



October 2009  
Volume 46 No. 9

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### DON'T MISS

**October 9:  
Wild & Scenic  
Environmental Film  
Festival**

- see flyer inside

**October 24:  
Carrotmob!  
Festival 350 at the  
Fountain!  
Cambria Climate  
Action day!**

- see page 3



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# SANTA LUCIAN



*Protecting and  
Preserving the  
Central Coast*

The official newsletter of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club • San Luis Obispo County, California

## The PG&E Plan: Trick the Voters and Make Them Cry

**If you liked the budget wars, you'll love the "2/3 requirement for local power," PG&E's monopoly protection referendum**

*By Sierra Club California*

There are lots of reasons to oppose the PG&E-backed ballot initiative, "New Two-Thirds Requirement for Local Public Electricity Providers."

We think a better name would be: "The Utility Monopoly Protection Amendment," or ThUMPA, since this measure would allow utility companies to use the state constitution to beat back local governments that try to provide energy choices for their communities.

PG&E, which provides electricity to about three quarters of Northern California, has put \$750,000 into signature gathering for a statewide ballot measure that is likely to be up for a vote next June. It needs 694,000 signatures by December 21 in order to qualify for the ballot. The measure came to the Attorney General from PG&E's Beale Street corporate offices in San Francisco and, so far, PG&E is the only contributor to the campaign, according to California's Secretary of State.

If it passes, the referendum would

amend California's Constitution so that communities that wish to give consumers an alternative to investor-owned utilities would first need two-thirds approval from voters. Why two-thirds? Well, you need a two-thirds vote to raise taxes in California. PG&E is trying to trick voters into thinking that this is about taxes and taxpayers, when in fact it is about choice of energy service.

Most deceptively, PG&E makes it sound like the initiative would "give taxpayers a choice." But PG&E has designed this "choice" to be as difficult as possible for voters. That's why they didn't offer a majority vote; because a public alternative to investor-owned utilities might actually pass. But a two-thirds vote,

where the utility can spend an unlimited amount on the campaign — and local governments are banned

*continued on page 5*



**If you missed it** Check out the exposé in the Sept. 10 edition of New Times, "PG&E pushes vote to limit public power."

## Morro Bay and Cayucos Flying Blind

**Mayor Peters leads charge to proceed with 2006 sewer plan despite major changes**

On September 8, at a packed meeting held in the auditorium of Cayucos Elementary School, the Morro Bay City Council and the Cayucos Sanitary District, acting under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), voted to proceed with a three-year-old-plan for an upgrade of their wastewater treatment plant without considering recent major changes in the proposed design. Their staff and consultants had informed them of the changes only the week before.

The JPA members had just learned that the existing plant site is in a 100-

year flood plain and therefore would have to be demolished, not upgraded, with a new facility built on the location of the site currently used for

sludge drying and composting. The formerly contemplated plant upgrade

*continued on page 9*



**Who cares what you think?** The Morro Bay City Council and Cayucos Sanitary District ignored overwhelming public testimony urging them to take the opportunity to make their sewer upgrade into a better project.

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photo/Karen Walsh

It's time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

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Outings, events, and more!

## Green Music & Seed Exchange

**Sunday, Oct. 18: The Pozo Green Music Festival**, a celebration to bring about awareness to the green economy & alternative sources of energy, and support of environmentally friendly goods and services. Local vendors & green information with local organic & vegetarian food and the famous Pozo BBQ. Tickets on sale at Boo Boo Records (SLO), Cheap Thrills (SLO), Boyd's Tobacco Shop (Paso Robles), Arlington Theater (Santa Barbara) or online @ [www.pozosaloon.com](http://www.pozosaloon.com).

**Friday, October 23, 6 – 9 p.m.: SLO Community Gardeners Seed Exchange** in the SLO City Library Community

Room is an opportunity to share gardening knowledge and learn more about saving seeds, locally grown grains and grasses, medicinal plants, hybrid vs open pollinated seed, how to garden year round in our climate, and plants that attract native pollinators. Free, open to the public, no need to bring seeds. For more information call: 543-5364.



Save the date: Sierra Club General Meeting - Protecting our coastal resources and creating sustainable Coastal Communities. **Thursday, November 12, 7p.m., Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo**

## Are We “Protecting Agriculture?”

### A view from Santa Barbara

by Bob Field

You may wonder what the ongoing policy struggle over agricultural land-use is about, particularly since both sides in this debate claim to have the same goal: protecting agriculture.

Sometimes when people say they have the same goal but they can't agree, it indicates that they do *not* have the same goal.

Not surprisingly, this issue is about money. Land-use decisions that increase the market value of ag land are profitable to the current owners but are detrimental to the economic viability of agriculture in the longer term. The increasing land cost makes it increasingly difficult for future buyers to make money through agricultural use of the property.

Since the high price of ag-zoned land is a primary threat to the long-term survival of agriculture in Santa Barbara County, it helps to understand the building blocks of the market price:

1) The intrinsic value: This basic value reflects the land's ability to produce economic profit through agricultural production. Factors include soil, climate, exposure and access to water, labor and markets. Alone, this should never be a problem because no rational agricultural businessman would pay more than would allow a reasonable return on investment.

2) The development rights value: Added to the intrinsic value is the value of the development rights available under the zoning. Quite simply, more development rights equals more market value. Aggravating the problem are development rights not related to agriculture, such as bed and breakfasts, non-agricultural housing or businesses, and so-called special events.

3) The speculative value: The price rises again when the buyer has reason to believe the market value of the land will go up over time, and return a profit upon sale. A trend in adding development rights in-

creases the speculative value.

4) The size of the parcel is an additional and significant factor. A very reliable rule of thumb is that the smaller the parcel, the higher the cost per acre. A routine practice of allowing subdivision of ag-zoned lands also adds to the speculative value.

So two of the worst land-use decisions we could make would be to add non-agricultural development rights to ag-zoned land, and to allow further subdivisions.

Interestingly, these actions are precisely what some agricultural landowners are lobbying for.

Their first argument goes like this: “Anything that puts money in the hands of the current owners makes it more likely they will stay in agriculture.” In the short term this may or may not be true, but in the long term it raises the market price of the land and certainly is detrimental.

Their second argument is the threat that if their requests are not granted, it will lead directly to urban development of the land.

First, this is not true because urban uses are not allowed under ag zoning. Second, and most ironically, the circular argument is that if we don't let them build houses, hotels and businesses on ag land, then the result will be houses, hotels and businesses on ag land! This argument invites intellectual whiplash.

In conclusion: Beware of proposals to “protect agriculture” by taking actions that will increase the market price of the land.

*This article originally appeared in the “Community Matters” column of the July 8, 2009, edition of the Santa Ynez Valley News. Bob Field is a retired businessman, volunteer president of his neighborhood's mutual water company and past chairman of the Valley Planning Advisory Committee.*

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The Executive Committee meets the third Friday of every month at 12:00 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 547-B Marsh St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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# October 24th is Climate Action Day

It's time to get the message to the people who need to hear it

Global Warming and climate change have long been a priority for the Sierra Club even before our Cool Cities Program, a do-it-yourself version of the Kyoto Accord, which now has over 900 U.S. cities signed up to the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement or joining the Partners for Climate Protection program. Prominent among the organizations that have recently sprung up to take on the challenge of combatting climate change is "350.org"

The organization was launched in 2008 by Bill McKibben, author of the book *Fight Global Warming Now*, and a team of young organizers behind the Step It Up 2007 campaign. The "350" concept comes from a path-breaking article by noted climate scientist Dr. James Hansen which found, based on an examination of both current and paleoclimatological records, that over the long run, 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (350 ppm) is the upper boundary for climate that will support life on earth as we know it. The level in 1750 before the start of the Industrial Revolution was 275 ppm. Our current level is 387 ppm and rising at just under 2 ppm per year.

Last August, Rajendra Pachauri, the U.N.'s top climate scientist, said that 350 was the bottom line for the planet. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which Pachauri heads is responsible for advising the world's governments on climate change. The IPCC's last report in 2007 didn't actually set a target for CO2, but it was widely interpreted as backing a goal of 450 ppm CO2. That is a number that many environmental groups and governments, including the Obama administration, seized on as the best science available. But that finding came before the Arctic melted, and before the world's leading climate scientists started producing reports showing that 350 ppm was in fact the planet's real threshold. Now Pachauri has given his imprimatur to that message.

October 24 is the day designated by 350.org for an international day of action at hundreds of iconic places around the world—from the Taj Mahal to the Great Barrier Reef—in the hopes of sparking a global movement that will unite the public, media, and our political leaders behind the 350 goal. The International Day of Climate Action is designed to call attention to this "most important number on earth" and show that people around the world are ready to take up this challenge. In the U.S., hopefully, the public will be motivated to weigh in on the Energy Bill now in Congress and urge strengthening of its carbon

emission and carbon trading provisions.

The people of San Luis Obispo

County will be doing their part: as we go to press, three local events are scheduled for 10/24, and there is time

to add more (are you reading this, Morro Bay?) The event planners are currently in the throes of creation, so to speak, so all the details weren't available, but the website is constantly updated ([www.350.org](http://www.350.org)) and lists events and details as they are added. For those who are still looking for dramatic ideas (there are dancing girls and bubble blowing in Vallejo), the website lets browsers go anywhere in the world to see what is planned.

