



Nov/Dec. 2014  
Volume 51 No. 10

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in Nipomo**

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**Nov. 20  
Prairie!  
Discovering the Great Plains**

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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



**Coming our way** An ethanol train derailment in Rockford, Illinois.

## Everyone is On the Wrong Side of the Tracks

*By Ross Hammond,  
U.S. Campaign Director, ForestEthics*

Oil trains give new meaning to living on the wrong side of the tracks. This summer ForestEthics released our blast zone map, an online tool that uses Google maps and rail industry data to let you see if your home, school, or office is inside the one-mile evacuation zone in the case of an oil train derailment and fire. We used census data to calculate that more than 25 million Americans live within this dangerous blast zone.

In September, ForestEthics and our partners submitted detailed technical comments on the administration's proposed new safety standards for oil trains. The standards miss the mark in many ways, but there are five immediate actions the administration needs to take to fix these proposed rules before they finalize them next year:

1) An immediate ban on the transport of crude oil in dangerous DOT-111 rail cars. The proposal gives the oil and rail industry as long as seven years to take volatile tanker cars off the tracks. In 1991 federal rail safety officials first declared these tanker cars unsafe to carry crude oil because they too easily derail, spill, and catch fire. Seven years is far too long to wait to remove rail cars that have been called the Ford Pinto of the rails. That's why we're suing the Obama administration to take those cars off the rails right now.

2) Provide an accurate assessment of the risks and consequences of crude oil

*TRACKS continued on page 7*

## Water We Waiting For?

**A recommendation for county-wide sustainable groundwater**

*On September 16, Governor Brown signed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act into law. On October 8, North County Watch and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club sent the following letter to the SLO County Board of Supervisors.*

TO: County Board of Supervisors  
RE: 10/14/14 Water Summit

Dear Supervisors,

The Groundwater Sustainability Act offers challenges and opportunities for the County. The new groundwater legislation directs local agencies to establish a Groundwater Sustainability Agency, offering unprecedented tools to manage groundwater resources. The County Flood Control and Water Conservation District has over 65 years of experience meeting challenges of managing the county's groundwater resources. Now that the job just got much easier, now is the time to take this opportunity to use the new tools provided and put that experience to work.

The opportunities before us will not be realized if the County allows the management of these basins to be parceled out to numerous, newly created small, inefficient, inexperienced districts rather than taking on the challenge of becoming the Groundwater Sustainability Agency for these various basins. At the July 8 Board hearing on an ordinance focusing on water neutrality, Supervisor Mecham pointed out the importance of a comprehensive, unified approach to groundwater management when he stated that he would support an ordinance requiring water neutrality if it applied to the whole county, not just portions of the county.

California Department of Water Resources interactive mapping identifies 21 water basins in San Luis Obispo County.\* A few are shared with neighboring counties. Each basin contributes to the unique environment, economic health, and agricultural resources of the county.

The County should move to designate itself the Groundwater Sustainability Agency for basins that are not under adjudication. In the case of the Paso Robles Basin, the County should not move to devolve authority over the basin. The new state legislation has changed the reality on the ground. You have a new mandate and new authority. Before you decide to form a new district, starting with the Paso Robles basin, we urge you to look down the road and answer the question: Why should the County *not* be the managing authority for all of the basins in its jurisdiction?

The best option for groundwater management is at hand: Declare the County to be the Groundwater Sustainability Agency. If future Boards decide they would rather not manage our groundwater resources, there is always the option of forming a new district and handing the basin to a new authority.

\*Los Osos Valley, San Luis Obispo Valley, Santa Maria River Valley, Cuyama Valley, Carrizo Plain, San Carpoforo Valley, Arroyo de la Cruz Valley, San Simeon Valley, Santa Rosa Valley, Villa Valley, Cayucos Valley, Old Valley, Toro Valley, Morro Valley, Chorro Valley, Paso Robles Area, Rinconada Valley, Pozo Valley, Huasna Valley, Rafael Valley, Big Spring Area.

## Moving Toward Sustainability

*A few proposals for water management*

Rather than take the above advice at their October 14 meeting, the Supervisors made the fundamentally irrational decision to apply to the Local Agency Formation Commission for a separate Paso Robles Groundwater District. In so doing, the county has likely delayed by up to two years any meaningful action to balance the Paso Robles basin. After the application is granted, a formation vote for the district is likely to fail, as many rural residents, who comprise the majority of landowner votes, are aware that the district is designed to benefit commercial agriculture at their expense.

If a formation vote succeeds, the new district would put a burden on rural residents – responsible for only 3 percent of water use over the basin — to fund a new overlay of government, which would be rendered redundant by a Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

Having decided to pursue a separate district for the Paso basin, the County's obligations and opportunities with the rest of the basins remain. Will the County meet those obligations and seize those opportunities?

History is not encouraging. All the

*WATER continued on page 5*

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photo:Kevin Walsh

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

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Enclose check and mail to: **F94Q W 2500 1**  
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## Sierra Club General Meeting

7 p.m., Thursday, November 20

*Prairie! Discovering the Great Plains*

Though comprising one quarter of North America and stretching across twelve states, the Great Plains ecosystem is terra incognita to most Californians. Outings Chair Joe Morris will introduce us to a world of grasslands, farms, cowboy country, and historic small towns close to nature from his sojourns there, rarely seen by drivers speeding by on the interstates. Protracted droughts, the receding Ogallala Aquifer, and the controversy over the Keystone Pipeline have environmental lessons to teach us all.

A screening of the acclaimed documentary, "The Great Plains: America's Lingering Wild," will follow, depicting the wild prairie that remains and the people working to keep it alive.

Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.



## No Confidence

Is PG&E's culture of scandal lapping up at Diablo Canyon?

In assessing risk and the probability of a hazard, nuclear regulators like to talk about confidence — whether it's "waste confidence," or the confidence levels in probabilities derived from the model used to evaluate the risks associated with a complex technology, or confidence regions for the location of seismic events.

Unfortunately, there is no formula for assessing a level of confidence in the risk of a regulatory scandal.

As PG&E seeks deeper into the mire of felony charges and scandal spreading out from the San Bruno gas pipeline explosion and the utility's efforts to escape liability, one of the last bulwarks manned by advocates for the continued operation and relicensing of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant has been the idea of the separation of the company's gas and nuclear operations. The theory goes that the multiple criminal indictments against the utility charging widespread negligence, safety violations, reliance on information they knew to be erroneous and incomplete, etc., do not necessarily reflect on operations at Diablo Canyon because the nuclear power plant is managed by a different division within the utility. (See "About Those Felony Indictments..." July.)

This theory of separation has been sorely tested by the judge-shopping scandal in the San Bruno case, as disclosed by a cache of e-mails revealing inappropriate "ex parte" discussions of the case between PG&E executives and California Public Utilities Commission officials. The disclosures resulted in a public storm of protest and the announcement by Public Utilities Commission President Michael Peevey that he will step down at the end of the year.

Brian Cherry, then PG&E's Vice President of Regulatory Relations, was at the heart of the judge-shopping scandal and the author of the May 31, 2010, email that provided the textbook definition of inappropriately close relations between a regulatory agency and the entity it is ostensibly regulat-

ing. In that e-mail, Cherry relates to PG&E's Senior VP of Regulatory Affairs that he "polished off two bottles of good pinot" with PUC President Peevey the previous evening while they proceeded to "delve into some work matters," including Peevey's concern about PG&E's need to "repair fences with opponents" and come up with a "communication strategy for getting back in the public's good graces" after the p.r. debacles of San Bruno and Proposition 16, PG&E's \$50-million attempt to kill off competition from communities that want to utilize Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) to buy their own energy from clean, renewable sources. Peevey assured Cherry that he "doesn't really support CCA" and hit him up for a \$100,000 donation to the PUC's 100th anniversary celebration. Cherry said "we are looking for a good [San Bruno] decision" and related that Peevey then told him PG&E could "expect a decision in January — around the time of the PUC's 100th anniversary celebration. I told him I got the message."

Mark Toney, executive director of The Utility Reform Network, said that the full cache of Cherry's e-mails showing how intensely PUC staff were lobbied by PG&E to get their preferred judge made it clear that "PG&E had a personal shopper

NO CONFIDENCE continued on page 9

### Santa Lucian

Andrew Christie

EDITOR

Greg McMillan

sierraclub8@gmail.com

Lindi Doud

Linda Seeley

Sandy Simon

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Denny Mynatt

PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

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send to:

Editor, Santa Lucian

c/o Santa Lucia Chapter, Sierra Club

P.O. Box 15755

San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

sierraclub8@gmail.com

### Santa Lucia Chapter

#### 2014 Executive Committee

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Patrick McGibney (12/14)

VICE CHAIR

Linda Seeley (12/14)

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Pat Veasart (12/16)

MEMBER

Lindi Doud (12/14)

MEMBER

Greg McMillan (12/16)

MEMBER

Victoria Carranza (12/15)

MEMBER

Greg McMillan

COUNCIL OF CLUB LEADERS

Lindi Doud, Patrick McGibney

TREASURERS

The Executive Committee meets the second Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m. The Conservation Committee meets the second Friday at 1 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 974 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

#### Committee Chairs

##### Political

Michael Jencks

##### Conservation

Sue Harvey

##### Development

Greg McMillan

##### Nuclear Power Task Force

Rochelle Becker beckers@thegrid.net

Linda Seeley lindaseeley@gmail.com

##### Climate Change Task Force

Heidi Harmon

sacredheart9395@yahoo.com

#### Other Leaders

##### CNRCC Delegates

Linda Seeley, alt: Greg McMillan

John Burdett

##### Calendar Sales

Bonnie Walters 805-543-7051

##### Outings

Joe Morris dpj1942@earthlink.net

##### Canoe/Kayak

open

##### Webmaster

Monica Tarzier monica@tarzier.org

##### Trail Guide

Gary Felsman

##### Chapter Director

Andrew Christie

805-543-8717

sierraclub8@gmail.com

##### Coordinator

Kim Ramos, Admin and Development

kimramos@yahoo.com

##### Assistant Coordinator

Victoria Carranza, vcarranza@gmail.com

### Santa Lucia Chapter

P.O. Box 15755

San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

**Office hours Monday-Friday,  
1 p.m.- 7 p.m., 974 Santa Rosa  
Street, San Luis Obispo**

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Outings, events, and more!

