



Jul/Aug 2011
Volume 48 No. 7



Inside

The real planning problem	2
At the ocean summit	4
The true cost of food	6
Lobby with SC in Sacramento	8
Classifieds	11
Outings	12

DON'T MISS
July 20
A 500-Mile Hike Across California
-see page 2



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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

Let's Eat Right

Sustainable food systems coalition forming in SLO

Anti-hunger, nutrition, agricultural and environmental organizations in San Luis Obispo County have been awarded a Hunger-Free Communities planning grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Sierra Club is one of eighteen partner agencies and five supporting organizations and government officials participating in the project. The key convening partners are the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County; Healthy Eating, Active Living San Luis Obispo (HEAL-SLO); San Luis Obispo County Health Department; the Central Coast Agricultural Network (CCAN) and Cal Poly's STRIDE center.

The project will bring together a broad range of local stakeholders to form a coalition to ensure sustainable food systems in San Luis Obispo County. The first meeting of stakeholder groups was attended by more than forty community representatives at the SLO headquarters of the Farm Bureau on the morning of June 8. Joseph McIntyre of the Ag Innovations Network, who has participated in the start-up of nine food systems coalitions, shared inside knowledge of how other California communities succeeded or failed in the effort, and helped the group "identify everything necessary to get food from farm to fork" in setting priorities for preserving and enhancing the county's food system.

McIntyre told the assembled participants they needed to "get outside some of the traditional arguments we have about food" and learn to "believe in the superiority of collective wisdom." The essential starting point, he said, is that "the U.S. has awakened to the fact that the way we eat is actually poisoning us," and that between this health crisis, rising international demand and global climate change, "there is a crisis coming that you will not be able to avoid."

Anne McDermott of STRIDE posed the question "We recognize there are haves and have-nots; how do we close

the gap?"

About 40,000 San Luis Obispo County residents either go hungry on a regular basis or sometimes don't know when or where they'll get their next meal. Despite its reputation as being a healthy community, nearly half of all adults in San Luis Obispo County are overweight or obese and do not eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, according to the 2007 California Health Interview Survey. In a 2009 San Luis Obispo County study conducted by Cal Poly and the Department of Public Health, 37% of preschool aged children were at the 85th percentile or higher for Body Mass Index (BMI), a significant increase from 2006.

Over the next year and a half, the San Luis Obispo County Hunger-Free Community Project will oversee a Food Security Assessment conducted by community volunteers under the guidance of researchers at Cal Poly's STRIDE center to assess hunger and nutritional deficits among the county's high risk populations; a Food Store Survey conducted by Cal Poly's community nutrition students to assess the availability and cost of quality food; and a compilation of local data on Food Production Resources by the Central Coast Ag Network to determine the availability of local food resources to help eliminate hunger and improved nutrition.

Nationwide, food system alliances have been successful in educating community leaders and the general public, offering public policy ideas, improving coordination between existing programs and starting new



Man with a plan Project director Diringer.

programs. The coalition will work with the community to develop a plan to improve food security and healthy nutrition for low-income residents of San Luis Obispo County.

Project Director Joel Diringer, a local health research and policy consultant, has organized and facilitated several county-wide planning processes in the health and nutrition sectors, including the HEAL-SLO coalition.

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Services division selected San Luis Obispo's project through a highly competitive process in which several hundred communities applied for 14 grants. The \$100,000 grant will fund the local studies and the convening and drafting of an anti-hunger plan.

Sierra Club food activism on page 6

Save Tomales Dunes

Historic Coastal Commission vote this month

By the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

At its upcoming meeting in Santa Rosa on July 13, as part of a process that has unbelievably dragged on for more than 20 years, the California Coastal Commission will make a momentous decision on the fate of Tomales Dunes, the largest unprotected dune system in central California.

About 90 minutes north of the Golden Gate Bridge, this is one of California's least-known ecological treasures, a complex of several rich coastal environments that includes coastal prairie, coastal scrub, salt marsh, tidal flats, bay and ocean. Tomales Dunes has the richest collection of seasonal dunes wetlands

TOMALES continued on page 9

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

General Meeting

Wednesday, July 20, 7 p.m.

A Hike Across California

Veteran Sierra Club conservationist and hardy outings leader, Cal French, backpacked 530 miles from the Needles area of the Colorado River to Morro Bay this spring, walking much of the way off-trail and using ultra-lite equipment. His trek across plains and desert demonstrated the need for continuous public and conservancy land between the eastern and western boundaries of California. Come hear his stories, marvel at his slides, and gasp at some unexpected adventures, all told by a skilled raconteur.



Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Fixing the Fake Problem

How do egregiously unsustainable development proposals get to the point where they require our local residents to dedicate a large portion of their lives to fighting them, devoting months or years to the task of becoming fluent in land use regulations and local, state and federal environmental laws?

Because "client service"-oriented planning staff agree to send such projects through the pipeline rather than telling the permit applicant and would-be developer right up front "this won't fly."

That's a problem. Unfortunately, it is not the problem identified as the problem in need of solving by the two streamlining committees consisting of (as *The Tribune* put it with a straight face) up to eight "planners, architects, developers and an environmentalist" tasked with advising the County Board of Supervisors on how to improve "a turgid and off-putting land-use process."

Instead, when the committees' work was presented to the Board of Supervisors at their June 7 meeting, the board heard tips on how to shake off pesky would-be project opponents: shorten the permit appeal period from two weeks to ten days, require all appellants to have first commented on a project at obscure, poorly noticed planning department hearings or else lose any standing to file an appeal, and dictate the way in which appeals should be written by appellants, requiring lots of that aforementioned fluency in land use regulations and local, state and federal environmental laws.

In other words, the Board got pretty much the kind of recommendations one would expect from eight "planners, architects, developers and an environmentalist."

A fundamental misreading of the problem was further apparent from the dais. As the Board tabled the report for more public input at the June 7 meeting, Supervisor Adam Hill, eager to adopt the proposals to restrict appeals and the role of the public in the public process, bemoaned the strife-ridden planning process and what he saw as an "increasingly destructive battle between people who want growth at any cost and those who want no growth whatsoever."

While that is an impressive combination of the straw-man argument and the fake symmetry gambit in a single statement, we would point out that all the major development fights in recent county history – the Hearst Ranch Golf Resort, Cayucos Viewshed, Santa Margarita Ranch, San Miguel Ranch, the Salinas gravel mines, the proposed sale of County land in the Oceano Dunes, etc. – have indeed involved those desiring development at any cost, but none to our recollection have involved people seeking no growth at all.

Rather, they have involved citizens who sought to defend the General Plan from gross violations, protect water or air quality, defend the habitat of threatened species, etc. In every case, the objective has been to send an ill-conceived, poorly-designed, destructive plan back to the drawing board or the waste basket (or the grand jury, in the case of the skullduggery that County planning staff engaged in when trying to force the sale of that land in the Oceano Dunes.) And in each case, opposition has been to a specific project with specific problems, an opposition formed by people who were seeking to protect something precious, not seeking to engage in a simplistic philosophical debate on growth vs. no growth. (We don't know if there is a group around here somewhere that is dedicated to "no growth at all," but if there is they are failing utterly, as at least 85% of all projects get approved by the Planning Commission and the Subdivision Review Board with no opposition whatsoever.)

The Board took a promising step toward fixing the real problem in 2009 when it ushered former Planning Director Vic Holanda into an abrupt retirement, not a moment too soon. But Holanda's wink-&-nod planning philosophy had permeated County Planning for 12 years, and the Board did not proceed to clean house or otherwise make it clear to staff that Holanda's laissez-faire planning style was now inoperative. Hence the "client service" philosophy is still very much in place; and hence the focus of the "streamlining" committee on trying to find ways to make it easier for developers to get project permits approved by making it harder for citizens to fix the problems that inevitably arise from that philosophy. It would be a lot simpler to make it clear to planning staff that when they first glimpse a General Plan bunker buster heaving over the horizon, trailing clouds of significant environmental impacts, many future problems could be solved and many battles avoided if they could learn to just say no.

That would do a lot more to streamline the process than continuing to put the private developer in the catbird seat and the public interest out in the cold — a location that may soon feature a higher mountain to climb in order for a citizen to challenge the permit for a bad development.

SANTA LUCIAN

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2010 Coastal Commission Voting Chart Now On Line

Sierra Club California has released the 2010 California Coastal Commission Conservation Voting Chart.

This chart, now in its 23rd year, is a combined effort of various coastal environmental groups, and measures the pro-conservation scores of the Commission. The 2010 chart examines 21 separate votes, which were selected in consultation with coastal conservation activists, based on their likely impact on coastal resources and their potential to set statewide precedent.

