

Environmental Exchange

A publication of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition

August 2003
Newsletter &
Calendar

The Houston-Galveston area's most comprehensive coverage of environmental news and events.

Global free trade agreements impact Houston environment

by Erika McDonald

Fair trade advocates from Houston and around the country traveled to New Orleans in July to protest private negotiations for the Central American free trade agreement. With CAFTA talks already underway, anti-globalization activists are working to build awareness about trade agreements already impacting local jobs, economies and the environment.

Amid discussion of the World Trade ministerial meetings taking place in Cancun this December and a meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Miami this November, many Houstonians may not have heard of the Central American Free Trade Agreement. But with CAFTA talks underway and more scheduled in New Orleans next week, anti-globalization activists are working to enhance awareness about trade agreements already impacting local economies.

CAFTA is essentially a geographical expansion of NAFTA picking up where the latter left off in the expansion of trade agreements that affect public environmental policy. The five principal countries involved in the new proposed agreement are Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

University of Houston history professor Bob Buzzanco spends much of his time lecturing local environmental and community organizations about the downside to free trade agreements. He said international treaties like NAFTA have engendered a "race to the bottom" when it comes to environmental law enforcement. Companies that declare an environmental law is a barrier to free trade can easily seek exemption.

With the U.S. government currently bro-

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Bucket Brigade issues company clean air challenge

by Erika McDonald

Following a fire at a Nova Chemicals plant in Bayport on June 11, official reports assured surrounding communities that no toxic chemicals had been emitted. Unconvinced by company claims, residents packed the tiny city hall in neighboring Shoreacres last month to hear the results of air samples taken by the Texas Bucket Brigade just hours after the blaze.

"Nova got out in front (after the fire), which was good PR for them, and said there was no ethylbenzene," the Brigade's Ken Martinez said, "but what they didn't mention was is there anything else."

In addition to low concentrations of ethylbenzene, the Brigade found the carcinogen benzene present at 34 parts per billion, well above the federal safety standards. The citizen-collected samples were tested at the Southwest Research Institute, the same lab used by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA investigators at the scene used handheld monitors the regulators say require even higher concentrations of the chemicals to register results. Though the amount of chemicals detected in the air after the Nova's fire exceeded federal standards, the levels were too low to register on the EPA monitors.

Jim Stevens, a Shoreacres resident said he knew there were chemicals in the air because he could smell them. "We knew there was a problem with their truthful-

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Activists protest private negotiations of the Central American Free Trade Agreement in July.

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

Local group still fighting TXDOT over Spur 527 plan

by Ray Jones, WALQ co-founder

The West Alabama Quality of Life Coalition challenged the current Texas Department of Transportation plan to reconstruct Spur 527 into downtown Houston off of US 59. WALQ's objective is to prevent irreparable harm to neighborhoods, residents, businesses, schools and churches. Construction on the Spur is expected to take place over a period of approximately 39 months beginning February 2004.

All Versions of TXDOT's Environmental Impact Statement failed to address severe negative impacts resulting from 80,000 detoured vehicles per day, many of which will choke neighborhood streets.

Neighborhood impacts will include degraded health, safety, mobility and quality of life, plus decreased property values and local business declines throughout the construction period and beyond.

WALQ has been the only public voice to consistently demand neighborhood protection. The organization seeks to prevent these impacts with three remedies designed to keep excessive freeway traffic off neighborhood streets during Spur reconstruction. We advocate that initiation of the Spur project be postponed until 2007, when construction on major alternative routes into downtown Houston will be completed. We also believe TXDOT should go back to the drawing board with its plans so that more Spur traffic can be kept within the freeway right-of-way throughout construction. Most importantly, we want to avoid neighborhood street modifications that attract freeway traffic into the area, and similarly, keep hundreds of METRO commuter buses out of the hardest-hit neighborhoods, i.e., those located in and around the Richmond / West Alabama corridor between Spur527 and Wesleyan.