# This is Your Ballot for the 2015 Chapter Executive Committee

All current members of the Santa Lucia Chapter are eligible to vote. If there is more than one Sierra Club member in your household, you may photocopy the printed ballot and mail both in the same envelope. The winners of this election will start their terms when the outgoing ExCom adjourns their December meeting. The ExCom will then convene a brief meeting to elect board officers and set the monthly date for ExCom meetings held in 2015.



## VOTING INFORMATION

- Vote for 3 or fewer.
- Ballots must be received by **5 p.m., December 5, 2014**, at the Chapter office.
- Address the envelope per instructions on the ballot

and sign and date over the flap of the envelope.

- Mail your ballot to our P.O. box address with sufficient time to arrive by the deadline, or drop it off via the door mail slot at the Chapter office at 974 Santa Rosa Street, SLO.

## Thank You, Cal French Donors Circle

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*What pains are taken to keep this wilderness in health—showers of snow, showers of rain, showers of dew, floods of light, floods of invisible vapor, clouds, winds, all sorts of weather, interaction of plant on plant, animal on animal, etc., beyond thought! How fine Nature's methods! How deeply with beauty is beauty overlaid!*

John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*

## BALLOT

Santa Lucia Chapter Election - 2015 Executive Committee

Mark an "X" or checkmark in the box next to the candidate's name. Vote for three or fewer candidates.

Members who subscribe to the electronic newsletter may print out this ballot. Households with more than two members may make duplicate ballots.

Do not write your name on the ballot.

Write your return address on the envelope. Sign and date your envelope over the sealed flap.

Linda Seeley

Patrick McGibney

Lindi Doud

Place in envelope, sign the front of the envelope, and mail to :

Elections Committee  
 Santa Lucia Chapter  
 P.O. Box 15755  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

## 20 from 300: halfway there



We are **almost halfway to our goal**: the equivalent of \$20 per month from 300 people in automatic donations, the amount of steady monthly income the Chapter needs to cover our annual operating expenses and give us a secure basis on which to advocate for the protection of the natural treasure that is the Central Coast, working to protect healthy ecosystems and the health of residents.

You will shortly receive our year-end chapter funding appeal, inviting you to get us the rest of the way there. A \$20 monthly donation or lump sum annual donation of \$240 gets you into the Cal French Donors Circle, joining all these wonderful people (left). Membership in the Cal French Circle confers special benefits in addition to knowing that you are a big part of the reason why the Sierra Club can continue to work on behalf of the environment of San Luis Obispo County.

The easiest and fastest way to join is to go to [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org), click the "Donate" button, and sign up for an automatic contribution of at least \$20 per month. Or you can set up a monthly donation with your bank using their free "Bill Pay" service.

## Making a 2014 Donation?

### Thanks! But do not wait until Christmas

When you receive our year-end appeal for funds, we hope you will choose to join the Cal French Circle of sustaining monthly donors and/or include your Sierra Club chapter in your holiday giving. And if you do, please keep two important things in mind:

1) Donations to the Sierra Club are *not* tax-deductible; donations to the Sierra Club Foundation *are*. To make a tax-deductible donation: Make out your check to "The Sierra Club Foundation," and write "Santa Lucia Chapter" on the memo line. (If you are over 70 and have an IRA, you can meet your minimum distribution requirement by making a tax-free charitable rollover contribution of up to \$100,000 directly from your IRA. Check with your tax advisor.)

2) All Sierra Club offices close for the holidays. The Chapter has to process your check and send it off to the Foundation for deposit, so it's a good bet that **if you wait until the week before Christmas to send your check, it won't be deposited until after January 1st**, turning your 2014 donation into a 2015 donation as far as the IRS is concerned.



Mail your check to:

Sierra Club  
 P.O. Box 15755  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

↑ Send your check now

↑ Not now

## California Aquifers Contaminated With Billions of Gallons of Fracking Wastewater

Desmog blog - Tues, 2014-10-07

After California state regulators shut down 11 fracking wastewater injection wells last July over concerns that the wastewater might have contaminated aquifers used for drinking water and farm irrigation, the EPA ordered a report within 60 days.

It was revealed yesterday that the California State Water Resources Board has sent a letter to the EPA confirming that at least nine of those sites were in fact dumping wastewater

contaminated with fracking fluids and other pollutants into aquifers protected by state law and the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Center for Biological Diversity, reveals that nearly 3 billion gallons of wastewater were illegally injected into central California aquifers and that half of the water samples collected at the eight water supply wells tested near the injection sites have high levels of dangerous chemicals such as arsenic, a known carcinogen that can also weaken the human

immune system, and thallium, a toxin used in rat poison.

Timothy Krantz, a professor of environmental studies at the University of Redlands, says these chemicals could pose a serious risk to public health: "The fact that high concentrations are showing up in multiple water wells close to wastewater injection sites raises major concerns about the health and safety of nearby residents." The full extent of the contamination is not yet known. Regulators at the State Water Resources Board said that as many as 19 other injection wells could



# Bad DOGGR!



## The state is fetching, rolling over and playing dead for fracking

others identified in prior comments. We noted that:

*DOGGR continues to propose regulations that will allow well stimulation to occur without providing any scientific or other information showing that these*

*regulations can and will ensure that well stimulation does not pose serious risks to life, health, property, and the environment. Indeed, DOGGR has not shown that any possible regulations could avoid these risks.*

*DOGGR's present course of drafting well stimulation regulations in the absence of and prior to a scientific inquiry regarding well stimulation is inconsistent with DOGGR's statutory obligations and basic principles of agency decision making. DOGGR must "prevent, as far as possible, damage to life, health, property, and natural resources." Consistent with this mandate, DOGGR may only permit those "methods . . . of increasing the ultimate recovery of underground hydrocarbons" which DOGGR deems "suitable".... Available information has shown that well stimulation and unconventional production pose significant risks to life, health, property, and the environment.*

The current revised text fails to cure any of these deficiencies. Most of the changes made in the second revision make the proposal *worse*, introducing needless ambiguity or weakening important protections, including an inexplicable relaxation of seismic monitoring and reporting requirements.

We continue to urge DOGGR to impose an immediate moratorium on fracking and well stimulation.

If DOGGR nonetheless permits well stimulation, the proposed regulations must:

- Provide the public with a clear outline of the entire permitting process,
- Limit single project authorization to ten or fewer wells,
- Require affirmatively informing neighbors of the application and environmental review processes, in addition to informing neighbors when actual drilling is contemplated
- Grant any person entitled to receive notification the right to water quality testing at the operator's expense, rather than treating neighboring tenants differently than neighboring landowners.
- Restore text deleted from its previous draft requiring follow-up water quality testing 30 to 60 days after well stimulation has been completed.

When the SLO County Board of Supervisors elected to take no action to fore-stall future oil fracking forays into the county at their September 23 meeting (see "A Deep Unconcern," October), they based that decision largely on the confident assertion that Division of Oil Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) is currently fashioning regulations to implement Senate Bill 4, which will constitute sufficient safe-guards on fracking and other forms of well stimulation statewide. Hence, the Supervisors reasoned, the regulations coming our way courtesy of SB 4 meant that the County need not take any local action to protect our land, air and water.

Based on the latest regulatory evidence, that confidence was misplaced.

On October 23, Sierra Club California submitted comments on DOGGR's second revision of SB 4 Well Stimulation Treatment Regulations. The revision failed to correct the many severe deficiencies Sierra Club and

## Free Trade Torpedo Aimed at GMO Labeling

Last September, the Sierra Club signed on to this letter to U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman.

The Honorable Michael Froman  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our deep concerns about proposals for the Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA, otherwise known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) that would threaten efforts to label food containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Recent polling by Consumer Reports shows that for three out of every four U.S. consumers, avoiding genetically modified ingredients when purchasing food is important. And, as last year's New York Times poll revealed, more than 90 percent of U.S. consumers support the labeling of genetically modified food. Thus, it is not surprising that more than half of the U.S. states are now considering GMO labeling legislation. However, proposed TAFTA rules could undermine such GMO labeling initiatives, limiting consumers' ability to make informed choices about their food.

Specifically, we are concerned that the terms of TAFTA's "technical barriers to trade" chapter could limit governments' ability to maintain or establish product labels that are not

premised on avoiding human or animal health risks but rather, for instance, on providing consumers information. The World Trade Organization's (WTO) Appellate Body has ruled that under the WTO's Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) rules, labeling policies that apply to both domestic and foreign products can violate WTO requirements.

The letter from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) notifying Congress of the launch of TAFTA negotiations proposes that the deal not only incorporate, but go beyond the already restrictive TBT rules of the WTO. While an increasing number of U.S. states are contemplating enactment of GMO labeling policies,

have been contaminating protected aquifers, and the Central Valley Water Board has so far only tested eight of the nearly 100 nearby water wells.

Fracking has been accused of exacerbating California's epic state-wide drought, but the Central Valley region, which has some of the worst air and water pollution in the state, has borne a disproportionate amount of the impacts from oil companies' increasing use of the controversial oil extraction technique.

News of billions of gallons of fracking wastewater contaminating protected aquifers relied on by residents of the Central Valley for drinking water could not have come at a worse time.

