

# Environmental Exchange

A publication of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition

November 2003  
Newsletter &  
Calendar

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

## Organic farmers says local food good for people, planet

by Erika McDonald  
Staff Writer

Take a drive down Highway 59 and about an hour south of Houston, you'll find a small farm and one woman trying to make a big difference.

Joan Gunderson, who tills the soil at Gunderson Farm, grows fruits and vegetables for the Houston market without using genetically engineered seeds or chemical pesticides and fertilizers. She made the decision to convert her conventional farm to an organic farm 10 years ago.

After considering the health and environmental benefits of organic farming, Gunderson said the choice to convert the farm was easy.

"I knew that there had to be a better way to farm," she said.

One environmental problem commonly associated with commercial farms is the

widespread use of toxic pesticides. While federal standards control the amount of chemicals sprayed on crops, over time, the toxins accumulate in the body and cause health problems.

But consumers are not the only ones suffering from pesticide exposure. Of the dozens of farmers around when Gunderson started out almost 20 years ago, only one is left. Most she knew died from severe heart conditions and rare brain cancers, both associated with chemical exposure.

"That's a whole lot of farmers knocked off by pesticides," she said.

According to the National Cancer Institute, farmers are six times more likely than the average American to die from exposure to carcinogenic chemicals.

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## Act of Council may help Houston better manage acts of nature

by Erika McDonald  
Staff Writer

Houston City Council passed a plan proposed by Mayor Lee Brown to fund a 15 year infrastructure project through a two-dollar-per-month drainage fee. Proponents of the plan say it is a flood control measure that was long overdue.

The six council members opposing the fee argued Houstonians were being over-taxed. "Today is a dark day for taxpayers," Council Member Bruce Tatro said.

But David Peters, assistant director for the city's Public Works for storm sewer management, said the damage done by Tropical Storm Allison in 2001 helped build enough support to get the plan funded.

"It takes that type of catastrophic event to get peoples' attention, then you get the (political) support to help the people who need it," he said. "They've needed it for years but I guess their voice just wasn't loud enough."

Though the city has maintained storm and sewer infrastructure for more than a decade, the project has flailed because of inadequate funding.

President of the Bayou Preservation Association, Kevin Shanley called Wednesday's vote a "momentous step" toward flood management. He said dedicated funding for the drainage system was preferable to paying out of general taxes, which are susceptible to market forces and the whim of political leaders.

"Flooding is too important to fund through capital improvement projects be-



*Central City Co-op offers fresh organic fruits and vegetables in the Montrose neighborhood.*

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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 Voters should take broad view on light rail plan

by David Crossley,  
Gulf Coast Institute

The central question about whether to vote yes for the "Metro Solutions" seems to have become "What's in it for me?"

People concerned about environmental issues tend to have a little broader view about public policy, so here we can make the case more along the lines of "What's in it for my children, friends, and my greater community?"

The Metro plan is not just about rail transit. Most of the money will go to a very large increase in the bus system, including vast expansion of the high-speed suburban park-and-ride capacity. There are also big increases in express bus service coming.

Of course, 25 percent of the money over the next several years will go for roadwork, in order to make sure Metro keeps spending money to compete with itself.

The bus system will always be the largest part of the transit network. But it is the rail service that anchors urbanity and gives a sense of permanence that encourages compact and efficient development areas, so that people who want to can work, live, learn, and play in a world that is largely not about cars.

For the voters, the largest hurdle is to accept the idea that the central city must thrive in order for the region to thrive. This means accepting policies in the city that are quite different from policies in the suburbs.

Urban strategy is to pack services and attractors closer and closer together to enable increased exchange by decreasing travel distances. At the scale of the region, time is more important than distance, but at the urban scale, distance itself tends to be the issue. At their best, urban places allow access to huge numbers of amenities on foot. Places that grow in this way also require public transportation to allow people to move from one walkable place to another.

In Houston, there are at least two such places where the urban commitment has already been made, the Central Business Dis-

trict and the Texas Medical Center. These are now connected by a light rail line, and sooner or later there will be an urban, mostly residential commitment in Midtown, too, and perhaps between the Medical Center and the foot of the line.

Most of the people who choose to live in such dense places don't work in distant suburbs, but work downtown, in the Medical Center, in Greenway Plaza, or perhaps along the West Loop—generally speaking, inside the Loop. Though they will not be participating in freeway congestion, without adequate transit inside the Loop, they may still be contributing to inner-city traffic.

