

Environmental Exchange

A publication of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition

October 2003
Newsletter &
Calendar

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

Houston neighborhood seeks city's help to cleanup dump

by Erika McDonald
Staff Writer

At a Houston City Council meeting last week, area residents reported the findings of soil tests from the ground near an abandoned landfill behind their homes.

For six years, residents of the Acres Homes super neighborhood have been trying to get the city of Houston to help investigate and cleanup the landfill shut down by the city more than 20 years ago. Since then, around 70 residents have developed cancer and 22 have died.

Suspecting a link between the abandoned dump and the high incidence of illness, the neighborhoods' civic associations took matters into their own hands. Residents partnered with the University of Texas Health Science Center to secure an EPA grant to test the soil around their homes for contaminants.

Soil samples tested by Quantum Environmental Services found evidence of arsenic, cadmium and lead at levels above Texas

Commission on Environmental Quality safety standards for residential areas.

City officials, however, maintain they have not taken action to clean up the site because they have no proof industrial dumping has occurred or that the area is contaminated.

James Smith, President of the Ella Park Terrace civic club said he has pictures of debris left at the landfill after it was closed.

"The previous owner did not keep a record of who dumped or what they dumped so they could have been dumping contaminants," he said.

Though soil samples taken by the city did not reveal hazardous levels of contaminants, health department officials say they are working with neighbors to further investigate.

Charles Roosevelt, environmental quality specialist for the city health department, said the Environmental Protection Agency would

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CEC honors local activists, groups at annual event

by Erika McDonald
Staff Writer

The CEC board of trustees is pleased to announce the 2003 Synergy Awards winners. Each of the groups and individuals honored represent the energy and expertise of Houston's thriving environmental community.

Corporate Awareness Award Star Pizza and Lola Savannah Coffee & Tea

In recognition of their diligent recycling efforts, Star Pizza is the recipient of the 2003 Synergy Award for Corporate Awareness. Each week, the restaurant staff recycle more than 2,000 pounds of tin cans, cardboard boxes, glass, plastics, paper and aluminum cans. Recycling more than 100,000 pounds of trash each year, Star Pizza has kept roughly one million pounds of waste from entering Houston landfills since their program began 10 years ago. Restaurant owners Henry and Marilyn Zwirek have extended their commitment and awareness to their employees by encouraging them to bring recyclables from home to the restaurant.

A second Award for Corporate Awareness was given to Lola Savannah Coffee & Tea in recognition of their enthusiasm about reaching out to the environmental community. The company offers a roast that is certified organic, fair-trade certified and certified bird-friendly. Bird friendly coffee is the only coffee on the market that is certified as shade-grown and organic by an indepen-

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Standing water and debris constantly collect in the backyards of Acres Homes residents.

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 Transportation Disconnect

by Catherine Rentz-Pernot,
Gulf Coast Institute

Are supply and demand out of sync in Houston?

A guest in Houston's auto-driven environment might easily assume that its inhabitants like building highways and being in cars. Indeed, Fodors travelers guide to Houston tells visitors that, "Driving is a necessity in Houston. Between sprawl and traffic, you'll spend a lot of time in your car." However, those who have viewed Houston and highways as synonymous might be interested to find out that its residents, though once well-known road supporters, are now more likely public transit proponents. That Houstonians want a change of pace should not be surprising to anyone. Pictures of crawling traffic along the city's congested corridors paint the picture clear enough. What may be more surprising is the disconnect between what taxpayers want to pay for and what the government plans to provide.

First, do car-grown Houstonians really want more public transit? Apparently so. Professional public opinion surveys and government-mandated transportation plans provide the evidence of such demand. First, the Houston Area Survey—a series of random-digit-dialed telephone surveys that have systematically polled Harris County residents since 1982—clearly indicates Houstonians' growing concern about transportation and growing demand for public transit. In 1993, only four percent of Houstonians thought traffic congestion was Houston's biggest problem and 45 percent thought mass transit was important to Houston's future. Now 33 percent believe traffic congestion is Houston's biggest problem (above all other problems including the economy and crime) and 52 percent believe mass transit is important.

If Houstonians see increasing value in transit, they see diminishing returns in road building. This year's survey also showed that almost twice as many people (46 percent) prefer public transit as the

best long-term solution to traffic over roads and highways (27 percent). The remaining respondents (24 percent) favor "developing communities where people can live closer to where they work and shop."