Adding insult to injury, fracking is a water-intensive process, using as much as 140,000 to 150,000 gallons per frack job every day, permanently removing it from the water cycle.

Hollin Kretzmann, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, says these new revelations prove state regulators have failed to protect Californians and the environment from fracking and called on Governor Jerry Brown to take action now to prevent an even bigger water emergency in drought-stricken California.

"Much more testing is needed to gauge the full extent of water pollution and the threat to public health," Kretzmann said. "But Governor Brown should move quickly to halt fracking to ward off a surge in oil industry wastewater that California simply isn't prepared to dispose of safely."

California is in the middle of an epic water shortage, with nearly 80% of the state experiencing "extreme or exceptional" drought conditions.

Given the situation, anti-fracking activists say it's time for Governor Jerry Brown to put a stop to water-intensive fracking, claiming that the controversial oil and gas production method is exacerbating the problem.

"We're talking about a triple threat to our water from fracking," says Adam Scow, the California Director for Food & Water Watch.

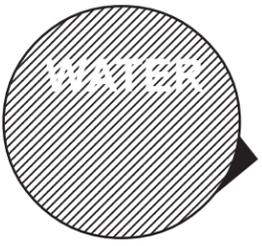
The first threat: The fracking process requires a lot of water, which then becomes unsuitable for any other use.

While it's true that fracking in California doesn't require as much water as it does in Texas and Pennsylvania, Scow contends that any amount lost to fracking is unacceptable.

"In the middle of the worst drought in 50 years, they're taking 140,000 to 150,000 gallons of water out of the water cycle per frack job," said Scow. "They're destroying that amount of water on a daily basis."

It's also possible that fracking fluid could leach into underground aquifers, and of course the toxic wastewater left over from fracking has to be disposed of somehow, and therein lies the second threat to California's water supply.

The California Department of Gas and Geothermal Resources recently ordered 11 fracked wells shut down over fears that they were contaminating potential sources of potable water. As many as 100 other fracking sites are under review as well.



## Water

*continued from page 1*

committees, CSD's, and other entities that have addressed water issues in this county over the years, including the Public Works Department and Board of Supervisors, have deferred to consultants and others in the water industry with a vested interest in pumping. They've also been overly influenced by developers and large growers, and have been unable to escape status quo "solutions" — i.e. more pipes in the ground.

At its October 14 "Water Summit," the Board deferred to vineyard owners who are not about to cut back on wine production until it's too late, and who are under the illusion that water will materialize during a drought by throwing money at the problem. They consistently refer to "supplemental water" without identifying a reliable source and consistently ignore or under-value the most important part of the solution: intense conservation, including rationing or placing limits on pumping, which may mean a reduction in crop size.

The California Department of Water Resources is expected to release priorities for GSA's early next year. All variety of GSA's will have to live by these criteria. Here are our recommendations for maximum County involvement in that process, contingent on the County implementing policies based on the principles of sustainability.

### A workable plan

With climate change and the likelihood of more frequent and long-term droughts, San Luis Obispo County will have difficulty sustaining the current level of economic development and population as it faces the water challenges ahead. This has become clear in the Paso Robles area and in Cambria, and in the long-term overdraft and other water problems in Los Osos and Morro Bay, as well as other parts of the county. The economic, environmental, and social health of the County depends on heading off the disastrous effects of acute and long-term water shortages in the future.

While the County has authority to develop an Integrated Water Management Plan and the authority and responsibility to oversee water resources in its roles as the administrator of the Conservation and Flood Control District, also via its powers as lead agency in charge of the Resource Management System, it has limited authority to enforce water resource policies, e.g., set pumping limits, monitor well use, mandate monitoring and testing, or require such programs as conservation and recycled water use, even for overdrafted basins.

The entities in charge of managing basins and other water resources in the County—CSD's, local water utilities and other purveyors—and individual well owners have been unable or unwilling, to manage water supplies in a manner that prepares for eventualities such as droughts. Climate change will make the management of these resource still more difficult, yet it is likely the same entities will be in charge of water supplies, possibly via joint powers agreements (JPAs) or as members of water master committees, as more basins are adjudicated. As a result, we will likely see the same

results—unsustainable resources.

### The County as Groundwater Sustainability Agency

As noted in our October 8 letter, the Supervisors should take the necessary steps to apply the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act to extend their oversight authority over water resources within the County.

We envision these powers extending to setting County-wide objectives for achieving sustainable water resources as soon as possible; establishing sustainable management principles, practices, and enforcement when water districts or water users not under the authority of a district fail to comply.

Specifically, these may include requiring modifications to sustainable basin yields (e.g., greater margins of safety), requiring more and better testing and well monitoring, restricting total extracts, requiring more aggressive conservation or recycled water use programs, requiring less reliance on surface and imported water, and/or less reliance on energy- and cost-intensive projects in the attempt to develop alternative supplies. These powers would also extend to the management of areas of the county that do not come under the authority of districts, JPAs, or water master committees. For instance, the current adjudications of the Paso Robles and Los Osos Basins may not include all parts of those basins. The County would have the authority and responsibility to establish and enforce sustainable water management plans for those areas.

The passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and other recent legislation is a very large step toward managing state water supplies sustainably. However, we recognize that the legislation does not go far enough to address the level of water shortages we are seeing in many parts the state and San Luis Obispo County. It falls short of addressing the impacts of this drought and the potential for similar droughts in the next decade. Requiring sustainable management plans by 2017 does not address the acute problems we face. Further, the state's mandate for a 20% water use reduction by 2020 is "too little too late," especially when a much greater reduction is possible from strong water use-efficiency programs. The Sustainable Water Management Act and other legislation appears to assume water users in the state have until 2020 to seriously address drought impacts, and that counties such as San Luis Obispo will be able to develop additional water supplies to accommodate current

populations, developing reservoirs or large desalination projects while suffering from the economic impacts of drought.

The County needs to take more aggressive and precautionary steps to bring water demand into line with supplies than the State requires, and to address the impacts of this and future droughts, which will have adverse impacts on aquifers for many years to come even if the overdraft stops now. We recommend that the Board set and enforce objectives that reduce sustainable yield estimates so they are consistent with current rainfall levels (i.e., the water recharging basins). This should happen on a much shorter and more aggressive timeframe than outlined in state legislation and policy.

The County Board of Supervisors is clearly the authority best suited to overseeing the integrated management of County water resources. The Sustainable Water Management Agency we recommend would allow the Board to do that. It is the fairest —

and likely the only — way to ensure County water resources are managed in a consistent, publicly transparent manner, which paves the road to sustainable water resources.

High-quality, reliable and sustainable water supplies available to all county residents at an affordable price and the water resources necessary to support healthy ecosystems are essential for the County to stay one of the most economically vital counties in the state and one of the most desirable destinations in the country. The Board of Supervisors must step forward to claim the authority needed to ensure the County retains these distinctions.

### Formation and structure

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (Pavley-Dickinson) grants the Board the authority to establish a county-wide district with the power to monitor all water extractions, set and enforce extraction limits, and to cover costs with assessments on water users. The Act allows for the sustainable management of all groundwater basins, not just "medium" or "high priority" basins. The County should act to manage all wells in its jurisdiction by setting sustainable yields and requiring metering and reporting of all wells.

Develop the Groundwater Sustainability Agency's (GSA) governing and administrative body and process, mission statement, principles, priorities, practices, policies, procedures, goals and objectives, all with the purpose of maximizing the potential for County-wide-water resource sustainability. This requires developing procedures and policies that bring ground and surface water extraction into line with drought recharge levels as soon as possible, including setting and enforcing aggressive sustainable yields and conservation targets. The objectives must be precautionary in nature, erring on the side of resource preservation, rather than maximum use of the resource.

This means, for example, building margins of safety into sustainable yield estimates to build reserves in aquifers and to improve basin resiliency. The most cost-effective, energy-efficient, and low GHG producing strategies and practices should be maximized.

Develop assessments on water users to cover costs based on the amount of water used, adding special operational/

### **Target zero outdoor potable water use via a combination of low water use landscaping, gray water reuse, rainwater capture, and recycled wastewater.**

project costs as appropriate for particular areas.

### Testing, monitoring and assessment

Ensure all decision making is science-based with ample high-quality data to make evaluations and predictions with a high level of certainty. Ensure all basins in the County have adequate test wells and testing frequency to assess basin health with a high degree of accuracy.

At a minimum, testing should determine the following: groundwater water levels and quality; groundwater storage capacity vs. actual water in storage (i.e., percentage of capacity); extent of seawater intrusion in affected basins; sustainable yield of basins with appropriate margins of safety; basin recharge sources, locations, and time delays (i.e., time needed for recharge to benefit drinking water aquifers and ecosystems).

Ensure all extractions are monitored at least semi-annually to provide accurate extraction data. The county

could install real-time data recovery systems in these wells.

Until adequate and complete data are available for a basin or groundwater source, set sustainable yields (total extraction limits) at below historic "sustainable/safe yield" estimates to account for approximately that much reduction in recharge due to the current drought and climate change.

Manage all basins with a margin of safety to ensure sustainable yield estimates are workable in practice.

Establish water budgets and pumping limits for all large water users (including water utilities) as soon as possible.

Establish water budgets for smaller water users as soon as possible.

Determine incentives and rewards to encourage water users to stay within budgets and penalties when they go over.

Do not adjust water budgets and safe yields up or down until conclusive evidence (well tests over time) show that an adjustment will result in basin sustainability.

### Water use efficiency

Make water use efficiency (WUE) the primary strategy. Water use efficiency includes potable water use reduction via efficient water use technologies and practices (e.g. toilet retrofits and low-water use landscaping), in addition to potable water use reduction via the reuse of grey water, rainwater and recycled water.)