“We are disappointed that the overall conservation score for the Commission dropped from 66% in 2009 to 61% in 2010,” said Michael Endicott, Advocate for Sierra Club California. “Commissioners appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger, in particular, have backslid from gains in 2009 to casting pro-coast votes in 2010 only 43% of the time.”

Though some votes show that the Commissioners are willing to support staff enforcement recommendations and to honor past precedent for development standards like bluff top setbacks, other votes demonstrate an inconsistent approach to protecting Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas and a failure to ensure long term enforceability of agricultural and open space permit restrictions. Still other votes allow high intensity projects, specifically desalination and wastewater treatment plants, to proceed despite probable potential to significantly degrade the coastline features, habitat and surface and



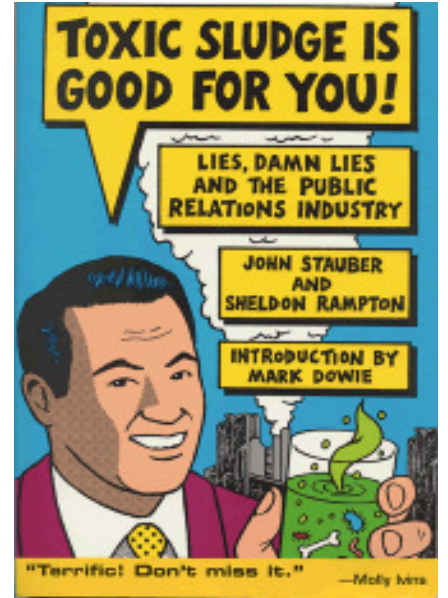
Gone at last Former Coastal Commissioner Katcho Achadjian (lower right corner) ended his Coastal Commission career in his traditional conservation vote ranking: dead last.

ground waters that support the wildlife and activities that drive the success of California's coastal economy.

“It’s also troublesome,” added Endicott, “that the sites of these projects do not appear to have been scrutinized for sustainability in the face of sea level rise. And the Commission’s two desalination plant votes have respectively undermined California’s greenhouse gas reduction efforts and set a precedent for segmenting impact assessments and

approvals for such projects. These decisions highlight the importance and value of ongoing public involvement to make sure that the Commissioners adequately and correctly review proposed projects against California Coastal Act criteria. Sierra Club California and activists from our eight coastal chapters are committed to continuing fulfilling this role along with our coastal allies.”

For more information and the complete report card, go to www.sierraclubcalifornia.org/.



Don’t Be Duped by the Sewage Sludge Industry’s “Compost”

by Lisa Graves
from PR Watch/Weekly Spin, 5/6/11, reprinted with permission of the Center for Media and Democracy

Editor’s note: Last year, the SLO County Planning Commission voted to adopt Open Space Policy 2.4, stating “The County should prohibit disposal of biosolids and composted bio-solids on open space lands.” (“Biosolids” is the p.r. euphemism for sewage sludge invented by industry lobbyists.) Under intense lobbying pressure, the Board of Supervisors opted to omit the words “and composted biosolids” before approving the update of the Conservation and Open Space Element. The following article provides a good reason why those words should not have been omitted, and why they need to come back into the discussion next year when the Environmental Health Division is expected to issue a permanent ordinance regulating the land application of sewage sludge in San Luis Obispo County.

It’s not green to greenwash sewage sludge with “organic” school gardens

Earlier this year, some of Hollywood’s “green” celebrities — Rosario Dawson and a bevy of starlets — thought they were promoting organic school gardens for inner-city kids when the Environmental Media Association (EMA) teamed them up with a secretive corporation, Kellogg Garden Products, whose main business is selling sewage sludge products.

That company calls its Kellogg brand “quality organics” and deceptively labels bags sold at the garden store as “garden soil” made from “compost” — with no mention that it is made from industrial and human waste that contains tens of thousands of contaminants. That’s why federal law bars the use of sewage sludge-based products in organic gardens.

So when news broke that Kellogg Garden Products provided sewage sludge products to EMA’s “organic” school gardens — and its spokesperson even posed with sewage sludge-derived products at the gardens — you’d think EMA and its stars would cut all ties to the sludge industry.

But you’d be wrong. Instead of denouncing the contamination of the kids’ gardens and the corporation’s effort to “greenwash” its brand through associating with stars devoted to organic produce, EMA is sticking with its corporate donor. So far.

Oh, Those Frivolous Appeals

As we report in “Fixing the Fake Problem” (left), the proposal to restrict public access to the County land use permit appeal process has been tabled for further review.

This attempt to narrow the “standing” and the time window to file an appeal is not the first time the County has sought a way to squeeze the public out of the public process. At the end of 2009, the Board of Supervisors hiked the land use appeal fee by \$200 and tried (and failed) to slap a fee on no-cost Coastal Zone appeals, a guaranteed right of all citizens of California under the California Coastal Act.

The County’s rationale for such actions is the need to cut down on the number of “frivolous appeals.”

After the June 7 Board meeting, Santa Lucia Chapter Conservation Chair Sue Harvey asked SLO County Planning & Building Division Manager Warren Hoag to give her an example of a “frivolous appeal” of the type that the measure would halt. Hoag cited as an example the appeal of the decision by a County Planning officer (Mr. Hoag, as it happens) to issue a Coastal Development Permit for the San Luis Coastal Unified School District’s solar power project. The permit required removal of



mature native trees to allow maximum sun exposure for solar panel arrays placed around the grounds of local schools.

Two appeals were filed with the California Coastal Commission by the Sierra Club and Los Osos resident Julie Tacker noting that the loss of those trees and the encroachment on wetlands -- classified by the Coastal Act as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) -- was a consequence of the array layout as approved by the County. The Coastal Commission agreed, and directed that one of the arrays be removed from ESHA and the trees spared (see “Solar Project Improved by ‘Opponents,’” February 2011).

with or without the new proposed definition of “standing.” The outcome of our appeal also would have been the same: we were right and the County was wrong in issuing a permit without sufficient conditions for the protection of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area, a violation of our Local Coastal Plan. Because we appealed the permit, the problem was fixed.

Which has to make you wonder: How is the County defining the term “frivolous appeal?” So far as we can tell, it seems to mean an appeal that disagrees with the decision of a Planning Department division manager -- especially when that appeal is upheld.

Sierra Club Takes to the Sea

by Judith Bernstein

Lucky me: I entered the Sierra Club Activist Network's contest to win a trip to the Blue Vision Summit in Washington DC, May 20-23 and won! (see "Her Blue Vision," May.)

What did I have to do to get this honor? First, I had to have a vision of my own for improving the health of the ocean in my local area. Second, I had to describe my commitment to environmental issues. Third, I needed the recommendations of local Sierra Club leaders. Thank you so much Andrew Christie, Karen Merriam and others who gave references.

This was the third such summit, organized by David Helvarg, President of the Blue Frontier Campaign. In his welcome, he said: "We are here to show that there is a growing constituency for restoring the Gulf of Mexico, demonstrating how health seas promote a healthy economy and seeing our national ocean policy launched at the local level where many of you are already working on local solutions to the challenges we face both on and offshore." As part of my commitment to working at the local level, I have joined the Marine Sanctuary Alliance (our local Sierra Club and Surfrider chapters), working to include the coastal areas off our County in an existing Marine Sanctuary.

I arrived in Washington already aware of the challenges to the health of the world's oceans: pollution (the ocean as worldwide garbage dump); warming waters in response to climate change resulting in coral bleaching and die-offs; melting icebergs raising the sea level with threats to islands and coastal areas; and the infamous "garbage patches" where plastic bottles and other debris swirl around in gyres.

The conference speakers and panels provided more specific information about these threats and their consequences. Unfortunately, I learned of more threats I hadn't known about. Fortunately, I heard about innovative ways scientists and other problem-solvers were dealing with them. So first the bad news, then the reasons to celebrate humanity's ingenuity.

The oceans are connected to the land, and although this may be obvious to most people, the interconnections are not always clear. As a Saturday speaker put it, "whatever happens upstream, impacts downstream." That is to say, what goes into streams and rivers goes into the ocean. And that includes agricultural runoff, sewer overflows during storms, toxic waste, soil turned over during construction as well as erosion, and junk casually tossed anywhere that can be washed into the ocean. Although state and local land use laws as well as coastal regulations may prevent many of the past abuses in this respect (the EPA is required to look at water impacts in its evaluations), the world's oceans border many countries that don't have stringent regulations or lack the staff to enforce them.

