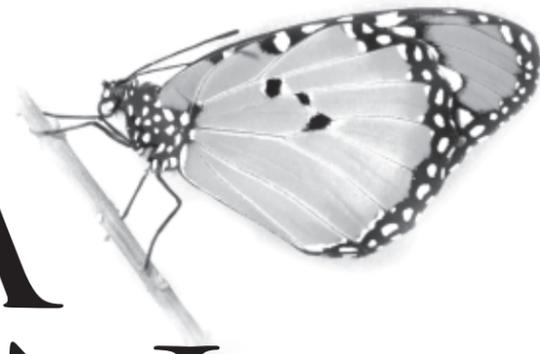




SANTA LUCIAN

Protecting and Preserving the Central Coast



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

February 2010
Volume 47 No. 2

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Moment of truth Environmental concerns raised at the California Coastal Commission hearing on the Los Osos sewer trumped the County's assurances that the project has no substantial issues that need to be addressed before its permit is approved.

Los Osos: Let's Get It Right

Coastal Commission steps in to oversee sewer saga

On January 14, the Los Osos Wastewater Project arrived at a watershed moment.

At a "Substantial Issue" hearing of the California Coastal Commission held at Huntington Beach city hall, the appeals and testimony of environmental groups and community activists won the day over County officials and a sizeable "just do it" contingent, who sought to assure the Commission that all issues surrounding the sewer plan had been resolved.

The Commission was persuaded otherwise, and decided to take on the issues at a full hearing a few months hence. At that time, the Commission will examine the degree to which the project is protective of wetlands as defined and required by the California Coastal Act, how treated effluent will be distributed to assure the biological integrity of creeks and habitat, how the project will mitigate the environmental damage done by the sewer's false start several years ago, and how the County will go about disposing of five million tons of septage from abandoned septic tanks.

Most crucially, appellants persuaded the Commission to look into the County's plans for water conservation and the agricultural re-use of treated effluent – the heart of the project – and take over the oversight and approval of those programs in order to assure their success.

County officials tried to minimize the day's outcome by characterizing the substantial issues identified by appellants and the Coastal Commission as minor details.

But there's a reason why such proceedings are called Substantial Issue hearings, not Minor Detail hearings. It was clear from its staff report that the last thing in the world the Coastal Commission wanted to do was take responsibility for the Los Osos sewer, and would take on that role only if absolutely necessary. By the end of the long day, a majority of Commissioners concluded that it was absolutely necessary.

Prior to the hearing, the County attempted to pressure the Sierra Club into withdrawing our appeal – part of a lobbying blitz in which County

Sierra Club & U.S. Green Building Council Launch "Green Buildings for Cool Cities"

The Sierra Club's Cool Cities program and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) have launched the Green Buildings for Cool Cities collaboration.

The partnership will leverage Cool Cities' more than 200 local campaigns and USGBC's national network of 78 chapters to encourage new and retrofitted energy-efficient buildings, a key solution to global warming and to achieving the transition to a clean energy economy.

Our step-by-step green building policy guide for communities of all sizes features policies ranging from basic to more advanced plans of action to address energy-efficiency and environmental sustainability through the built environment.

Highlighted policies include leadership standards for government buildings that serve as models for the community; financial and no-cost incentives to build green for the commercial and residential sectors; improved minimum efficiency standards through energy code adoption and enforcement.

The Green Buildings for Cool Cities policy guide is available online at www.coolcities.us and www.usgbc.org.

"Because buildings contribute nearly 40% of global warming emissions and consume over 70% of electricity use in the United States, increasing the energy performance of our homes and businesses is a cost-effective clean energy solution to global warming, and an enormous



opportunity for rebuilding our economy," said Glen Brand, Sierra Club's Cool Cities Program Director.

"Local governments have long been laboratories of innovation when it comes to energy-efficiency, proving by example that sustainable building practices can be effectively brought to scale. USGBC is pleased

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Cambria Activists & Mercury Put Desal Plan in Retrograde

Another attempt to diminish CEQA in the County meets determined, successful opposition

By Lynne Harkins

In what veteran Cambria Community Service District observers have described as a significant upset (with a significant impact!), environmental community activism in Cambria has forced off the table an attempt by the Cambria CSD to exempt itself from environmental review of the Army Corps of Engineers proposal to drill multiple desalination test wells on Santa Rosa Creek State Beach.

Put forward in the guise of just a little harmless information gathering, the proposed exemption raised an alarm in the community. Environmental review is already a locally charged issue, with the Cambria CSD being sued by LandWatch SLO over alleged deficits in the District's Environmental Impact Report for the Cambria Water Master Plan, citing impacts to aquatic habitat and biota.

As the lead agency on the project, the Army Corps compiled a 17-page Coastal Act Consistency Determination, asserting that the project would comply with the Coastal Act to the "maximum extent practicable" — always a phrase that leaves room for interpretation, certainly when it

environment, including a reef that provides habitat for multiple important fish species near the proposed drilling area. He also pointed out omissions in the staff/Corps report's description of the appropriate jurisdictional/regulatory framework which applies to the nearshore environment and safeguards the recently designated Marine Protected Area off Cambria.

Elizabeth Bettenhausen's extensive analysis pointed to the Corps' and District's failures to allow for the vital functioning of the beach ecosystem itself, quoting from the book *Sand: The Never-ending Story*, by geologist Michael Welland: "Without meiofauna, the sand of our beaches and lakeshores would be stinking, toxic places, with organic debris rotting unconsumed and dangerous bacteria rampant. The microscopic creatures of the meiofauna feed off this debris: They keep our beaches clean." (More reason to, as Surfrider says, "Respect the beach!")

Tina Dickason asserted there was a failure to accurately describe public health threats that will accrue as a result of the diesel pollution and other potential contaminants that could be released by drilling activity. The Corps says the odors will disappear and there will be no problem for surrounding residences and the Shamel Park public playground, but that flies in the face of the known carcinogenic effects of diesel emissions, which was pointed out by Mary Giacoletti's letter, read into the record by Jack McCurdy. McCurdy also told the Board that the Santa Lucia



Let's see for ourselves Cambria residents mark off the proposed locations of test wells for the desal plant.

comes to dealing with Santa Rosa Creek State Beach, highly accessible to and much beloved by the Public.

The Corps and CCSD's bid for a highly-accelerated process was evident when the CCSD Board of Directors announced over New Year's weekend a Jan. 5 meeting designed to speedily commence and complete the test wells project on the beach sometime around March. At that meeting, the CCSD Board nevertheless got an impressive turnout and a resounding thumbs down on the matter. Compelling public testimony drew recurring rounds of applause from the audience as the majority of thirteen speakers made their own well-documented "negative declarations" in response to the 40-page staff report released just days before.

One speaker after another pointed to glaring sins of omission and proposed commission. Commencing with Mickie Burton's charge that the Board was misconstruing the grounds for environmental exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), there followed Jim Webb's detailing of what he saw as an egregious failure to allow for the extreme complexity of the near-shore

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Our Annie

Anne McMahon died of cancer on December 19. She was an environmental champion of California's central coast, so much so that it would be impossible to fully put into words just how much she contributed to the preservation of the land we love, but herein some of her friends give it a try.

I first really got to know Annie during the Hearst Ranch land-use battle in the mid-nineties. Since then, I had the pleasure (and shared the pain) of working with her on many issues and campaigns. What I loved about her is that she always "got it"; she was always able to see through the smoke and mirrors into the core of an issue. She never fell into the trap of compromising herself or her values in order to seem reasonable. Annie always fought tirelessly for what was right, regardless of whether it was popular; and people loved her for it. Annie passed from this world with her soul intact, surrounded by family, friends, and a grateful community.

-Pat Veasant

It's hard to quantify who and what Anne McMahon was to me. A litany of her accomplishment – impressive and extensive as they are – doesn't come close to capturing Anne for me. She was so much more than what her public accomplishments would reveal. She was always ready to mentor and advise and share her knowledge but more than that, she was always ready to listen, to sympathize, to laugh about the absurdities of life. And always ready to do the work needed to succeed. I was always mindful when seeking help, not to overburden her – she never said no, no matter how difficult the job. She was dedicated and loyal and never compromised her beliefs. The quote from E.B. White she used as her tag line on all her emails expressed her well: "I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her beauty."

-Sue Harvey

I had the absolute joy and delight of working with Anne McMahon at The Nature Conservancy when the local chapter of TNC was alive and well on the Central Coast. Those were the days when giant leaps in local conservation were being made with projects that were ambitious and courageous and somewhat forbidding, but with Annie's help the impossible became possible. We celebrated the possibilities of The Carrizo Plain National Monument, the conservation success of SLO's "Irish Hills" and the protection of the last stand of native Monterey pines in Cambria. These were victories, celebrations, perpetual gifts to the community, many members of which don't know the names of the people behind these giant leaps in environmental success that we all enjoy today. Annie was the backbone of such accomplishments, and they stand as a perpetual reminder of her and her efforts. The love and the dedication that this woman has had for her community is immeasurable.