Set aggressive conservation targets, and assist water users in developing strong programs supported with budget-based rate structures and a full range of indoor and outdoor conservation measures, including rainwater and grey water reuse. In urban areas target zero outdoor potable water use via a combination of low water use landscaping, gray water reuse, rainwater capture, and recycled wastewater.

Conservation is the most cost-effective, energy-efficient, and low GHG producing method for reducing water use. Conservation targets should be set well above the state mandate of a 20% reduction by 2020. According to the 2013 Update of the California Water Plan, current average residential use in California is 198 gallons per capita per day (gpcd), with about 81 gpcd outdoor use. A 20% reduction would be about 150 gpcd. However, a target of less than 60 gpcd indoor-outdoor is achievable with a strong program. Los Osos currently has an emergency measure in place that limits use to about 57 gpcd, indoor and outdoor use, for a family of three.

Although Los Osos and other coastal areas have cooler temperatures, targets should not be too much higher than this for inland areas in order to restore the aquifer. An EPA study reports that 43 gpcd indoors is achievable with water-efficient fixtures and appliances on the market. Even a 57 gpcd target allows 14 gpcd of potable water use outdoors, times the number of people living in a home. In a household of two, that's 28 gallons per day and about 200 gallons per week for outdoor use. Augmented with grey water, rainwater and recycled wastewater, 200 gallons per week should provide an adequate amount for outdoor use.

Set aggressive targets for 100% use of recycled water for agriculture, landscaping, and industrial uses to offset the use of potable water pumped from groundwater.

Recycled water usually requires tertiary treatment, which can increase treatment costs and energy use. It also requires purple pipe infrastructure, and may require additional treatment (especially for salts) to provide high-quality water. However, it is a drought-

from the pen of John Muir

## 1868 – Muir in Yosemite, Part 2

(Continued from last month, when we left our intrepid founder perched on a narrow ledge next to Yosemite Falls)

If I was to get down to the brink at all that rough edge, which might offer slight finger holds, was the only way. But the slope beside it looked dangerously smooth and steep, and swift roaring flood beneath, overhead, and beside me was very nerve-trying. I therefore concluded not to venture further, but did nevertheless. Tufts of artemesia were growing in the clefts of the rock nearby, and I filled my mouth with the bitter leaves, hoping they might help to prevent giddiness. Then, with a caution not known in ordinary circumstances, I crept down safely to the little ledge, got my heels well planted on it, then shuffled in a horizontal direction twenty or thirty feet until close to the outplunging current, which, by the time it had descended thus far, was already white. Here I obtained a perfectly free view down into the heart of the snowy, chanting throng of the comet-like streamers, into which the body of the fall soon separates.

While perched on that narrow niche I was not distinctly conscious of danger. The tremendous grandeur of the fall in form and sound and motion, acting at close range, smothered the sense of fear, and in such places one's body takes keen care for safety on its own account. How long I remained down there, or how I returned, I can hardly tell. Anyhow I had a glorious time, and got back to camp about dark, enjoying triumphant exhilaration soon followed by dull weariness. Hereafter I'll try to keep from such extravagant, nerve-straining places. Yet such a day is well worth venturing for. My first view of the High Sierra, first view looking down Yosemite, the death song of Yosemite Creek, and its flight over the vast cliff, each one of these is of itself enough for a great life-long landscape fortune – a most memorable day of days – enjoyment enough to kill if that was possible.

**July 16** – My enjoyments yesterday afternoon, especially at the head of the fall, were too great for good sleep. Kept starting up last night in a nervous tremor, half awake, fancying that the foundation of the mountain we were camped on had given way and was falling into Yosemite Valley. In vain I roused myself to make a new beginning for sound sleep. The nerve strain had been too great, and again and again I dreamed I was rushing through the air above a glorious avalanche of water and rocks. One time, springing to my feet, I said, "This time it is real – all must die, and where could mountaineer find a more glorious death!"....

**July 17** – A new camp was made today in a magnificent silver fir grove at the head of a small stream that flows into Yosemite by way of Indian Canyon. Here we intend to stay for several weeks, — a fine location from which to make excursions about the great valley and its fountains. Glorious day I'll be sketching, pressing, plants, studying the wonderful topography, and the wild animals, our happy fellow mortals and neighbors. But the vast mountains in the distance, shall I ever know them, shall I be allowed to enter into their midst and dwell with them?

**July 18** – Slept pretty well; the



valley walls did not seem to fall, though I still fancied myself at the brink, alongside the white plunging flood, especially when half asleep. Strange the danger of that adventure should be more troublesome now that I am in the bosom of the peaceful woods, a mile or more from the fall, than it was while I was on the brink of it....

About noon we had another rain-storm with keen startling thunder, the metallic, ringing, clashing, clanging notes gradually fading into low bass rolling and muttering in the distance. For a few minutes the rain came in a grand torrent like a waterfall, then hail; some of the hailstones an inch in diameter, hard icy, and irregular in form....

**July 19** — ...About noon, as usual, big bossy cumuli began to grow above the forest, and the rainstorm pouring from them is the most imposing I have seen yet. The silvery zigzag lightning lances are longer than usual, and the thunder gloriously impressive, keen, crashing, intensely concentrated,

speaking with such tremendous energy it would seem that an entire mountain is being shattered at every stroke, but probably only a few trees are being shattered, many of which I have seen on my walks hereabouts strewn the ground. At last the clear ringing strokes are succeeded by deep low tones that grow gradually fainter as they roll afar into the recesses of the echoing mountains, where they seem to be welcomed home. Then another and another peal, or rather crashing, splintering stroke, follows in quick succession, perchance splitting some giant pine or fir from top to bottom into long rails and slivers, and scattering them to all points of the compass. Now comes the rain, with corresponding extravagant grandeur, covering the ground high and low with a sheet of flowing water, a transparent film...making the rocks glitter and glow, gathering in ravines, flooding the streams, and making them shout and boom in reply to the thunder.

How interesting to trace the history of a single raindrop! It is not long, geologically speaking, as we have seen, since the first raindrops fell on the newborn leafless Sierra landscapes. How different the lot of these falling now! Happy the showers that fall on so fair a wilderness, — scarce a single drop can fail to find a beautiful spot — on the tops of the peaks, on the shining glacier pavements, on the great smooth domes, on forests and gardens and brushy moraines, plashing, glinting, pattering, laving. Some go to the high snowy fountains to swell their well-saved stores; some into lakes, washing the mountain windows, patting their smooth glassy levels, making dimples and bubbles and spray; some into the waterfalls and cascades, as if eager to

join in their dance and song and beat their foam yet finer; good luck and good work for the happy mountain raindrops, each one of them a high waterfall in itself, descending from cliffs and hollows of the rocks, out of the sky-thunder into the thunder of the falling rivers. Some, falling on the meadows and bogs, creep silently out of sight to the grass roots, hiding softly as in a nest, slipping, oozing hither, thither, seeking and finding their appointed work. Some, descending through the spires of the woods, sift spray through the shining needles, whispering peace and good cheer to each one of them. Some drops with happy aim glint on the sides of crystals, — quartz, hornblende, garnet, zircon, tourmaline, feldspar, — patter on grains of gold and heavy way-worn nuggets; some, with blunt plap-plap and low bass drumming, fall on the broad leaves of veratrum, saxifrage, cypripedium. Some happy drops fall straight into the cups of flowers, kissing the lips of lilies. How far they have to go, how many cups to fill, great and small, cells too small to be seen, cups holding half a drop as well as lake basins between the hills, each replenished with equal care, every drop in all the blessed throng a silvery newborn star with lake and river, garden and grove, valley and mountain, all that the landscape holds reflected in its crystal depths, God's messenger, angel of love sent on its way with majesty and pomp and display of power that makes man's greatest shows ridiculous....

From *My First Summer in the Sierra*, by John Muir, The Modern Library Paperback Edition, 2003.

## Last Look?

### Sierra Club appeals Shell Beach bluff development to Coastal Commission

Pismo Beach has allowed over 90 percent of its ocean bluffs to be developed, in conjunction with a long history of tree trimming, nest removal and tree removal without permits that has virtually eliminated nesting areas for herons, pelicans, cormorants, egrets, oyster catchers and falcons in the Shell Beach neighborhood. By 2008, the bluff site at 2900 Shell Beach Road was virtually all that remained of the region's primary nesting habitat for these birds. Then those nesting trees were cut down.



The Silver Shoals development proposal for this site – ten townhouse lots, nine single-family residential lots and a one-acre bluff top park — is the logical place to attempt some degree of environmental restoration. Also, 2900

Shell Beach Road offers virtually the last, large unobstructed ocean view in the area.

The Sierra Club and concerned residents have pointed this out in an appeal to the California Coastal Commission of the project's Coastal Development Permit as issued by Pismo Beach. If the Commission finds that our appeal raises substantial issues of nonconformity with the City's Local Coastal Plan (LCP) and the California Coastal Act, it may condition the permit with requirements for measures

*SILVER SHOALS continued on page 8*



At risk 7,000 square feet of threatened coastal scrub and equally precious trails allowing public access to the beach from the bluff perch on the ocean side of the Silver Shoals site.

# A LUCE Win

As clashes with the County Airport Land Use Commission over the land around the SLO Airport triggered headline-grabbing acrimony on the San Luis Obispo City Council this fall, the Sierra Club was busy getting good stuff into and taking bad stuff out of the City's General Plan update.