Spur reconstruction plans and timing must be modified to protect residents, local businesses, churches and schools. Neighborhood streets must not be modified in undesirable ways to accommodate TxDOT.

WALQ intends a court suit barring Spur

construction until neighborhood protection issues have been resolved and by requesting federal regulatory action centered on the project's environmental impact in the affected neighborhoods.

City of Houston Public Works uses a grading system to describe the level of traffic congestion from proposed construction projects. The city predicts "E and F service" at neighborhood intersections. Level E means, "traffic at capacity." F means "extreme congestion" - essentially one stalled car or fender-bender away from level G, "gridlock." City traffic engineers admit they anticipate E and F conditions on neighborhood streets during four to six hours of peak traffic daily. Substantial traffic increases are anticipated during off-peak hours as well.

The City hopes to mitigate tens of thousands of freeway cars, trucks and buses flooding through our neighborhoods daily for three years by making changes to Richmond, West Alabama and other streets. But the traffic numbers are staggering. Once such an overwhelming flood hits our streets, common sense, engineering judgment and computer models all indicate that nothing really effective can be done to mitigate.

Neighborhoods cannot possibly be protected by the City's street-project mitigation. Only preventive mitigation - keeping excessive freeway traffic off our streets - can save neighborhood, residents and businesses from severe negative impacts

WALQ has established tree goals to mitigate neighborhood traffic. One goal is to minimize (not eliminate) Spur construction detour traffic through our neighborhoods - reducing this traffic to the point where it is manageable.

Postponing the start of Spur construction until 2007 is another measure required to protect our neighborhoods. If Spur reconstruction begins earlier than 2007, drivers will have fewer alternative routes to choose because one or more of the major alternatives will themselves be under construction.

Drivers need alternative routes to avoid any major freeway construction project. Common sense dictates that the more viable alternatives drivers have, the less likely they will be to cut through our neighborhoods, especially during peak traffic hours.

Reconstructing Spur 527 under TxDOT's current plan and schedule will incur huge consequences in our neighborhoods and cause unreasonable hardships and irreparable harm.

Memorial Park tree-sit sparks local campaign against Maxxam

By Renee Feltz, KPFT News and Erika McDonald

Two activists demanding corporate accountability from Houston-based Maxxam brought their forest defense tactics to the corporation's home turf last month. Now the campaign against Maxxam that has lasted for more than a decade has entered a new phase with local activists and a new organization joining the fight.

With a tree-sit in a Houston city park, a lawsuit against its subsidiary Pacific Lumber in Humboldt County, and possible revocation of logging permits, Maxxam is battling pressure over its business practices on several fronts.

A tree-sitter from Northern California's Humboldt County named Trust joined forces with a Houston man named Bear to set up platforms among the branches of three ponderosa pines in Memorial Park. The activists garnered local media attention and evaded Houston police who promised to arrest the pair for trespassing upon their descent.

Though the tree-sit is a California-style tactic long used in campaigns for corporate accountability, it is the work of a coalition of activists from Houston and the East Coast that has kick-started campaigns to expose problems with Maxxam subsidiary Pacific Lumber logging practices.

When local woman Rhea Green got involved with the campaign a few months ago, she said it was crucial for her to visit the Pacific redwood forests and see the situation firsthand. Green visited Humboldt County to talk with activists and landown-

ers and view what she called the devastation left in Maxxam loggers' wake.

"I was horrified by what I saw," she said. "This is not dramatization, the place looks like a desert."

The devastation she witnessed at Freshwaters, the area surrounding a tree where the activist Remedy sat for 361 days before being physically extracted by Maxxam, inspired Green to "build a bridge" between Humboldt and Houston.

Green founded a Houston group that hopes to use the tree-sit to bring the level of pressure on Maxxam in Houston to the same level it has reached after 13 years of campaigning in California. She started the group, Southern Alliance of Coast Redwood Earth Defenders, or SACRED after she visited Humboldt County.

