Fairhope. Ron Parry, 713-669-1195.

Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, Monthly walking tours, 4th Sun, 2 pm. Historic Neighborhoods Council Meeting, 4th Sat, 10:30 am, Heights Branch Library. 713-216-5000 or www.gpha.org.

Green Party 3rd Mon, Montrose Public Library 4100 Montrose. 713-866-6285 or 713-880-3219.

Gulf Coast Institute: Houston/Gulf Coast Smart Growth Initiative 4th Wed, monthly at 11:30 am, H-GAC, 3555 Timmons, 2nd floor. 713-523-5757.

Harris County Soil & Water Conservation District 1st Wed, 9 am. Bennie Billington, 713-855-8716.

HART – the Houston Animal Rights Team 1st and 3rd Thurs, 7pm, University of St. Thomas 2nd floor, Crooker Center (the student cafeteria) 713-527-9144.

Historic Neighborhoods Council 1st Sun, 10:30 am, Heights Branch Library. Ramona Davis 713-216-5000.

Houston Arboretum & Nature Center 3rd Wed, 5:45 pm, Houston Arboretum. 713-681-8433.

Houston Archeological Society 2nd Fri, 7:30 pm, M.D. Anderson Hall, Univ. of St. Thomas. Tommy Nuckols, 713-664-8369.

Houston Audubon Society 2nd Wed, Sept-May. 7 pm, University of St. Thomas, Cullen Hall. 713-932-1639.

Houston Bicycle Club, Inc 2nd Tues, except May. 7 pm, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive. 713-935-2810.

Houston Canoe Club Gen Mtg 2nd Wed, 7 pm, Red Cross Building, 2700 Southwest Frwy. Social Mtg 4th Wed, 7 pm Jax Grill, 1613 Shepherd. 713-467-8857.

Houston Homeowners Assoc 4th Mon (except November, Aug, and Dec), 5:30 pm, First Presbyterian, 5300 S. Main. Michael O'Brian, 281-496-0752.

Houston Renewable Energy Group Last Sunday of Jan, April, July, Oct., 2-4 pm, TSU School of Technology, Room 225. 713-524-2492.

Katy Prairie Conservancy 2nd Tues, 5:30 pm, Houston Environmental Center, 3015 Richmond, Suite 280. 713-523-6135.

Keep Houston Beautiful Quarterly meetings at 2700 Post Oak Blvd., Ste. 1728. 713-621-7020.

Legacy Land Trust 3rd Wed, 6 pm, Houston Environmental Center, 3015 Richmond, Suite 280. 713-524-2100.

League of Women Voters of Houston 2nd Thurs or Fri. 713-784-2923.

Mothers for Clean Air Quarterly. Call Jane Laping 713-526-0110.

Nature Discovery Center of Friends of Bellaire Parks 3rd Mon, 7 pm, Nature Discovery Center, 7112 Newcastle. 713-667-6550.

Native Plant Society of Texas 3rd Thurs (except Dec, Jan), 7pm, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway, 713-431-6346.

Outdoor Nature Club 2nd Thurs, Sept-May. 7:30 pm (social begins at 7), Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet. 281-358-5407.

Piney Woods Wildlife Society 3rd Tues, 7:30 pm, Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. 713-955-6667.

Sierra Club 1st Thur, 7:30 pm, Central Presbyterian, 3788 Richmond @ Timmons. 713-895-9309.

Texas Association of Environmental Professionals 3rd Thurs, 11:30 am, Brady's Landing, 8505 Cypress; Reservations: www.taep.org, reservation@taep.org, or 713-629-9119.

Urban Harvest Community Gardens Quarterly Meeting 4th Tuesday in January, April, July, 6-8 pm; Organic Gardening Classes weekly; workshops for outdoor classroom teachers annually summers. 1900 Kane. 713-880-5540.

Vegetarian Society of Houston 4th Wed, dinner mtg. at various local restaurants. 713-880-1055; Outreach volunteers call 713-880-1055.

White Oak Bayou Assoc 2nd Wed, 7:30 pm, Heights Fire House, 12th & Yale. For agenda, Fred Lazare, President, 713-864-9416 or Teresa Matlock, Treasurer, 713-864-3008.

Wildlife Rehab & Education Central/West: Carol at 713-661-5038 date and times. South/East: 2nd Wed 7 pm Sharon, 281-332-8319.

The Woodlands GREEN Quarterly at WCSC, 8203 Millennium Forest Drive. Christina West, 281-291-5876.

President's Letter

Are you angry yet?

by David Gresham, CEC President

How many times have you seen something on television, or heard something on the radio, or read something in a newspaper or magazine that really riled you? How many times, after getting such a strong message from the media and your conscience have you stepped forward to do something about it?

Every day we are bombarded with messages designed to stimulate our emotions. This is the way journalism works. One doesn't buy a paper to read about happy news, one wants to know, with outrage, how our politicians are messing up, or how other governments are messing up, or how people (hopefully people other than ourselves) are messing up. We really don't care to read that Mrs. Prudence's cocker spaniel had puppies

or that Becky Sue Bracewell got straight As on her report card.

With the proliferation of news magazines, news shows, and news radio, we are bombarded more and more with negativity. We are confronted by so much negativity, that it wouldn't surprise me if the proliferation of Paxil prescriptions is directly linked to the over stimulation of our anxiety gland.

However there is a solution. The media isn't changing their revenue-generating model anytime soon, so we can all stick our heads in the sand and scream, "No! I can't take it anymore!" But that isn't productive.

Instead, we can fight these overwhelming feelings of frustration by standing up and fighting for what we believe is right. My friend Steve listens all day long to radio station KSEV while at work. He gets angry as he listens to Rush Limbaugh, Dan Patrick and Jon Mathews spout the latest interpretations of what's happening in our society. The pundits put their conservative spin on news items, deliberately inciting their listeners to call in and rave about an issue they really don't understand. Steve often yells at

these ill-informed individuals through his radio, insisting they secure an education more formal than beer guzzling 101, or advanced stock-car tune-up tricks.

I, on the other hand, am subjected to these same callers by my spouse, who is more conservative than I, every time we drive her car to a family function. I actually enjoy hearing this nonsense because it reminds me each time I hear it of the rights of Americans to stand up and shout about things we don't like or, in some cases, don't understand.

Why do we acknowledge that Houston has some serious

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Citizens' Environmental Coalition

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January 2003

Newsletter &

Environmental Calendar

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