Government-mandated studies for the region's largest transportation project—the I-10 Katy Freeway expansion—also show distaste for large road expansions and demand for more transit. The I-10 Environmental Impact Statement cited more negative public complaints than positive comments. The most recent government study that transformed the planned HOV lanes on I-10 into mostly toll lanes resulted in the vast majority of comments reflected opposition to TxDOT's plan and support for a citizen-derived, transit-oriented plan.

The public outreach summary for the most comprehensive transportation plan for the region, the 2022 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, concluded that there is an "opposition to the financing of additional freeways and roadways as a solution to congestion problems."

Yet that same plan is set to add 5,644 lane-miles to the Houston region. That would add enough concrete to build a lengthy road from New York to Los Angeles, from Los Angeles to Pensacola, and from Pensacola to Houston.

The fact that Houston's road expansions are no longer limited to vacant lands could help explain the growing demand for alternative solutions. The Katy Freeway expansion project will take out over 871 businesses, 72 houses, 122 multi-family housing units, and two non-profit organizations. The loss of commercial and residential properties has already caused one city lining the freeway Spring Valley to propose a property tax increase on its remaining taxpayers.

The fact that Houstonians are paying more only to drive more could be another reason. A recent report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project found that Houstonians now drive more miles per capita than anyone else in the nation and their household transportation expenses are the third highest.

Despite an increasing demand for transit, road expansion projects continue to dominate future transportation plans. What could be the reason for such a disconnect between government supply and public demand in a city known to some as

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Adopt-an-esplanade program helping make Houston greener

by Pat Y. Spillman, Jr.
Contributing Writer

Houston's roadways may not be getting less crowded, but they are getting greener thanks to the Parks and Recreation Department's Adopt-an-Esplanade program.

Esplanades are open areas in the middle of a roadway separating two or more lanes of traffic. They are one of the few public spaces where Houstonians can contribute in a tangible way toward improving the environment by planting trees and shrubs to rebuild the city's declining urban forest and beautify their local communities. Vegetation absorbs air pollution helps to reduce the urban heat island effect by cooling the surrounding air and shading heat-absorbing streets.

The city continues to benefit from citizen-inspired beautification of its esplanades with more than 1,100 having been landscaped under the 10 year-old program.

"We receive about ten calls a week from organizations all over the city interested in landscaping esplanades," says Angela Solis, the Parks and Recreation Department's Adopt-an-Esplanade coordinator.

During the past three years, major esplanade landscaping projects have been undertaken in Tanglewood, on McGregor Road in southeast Houston, and in the Westchase District.

One of the largest in the city, the Antoine

Beautification Campaign, involved 43 esplanades with hundreds of trees and more than 2,400 shrubs planted along a four-mile stretch of Antoine Drive in north Houston. Campaign chairperson Daphne Tumlin says local neighborhoods, apartment owners and businesses raised \$170,000 and adopted individual esplanades.

The campaign employed Harris County probationers to plant landscaping and obtained grants totaling \$25,000 from a neighborhood matching grant program to help pay for the irrigation system and landscaping materials.

The Parks Department must approve any tree planting or landscaping on esplanades. Individuals or organizations wanting only to plant trees or a small area of plants and shrubs that can be manually watered should submit a drawing of the esplanade showing the location and types of trees and shrubs that will be planted. The Department's forester will inspect the esplanade to verify trees and shrubs can be properly spaced and set back from the street. The department of public works and engineering will determine whether any underground utilities might prohibit planting. The project sponsor is responsible for watering and mulching all plant materials as needed.

An esplanade project that will use an irrigation system requires a more extensive approval process. After obtaining an application package from the Parks Department, the sponsor must obtain the necessary plumbing and electrical permits for the irrigation system. The sponsor must submit the original and nine copies of the application, nine sets of esplanade drawings, and the permits to the Parks Department which distributes them to five separate offices at public works—traffic, right-of-way, utility customer service, water quality, and water conservation for review and approval.

"Despite the rather difficult approval process, city staffers were very helpful in moving our applications through the various departments," says Tumlin.

Organizations considering undertaking an esplanade project should first contact others that have completed projects for tips on expediting the application process and keeping costs down. ☪

Synergy

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dent inspector. This coffee comes from farms in Latin America that minimize their ecological footprint by providing excellent, forest-like habitat for birds. Lola Savannah has committed to offering only 100 percent organic coffee in the future.