Throughout the month of August, activists from SACRED will gather every Monday outside Maxxam offices on San Felipe for meditation and nondenominational prayer sessions. Green said protesters will be there to demand the company halt logging of old-growth trees in the Pacific and show solidarity with activists in Humboldt County. The group also hosts teach-ins on forest activism and the logging industry.

Maxxam's only response to local protests so far has been to deflect opposition to their subsidiary, Pacific Lumber. Maxxam officials say Pacific Lumber calls the shots and can address protesters' demands. Maxxam spokesman Josh Reiss told the *Houston Chronicle* that the company's lumber subsidiary follows its own stringent environmental regulations and has donated

Brigade

Continued from page 1

ness because you could see the smoke in the air and people were complaining about having trouble breathing," Stevens said.

Still, the company plans to stand behind its initial claims.

Nova has also yet to disclose the cause of the fire, a violation Harris County Pollution Control's Paul Newman said could cost the company \$25,000 per day until the information is provided.

"(Nova's) cooperation has not been great," Newman said. "They haven't gotten the information we need in a timely manner."

A provision of the federal Clean Air Act requires Nova to report the exact cause within two weeks of the fire.

Newman said Nova officials responded to Pollution Control's violation notice with a draft report on the circumstances leading up to the blaze. Once a final report is submitted, pollution control will continue its investigation to determine what if any fines will be assessed.

While Newman could not comment on the content of the report until a final draft is submitted, he did say some portions of the final report might be kept "confidential."

A Nova site leader, Richard MacKay said a report was filed before the deadline and that the company was well within its rights to withhold information about the cause of the fire.

"What people need to understand is that there are issues we need to clear up with our legal folks as to what information we can reveal," McKay said.

Nova's conduct during and after the blast lit a fire under residents who say they are ready to take action to get straight answers about what is in the air and why.

MacKay said concerned residents can join a Citizen Advisory Panel. All plants in the area, including Nova's have managers on the panels who hear health and environmental concerns from the community. But that is not always how it works said the Bucket Brigade's LaNell Anderson.

"In reality, CAPs function as a way for industry to manage and control citizen opposition," Anderson said.

Instead of working through the CAP, Anderson wants Nova to engage residents in a cooperative source reduction program.

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Above: Activists installed platforms in three ponderosa pines to protest Maxxam.

Photos courtesy SACRED

Below: Trust, the tree-sitter descends from his tree-top perch to shake hands with local supporters.



Tree-sit

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thousands of acres of redwood territory to the government.

"They (the protesters) wanted the government to buy 60,000 acres of Pacific Lumber's private property," Reiss said. "The government bought about 5,000 acres. These folks are not happy with that." But, the Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters' Karen Picket, in Houston last month, said she finds this hard to swallow. Picket said that when Maxxam sold its acreage to the public via the Headwaters deal, they sold it at a huge profit.

In fact, CEO Charles Hurwitz made an \$11 million bonus from negotiating the Headwaters deal that now outlines much of Pacific Lumber's logging operations.

These practices have come under increased scrutiny by individuals other than forest activists. Humboldt County District Attorney Paul Gallegos filed a \$300 million lawsuit against Pacific Lumber for fraud – alleging that the company withheld information from the California Department of Forestry about logging effects.

Although attempts by Maxxam to get the suit thrown out have failed, Richard Salzman with the Alliance for ethical business explained it's not for lack of trying.

Salzman said Maxxam officials have threatened lawsuits against Humboldt County, stormed the county courthouse, encircling it with logging trucks and initiated a recall campaign to try to remove the

prosecutor from office.

Logging in places like the Freshwater Watershed went from 50 acres per year to 1,000 acres per year when Maxxam took over Pacific Lumber in the 1980s.

Several Humboldt County residents suffering property damage because of the company's liquidation logging practices have filed suits. Hurwitz was named as a defendant in two racketeering cases alleging the damages residents suffered resulting from orders originating in Houston that crossed state lines when they were carried out by Pacific Lumber.