On a personal level, Annie was a riddle to me. She seemed to balance a demanding and hectic professional

career and a peaceful and nurturing family life and with ease. She navigated through the turbulent diplomatic tides of environmental heroism with her graceful negotiation skills and balanced it all with a sharp wit and brilliant sense of humor. I admired her for her levity and her resolve when the outcome wasn't what she had hoped for.

This and many other wonderful qualities made Annie who she was. I'll always and forever be changed because Annie taught me to walk through a rainstorm as though it was sunshine on my shoulders and look forward to warmer days ahead.

-Laurin Hayes

Annie was the first friend I made when I moved to San Luis Obispo County in 1994. We were working together as reporters at the Country News, and I was pretty unsettled about leaving my wonderful community on Kauai and moving here where I didn't know a soul. As I was a "newbie," Annie helped me understand the context of the local stories I was covering—who the players were, what the deep background was. She covered the Santa Margarita Ranch development proposal back when the Robertsons still owned the ranch—and I occasionally helped with some aspect of the reporting. It opened my eyes to the way that power and money corrupt the public planning process, and how easily elected officials are manipulated by developers with millions of dollars at stake in their speculative real estate deals. It was the beginning of an education process that continues to this day.

She was a relentless advocate for biodiversity, agricultural preservation, and local, sustainable food systems. This required her to frequent places where many other environmentalist fear to tread—meetings with the Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association, and the Ag Commissioner's office. She was perfect for this work, because even people who disagreed with her couldn't help but like her as a person and appreciate her sincerity and commitment. While working for Congressman Capps and the Nature Conservancy, she successfully battled bureaucratic roadblocks to getting the USDA to certify a mobile slaughter unit, which sounds a little gruesome, but is an important tool that allows ranchers and small-scale meat producers to market their product directly, as opposed to selling (usually at a loss) to industrial-scale feed lots that are at the mercy of the four corporations who now control 90% of the slaughter houses in the country. It took years of advocacy, but she finally succeeded.

She was a founding member of the Central Coast Ag Network, wrote the grant that got it off the ground, shaped its organizational structure and did much of the media outreach behind its popular "Central Coast Grown" campaign. She held the Environmental seat for the Agricul-

tural Liason Advisory Board (ALAB), a committee heavily, but not exclusively, stocked with traditional ag and ranching types who have little sympathy for all that enviro fol-de-rol. Her current passion was the creation of an "Agricultural and Open Space District" that would provide a source of funds to purchase critical landscapes vulnerable to development, and protect them through easements or public ownership. When ALAB proved unwilling to endorse such a move, she simply went around them and contacted the ag community directly, selling the idea to ag leaders, county planners, elected officials and environmentalists and forming a steering committee to move the idea forward. The Planning Commission has now officially endorsed the idea by including it in the Conservation and Open Space Element, and it will be up to the Board to get behind the idea and put it on the ballot. The creation of such a district would be a fitting, lasting legacy to Anne's life's work.

I will always respect Annie for her sense of integrity and principled stands on environmental issues. She was pragmatic and able to compromise so long as the solutions did not compromise away the underlying values. This is always the more difficult road to take as an activist. For instance, while she was a warrior who often doubled as a general in the fights to protect the Hearst Ranch and the Santa Margarita Ranch from development, she was adamantly opposed to the "conservation easements" proposed for both of those properties because they allowed far too much development, and did not go far enough to provide public access and protect the natural resources that she and others were fighting to conserve.

For this she was branded an "extremist," primarily by people who did not take the time to read those documents or did not understand their implications. But she was also a staunch supporter of conservation easements that were truly protective of open space, habitat, and sustainable ag production.

The two landscapes I will always associate with Annie are the Santa Margarita Ranch and the Carrizo Plain. She fought two very different

battles to save them both. Saving extraordinary landscapes from the pressures of development is a long-term engagement. It takes endurance and tenacity to follow them all the way through the twists and turns of environmental review, political maneuvering, regulatory approval and litigation. And while the final scene has not been written on either property, Annie was on the front lines of both battles every step of the way. She brought people together, networked like a champ, and forged important connections between people who are working together for common goals. She had an ability to find the very best people, get them all in the same room, and trust that the creative synergy would blossom into a plan of action.

Her environmental advocacy propelled her political activism. She was a tireless campaigner and served on the core committees for David Blakely, Kat McConnell and Jim Patterson. Through her volunteer campaign work for Lois Capps, she experienced first-hand a model of grassroots campaign strategy that changed the face of local elections forever. Annie was the bridge between the old, "yard signs and leaflets" style local grassroots campaign, and the sophisticated, high-tech, "targeted voter universe" style campaign used by the big boys that has turned the political tide in SLO county. Annie first introduced us to that strategy in David Blakely's 2000 campaign, and although we did not prevail that year, it was successfully re-deployed in 2004 to elect Jim Patterson and in 2008 to elect Adam Hill.

And lastly, I will be forever grateful for her personal loyalty. Her last "public" act, less than two weeks before she died, was to join the environmental leaders who met with Supervisor Patterson to urge him to retain me on the Planning Commission. While I know she was motivated in part by our friendship, what she was really advocating for was the need to protect the environment through enlightened land use planning, a passion she carried with her to the end. That she would choose to expend her precious, dwindling energy at that



Los Osos

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officials solicited letters from state and federal legislators urging a finding of “no substantial issue” and sought to meet with each of the twelve Coastal Commissioners. That effort ultimately could not obscure the environmental pitfalls in the project pointed out by the Surfrider Foundation, Los Osos Sustainability Group and Sierra Club, whose representatives led off the testimony of the 20-plus appellants at the



Say what? Coastal Commission Executive Director Peter Douglas said that, as the permit is written, the County would have to “bring an enforcement action against itself” if the water conservation program fails.

Hydrology Firm Says County Underestimated Threat to Los Osos Basin

The day before the Coastal Commission hearing, the Los Osos Sustainability Group received a review of the work of the consultants that the County relied on in its estimation of seawater intrusion and the measures necessary to mitigate its impacts as part of the Los Osos Wastewater Project.

Eugene B. Yates, Senior Hydrologist for the firm HydroFocus, concluded that the model the project consultants used to evaluate groundwater

yield “underestimates the rate of movement of the saltwater front,” which could result in “a direct risk of continued overdraft,” the contamination of “key production wells, and require that they be removed from service for a period of months or perhaps years,” and that “mitigation of impacts to riparian, marsh, and aquatic habitats could require an allocation of yield that is currently not considered.”

Substantial issue, indeed.

hearing. We pointed out all of the concerns that were subsequently cited by the Commission as the grounds for finding that our appeals raised substantial issues with the project.

After listening to all testimony and before taking the vote, several Commissioners were especially strong in their comments. Commissioner Patrick Kruer said that “in good

conscience” he could not say that there was no substantial issue, expressing amazement that any of his colleagues would consider overlooking those issues just so the sewer could get built sooner.

Commissioner Esther Sanchez noted pointedly that “our staff has not been able to respond clearly to questions raised here.” Commissioner

Sara Wan cited “serious deficiencies” in the Environmental Impact Report and said that the restoration of the project’s proposed effluent disposal site, which is proposed as mitigation for the project’s destruction of habitat, had already been designated as mitigation for a previous project’s destruction of habitat. She agreed with the Sierra Club that this constituted impermissible “double dipping” and that deferring the resolution of this problem until an unspecified later date was not acceptable. “This is the time to resolve this issue,” she said.

She also noted that, as currently worded, there is no way to enforce the implementation of the project’s water conservation and agricultural reuse programs.

“This was a textbook example of environmental activism at its best,” said Santa Lucia Chapter Chair Melody DeMerrit of the hearing’s outcome. “Our congratulations and thanks to the Coastal Commission for acknowledging the problems pointed out to them and moving to correct them, despite the enormous pressure on them to do otherwise.”

Climate Clowning with Meg and Carly

California’s Republican gubernatorial and senatorial candidates are making a bold bid to reverse the progress made in clean energy and climate change mitigation measures.

Both Meg Whitman and Carly Fiorina are promising California voters a return to the nineteenth century — albeit a much hotter version of the 19th century, marked by monster storms, widespread drought and tropical disease, flooded coastal cities and dead oceans — if the people of California elect Whitman governor and replace Senator Barbara Boxer with Fiorina.

To be fair, they are merely upholding the tradition of the California Republican party. Before signing into law the landmark Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, Governor Schwarzenegger fought it down to the wire, fronting for corporate interests and seeking to neuter the bill’s regulatory authority with toothless “market-based solutions” and wrestle enforcement away from the California Air Resources Board before he finally had to sign the bill or risk political irrelevance. He now touts his signing of AB 32 so proudly you would think he wrote it, or at least supported it. GOP State Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee voted against AB 32, but now cites his commitment to fulfilling the goals of AB 32 with every energy bill he proposes.

