

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

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DECEMBER 2010**

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

November Meeting

Evaluation of Exposures to Air Toxics from Natural Gas Compressor Stations in the Barnett Shale

Melanie Sattler, PhD, PE
Associate Professor, Environmental
Engineering, Environmental
& Earth Sciences Program
Dept. of Civil Engineering, UTA

Wednesday, November 10, 7 pm
Fielder Museum
1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)

What's the natural gas boom doing to
our air? Dr Sattler, a former ACC
president, has studied the issue and
will give us some answers.

**Remember to bring
something for the raffle**

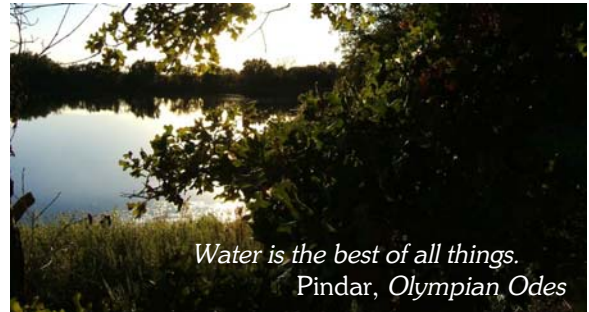
Bits & Pieces

Another Invisible Resident

The tiny great plains narrow-mouthed toad isn't a toad, often lives far from plains, frequently in tarantula holes, and specializes in eating ants. It's here, nocturnal and usually underground, so we don't see it. Just another neglected member of the Invisibles Club.



Today's Inspirational Moment



Water is the best of all things.
Pindar, *Olympian Odes*

Democracy in Action



Texas voters
have spoken.
Environmentalists can
relax at last.



A cheerful Web site: Inhabitat.org



Tired of depressing environmental news? You can get lots of free good news on a great variety of innovations at [Inhabitat](http://Inhabitat.org) — and sign up for a free newsletter loaded with inspiring stories related to the idea that “Green design will save the world.” (Thanks to John Dycus for this one.)

From the President Jo Ann Duman

Is focus as difficult for you as it is for me? It seems we are beset with something else every day when we care about our environment. Bless the people who carpooled to another Comanche Peak hearing last week. The company and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have made it clear the expansion will be permitted and constructed despite the science and facts on the impacts from the existing units (increased cancer deaths in the downwind plume of the old plant are statistically significant).

I went to the Open House with TCEQ and TRC arranged by State Senator Wendy Davis on October 16. Met Kim Feil there with her rolling mannequin, Mr. Ben Zene, gas mask and all. I toured the mobile equipment, learned how crews respond to complaints and what they can monitor. Turns out they can test for things like formaldehyde, but only back in a lab instead of on the spot. The state employees were good about

answering questions. I learned from a TRC employee why oil and gas drilling sites are contaminated with low-level radioactive wastes, but he couldn't tell me who pays for the Texas Dept. of Health to decontaminate those sites or why the industry doesn't have to do the cleanups.

Do not miss the November 8 Sunset Town Hall at the Sheraton Arlington, 1500 Convention Center Road (near the ballpark) for dialogue with a distinguished panel about sunset review of the Texas Railroad Commission and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. (As one ACC member told the TCEQ employees at the air quality plan hearing in Arlington a couple of months ago, they act like their name is the Texas Commission for Environmental Pollution - wish I'd thought of that.) Registration starts at 6:30 pm and the action at 7:00 pm. *[Sorry, you'll see this too late to attend but you can submit comments online - Ed.]*

The City of Arlington won a national award for its water conservation programs and installed native plants at city hall that will save water in future and reduce maintenance costs for years to come. We need to save water as the latest reports from government and universities show climate change will reduce available water supply in the western US by half over the next century.