## Events in SLO County

### North County:

A "Festival 350 at the Fountain" will take place on Saturday between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. The event has been organized by Transition Towns Paso Robles/SLO as the 350 theme fits so closely with the Transition Towns' goals of addressing global warming and peak oil, as well as building resilience in the local economy. There will be bands, appealing to a variety of age groups and tastes, an improv theatre group, information, handouts and displays, green businesses, and a surprise event at 1p.m. that dramatizes the 350 ppm carbon goal. For more information on volunteering or attending the event, contact Fred Frank at 610-6876 and/or go to the Transition Towns P.R. website: [www.transitionpasorobles.org](http://www.transitionpasorobles.org) or [www.transitioncalifornia.ning.com](http://www.transitioncalifornia.ning.com)



### San Luis Obispo:

A "Carrot Mob" event will take place at a yet unnamed, locally-owned liquor store in the City, from 3:50 to 7p.m. A carrot mob is a reverse boycott; consumers "reward" an eco-friendly store by giving them a lot of business. In return, the business will use a certain percentage of the profits to make eco-friendly improvements to the store, such as an energy retrofit. It's a "win-win" for the consumer, the store and the earth. For more information and to sign up, visit the website: <http://slo.carrotmob.org>



### Cambria:

The Cambria 350 Action Group is holding an informational and awareness rally and picnic from 1-3 p.m. at Shamel Park, 5455 Windsor Boulevard. Pack your picnic lunch and come on down. Go to the 350 website to get contact information and updates or call Stevan and Lori Rosenland at 805-927-9557.



Whatever your geographic inclination may be, please turn out in large numbers to show your support for both the goal and the organizers who have worked hard and creatively to make the voice of the people heard in high places while there is still time to act.



Transition Towns Paso Robles members at a meeting to plan "Festival 350 at the Fountain."

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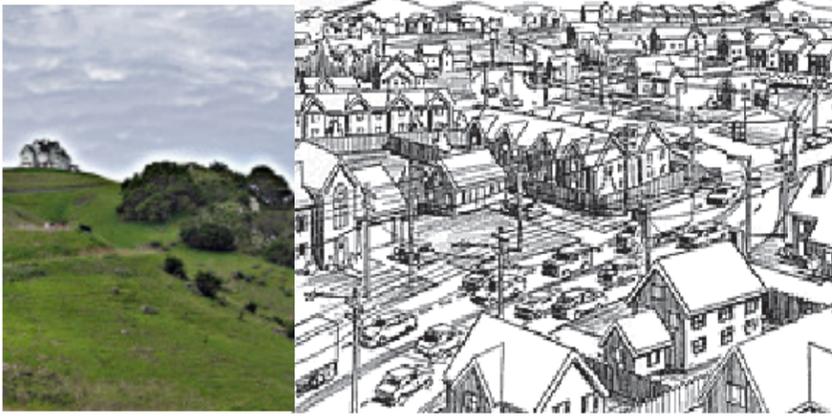
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### "This is one of those crux moments of our lives, when not choosing is choosing."

"It doesn't take 51 percent of people to make huge change happen," says 350.org co-founder Bill McKibben, "five percent of people is more than enough if they're doing stuff, if they're being loud about it, if they're being smart and persistent about it. That's why I don't worry about trying to convince the 25 or 30 percent of Americans who refuse to be convinced about global warming."

Speaking at Mt. Holyoke College in Massachusetts earlier this year, McKibben told the audience "It's the political fight that's going to make the difference. And all the rest — corporations' greenwashing ads, people changing to compact fluorescent light bulbs — all of that, in some sense, is secondary to the real fight. The one good thing is: We'll know. The suspense is not gonna go on forever; we'll know within the lifetime of everybody in this room whether we made enough change to at least begin this process with some prospect of success."



## How Base Was My Density

Now is a good time to rethink ag clusters

By Eric Greening

The County is in the throes of updating the Conservation and Open Space Element, which will be finishing hearings at the Planning Commission and moving on to the Board of Supervisors in the next few months.

The original Conservation Element which this document is to replace is now 33 years old, so it is about time. The Open Space Element is barely a decade old, and was part of the controversial Agriculture and Open Space Element that itself took close to a decade to produce.

Originally, it was the intent of the Planning Department to bring the whole Agriculture and Open Space Element into the COSE, but one of the last legacies of the previous Board of Supervisors was to detach the Agriculture policies and leave them to stand as is. Since an Environmental Impact Report is being prepared on the COSE, it had been my fervent hope that the Agriculture policies would, at long last, get EIR treatment. (The AG-OS was approved under a Negative Declaration, which Life on Planet Earth challenged, and narrowly lost.) But that is not to be. However, one of the more controversial and impactful agricultural policies is still arising as an issue that the COSE may have to consider.

Our "Ag Cluster" policies were created, nominally, to reduce the impacts of developing "antiquated subdivisions" on the agricultural lands where they are found. Old parcel lines were often drawn with no reference to the productive capacity of the land to sustain a family, and enclose holdings at risk of becoming sprawling ranchettes.

Ag clusters were sold to the public and the decision-makers as a way to preserve property rights while protecting agricultural land. The idea was to consolidate existing entitlements and into development in one corner of an agricultural operation, keeping the rest whole and unimpaired. Since no EIR was done on this policy, it was simply asserted that the development thus created would be an improvement over development *in situ* of antiquated lots.

Not only does such an assertion play fast and loose with the California Environmental Quality Act, it completely ignores a feature of the cluster policy that arguably encourages rather than contains the suburbanization of agricultural land.

It goes by the wonkish name of "base density calculation." To create new parcels in grazing land, the minimum size is 320 acres, with two primary residences allowed on each parcel. To create new parcels on fertile irrigated cropland, orchard or vineyard, the minimum parcel size is either 40 acres (with two primaries)

or, under specified circumstances, 20 acres, with one primary residence. Grazing land allows one residence per 160 acres, while irrigated cropland on prime soils allows one residence per 20 acres.

In cluster after cluster, the rabbit that has emerged from the hat is the *creation of lots* that never existed before, based on these ratios. Thus, an incentive is created to convert grazing land to irrigated production not for sustainable agricultural reasons but in order to octuple the number of imaginary lots that can then be clustered. Since the irrigation itself is not subject to county permitting, there is no public process to assess the sustainability of the water supply for the newly irrigated acreage. Normally, a sensible agriculturalist would look into this prior to making the decision to intensify the production. However, if the goal is to create many more new parcels to cluster and sell off, the sustainability of the agricultural production is not an issue for those who are more drawn to the promise of real estate profits than to the demanding and uncertain life of the committed agriculturalist.

Because this base density issue can have a serious impact on water supply, the question has arisen whether a policy prohibiting or limiting ag clusters, or at least the creation of new lots in such clusters, needs to be in the Water chapter of the COSE. If it does get into the COSE, there will be a General Plan consistency issue with the existing cluster policies in the Agriculture Element. But these policies are, thankfully, undergoing review anyway, and maybe a forthright statement in the COSE will create the nudge it takes to stop pretending that a policy intended to protect agriculture is, in fact, threatening it.

To put it bluntly: Should there be an incentive for mining groundwater to create the basis for more sizable leapfrog residential developments in the midst of working agriculture? And if there should, how is this consistent with our professed commitment to "strategic growth" and prudent conservation of resources?

This is only one of the many dramatic issues in play in the COSE. Many bad habits have the opportunity to be challenged through this document by asking more blunt questions: Can Cultural Resource destruction be "mitigated" by documenting what is being destroyed? Can habitat destruction be "mitigated" by a promise to not destroy some habitat somewhere else, leaving a net minus in the habitat?

The most basic question of all, one that can be asked of you in the future, looking back, is: Where were you when these issues were being decided?

## Why We Support the Employee Free Choice Act

Global warming represents not only one of the greatest challenges we face as a generation, but also a tremendous opportunity to move toward a clean energy economy where creating good jobs and protecting the environment go hand in hand. It has been projected that a \$100 billion investment in the greening of our economy over the course of two years will create 2 million new jobs nationwide. Such investment in green recovery and infrastructure would create four times more jobs than spending the same amount of money within the oil industry, and could roughly triple the number of good jobs paying at least \$16 an hour.

One way to help ensure that these green jobs will also be good family-supporting jobs is to allow workers a democratic chance to form unions. That's why the Sierra Club supports the Employee Free Choice Act, which would give workers a fair and direct path to form unions without the fear of being fired, help employees secure a contract in a reasonable period of time, and toughen penalties against corporations who violate workers' rights.

### Why being Green should mean being Blue too

In recent years, trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have led to the off-shoring of more than 1.5 million jobs. These agreements have enabled companies to relocate to countries with weak or non-existent protections for workers and the environment, incentivizing reckless behavior in pursuit of corporate profits.

In addition, the American worker has been besieged by shrinking wages that fail to keep pace with inflation, increased healthcare costs and uncertain futures as pension plans have been put in jeopardy and retirement funds continue to disappear.