Whitman is having none of that. She’s kickin’ it old school: AB 32 must die! Fiorina meanwhile is challenging Senator Barbara Boxer over the costs of national climate change legislation.

Both candidates are playing on the presumption that they can link fighting climate change to a weak economy, portraying climate action as too expensive, whereas inaction denotes fiscal prudence. Praying for more bad times so they can ride into office on a wave of reactionary anger, they’re betting that by the time election day rolls around, voters will be irate and scared enough to agree with them.

It’s a pretty basic political tactic,

and, in this case, fundamentally wrong in every possible way.

As the *New York Times* noted in a report on the scary dollar figures cited for fighting climate change on a global scale, quoting the chief of Deutsche Bank Asset Management, “The figures people tend to cite don’t take into account conservation and efficiency measures that are easily available. And they don’t look at the cost of inaction, which is the extinction of the human race.”

But Whitman and Fiorina are even more wrong than that piece of common sense would indicate. Combatting climate change will not only cost less than ignoring it, it represents the only possibility for a viable economy.

We refer the candidates to a new report from University of California researchers examining the economic impacts of putting AB 32 on hold. “Energy Prices and California’s Economic Security,” sponsored by Next 10, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, finds that if California remains primarily dependent upon fossil fuels, private electricity costs could escalate as much as 33 percent. Using price forecasts from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Annual Energy Outlook (AEO), the study estimates that without diversifying California’s energy portfolio toward more renewable fuels and energy efficiency, the state risks a loss of over \$80 billion in Gross State Product (GSP) and more than a half million jobs by 2020. Implementing 33 percent renewable energy, combined with 1 percent annual improvement in energy efficiency, on the other hand, shields the economy from higher energy prices and yields a growth dividend, increasing GSP by \$20 billion and generating 112,000 jobs.

To date, official and unofficial economic assessments of state policies have been informed by relatively outdated fossil fuel price trend estimates. Unlike any previous study on the impacts of California’s climate policies, this study uses up-

to-date U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) fossil fuel projections.

“The global financial crisis has hit hard in California, where unemployment, mortgage foreclosures and an unprecedented state budget deficit are among the highest in the nation. But the current decline in demand in global energy markets is temporary and risks lulling policymakers and the public into a state of denial about long-term fossil fuel price trends,” said the report’s author, UC Berkeley professor David Roland-Holst. “Even using conservative official estimates, we find that California risks far greater economic peril by remaining heavily dependent upon fossil fuels. Energy efficiency and renewables offer a valuable hedge against the risks of higher energy prices.”

Over the last six months, even as national and state unemployment remain figures climb, retail U.S. gasoline prices have risen 40 percent and crude oil prices have risen 60 percent. While looking for work, California’s motorists are already paying half a billion dollars a day more to drive than they did in January 2009.

The study assesses the impact on California’s economic growth prospects of three primary drivers: the course of fossil fuel energy prices, energy efficiency trends, and renewable energy development. To assess the economic impact of increased implementation of renewable energy, the study sequences projects according to the most recent and definitive Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) report.

Highlights of report findings include the following:

- Without changing the state energy mix, under official fossil fuel energy price trends as projected in the U.S. Department of Energy’s AEO, private electricity costs in California would be up to \$100 per person higher in 2020 (already \$100 above today’s prices), making electricity up to 33 percent more expensive.
- If fossil fuels follow the Dept. of Energy forecast, and the state does



What them worry? Whitman and Fiorina.

not implement its climate policies, California’s economy will shrink by \$84 billion and over a half million jobs by 2020.

• Diversifying California’s energy portfolio to include 33 percent renewable energy and 1 percent annual improvement in energy efficiency significantly shields California’s economy from higher energy prices, resulting in lower consumer costs, increasing GSP by \$20 billion and boosting jobs by 112,000 by 2020. The full report is available at: www.Next10.org

On January 11, a bill introduced by Republicans in the state Assembly to overturn AB 32 was rejected. Its sponsors immediately set about turning it into a ballot initiative.

“When it comes to climate change, the most expensive thing we can do is nothing and the second most expensive option is to delay action,” said Ann Notthoff, California Advocacy Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council. “The annual economic impacts of climate-induced damage in California’s energy sector will range from \$2.7 billion in the low warming scenario to \$6.3 billion in the high warming scenario. Overall, \$21 billion in energy assets are at risk.”

Whitman and Fiorina ignore all this. As the *Daily Beast* politely observed: “The politically ambitious Silicon Valley Republicans are making perhaps the biggest, most consequential political gamble of anyone in the country.”

We’ll be more blunt: Meg Whitman and Carly Fiorina are California’s climate clowns, running for election on a promise to drive our economy all the way over the cliff, en route to helping bring about the end of life as we know it.

Why Water Rules

You need to know about the Master Water Plan

By Eric Greening

A dizzying array of important County plans is in progress, or soon to be: the Conservation and Open Space Element, the Climate Action Plan, the Land Use and Circulation Element/Rural Areas Plan, the Regional Transportation Plan, and others.

One plan that is lurking outside the current focus but is at least equally important is the update of the Master Water Plan. Its relative obscurity largely results from the fact that the County Water Resources Advisory Committee is not on television like the Planning Commission, Council of Governments, and Board of Supervisors, but WRAC meetings are open to the public, and could benefit from robust public attendance and participation.

The WRAC recently received a presentation on the work in progress. This should soon take the form of a written draft, which can be found at www.SLOCountyWater.org. Said draft will be open for comments.

Here are a few things to look for. You will notice that the County is divided into 16 water planning areas. Since one justification given for the abandonment of the 19 regional Planning Areas in the update of the Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) is the WRAC recommendation



that planning be shifted to a watershed basis, it is important to note that there is a large difference between the 16 areas in the Draft Master Water Plan and the 5 areas in the LUCE.

That said, there still may be some adjustment needed in the areas defined in the Master

Water Plan. The current lines are *not* just based on watersheds; they sometimes define underground basins, or even areas where current purveyors provide service. In a watershed-based map, the Salinas River would not be crossed by four boundary lines in its journey from headwaters to the Monterey County Line. There needs to be public discussion about whether areas should be defined solely by watershed, or whether a hybrid system can be justified.

In addition to the map, the parts of the draft completed to date include a water supply inventory and summary of available information about demand, and a “demand methodology,” including “Criteria for Asserting a Water Resource Shortfall” and “Criteria for Evaluating Potential Water Supply Solutions.” An important issue with the latter is to make

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A Squeaker for San Miguel

By Sue Harvey

On December 8, the County Supervisors rendered a long-awaited vote on the San Miguel Ranch development – 550 acres of valuable ag land hanging in the balance.

Would a General Plan Amendment (GPA) be granted, turning the land into a sprawling subdivision, or would it be retained as a viable capable agricultural parcel?

The authorization to process a zoning change was initiated in June 2005 by a Board of Supervisors ideologically 180 degrees from the current Board. Still, it was widely speculated that Supervisor Patterson might vote to approve the GPA.

The Environmental Impact Report

that accompanied the project cited numerous inconsistencies with county policies and goals and 21 Class 1 impacts – serious, unavoidable and cannot be mitigated. County staff had recommended denial of the project. On a 5-0 vote, the Planning Commission voted to recommend to the Board that the GPA be denied.

Central to the question of expanding the San Miguel development onto the Ag land on the west side of Highway 101, where very little development has occurred due to access constraints, was the question

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“Best Practices” Website Launched

First-in-nation project designed to expedite the greening of America

Green Cities California (GCC), a collaborative of ten of the state’s most environmentally progressive jurisdictions, has launched a Best Practices website.

The purpose of the first-of-its-kind Web site is to energize the implementation of sound environmental policies in cities and counties around the state and, ultimately, the country, by providing access to a storehouse of cutting-edge environmental policy that can accelerate policy implementation by helping cities avoid pitfalls and save time.

Local sustainability policies can have a profound and positive impact on environmental protection. California experienced a dramatic drop in littered polystyrene on beaches due to the adoption of polystyrene bans by dozens of coastal jurisdictions in the state.

However, the development of such legislation is exceedingly time-consuming and many cities, particularly small cities, don’t have the resources to develop local environmental policy.

“Our Best Practices Web site addresses that problem by providing a central repository of information with easily downloadable policy documents and staff reports,” says GCC Coordinator Carol Misseldine. “Now any jurisdiction can benefit from the hard work completed by other jurisdictions, and simply modify the policy to suit their locale.”

“This collaborative effort will save communities staff time and money by providing the resources required for change, eliminating the need for individual cities to constantly reinvent the wheel,” said Dean Kubani, director of the Office of Sustainability and the Environment.

The free web site, created by local governments for local governments, provides everything staff and policymakers need to implement new policies, including the policy document itself, staff reports, background research, legal analysis, and outreach and education materials. Almost fifty Best Practices, organized around the seven categories of the Urban Environmental Accords – Energy, Waste, Urban Design, Urban Nature, Transportation, Environmental Health and Water – can be accessed now at www.greencitiescalifornia.org.