This can only be cured by more and better transit.

A rail line is always looking for the next closest dense or densifying place to throw a connector to. From Main Street, the next obvious places are Greenway Plaza and the Uptown/Galleria area. Indeed, the Metro plan envisions such a connector relatively soon.

Beyond this dynamic of searching for the next closest dense place, there is another prime mover of transit policy. Transit has a core mission of enabling mobility for people who are unable to participate in the car and truck system. This includes many disabled people, many elderly people, many young people, and many poor people.

One goal of cities should be to reduce the burden on society of the impoverished by enabling them to rise into the middle class. Isolating and concentrating the poor and near-poor in certain areas, then withholding certain public services from those areas, discourages the residents' rise to the middle class. Public transit, to the extent it reaches jobs and services, enables that rise.

So extending the tentacles of the rail system into the nearest places where there are growing populations of below-median income households and reasonably healthy indigenous economic activity hugely supports the goal of enabling the rise into the middle class.

Sending transit lines into areas that have been neglected in terms of public spending helps to redress inequity; this is part of what we mean by "environmental justice." It's also sound public policy because it begins to reduce the need for other social spending that is essentially unproductive.

Urbanization is how the City's tax base can rise as Houston moves into a future

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## Organics

*Continued from page 1*

Pesticide-laden run-off is a problem for all Houstonians, with the city downstream from dozens of commercial farms. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, farm pesticides and herbicides contaminate the groundwater in 38 states including Texas.

“With organic farming, we’re not polluting the land, we’re not polluting the soil, we’re nourishing and replenishing and going back to what this country was all about a lot of years ago,” Gunderson said.

In addition to polluted drinking water, water scarcity is also a concern. According to a 2000 study, Texas Environmental Profiles, more than half—65 percent—of the state’s water use is for irrigation and livestock.

Meanwhile, cities like Austin, Dallas and Houston are scrambling to meet municipal water needs.

Soil erosion is another problem caused by unsustainable farming practices. Each year the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports losses of millions of acres of farmable soil.

With state and federal energy legisla-

tion currently pending, Gunderson said this was another important way organic farming could minimize the agricultural industry’s ecological footprint. Commercial farming accounts for roughly 12 percent of the nation’s total energy consumption, according to the USDA.

Though the decision to convert her farm was easy, unwilling retailers and a cost driven market made the process difficult.

Gunderson said the Houston organic market was at least a decade behind places like Austin where demand for pesticide-free produce is high. She was originally turned away by Houston brokers who, in retrospect, may have underestimated the local market.

Patricia Greer, founder of Central City co-op sells fruits and vegetables from Gunderson Farm. She said more people are coming to the co-op to shop as awareness of the environmental benefits of eating locally grown organic food increases.

“When you go to the grocery store, you really don’t know what you’re getting,” she said. “It means something to people to come here to see the farmers’ face and know you’re getting healthy, natural food for your family.”

Gunderson now sells 50 to 70 percent of her crops to small co-ops like Greers’ and farmers’ markets. She said she hopes to scale back distribution to grocery stores even more as globalization makes it harder for her to compete with Mexican farms that can offer lower prices.

In addition to using pesticides banned on this side of the border, Mexican farms also pay lower wages and ship the produce to local stores in trucks that are not held to federal standards for diesel emissions.

Gunderson said the only way Texas’ organic, independent growers like her can survive is if consumers opt to shop at co-ops and farmers’ markets.

“At first I was discouraged, but then I decided what the heck, I’m going to do it anyway,” Gunderson said. “As a farmer, my purpose in life is to nourish people.”

Though there is currently only one farmers’ market in Houston (in the Heights) more maybe on the way.

Currently Urban Harvest, a local gardening co-op has plans to open a green market next year. ●

## Flooding

*Continued from page 1*

cause council politics and priorities change from month to month,” he said. “Setting up the utility as an enterprise fund is the best way to manage long-term infrastructure projects, he said.

While BPA supported the creation of the fee, Shanley said he would like to see the city go even further by changing its approach to flood management. Historically, Houston has addressed flooding by channelizing the bayous in order to move water more quickly out of neighborhoods.

“We need to think of rain water as a commodity,” he said. “Instead of trying to get rid of it as quickly as we can, we should be trying to keep it in the soil for as long as possible before moving into the streams, which can only hold so much water.”

Shanley said collected rainwater could be used to water lawns or be collected in detention basins.

He said the bayous could be turned into neighborhood assets by turning areas around them into green space and connecting habitat corridors and walking trails.