Community Activist Award Mark Nelson and Patricia Greer

By promoting art as a viable way to address communities' environmental needs, Mark Nelson earned the 2003 Synergy Community Activist Award. Six years ago, Nelson began picking up dangerous shards of glass from city parks and turning them into colorful marbles. Today, his concern for safe parks and love for art has turned into a lesson in environmental stewardship. More than 900 volunteers have been trained through his public art project, Glass Free Grounds. Nelson has trained hosted dozens of workshops in city parkover the years. To date GFG volunteers have collected more than 1700 pounds of broken glass from Houston parks and turned them into 150,000 of the world's only marbles made from broken and discarded beer and wine bottles.

A second Community Activist Award was given to Patricia Greer, founder of Central City Co-op. Because of her efforts, hundreds of Houstonians now have the opportunity to purchase locally grown organic fruits and vegetables. Patricia also demonstrates her commitment to sustainable eating by holding workshops and monthly dinners to teach others in the community about the benefits of a raw diet and the environmental implications of eating locally produced food.

Government Award Ronald Jones

In honor of his decade of outstanding service with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, 2003 Synergy Government Award went to Ronald Jones. Throughout his career, Jones has been instrumental in developing educational opportunities at area schools by installing wetland prairies, grasslands and forested areas. He has overseen the expenditure of government grants for thousands of acres of private and public lands. Jones was the driving force behind the Urban Migratory Bird Conservation Treaty for the city of

GMO foods book signing at CEC

Join us in welcoming author and environmentalist Jeffery Smith Thursday, Oct. 16th who will be signing copies of his explosive exposé *Seeds of Deception*, which documents significant health dangers of genetically modified foods and the intense industry influence and political corruption that allow them on the market. Copies will be available for \$17.95. The event will be held at the Houston Environmental Center, 3015 Richmond Ave. at 6 pm. For more information call (713) 524-4232.

Houston. In his personal time Jones spends hours assisting local schools, organizations and individuals in their conservation efforts.

Sustainable Planning Award Buffalo Bayou Partnership

The 2003 Synergy Award for Sustainable Planning goes to the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, a group whose green guidance seeks to shape responsible development along the city's signature waterway. Last year, BBP released its master plan for the bayou that includes prioritizing water quality improvements, the creation of wetland habitat, increasing native plant species, open space improvements and an aggressive plan for trash removal, point-source pollution reduction and brownfields remediation.

Army & Sarah Emmot Conservation Award Carole Allen

The Synergy Conservation Award went to Carole Allen in recognition of her work to save the Kemp's ridley sea turtle from extinction. After discovering that the Kemp's ridleys were declining rapidly and might soon be extinct, Allen organized a volunteer organization, Help Endangered Animals-Ridley Turtles in 1982 and built a nationwide network of sea turtle advocates who lobbied Congress for the Turtle Excluder Device regulations and other conservation measures. She raised thousands of dollars for the "head start" program that consisted of ridley eggs from Mexico being hatched at the Padre Island National Seashore with hatchlings raised at Galveston for ten months before release. Although the program was stopped in 1993, Allen has contin-

ued working to keep the plight of sea turtles in the public eye. In August 2002, she left the volunteer ranks to represent the Sea Turtle Restoration Project in Houston as their Gulf office director.

Environmental Education Award Kids on the Bayou

The 2003 Synergy Award for Environmental Education went to Kids on the Bayou, for providing area children with fun bayou-related activities focused on academics, community service, recreation and creative expression. Kids on the Bayou is an innovative educational program for young people administered through the Bayou Preservation Association. Cooperating with other local environmental venues, the program organizes bayou camps for students and teachers during which, participants learn about bayou habitat and wetlands ecology. Teachers are encouraged to continue this learning process in the classroom with relevant curriculum materials and supplies. Through Kids on the Bayou, BPA has reached more than 6,000 students and initiated after-school bayou clubs in 20 schools throughout the city.