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Green Buildings

continued from page 1

to join forces with the Sierra Club to engage our network of green building practitioners on this important campaign,” said Roger Platt, USGBC’s Senior Vice President for Global Policy and Law.

Some of the communities whose policies are mentioned in the policy guide as models include: small cities such as Greensburg, KS, Clayton, MO, and Doylestown Borough, PA; medium size cities such as Kearny, NJ, Portsmouth, NH, and Asheville, NC; and larger cities such as Anchorage, New Orleans, Boston, Los Angeles, and El Paso. In addition, the green building policies of several counties are highlighted, including Chatham County, GA, Montgomery County, MD, and Sonoma County, CA.

Green buildings efficiently use energy, water, and other natural resources, protect the health of occupants, improve employee productivity, and reduce pollution. Compared to new structures built to standard construction methods, green buildings can reduce energy consumption by 26% and greenhouse gas emissions by 33%.

Investments in green buildings pay dividends, on average resulting in 6.6% improvement on return on investment, 8% reduction in operating costs, and a 7.5% increase in building value. Improving the energy performance in existing buildings can

reduce energy use by as much as 30% or 40%, with the ability to earn back those investments through lower utility bills over time.

Green building will support 7.9 million U.S. jobs and pump \$554 billion into the American economy—including \$396 billion in wages—over the next four years (2009-2013), according to a 2009 study by the USGBC and Booz Allen Hamilton.

LEED is the internationally recognized green building certification system developed by the USGBC. LEED provides third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, stewardship of natural resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

In recent years, thousands of buildings in the United States have achieved LEED certification. As of October 2009, more than 200 localities across the U.S. are recognizing LEED as an effective tool for benchmarking the performance of their green building policies, and 2,995 local government projects are pursuing LEED certification.

For more information on the Green Buildings for Cool Cities project, see www.coolcities.us and www.usgbc.org.

A Will is a Way
Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering the Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature.

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Director of Gift Planning at
(415) 977-5639 or e-mail:
planned.giving@sierraclub.org



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Our New Farmers

by Anastasia Killham

The Cal Poly Organic Farm (CPOF) generates more than fresh produce; it grows future farmers who put their agricultural skills to the test on the commercial market.

At the head of the group is '05 graduate John DeRosier, who currently leases 100 acres in areas throughout San Luis Obispo County. While achieving a bachelor's degree in

Soil Science, DeRosier worked at the Farm as Production Manager. He volunteered numerous hours to various farm projects and started a biointensive garden, a methodology that "looks at the farm as a whole living organism over individual parts."

DeRosier is known within the CPOF community for his success as a dry farmer in areas with as little as 4 inches of annual rainfall. "A 'dry

farmer' is someone who uses natural rainfall to grow their crops," explained DeRosier, who employs crop rotation and cover cropping to increase soil fertility and retain soil moisture.

He also gained experience in the production and marketing sides of an agricultural operation through the CPOF's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program, farmers' market and restaurant sales, working with a wide variety of equipment and interacting with community members, growers and machinists at the university's organic farm, compost unit and machine shop.

He recently completed his first year of operating a 20-member "grain CSA" -- the first in this area -- featuring bi-weekly shares, and plans to feature over 20 different kinds of wheat along with a more exclusive, smaller member share with grains including oats, rye, spelt, millet, quinoa, amaranth and various wheat varieties.

In addition to the CSA, DeRosier will soon be selling his grains at local farmers' markets and has started a customer interest list. More information is available online at www.withthegrain.org

"Once people eat good grains, they don't go back," said DeRosier.

Following in DeRosier's footsteps is Templeton native and Cal Poly graduate Kyle Cosgrove, who rents five acres in his home town. Three of his five acres are in production with various vegetables and flowers. Cosgrove also experiments with growing beer hops "in hopes of supplying a family micro brew down the road." He has two brothers who plan to collaborate on the project, one to head up beer making and the other, also a Cal Poly graduate, to direct



In his element John DeRosier, managing production at CPOF.

Water

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sure that conservation is the first supply solution evaluated.

The inventory, broken down by planning area, still raises questions. For example, "environmental demand" figures are still speculative, and the question of whether they can be based on the needs of only one indicator species (Pacific Steelhead) need to be discussed by the biologically informed. Also needed is an assertion that the needs of steelhead need more fine-grained attention than annual flow figures; the seasonality of that flow, and the temperature of the water, are also critical. In addition, there is, as yet, no information whatever, even speculative, about environmental needs in the Salinas River system. Since there are multiple proposals for sand and gravel mining in the River and its tributaries, such information is needed before the possibility of a living stream system is sacrificed to the demands of an auto-dependent population for road base and sprawling development.

Other "supply-side" issues need to be better tuned: subscribers to the State Water Project, for example, should not be credited with figures that assume full delivery of their subscriptions. This year, for example,

the Department of Water Resources has announced that subscribers can only count on 5% of their allotments. While there is reason to hope that generous Sierra snowpack might accumulate and allow this figure to rise, it is symptomatic of an ongoing shortfall as the state's population rises while its precipitation does not. Even those jurisdictions that sought to pay for a more secure supply by signing up for a "drought buffer" only receive a doubling of their share: 10% instead of 5%.

There is a lot more detail to pay attention to once the current scattered pieces of this draft congeal into a complete draft. It is worth looking for that complete draft at the SLOCountyWater website by the time this issue of the *Santa Lucian* is in your hands.

Future articles here will get into more detail as details emerge. In the meantime, it is time to be aware of this document and its importance. Unless you have figured out a way to survive without water, or unless technophiles invent virtual water ("Instant water: add water and stir!") that is actually wet, this document is vital to you and everyone you know!



Dogs Get It Done



They howled Nipomo Creek Dogs Ralph Bishop and Dan Diaz.

After years of going to every conceivable regulatory agency, talking with staff, testifying at meetings, providing photo-documentation and conducting site tours, the Nipomo Creek Dogs -- aka Ralph Bishop and Dan Diaz -- have secured a future for their beloved creek, long befouled by agricultural waste (i.e. discarded nitrate-laden irrigation tubing).

Last December, Regional Water Board staff told the Dogs they are evaluating the express prohibition of discharge of "agricultural rubbish" into surface waters or any potential point of contact, and are requiring "responsible parties" on Nipomo Creek to identify actions being taken to prevent further discharges of agricultural waste, as well as to address the potential impact of waste currently in place."

Ralph and Dan are examples of what intimate, knowledge of and love for a special place can accomplish.

sales and marketing.

Cosgrove graduated last spring from Cal Poly with a degree in Plant Protection Sciences. While attending Cal Poly, Cosgrove discovered the CPOF and enrolled in the Organic Enterprise Course. He went on to attain paid employment first as a harvest worker and later on as harvest supervisor. The income from the Farm supplements his personal venture as an independent farmer.

"Right now, I'm just seeing what works and that entails doing a lot of different things," he said. His biggest challenge is fending off an abundant deer population. Next on the list is a short water supply, which has spurred him to focus on less consumptive growing methods and plant varieties.

Fellow CPOF alum Roger Tompkins, who will be graduating this spring with a degree in Environmental Management and Protection, also has returned to his home town to put his farming skills to the test. With ¼ acre of family-owned land in production in Atascadero, he is also experimenting with numerous varieties and has a target market in mind. He successfully completed the Organic Enterprise Course as well as a summer internship at CPOF last year.

"My work at the Cal Poly Organic Farm gave me the knowledge and confidence to pursue this path more than any of my other classes," he said.

After two years as a sous chef with Vraja's Kitchen in SLO, which features international vegan cuisine, Tompkins got a feel for what ingredients would be particularly useful to grow. Tompkins creates recipes that incorporate ingredients he is able to grow in abundance. The restaurant saves vegetable scraps for compost, which is then used to amend the soil.

Tompkins hopes to "just get established" in his first year of farm operations, improve soil fertility and ideally make some of his money back. In the long term he would "love to farm as a career and to be able to survive off the proceeds."

The Cal Poly Organic Farm reaches out to over 200 students annually through formal coursework, paid employment and volunteer opportunities. All farm supporters contribute in various ways to the operation of the diversified, 11-acre, certified organic farm, which, along with an amazing array of vegetable varieties, is home to a small flock of chickens, a growing worm population and one known feline mouser.

For more information about the Cal Poly Organic Farm and related opportunities, please visit: www.calpolyorgfarm.com. Email orgfarm@calpoly.edu or call 805-756-6139.

Peerless Leaders



Tomorrow's leaders Chapter Outings Chair Joe Morris leads a session of Outdoor Leader Training 101, the first step to becoming a certified outings leader. OLT 101 is free and limited to groups of about 10 people at the chapter office. First Aid Training, also required for certification, costs \$25.