My initial inspiration for attending the conference was the growing Pacific Garbage Patches that I had read about. The news about the effects of plastics on marine life was truly horrendous. The Plastic Pollution Coalition, headed by Daniella Russo in Monterey, is part of a global effort to rid the world of plastic. Their staff pointed out the many ways that plastic is harmful both on land and sea, and the proliferation of products that use plastic.

There are plastic pieces or micro-particles ingested by marine fish and animals that fill up their stomachs so that they can't eat properly, or choke them, or leach PCB's into their system. They also become entangled in nets or plastic items like soda can holders and drown. And there is more: invasive species are finding a home on floating plastic rafts; plastics can move up the food chain as a bigger fish eats a smaller fish that has ingested plastic.

Couple today's plastic problems with a world population that is still growing and throwing, and you have a disastrous situation for the future. The Coalition's approach involves public education and lobbying for legislation to outlaw plastic use of various types. Although California failed to pass a ban on plastic bags, out-lobbied by the usual suspects, other municipalities (San Francisco, San Jose, Marin/LA/Santa Clara counties) have passed laws against single-use bags. A bill in Congress, HR 1628, proposes a tax on plastic bags.

I was interested in laws or tax breaks that would encourage the development of alternatives to plastic, although most of the panelists were sure this wouldn't happen in their lifetimes. I asked about alternative products now on the market and was told that (1) many of them didn't degrade for a long time, even if that time was not as long as plastic and (2) corn-based products such as cups and plates sold at health stores, New Frontiers, etc. had their own negative environmental consequences since more and more acres of good soil that could be

SEA continued on page 10



Ahoy The author, left, with Rep. Lois Capps' legislative assistant Jennifer Salerno in D.C.



Cooling It



by Jack McCurdy

The EPA has published a proposed rule relating to the regulation of the use of cooling water at existing U.S. power plants and other industrial facilities.

Unfortunately, EPA's proposal does little to protect our waterways from the destructive impacts associated with once-through cooling.

Once-through cooling is incredibly harmful because it relies on massive water withdrawals – approximately 80 trillion gallons per year from our nation's waters. Among other things, these withdrawals kill fish and aquatic organisms by the millions by "impinging" them on intake screens (i.e., trapping them against the screens by the pressure of the intake flow) and by "entraining" them through heat exchangers where they die due to physical, thermal and toxic stresses. Readily-available modern technology – known as closed-cycle cooling – recycles cooling water and reduces withdrawals and fish kills by 95 percent and is required for new plants.

EPA's proposed rule is a step backward in our collective efforts to safeguard America's waters. Basically, EPA has chosen the path of least resistance by caving into industry pressure and punting this issue to state agencies – agencies that too often lack the resources and the ability to stand up to industry on this issue.

"The country is long overdue for a clear, consistent national policy that protects waterways and helps move the nation toward cleaner, more modern and more efficient energy production by phasing out the environmentally destructive once-through cooling systems," said Steve Fleischli of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Without national standards, the EPA remains in violation of the Clean Water Act and states continue to lack the political will, resources, and clout to impose use of better technologies on the power industry."

TAKE ACTION

The deadline for comments on the draft rule is July 19. A final rule will be issued by July 27, 2012. To comment, go to www.sierraclub.org/, type "Tell the EPA to Stop the Fish Massacre" in the Search window, and then click on "Attack of the Fish-Chopping Coal Plants!" (Take Action).

More information on the impacts of power plant cooling water can be found on Riverkeeper's campaign website. Go to www.powerplants thatsuck.org.

A Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Morro Bay

by Lexie Bell, Assistant Director Morro Bay National Estuary Program

The CCMP update is in full swing! For those of you that were unable to attend the first public meeting on April 14th, the meeting presentation and notes can be found in the blue box on the right-hand side of this web page: <http://www.mbnep.org/ccmp/plan-progress-update.php>.

We have also scheduled the technical workshops. During these workshops, the Estuary Program will seek advice and feedback from experts in specific areas of the plan. The workshop topics do not represent the only areas of the plan to be updated; instead, they are the areas in greatest need of expert assistance. An invited panel of experts will participate in each meeting, and members of the public are also welcome to attend.

Because meeting space is limited, please contact me by email or phone (805-772-3834) if you wish to attend. Complete information on the technical workshops can be found here: http://www.mbnep.org/ccmp/public_meeting_agenda.php.

The remaining workshops are scheduled as follows:

Future Direction of MBNEP Monitoring – July 7, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Freshwater Flow – July 12, 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Safety is paramount,” by Victor Dricks, *New Times*, June 9, 2011.

Summary: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s senior public affairs officer in the NRC Region IV office takes on local critics of his agency and defends its reputation.



The NRC has frequently been criticized as too close to the nuclear industry. During the 2008 campaign, President Obama called it “a moribund agency...captive of the industry it regulates.”

The NRC is an independent regulatory agency respected around the world for its high standards and low threshold for concern.

– “Cold Comfort at Senate Nuclear Safety Hearing,” George Zornick, *The Nation*, Jun. 17, 2011

The attorney for the Mothers for Peace, the Sierra Club and former supervisor Peg Pinard argued that “the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have removed any shred of credibility from the NRC’s stance that terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities are ‘speculative’ events that cannot be predicted.” The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed.

Despite Swanson’s claim, there was nothing “irrational” about the NRC’s refusal to prepare an environmental analysis on the consequences of a hypothetical terrorist attack on Diablo Canyon.

PG&E said this in the context of the frame it was then trying to put around the Fukushima disaster -- one in which the nuclear reactors supposedly came through the earthquake with no problems; all the damage came from the 30-foot tsunami (i.e. Diablo is 85 feet above sea level so it can’t happen here) before it was discovered that the quake knocked out vital systems at the Fukushima reactors before the tsunami hit... so, yes, it can happen here. And why is the NRC acting as an apologist for a utility it is allegedly monitoring as an impartial, independent regulator?

[After Fukushima], PG&E never said the plant is safe from earthquake damage because it sits on a cliff 85 feet above sea level. They said it’s safe from tsunamis because of its location.

“Federal regulators have been working closely with the nuclear power industry to keep the nation’s aging reactors operating within safety standards by repeatedly weakening those standards, or simply failing to enforce them.... Time after time, officials at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission have decided that original regulations were too strict, arguing that safety margins could be eased without peril.

Our inspection process is designed to identify problems long before they become safety significant.

Commissioners also had no answers about how to fix backup power systems that continue to cool nuclear material in the event of a major power outage. The batteries at Fukushima ran for only eight hours—not

nearly long enough. In the United States, the standard length is only four hours. “This is something we have to look into and take action on,” said commissioner George Apostolakis. “I’m not sure what that action would be.”

– “Cold Comfort at Senate Nuclear Safety Hearing,” George Zornick, *The Nation*, Jun. 17, 2011

“Again and again, problems worsened before they were fixed. Postponed inspections inside a steam generator at Indian Point allowed tubing to burst, leading to a radioactive release in 2000. Two years later, cracking was allowed to grow so bad in nozzles on the reactor vessel at the Davis-Besse plant near Toledo, Ohio, that it came within two months of a possible breach, the NRC acknowledged in a report. A hole in the vessel could release radiation into the environment, yet inspections failed to catch the same problem on the replacement vessel head until more nozzles were found to be cracked last year.”