Given the current financial crisis, it is more important than ever to focus on farsighted policies that will strengthen the American workforce. Unions can provide a counter-balance to corporate greed by giving workers a voice on the job about safety, security, pay, benefits and about the best ways to get work done. Union members make on average 30% more than non-union members and nearly 80% of unionized workers receive health insurance, compared with 49% of non-union workers.

However, the current labor law system makes it difficult for workers to form unions. Employees who try to form unions are routinely harassed, and often even fired. Among private sector employers whose workers try to form unions, 25% have illegally fired at least one worker for union activity.

### Why Unions Are Better for the Environment

Protecting workers' freedom of association is closely linked to efforts to protect the environment and communities. Workers serve as the front line of defense against hazardous pollution, chemical spills and other accidents that can devastate communities. Union workers are better trained to know about the health and safety risks of hazardous chemicals and have greater protections if they blow the whistle on hazards and accidents in the workplace.

Across the country, union workers have worked to hold corporations accountable for pollution that threatens both workers and the environment. As an example, the United Steelworkers filed a lawsuit that forced the state of California to protect its residents from the chemical PFOA(C8), used in the manufacture of Teflon, which has been linked to birth defects and increased cancer rates. Steelworker members in New Jersey were also instrumental in preventing a chemical treatment plant from dumping the effluent from treating highly toxic nerve gas agent VX into the Delaware River.

Organized labor has played a critical role in passing some of the strongest environmental policies and regulations in the United States, supporting the Clean Air Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, pushing the implementation of the Toxics Release Inventory, and fighting to keep workplaces and communities safe from dangerous chemicals and pollutants.

Allowing workers the basic right to form a union and to play a greater role in the workplace will be essential to the success of a green and healthy economy. The Employee Free Choice Act would give workers the ability to work for decent pay, be treated with dignity, and take care of their families.

**We reject the notion that we have to choose between good jobs and a clean environment. It's not one or the other. It's both or neither.**

- Leo Gerard, International President, United Steelworkers



May 6, 2009: The Sierra Club participated in a 24-hour vigil for the Employee Free Choice Act in downtown Los Angeles.

**PG&E's Trick**  
continued from page 1

from campaigning at all — would set up a hurdle too high to get over.

The irony, of course, is that no one ever gets to vote on anything PG&E does (or the other monopoly utilities like Southern California Edison or San Diego Gas and Electric); Only public power options offer citizens the right to vote on how they are run, and these opportunities come with every regular election.

The targets of this measure are municipal utilities and a program that most Californians have probably never heard about: Community Choice. Community Choice is a right— under state law— that allows local governments to contract for electric power, and make this service available to all local utility customers. Customers are automatically enrolled, unless they choose otherwise, and are given multiple notices of their rights to opt out of the program. Community Choice differs from municipal power in that the utility continues to operate the transmission/distribution system, billing, and customer service.

Community Choice electricity programs allow ratepayers to reject PG&E's expensive and environmentally unsound power portfolio (including 23% nuclear power), and choose greater renewables and efficiency, local control and better rates. Today, local governments can offer this choice without going to a public vote, for the same reason communities don't need a vote every time they decide who is going to collect the garbage or pave the roads — that is why we elect city councils.

PG&E wanted to call this the "Taxpayer's Right to Vote Act," a title rejected by the Attorney General because financing for Community Choice local energy programs does not require any tax money beyond the initial startup cost of a few hundred thousand dollars, which is paid back immediately out of the revenue from customers.

Startup for a municipal utility is more expensive because of the need to buy out the existing system — but even then, the startup costs are easily repaid through rates, which are invariably lower because munis are non-profits, unlike investor-owned utilities like PG&E that collects over 11% profits and pays extravagant executive compensation.

Once up and running, both Community Choice and municipal programs can use low-interest or zero interest "revenue" bonds that are repaid by the value of energy produced from power generation equipment. That is another key reason why local public power agencies have 20% to 30% lower rates than privately-owned utility companies like PG&E. Revenue bonds are usually approved by a vote of city councils or county supervisors because they do not expose taxpayers, but PG&E's initiative would require a 2/3 vote of the public instead.

Both public options — Community Choice or Municipal Utilities — continuously generate revenue that provides more benefits for the local economy and more construction of renewables and energy efficiency than for-profit utilities. Community-owned power has been 20% cheaper, on average, for over 100 years.

The two-thirds vote requirement for state budgets has crippled Sacramento's ability to deal with California's on-going budget crisis; PG&E's referendum would extend this discredited arrangement to commu-

nity control of power. PG&E aligns itself with those who oppose government involvement in essential public services. Community Choice and public power both provide democratic control of energy services, because the community buys or builds its own power.

PG&E sees this affordable green

**Community-owned power has been 20% cheaper, on average, for over 100 years.**

power as a threat and wants to protect its market share by manipulating the legal referendum process under the rubric of a jaded, fictitious taxpayer populism. In "two-thirds" elections it wants, PG&E has the unlimited right to reach into our rates to fund its campaigns. It can also sprinkle money on community organizations, and support local political candidates—to ensure that everyone either "partners" with PG&E or remains on the sidelines. On the other side of the campaign, the cities and public power agencies are banned by law from campaigning. Public agencies are forbidden to spend *any* money on electoral campaigns, and public employees may only participate as private individuals. The fight would not even be close to fair.

In Yolo County, PG&E spent \$12 million—the most that had ever been spent on a local election— to defeat a proposal to extend the territory of a public power agency, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), to 73,000 customers in Eastern Yolo County. SMUD's electric rates are 25% lower than PG&E's, but relentless propaganda including TV ads and mailers persuaded voters that leaving PG&E would be "too expensive and too risky." The corporation has spent millions against three public power campaigns in San Francisco since 2001, and defeated them all.

By squelching local efforts to scale up renewable power and energy efficiency, California's targets for carbon reductions would be jeopardized, because many local governments are seriously committed to meeting the state's targets for reducing greenhouse gases while PG&E's own record is lackluster, falling short for both renewables and efficiency.

For example, California's Renewable Portfolio Standard law (2002 and 2006) stipulated that investor-owned utilities should expand their renewable portfolio by 1% each year until reaching 20 percent in 2010. But PG&E ignored the 1% and has admitted it will fail to reach 20% until 2013. Unfortunately, a loophole in the law allowed utilities to excuse themselves on the grounds that renewables weren't "economically feasible." No such feasibility problems stopped their lavish spending on lobbying, political campaigns, and greenwashing to cover up their environmental failures. Governor Schwarzenegger's 2008 Executive Order mandated raising the Renewable Portfolio Standard to 33% by 2020. PG&E has lobbied against this target for several years.

Such program failures by the utility are a big motivator for local governments pursuing alternative programs, with some Community Choice programs establishing renewable targets as high as 51%. Local governments are waking up to the fact that they hold the ace card for reducing

the cost of clean energy. Representatives of Community Choice programs in Marin, San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley have objected to PG&E's strong-arm tactics. San Francisco Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi called the state ballot initiative "PG&E's deceptive act to kill its competition and subvert any California city's right to chart its path toward energy independence." Marin County Supervisor Charles McGlashan called it, "a cynical

attempt to gum up the works for everyone who competes with these monopolies."

There is a compelling public

interest to make it as easy as possible for communities to promote clean energy, reduce pollution and increase local and consumer control over energy decisions. PG&E's ballot initiative makes a mockery of its self-proclaimed leadership in clean energy and climate protection, places corporate interest above the public good, and makes it more difficult to confront global climate change.

**TAKE ACTION**

Find out about Community Choice in your area, make sure *not* to sign the referendum's petition when approached by paid signature gatherers, and if it does get on the ballot, let your friends know why it's a bad idea.

**How Wonderful to See Democracy Work**

*by the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility*

As summer wound to a close, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility discovered that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was planning to hold its only western public meeting on Generic Environmental Impacts for reactor license renewal in Westlake Village, near Los Angeles—a 160-mile drive for everyone here. San Luis Obispo representatives demanded that the NRC hold this meeting in the impacted reactor community. At the urging of the Alliance, with the support of the Sierra Club and local residents, the NRC canceled the September 22 meeting and is in the process of rescheduling a date in SLO. (Thank you, Supervisor Hill, Assemblyman Blakeslee and Congresswoman Capps.) The Alliance also worked closely with Southern California representatives and residents and the NRC has announced a second meeting nearer to San Onofre.

Some of the issues that the NRC told our elected officials are "generic" include: Solid Waste Management; Emergency Planning; Human Health, Radiation - exposures to the public and occupational workers and impact from chemicals; Postulated Accidents; Categorizing spent fuel storage, security, health effects and radiation exposure; need for power; and economic feasibility. If we had not spoken out, these issues would have been decided in Westlake Village virtually without public input from our community.

In 2003, ANR's Rochelle Becker was the only person to attend the first "public" NRC meeting on license renewal criteria. The meeting was held across the street from Disneyland, and the evening's proceedings were as Mickey Mouse as they could be. The fact that six years later the NRC could announce, with a straight face, that it was encouraging public participation by locating the meeting well over 100 miles from either reactor site does not inspire trust.

The Alliance is now reviewing the 602-page License Renewal document as well as comments from other reactor communities and elected officials. We invite you to sign on in support of our comments and recommendations, and we encourage you to attend the NRC meeting when it is rescheduled. Visit our website, [www.a4nr.org](http://www.a4nr.org) for an update on the new time and date.