Sierra Club Outings are about maintaining and enhancing a diversified, volunteer-run outings program that supports the Sierra Club's conservation mission by connecting people with the natural world and with the Club.

After you've been on a few Sierra Club hikes, you may feel a yen to become a volunteer Sierra Club Outings Leader.

"One leader was recently heard to extol the benefits of leading trips: 'You can go where you want, with whom you want, at the pace you want,'" says Will McWhinney, Angeles Chapter Outings Committee Chair. "Another once told me she was gaining leadership skills and confidence that applied to her professional life. Others have felt fulfillment from sharing the wilderness experience with others. Beyond the personal benefits of leading there are many benefits that leadership brings to others. Without leaders, many people are too shy to venture into the forests or onto the mountains. Without leaders, no one would know when to show up for a group activity, or where to park. Without leaders, there would be no outings."

Sierra Club outings are open to all

Sierra Club members and the general public. Some trips have special restrictions due to safety or membership factors. Almost all are free. A waiver is required for trips and hikes. Find an outing that interests you by turning to our back page for a partial listing or going to www.santalucia.sierraclub.org and clicking on any listed outing to view the entire current schedule.

For more information on Chapter outings or leadership training, contact Outings Chair Joe Morris at 772-1875 or dpj1942@earthlink.net

Help the Farm

Act locally to foster a better future by feeding yourselves while educating youth and promoting sustainable agriculture in the county. The Cal Poly Organic Farm is looking at a very challenging year. They are in great need of more Community Supported Agriculture members (CSA) and would really appreciate you passing on the word to your friends. For information, visit www.calpolyorgfarm.com or contact orgfarm@calpoly.edu.

Let's Make Power Local



On February 9, the County Board of Supervisors will review the work of the Planning Commission in the monumental chapter-by-chapter review and update of the county's two-decades-old Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE).

Improvements could be made, of course. As far as the Planning Commission's draft of the Energy chapter of the COSE is concerned, those can be summed up in four words: Make local power easier.

That's because the new language in the draft Energy chapter makes it clear that the County encourages the local production of renewable energy, consumed as close as possible to the point of production. This is the definition of "distributed generation," which entails numerous small generators of clean, renewable power, feeding into the grid. It avoids "line loss" – the 15 percent energy loss over long transmission lines from remote power plants – and avoids environmental impacts by encouraging "dual use," i.e. a solar array added to an existing structure. It also makes possible a great deal of control over energy use and pricing to individuals and local governments.

This, inevitably, equates to control taken away from large, investor-owned utilities. So it isn't hard to imagine who would have a problem with the County championing local power in its new Conservation and Open Space Element.

The number of rooftop solar systems installed in the U.S. jumped more than 60 percent between 2007 and 2008. In California, that jump was 95 percent. As a result, last year rooftop solar panels put 10 times as much new energy into the grid as the

utilities did. These are some of the eye-opening statistics you can learn from the article "Taking a Dim View of Solar Energy," on *Newsweek's* website. The title refers to the lengths utilities have gone to in their efforts to short-circuit rooftop solar.

In October, the governor signed a bill that will finally make it possible

for Californians who own solar panels or backyard wind turbines to get paid for the excess energy they feed into the grid. It's a baby step, but it's the kind of policy that made Germany – cloudy, overcast Germany – into the world's solar powerhouse.

The new report "In Our Backyard: How to Increase Renewable Energy

Production on Big Buildings and Other Local Spaces," a collaboration between UCLA and UC Berkeley law schools, underscores the point. As reported by UCLA Newsroom, "California has focused too much attention on long-term efforts to build large-scale and remote renewable energy facilities, including centralized wind and solar plants. These projects are usually located far from most energy consumers and face significant land-use and related hurdles that take years to resolve." California's natural resources could make us "a world leader in renewable energy production just by focusing on the opportunities that exist on big buildings and public spaces in our own backyards," says the report's primary author Ethan Elkind, Bank of America Climate Change Research Fellow at UCLA Law and Berkeley Law.

This is the future. The County's land use and energy policies can be written in such a way that they ensure either that San Luis Obispo is part of that future or that we are left behind. The COSE is the document that will guide the ways the county uses land, water and energy for the next twenty years. It needs to look ahead. And in looking ahead to clean energy and curbing climate change, localized power is clearly a winning bet.

If you want to make sure the County puts its (meaning your) money down on the right bet, it would be a very good idea for you to show up at the County Government Center on Feb. 9 when the Supervisors review the Conservation and Open Space Element. Tell them to keep local power in the COSE and in the county. Because you can guess who's telling them not to. (See "Solar Cheating," left.)

Solar Cheating

Utility-scale solar power plants? Sure.

The distributed generation of small-scale clean energy? You bet.

What's needed to make both these competing models of alternative power generation happen the right way? The policies that create a level playing field.

What direction is the pressure coming from to thwart that goal, while simultaneously claiming that rooftop solar can't cut it? Guess.

Let's take a look at the political reality of distributed generation in California, and the entity that seems to like it least:

- PG&E opposed AB 920 (Huffman) which would require utility companies to pay customers for any excess electricity produced by their residential systems. Fortunately, Governor Schwarzenegger signed AB 920 despite PG&E's opposition, which means residents who install solar panels will no longer have to give their excess electricity away to PG&E for free.

- PG&E also opposes AB 560 (Skinner) which would lift the state's net metering cap from 2.5% to 5%. Under existing law, utilities have to allow customers who install solar arrays "tie into the grid," allowing them to essentially run their meters backwards and reduce or eliminate their utility bills. But this only applies to the first 2.5% of customers who sign up to take advantage of the policy. PG&E's customer service area is about a year away from hitting the cap. AB 560 would raise the ceiling on the program to 5%, which is particularly needed now that AB 920 will be adding additional incentive to install rooftop solar. But PG&E and all the other IOUs oppose the bill.

- PG&E also opposed SB 14 (Simitian) Which would have, among other things, increased the state's renewable energy target from 20% to 33% by year 2020, and would have prevented utilities from taking credit for power generated by large hydroelectric dams in Canada. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed SB 14, missing an opportunity to increase California's renewable energy potential.

Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Group protests Diablo seismic study delay,” by Ronald W. Powell, *Telegram-Tribune*, November 25, 1987

“PG&E to seek license renewals at Diablo,” by Sally Connell, *Tribune*, November 24, 2009

Summary: Only 24 hours separate November 24th and November 25th, but twenty-two years came between 1987 and 2009. In 1987, controversy shook the county over the ramifications of the Hosgri fault found near the Diablo Canyon reactor; in 2009 controversy surrounds PG&E’s application to relicense the plant for 20 more years in spite of state requirements to first study the newly discovered Shoreline fault. The more things change, the more they seem to stay the same....

Foot-dragging on seismic issues seems to be the order of the day at PG&E. In their 2009 IEPR Report, the California Energy Commission noted, “For example, the CPUC required PG&E to submit an application by June 30, 2011, on whether renewing Diablo Canyon’s operating license is cost-effective and in the best interest of PG&E’s ratepayers....PG&E continues to object to a CPUC review of Diablo Canyon seismic studies as part of a license renewal review, and its current schedule would in fact not allow time for this review. PG&E is required to submit its license renewal feasibility assessment to the CPUC by June 30, 2011, but does not expect to complete updates to the seismic hazard model and the seismic vulnerability assessment until 2012 and 2013, respectively.” Given that ignoring the seismic hazard of the Hosgri fault ended up costing ratepayers billions in the 1980s, the CPUC wants answers before deciding on whether to allow PG&E to proceed with license renewal.

Then:

PG&E has asked the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission for one additional year beyond the established deadline of July 31, 1988....Spokesmen for PG&E have said the extension is necessary because the company’s seismic experts are needed to provide information to the state’s Public Utilities Commission for a pending multi-billion dollar rate case.

New names; same concerns. Today, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility is spearheading a citizen effort to make PG&E answer seismic questions. PG&E’s premature relicensing application to the NRC is filled with wiggly words: buried in the application are the following references to the new Shoreline fault: “...preliminary results from ongoing studies by PG&E...” and “PG&E informed the NRC staff that it had performed an initial evaluation...” and “The NRC staff undertook a preliminary independent review....” These vocabulary choices don’t offer much of a basis for making a decision, but that hasn’t stopped PG&E from steamrolling ahead with their plans.

Nancy Culver of the Mothers for Peace said the organization decided to join the Sierra Club in objecting to the request because members believe PG&E does not plan to complete the study for fear of what is might show.

Charles Trammell, NRC project manager for Diablo Canyon in Bethesda, MD., said the Agency will review the arguments offered by the Mothers for Peace and the Sierra Club to determine if a hearing is warranted.

There is much less chance of such a review happening today. According to a draft of the NRC’s new Generic Environmental Impact Statement for license renewal, seismic issues are lumped into a generic “one-size-fits-all” category and are no longer site specific. In more than 50 previous license renewal cases, the NRC has accepted no new seismic issues for discussion, and has approved every single application.