Activists say even if this allegedly illegal logging ended today, damaged redwood forests will take decades to recover.

Globalization

Continued from page 1

uring CAFTA negotiations, Buzzanco warned free trade agreements supercede municipal protections on citizens' health, environment and civil rights.

"Under NAFTA, clean air regulations have been struck down, clean water regulations have been struck down and there is no reason to believe that this won't continue with CAFTA."

Houston city council member Ada Edwards said once corporations invoke free trade status, there is little local law makers can do to protect their citizens.

"Treaties trump local ordinances and that's just the bottom line," Edwards said.

She said there was a lack of understanding and interest on the part of local officials when it comes to addressing the local impacts of globalization.

"I've only seen one other colleague and that's (Houston City Council Member) Annise Parker to show any interest in even looking at the issue from a local perspective," she said. "There's not a lot of interest, I think, because our own local officials, our Senators and Congressman who passed the treaty, a lot of them didn't even know what was involved in the bill."

Edwards said when citizens are kept in the dark about international trade agreements they will not understand the impacts of globalization on their own lives until it's too late.

The secret nature of the current negotiations is a NAFTA legacy free-trade opponents say they will continue to rally

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Coalition Notes

Buffalo Bayou

Partnership opens first downtown bike path

The Buffalo Bayou Partnership last month hosted a reception to commemorate the opening of the North Side Trail, downtown Houston's newest recreational hike and bike trail. The \$3 million trail that links Sesquicentennial Park to the University of Houston-Downtown, is part of the Greater Allen's Landing Project, a redevelopment effort officials say is designed to unify more than \$25 million existing and planned initiatives in north downtown.

North Side Trail enhancements include grading and drainage improvements, new bulkheads and a new irrigation system. Grading and drainage modifications were made to avert high water along the path during heavy rains. To prevent ground erosion, jute mesh and mulch were placed along the waterway.

In an effort to shade the walkway and enhance existing trees, groupings of native species of trees were planted along the banks of the bayou during a community tree planting initiative. Those wanting to picnic in downtown Houston will now enjoy benches and trash cans that can be found in seating areas along the path. This project was sponsored by the City of Houston and the BBP through a grant from Houston Endowment, Inc.



Photo courtesy Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Resource Corner

Helpful hints for CEC member organizations

There is a wealth of information about the history of and trends toward water privatization available online.

Public Services International:

www.psir.org

GAT\$ Watch: www.gatswatch.org

Public Citizens' Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program: www.citizen.org/cmep/Water

Sierra Club: www.sierraclub.org/clean-water/

Citizens' Network on Essential Services www.ServicesForAll.org.

To find out more about how to fight water privatization contact the Texas Fair Trade Coalition at 512-472-1915.

EcoNotes

Public lands fight pends in court, congress

In June, the CEC reported on the local implications of a measure in the US house to write George W. Bush's healthy forest initiative into law. In July, conservation groups sued the Forest Service over new regulations as the bill made its way into the Senate.

Eighteen environmental and conservation organizations from across the country are headed to court over rules issued by the U.S. Forest Service. The new rules roll back a 1993 regulation, which allowed citizens to appeal all types of land management activities including mining, grazing, recreation and logging projects by exempting all categorically excluded projects from appeal.

According to the lawsuit, the new directives open the door for an irresponsible logging program that would ignore environmental impacts and public opposition to harmful projects.

Meanwhile House resolution 1904, which seeks to make the administration's directives law heads to the Senate. The resolution was voted passed by the US House in May, with 217 of the 246 votes in favor coming from Republicans.

Two democrats, Tom Daschel of South Dakota and Jef Bingaman of New Mexico have proposed alternative legislation that would restrict logging to areas where forests border urban development. The democrats say limited fire prevention resources should be concentrated in areas where communities are vulnerable to wildfire; the administration argued local foresters should have discretion.