And if you have a minute, take a look at the Alliance's new project, SWANS (Sensible Women Advocating Nuclear Safety). The project is designed to honor women around the country who have worked unpaid (or underpaid) to protect our children, our grandchildren and our future. The SWANS will create ads on relevant nuclear issues for use by anyone who wishes to place them in newsletters, media, web sites, fact sheets and more. Each SWANS newsletter will highlight 3-5 women in different states who have committed themselves to challenging nuclear issues that impact our safety, our security, our economy, and the reliability of our dependence on radioactive kilowatts. Check SWANS out at [swansweb.org](http://swansweb.org).



**Call for Candidates**

In November, Chapter members will vote for the candidates who will lead the Santa Lucia chapter on its Executive Committee in 2010.

We encourage our members to run for the ExCom and become a part of the dynamic action of Sierra Club leadership on energy, global warming, water and land use issues.

The ExCom meets in December to appoint the chair, vice-chair, secretary

and treasurer, as well as program, conservation and outings chairs.

We also appoint a delegate to the Council of Club Leaders, a liaison to the national Sierra Club.

Candidates are elected for a term of three years. Deadline for nominations is **October 12**. Contact Letty French at [lettyfrench@gmail.com](mailto:lettyfrench@gmail.com) or call the Sierra Club Office at (805) 543-8717.

# That's a Lot of Water

By Sue Harvey  
Chair, Conservation Committee

Wine growers and residents on the West Side of Paso Robles – the heart of wine country – are experiencing escalating problems with well water supplies and the east side growers and residents aren't faring much better.

There are 32,950 acres of wine grapes planted in the north county according to the Ag Commissioner's Office – 5,275 on the West Side and 27,675 on the east side within the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. Grape growing and wine production are water consumptive. With the right kind of retentive soils and climate and over 24 inches of rain a year, you may be able to dry farm your grapes but for the most part, vines rely on a combination of rainfall and ground water aquifers. Vineyards require two acre feet of water per acre in the north county. Rainfall and ground water supply the two acre

feet. The more rain, the less ground water needed.

In a June 3 presentation on vineyard management to the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC), industry representatives showed how Best Management Practices could reduce vineyard water consumption to around 1 acre foot per acre of grapes, as practiced by the J. Lohr vineyards. In response to a question posed to Dr. Tom Rice, Cal Poly soils expert, at the August 28 California Wine Month Sustainability Tour sponsored by the Central Coast Vineyard Team, P.R. Wine Country Alliance, and SLO Vintners, Dr. Rice stated that the west side Adelaida aquifer was millennia old and not subject to recharge by rainfall. That translates to a one-way trip for the depleted aquifer.

And growing the grapes isn't the whole story for water. Wine production in a carefully managed winery such as J. Lohr adds an additional 1.2 gallons of water per gallon of wine

produced. The Lohr operation processes 2000 acres of grapes with a conservative 5.3 acre feet of water annually. Many wineries consume much more water in production. The industry average is 3.5 gallons of water for each gallon of wine produced.

That's a lot of water. Although some vineyard operations may have replaced high-consumption alfalfa

*continued on page 10*



## Take 2 Minutes to Support a Marine Sanctuary for SLO

The movement to get the waters off SLO County declared part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is gathering steam, and you can be part of it!

If you own or manage a business in the county dependent on tourism, the extension of the Marine Sanctuary would be just about the best thing that could happen to your business, and your opinion carries weight.

Just go to:

[www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/documents/MBSE.pdf](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/documents/MBSE.pdf)

and download the petition, print it out and fill it in — or hand it to your favorite local business owner to fill out and mail to us.

That's it. We'll make sure you get the word when your voice is needed at a public meeting to help make this happen. One call, one meeting.

If you or your friend want more information or need any convincing as to why this is a very good thing to do, go to: [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/lucian/2009/06June.pdf](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/lucian/2009/06June.pdf)

The ocean thanks you!



Terry Lilley

## Now In Color, Thanks to Bill

You hold in your hands the colorful new incarnation of the *Santa Lucian*, thanks to a

generous donation from Bill Denneen, distinguished eco-hooligan, bane of off-roaders on his beloved Nipomo/Oceano Dunes, and elder statesman of environmental awareness on the central coast.

Eldr Bill, you're the best.



# Activists Beat Oil

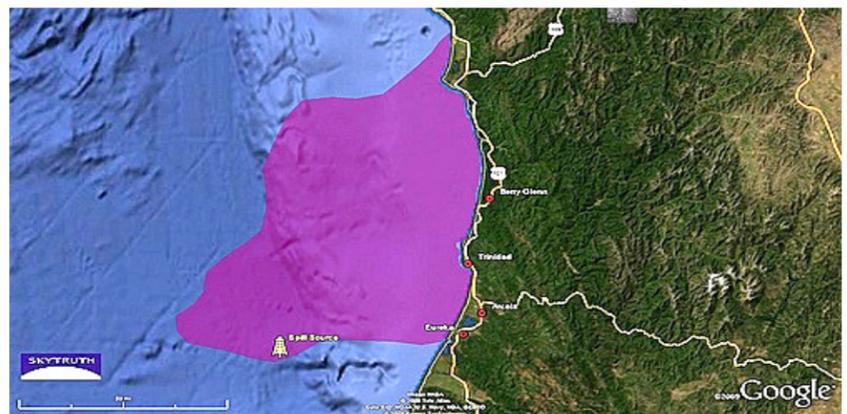
By Sara Wan, Vote the Coast

AB 1536, the bill that would have handed the PXP oil company the right to drill for oil in state waters for the first time in 40 years, did not find its way to the floor of the legislature this summer. The bill died, and PXP has had its fourth defeat thanks to the great work of lots of people.

An incredible team was working in Sacramento: Michael Endicott (Sierra Club) and Fran Gibson (CoastWalk), with the help of Dan Taylor (Audubon), Don Jacobson and Gina Goodhill (Environment California) Tina Andolina (Planning and Conser-

thanks goes to Lt. Governor John Garamendi and his Chief of Staff, Mona Pasquil, along with Assemblyman Pedro Nava and his staffers Ben Turner and Michael Miller. They were there every step of the way. The oilies may have all the money and power, but we have the greatest bunch of dedicated people on the planet.

And then, of course, there were all of you. You have no idea how important your faxes and phone calls were. They were the backbone of our message and those of us in the trenches send our *thank you, thank*



Based on NASA/MODIS satellite imaging of the slick that resulted when an oil rig blew out in Australia's Timor Sea in August, here's that slick exported to the west coast of the U.S., overlaid from a source 35 miles off Eureka. The hypothetical slick shown here covers about 3,750 square miles. By September 3, the Timor Sea slick covered 5,800 square miles.

vation League), Susan Jordan (California Coastal Protection Network), Richard Charter (Defenders of Wildlife) and Virginia Rome (NRDC). Everyone played their part, working the halls and delivering our message to the PSA. Of course a very special

*you* to all of you. Let's enjoy this victory and savor the fact that we defeated PXP again. Unfortunately, I doubt that this is permanent. If there is a special session, we will see this appear again. The Governor is determined to push this through.

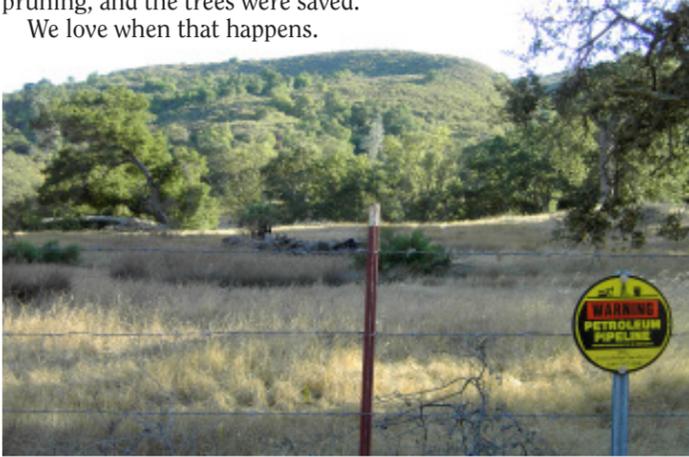
## Mr. Lopez Saves His Trees

Many of the calls we get here at the office could be described as falling into this category: *Something bad is happening right now where I live or is about to happen, the authorities are giving me the run-around or are non-responsive, can you help me, Sierra Club?*

On the afternoon of July 21, Natividad Lopez called to say that Nacimiento Pipeline workers were on his Tassajara Creek Road property in Santa Margarita, the pipeline was deviating from the path he'd agreed to in the easement he signed and was now heading for his oak trees. The engineer was deaf to his pleas that "if they go under my trees, three feet deep, they're gonna hit the roots of my oaks and they're gonna die."

We made some calls. Within 24 hours, Nate's Spanish-speaking neighbor, George Sullivan, stepped in; Supervisor Jim Patterson got the word and got on the phone; a compromise was struck involving some judicious root pruning, and the trees were saved.

We love when that happens.