The PUC staff recommendation that PG&E eat the \$4 billion in earthquake retrofit blunders was over-ridden by the Commissioners. Utility customers have been paying for these seismic mistake ever since. Can cash-strapped California residents afford to ignore seismic issues and let this happen again?

The PUC’s public staff, assigned to represent consumer interests, has recommended the company be forced to absorb \$4.4 billion of the costs, saying PG&E management caused construction delays and cost over-runs that should not be charged to the public

Upshot: PG&E seems to be operating under the theory of “apply first; ask questions later,” and believes that by hiding under the dark coattails of the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission, they can fool Californians into believing that our state’s pertinent and pressing questions can be ignored. As history has shown—both here and most recently in Japan—ignoring seismic perils doesn’t make them go away, and the price for such ignorance has been in the billions of dollars. Concerned ratepayers should support the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility in making sure state regulators hold PG&E’s feet to the fire.

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT PG&E to seek license renewals at Diablo

By SALLY CONNELL
sconnell@thetribunenews.com
Pacific Gas and Electric Co. is expected to announce today that it will seek renewal of its two operating licenses at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. The licenses are for the two reactors at the plant. One license is set to expire in 2024, and the other in 2025. The company on Monday only stated it will be a “major an-

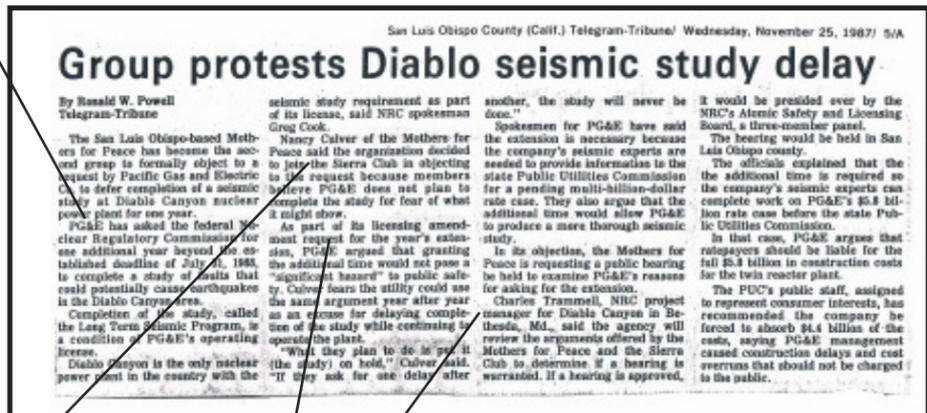
Firm is expected to make the ‘major announcement’ regarding two reactors at a news conference today

ouncement regarding the Diablo Canyon Power Plant, which provides low cost, carbon-free electricity to more than 3 million Northern and Central California homes.” Spokesman Kory Rafferty would not expand on the statement. Two public officials who deal

with tax assessments, county schools Superintendent Julian Crocker and county Tax Assessor Tom Bordonaro, are expected at the PG&E event.

Crocker said the news conference is about relicensing. He will

Please see DIABLO, Back Page



Diablo

avoid some of the studies that have been suggested

tion that was vetoed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger mid-October that have required a full of a recently discovered earthquake fault tbo.

arnzenegger called unnecessary because of previous legislation believed would achieve the same thing. Recently as late October &E officials said they had not made a decision whether to apply for renewal with the Regulatory Commission.

applications for relicensing appear to be standard industry practice, and the state Public Utilities Commission had given the energy provider until June 2011 to make a decision on what can be a multi-year process.

Now:

Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee, R-San Luis Obispo, also proposed legislation that was vetoed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in mid-October that would have required full mapping of a recently discovered earthquake fault near Diablo. Schwarzenegger called the bill unnecessary because of previous legislation he believed would accomplish the same thing.

The “previous legislation,” AB 1632, recommended these new seismic studies be done. As state regulators, the California Energy Commission noted in 2009: “An issue of critical importance to the state

for reliability planning is the possibility of a nuclear plant shutdown or even an extended outage, such as the multi-year outage at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Japan following a major earthquake.” That quake occurred on a previously unstudied, undetected fault. The bill vetoed by the governor would have made this study a more urgent issue. If he believes the current law does the same thing, then he needs to tell the CEC and CPUC that PG&E must answer their questions.

Such applications for renewal appear to be standard industry practice, however the state Public Utilities Commission had given the energy provider until June 2011 to make a decision on what can be a multiyear process.

In 2007 the CPUC gave PG&E about \$17 million in ratepayer money to study license renewal, not to apply. What the CPUC actually said in their 2007 decision was: “We will require PG&E to submit by no later than June 30, 2011, an application on whether to pursue license renewal....

As stated previously, it is our intent that the proceeding in 2011 will result in a decision on whether to pursue license renewal based on circumstances at that time, and that the results of the proceeding will be incorporated into the CEC’s 2013 IEPR and the Commission’s 2014 LTPP.” In other words, the CPUC’s decision on whether ratepayers can be charged for license renewal isn’t on their schedule until 2013-14. What’s PG&E’s hurry?

Arnold's Bad Budget



In the Governor's final budget, he has proposed (again) bypassing the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission, which approves oil and gas leases off California's coast, and has added the Tranquillon Ridge (PXP) offshore oil drilling project in Santa Barbara county. Allowing the first new oil drilling in state waters in over forty years is his way of balancing the budget.

Approving the PXP project would pit two California natural assets against one another: our coast and our state parks system. The Governor proposes to defund our state parks system by 140 million dollars, with the promise of petroleum profits that will flow from PXP back into the state parks budget. This is unacceptable.

"We strongly oppose any reduction in funding for state parks, which have already seen punishing cuts to their funding by this Governor," said Fran Gibson, Board President of Coastwalk California. "It is unconscionable to leverage the PXP project against state parks in this way and use our coast and state parks as pawns in his

budget game."

"Our coast is one of our most important economic assets, and renewing offshore oil drilling puts at great risk our tourist and fishing industries," said Dan Jacobson with Environment California. Jacobson's group is one of 105 environmental groups statewide united together to oppose the PXP project.

"The hypocrisy of the Governor cannot be overstated," said Susan Jordan, who directs the California Coastal Protection Network. "He would rather reverse forty years of bipartisan California state policy against offshore oil drilling to push through a pet project over 100 statewide groups rather than require oil companies extracting oil from our state's sea beds pay a severance tax — their fair share to taxpayers for doing business in California. We are the only oil-producing state in America that does not tax extraction of gas and oil on lands owned by the state. This would bring in more than 1.5 billion dollars annually to the state's General Fund."

California Coastal Commissioner

Sara Wan calls PXP's original agreement "unenforceable" and "a sham, since it uses the perverse logic that new drilling is necessary on the Tranquillon Ridge so we can 'end all drilling along the California coast' as its several proponents boast." The federal government can continue drilling on Platform Irene after the PXP contract is completed.

PXP, as predicted, has opened Pandora's box. We see oil companies rushing in quickly to push for new offshore oil and gas along two-thirds of the state's coastline. In January, Chuck DeVore (R-Orange County) announced his legislative plan creating a "new" committee to review coastal oil and gas leases (bypassing the State Lands Commission yet again) and opening up the entire coast of California to slant drilling from existing platforms or onshore.

DeVore's bill institutes a royalty program that puts our coast -- home to two-thirds of the state's population -- at great risk for oil spills and onshore industrialization.

Drilling anywhere offshore in California is a dirty and dangerous business. "Should existing oil operations be paying for the profits

they extract from our state's environment? Absolutely!," said Michael Endicott of Sierra Club California. "Should we be conducting a fire sale of new offshore oil drilling by exposing our coastline and fisheries, which we hold in trust for future generations? Absolutely not! The risk is too great, especially when we have to get off our fossil fuel habits."

PXP proponents claim offshore oil drilling is now technologically safe from major oil spills along our coast. This is patently false. Of the forty offshore oil rigs spills greater than 42,000 barrels of crude petroleum that have occurred since 1964, thirteen happened in the last decade.

No amount of funding from PXP's project can offset the coastal damage offshore oil drilling will likely cause. All the offshore oil reserves in coastal states yield up only three and a half years of petroleum, adding to the growing trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions that are putting our planet in peril of sea level rise and species extinctions.

We must reverse this course or stand to lose our way of life. Offshore oil drilling is not an answer for California's energy needs.

San Miguel

continued from page 5

of whether San Miguel has enough land already available for development within its current boundaries.

Planning Staff found that San Miguel is currently only 50% built out and 700 parcels are still available for growth. A Cal Poly Planning document confirmed this assessment and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) determined in 2006 that San Miguel essentially had adequate areas for growth when it looked at a 20 year projection for the area.