President's Award

Kevin Shanley

The 2003 Synergy President's Award went to Kevin Shanley in recognition of his invaluable contributions to the city's watershed management. His tireless efforts to broaden the community's understanding of local watersheds and their importance in Houston's quality of life have impacted bayou conservation groups and public policy makers. Shanley has been able to maintain a cooperative working relationship with the Harris County Flood Control District and, in this way, has helped shape agency policy with positive environmental results. Shanley's work as Bayou Preservation Association President has resulted in innovative projects like the Bayou Information Center, a unique online bayou mapping resource, educational programs like Kids on the Bayou and community-based planning projects like Willow Waterhole. Shanley's visionary approach to watershed management and commitment to civic involvement can best be viewed in the wide channel flood benches and forrested slopes of Sims Bayou and current changes being made to Allen's Landing.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Charles Tapley

For his years of commitment to green design, Charles Tapley received this year's Lifetime Achievement Award. A landscape architect, Tapley has brought his perspectives on responsible building to civic boards and institutions and architectural societies at the national, state and local level. Tapley has demonstrated his commitment to preserving the city's natural environment directing organizations like the Bayou Preservation Society and the Houston Arboretum. He also worked for eight years with prisoners and probationers to design, install and maintain Championship Park. Combining education with environmental stewardship, Tapley served for four years on the Architectural Advisory Council at Rice University. As a volunteer he worked to establish the Lynn Lowery Arboretum at Rice in 1998 and has since continued to assist the university on the arboretum's behalf. His non-profit organization, The Bayou Improvement Group raised funds for construction materials and plants to create an outdoor space for students and faculty at the University of Houston-Downtown.

Founders' Award

Hana Ginzburg

In honor of her more than 30 years of tireless work to improve Houston's parks and waterways, the Synergy Founders' Award went to Hana Ginzburg. Her talent for raising public awareness about the importance of Houston's natural treasures has been demonstrated through her years of writing letters, lecturing organizations and universities and leading tours along Houston's bayous. In 1966, Ginzburg built a grassroots community effort to establish Armand Bayou and Russ Pitman Park. She was also responsible for saving land along the bayou from becoming a parking lot for the University of Houston and turning it into a greenbelt. In 1988, when Hana learned that the bayou was threatened by a planned six-lane highway, her letters to the editor and mailing campaign generated enough opposition to halt the project. In 1979, Ginzburg raised money to buy a four acre parcel of land in Bellaire now known as the Nature Discovery Center. She recruited volunteers and solicited donations of materials to complete the landscaped park that exists today. Her talent and dedication to raising public awareness about maintaining Houston's parks and bayous have shaped conservation efforts in the city for the last 30 years.



Photo Courtesy Kids on the Bayou

Coalition Notes MfCA joins fight for cleaner air in nation's parks and schools

In September Mothers for Clean Air joined two national campaigns to promote air quality. MfCA joined the National Parks Conservation Association and 165 conservation, health, recreation, business, and community groups in urging Congress to clean up the air in our national parks. A letter was delivered to every congressional office, asking legislators to protect and restore air quality in America's national parks. According to the group, national parks across the country suffer the effects of air pollution, including visibility loss, acid rain, mercury contamination and negative health effects for park visitors, staff and wildlife. Haze generated from power plants and other sources frequently blocks scenic views at every national park. The Sam Houston National Forest is among those most threatened.

The group also announced Monday the launch of the national Green Flag Program, which works with schools to teach children a hands-on approach to solving environmental health problems before they start. MfCA will be one of the nation's first groups to help schools take part in the program. Through the Green Flag Program, children become detectives, investigating potential environmental hazards, such as pesticide use, cleaning products containing dangerous chemicals, and toxic mold.

After investigating, the program encourages students to work with teachers, administrators, custodians, parents, businesses and community members to ensure that their school environment is safe and healthy. Although mostly focused on Houston-area outdoor air pollution and its effects on children's health, MfCA launched the program after hearing parents' concerns about dust and mold in schools making their children sick.

For more information on MfCA's work at home and around the country, contact executive director Jane Laping at (713) 526-0110 or www.cechouston.org/groups/mca.html.

EcoNotes

Advocates say Prop 4 means more parks for Harris, other counties

In the September special election, Texas voters approved Proposition Four, a constitutional amendment allowing Municipal Utility Districts to use taxpayer money to build parks.

The new revenues will result in more parks, according to Glenda Barret, executive director for the Park People, a non-profit group that supported the measure. Barret said passage of Proposition Four is evidence that more and more people are joining the conversation about quality of life in Houston.

"This is a point that's becoming more and more popular, I think more people are realizing the importance of parks and green space and are trying to do something about it," she said.

State Senator John Lindsay, of Houston, said he sponsored the legislation because of quality of life concerns and economic benefits. Lindsay said more business would be attracted to Houston if the city offered more green space.

Still, the measure would primarily impact unincorporated areas. Harris County Parks Department director John De Bessonnet said by passing Proposition 4, voters helped the department in their race against developers.