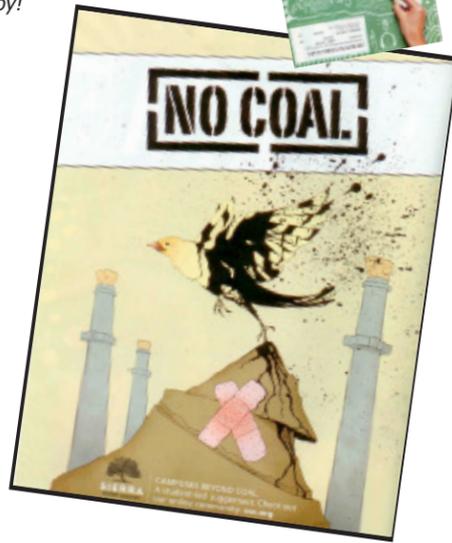


R. Ajilani

Saved.



That's my boy!



# Local Boy Makes Good

Proud mom Karen Blake displays the work of her son, Robert, a San Luis High School grad who is now a student at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Robert's work caught the eye of the Sierra Student Coalition and became the poster for our Campuses Beyond Coal campaign and the inside front cover of the September issue of *Sierra* magazine.

For information on the campaign or to join the online community, go to [www.sierraclub.org/coal/campus](http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/campus).

# What's at Stake for Carrizo

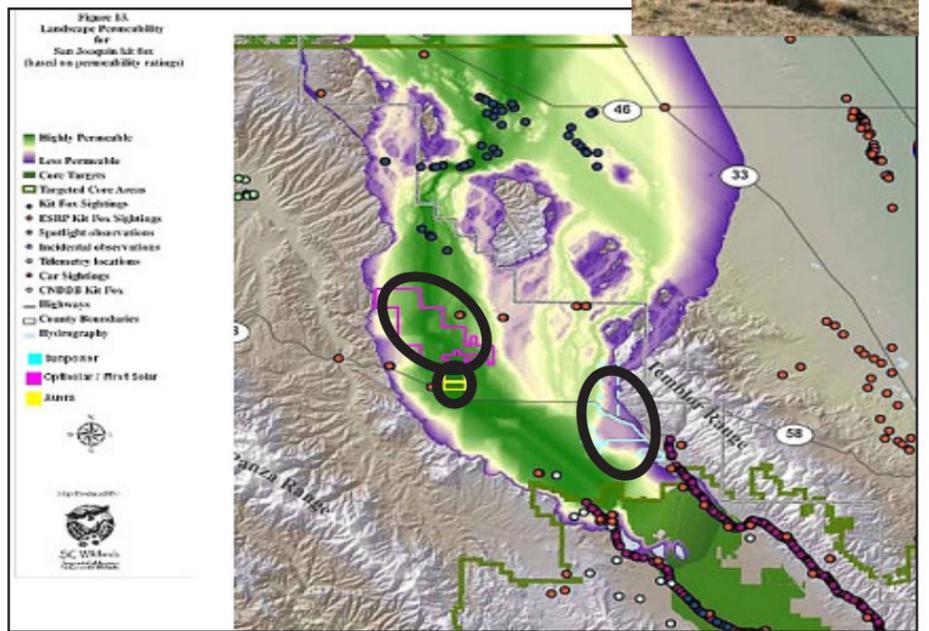
Over September 6-9, *The Tribune* ran a four-part series by reporter David Sneed on the plans to build three industrial-scale solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain. The series provided an in-depth overview of the issues, and commendably did not shy away from the central fact about the Carrizo: It is the site of the largest concentration of threatened and endangered species of plants and animals in California.

*The Tribune* erroneously reported that the decision on a request by project applicants to classify the results of the projects' mandated wildlife corridor study is still pending. In fact, the California Energy Commission emphatically rejected that request for secrecy last May after receiving strong objections from the Sierra Club and intervenors (see "Carrizo Solar: Not Behind Closed Doors," June *Santa Lucian*.) The Trib subsequently editorialized that applicants should stop "squabbling over what is essentially a side issue" and agree to release of the information, accepting at face value the solar companies' contention that they wanted the results kept secret because they simply didn't want local land owners to know which land parcels the companies will be required to purchase as mitigation. Not stated: the public also would not have known how *much* land the companies would have to purchase as mitigation for their projects' environmental impacts in order to meet the Department of Fish and Games's mitigation/replacement ratio of 5:1.

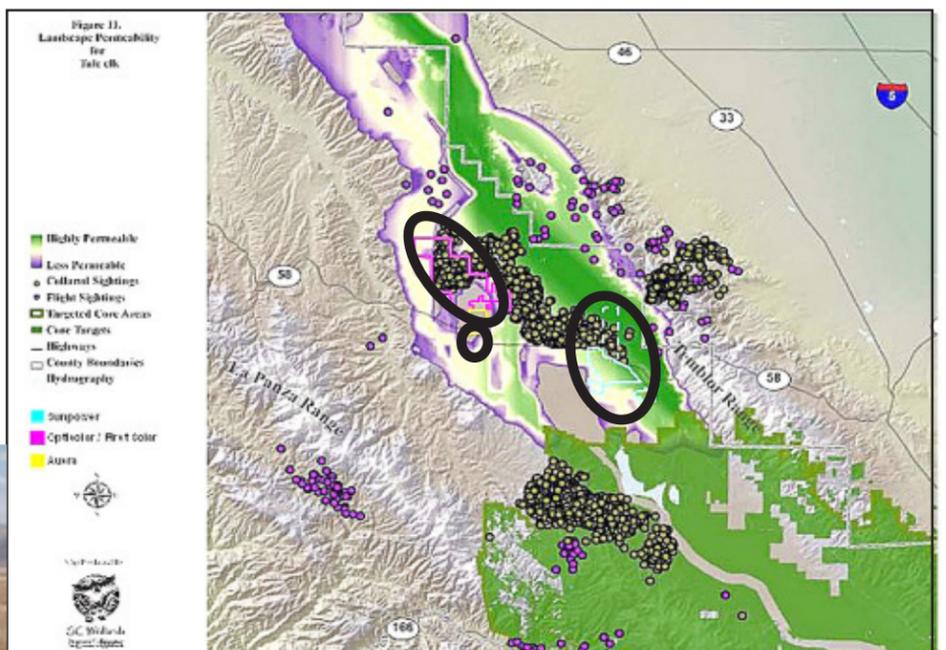
Whittling down that number will not be acceptable. Carl Zichella, Sierra Club's renewable energy program director, summed up the position of the Sierra Club in the *Tribune's* September 7 installment: "The solar companies are going to have to take a very serious and coordinated look at the environmental impacts of the plants, particularly concerning wildlife, and offset them. No cutting corners or predetermined outcomes."

Several readers of the *Tribune* series attempted to characterize objections to the Carrizo plants as a NIMBY issue. Large, centralized solar facilities will have to be part of the fight to curb carbon emissions and maintain a livable planet, but it is too easy to cast the debate over the sites for such facilities as NIMBYs v. those who are willing to make the hard choices about renewable energy. There are real alternatives to centralized, industrial scale, investor-owned utility solar. Everyone -- especially the SLO County Planning Department -- should read "Energy Self-Reliant States: Homegrown Renewable Power," an eye-opening 2008 policy brief by the New Rules Project, available at [www.newrules.org](http://www.newrules.org).

Distributed generation is an opportunity to democratize energy production, which, as our front page makes clear, is a goal contrary to the wishes of corporations whose primary goal is the retention of their multi-billion dollar stranglehold on energy generation and transmission. Distributed generation creates more jobs, avoids essentially all environmental impacts, and can be brought on line much faster than massive industrial facilities. What it doesn't do is preserve the energy companies' business model and provide profits for their shareholders. *Tribune*, let's see some in-depth reporting on that.



**No secrets** Wildlife corridors are indicated in green and purple. Above, kit fox; below, tule elk. The dots are sitings. Proposed power plant sites are circled.



South Coast Wildlands Project/CARE

# Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Gruesome chick video has farm industry reeling,” by Nigel Duara, *The Tribune*, September 6, 2009  
 “Phased out?” by Jeremy Thomas, *New Times*, September 10, 2009

**Summary:** In two bulletins from the realm of industrial agriculture, an undercover video shows unwanted male chicks being thrown alive into grinders at an Iowa hatchery, and local strawberry farmers are making even more intensive use of an acutely toxic pesticide than they did before it was formally banned in 2005. Both reports offer essentially the same conclusion: There Is No Alternative.



[Tossing male chicks into a grinder is] a standard industry practice that was adopted just after World War II, when farmers began raising some hens for the meat and others for just the eggs.

Over the last 50 years, USDA economic policy adjustments and subsidy programs have shifted America's agricultural system

from a sustainable network of family farms to an intensely mechanized industrial system. This production shift made it cost-prohibitive for most farmers to feed their animals on their own farm land. USDA agricultural policies have essentially encouraged farmers to grow as much corn as possible and fatten their livestock en masse in facilities that are known as Combined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Today, instead of a few chickens being raised on a diet of grass and insects on a pasture or chicken yard, thousands are crammed into unimaginably tight quarters where they produce massive amounts of fecal waste. This waste has a nasty habit of flowing into waterways.