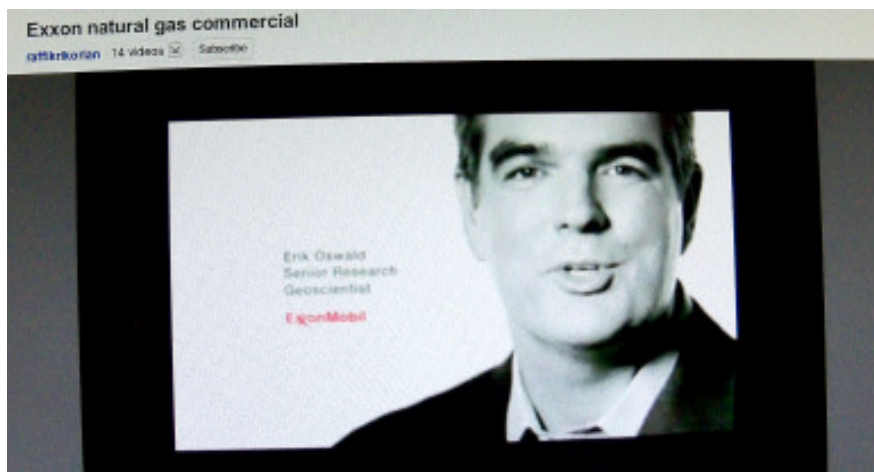
– “Plants Crumble as Nuclear Rules Erode,” by Jeff Donn, Associated Press, *The Tribune*, Jun. 20, 2011

People who have questions and concerns should attend a June 15 public meeting at 6 p.m. at the Embassy Suites hotel in San Luis Obispo, where the NRC staff will provide a briefing about the Diablo Canyon plant’s 2010 safety performance.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission travels to San Luis Obispo (on our dime) to “listen” to questions from our community on the safety of aging reactors on the west side of the Pacific Rim. Yet the NRC provided

answers to neither San Luis Obispo nor Santa Barbara residents’ questions at their June performance review meetings on Diablo Canyon. The NRC has been a rubber stamp on every single nuclear reactor license renewal request it has ever received. On June 20, five days after the NRC’s meeting in SLO, the NRC and PG&E seismic experts held a conference call with licensing and relicensing staff to discuss an unprecedented License Amendment Request (LAR) for Diablo Canyon. The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility will address this and other age/seismic/cost/reliability issues at a July 26 California Energy Commission nuclear workshop in Sacramento. On July 7 at the California Public Utilities Commission, the Alliance and co-intervenor Sierra Club, CalPIRG and Environment California will formally oppose PG&E’s motion to suspend its request for ratepayer funding to underwrite the utility’s quest to renew Diablo Canyon’s operating license for another 20 years (see “Seismic Showdown,” March 2011). As funding for PG&E’s license renewal application should not be considered before the seismic studies are complete, we will argue for dismissal.

Frack Attack



Hey, bunky, are you getting a little tired of those commercials on every cable news channel featuring handsome, sincere, down-home oil company executives telling you how exciting it is that they are using the technique known as hydrofracking to pull natural gas out of the ground, and how clean, safe, and carefully monitored it is?

Yes, it’s all the opposite of true, as the *New York Times* has exhaustively documented (search “drilling down” on the *Times*’ website). And you can do something about it. Fractivists can find and post templates for letters to representatives, and for use when encountering industry mouthwash in articles that need rapid response. Check out Sierra Club’s Activist Network on Facebook, and join up at sc.org/act-net/.

Upshot:

“The AP found proof that aging reactors have been allowed to run less safely to prolong operations. As equipment has approached or violated safety limits, regulators and reactor operators have loosened or bent the rules. Last year, the NRC weakened the safety margin for acceptable radiation damage to reactor vessels - for a second time. The standard is based on a measurement known as a reactor vessel’s ‘reference temperature,’ which predicts when it will become dangerously brittle and vulnerable to failure. Over the years, many plants have violated or come close to violating the standard. As a result, the minimum standard was relaxed first by raising the reference temperature 50 percent, and then 78 percent above the original -- even though a broken vessel could spill its radioactive contents into the environment.... Unprompted, several nuclear engineers and former regulators used nearly identical terminology to describe how industry and government research has frequently justified loosening safety standards to keep aging reactors within operating rules. They call the approach ‘sharpening the pencil’ or ‘pencil engineering’ -- the fudging of calculations and assumptions to yield answers that enable plants with deteriorating conditions to remain in compliance.”

– “Plants Crumble as Nuclear Rules Erode,” by Jeff Donn, Associated Press, *The Tribune*, Jun. 20, 2011

From Field to Fork

The 3 questions to ask about your meal before it gets to your plate are how was it grown, where did it come from, and what is it doing to the planet?



The Sierra Club seeks to increase awareness of the environmental impacts of our consumption practices, encouraging environmentally friendly consumption in energy and transportation, food, and forest products.

We advocate specific changes in public policy that will promote more-sustainable consumption practices, and we provide information and resources that can help us make more thoughtful, educated choices in satisfying daily needs.

When it comes to food, we recommend a three-part policy:

- **Eat Local**

If you care about global warming, don't buy food that has traveled hundreds or thousands of miles by plane and truck to get to you. If you care about open spaces, buy food that is grown on small local farms, which help keep open spaces from being paved over. If you care about stopping sprawl, buy from local producers rather than from big chain stores.

- **Eat Organic**

If you care about biodiversity and endangered species, don't buy food that is produced with toxic pesticides, which kill all sorts of creatures. If you care about global warming, don't buy food that is grown with petroleum-based fertilizers. If you care about clean air, water and soil, look for food that is grown on farms where farmers don't use chemical pesticides that are sprayed from the air and leach into the water and soil.

- **Eat more vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, and seeds**

If you care about forests, wild places, biodiversity and endangered species, you should know that a leading cause of deforestation in the Americas and elsewhere is the raising of cattle and their feed. If you care about clean water and soil, don't buy meat from factory farms where animals are raised in confined operations so that their wastes poison the



TAKE ACTION

Get the Activist Toolkit

Consumers hold a lot of power in determining how products are produced, and in turn how our environment and health fare. We can work to bring about an economic system that strives for the sustainability of our environment and our communities. Here's a list of activities to get started:
www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/toolkit/

Learn the True Cost of Food

An educational and entertaining animated short produced by the Sierra Club's Sustainable Consumption Committee, "The True Cost of Food" is part of a campaign to encourage people to think about the environmental impacts of their consumption choices and show how consumers, through our food choices, can stop the practices that harm our health, our planet and our quality of life.

"The True Cost of Food" is available as a 15-minute DVD or web download. E-mail truecostoffood@aol.com to get a copy of the DVD and discussion guide, or download a full-length or abridged version at www.truecostoffood.org/.

Rachel's Kids

by Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club

Rachel Carson would be proud of the kids at Renaissance High School in Watsonville, California.

Carson, of course, was the former U.S. Bureau of Fisheries biologist who, alarmed by the effects of DDT, wrote *Silent Spring* — the Big Bang of the modern environmental movement.

Before *Silent Spring* appeared way back in 1962, no one questioned the indiscriminate use of pesticides. People assumed that better farming through chemistry was completely safe. Who would dare challenge the inexorable march of "scientific progress?"

Rachel Carson, that's who. As a scientist herself, she was able to build a devastating and convincing case against DDT. The chemical industry cried foul, but when President Kennedy asked the President's Science Advisory Committee to report on Carson's findings, they backed her up, DDT was eventually banned, and the rest is history.

Which brings us back to Watsonville. Almost half a century after *Silent Spring*, we now have an Environmental Protection Agency that is charged with protecting the health and safety of both consumers and agricultural workers by regulating pesticides and fumigants. But, in spite of greater awareness of the dangers, we still can't assume that the fruit and vegetables on our supermarket shelves are safe. And for the low-income workers who do the back-breaking work of harvesting our food, we actually can assume that

many of them will be exposed to dangerous chemicals every working day.

One of those chemicals is methyl iodide. In "Refusing to Bend," a fine piece of reporting by Rosie J. Spinks for *Sierra* magazine, we learn that the EPA approved methyl iodide for agricultural use in 2007. The agency did so over the objections of more than 50 scientists (including four Nobel laureates), who considered it too toxic. We also learn that the California Department of

The EPA approved methyl iodide for agricultural use over the objections of more than 50 scientists who considered it too toxic.

RACHEL'S continued on page 9



Rowan Byers

Worth Reading "Refusing to Bend" is a *Sierra* magazine on-line feature.

TAKE ACTION

Since methyl iodide was approved as a strawberry fumigant in California against the advice of the Department of Pesticide Regulations' own scientific panel (see "A Strawberry Statement," January 2011), a threat has loomed for the environment and residents of SLO. Some 2,418 acres of strawberries were planted here last year. This month, the SLO County Health Commission will discuss tentatively scheduling a panel discussion of the human and environmental health risks of methyl iodide featuring staff from the Regional Water Board and members of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation's Scientific Review Committee. **Public demand put this on the Health Commission's radar; public demand will be needed to keep it there.** To tell the Commission to schedule this panel, come to the Auditorium, County Ag Commission Building, 2156 Sierra Way, SLO, at 6 p.m., Monday, July 11.

Whatever Happened to Dolphin-Safe Tuna?

Nothing good

by Joan Jones Holtz, Sierra Club Responsible Trade Team

Between 1959 and 1972, millions of dolphins drowned when they became ensnared in mile-long fishing nets used to catch tuna. Fishermen in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean, which includes southern California, Mexico and South American, would deliberately chase schools of dolphin to encircle them in these huge purse seine nets. Since dolphins tend to congregate above schools of tuna, the fisherman knew they would lead them to the tuna.

In 1972, in response to an outraged American public who had refused to buy tuna, Congress passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Act prohibited U.S. fishermen from using purse seine fishing nets to catch tuna.