The clashes and acrimony have delayed a final vote on the update of the Land Use and Circulation Elements -- and hopefully councilmembers will make use of that delay to resolve

significant issues prior to that final vote -- but here's the tally of salutary changes the council did get around to at its October 7 meeting [*italics* = our additions.]:

- Amend the Circulation Element to read "The City will continue to support the use and development of compressed natural gas *and biodiesel* fueling stations, *EV recharging stations, and other alternative fuel stations* in the San Luis Obispo area."
- Delete a proposed tourism marketing program from the Land Use Element.
- Amend the Land Use Element to *omit* direct implementation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, citing instead only "appropriate strategies for business retention and expansion with a focus on those providing head-of-household jobs."

● Amend the Land Use Element to state that "the City shall *require* [not "encourage"] the use of methods to facilitate rainwater percolation for roof areas and outdoor hardscaped areas where practical to reduce surface water runoff and aid in groundwater recharge," and "*require* [not "encourage"] project designs that minimize drainage concentrations and impervious coverage."



**Making change** The SLO City Council's October 7 meeting resulted in a much improved LUCE, thanks to the Sierra Club.

● Amend the Land Use Element to state that the city shall "*implement a builder incentive program that will encourage new homes to be built with*

*LUCE continued on page 8*

## Trains

*continued from page 1*

accidents in highly populated areas and to critical drinking water supplies. The administration used accounting tricks to reduce their estimate of the likelihood and severity of "high consequence accidents" and the potential costs, in lives and dollars, of an oil train derailment, spill, or fire. The oil and rail industries need to treat oil trains as the dangerous threat to public safety, drinking water, and wildlife that they are.

3) Eliminate exemptions so that all volatile crude oil moving on trains is subject to safety rules. The administration ignores safety completely when it comes to shorter trains and some train operators. A single tanker car carries 30,000 gallons of explosive crude oil. That's way more than most U.S. fire departments can fight, and it's far more than enough toxic crude oil to permanently damage rivers, wild areas, and drinking water supplies. There's no reason why every train carrying crude oil shouldn't be held to the highest safety standards.

4) New 30 mile per hour speed limits for all hazardous crude oil transport through populous areas. Turns out the slower you go, the fewer accidents you have. Nearly every city and town in America has an oil train route right through the heart of it. Same goes for our most important rivers and national parks. The U.S. rail system was built to carry people and products between population centers, not to transport hazardous crude oil. Yet the oil and rail industry believe that the same speed limits for passengers and grain should apply to the heaviest, most dangerous trains on the rails. They are wrong.

5) Protect Americans who already face the biggest threats from industrial accidents and pollution. The administration's proposed rules ignore environmental justice. Executive Order 12898 requires the federal government to write safety standards that protect communities of color who already face a larger threat from industrial pollution and accidents. ForestEthics evaluated our Blast Zone data and found that more than 16 million—or 60 percent of the 25 million Americans in the evacuation zone—are communities of color. The threat here isn't just catastrophic fires. Our partners at the Natural Resources Defense Council estimate that as much as three percent of crude oil in a tank car leaks out into the air as these trains roll down the track. That's as much as 900 gallons of toxic air pollution per car. Now multiply that by a single unit train 100 cars

long and we're talking about people breathing a massive amount of cancer-causing, asthma-inducing and carbon-polluting poisons along oil train routes.

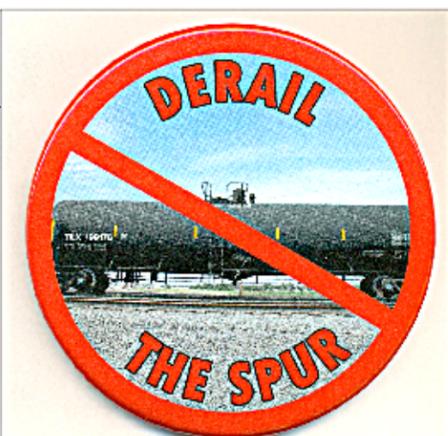
The Obama administration is asleep at the switch. The oil industry has turned to America's railroads to move explosive, toxic North Dakota Bakken and Alberta tar sands crude oil. We're talking about millions and millions of barrels moving each day on US tracks, through our cities and by our homes and schools, on a rail system that was designed in the 19th century to move people and freight across America. The oil industry is turning US rail lines into hazardous crude oil corridors and the Obama administration's anemic response and weak regulations leave far too many Americans in peril.

The good news is that communities across the U.S. are speaking up for stronger controls and better safety. There's a growing network of community groups rising up to oppose these dangerous oil trains.

They are demanding answers from their public officials, holding decision-makers accountable, and refusing to back down. ForestEthics and our partners helped more than 150,000 Americans submit comments criticizing the government's proposed new standards. We are working with communities across the country and demanding that the oil and rail industries, and the federal government, put public safety first.

The Obama administration needs to get serious about protecting 25 million Americans, and there's no doubt that many of those Americans and the millions more who live downwind and downstream of an oil train route, are watching closely.

*- From The Root Word: ForestEthics Blog*



### Oil Train Blast Zone

ForestEthics

When oil trains derail we all pay the price. How close are you and your family to a disaster waiting to happen? Use the blast zone map below to find out and take action.

Find an Address

Tell President Obama & Congress: Get Exploding Oil Trains Off the Tracks

Oil train explosions and spills threaten millions of Americans. Safety standards lag far behind the massive increase in oil train traffic, now it's time to protect our families. President Obama and Congress must act to take dangerous oil trains off the tracks.

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

**Straight through the heart** Can you find yourself on the blast zone map? Oil trains heading for the Central Coast, per the Oct. 15 *Contra Costa Times*: "would go along the Amtrak Capitol Corridor from Martinez via Richmond, Berkeley and Emeryville to Oakland, and from there south along the Capitol Corridor or Coast Starlight route via Hayward, Fremont and Santa Clara to San Jose and on to Santa Maria."

## Spurred to Action

Last January, Sierra Club, the Center for Biological Diversity, Natural Resources Defense Council, North County Watch, Mesa Refinery Watch et al were among the groups and individuals that inundated County planners with comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Phillips 66 Santa Maria Refinery Rail Spur project. The project plans to vastly expand the rail transport of oil to the Central Coast, bringing 80-car oil trains into the county, each train a mile and a half long, at the rate of five trains or 21,000 tank cars per week, every week, 520 trips per year. The trains would most likely be carrying Canadian tar sands crude oil, rightly known as one of the world's dirtiest and most environmentally destructive sources of fuel.

Those highly critical comments effectively derailed the project, forcing the withdrawal of the wholly deficient EIR and cancellation of the County Planning Commission meeting scheduled to review and potentially approve the proposal (see "Oil Train Hits a Bump," April).

A Recirculated Draft EIR has now been released, and the public has 45 days to review the 849-page document, with comments due three days before Thanksgiving.

There are differences between the previous and current drafts, but here's

what remains the same: The promise of even worse air quality for the Nipomo Mesa — current title holder for the worst air in the county; the potential for oil spills, fires and explosions; and the potential to turn SLO County from a place where everyone wants to live, work and visit to a place where nobody does.

As the story on our front page makes clear, the Phillips 66 project is just one part of a very big picture. But even the local picture is pretty big. The oil rush that is heading to the Central Coast includes this project, expansion of the Price Canyon oilfield, development of the Huasna Valley oilfield and exploration for oil on Porter Ranch. The industry wants to probe for oil at over 7,700 regional sites.

We also draw your attention to the "blast zone" map above. (You can find the original and zoom in at [www.forestethics.org](http://www.forestethics.org)). If you're on it, you need to get involved in this issue, pronto. Here's how:

### TAKE ACTION

The Mesa Refinery Watch Group is holding a forum on **Tuesday, November 11** from 4-6 p.m. at 1645 Trilogy Parkway, Nipomo, 93444. For more info, contact Linda Reynolds at [lreynolds151@gmail.com](mailto:lreynolds151@gmail.com).

## Silver Shoals

continued from page 6

to reduce or avoid the project's impacts that the City failed to impose.

We pointed out that the project is inconsistent with Coastal Act policies assuring public access insofar as the proposed road through the subdivision would block access to trails from the bluff to the beach at an immediately adjacent designated public coastal access area.

It is also inconsistent with the City's LCP policy requiring that "New development within the City's jurisdiction shall be designed to withstand natural and man-made hazards to acceptable levels of risk by...requiring new development to avoid portions of sites with high hazard levels." Portions of the South Silver Shoals Road extension are located within the setback area, despite the fact that

## GMOs

continued from page 4

inclusion of such WTO-plus requirements could invite challenges of GMO labeling policies before TAFTA dispute resolution panels. The panels' rulings would be enforceable by indefinite trade sanctions unless and until a violating policy would be brought into conformity with TAFTA constraints.

Equally concerning is the controversial and unpopular proposal to include investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions in TAFTA. This would grant foreign corporations the power to skirt domestic courts and laws, drag the U.S. and EU governments before extrajudicial tribunals, and directly challenge GMO labels as violations of expansive, TAFTA-created foreign investor "rights." The tribunals, comprised of three private attorneys, would be authorized to rule against new GMO labeling laws on the basis that they frustrated the expectations that the investors held when they made their investments.

Such tribunals would be empowered to order unlimited taxpayer compensation to biotech and other firms for alleged losses to "expected future profits" resulting from new GMO labels or other changes to domestic policy.

Such extraordinary "investor-state" rules have been included in past U.S. "free trade" agreements, forcing taxpayers to pay firms more than \$430 million for toxics bans, land-use rules, regulatory permits, and water and timber policies. Just under U.S. pacts, more than \$38 billion remains pending in corporate claims against medicine patent policies, pollution cleanup requirements, climate and energy laws, and other public interest policies. If ISDS were included in TAFTA, the investor-state threat would be vastly expanded, as European-chartered corporations would be newly empowered to directly challenge U.S. state, local or national policies — including GMO labeling laws — on behalf of their more than 24,000 entities operating in the United States.