Despite its good efforts for the environment, the city continues to permit gas drilling, an industrial activity, in residential areas. Only after Texas Sharon paid for air testing and proved there are toxic emissions from those activities have local officials and state regulators begun to consider the problem. It took years for the city ordinance to be changed to require a 600-foot distance from homes, schools and parks, yet variances are easily granted. The proposed drill pad next to the Southwest Nature Preserve

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THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Photos by Wesley Miller and Jim Varnum

This just in (never thought I'd say that about the prairie): Plant authority Jim Varnum, reacting to a bad year for a local orchid, went looking for it at our little prairie remnant — and found it. Here are his two photos, *left* and *lower right*: Nodding ladies' tresses, *Spiranthes cernua*. Thanks Jim, and Wes too, for the photos.



Wildscape Update **John Dycus**



Fall brings all manner of cosmic delights, not the least being a new batch of Cross Timbers Master Naturalists. Read that: potential wildscape volunteers. Texas Parks and

Wildlife's Jessica Alderson recently brought the intern class of 2010 to the wildscape for a tour. They learned a bit of its history and were shown its many virtues and what a great place it is to volunteer. Lunch at Mijo's sealed the deal.



Also last week, a younger crowd from the next-door Montessori Academy — first-, second- and third-graders —



trooped through on a Walk on the Wildside field trip. They learned about birds in the wildscape and the different ways seeds are dispersed. They made seed balls and experienced with a hands-on activity how ants forage and communicate with each other by scent. They saw how important color can be to survival by playing the camouflage game. Most of all, they got to appreciate an urban wilderness.

Wildscape volunteers have especially appreciated planting, weeding, watering and pruning in this urban wilderness, what with the beautiful weather and the changing fall colors. As the floor show for first Saturday, Arlington Parks and Recreation Department forester Matt Churches led a short tour of his own to detail the benefits of native trees. They not only include beauty and environmen-

tal aspects, but major money. A city analysis explaining just how much money is at http://www.arlingtontx.gov/park/forestry/forestry_ufore.html. The wildscapers took away an even greater appreciation of the job that trees and the APRD Forestry and Beautification folks do for us.



December continues the first-Saturday topic of trees, specifically post oaks. Steve Chaney from AgriLife Extension Service will discuss "Preserving the Post Oak Forest." After learning about the importance of trees from Matt, how could anyone not want to do that.



Thanks

In October, UTA landscape architecture professor David Hopman set some sort of record for a speaker: We just wouldn't let him go home, and he never seemed to mind. His topic, Towards a New Urban Ecology at UT Arlington, had everything we like, from native plants to mixed-use development, and he heaped humor onto insight and expertise. Our vote: More!



President continued from page 2

fails even the original, inadequate 200-foot rule, as it would be only 187 feet from the headquarters office of a local business. How can the city council continue to disregard public safety and health this way?

After the craziness of the elections, the holidays are coming up. It will be time to concentrate on family, friends, and celebrations. Come to the November 10 program and enjoy the cozy setting at Fielder House. ACC will take a break until January when we'll start a new year and, it seems, carry on the same old worries and fights.

Helping the Little Guy John Darling

For some time I've been a member of the city's Brownfields Committee, a group related to efforts to safely develop contaminated sites. At the last meeting I was surprised to learn that the city used brownfields grant money to help a developer implement a project that many of the nearest residents deplore.

The project seemed bad to me before I heard about the money because the proposed student apartments really didn't fit the neighborhood; renderings featured a black roof, the opposite of what we need in this time of global warming; and it looked like lots of trees would be lost in the process.



I learned that offering financial help with testing for contaminants is routine. Other committee members expressed favorable opinions, including the notion that it couldn't have been much money, maybe only three or four thousand dollars. One member stated flatly that the site was an eyesore, while I see it every day and thought of it as an agreeably messy mass of trees and scruffy shrubs (lots of privet), full of fox squirrels, cardinals, and chickadees and quietly sucking up pollutants while pumping out oxygen.

Here's how the city staff person summarized the situation: "FY2007 Grants Closeout ... There are two sites that participated in our Brownfields program that are now being redeveloped, Maverick Village and the ACC site [not our ACC, just more student apartments]. There was some discussion at the meeting regarding the Maverick Village project and whether we should be providing financial assistance to projects when many residents were opposed to the final design. However, most members present felt design decisions should be left to Council, and that the goals of the Brownfields program should be limited to providing environmental assistance where needed."