In 1988 Congress passed amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act which banned tuna imports from countries whose fishermen used purse seine nets to catch tuna. Studies had verified that at least three species of dolphin had been severely depleted due to this method of fishing.

In 1990, Congress passed the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act and created the popular “dolphin safe” label for cans of tuna. That label could be displayed only on cans which certified that the

tuna had not been caught using purse seine fishing nets. Sales for tuna without the “dolphin safe” labels suffered. During this period dolphin deaths dropped dramatically—from 423,678 deaths per year in 1972 to 15,550 per year in 1992.

In 1991, Mexico challenged the U.S. ban on tuna caught in Mexican waters. They contended that the provisions in the Marine Mammal Protection Act were not necessary to protect tuna. A GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) panel backed them up. That panel ruled that a policy which treats physically-identical goods differently based on their production or method of processing violated GATT rules. GATT rules require agreement of all GATT

nations to adopt a new ruling—this time, in regard to dolphin safety. However, both the U.S. and Mexico agreed to drop the matter.

Why did both Mexico and the U.S. decide to stop the controversy? Because the North American Free Trade Agreement was about to be introduced to the U.S. Congress and its passage was in doubt. Both countries knew that the publicity generating from the dolphin safety controversy would likely doom NAFTA.

In 1995, soon after the U.S. entered the World Trade Organization (WTO), Mexico again challenged the U.S. Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act by threatening a WTO enforcement case against the U.S. for refusing to implement the 1991 GATT ruling.

One cannot understand the battle to protect the “dolphin-safe” tuna label without realizing the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the wide-ranging corporate establishment that supports it, views this fight as a symbol of how to get rid of environmental laws that restrict trade of any product, no matter how it is produced or obtained.

-- “Killing Dolphins For Free Trade & WTO,” by David Brower, David Phillips, and William Snape, *Grist*, Dec. 1999

Anxious to be on good terms with our Mexican neighbors and new NAFTA partners, President Bill Clinton promised Mexican President Ernest Zedillo that weakening the dolphin protection standard would be a top priority for his administration. After intensive lobbying by the Clinton Administration, Congress passed the Dolphin Conservation Program Act (DCPA) which permitted imports of tuna from other countries, even those using the purse seine nets for catching tuna.

This new law, DCPA, allowed the newly imported tuna to use the “dolphin-safe” label— even if the tuna was caught by the use of purse seine

nets. If monitors stationed on sighting boats did not actually see dolphins killed or injured during the setting of the lines, then that tuna could be labeled “dolphin safe.”

The original champions of the Dolphin Consumer Protection Information Act, joined by the Dolphin Safe Fair Trade Coalition, fought against the weakening of the law, saying that a monitor on a fishing boat the length of a football field could not possibly monitor all activities surrounding the boat.

In March 1999, President Clinton’s Secretary of Commerce Bill Daley (now President Obama’s Chief of Staff) determined that there was

insufficient evidence that “chase and encirclement” by the tuna purse seine fishing method had any effect on the safety of the depleted dolphin stocks. A year later, the dolphin safe tuna label regulations were formally changed to allow tuna caught with purse seine nets to carry the dolphin-safe label as long as the monitor on a tuna vessel did not observe dolphins being killed or seriously injured during the netting.

On April 11, 2000, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California



Thanks a lot, WTO The World Trade Organization strikes again.

rejected the Department of Commerce’s attempt to weaken standards on dolphin-safe labeling. This decision was hailed by environmental groups and lawmakers who had worked to establish the dolphin-free label. They rebuked the Clinton Administration for selling out dolphin protections to accommodate a handful of foreign fishing companies.

However, corporate fisher groups have never given up trying to weaken dolphin safety rules. In 2008, this time through the WTO, Mexico launched a new attack on the Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act. The new attack alleged that U.S. dolphin protection standards violated the WTO agreement on “Technical Barriers to Trade.” The WTO agreement states that “technical regulations are not prepared, adopted or applied with a view to or with the effect of creating unnecessary obstacles to international trade. Technical regulations shall not be more trade restrictive than necessary.”

Eyes on Trade reported on May 20 that the U.S. dolphin-safe tuna labeling rule has been deemed a WTO violation. Purely voluntary dolphin-safe labeling might impede non-labeled tuna from marketing opportunities in the U.S. Tuna consumers who prefer to buy dolphin-safe tuna will no longer have any means of determining which tuna was caught by dolphin-safe methods.

Is this what “the race to the bottom” is all about? Does U.S. trade policy affect environmental protections? You bet it does.



From the Greenhouse

SLO’s Outside Now Nature Academy reports on the progress of its Sierra Club eco grant-funded home grown sprouts project

We received the grant money in March. Since then we have purchased a seed warming mat, temperature controller, fluorescent grow-light, and seed trays. We have also acquired potting soil and seeds through donations from Farm Supply in San Luis Obispo.

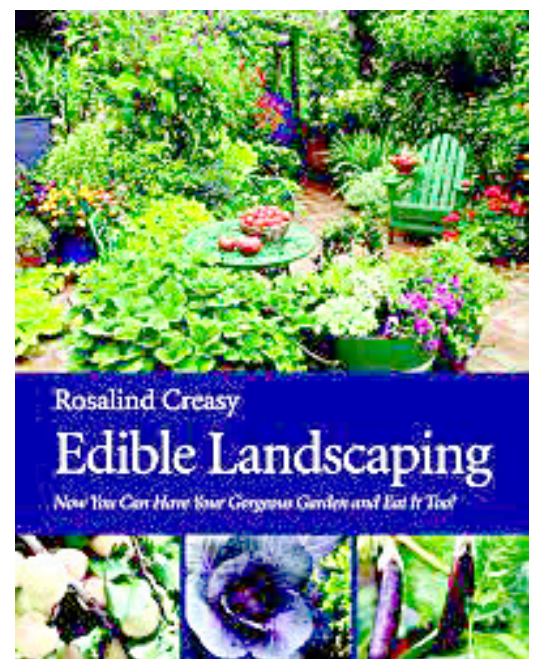
Once our growing supplies arrived in the mail, we got to work. First we filled our seed trays with soil, gently compressed the soil, and saturated it with water. Then we carefully sowed the seeds (tomatoes, melons, squash, and broccoli) just under the surface of the soil. We used one seed for each seed-tray compartment. We learned afterward that we should have used 2 or 3 seeds per compartment because not all or seeds germinated.

Once the trays were planted, we placed them on top of the seed warming mat. The warming mat uses electricity to warm soil in the trays from underneath. Most seeds like the soil to be between 75 and 80 degrees to sprout. The tem-

Grow Your Own Groceries

Gardening season is in full swing with delicious backyard mainstays like tomatoes, lettuce, and rosemary. But if you’re ready to try some quirkier crops, check out Sierra magazine’s expert recommendations for offbeat but easy-to-grow fruits and vegetables that you might not have tried yet (www.sierraclub.org/sierra/201105/enjoy.aspx).

If you want more fun edible ideas, get the new edition of *Edible Landscaping* by Rosalind Creasy. Order online from Sierra Club Books and we’ll include a free garden tote while supplies last.



California Clean Cars Campaign Kicks Into Gear

Diverse coalition supports tighter pollution controls on passenger vehicles and clean tech investment

On June 9, top consumer, health, business, government, faith and environmental leaders announced the launch of a broad-based campaign that aims to tackle dangerous pollution from passenger vehicles in California.

Pollution from cars is a significant threat to public health, according to recent studies by Harvard and the American Lung Association. The California Clean Cars Campaign is pressing for adoption of the strongest possible emissions standards to clean up California's passenger cars and light-trucks.

"More than 90 percent of Californians live in areas with unhealthy air according to the American Lung Association State of The Air Report," said Jane Warner, co-chair of the Clean Cars Campaign Advisory Committee and CEO of the American Lung Association in California. "Our research demonstrates that stronger state standards that cut vehicle emissions and promote zero emission vehicles could prevent more than \$7 billion annually in health care and societal costs as well as hundreds of hospital visits, heart attacks, early deaths and thousands of asthma attacks every year in California."

Strong standards for new cars sold in California will not only reduce air pollution, they will also lower consumer costs, bring jobs and investment to California's clean tech economy and encourage automakers to build the advanced clean cars Californians want to drive, according to a recent UC Berkeley study.

"Local governments all across the state are struggling to maintain basic services and restore their financial health," said Los Angeles City Controller Wendy Greuel, co-chair of the campaign Advisory Committee. "Cleaner cars help in two ways. They deliver direct jobs to California's growing clean transportation sector and help people spend less on fuel, pumping money into the local economy."