"Someone has to look to the future," De Bessonnet said. "If commissioners didn't buy land 25 years ago that we're using today we would really be in trouble; if we can get to what we call the 'frontier area' of county before development gets there, we can get substantial parcels of land reasonably (priced)."

The law would apply to 13 counties across the state including Harris, Fort Bend, Galveston, Brazoria and Waller Counties.

TCEQ rule change may close industry loophole

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is considering an amendment to state clean-air law that could result in increased enforcement on industrial pol-

lution.

For years, a loophole has prevented enforcement action on companies that emit toxins at levels higher than allowed by their permit. Texas law currently exempts certain releases, known as upset emissions, from compliance with the federal Clean Air Act.

The proposed rule change would close the loophole by requiring enforcement action on all releases that violate federal permits. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defined upsets, but allowed states to adopt their own criteria for determining which releases were subject to penalties.

Clean-air activists who support the amendment say Texas companies have exploited the exemption claiming any release as an upset in order to avoid paying penalties.

Industry lobbyists are fighting to keep the rule the way it is, but the public also had a chance to weigh in. The comment period on the proposed amendment closed Mon, Aug. 25.

A ruling on the changes is expected out this month.

New Metro busses lower diesel emissions, increase fuel efficiency

Some bus riders may breathe a little easier now that METRO has purchased four hybrid diesel buses.

The 40-foot buses feature diesel engines with electric propulsion and "Breathe Easier" written across the side to indicate their improved emissions.

According to a METRO spokesperson, field tests in other cities such as New York have shown that such hybrid buses have improved fuel mileage, decreased emissions, lower noise levels, extended brake and bus life, and enhanced acceleration.

The \$1.9 million bus project is part of a regional governmental program called Clean Cities/Clean Vehicles that aims to encourage alternative fuels for cleaner air and greater fuel independence.

Seventy-five percent of the funding for the project came through the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality federal grant program.

For more information about the program, visit <http://www.houston-esolve> 

October 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.