Well, council did say yes, over the ardent protests of neighbors, and I'm left wondering what I'm doing on that committee. The answer appears to be nothing at all.



Southwest Nature Preserve John Darling (left) and Danny Kocurek (right)

We've seen two big developments recently for our most beautiful piece of post oak woodland: one very bad city council decision, and the release of the first information about just how the preserve might look in the future.

Last week, council voted in favor of the zoning change that would allow a gas well very near the preserve's northern boundary to proceed. Despite concessions by Vantage Energy, questions about the effects of a gas well on the preserve were never addressed.

Given all the recent data on the negative effects of gas drilling, extraction, and compression, it is essentially impossible to believe that the nearby plants and animals will not be adversely affected.

We were assured that drainage and prevailing winds favor minimal impacts, but we all know that sometimes the wind, filled with unknown quantities of airborne toxins, will blow right into the preserve.

And what about the effects of bright lights and loud noises? Just a couple of quick thoughts: Nocturnal mammals forage most during the dark of the moon, and their predators have adjusted to this pattern over millennia. Owls call for mates and advertise their territories over great distances at night. They also listen for tiny sounds made by shrews and rodents in the darkness. How much disruption will bright lights and loud noise cause?

This unhappy decision was made even as many of us already fear the effects of seemingly unstoppable plans to widen Bowman Springs Road along the preserve's western edge. As I see it, the road widening is unjustified, and the gas well is not only unnecessary, but also potentially harmful.

As usual, progress has prevailed and all we're left with is the forlorn hope that things won't be as bad as we expect.

On a very different note, a first look at the draft plan for the preserve shows promise for sensitive development. No doubt, Parks & Rec staff and the preserve advisory committee members will be looking at every detail in the coming weeks, and in this case our hopes will be high.

Dear Southwest Nature Preserve Supporters,

Please call 817-459-6122 today and tell your City Council we need to table the vote on the gas well next to Arlington's Nature Preserve until they get enough information to make an informed decision.

Last week, the Arlington City Council approved the first step to place the Vantage gas well adjacent to the Southwest Nature Preserve by a vote of 6 to 3. The final vote will occur in 1 week. We need to bombard the Council with our objections this week. We believe the vote was marred by misinformation by Vantage and we need to act now before it is too late. We only need 2 votes.

Because the well was moved a short distance from the original plan, your Council Members and Mayor will believe you are no longer opposed to the Vantage well unless you call. The well is still less than a football field away from the Nature Preserve and still violates the intentions of the Gas Well Ordinance.

Vantage has said that the other gas well across the street is not going to be approved because of technical issues. I have spoken with the people in charge of this site and this is untrue. Vantage will say anything to get approval and we need to stop their lies.

We have also discovered that the recommendation from the Parks Board to "require identification of impacts to native wildlife" has been ignored. This was a specific recommendation voted on by the Parks Board and it has been completely ignored. The only City Board looking out for the Nature Preserve has had its recommendation negated.

Please call 817-459-6122 today and say you are opposed to SUP 10-14 and the vote needs to be tabled until the Parks Board recommendations are followed. Also please encourage your friends and family to call. This one number covers the entire council and the Mayor.

If you want to add any of the following, please do.

- There is another well site 1600 feet away that can service all of the leases in Arlington. Arlington residents will lose no royalty money.
- Contrary to what Vantage has said, the other gas well across the street is very much available.
- Also please ask why the recommendation from the Parks Board to "require identification of impacts to native wildlife" was ignored.

Arlington does not need a gas well on every corner and Council needs to take the control of this process back from the gas companies.

Thank you for your support.
Danny Kocurek

Southwest Nature Preserve Draft Plan



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How did you hear about us? _____

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't Forget!

Wednesday, November 10
7 pm

Dr Melanie Sattler

***Evaluation of Exposures to
Air Toxics from Natural Gas
Compressor Stations in the
Barnett Shale***



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