- Black Warrior RiverKeeper

A CAFO is an industrial-sized livestock operation. These corporate-controlled units — where tens of thousands of animals are “produced” in factory-like settings — are polluting America's water and air with animal-raising practices that are neither economically viable or sustainable. Every corporate unit replaces 10 family farmers. A CAFO can house anywhere from hundreds to millions of animals, confined at least 45 days or more per year in an area without vegetation. The Mississippi River bears the brunt of the pollution from Midwest livestock operations, and the pollutants that flow down the river to the Gulf of Mexico have contributed to a dead zone the size of New Jersey.

- Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter, Indiana

Industry groups said...the footage belies an overall trend of improved treatment of animals in the past decade.

CAFOs can't survive without taxpayer subsidies. CAFOs receive many subsidies, such as milk price support guarantees, federal EQIP money through the Farm Bill, Development Right Agreements, tax abatements, grants, bonds, even economic development funds for roads. These taxpayer supports not only encourage the growth of this industry, they undercut the ability of traditional livestock operations to compete with CAFOs. Without the subsidies, CAFOs would fail financially.

- Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter

“Most people think their food comes from a grocery store,” said Dave Warner, spokesman for the National Pork Producers Council. “In processing food animals, there are things that you have to do to get them there.”

...videos like the one in Iowa stir up people's emotions without addressing important business considerations -- in this case, the need to dispose of male chicks...because they can't lay eggs or grow large enough or fast enough to be raised profitably for meat.

Cheap corn is the engine that drives the CAFO and makes our chickens cost less.

Yet CAFOs do so by externalizing the hidden environmental and health costs of chicken production. As consumers, each of us has a voice that speaks loudly: our wallets. We can buy our meat and eggs from suppliers that raise animals naturally, humanely, organically, and locally. Many supermarket retailers, such as Wal-Mart, are beginning to take notice. Please visit [www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org) for more information on CAFOs and what you can do to make a difference.

- Black Warrior RiverKeeper



Growers will likely continue to use the stockpiled methyl bromide until the supply is used up, because it is unmatched as a pest-eradicator..... “The strawberry growers don't have any other alternatives, so they're trying to hold on to what they have.”

“The growers prefer methyl bromide because...it's a broad-spectrum fumigant, so it pretty much kills all the major organisms that would be a problem for strawberries.”

According to SLO County Ag Commissioner Bob Lilley, strawberries are so disease-prone that pre-plant fumigation is considered necessary.

In 1996, the EPA concluded “Organic strawberry production is an effective integrated approach that offers an alternative to methyl bromide use for California strawberries.” The EPA case study found that organic growers produced “yields as high as 89 percent of (those) obtained from conventional strawberry production,” even though the organic growers raised plant varieties known for producing flavorful berries, rather than high yields. The EPA study also found that production costs of organic and non-organic strawberry growers are comparable. While the organic growers spend more on labor, the non-organic farms, obviously, spend more on chemicals.

- *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*, Island Press

Swanton Berry Farm in Davenport, California, has grown organic strawberries and other fruits and vegetables since 1985. According to the farm founders, “There are two foundations of our farming methods: soil building and crop diversity.” Swanton principal

owner Jim Cochran builds the soil by applying biodynamic compost and kelp products and by planting soil-enriching cover crops, such as grains and legumes. To protect its strawberries from harmful fungi, Cochran turns not to methyl bromide, but to crop rotation. The farmers have designed their crop rotation schedule to prevent high levels of any particular soil pathogen. “We don't try to eliminate pathogens completely; we just try to encourage the ‘good guys’ of the soil's biologic profile,” Cochran says.

- *Fatal Harvest*

**Upshot:** We are swimming in a sea of unexamined assumptions, largely cemented in place by the corporate profit imperative, which began the takeover of agriculture after World War II and has since infiltrated every aspect of our lives. If you grow food or just eat it, you have options. Exercising them is the first step away from an inhumane, environmentally destructive, unsustainable system cloaked in the mantle of “the way things are.”

**Flying Blind**

*continued from page 1*

will now be a new facility, and the treatment method originally chosen will generate high levels of sludge, all of which will have to be trucked to a landfill outside the county.

Two years ago, the efforts of Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Surfrider, the Otter Project and the Ocean Outfall Group were successful in generating the broad community support that resulted in the decision by Morro Bay and Cayucos to drop their routine requests for waivers from the Clean Water Act and select the highest level of treatment in upgrading their wastewater treatment plant. At the

that regulators were not to be trusted and might change their minds in the future, so there was no point in consulting with them now.

Proclaiming that she sought to avoid the kinds of delays that have plagued the Los Osos sewer project, Mayor Peters ironically took Morro Bay and Cayucos one big step down the same my-way-or-the-highway path that brought Los Osos sewer projects to grief several times in recent years due to the failure to give adequate consideration to environmental red flags in project design and the regulatory lay of the land, and to do so at the beginning of the process so as not to run into a brick wall at the end of it.

“Unfortunately, the majority voted to begin the environmental analysis of the proposed project that does not address water recycling opportunities and sustain-

able biosolids management and is located in the Atascadero Road floodplain,” said Smukler. “These three details assure that this project will be appealed and ultimately rejected by the Coastal Commission for not adequately addressing the primary challenges of our present and future.”

The majority of the public who spoke from all three Estero Bay communities — Los Osos, Morro Bay and Cayucos — implored the JPA members to rethink and focus on maintaining Estero Bay as a healthy, sustainable watershed. The public, including the NRDC, Sierra Club, Ocean Outfall Group, Otter Project, Surfrider, New Water for Peace, Get Green Los Osos and Concerned Citizens of Cayucos, were ignored by the majority of the Cayucos SD and Morro Bay City Council.

Despite the outcome of the meeting, “the community’s strong turnout and comments are an inspirational reminder that this is not over by a longshot,” said Smukler, adding that the level of citizen participation and “the passion for our future made it a night I’ll never forget and, more importantly, gives me reason to believe we will ultimately succeed in the quest for a project we can all be proud of.”

**They seem to think there’s time to go back and fix it, but no time to do it right in the first place.**

September 8 meeting, all groups urged the JPA members to take a month or two to evaluate the changed circumstances before proceeding to authorize an Environmental Impact Report on the project as originally planned.

Morro Bay City Councilpersons Noah Smukler and Betty Winholtz agreed with us, and with the overwhelming majority of the members of the public who packed the meeting, but Morro Bay Mayor Janice Peters citing fear of fines, whipped the majority of her fellow JPA members into a vote to proceed without first considering either the implications of the changes in the project or options to what had been placed before them.

Councilwoman Winholtz testified that Regional Water Board staff had assured her that there would be no problem with Morro Bay and Cayucos taking time to reevaluate project options and possibly extending the project timeline due to circumstances beyond their control. Winholtz and Smukler urged a meeting of the JPA and the Water Board before voting to proceed with the project as is, but the Mayor wouldn’t hear of it. In a tone notably truculent and antagonistic – the ire Mayor Peters traditionally reserves for environmental concerns and regulatory agencies – she asserted

**George Clucas, 1920-2009**

George Gordon Clucas passed away on July 28. A strong supporter of the Santa Lucia Chapter and of the work of his wife, Jan, who has led the Chapter in its quest for protection of the Morros, served on the Executive Committee and as Chapter Historian, George was known for his passion for genealogy, tracing his family tree back to its origins on the Isle of Mann. George and Jan were married for 63 years.

“George’s prowess as a maker of strawberry guava jelly was unsurpassed, and is the reason why a strawberry guava tree stands today in my front yard,” said Chapter Chair Karen Merriam. “I and the Sierra Club will never forget him.”

**We Need Change**



**Major Donors** We were just working in the office minding our own business one Friday afternoon when Allan Lipper walked in with sons Benji, 7, and Joseph, 4, who broke their piggy banks (or reasonable facsimiles thereof) and laid eighteen dollars and twenty-six cents on us. And their dad wrote a check. We didn’t let them go without Sierra Club decals, temporary tattoos and some local mineral samples. Thanks, Lippers!

Take a lesson from Benji and Joseph Lipper, and donate your hard-saved change to support the work of your local Sierra Club. The Lipper family understands the value of contributing to help preserve and protect the environment of the Central Coast.

As a tribute to Benji and Joseph’s wonderful donations to the Santa Lucia Chapter, we are designating October our Month of change. Bring us the change you’ve saved up in a piggy bank, a drawer, or secret place. No donation is too small. And no

donation is too large. If you’re in the habit of saving bills rather than coins we won’t turn them down. The point is: take the opportunity to stop by the office any day, Monday – Friday, from noon to 6 p.m., to say hello and give us your donation. And you can pick up a swell Sierra Club tattoo.

Make October your month of change.

See you soon,

Karen Merriam, Chair  
Executive Committee

**Paul J. McCloskey • Photo-Paintings**





“Painting With Light”  
“Sacred Light - Sacred Lands”  
A New Vision From the Central Coast

The Clark Center  
For The Performing Art

487 Fair Oaks Avenue  
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420

Sept. - Oct., 2009

[http://web.mac.com/paul\\_mccloskey/](http://web.mac.com/paul_mccloskey/)

\* A percentage of sales goes to the Sierra Club

“Painted Sky - October Light”  
24" x 36" Photo-Painting on canvas  
(Mixed Media: Pigment Print w/acrylic)

**Sierra Club’s Call to Action on Global Warming and Energy**

We are at a historic crossroads in the fight against climate change. The Sierra Club is asking its activists and chapters to help in this critically important fight by committing to daily, weekly or monthly actions as a Sierra Club Climate Leader. Please go to: [www.sierraclub.org/climateleaders](http://www.sierraclub.org/climateleaders) and sign up.