Sun, Oct 5

15th Annual Lone Star Vegetarian Chili Cook-Off

Where: Splashtown off I-45 N in Spring, TX

When: 12-4 pm

Contact: (713) 560-9073

Fee: \$5 to taste chilies

Sun, Oct 5

Brawn, Brew & Bricks: A Tour of Bayou Industrial Architecture

Where: Contact for details

When: 2-5 pm

Contact: (713) 752-0314

Fee: \$20

Mon, Oct 6

Ornithology Group October Monthly Meeting

Speaker: Glenn Olsen

Where: Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet

When: 7 pm

Contact: Kathy Farr at (713) 939-9375

Fee: Free

Tue, Oct 7

Hands-On Gardening Skills Class - Fertilizing Fundamentals

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 6:15-8:15 pm

Contact: (713) 880 5540

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

Wed, Oct 8

Houston Audubon Society October Monthly Meeting

Where: University of St. Thomas, Cullen Hall

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: (713) 932-1639

Fee: Free

Rice Design Alliance Lecture - Selling

Style: The Houses at Sagaponac

Where: Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: (713)348-4876

Fee: \$7 for member, \$10 for non-member

Thu, Oct 9-Sat, Oct 11

Garden Club of Houston 61st Annual Bulb & Plant Mart

Where: Westminster United Methodist Church, 5801 San Felipe at Bering

When: 9 am-5 pm

Contact: www.gchouston.org

Fee: Free

Thu, Oct 9-Sun, Oct 12

Big Thicket Science Conference

Where: Holiday Inn Plaza, Beaumont, TX

When: Contact for details

Contact: (409) 839-2689 ext. 223

Fee: Contact for details

Sat, Oct 11

Harvest Moon Birding Event

Where: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson, TX

When: Contact for details

Contact: (979) 480-0999

Fee: Free

Houston Museum of Natural Science Day Excursion Shelling Trip

Where: Galveston & San Luis Pass

When: 8 am-3 pm

Contact: (713) 639-4629 or www.hmns.org

Fee: \$30 for member, \$35 for non-member

Katy Prairie Conservancy Workday

Where: Williams Prairie, Brookshire

When: 8 am-12 pm

Contact: (713) 523-6135

Fee: Free; Reservations required

Sat, Oct 11-Sun, Oct 12

Ornithology Group Field Trip - Edwards Plateau

Where: Holiday Inn, Uvalde, TX

When: Contact for details

Contact: Bill Saulmon at (281) 537-6924

Fee: Yes

Sun, Oct 12

BikeHouston - Moonlight Bicycle Ramble

Where: Contact for details

When: 2 am-4 am

Contact: (713) 222-BIKE or ramble@bikehouston.org

Fee: Contact for details

Mon, Oct 13

How to Start a Community Garden

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 4-6:30 pm

Contact: (713) 880-5540

Fee: Free; Reservations required

Wed, Oct 15

Urban Harvest 10th Anniversary Gala

Where: The Houstonian Hotel

When: 6:30 pm

Contact: (713) 880-5540

Fee: Yes; Please call

Thu, Oct 16

Houston Museum of Natural Science Day Excursion - Birding at Anahuac NWR

Where: Anahuac National Wildlife Reserv

When: 7:30 am-5:30 pm

Contact: (713) 639-4629 or www.hmns.org

Fee: \$25 for member, \$30 for non-member

Native Plant Society of Texas Oct. Meeting

Speaker: Mike Anderson

Where: Houston Arboretum

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: Glenn Olsen at (281) 345-4151

Fee: Free

Sat, Oct 18

Camille's Inside Look at the Salad Season

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 10:30 am-12 pm

Contact: (713) 880-5540

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

Ornithology Group Field Trip - Lake Anahuac Area

Where: Fort Anahuac Park

When: 8 am

Contact: Bill Saulmon (281) 537-6924

Fee: Free

Mon, Oct 20

How to Start a Community Garden

Where: Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

When: 1-3:45 pm

Contact: (713) 880-5540

Fee: Free; Reservations required

Tue, Oct 21

Hands-On Gardening Skills Class

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 October Sanctuary Seminar

Where: Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

When: 7:15 pm

Contact: (713) 932-1639

Fee: \$5 donation

Piney Woods Wildlife Society Meeting

Where: Mercer Arboretum

When: 7:30 pm

Contact: Kathy Coward at (281) 893-1816

Fee: Free

Wed, Oct 22

The Nature Conservancy - Houston Conservation Leadership Awards Luncheon

Hyatt Regency Downtown, 1200 Louisiana

When: 11:30 am-1:30 pm

Contact: (713) 524-6459

Fee: \$75

Fri, Oct 24 & Sat,
Oct 25

Creepy Crawlers Halloween Fun

Where: Armand Bayou Nature Center

When: 6-9:30 pm

Contact: (281) 474-2551

Fee: \$8 for member, \$10 for non-member;

Sat, Oct 25

Project Prairie Birds Workshop

Where: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory,
Lake Jackson, TX

When: 10 am-3 pm

Contact: (979) 480-0999

Fee: Free

Fri, Oct 31

Moody Gardens - Ghostly Gardens

Moody Gardens, Galveston, TX

When: 6-9 pm

Contact: (800) 582-4673

Fee: Contact for details

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.

Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition 3rd Weds, 7:30 pm, Lakewood Forest Residents Club, 15006 Lakewood Forest Drive

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, 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.

Landfill

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be brought in by the end of September to conduct a more thorough analysis of the site.

"We can't say at this point whether there is or isn't contamination," Roosevelt said.

"Once EPA gets in here, we'll be a whole lot better off."

Complicating matters is the question of ownership. When the city shut down the landfill, which was operating without a license, a temporary injunction was filed requiring the owner to comply with state environmental standards for closing the dump. City records show the owner, Raymond Booker violated the court order and served two days in jail in 1982. Since then, no property taxes have been paid on the land.

Booker denied owning the property or using it as a landfill. City officials say they cannot prove that dumping has continued.

As Smith and other Acres Homes residents await EPA findings, the question of who will ultimately clean up the mess still looms large. ☾

Transportation

Continued from page 2

the last bastion of laissez faire economics? Basically, it comes down to the fact that transportation is far from laissez faire. Government subsidies and a selective transportation democracy factor into an environment that favors road building over transit building.

Come January, visitors in Houston will find that they are able spend less time driving and more time touring when the seven-mile Main Street light rail opens along many of Houston's recreational and cultural destinations. Whether that transit supply increases to serve public transit demand in different areas throughout the city will be determined this November when residents go to the polls to vote on a referendum that would increase bus and light rail services. Voters, however, are a much different population than residents. Recent polls show support for more public transit among the voting population as well, but whether or not such demand as

seen on paper translates into concrete action at voting booths and beyond will be seen this fall.

Catherine Rentz Pernot is an Associate with The Gulf Coast Institute. For more information about the transportation disconnect, see the full report online at <http://www.livablehouston.org>. ☾

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