BPA also advocates the city employ concepts like permaculture or sustainable landscaping. One example Shanley provided were green roof tops. The city is covered with acres of flat roof tops that allow rain water to run off. He suggested planting vegetation on roof tops that would absorb rainwater and reduce urban heat island effect.

Another challenge to flood management in Houston is the soil’s natural lack of permeability.

Shanley said the city could take simple steps like stopping the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers in landscaping projects. These chemicals destroy microbes and worms that help keep the soil spongy and absorptive.

Though, according to Shanley, the city still has a long way to go when it comes to managing area watersheds, he said City Council took an historic step by creating the new drainage fee.

The new fee will appear on city residents’ monthly water bill. Businesses will pay based on the amount of stormwater runoff they contribute to the drainage system.

The city will raise millions more for the new drainage fund by restructuring the existing water/sewer-fund debt. ●

### Swing Vote

Election day is around the corner and you’re still undecided! Fear not, environmental groups in town and around the country have done the work for you. Many local groups hosted candidates forums leading up to the November election, giving the public a chance to hear from candidates first-hand their solutions to Houston’s environmental concerns. To find out what you missed visit <<http://www.cechouston.org>> for our special election coverage:

For national perspective, check *Grist Magazine* special election edition, “Electoral Collage,” which offers compelling analysis of environment as politics circa 2003. Check it out online at <<http://www.gristmagazine.org>.

## Coalition Notes

### Get transportation news notes from Gulf Coast Institute

Did you know that Houstonians travel more miles per day than there are miles between the earth and the sun? The distance between the earth and the sun is about 93 million miles. Houstonians drive about 156 million miles per day. You would know if you had read Gulf Coast Institute's new transportation bulletin. Several times per week, the electronic bulletin puts important facts, information and updates about the state of mobility in Houston right in your email. From light rail to freeway construction, the timely report considers quality of life and health impacts related to transportation planning. To subscribe to the digest, email: <issues@gulfcoastideas.org>.

## MfCA hosting series of environmental films at HEC this fall

Mothers for Clean Air will host a series of environmental film screenings throughout the month. The next event will feature the PBS documentary *Affluenza*, which takes a comic approach to exposing the health impacts of American consumerism and economic growth. *Affluenza* will be shown on November 14, at 7:00 pm.

The series is co-sponsored by CEC and Houston Sierra Club's *Sprawl* Committee.

Each-hour screening will be preceded by a time for conversation and networking with free refreshments beginning at 6:15 PM. A short, open discussion will follow each of the films. The films will all be shown on Friday evenings at the Houston Environmental Center in the Upper Kirby District Building, 3015 Richmond. Watch for upcoming announcements for the screening dates of three more videos that will round out the series.

For more information contact Jane L. Laping at (713) 526-0110 phone or mfca@mothersforcleanair.org.

## EcoNotes

### Council votes to fund weak mitigation plan for Spur closure traffic

Last month, Houston City Council passed a controversial \$2 million dollar plan to fund street projects on Richmond Avenue and West Alabama as part of plan to handle commuter traffic that will be diverted on to the two streets while Spur 527 undergoes construction.

The measure passed despite the fact neighborhood residents, federal regulators, city engineers and all the council members agreed the plan would not mitigate traffic congestion on the streets or community health impacts from the resulting pollution. The plan calls for \$1.7 million to install twelve contra-flow signals along Richmond and West Alabama to divert roughly 40,000 cars a day into downtown in the morning and back out again in the afternoon. Another \$360,000 will be used to install traffic surveillance

cameras along Richmond Avenue.

The city's own analysis through the department of public works determined the plan was inadequate. Federal regulators agreed; the Federal Transit Administration pulled \$3 million from the project. Still, council member and chair of the quality of life committee, Anise Parker, said the city made the best decision it could while being handcuffed by the Texas Department of Transportation.

Neighborhood resident Craig Bohn is a member of the West Alabama Quality of Life Coalition, a group currently seeking a temporary injunction against TXDOT. Bohn said he was disappointed by the city's response to resident's concerns.

"What I heard was city council asking us for suggestions. I believe in a representative government. City council is there to find solutions for us. Why isn't the city of Houston looking at a lawsuit instead of just a civic organization?"

Only two council members, Michael Berry and Ada Edwards voted against funding the plan.