Our top priority is an education campaign to encourage people to support the Obama Administration’s use of rules and regulations by the EPA and other agencies to address climate change.

We call this campaign “the Big Picture.” Using a very successful online petition and massive phone call outreach, activists are asking Senators to urge President Obama to create rules as quickly as possible that will regulate coal ash, mercury, mining, soot, smog, and carbon pollution more effectively.

Visit the Big Picture Campaign to learn more: [www.sierraclub.org/bigpicture](http://www.sierraclub.org/bigpicture)

## Water & Wine

continued from page 6

production, most vineyards are located on lands previously dedicated to dry farming and grazing.

North county growers are increasingly coming face to face with these realities. West side growers Justin winery and Hastings Vineyards are just two of the vineyards that have had to drill multiple new wells to replace dry wells in an attempt to get enough water. Justin is importing water to sustain his vineyard. Halter Vineyard has replaced some irrigated acreage with newly planted dry farmed vines.

Controversy over water capacity swirled around the approval of Heart Hill Winery a few years ago. Now the contractor has had to import water just for construction purposes because the wells on the property can't sustain the relatively low water needs of the building process. Justin is shifting most of its wine processing from its west side winery to its east side Golden Hills facility located on the Paso Robles aquifer, which is also in stress.

The Paso Robles Ground Water Study has verified a large cone of depression underlying Paso Robles, the east side of Paso Robles and into the Estrella/El Pomar/Creston areas due to pumping of ground water. The Estrella area exceeds all the other areas by a factor of three, with a total of 15,843 acres of irrigated vineyards, according to the May 2009 Todd report on the basin. The area is considered to be equivalent to a Level of Severity I, which means that projected demand over the next nine years will equal or exceed dependable water supplies. This area has shown a sustained decline in groundwater levels from 1980-2006 and shows a minus 20-foot change in ground water storage. Many residents east of Paso Robles have already been faced with drilling new wells, or, if they're lucky, only having to lower their pumps in their existing wells.

### Our common problem

WRAC delegate and soils physicist Bill Bianchi has commented on the political and socio-economic issues of the groundwater problems, writing "Individual property owners over this expanding groundwater depression must recognize that continued depletion of a groundwater supply is a problem for all overlying land owners in common. A political structure directed at the solution of their common problem is required."

The wine industry in the north county is seeking to address some of these problems with their Sustainability in Practice (SIP) certification program. On August 31, vineyardist Steven Lohr, President of the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, announced an industry initiated three-year study to consider the challenges and solutions to balancing water use in the Estrella sub-basin. More than 60 wine grape growers, local and county officials and other interested parties attended. The response to the proposed study was so strong that 41 Estrella sub-area wine grape growers volunteered to participate in irrigation monitoring for the study.

Our common problem will need some very creative solutions if we want to preserve groundwater for agriculture. The county can do its part by promoting an effective Open Space District in conjunction with establishing a Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) banking program that works.

# Letters

send to: [sierraclub8@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub8@gmail.com), or Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

## Ag events and their discontents

Editor,

In your piece "At the Circus" (*Santa Lucian*, September), you characterized the grass-roots opposition to the proposed revision of the Ag Events ordinance as employing strategies where "facts and evidence are never the point." Since you stress the importance of accurate fact checking and evidence gathering, I feel compelled to comment on a few key points of your piece where you completely missed the boat in this regard.

First, you state that Planning Commissioner Anne Wyatt was asked to recuse herself "because she runs a bed & breakfast." In fact, she was asked to recuse herself because she would stand to profit from the outcome of the proposed ordinance revisions. The impact of the proposed ordinance revisions would make properties such as hers one of the few available for the type of events affected by the new ordinance.

You also state that without the Ag Events ordinance revisions, our agricultural lands will turn into "commercial zones under an avalanche of unsustainable non-ag related events of vast size and numbers." What your piece completely fails to mention is, at no time has any proponent of the ordinance revision presented any empirical data of any sort to support this contention. Where are your facts and evidence?

Finally, no proponent of the proposed ordinance revision has ever been called "dishonest" as you claim,

but rather, the policy arguments in support of the revisions have been characterized as disingenuous because they fail to accurately reflect the consequences to the economic health of our community. Chicken Little wasn't dishonest for saying the sky was falling; she was just plain wrong.

Keith A. Dunlop  
San Luis Obispo

### Point by point:

- *Planning Commissioner Wyatt's B&B could accommodate perhaps a dozen people, and therefore would not even begin to be affected at the level at which the proposed ordinance language would restrict non-ag events on ag land, hence there was no possibility of her profiting from the ordinance. She has stated that the Fair Political Practices Committee informed her that she had no conflict of interest and need not recuse herself from the vote on the proposed Ag Events ordinance amendments.*

- *The best example in California of ag land turning commercial as its original use gradually gave way to non-ag uses is Knott's Berry Farm. Napa County, citing the "Disneylandification" of wine country and the rising tide of congestion and pollution detrimental to wine production, no longer permits commercial events on ag land. When they started seeing permit applications for hotels in vineyards, Napa supervisors knew they had allowed a growing land use conflict to go too far, and they had to take action to protect their primary industry. SLO*

*has not yet gotten to the point where Napa found itself, which means we have the opportunity to put a few common-sense regulations in place sooner rather than later.*

- *Attendees at the July 27 forum on the Ag Events ordinance hosted by the SLO Chamber of Commerce heard Daniella Saprielle, representing the Coalition of Affected Business Owners (CABO), state that the Ag Tourism Coalition was dishonest for suggesting amendments to the Ag Events ordinance that were, in her opinion, an underhanded attempt to contradict legislative intent, a theme she expounded on at length. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrT9\\_800teE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrT9_800teE).*

- *Ordinance opponents have never said what they would propose instead; if they think there should be any limits on event size or frequency, any kind of cap on total events per site per year, or a way to address cumulative impacts. From their public comments, they want large events permitted everywhere, with no concern for long-term impacts on natural resources or the environment, and with no regard for the burdens placed on neighborhoods. Those who have their own short-term economic interests at heart don't seem to be interested in the long-term preservation of ag land, which we are losing at a startlingly rapid rate.*

- *Chicken Little was indeed wrong. Hopefully, CABO & company will come to that realization soon, and stop shouting that implementation of an ordinance that will help protect the viability of agriculture will cause the sky to fall.*

# Cleaning Up Their Creek

Thirty people collected 22 bags and one pick-up truckbed of trash in two hours on Saturday, September 19, at the Nipomo Creek Clean-Up.

Coordinated by the Nipomo Creek Dogs (Daniel Diaz and Ralph Bishop), the event was scheduled two weeks before the county-wide creek clean-up because, well, Ralph and Dan generally don't like to be kept waiting.

Dan attended the August 31 teleconference of the Regional Water Quality Control board to update the board on the condition of Nipomo Creek, one of the county's most heavily impacted waterways, notori-

ously for the discarding of used irrigation drip tubing, loaded with nitrates.

The Creek Dogs are preparing a Powerpoint for the state water board, an investigative report on plastics in the creek, and a DVD culled from 200+ hours of video footage and a multitude of photographs. In May 2008, the Creek Dogs took their complaints to a meeting of the Regional Water Board for the first time, after many months of discussion with staff. Following that very candid session, a water board memo went out to local growers on the proper storage and handling of irrigation tubing, reminding them of locally available recycling programs.

Future promised actions, including a Fish & Game permit to allow for major clean-up and stream maintenance, haven't happened yet.

A safe bet: The Creek Dogs will make sure they do.



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**Catch of the day** Ralph Bishop displays the day's most toxic find: a 5-gallon bucket containing the remains of illegal fighting cocks, marinating in rainwater, stashed under the bushes on the banks of a creek tributary.

# Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **October 12**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:  
 Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter  
 P.O. Box 15755  
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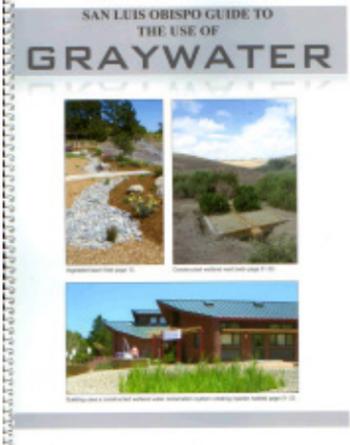


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**Got Graywater if You Want It**

The Sierra Club has on hand a limited supply of *The San Luis Obispo Guide to the Use of Graywater*, the new manual produced by the Appropriate Technology Coalition -- SLO Green Build, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the San Luis Bay Chapter of Surfrider.

Graywater systems turn a waste product that can comprise up to 80% of residential wastewater into a valuable resource for irrigation and other non-potable uses. Harvesting graywater to meet your non-potable water needs utilizes an appropriate technology that can recover initial costs quickly. No permit required.