The California Clean Cars Campaign is revving up to push for tighter standards for 2017-2025 model-year cars in California as the California Air Resources Board, federal Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration work together to develop new car and light truck standards that will be announced this fall.

"Dirty vehicles harm consumers twofold by hitting their pocketbooks and damaging their health," says Ken McEldowney, co-chair of the campaign Advisory Committee and executive director of Consumer Action. "Low income families are disproportionately affected by pollution because they often live in close proximity to roadways in urban areas. California has a chance to help these people by reducing the pollution spewed from vehicle tailpipes."

As carmakers try to out-innovate each other, using the latest clean technology to lure customers into showrooms, California policies can



Join Us at Our annual Lobby Day in Sacramento!

Sunday and Monday, August 28th and 29th

Become part of a team will help Sierra Club California pass our priority legislation during the most exciting and challenging time of the year at the State Capitol! You will have opportunities to interact with other activists and our professional lobbying staff, as well as with legislators and their staff.

This is a two-day event. On Sunday, starting at around noon, our advocacy team will train you on how to lobby and brief you on our priority bills so that you can effectively advocate for them. On Monday, you will work the halls of the Capitol as teams, with meetings scheduled from morning through the afternoon.

Sierra Club California will reserve beds at the Sacramento Hostel for members who are joining us from out of town — you will have the option to sign up to stay in the Hostel, at no cost to you, when you register for Lobby Day. As a courtesy to our

participants who would prefer more private accommodations at their own expense, Sierra Club California is also looking into special group rates at a nearby hotel as well as special travel rates for the weekend. Additionally, limited travel subsidies are available by request, based on need and distance traveled, with special consideration given to advocates from targeted districts.

For questions, please contact Amanda Wallner at Amanda.Wallner@sierraclubcalifornia.org.

Students: Travel Countywide for \$30 All Summer

by San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare

Until September 5, the Summer Break Pass allows K-12 Students to go anywhere the bus goes in San Luis Obispo County including Cuesta College, Cal Poly, downtown San Luis Obispo and the beach.

The Summer Break Pass is a discounted regional transit pass for K-12 Students that works on all buses in San Luis Obispo County including the Avila, San Luis Obispo and Cambria Trolleys.

With gas prices predicted to spike over the summer, the \$30 Summer Break Pass can help alleviate parents' financial constraints while teaching youth how to use sustainable transportation.

The Summer Break Pass can be purchased online at www.summerbreakpass.com or at Regional Transit Authority pass outlets. For each pass purchased, a free Regional Day Pass is available for parents or siblings who want to accompany the pass holder on their first transit trip.

For trip planning assistance, pass

purchasers are encouraged to call Rideshare at 781-4362 or visit www.summerbreakpass.com to use the online bus trip planner or view the How to Ride the Bus Video and the Places to Go Guide.

San Luis Obispo County has six fixed-route transit systems, three trolleys and seventeen Park & Ride Lots. In addition, each RTA bus has room for six bikes. This means there are a lot of transit options and routes available for countywide travel. To help transit riders determine which route is best for them, Rideshare launched an online bus trip planner using Google Transit at www.rideshare.org.

The goal of the Summer Break Pass is to enable youth with healthy commuting habits and reduce the vehicle trips, miles and emissions that parents would otherwise create driving their kids around, thereby protecting the environment and saving families money.

The Summer Break Pass is a not-for-profit program. The funds gained from pass purchases are redirected into the program to provide travel



www.summerbreakpass.com

K-12 students can travel anywhere the bus goes in San Luis Obispo County with the heavily discounted Summer Break Pass. The \$30 pass works on every bus and trolley in the county from May 31-September 5.

training and encourage youth to use transit.

SLO Regional Rideshare is dedicated to reducing the number of single occupant vehicles on San Luis Obispo's roads and highways, reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and making it easier for commuters to get to work or school. A division of the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, SLO Regional Rideshare has programs for adults, youth and seniors in addition to information on all ways to get around — bus, bike, carpool, vanpool and walking. For more information about SLO Regional Rideshare, visit www.rideshare.org/.



help ensure cleaner air and greater consumer savings while creating jobs in budding cleantech economies here and across the country. Since California's groundbreaking actions to adopt the nation's first Clean Car Standards, 13 other jurisdictions have adopted California's standards, including Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New

Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, DC.

"China is spending around \$12 million an hour on clean technology investments," said Bruce Klafter, co-chair of the campaign's Advisory Committee and Managing Director of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability at Applied Materials.

"We want the world market importing clean car technologies from California, not China. Without strong policies and enforceable benchmarks that drive innovation, new technologies will take longer to develop and bring to market."

For a complete list of supporters of the California Clean Cars Campaign visit www.calcleancars.org/docs/CCC_Supporters.pdf/.

Sprouts

continued from page 7

perature controller has a little thermometer we placed in one of the seed-tray squares. This caused the mat to stay on when the soil temperature was below 80 and turn off when the soil reached 80. We also turned the grow light on for 12 hours each day to simulate daylight. We watered the soil twice a day, every day to make sure the seeds sprouted and to keep the fragile seedlings alive. A couple of times we forgot to water the seedlings for half or a whole day and a few of them died.

As the seedlings got bigger, it was time to move them outside into the sunlight and out from under the fluorescent lamp. Some of the first sprouts to pop up started getting very tall and falling over. We found out that this is very common when growing plants with artificial lights that are too close.

Next we transplanted the seedlings into larger 3-inch pots and moved them outside. The larger pots give the roots more room to grow. Putting them outside will toughen them up and get them used to the changing climate of a day and night. We've read that this makes plants harder when they are eventually planted in the ground.

Currently, we are watering the transplanted sprouts and waiting for them to grow large enough to put into the ground. If all goes well, this will happen in three weeks. We found a good home for our seedlings when they are ready -- the Cuesta College summer program, College for Kids. We met with the instructors for the "Greening the World" class. Their class teaches middle school kids how to be more sustainable and to take care of the earth. Each student will get to make a planter, take it home and enjoy home-grown food!

We look forward to continuing to grow seedlings throughout the year, finding good homes for them and spreading the good feeling that comes from eating home-grown food. Thank you Sierra Club for the opportunity to make this project happen.

Sincerely,

Students of the Outside Now
Nature Academy

Isaac Moelter
Star Pendergast
Issac Teixeira
Grant Helete
Troy Nino De Rivera
Alexa Nino De Rivera
Doran Wensloff
Brian C. Engleton



Rachel's

continued from page 6

Pesticide Regulation approved methyl iodide for use as a fumigant in December of last year. Again, the warnings of scientists were ignored. As Spinks writes:

Airborne transmission, groundwater accumulation, developmental effects, thyroid disruption, cancer — these are some of the potential consequences that led an independent scientific review committee, commissioned by the DPR prior to its approval of methyl iodide, to conclude that "there is little doubt that the compound possesses significant toxicity" and would thus result in an "adverse impact on the public health."

Methyl iodide has been used in California but — so far — not in the Watsonville/Salinas area that produces half of California's annual strawberry crop. That is in part thanks to some remarkable activism by the students at Renaissance High — the heroes of Spinks's article. These young people live at ground zero for this chemical. And they know that their parents will be on the front lines of exposure, so they organized support from farm workers and persuaded Watsonville's mayor and City Council to support a methyl iodide ban.

Their advocacy is working, so far. Already, Governor Jerry Brown has conceded that California should take "a fresh look" at methyl iodide. The EPA also reopened public comment earlier this year in response to a petition filed by Earthjustice and other environmental groups calling for the suspension and cancellation of the chemical.

Will methyl iodide eventually find its way onto the strawberry fields of the Salinas Valley? It's up to all of us. Let's make Rachel Carson — and the students at Renaissance High School — proud. Please join them and take action now by sending a message to California Governor Jerry Brown through the Sierra Club's Mobile Action Network. Join the Network by texting SIERRA to 69866.



Dan Howard

In need of your assistance Tomales Bay wetlands.

Tomales

continued from page 1

in central California and supports at least nine rare, threatened or endangered species.

It is a wetland paradise, with the richest collection of these seasonal dunes wetlands - known as "dune slacks" - in central California. An amazing "Grand Canyon of the Sands" is re-cut and reshaped by wet winters by a rain-fed underground spring, the only such dune canyon in Central California.

More than 40 species of waders and waterfowl find their winter roosting and feeding grounds at Tomales Dunes. It is one of only eight sites in North America where Pacific golden plovers are known to overwinter.