Regardless of the outcomes in Congress or in the courtroom, logging will begin in Sam Houston National Forest as early as this fall. An hour north of Houston, the local preserve is one of ten pilot projects across the country that will institute the new policy. Texas Forest Service director Jim Hull said he thought the local preserve an ideal location to test the Bush policy.

"I don't think there's all that big an issue here," he said. "But you get people looking to make a big deal out of something, they'll figure out a way to do it."

According to Houston Sierra Club's forestry chair, Brandt Mannchen the project, which could begin this fall, means bad news for wildlife, recreation and fire prevention in Sam

Houston Forest.

New land deal makes private forest public

A conservation group and a company that buys and sells timber announced last month their purchase of 33,000 acres of private forest along the Neches River near Lufkin in a \$26 million deal believed to be one of the largest of its kind in Texas.

The Conservation Fund and Renewable Resources, a private forest investment firm, bought the tract from International Paper as part of a long-term strategy to protect forests in East Texas.

The fund will work to protect the river corridor and oversee Renewable Resources' harvest of the timber until the state can afford to buy the land and open it to the public, a process that officials say could take three to five years.

Houston-based Motiva pleads no contest to negligent homicide

Houston-based Motiva Enterprises pleaded no contest Tuesday to a felony charge of criminally negligent homicide and six misdemeanor assault charges in a fatal explosion and fire at its Delaware refinery in July 2001.

Prosecutors filed criminal charges against Motiva after the flaming collapse of a 32-foot sulfuric acid storage tank at the oil refinery killed one worker, 50-year-old Jeffery Davis and injured eight others. 1.1 million gallons of gasoline-laced acid spilled onto surrounding soils and into the Delaware River.

A two-year federal investigation into the accident revealed neglected safety warnings and chronic, unrepaired corrosion and leaks in the 415,000-gallon storage tank.

A Wilmington judge ordered Motiva pay the maximum fine, \$46,000, for the seven charges and an additional \$250,000 into the state's victim's compensation fund. The company could face another \$50 million in fines pending the outcome of a civil suit brought by the U.S. Justice Department and Environmental Protection Agency.

Just one day after Motiva entered its plea,

Delaware environmental engineers launched an investigation into another accident. State officials said Motiva failed to explain the cause of another storage tank burst that spilled 25,000 gallons of sulfuric acid this May.

Chirping frogs may hold new clues to environment, evolution

A team of biologists at the University of Houston will study the habits of chirping frogs in hopes the amphibians will provide vital clues about evolution and environmental quality.

Dan Wells, professor of biology and biochemistry at UH, and his team are rummaging the campus undergrowth this summer in search of the Rio Grande chirping frog. The tiny amphibian is the only direct developing frog, meaning it hatches directly to a frog from an egg, outside a tropical climate.

Wells hopes to find out how and why the frog has developed the ability to skip a lifecycle vital to other amphibians. Unlike other amphibians, which lay their eggs in water, the chirping frog buries its eggs in the ground. Wells believes the source of this unusual lifecycle is a genetic master switch, or a single gene that controls metamorphosis. "It's a quantum leap for our understanding," he said.

A key element to a genetic master switch is a protein called a thyroxin receptor, which determines what organs the frog develops at what time. For instance, the Mexican axolotl, an amphibian with a thyroxin deficiency, is water-bound its entire life.

The Rio Grande chirping frog may also be used as a guide to the quality of the local environment.

"Amphibians in general can be used as good monitors of environmental pollution," Wells said. He said by studying their genetic defects, scientists can monitor what pesticides, pollution or ultraviolet light effect frog embryos.

The frog's only natural habitat is in the southern tip of Texas. It was introduced to Houston and San Antonio by way of the potted plant; 1984 was the first confirmed sighting. It is now spread over much of southwest Texas. If the frog chirps have changed, it may signify that the Houston population of frogs has evolved to a unique and distinct version of the Rio Grande chirping frog.