Take, for example, BASF — a German firm that, in addition to being the world's largest chemical corporation, recently relocated the headquarters of its burgeoning GMO division to North Carolina. BASF owns more than 40 subsidiaries in the United States, any one of which could serve as the basis for an investor-state attack against GMO labels or other U.S.

"onsite soils have the potential to lack the resistance required to support the type of loads imposed by traffic."

The project is inconsistent with Coastal Act and LCP policies protective of the public viewshed, which declare that "Shell Beach Road is the scenic road that ties together much of Pismo Beach. Its character is derived from the views of the ocean on one side and the foothills on the other." Therefore: "Projects should be designed to preserve some of the significant views enjoyed by residents of nearby properties, which could be blocked by the project. Especially on larger sites, clustering the buildings or creating new public viewpoints can preserve portions of these views."

Per the City's policy on Visual Access: "Open space shall be arranged to maximize view corridors through the planning area from public viewing areas to protect and maintain views of both the ocean and coastal foothills, as well as the visual sense of the coastal terrace landform."

The project is inconsistent with the LCP policy requiring that "Native vegetation shall be preserved to the maximum extent possible." The City's

public interest policies under TAFTA.

Indeed, European and U.S. agribusiness corporations, in their formal demands issued to TAFTA negotiators, have been remarkably candid in naming the dismantlement of GMO labeling policies as one of their goals for TAFTA. For example, the U.S. National Confectioners Association, which represents Nestle USA and The Hershey Company, has bluntly stated, "U.S. industry also would like to see the US-EU FTA achieve progress in removing mandatory GMO labeling and traceability requirements."

## Consumers gain nothing by being denied information to make informed choices about their food

This corporate goal for TAFTA threatens not just the EU's robust GMO labeling policies, but also those being advanced in the United States. Connecticut and Maine passed GMO labeling laws in 2013, and so far in 2014, 35 new GMO labeling laws have been introduced in 20 states. In May 2014, Vermont passed the first GMO labeling law that will automatically take effect without waiting for other states to pass similar laws. One month later, the Grocery Manufacturers Association and ally food industry entities filed a lawsuit against the state of Vermont over this new GMO labeling law.

TAFTA, as currently proposed, would provide such industry groups a wider array of tools to halt the advance of GMO labeling policies. When U.S. courts rule in support of such policies, TAFTA, if ISDS is included, would provide a new means to thwart the public's will.

TAFTA is being sold on the basis that it would benefit consumers by creating new efficiencies. But consumers gain nothing by being denied information to make informed choices about their food. The only beneficiaries from such constraints on GMO and other consumer food labeling would be the large agribusiness and biotech firms that seek to keep

Environmental Determination appears to identify 7,270 square feet of Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub — listed in the California Natural Diversity Database as "very threatened" — as an "area of proposed disturbance" and proposes the replacement of 4,346 square feet of coastal scrub, with mitigation of impacts to this sensitive natural community via "further restoration of removed scrub." As it appears the applicant is proposing a mitigation measure that will result in the net loss of 2,924 square feet of Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub, with no explanation of the meaning of the phrase "further restoration of removed scrub," current measures are not sufficient to protect this sensitive coastal resource. A proposed Habitat Mitigation Plan's mitigation ratio of 1:1 would necessarily result in the overall loss of half the resource. (If you promise to spare one tree for every tree you cut down in a grove of 100 redwoods, you end up with 50 redwoods.)

We are asking the Commission to require significantly more mitigation, much better defined, as a condition of the permit for this project.

consumers ignorant so that they buy foods that they would not choose when provided full information.

The undersigned organizations commit to fighting any trade pact that threatens GMO labeling. We will strenuously oppose any U.S.-EU deal that undermines U.S. consumers' right to know what is in the food they purchase and feed their families.

## LUCE

continued from page 7

onsite water/heat recycling systems to help achieve the goal of net zero water and energy use."

● Amend the Circulation Element to state that "The City shall [consider] parking demand reduction strategies, and consider emerging best practices such as unbundled parking, smart parking technologies and cash out programs."

The deletion of the national tourism promotion program will help keep places like Bishop Peak from being overwhelmed. The deletion of the Economic Development Strategic Plan will keep the future whims of the Chamber of Commerce from being carved into the General Plan. The addition of all the other measures will ensure a sustainable water supply, improved air quality, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, traffic congestion and energy use. Because Sierra Club members inundated the Council with requests for these changes, October 7 was a good day for SLO.

Finally, we request that TAFTA negotiating texts be made public so as to allow for a robust public debate about the impact the proposed provisions would have on these most basic aspects of our daily lives.

Sincerely,  
[Sierra Club and two dozen other public interest groups]

## Sure Enough, Organic is Better

By Food Tank  
foodtank.com



Organic and agro-ecological farming methods typically build healthier soils, produce less pollution, and protect ecosystems better than conventional cultivation methods. However, scientists have only recently discovered that organic products are also better for eaters.

A new study by Newcastle University on organic versus conventional crops confirms that organic farming methods do have a positive impact on health. Results found substantially higher levels of antioxidants and lower levels of pesticides in organic crops versus conventional crops. Antioxidants have been linked to a lower risk of cancer and other diseases in humans. Plants naturally produce antioxidants to defend themselves against pests and diseases. But when pesticides are applied, plants lose the need to generate antioxidants for their own defenses.

Dr. Charles Benbrook, professor at Washington State University's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources and co-author of the study, says, "Our results are highly relevant and significant and will help both scientists and consumers sort through the often conflicting information currently available on the nutrient density of organic and conventional plant-based foods."

The findings contradict a 2009 U.K. Food Standards Agency funded study that found no significant differences in nutritional benefits between organic and conventional crops. However, the authors commented that newly available data and better analysis methods make the recent study's findings more definitive.

"It shows very clearly how you grow your food has an impact, and that if you buy organic fruits and vegetables, you can be sure you have, on average, a higher amount of antioxidants at the same calorie level," says Carlos Leifert, Professor of Ecological Agriculture at Newcastle University and lead author of the Newcastle study.

Benbrook and his colleagues analyzed 343 studies, which is the most extensive analysis of nutrient content in organic versus conventional food to date. Significant findings from the study include:

- Organic crops contain an average of 17 percent more antioxidants than conventionally grown crops.
- Some of the organic crops, including fruits, vegetables, and grains, had as much as 60 percent higher concentrations of antioxidant compounds than conventional crops.
- The level of flavanones, which are associated with a lower risk of stroke, were 69 percent higher in organic foods tested.
- Pesticide residues were found to be three to four times more likely in conventional crops compared to organic.
- Overall levels of pesticides were found to be ten to 100 times lower in organic food than in conventionally produced food.

The research team has translated the executive summary and press release into more than 20 languages and made the study's database free and accessible to the public. The entire study is available from the British Journal of Nutrition.

"This study is telling a powerful story of how organic plant-based foods are nutritionally superior and deliver bona fide health benefits," said Dr. Benbrook.



**Water**

*continued from page 5*

resistant source of water and much more cost-effective than imported water when all costs and reliability issues are factored in. State law requires its beneficial use to offset potable water use when good quality recycled water is available.

**Basin Recharge**

Start a program to identify and protect water recharge areas. Make drainage and storm water management the primary strategies for recharging basins. Require areas to maximize recharge of basins by capturing and infiltrating all urban runoff and much of the non-urban runoff in locations where it will benefit basins. Assist areas in developing strong programs that focus on use of low impact development (LID) strategies, with measures such as rain gardens and bio-swales.

LID is the Best Management Practice for storm water management plans mandated by the Central Coast Regional Water Board. This is largely because the measures provide multiple benefits. In addition to reducing pollution of surface waters, LID measures recharge groundwater with clean rainwater, reduce outdoor water use, and provide attractive outdoor spaces. They use less energy and produce less GHG than conventional drainage with pipes and pumps.

When considering the options of direct and indirect potable recharge (injection wells and leach fields), conservation and recycled water, all can provide direct and immediate benefits on basin water levels. Water Boards are recommending high levels of treatment for direct and indirect

recharge. Direct potable reuse requires reverse osmosis, so high costs, energy use, and other impacts must be considered. Injection wells are required to be located a safe distance from drinking water wells. Conservation and recycled water reuse reduce pumping; direct potable recharge replaces the water removed with pumping. However, conservation and recycled water use (conservation in particular) are more cost-effective. Also, direct (and indirect) potable water use reduces recycled water use for other purposes such as irrigation, which must be factored into cost-benefit analyses. The Sierra Club has recommended maximizing urban and ag reuse (ag exchange), along with conservation, before other measures are implemented.

**Imported water and desalination**

Discourage the use of desalination,

especially desalination of seawater, as a source of water. Desalination's high costs and energy use, along with the environmental impacts of brine disposal, make it much less sustainable than conservation and recycled water use. If desal must be used, require that the source is brackish water, rather than seawater. The less salt removed, the lower the energy use, cost, and amount of brine disposal. Use salt-removal technologies and strategies other than reverse osmosis (R/O) as a first choice, including new technologies, which minimize costs and energy-use, including by reducing the environmental impacts and costs of brine disposal. Blending high-salt concentration water with low-salt concentration water provides an inexpensive way to lower salts. In seawater-impacted basins, conservation and other means of reducing production can reduce intrusion and the salts in the potable

and recycled water supply.

**Surface water and watershed management**

Assume the amount of surface water in local reservoirs available to augment groundwater supplies is the amount available during the present drought, and develop sustainable basin yields and reservoir allocations based on this.

Manage each basin and watershed as a whole, not as separate parts, sub-basins or sub-areas, and strive to make area basins and watersheds the sole water source for those areas.

Allow intra-basin transfers of water before inter-basin transfers. To the extent possible, have areas within the County rely on the water naturally occurring within those areas.