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*Transition Towns Paso Robles / SLO presents*  
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**350 Climate Action Day Event**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24th, 11-2PM**  
 ATASCADERO SUNKEN GARDENS

*FEATURING*

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 Cuesta Ridge Mountain Boys  
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HYBRID CARS  
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IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE

*and a SURPRISE 350 EVENT AT 1 PM*

**350** signifies the safe upper limit of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) in our atmosphere. Today our planet has 390 parts per million (ppm) of CO2 and that number is rising every year. Scientists worldwide agree that 350 ppm is the safe upper limit if we are to avoid the worst consequences of global warming.

# Outings and Activities Calendar

Seller of travel registration information: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter's outing policies, or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Chair Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the outing leader.

**Mon-Tue, October 5-6, Wilderness Restoration in Death Valley National Park.** We plan to finish the conversion to a trail of the northern end of the old Mesquite Flats/Death Valley crossover road which used to join the Scotty's Castle road in the vicinity of Red Wall Canyon. Meet Sunday evening or early Monday morning, work Monday and Tuesday. Potluck Monday night. On Wednesday, there will be a ranger-led hike for those who can stay over. (Project may change). For more information, or to sign up, contact leader: Kate Allen 661-944-4056 [kj.allen@wildblue.net](mailto:kj.allen@wildblue.net) (email preferred). CNRCC Desert Committee

**Wed, October 7, 14, 21, 28. 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes around San Luis Obispo,** approximately 5 miles with 1200 foot elevation gain. Bring water and dress for the weather. E-mail: [backpackingary1@gmail.com](mailto:backpackingary1@gmail.com) for details.

**Sat, October 10, 8:30 a.m., Big Sur Coastal Hike,** at least 8-12 miles and approx. 2000 foot elevation gain. Exact destination is unknown at this time, but may be Prewitt Valley to Stag Camp, depending on the weather. Meet at the Washburn Day Use Area, San Simeon State Park. SLO Carpools should meet at Santa Rosa Park and leave by 7:40 a.m. Bring lunch, plenty of water, and non-slip shoes. There may be poison oak and ticks along the trail. Details: Gary 473-3694.

**Sun, Oct. 11, 10 a.m. Eagle Rock Nature Trail.** Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles. 2.2 miles/720 feet elevation change. The trailhead is located across from Cuesta College at El Chorro Regional Park. From SLO, take Highway 1 North and turn east (right) at the first of two turn signals to El Chorro Regional Park. Follow the signs to the Day Use area, passing the ball fields and Botanical Garden. Park in the Day Use area at the end of the road, just before the locked gate. Confirm with David Georgi at [polecatleader@gmail.com](mailto:polecatleader@gmail.com) 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

**Sun, October 11, 2:00pm, Sierra Singles – Bishop Peak** Come join hike leader Stacy Talbert for this 4.4 mile moderate hike with an elevation gain/loss of 1200 feet. At an elevation of 1559', Bishop Peak is the tallest of the Nine Sisters, a volcanic range that extends from Morro Bay to San Luis Obispo. Please be sure to bring sturdy hiking shoes, hiking poles if you desire, and plenty of water. We will meet at the Patricia Drive trail head. From Santa Rosa St, heading towards Los Osos Valley Road, turn right on to Patricia and follow it to the 800 block. The "TRAIL" sign will be on the left. If possible please park on the Bishop Peak side and be mindful of the neighbors. Call Stacy for any questions or more details (818) 472-6827.

**Sat Eve – Sun, October 17-18, Exploring the Soda Mountains – Mojave Desert.** We will explore the ridges and deep washes of this

relatively unknown and rugged Wilderness Study Area (WSA), located east of Barstow and north of I-15. Arrive late Saturday afternoon at the camping area in the open flats near the Cronese Lakes. Potluck Saturday night. The full day hike on Sunday will help us appreciate a unique place and to comment upon the future of this WSA which is currently uncertain. Hike is moderately difficult. For details contact leader: Craig Deutsche, (310-477-6670), [craig.deutsche@gmail.com](mailto:craig.deutsche@gmail.com). CNRCC Desert Committee.

**Sat, October 24, 8:30 a.m., Rinconada, Little Falls, Big Falls Loop Hike.** Join us for this strenuous

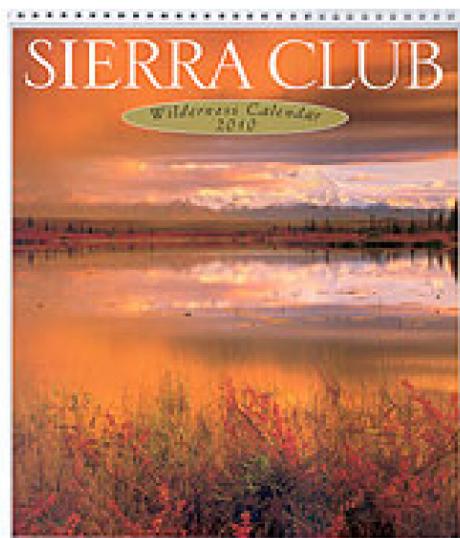
straight for .2 miles and look for the dirt parking lot on the left. It is easy to miss. Do not wait at the Live Oak trailhead, which is shortly after the Quarry trailhead. Confirm with David Georgi at [polecatleader@gmail.com](mailto:polecatleader@gmail.com) or 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

**Sat, October 24, Eagle Cliff Mine Hike – Joshua Tree National Park.** Eagle Cliff Mine is a 4.5 mile loop hike in a very pretty area of the park. The hike is strenuous, with some off-trail and rock scrambling. Near the mine are a cabin and other points of interest, both historic and natural, and an excellent overlook. Bring a couple of quarts of water, decent



This is a partial listing of Outings offered by our chapter. Please check the web page [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org) for the most up-to-date listing of activities.

## 2010 Sierra Club Calendars



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all-day trek on these scenic trails and roads, 15 miles/ 2,000 feet of elevation gain. Bring sandals or other footwear to temporarily change into when we wade through creek crossings on Lopez Canyon Rd. Also bring lunch, snacks and water. The leader will have a water purifier available. There will undoubtedly be poison oak. Meet in front of Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita. Participants have the option of a shorter in and out hike if they desire. Extreme heat will postpone this outing to Nov. 7th. For any other info. call Carlos at 546-0317.

**Sat, Oct. 24, 10 a.m. Quarry Trail.** Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles. 2 miles/320 feet elevation change. Meet at the Cabrillo Peak trailhead. From SLO, go 12 miles north on Hwy 1 to Los Osos/Baywood Park exit just before Morro Bay. Go south on Southbay Blvd. and drive .7 miles to the State Park entrance. Continue

boots, a snack and lunch. Contact Ann and Al Murdy [al.murdy@gmail.com](mailto:al.murdy@gmail.com) or 760-366-2932 (no messages) Tahquitz Group (San Geronio Chapter).

**Sun, October 25, 2 p.m. Guided Walk of Mission-Era SLO.** Join us on an easy stroll past the Mission, old adobes, and other historic sites in downtown San Luis Obispo and learn about the padres, the Chumash, and Gold Rush renegades. Stride by the location of the town gallows, home of the first doctor, and the store owned by the kindest man in town. Meet corner of Monterey and Osos Streets. Duration 1 1/2 hrs. No reservation needed. Leader: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

**Sat, October 31, 8:30 a.m. Salmon Creek/ Spruce Creek Trails to Dutra Flat.** On Halloween, join the leader on this moderate 8-mile hike in the southern Big Sur region. There will be about 2200 ft. of elevation gain. We will enjoy coastal views, streamside

environments, and grasslands. This is also the last day before the time changes. We will meet at the Washburn day use area of San Simeon State Park. This is about 300 yards north of the Hamlet restaurant as you leave Cambria going north on Highway 1. Bring water, lunch, snacks and dress for the weather. Ticks and poison oak may be present. There is a possibility of a refueling stop at the Main Street Grill following the hike. Costumes are optional. Info: Chuck at 441-7597.

**Sat-Sun, October 31 – November 1, Ghost Town Extravaganza.** Spend Halloween weekend exploring the ghosts and ruins of California's colorful past. Come with us to this eerie desert landscape near Death Valley. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Sat., do a challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this wild west town. After, return to camp for Happy Hour and a potluck feast, followed by a midnight visit to Ballarat's graveyard. On Sun, a visit to the infamous Riley townsite. Group size strictly limited. Send \$8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329; (760) 868-2179. CNRCC/Desert Committee.

**Wed, November 4, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes around San Luis Obispo,** approximately 5 miles with 1200 foot elevation gain. Bring water and dress for the weather. E-mail: [backpackingary1@gmail.com](mailto:backpackingary1@gmail.com) for details.

**Fri-Sun, November 6-8, Mojave National Preserve Service Trip.** Help the Mojave National Preserve clean up a large illegal dump that has built up over the years. Work all day Saturday and until noon on Sunday. Preserve staff will provide a barbecue Saturday evening. A hike is planned for those arriving Friday morning. Camping will be rustic, but a portable restroom will be provided. High clearance vehicle is recommended to access the site, but we can shuttle people and gear if needed. Email or call leader for reservation information. Leader: Rich Juricich, [rich.sac@pacbell.net](mailto:rich.sac@pacbell.net), 916-492-2181. CNRCC Desert Committee.