Metro board approves rail heavy mobility plan

What officials are calling the most comprehensive rail plan in the city's history now heads to the November ballot box.

In a 6-3 vote, METRO's board of directors approved a 22-year transit expansion plan that includes 65 miles of light rail, and eight miles of commuter rail.

Beyond rail, the plan aims to increase express bus service by 50 percent adding 47 new routes and doubling existing service to 250 miles.

The Transit Authority was lauded for its bold move by many at the meeting who say traditional solutions to mobility problems, which in Houston means highway expansion, are costly and ineffective.

Waving a front page *Houston Chronicle* headlining budget overruns on the Katy freeway expansion, U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee told the METRO board roads cost taxpayers more to build than rail and bring more negative environmental and quality of life impacts.

The *Chronicle* reported that the Katy freeway project is running \$244 million over budget and could be delayed because of the high number of landowners fighting the taking of property needed for the widening.

The overruns prompted Commissioner Steve Radack to announce the County may have to reconsider its commitment to fund the expansion through toll road revenues.

Rail costs \$46 million per mile compared to roads, which cost \$77 million. Bigger highways also mean more cars on the road, emitting toxic fumes.

Lee also pointed out that Houston is the only major city in the country that does not receive federal funds to pay for rail related transportation projects. She said the majority of her constituents supported rail as a solution to Houston's mobility problems.

The roads-vs-rail struggle is at the heart of a continuing conversation on how to fund the new METRO plan. In order to pay for rail, METRO must cut its 25 percent budget allocation reserved for road construction and repair. A proposal to cut the road fund to 12 percent of METRO's budget was tabled until Aug 11, but voters will ultimately decide the issue this November. ●

August Calendar

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

Sat, Aug 9

Rice Design Alliance Partners Design Charrette - Launching the Energy-Wise Dwelling for Houston

Where: University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture
When: 8 am-6 pm
Contact: 713-348-4876
Fee: Please call

Buffalo Bayou Canoe Tour

Where: Buffalo Bayou
When: 3-7 pm
Contact: 713-752-0314
Fee: \$40

Katy Prairie Conservancy Workday

Where: Nelson Farms Preserve
When: 4-7 pm
Contact: RSVP to 713-523-6135
Fee: Free

Summer Supper Series Family Program - Marine Cuisine

Where: Houston Zoo
When: 6-8 pm
Contact: 713-533-6550
Fee: \$12 per person

Totally Turtles

Where: Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center
When: 10 am
Contact: 281-446-8588
Fee: Free

H-GAC Conference - How's Our Water? Protecting Our Rivers, Lakes, Bayous and Bays

Where: University of Houston - Clear Lake, Bayou Building, 3rd Floor
When: 9 am-3 pm
Contact: 1-877-506-1401 or TW05@swt.edu
Fee: Free; Please RSVP; choose water monitoring or water issues or Texas Watch

Sun, Aug 10

Birding without Books or Binoculars

Where: Houston Arboretum
When: 2-4 pm
Contact: 713-681-8433
Fee: Free

Tue, Aug 12

Night Prowl Family Program - Masters of Defense

Where: Houston Zoo
When: 6:30-8:30 pm
Contact: 713-533-6550
Fee: \$10 per person

Behind the Scenes at the Cockrell Butterfly Center

Where: Houston Museum of Natural Science, Cockrell Butterfly Center
When: 6 pm
Contact: 713-639-4629
Fee: \$20 for member, \$25 for non-member

Amphibians - A Foot on Stream and Land

Where: Houston Arboretum
When: 7-9 pm
Contact: 713-681-8433
Fee: \$15 for member, \$20 for non-member

Sat, Aug 16

Snake Hunt

Where: Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center
When: 10 am
Contact: 281-446-8588
Fee: Free