Tomales Dunes is an ancient system, but one that is perpetually forming itself anew. Since 1954, more than half of these rare mobile dunes have been lost, mostly to invasive European beach grass and iceplant. And in the last few decades, this ancient system has come under increasing pressure from ranching, quarrying, and recreational vehicles.

How much longer can the Tomales Dunes survive intact?

Facts about Lawson's Landing

Lawson's Landing at Tomales Dunes is the largest RV campground on California's Coast.

Yet, it has operated without any land use permits or an approved, permitted septic system for decades.

Years of operation without the required permits has caused significant degradation of wetlands and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas.

For years, up to 1000 RVs have overnights at a time, many of them parking in the sensitive dunes wetlands.

There are also 233 travel trailers permanently parked adjacent to the shoreline that are served by over 100 unpermitted cesspits.



TAKE ACTION

Send a letter to the Coastal Commission! A personalized letter makes the greatest impact; please take a few minutes now to write your letter and send it in! Please use the points above and below. Recreation and natural resource protection can co-exist at Lawson's Landing, but only if the Coastal Commission ensures that unpermitted uses do not continue once a coastal permit is issued, and that:

- All wetlands and sensitive habitats are identified, protected, and given appropriate buffers.
- A restoration, monitoring and management plan is put in place that will restore the natural hydrology of the wetlands, reverse the loss of mobile dunes, and identify and protect listed and special-status species.
- All camping spaces are open to the public, not reserved for the lucky few who hold private long-term leases over prime shoreline camping areas while being served by unpermitted cess pits.

Personalize your letter by adding your own thoughts and perspective. We need to show that our commitment level to protecting the precious Tomales Dunes is just as important and personal to us as RV users defending their "turf!"

Sample at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/ccletter.html

Mail or fax your letter to the Coastal Commission today!

Mail to:
The Commissioners
California Coastal Commission
45 Fremont Street Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105

fax: (415) 904-5400

A Congressional Coffeebreak

Representatives of the Sierra Club and other local environmental groups met with Congresswoman Lois Capps and her local district reps at the BlackHorse coffee shop in SLO on June 17 to discuss health, energy, climate, coastal and agricultural issues.

"You guys have the long view," said Capps, who expressed relief at the chance to take a break from Congress and speak with environmental advocates who are moving forward with the kind of local work that her more reactionary colleagues are blocking at the federal level.



BlackHorse bull session Left to right: Kim Pasciuto of the Central Coast Ag Network, Congresswoman Capps, her San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County District Representatives Greg Haas and Rachel Kondor, SLO CoastKeeper Gordon Hensley, SLO Surfrider Treasurer Carol Georgi.

Sea

continued from page 4

raising food are turned over to the production of corn for ethanol and corn-based items. So if anybody ever invents a viable substitute for plastic, he or she will be a gazillionaire—local talent, get cracking!

Overfishing of certain species may lead to depletion and eventually extinction, but I hadn't thought out the repercussions that might have for the other species of both plants and animals that depend on them. Once again, the intertwining and dependency of different life forms on each other was emphasized during various conference panels.

Farmed fish was a topic of concern. The hazards of relying on farmed fish or other marine edibles was made clear in terms of the known negatives such fish have on wild fish stock, but there were aspects of farming that were new to me. One of the other Sierra Club contest winners, Laura Hendricks, has led a fight against a large company, Taylor Shellfish, that set up camp in the Puget Sound waters (Washington State) to raise a delicacy appreciated by the Asian markets: geoducks, pronounced

gooey-ducks. Raising these clam relatives involves both plastic stakes and netting, both of which are hazardous to the health of the water and to other species. As the world's demand for seafood increases and the supply of wild fish decreases, there may be many more such situations—Does California have similarly unprotected in its bays?

There was also encouraging news from different organizations and panels. One useful panel, moderated by Linwood Pendleton, Chief Economist for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, dealt with coalitions of interest, that is to say organizations and businesses who have an economic stake in healthy oceans and might partner with environmental organizations. The list includes: surf shops, boat excursion companies; dive shops; sports fishing groups; recreational boaters; yacht harbors, etc. as well as the businesses involved in restoring or preventing damage to the oceans ("blue jobs"). One notable statistic was that diving contributes \$2.1 billion to the U.S. economy, and \$9.6 billion worldwide! The presenter made the point that such coalitions have to be a "two-way street," with benefits accruing to all parties.

What amazed me was the interest in challenges to the world's oceans shown by young people and by people who lived far from the ocean. A group of teenagers from the Ocean Harbor School in New York City made a presentation about their school's unique curriculum, based on oysters! Although I never learned whether the English, civics or physical education classes were also oyster-based, surely math, chemistry, biology and physics—and even political science, might lend themselves to this approach. The School's students are involved in every aspect of oyster production, from first propagating the young, tending the "spats," transferring them to some kind of oyster raft or floating bed in areas off long island and other parts of the New York Harbor, and finally, harvesting the oysters. The students showed slides documenting each step of the process and then talked about why they liked their school so much they hated to graduate! And what's more, they loved each and every teacher in the program. The students were loved by all of us who heard their presentation and received a well-deserved standing ovation.

Vicki Nikols Goldstein is head of the Colorado Ocean Coalition, an enthusiastic promoter of projects that get land-locked people to care about and work for the health of oceans. Her high school students go to different areas to work on different projects. And then there was Rob Ryan from Boulder, Colorado, who recently started Windhorse Lightships, an organization removing deep sea debris and disposing of it properly. Although they also are based inland, they go anywhere that merits a dive and salvage operation.

The last day of the Summit got political: regional teams were trained to speak with Senators and congressional Representatives or their legislative aides about the National Ocean Policy, as well as specific local projects. Our Sierra Club group had received excellent training from Athan Manuel, the Club's Lands Team Director in D.C., the day before the conference.

On lobby day, Sierra Club Activist Network Coordinator John Barry and I met with Congresswoman Lois Capps' aide Jennifer Salerno and Senator Boxer's top aide, Dr. Lynn Abramson. Senator Boxer is one of the most active congressional proponents of a national ocean policy and has worked for ten years on expanding the Gulf of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary in northern California. Dr. Abramson gave us helpful advice about the steps needed to get our County's coastal waters added to a Marine Sanctuary.

Looking back at the conference panels and presentations, I realize there are many challenges to the world's oceans that are linked to climate change impacts, land use policies, population pressures and domestic politics, so that they cannot be viewed as just a marine biology issue. I also saw how many thriving marine-related organizations and dedicated public servants (so often unjustly maligned, I might add, having been one) are working to meet the complex challenges to the oceans' health—today and in years to come. Whether these challenges are met before major, irreversible damage is done is a \$64 billion dollar question. And just as important is the question as to whether individuals and groups can work cooperatively and without the usual silo or piecemeal or territorial approach.

Next month: Our National Ocean Policy.

Sludge

continued from page 3

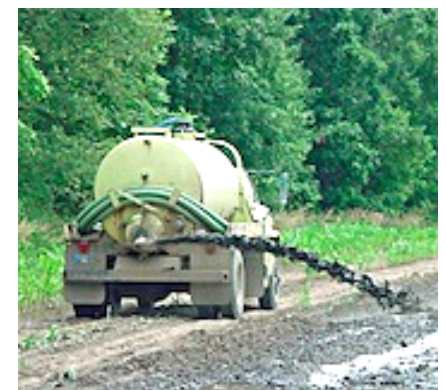
Outing the sewage sludge industry's latest PR scam

Every spring, the U.S. Composting Council (USCC) pitches an annual PR campaign, which it calls "International Compost Awareness Week." The USCC describes itself as a national trade organization. USCC's members include Synagro, the largest processor of sewage sludge in the United States with revenues of over \$300 million annually.

"International Compost Awareness Week" is coordinated by Jeff Ziegenbein of the giant Inland Empire Utility Agency (IEUA) in Southern California. IEUA supplies the sewage sludge "compost" that is resold by companies like Kellogg Garden Products, which supplies the sewage sludge-based products to local Home Depot and Lowe's garden centers.

But you won't find the word "sludge" on the bags of "soil," "soil amendment," "compost" or "fertilizer" that are made from the sludge. Instead, you may find the word "compost" in the ingredients and even the word "organic" or "organics" on the label. Unless the material has the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) certification, however, it is not a certified organic product. Under federal law, organic produce cannot be grown in sewage sludge.

Let your friends know that they should beware of any garden product that uses the word "compost" or that has a "seal" from the U.S. Compost Council, because it might be from sludge. We need you to help spread the word.



TAKE ACTION

You can help fight the sewage sludge scam!