Manage and control the costs of intra- and inter-basin transfers to assure equitable and affordable access to groundwater and surface waters.

# No Fence

**Coastal Commission restores access to Ontario Ridge**

As every hiker in the county should know by now, you can once again hike Ontario Ridge sans illegal fences, gates, barbed wire and "no trespassing" signs.

On October 7, the Coastal Commission approved a final plan to restore public access to the popular hiking trail. The plan provided details about how the property owner must remove barbed wire and other fencing, gates and "No Trespassing" signs that were placed along the Ontario Ridge Trail that leads from the City of Pismo Beach to Pirates Cove just south of Avila Beach.

At its July meeting, the Commission ordered Robert and Judy McCarthy of Bakersfield to remove the unpermitted fencing and signs, requiring them to first prepare a plan that would spell out exactly how that would be accomplished. The McCarthys worked with Coastal Commission staff to prepare a plan that would expedite the restoration of access, while minimizing any harm to the environment or the trails. The plan required the unpermitted development to be completely removed within ten days of plan approval.

"We are pleased that the McCarthys have followed the Commission's order to remove the fences and restore the historic public use of this property quickly and completely" said Lester. "The public, including many local residents, are looking forward to returning to this fantastic stretch of coast."

Shortly after the order was issued, the state legislature gave the Commission authority to issue fines for any Coastal Act violation that interferes with public access. The Commission informed the McCarthys that if they did not comply with the Order, fines would be pursued in the case.

Chief of Enforcement Lisa Haage had no doubt that the potential to levy fines contributed to the speedy resolution of the issue.

"We believe that property owners become a lot more cooperative when they know they might have to pay fines for not complying with the Coastal Act," she said. "The threat of daily fines accruing provides a strong incentive to resolve a problem, and to resolve it more quickly, rather than argue about it for years on end. And most important, it can help us protect and more quickly restore public access



to the magnificent coast of California."

By October 17, the McCarthys had removed all unpermitted fences, signs, gates, gateposts and footings and restored all areas impacted by the unpermitted development and its removal. One fence and gate remains, allowed for another 45 days past the October 17 deadline while the County figures out a way to keep ATV's out of the area.

"It's amazing to go up there now to drink in the fenceless view," wrote local attorney and land use activist Tarren Collins, who worked with the Sierra Club on public outreach and organizing throughout the fight to restore public access. "Thank you to everyone who wrote letters, showed up



**The people prevail** Former Santa Lucia Chapter Chair Tarren Collins, who led the charge to free Ontario Ridge, celebrated the arrival of the fence removal crew.

at Coastal Commission hearings since February, and spread the word. This victory could not have happened without your outpouring of concern to the Coastal Commission!"

**No Confidence**

*continued from page 2*

in Peevey's office, helping to pick and choose the judges that suited PG&E best."

Funny story: In March 2013, representatives of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility were kicked out of a Senior Seismic Hazard Analysis Committee (SSHAC) conference in Berkeley. When the alliance complained to the PUC that this was inappropriate behavior by the utility at a ratepayer-funded conference, they got the answer back that PG&E was just one party to the conference and the other folks didn't want the Alliance there, so their hands were tied.

The author of that explanation was Brian Cherry, whose former job description obviously covered matters pertaining to the utility's operations whether the issues involved natural gas or nuclear power. And the same could be said of PUC President Peevey and his eventual successor.

Whether it's the California Public Utilities Commission or Nuclear Regulatory Commission (See "NRC: Who Me?," page 10), the public is right to wonder how many good bottles of Pinot will perish as regulators seek to console and advise our neighborhood nuclear utility on public relations matters and ease the regulatory burden of PG&E's liability.



# Stop the Oster Quarry!

On December 11, the SLO County Planning Commission will make the decision to approve or deny this large scale industrial project.

If the truth and the County's land use policies are adhered to, the proposal will be denied. That could be why the applicant's well-paid marketing team has attempted to confuse and confound the community in their ongoing effort to obtain a permit. If they succeed, Santa Margarita will turn into a mining town.

By being well informed and taking action, each of us can make a difference in helping achieve a decision that will ensure the future safety and quality of life in this irreplaceable rural community.



**TAKE ACTION**

- Plan to attend the **December 11 Planning Commission hearing** at the County Government Center in San Luis Obispo. Your presence matters whether you plan to speak or not.
- Contact margaritaproud@gmail.com for a detailed information sheet or go to www.margaritaproud.com
- Write to the Planning Commission with your concerns: rhedges@co.slo.ca.us



Left to right: Sierra Club youth organizers Yassamin Kavezade, Opamago Agyemang and Allen Hernandez are introduced by Jono Hildner, Political Chair of the San Geronio Chapter, at the Sierra Club California/CNRCC Convention.

## Sierra Club California Convenes in SLO

Sierra Club California and the Club's California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee convened their annual joint convention at Rancho El Chorro over the weekend of October 11.

The keynote speech was delivered by the company principals of P.R. for the Public Good, Sev Williams and Nina

Erlich (below), who counseled attendees on how to advance policy objectives, express the values motivating you, the problem and the solution.

Organizer Allen Hernandez, working with high school students on environmental justice issues, related how he took a busload of teenage Latino

students to testify at a PUC hearing on replacing the San Onofre nuclear power plant -- something the regulators had never seen before. Fellow organizer Opamago Agyemang brought the house down with his observation "I'm an activist. I don't call myself an environmentalist because that sounds like the environment is separate from everything else. Without the environment, there is nothing else."



## NRC: Who, Me?

In 2011, PG&E informed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that the three major earthquake faults around the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant were capable of generating greater ground motion than was believed when the plant was designed.

On multiple occasions between 2012 and 2014, when he was the NRC's resident safety inspector at Diablo Canyon, Dr. Michael Peck tried to tell his employers they couldn't play fast and loose with new information about the possible interaction of the Shoreline Fault with the other major faults around the nuclear power plant: PG&E had to apply for an amendment to the plant's license and the NRC meanwhile must order the immediate shutdown of Diablo's reactors.

Diablo Canyon's design basis is the "Safe Shutdown Earthquake" (SSE), a model of the plant's ability to safely shut down in the midst of the maximum ground motion the local earthquake faults are believed to be capable of generating. As noted by Dr. Peck in the September 13 issue of *The Tribune*, "PG&E could have updated the SSE safety analysis with the new ground motions. However, this approach would have required an amendment to the Operating License because the resulting stress would have exceeded established safety limits for equipment important to safety, including the

reactor pressure boundary. The NRC typically doesn't approve safety analysis changes that conclude safety limits have been exceeded."

Instead, in consultation with PG&E, the NRC went about "bypassing statutory requirements for notice and hearing opportunity associated with a design basis change" and simply rewrote the design basis in the plant's license application, "appearing to work around the failed license amendment process."

On October 28, Friends of the Earth petitioned the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. circuit to review the NRC's action, overturn it and order a public license amendment proceeding as required by federal law.

"At Diablo, it is now clear that these outdated 1960s-era reactors are not built to withstand the earthquake risks that surround the plant," said Damon Moglen with Friends of the Earth. "But instead of making them address these safety issues, the NRC worked with PG&E to change the rules."

As Dr. Peck wrote in the September 13 *Tribune*, "PG&E continues to operate the Diablo Canyon reactors outside the bounds of the facility design basis as defined by the NRC Operating License. Any operation outside of the design basis challenges plant safety due to erosion of regulatory margins."

## Diablo: Not Skate Away

PG&E must not be allowed to duck the rules for coastal power plants

Diablo Canyon utilizes a once-through cooling (OTC) system for the plant's two nuclear reactors. It takes in 2.5 billion gallons of ocean per day, decimating marine life in the process, both small organisms such as larvae (1.5 billion a year) that are sucked in and pass through the pipes, and millions of adult fish and other sea life that are pinned against the grates at the mouth of the pipes.

In 2010, California enacted a policy to help protect the marine environment, requiring all coastal power plants to replace once through cooling with an alternative cooling system. San Onofre and Diablo Canyon were granted an exemption that allowed them until 2015 to determine how they would comply. The current discussion is now focused on Diablo Canyon and the viability of installing cooling towers. The State Water Board could allow a permanent exemption or require it to replace the plant's cooling system.

On October 14 and 15, the Diablo Canyon Independent Safety Committee (DCISC) met in Avila Beach to make recommendations to the State Water Board about once through cooling and cooling tower issues at Diablo Canyon.

Friends of the Earth, San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility and the Sierra Club take the position that PG&E should be held to the state's requirement to end once-through cooling of Diablo Canyon's nuclear reactors.

The DCISC voted to send to the State Water Board a "Preliminary Evaluation of Safety Issues for the Addendum to the Final Assessment of Alternate Cooling Technologies or Modifications to Once-Through Cooling at the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant." This evaluation includes some major edits to the previous draft as a result of input from Bill Powers, consultant to Friends of the Earth, as well as Mothers for Peace and other members of the public.

The DCISC was inconclusive about the whether a change from OTC to cooling towers would lead to more or fewer safety problems, and indicated that further study was warranted.

The Water Board will deliberate on the issue at its November 18 meeting in Sacramento. At the request of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, the DCISC submitted a letter to the Water Board requesting it set up a remote location for San Luis Obispo residents to be heard via web-conferencing on Nov 18. The Sierra Club and Mothers for Peace have added our voices to this request to make it possible for the citizens most affected by the Board's decision to have their voices heard without their having to travel to Sacramento.

### TAKE ACTION

The goal of the state's mandate to end once-through cooling at coastal power plants is to create an alternative to once-through cooling that achieves the goal of reducing the mortality inflicted on sea life by 97%.