Sat, Aug 16 & Sun, Aug 17

Reptile Open House

Where: Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center
When: 1-4 pm
Contact: 281-446-8588
Fee: Free

Natural History Field Trip - Austin Bats

Where: Houston Arboretum
When: 3 pm-12 midnight
Contact: 713-681-8433
\$40; reservations required; bring money for dinner

Sun, Aug 17

Butterflies and Hummingbirds

Where: Houston Arboretum
When: 2-4 pm
Contact: 713-681-8433
Fee: Free

Thu, Aug 21

Native Plant Society of Texas Meeting

Where: Houston Arboretum

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: Glenn Olsen at 281-345-4151

Fee: Free

Sat, Aug 23

Piney Woods Wildlife Society

August Potluck Show and Tell

Where: Olde Oakes MUD Building

When: 6:30 pm

Contact: Kathy Coward at 281-893-1816

Fee: Free; bring food & slides to share

Tropical Plant Workshop

Mercer Arboretum

When: 8 am-5 pm

Contact: 281-443-8731

Fee: \$35 for member, \$45 for non-member;

Butterflies of Houston

Where: Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center

When: 10 am

Contact: 281-446-8588

Moonlight Moth Madness

Where: Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: 281-446-8588

Fee: Free; Reservations required

Butterfly Open House

Where: Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center

When: 1-4 pm

Contact: 281-446-8588

Fee: Free 8-23-2003

Volunteer Orientation

Where: Houston Arboretum

When: 9 am-12 noon

Contact: 713-681-8433

Free

Sun, Aug 24

Backyard Beasts

Where: Houston Arboretum

Contact: 2-4 pm 713-681-8433

Fee: Free

Tue, Aug 26

Reptiles in our Midst

Where: Houston Arboretum

When: 7-9 pm

Contact: 713-681-8433

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, at the Houston Arboretum, 713-529-6443. Please RSVP.

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, Samual 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, last Sat. Call 713-216-5000 or visit www.gpha.org for times and locations.

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.

Globalization

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against. At the July talks in New Orleans, the negotiating texts were not available to the public or to Congress. The only opportunity for public input was an adjoining room where public could sit and request a meeting with trade representatives who may or may not honor their request.

"I think the American public are being duped and their quality of life and their livelihoods are being reduced to a bottom-line profit line on a financial statement and that's a sad place to be," Edwards said.

Houston business leaders tend to downplay the effects of free-trade agreements, citing the city's thriving Port and energy sector as the most important factors affecting the local economy. But Harris County AFL-CIO's Richard Shaw said manufacturing jobs lost to globalization threaten the long-term health of Houston's economy.

"The effects will be secondary, but in the end they're going to hurt us," Shaw said.

"Houston might be able to survive for a while based on the oil and chemical industry, some of the major energy corporations headquartered here and our Port, but we're losing our manufacturing base."

Shaw pointed to the recent shut down of the Abitibi paper plant, which resulted in the loss of 300 well-paying jobs with benefits. He said Houston has no chance to replace lost manufacturing jobs, which means hard times ahead for the city's working class families.

While losing manufacturing jobs, the city also faces a growing population of unskilled workers, Shaw said. "Without jobs to put them in, many Houston families will be unable to ever work themselves out of poverty." ☉

Brigade

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"We absolutely refuse to be lead around by a hook through the nose," she said. "We want cooperation and we want (Nova) to responsibly tell what they're putting into the air and forcing us to breath."

About 40 residents of Shoreacres signed a letter addressed to Nova officials challenging them to involve citizens in the emissions reduction process with the help of the Bucket Brigade.

Armed with more knowledge and a plan of action, all residents can do now is wait for the company to except their proposal. ☉

In this issue:

Free trade agreements have local impact

Bucket Brigade takes on Nova Chemicals

City's first tree-sit kicks off local campaign

CEC Notes

Coalition Notes

EcoNotes

August Calendar

Citizens' Environmental Coalition

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June 2003

Newsletter &

Environmental Calendar

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