When it came time to vote, Supervisor Mecham hoped to keep the project alive by continuing to explore other possibilities. Supervisors Gibson and Hill were not convinced that any alternative would serve to overcome the serious policy inconsistencies and impacts and reiterated the need to deny the GPA now and not string the applicant along. Supervisor Hill also strongly expressed his disapproval of soliciting applicant money to pay for public studies — in this case a much needed San Miguel community plan. This concept, called "a public private partnership," much favored by the former Board, raises the specter of undue influence on the process by development interests.

The big question of the day was how Supervisor Patterson was going to vote. Even though he is an avowed supporter of Smart Growth and takes credit for initiating the process to adopt Smart Growth in the County, he seemed unconcerned about the inconsistencies and impacts of this project. He had indicated to others prior to the hearing that he thought the "issues had been resolved," and several members of the planning staff were assuming he would support some form of the project. Hearts sank when he stated from the dais his opinion that growth in this county has to occur on ag land.

But in the end, his almost inaudible vote was for denial. Final vote on a motion to deny the General Plan Amendment: Gibson, Hill and Patterson - yes; Mecham and Achadjian - no.

Letters

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

The following was posted to The Tribune's website as a response to our December 13, 2009, Tribune Viewpoint, "A New Reality of Solar Power," by Chapter Chair Karen Merriam, which reported that rooftop "urban solar" or distributed generation (DG) has been found to be much more capable of meeting California's renewable energy goals than previously thought. You can read the Viewpoint at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org.

Great. I now expect the Sierra Club to support relaxing the renewable energy mandates imposed on PG&E. The Sierra Club cites distributed generation as the answer in their opposition to the permitting of any large-scale renewable energy projects (have they supported ANY solar projects?). DG will be an important source of power but how will PG&E satisfy their renewable mandate through rooftop solar? Will they have a contract with every one of these homeowners? Instead of a single contract for a 500 MW central station solar plant, PG&E will have to administer 500,000 contracts for 500,000 1KW rooftop installations? Will PG&E be responsible for ensuring these 500,000 installations are properly maintained? What will this cost and who will pay? The enviros are great on the concepts but they have few answers for how any of this will actually work.

-posted on the Tribune website by toxiccop, 12/13/09

Ryan Pletka, the head of the engineering firm that performed the cost/feasibility analysis for California's Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI), whose comments comprised the gist of the Tribune viewpoint by our Chapter Chair that toxiccop is responding to, said "a firmly rooted mind-set among everyone who works from a traditional utility planning perspective" has meant that "we present this new information on photovoltaics to people, and it's still not sinking in." See the above.

Setting aside the fact that the author is not arguing with "the

enviros" but with Mr. Pletka, here are a few answers to the questions of "how will PG&E satisfy their renewable mandate through rooftop solar" and "how any of this will actually work." On March 27, 2008, Southern California Edison launched a project that will place 250 megawatts of advanced photovoltaic generating technology on 65 million square feet of roofs of Southern California commercial buildings — enough power to serve approximately 162,000 homes.

"This project will turn two square miles of unused commercial rooftops into advanced solar generating stations," said John E. Bryson, chairman of Edison International. SCE's renewable energy project was prompted by recent advances in solar technology that reduce the cost of installed photovoltaic generation. When combined with the size of SCE's investment, the resulting costs per unit are projected to be half that of common photovoltaic installations in California.

And as Edison International proudly pointed out: "SCE's solar program supports the state's Global Warming Solutions Act requiring the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, as well as California's renewable portfolio standard requiring that 20 percent of the state's electricity be generated with renewable energy by 2010."

In 2009, SunEdison, North America's largest solar energy services provider, announced the nation's largest solar distributed generation program in conjunction with Developers Diversified Realty, a Cleveland-based real estate investment trust engaged in the development of shopping centers. SunEdison

now has the rights to deploy solar energy systems at more than 200 shopping centers, covering up to an estimated 30 million square feet, located in 24 states and Puerto Rico. Potential capacity of the program is up to 259 MW.

The corporations that have contracted with PG&E to build solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain have done so at the behest of PG&E, which told them it wanted utility-scale solar on the Carrizo rather than going the SCE or SunEdison route, which would get new, clean power into the grid much faster while creating far more jobs and without the loss of energy entailed by transmission over long-distance power lines.

The California Energy Commission, in its Distributed Generation Strategic Plan, states: "Distributed generation will be an integral part of the California energy system, providing consumers and energy providers with safe, affordable, clean, reliable, and readily accessible energy services.... [The] Energy Commission shall lead a statewide effort, which promotes and deploys distributed generation technologies to the extent that such effort benefits energy consumers, the energy system, and the environment in California."

The Sierra Club supports utility-scale renewable energy projects that are properly sited, environmentally sound and don't wipe out habitat for endangered species in order to produce power. We never support a more harmful alternative over a less harmful one, or putting the right thing in the wrong place, or a philosophy based on the notion that we had to destroy a species in order to save it.

Cambria

continued from page 2

Cambria CSD decided to try to put a desalination subsurface intake on the beach at the mouth of the creek.

With no comprehensive answers available, an ad hoc citizen science inquiry was initiated, entailing creek sediment sample collection and testing, which yielded findings of mercury in four creek locations, a mile or closer to the beach. Most startling was a sample that found mercury at 540 parts per billion in one location at the mouth of the creek.

The Santa Lucia Chapter stepped up to the plate and backed this citizen-reporter's investigation – both in principle and financially — in pursuing further testing to see if bioavailable and highly toxic methylmercury was part of that total mercury. The tests came back positive for 3 parts per billion methylmercury.

That doesn't sound like much until one learns how damaging minute quantities of methylmercury can be, because it biomagnifies as it moves from one organism to the next in the food chain. Methylmercury found in sediments often indicates the presence of concentrations 10 to 90 times greater in the surrounding biota, due to its high solubility and bio-availability.

In the California Ocean Plan for Water Quality Control, the Regional Water Board has rules for discharges, with water quality objectives, limiting concentrations for mercury that are expressed in fractions of a part per billion. When asked about these limits, Dominic Roques of the RWQCB said they refer to total mercury; *there are no allowable*



Outlook unclear The logic in the CCSD's desal project studies resembles a winter day on Santa Rosa Creek State Beach.

discharge levels for methylmercury.

What would be in the discharge to the ocean if test wells, and then desalination, were to be pursued in this specific location in Cambria?!

This question also looms: Is the terminus of a creek that had almost three million pounds of liquid mercury extracted from a mine just five miles upstream a good place to put an intake for creating a drinking water supply? Viewing the awesome speed and force with which winter storm water makes its way down Santa Rosa Creek to the ocean, sweeping huge quantities of sediment with it, this observer thinks not.

After the January 5 meeting, CCSD President Sanders was quoted in *The Cambrian* as saying that the district "has known about the mercury situation for years. But we need to put the data in a comprehensive form so

the public knows how it was dealt with."

One ratepayer opined that it will be interesting to see how the director most associated with desal squares that admission of prior knowledge with the requirement that district decisions be made in public meetings, based on information made known to the public in a timely manner. (President Sanders: What did you know and when did you know it?)

All of the January 5 testimony had the cumulative effect of decelerating the Board's headlong rush, especially with ratepayers urging them to take time to reflect on all the information presented in public comment.

Ultimately, after two recesses and a conference with counsel, the Cambria CSD Board decided against approving the CEQA exemption, and instead voted to direct staff to commence, per

CEQA, an initial study for the project. The further consideration of the course of the test wells project was deferred until their regular January 21 Board meeting. The Public prevailed for the day.

The CCSD has sent out a Notice of Intent to adopt a Negative Declaration for the test well drilling/installation project. Apparently abandoning their quest for CEQA exemption, the Cambria CSD seeks to press forward by still asserting, now in a Negative Declaration, that there will be no significant impacts from 7 to 10 test wells on Santa Rosa Creek State Beach, with tens of thousands of pounds of equipment lumbering over the beach, drilling and pumping from multiple wells up to 150 feet deep.

Per that study, everyone can be glad that there seems to be no problem with mercury in the SR-4 well near Santa Rosa Creek, which provides drinking water (and which could providing potential relief for concerns about a water shortage for current ratepayers). However, what's in the depths of a well does not address the problem with surface and water sediment contamination from past and present mercury mine impacts.

It seems ill advised to draw false comfort by essentially comparing apples to oranges. A fuller investigation of the mercury issue than is called for in the Negative Declaration would appear to be in the best interests of public health and safety and seems prudent before disturbing sediments that could have negative impacts on this coastal ecosystem. The precautionary principle surely applies here. (Go to the Science and Environmental Health Network website, www.sean.org — a wonderful website for the concept of guardianship and stewardship into the future.)

Our Annie

continued from page 3

point in her life in that way is the most humbling gift I have ever received.

For the rest of my days, I will always look at landscapes, seascapes and skies with Annie's eyes. I want to appreciate the world every day as a better place for her having been here.