We think you have a right to know if the "compost," "soil" or "fertilizer" marketed by your garden store is actually made from sewage sludge containing industrial and human waste.

We also think you have a right to know if the fruits and vegetables you buy to eat more healthily are actually being grown in sewage sludge. But we think you have more than a "right to know." You have a right to demand a stop to this deceptive practice that exposes you and your family to contaminants.

Sewage sludge is not just being used on so-called "conventional" produce without telling you. Sewage sludge products are increasingly being marketed as "compost" and green-washed as "organic" by the industry and its allies.

Through our newly-launched project, The Food Rights Network, we are fighting this outrageous deceit! And we need your help to blow the whistle on what may be the biggest toxic scam in the United States and beyond. Go to: www.foodrightsnetwork.org/.

When They Go, They're Gone

A Californian's Guide to the TREES AMONG US



MATT RITTER Foreword by Peter H.L. Raven

While supplies last, you can receive an autographed copy of the *Guide* as a gift for your donation of \$50 or more to the Santa Lucia Chapter. Write "TREES" in the memo section of your check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo 93406.

Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **August 15**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:

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*A percentage of sales goes to help support the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club

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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.

Sun-Tues., July 3-5, Black Rock National Conservation Area - Carcamp: Leader's choice in the Black Rock National Conservation area about 100 miles north of Reno. Expect lots of people and fireworks during this busy "4th of July" weekend on the Playa. We'll probably camp at a hot spring and take day trips to other nearby locations. Expect good stars, as the new moon is 7/1! Primitive camping, high clearance vehicles, 4WD preferred. Dogs limited, on leash, Leader David Book, 775-843-6443. Great Basin Group-Toiyabe Chapter/ CNRCC Desert Committee.

Mon., July 4th, 10 a.m. Guided Walk of Mission-Era San Luis Obispo. Do you know where the city's first doctor lived, the location of the "hanging tree," and the building that may be the oldest in the state? Find out and much more on an easy stroll past the Mission, adobes, and Chinatown. Learn about the early days of SLO, the Chumash, and its Gold-Rush pioneers, famous and infamous. Families welcome. Meet NW corner of Monterey and Osos Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sat., July 9, 8:15 a.m. Hike the Kirk Creek Trail to Vicente Flat. Out-and-back 10-mile hike on Big Sur Coast, moderately strenuous, about 2000 ft. of elevation gain. Enjoy incredible views of Big Sur Coast and wonderful redwoods. Lunch stop is Vicente Flat, a delightful campground surrounded by redwoods. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. Bring lunch, water, and dress for the weather. Meet at Washburn day use area of San Simeon State Park. As you leave Cambria, you will see the Hamlet restaurant on the right. The day use area is about another 200 yards on the right. Trailhead is about a 50-minute drive north on Hwy. 1 from day use area. There is a probability of eats following the hike. Info.: Chuck, 441-7597. (SLO Residents can carpool from Santa Rosa Park and can leave at 7.20 a.m. sharp).

Sat., July 16th, 9:00 am, Point Buchon trail, Montaña de Oro SP. The Point Buchon trail stretches south along the coast at Montaña de Oro State Park. It was recently opened by agreement of PG&E and offers magnificent views of a previously unseen portion of this rugged California coastline. Total distance is 7 miles, elevation gain of 400 ft.

Travel time is about 4 hours. Meet at parking lot, southern end of Montaña de Oro SP at start of Coon Creek trail. Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress in layers for the weather. Hat and sturdy shoes are advised. Info.: Bill at (805) 459-2103, bill.waycott@gmail.com. The plants, animals, and the geology of the area will be topics during the hike.

Wed., July 20th, 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly Meeting: "A 530-Mile Backpack Across California." Veteran Sierra Club conservationist and hardy outings leader, Cal French, backpacked from the Needles area of the Colorado River to Morro Bay this past spring, walking much of the way off-trail and using ultra-lite equipment. His trek demonstrated the presence of continuous public and conservancy land between these east and west points of the California border. Come and hear his stories, marvel at his slides, and gasp at some unexpected adventures, all told by a skilled raconteur. Location: Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sat., July 23rd, 9 a.m. A walk in the Clouds along East Cuesta Ridge. Moderate 8-mile round trip hike above San Luis Obispo, 1000 foot elevation gain. Along the way, we will see views of San Luis Obispo, Morros and Pacific ocean. Bring water, snack, and dress for the weather. Meet at top of Cuesta Grade on northbound Hwy. 101 side. For details, call Gary @ 473-3694.

Sat., August 6th, 9 a.m., Pecho Coast Trail with Optional Lighthouse Tour. The Pecho Coast trail runs south and then west along coast near Avila Beach. This trail traverses the headlands at Port San Luis, then rounding the point to arrive at Point San Luis Lighthouse, with sweeping views of bay south to Point Sal in Santa Barbara Co. For those interested, tour of the Lighthouse Headkeeper's quarters is available for \$5 fee (\$10 for families) to support building restoration. For those wishing to continue, we will hike further west along the coast. Total distance is 3.5 miles to the lighthouse, elevation gain 600 ft. Travel time is roughly 4 hours (which includes the lighthouse tour, if you are interested). Meet promptly at 8:45 a.m. in parking lot at Port San Luis. Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress in layers for the weather. Hat and sturdy shoes are advised. To

join this outing, you must contact Bill at bill.waycott@gmail.com or (805) 459-2103 in advance, as the hike has a capacity of 20. Plants, animals, and geology of the area will be topics during the hike.

Sat., Aug. 13th, 9 a.m. She'll be comin' 'round the mountain with the Sierra Club. Meet at the parking lot/restrooms (dog park) at Laguna Lake for a walk round Cerro San Luis. We will go at a moderate (not slow, not fast) pace, but there are a few steep uphill and a rocky section. Hike is 5 miles, about 2.5 hours to complete, depending on how much time we spend enjoying views. Dogs are allowed on leash. Info.: Mike Sims, 459-1701 or email msims@slonet.org. Rain cancels.

Sat., Aug. 20th, 9 a.m. Islay Road-Barranca Trail-Ridge Trail Loop in Montana de Oro State Park. Moderate 8-mile hike with about 1800 ft of elevation gain. This is a wonderful hike to explore backcountry of Montana de Oro State Park. There are also great views of coastline from Hazard Peak. Bring water, lunch, or snacks and dress for the weather. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. Meet at the Ridge Trail parking area, 2.3 miles from the park entrance. There is a possibility of eats somewhere in Los Osos after the hike. Info.: Chuck, 441-7597

Sat-Sun, Aug. 20-21, Bristlecone Pines. Come to the beautiful White Mtns to camp, hike and just relax. On Sat, we'll hike the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest on a moderate 5-mile rt interpretive trail, followed by picnic

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Reserve early!

July 16-19; August 6-9; September 11-13; October 16-18.

California's Channel Islands are Galapagos USA! Marvel at the sight of whales, seals, sea lions, rare birds & blazing wildflowers. Hike the wild, wind-swept 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 fundraisers benefit Sierra Club political programs in California. Cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' *Truth*. The fee (\$590 for May and Sept & Oct.; \$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; jholtzhln@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.

lunch and short optional hike to a nearby old mining cabin. Back at camp, we'll enjoy Happy Hour, a potluck feast and a campfire. Sunday—pack up and head home. Group size strictly limited. Send \$8 per person, 2 large SASE, H&W phones, email address, rideshare info to Ldr: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329, 760-868-2179. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Tues-Wed, Aug. 23-24, Perseid Meteor Shower on the Playa - Carcamp. Full moon in the Black Rock Desert, about 100 miles north of Reno, Nevada. We'll be camping with a group of people mid-Playa and watching the meteor shower. Porta-Potty provided. Potluck dinner or barbecue Saturday night, side trips to local hot springs. Expect your vehicle to get dusty! Dogs limited, on leash, expect to pick-up after your dog! Leader David Book, 775-843-6443. Great Basin Group-Toiyabe Chapter/ CNRCC Desert Committee.

Outings Sponsored by other organizations

Sweet Springs Nature Preserve —Audubon Society, which manages Sweet Springs Nature Preserve in Los Osos, will be receiving a grant to work on pathways, etc. Volunteers are needed on the second Saturday of the month 9 a.m.-noon to help with watering, weeding, planting, etc. More information at www.morrocoast.audubon.org/.

Ventana Wilderness Alliance Trail Crew Opportunities

Trail Crew Volunteers are needed for work in the Ventana and Silverpeak Wilderness Areas. If interested or to get more information contact Dave Knapp, Trail Crew Leader at e-mail daveknapp@ventanawild.org/.