Running out of options at City Hall,

## 2003 CEC Synergy Awards Night

About 120 of the hardest working folks in Houston's environmental community turned out



to honor their peers at the 2003 Synergy Awards last month at the Crowne Plaza Hotel-Downtown. The Coalition spends one night each year celebrating the efforts of their colleagues; this year's group of recipients proved their dedication to improving the city's quality of life. Synergy Award winners included Carole Allen, HEART; Mark Nelson, Glass Free Grounds; Star Pizza; Lola Savannah Coffee & Tea; Kids on the Bayou; Buffalo Bayou Partnership; Ronald Jones; Charles Tapley and longtime activist Hana Ginzburg.



Above, left: Presidents' award recipient Kevin Shanley received a standing ovation. Above, from left-right: CEC President Will Meyer, Community Activist Award recipient Patricia Greer of Central City Co-op.

*Photos by Charles Irvine*

WALQ is now ready to take their fight to a federal court. But according to the group's attorney Jim Blackburn, it is unlikely the suit against TXDOT and the Federal Highway Authority would be amended to include the city of Houston. Though disappointed by the city's vote, Blackburn said he blamed the state and federal agencies for not providing the city with enough information to make a better decision.

The city has not yet set a date to begin the street project. They have until January to get ready for the 40,000 commuters. TXDOT will begin Spur construction after January to accommodate the Super Bowl.

## KCC amends lawsuit to charge state agency hid loop construction

Attorneys suing to stop construction on the Katy Freeway found documents they say could be the smoking gun in their lawsuit. At a town hall meeting of about 200, lawyer for the Katy Corridor Coalition Jim Blackburn presented administrative records from the Texas Department of Transportation that detail construction contract for loop 610 as part of the Katy Freeway project. Loop construction and possible related impacts were not included in publicly disclosed documents or considered during environmental analysis.

The 610 contract calls for construction that would elevate the loop as much as 20 feet. Blackburn said that residents in the nearby Lafayette neighborhood who raised concerns about noise pollution were dismissed. But the recently discovered documents reveal an increase of six to eight decibels.

Blackburn said TXDOT violated federal law by issuing a categorical exclusion, a document that can only be authorized when there is no impact to park land. However, TXDOT records include a plan to extend the I-10 feeder road and acquiring right away in Memorial Park.

The loss of parkland and noise pollution were not part of environmental analysis even though construction plans for Loop 610 had been in the works since June of 2001. Documents detailing the plan were eventually unearthed by attorneys who had issued subpoenas. They realized the

connection between the Loop and I-10 when they discovered both projects listed under the same contract number.

Blackburn said the state agency's deliberate concealment of 610 construction plans could work in KCC's favor. If federal judge John Hoyt determines TXDOT violated the law, he has the authority to halt the project.

"Ultimately, what we're fighting for is the chance to get this project done right," Blackburn said. "The Katy freeway truly is the frontier for transportation in this region."

TXDOT officials were contacted but were unable to comment because of the pending lawsuit.

## EPA adds new data to regional air monitoring

Beginning last month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will forecast air quality based on concentrations of fine particulate matter that contribute to haze and can reach the deepest parts of the lungs.

These particles, a mixture of microscopic pieces of dust and ash and droplets of liquid, are 100 times thinner than a human hair. They're released by cars, industrial plants and forest fires, or formed when gases react in the atmosphere.

At certain times of the year in Houston, particles from crop-clearing fires in Mexico or dust storms in the Sahara trump ozone, according to state officials.

Air quality forecasting based on ozone, created when pollution reacts in sunlight, began in the late 1990s, using the index.

While high ozone tends to dominate Houston summers, fine-particle levels become elevated on cold, calm winter nights when there is little wind to disperse them.

Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services said they would begin to watch fine-particle levels on an hour-to-hour basis and use them to issue warnings. As it does for ozone, the county will recommend that children remain indoors on level red days, but admitted that different guidelines would be needed because fine particles also contribute to indoor air pollution and, unlike ozone, can affect people with heart disease.

Nine monitors in the Houston area continuously watch particulate matter, according to the TCEQ.

## Annual A&M study ranks Houston among worst cities for driving

According to a study by Texas A&M University in October, the average Houston commuter spent 55 hours extra in 2001, a full work week plus two days, stuck in traffic.

Those whose commutes took longer than the national average of 25 minutes, wasted even more time in the car.

Houston tied for 13th nationally with Atlanta and San Bernardino-Riverside as the study ranked worst places to commute.

The study found transit saved the average Houstonian 5.7 hours of potential delay per year. Total annual delays in the area would have been about 15 percent higher if transit did not exist, and about 2 percent higher without HOV lanes.