-Sarah Christie



The Measure of Anne McMahon

There are any number of ways to take the measure of a person, but two seem to be most telling on a human scale:

Do people smile and immediately feel better when they see that person coming?

and

Does that person, through his or her everyday example, in small acts and large, when people are looking and when they're not, cause the rest of us to understand that we need to be better people?

For Anne McMahon, for our Annie, anyone who was blessed by knowing her knows what the answer is

And also knows that without her there is less, now, to smile about.

And we also know that to finish (will there ever be an end point?) what Annie was doing, the rest of us will have to be better –

kinder,
gentler,
more compassionate,
more persistent,
more understanding,

than we usually are.

- Bud Laurent

Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **February 12**.
To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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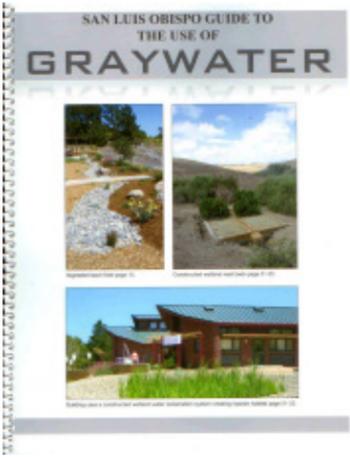


Bryan Bowers
Graphic Artist

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.



\$10 each, while supplies last. E-mail kim.sierraclub@gmail.com, or call (805) 543-8717 to reserve your copy.

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Do Sierra Club Members Have More Fun?

Do you really have to ask? You do? Then obviously you did not get this copy of the *Santa Lucian* though the mail, but by dumb luck -- in a coffeeshop, a library, off your mother's credenza -- and have been enjoying it without benefit of membership. That's easily fixed! Fill in, clip out & send in the coupon under the wind turbine on page 2, or go to www.santalucia.sierraclub.org, click on the "join or give" button, and follow instructions. It will be worth it just for the burden of guilt that will be lifted from your shoulders and the free tote bag.



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.

Sat., Feb. 6th, 9:30 a.m. Bishop Peak Exploration Hike with Mike Simms. Visit several of our Central Coast environments from oak woodlands to the sage scrub to the chaparral on one hike. Just 5.4 miles takes us around Felsman loop, up to the top of Bishop peak and back to Patricia Drive. There are a few steep parts and sturdy shoes are recommended but this hike will be at a moderate pace. Approximately 1100 feet of elevation gain. Patricia Drive trailhead. Leader Mike Sims, (805) 459 1701, msims@slonet.org. Non-members are encouraged to hike with us.

Sun., Feb. 7, 10 a.m., Islay Hill Open Space. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles. 1 mile/400 feet elevation change. Join us for a hike with spectacular views of Edna Valley and Morros. From Broad, go east on Tank Farm, turn right on Wavertree, left on Spanish Oaks and veer right onto Sweetbay and park near cul de sac. Confirm with David Georgi at 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com for upcoming activities.

Sun., Feb. 7, 2010—Superbowl alternative hike and potluck: If bears, dolphins, and eagles just sound like animals to you, join us as we hike Point Sal Road to our potluck dinner destination (4 miles round trip, 1300 ft. elev. gain). Bring a daypack with food to share, as well as a plate, utensils, and water for yourself. Meet at the Orcutt CVS Drugs parking lot at 3 pm. Details: JIM 937-6766. (Sponsored by the Arguello Group).

Mon-Wed, Feb. 15-17, Gold Butte Introductory Tour. Come explore this proposed National Conservation Area in Southeast Nevada. See many beautiful and interesting sights, including petroglyphs and Joshua trees. Climb one of the areas peaks and enjoy the splendid views. Central commissary. Leader: Vicky Hoover, (415-977-5527), vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org. CNRCC Wilderness and Desert Committees.

Sat., Feb 20, 10 a.m. Maino Open Space trail/Lemon Grove Loop. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles. 2 miles/400 feet elevation change. The trailhead is located off the Marsh Street onramp of southbound Highway 101. From downtown SLO take Higuera Street to the intersection with Marsh Street and proceed as if to take 101 South. Immediately after the underpass, bear right into the parking lot. Confirm with David Georgi at 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com. Bipedes welcome.

Sun., Feb. 21, 9 a.m. Hike the Barranca-Ridge Trail Loop. Join the leader on this late winter hike in Montana de Oro State Park. The hike will be about 8 miles with about 1800 ft. of elevation gain. We will enjoy the backcountry of the park, great views from Hazard Peak, and possibly some early wildflowers. Ticks and poison

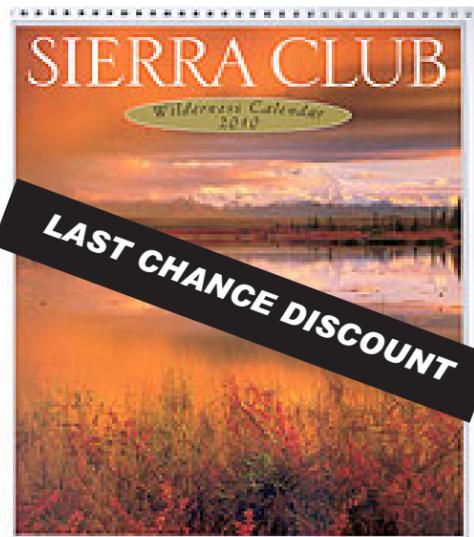
oak possible. Meet at Ridge Trail trailhead, 2.3 miles from the park entrance. Bring water, snacks, and dress for the weather. There is a good chance of a refueling stop at a Los Osos eatery following the hike. For info, call Chuck at 805-441-7597.

Sat., Feb. 27, 10 a.m. Family Hike in Harmony Headlands State Park. Explore the newest of our state parks. Easy 4-mile roundtrip hike, socially paced, past creek, rolling hills, historic ranch house, down to bluff overlooking the ocean. Children

visit the museum in Furnace Creek and take a two-mile hike to the highest sand dune. Possible hike into Mosaic Canyon. If you want to stay Sunday night, camp at Stovepipe Wells (\$12/site). Contact Carol Wiley at desertlily1@verizon.net or call (760-245-8734). CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat-Sun., March 13-14, Fence Removal, Hiking, Carcamp - Carrizo Plain. Help remove fences on the Dept. of Fish and Game Reserve. A wet winter means wildflowers! Work

2010 Sierra Club Calendars



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wall calendar: ~~\$12.50~~ \$9.00

desk calendar: ~~\$13.50~~ \$9.00

To order, call 543-7051

over 7 yrs. with parent welcome. Meet at Cayucos town pier for short rideshare. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sat-Sun, Feb. 27-28, Mecca Hills Carcamp. Join us as we explore the Mecca Hills Wilderness Area east of Indio, CA. We will hike through the gravel washes and rocky hills to several well-known and spectacular sites. Saturday we visit Hidden Springs and the Grottos, and Sunday we will explore Painted Canyon. Carcamping will include the civilized amenities, potluck supper, and campfire Saturday night. Limit 12 participants. Ldr: Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com 310-477-6670. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat-Sun., March 6-7, Death Valley National Park Exploratory Tour. Come and experience a sample of the many wonders offered in this national park. Beginning in Shoshone on Saturday morning, we will travel north on Hwy 178 with a stop at Badwater, and easy two-mile hikes at Natural Bridge and Golden Canyon. Camp at Texas Springs (\$14/site). If time allows, drive to Zabriskie Point and Dante's View. Sunday morning,

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

May 7-9; Jul 16-19; Aug 6-9; Sep 10-12.

CA's Channel Islands are Galapagos USA! Marvel at the sight of whales, seals, sea lions, rare birds & blazing wildflowers. Hike the wild, windswept trails. Kayak the rugged coastline. Snorkel in pristine waters. Discover remnants of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or just relax at sea. These 3 & 4-day "live aboard" fundraiser cruises are sponsored by the Angeles Chapter Political Committee & Sierra Club California Political Committee. Depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' Truth. \$590 for May and Sep; \$785 for July & August, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks & beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes on each island and point out interesting features. To make a reservation mail a \$100 check payable to Sierra Club to leaders Joan Jones Holtz & Don Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leaders for more information (626-443-0706; jholtzhl@aol.com)



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

Saturday, camp and potluck dinner that evening. Hike Sunday. Bring leather gloves, warm clothes with long sleeves and legs, dish for potluck on Saturday night. Leaders will be at Selby Camp on Friday night for those who want to arrive early. Leaders: Cal and Letty French, (805-239-7338). Prefer email lettyfrench@gmail.com. Santa Lucia Chapter and CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat-Sun., March 13-14, Ghost Town Extravaganza. Spectacular landscape near Death Valley; explore the ruins of California's colorful past. Camp at the ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Saturday, do a very challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this Wild West town. Later we'll return to camp for Happy Hour, a St. Patty's Day potluck feast and campfire. On Sunday, a quick visit to the infamous Riley town site before heading home. Group size strictly limited. Send \$8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329; (760) 868-2179. CNRCC Desert Committee.