The institute's report always lags two years behind its data, which are based on traffic counts by state transportation departments. The raw numbers are sent to the U.S. Department of Transportation, which organizes them and returns them to the states.

Compared with last year's report, based on data from 2000, Houston's congestion changed slightly. The so-called "travel time index," a ratio of the time an actual commute takes during peak hours compared to free-flow conditions, rose from 1.38 to 1.39. In other words, it takes about 40 percent longer during rush hour.

## Campaign report says Houston developers have too much influence

A coalition of civic groups including the Sierra Club gathered in downtown Houston Tuesday to announce that the average Houstonian can't afford access to local politics. A report released this week by Campaigns for People, an advocacy group for electoral reform, revealed that 90 percent of contributions to Houston's successful mayoral campaigns came from donations larger than \$1,000 and more than half were larger than \$5,000. The average city council race costs more than \$300,000 to win. The average Houstonian makes \$24,000 per year. The report found the largest contributors to city campaigns were

# November 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](http://www.cechouston.org) and click on Calendar.

## Mon, Nov 3

### Ornithology Group Meeting

**Where:** Bayland Community Ctr, 6400 Bissonnet

**When:** 7 pm; 6:30 Learning Corner

**Contact:** Kathy Farr at (713) 939-9375 or

[www.ornithologygroup.org](http://www.ornithologygroup.org)

**Fee:** Free

## Tue, Nov 4

### Ecological Pest Management

**Where:** Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

**When:** 6:15-8:15 pm

**Contact:** (713) 880-5540

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

## Wed, Nov 5

### Bayou Preservation Association Gala

**Where:** Fiesta San Felipe

please call

**When:** 6:30-10 pm

**Contact:** (713) 524-2366

**Fee:** \$100

## Wed, Nov 5-Sun, Nov 9

### Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival

**Where:** Harlingen

**When:** Contact for details

**Contact:** 1-800-531-7346 or [www.rgvbirdfest.com](http://www.rgvbirdfest.com)

**Fee:** Contact for details

## Sat, Nov 8

### Houston's Working Waterfront: An Industrial Tour of Companies that Revolve Around the Port of Houston

**Where:** Contact for details

**When:** 9 am-12 noon

**Contact:** (713) 752-0314

**Fee:** \$35

## Sat, Nov 8 & Sun, Nov 9

### Armand Bayou Nature Center Fall Festival

**Where:** Armand Bayou Nature Center

**When:** Sat 9-5, Sun 12-5

**Contact:** (281) 474-2551

**Fee:** Contact for details

### Colossal Creatures (ages 4-5)

**Where:** Houston Zoo

**When:** 9-10 am or 10:30-11:30 am

**Contact:** (713) 533-6550

**Fee:** \$15 for member, \$20 for non-member

## Sat, Nov 8

### Wild-Proofing Your Home

**Where:** Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center

**When:** 10 am

**Contact:** (281) 446-8588

**Fee:** Free

### Rice Design Alliance 2003 Gala

**Where:** 1500 Louisiana

**When:** 7 pm

**Contact:** (713) 348-4876

**Fee:** Contact for details

## Mon, Nov 10

### 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, Nov 12

### The Baird's Tapir - Field Research for Conservation

**Where:** Houston Zoo, Brown Education Center

**When:** 7 pm

**Contact:** (713) 533-6550

**Fee:** \$12 for member, \$15 for non-member

### Lunch Bunch: Plant Now for a Beautiful Spring

**Where:** Mercer Arboretum

**When:** 12-1 pm

**Contact:** (281) 443-8731

**Fee:** Free

### Houston Audubon Society Meeting

**Where:** Cullen Hall, University of St. Thomas

**When:** 7:30 pm

**Contact:** (713) 932-1639

**Fee:** Free

## Sat, Nov 15

### Buffalo Bayou Canoe Tour

**When:** 1-5:30 pm

**Contact:** (713) 752-0314

**Fee:** \$40

### Battening Down the Frost Cloth: Being Prepared for the Worst Winter Ever

**Where:** Mercer Arboretum

**When:** 9-11 am

**Contact:** (281) 443-8731

**Fee:** Free

## Sat, Nov 15-Sun, Nov 16

### Sierra Club Backpacking Trip - Turkey Creek in the Big Thicket

**Where:** Contact for details

**When:** Contact for details

**Contact:** Bruce Baird at <[bruce2skis@aol.com](mailto:bruce2skis@aol.com)>

**Fee:** \$25

## Sat, Nov 15

### Breakfast on the Bayou

**Where:** Armand Bayou Nature Center, Bay Area Park

**When:** 8-9:30 am

**Contact:** (281) 474-2551

**Fee:** \$20 for member. \$25 for non-member; children & seniors \$5 discount

## Sun, Nov 16

### All About Owls

**Where:** Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center

**When:** 2 pm

**Contact:** (281) 446-8588

**Fee:** Free; Reservations required

## Mon, Nov 17

### 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, Nov 18

### Irrigation for Gardeners

**Where:** Urban Harvest, 1900 Kane

**When:** 6:15-8:45 pm

**Contact:** (713) 880-5540

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

### Piney Woods Wildlife Society November Meeting

**Where:** Mercer Arboretum

**When:** 7:30 pm

**Contact:** Kathy Coward at (281) 893-1816

**Fee:** Free

## Houston Audubon Sanctuary Seminar

**Where:** Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

**When:** Contact for details

**Contact:** (713) 932-1639

**Fee:** \$5 donation requested; reservations

## Thu, Nov 20

### Power Tools for Nonprofits Conference

**Where:** Reliant Center

**When:** 8 am-4 pm

**Contact:** (713) 743-1060

**Fee:** Contact for details

## Fri, Nov 21

### Native Plant Society Meeting - Annual Plant and Seed Swap

**Where:** Houston Arboretum

**When:** 7:30 pm

**Contact:** Glenn Olsen at (281) 345-4151

**Fee:** Free

## Sat, Nov 22

### The Heavyweights (ages 6-9)

**Where:** Houston Zoo

**When:** 9:30-11:30 am or 1-3 pm

**Contact:** (713) 533-6550

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

### Piney Woods Wildlife Society Field Trip Where:

Big Creek Scenic Area

**When:** Contact for details

**Contact:** Kathy Coward at (281) 893-1816 or

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/piney-woodswildlifesociety>

**Fee:** Free

### Canoeing Armand Bayou

**Where:** Armand Bayou Nature Center, Bay Area Park

**When:** 8-11 am

**Contact:** (281) 74-2551

**Fee:** \$20 for member, \$30 for non-member

## Sun, Nov 23

### Fall Nature Walk

**Where:** Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center

**When:** 2 pm

**Contact:** (281) 446-8588

**Fee:** Free

# 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.ghpa.org](http://www.ghpa.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](http://www.taep.org), [reservation@taep.org](mailto: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.

# Transportation

*Continued from page 2*

where annexation of surrounding areas no longer provides that growth. From now on, we'll have to earn it, and that will eventually lead to public officials grasping the need for urbanization in certain areas.

The voters in this referendum are focused in Houston and western Harris County – the Metro service area. Large portions of Eastern Harris County, including the next largest city, Pasadena, are not part of the Metro system.

Houston residents should vote for this transit plan in order to give the City an urban advantage to balance the cheap-land, cheap-homes policies that drive suburban growth. Rail transit can give the city that advantage.

If a real city can develop with a complete range of housing choices available, this will slowly take pressure away from distant land development.

As the Urbanist Andres Duany says, "It is only when we learn how to make cities great, that people will want to stop

escaping them and trampling nature with sprawl."

Air quality, water quality (and quantity), habitat, parks and other green space, human health, and the whole range of environmental issues depend on the rational urbanization of the region in a way that ultimately is both highly efficient and provides the maximum number of choices.

For the suburban dweller who is unable to comprehend why the health of the center city is important to his or her own future, the plan provides a lot of new high-speed bus service that will serve only suburban dwellers.

The transit plan is the key to a transformation of place that offers the chance of improved quality of life for everyone. ☉

## Eco Notes

*Continued from page 2*

developers, transportation engineers, law firms, concessionaires and unions.

Part of the coalition, environmental groups were most concerned about contributions from developers and trans-

portation engineers. Money from both sectors combined for more than \$3 million since 2001.

Major contributors to city campaigns included Perry Homes and David Weekly Homes and Properties.

The report, "Playing the Game: Big campaign contributions and political influence in Houston, compiled election data from 2001 to July 2003. ☉

### In this issue:

Organic farmer wants Texas consumers' support

Council approves drainage fee to manage flooding

Perspective: Transportation expert advocates light rail

Resource Corner: Green groups focus on elections

CEC Notes

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EcoNotes

November Calendar

# Citizens' Environmental Coalition

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