For years, PG&E has maintained that the costs of converting to OTC to achieve this standard are too high to justify, and they should be allowed an exemption or some lesser, cheaper alternative that would partially mitigate the damage while continuing to inflict it. If the Water Board agrees to our request for a local node for the Nov. 18 hearing, please be prepared to tell the board:

- Donating a future easement on PG&E's coastal property does not achieve the state's goal of 97% reduction in mortality (nor is it even relevant to the goal).
- Building offshore artificial reefs to attract and replenish sea life will not offset impacts on sea life equivalent to a 97% reduction in mortality. This was tried at San Onofre, at great cost to ratepayers and after years of study. The results were a failure.
- "Wedge wire" and fine mesh screens will not achieve the state's goal of 97% reduction in mortality.
- Support the conclusion of the Water Board's Subcommittee on Nuclear Fueled Power Plants:

*The Subcommittee finds that there is no basis for an exemption for Diablo Canyon from the OTC Policy. Based on the information presented above, the closed cycle cooling options are viable alternatives to OTC for Diablo Canyon and should be considered with other viable cooling options. While the costs for closed cycle cooling are highly uncertain, there is no doubt about the viability of closed cycle cooling in meeting the OTC policy. As a consequence, Diablo Canyon should be required to meet the same standards set forth in the OTC Policy for the other OTC plants.*

- Subcommittee Comments on Bechtel's Assessment of Alternatives to Once-Through Cooling for Diablo Canyon Power Plant, Sept. 12, 2014

Earlier in October, Senators Ed Markey and Barbara Boxer inquired of the NRC how it was that NRC Chair Allison Macfarlane had come to draft a memo proposing to muzzle the NRC's independent Office of Investigations.

The memo outlined a reorganization plan that would "essentially direct its activities at every stage of an investigation, as well as by limiting the type of investigations OI could undertake in the first place," and would remove "the independence that is essential to an effective investigative office," the Senators wrote.

Boxer and Markey described the proposal as likely to "have the effect of ensuring the investigations into some criminal violations and matters with significant fiscal implications could no

longer be undertaken."

An NRC spokesman promptly responded "we can affirm that no such reorganization plan exists, nor has one been contemplated." Which must have made the senators wonder how it was possible that they could be in possession of that memo, dated October 1, with Chairwoman Macfarlane's name on it.

The senators also politely inquired of Chairwoman Macfarlane why she thought it would be a good idea to put the NRC's Office of General Counsel in charge of the Office of Investigations while the General Counsel's office is under fire for attempting to block an investigation and allegations of retaliatory actions in an Office of Investigations case.

# Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **December 1**.  
To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:  
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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. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. Pets are generally not allowed. A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 18. 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, 549-0355. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.

**Sat., Nov. 1st, 8 a.m., Cruikshank & Salmon Creek Trails.** If you are looking for a challenging hike with inspiring views and diverse landscapes, please join us. However, this hike will be strenuous: total length of 13 miles, with 3,000 feet of elevation gain and loss. We will set up a car shuttle between the two trail heads. Route will start at the Cruikshank trail head, climb nearly 7 miles to the South Coast Ridge Rd., walk 1/4 mile south to the top of the Salmon Creek Trail, and descend back to Highway 1. There is poison oak on this hike. The hike will take all day. Hikers must contact the leader at least 24 hours ahead of time to confirm. We will meet at Santa Rosa Park (SLO) at 7:20 am and Washburn Day Use Area in San Simeon State Park, north of Cambria on Hwy 1, at 8 am. Bring water and food, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hats, and jackets. For more info, contact Leader: Bill Waycott, (805) 459-2103, bill.waycott@gmail.com. Rain or the threat of rain cancels.

**Sat., Nov. 1st, 10 a.m., SLO City Walk: San Luis Cemetery.** Guided stroll past gravesites of famous pioneers like Angel, Murray, Sinsheimer, and Civil-War vets, plus the "old potter's field" for indigents and the landmark pyramid. Learn the compelling stories of the 19th-century founders of San Luis Obispo. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet in south parking lot adjacent to the pyramid, 2890 S. Higuera St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

**Sat., Nov. 8th, 8:30 a.m. Ragged Point to Mt. Mars Hike.** Twelve-mile, very strenuous hike, 2400 ft gain, in southern Big Sur area, with ridge views. Poison oak likely near the summit. A shorter hike possible since we retrace route on return. Bring lunch, sturdy shoes, and water. Meet at Washburn Day Use Area, 2 miles north of Cambria. Rain cancels. Leader: Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317.

**Sat.-Sun., Nov. 15th-16th. Explore and Serve in Carrizo Plains.** Saturday, work to remove sections of fence to enable pronghorn antelope movement. Sunday activity is group choice



—either in Caliente Range or tour of popular viewings areas in the plains. This is an opportunity to combine car camping, day hiking, exploring, and service in a relatively unknown wilderness. Leader: Craig Deutsche, 310-477-6670 or craig.deutsche@gmail.com. CNRCC Desert Committee.

**Sun., Nov. 16th, 10 a.m. Coon Creek Loop Hike.** Three-mile hike, 450 ft. gain in Montana de Oro State Park for ocean, mountain, canyon, and creek views. Meet at Coon Creek parking lot, 3.8 miles after park entrance. Leader: Vicki Marchenko, 528-5567 or vmarchenko57@gmail.com.

**Sun., Nov. 23rd, 10 a.m., Sycamore Springs Trekking-Pole Hike.** Polecats dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes to model benefits of using trekking poles effectively. This hike is 2 miles, 600 ft. elevation change. Meet near entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Dr.. Need to confirm beforehand with leader: David Georgi, 458-5575 or hikingpoles@gmail.com.

**Sat., Dec. 6th, 8 a.m. Fernandez Semiloop Hike.** Hike on a remote trail northeast of Pozo maintained by the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers. This is a moderately strenuous 11-mile, 1400 ft. gain, outing with some off-trail walking to follow a creek. Poison oak may be present along trail. Bring lunch and water. Meet in front of Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita. Rain cancels or

**Above 12,000 feet** Bill and Diana Waycott at 11,500 ft. above Lower Palisade Lake on the John Muir Trail on Sept. 27, preparing to cross Mather Pass (12,200 ft.) in the background.

postpones. Information: Leader, Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317.

**Sat., Dec. 6th, 9 a.m. Cerro Alto Hike.** Join us on our 7th anniversary, seven-mile hike, moderate difficulty and 1700 ft. gain, to Cerro Alto summit, leaving from Cerro Alto campground, descending past the old Sweetwater mine via the Boy Scout trail. Great views of morros and coastline from peak. Reach the campground via Hwy 41, 8 miles east of Morro Bay and 12 miles west of Atascadero. Day Use fee of \$5 at campground parking area, unless you have Adventure or Golden Age Pass. We will probably go for eats at Taco Temple afterwards. Rain cancels. Info: Leader, Chuck Tribbey, 441-7597.

**Sun., Dec. 7th, 10 a.m. Valley and Islay Creek Hike.** Two-mile, 300 ft. gain, loop hike, with mountain and creek views in Montana de Oro State Park. Meet near Spooner Ranch House, about 2.5 miles past park entrance. Information: Leader, Vicki Marchenko, 528-5567 or vmarchenko57@gmail.com.

**Fri., Dec. 12th, 7 p.m. Victorian Christmas City Walk in San Luis Obispo.** Easy, guided stroll past 15 holiday-lit houses in the Old Town Historic District to learn of the festive Christmas customs, events, and locales of the 1890s. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet in front of St. Stephen's Church, corner of Nipomo and Pismo Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

**Sat., Dec. 13th, 9 a.m. Gibraltar Reservoir and Canyon Hike.** Moderate six-mile rt hike from Paradise Rd. to Gibraltar Dam in loop to see fall colors, with option to continue to Sunbird Quicksilver Mines for another 6 miles. See Los Padres mt. vistas, river pools, and rock formations. Creek crossings possible if previous rainfall. Bring hat, water, sunscreen, and dress in layers for changing weather. From Hwy 101, take Rt. 154., left on Paradise Rd. for 10 miles to end. Meet in restroom area near parking lot entrance. \$5 Los Padres Day Use fee. Leader: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792, 264-4527, or kenya683@msn.com.

**Sat., Dec. 20th, 8:30 a.m. Montana de Oro SP Plant Walk.** Moderately strenuous, nine-mile, 1,000 ft. gain, hike to explore some of the hidden beauty of this park. We will see diverse plant communities: riparian, oak woodland, and coastal sage scrub. Meeting at the Visitor's Center, we will walk to Spooner's Cove, hike along Islay Canyon, up the Barranca trail, then take the Hazard Peak trail to the top and back to Visitor's Center. Duration about 4 hrs. Bring water, snacks, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hat, and jacket. Rain or threat of rain cancels. Leader: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.



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



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*For further information contact:*  
**Joe Morris**  
 Sierra Club  
 (805) 549-0355  
 dpj1942@earthlink.net



John Meade, a member of the Sierra Club, in Yosemite

**Sun., Dec. 21st, 5 p.m. Victorian Christmas City Walk in San Luis Obispo.** Easy, guided stroll past 15 holiday-lit houses in the Old Town Historic District to learn of the festive Christmas customs, events, and locales of the 1890s. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet in front of St. Stephen's Church, corner of Nipomo and Pismo Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

**Mon.-Fri., Dec. 29th-Jan. 2nd Holiday Service in Carrizo Plains.** Celebrate the year's end and offer service to the pronghorn antelope in this National Monument, lying between SLO and Bakersfield, and grassland home to also tule elk, kit fox, and a wide avian variety. Welcome hike on Dec. 29th, then 2 1/2 days of service modifying barbed wire fencing, then full day of hiking and exploring planned. Use of accommodations at one of the old ranch houses is included. \$30 covers four dinners and breakfast on New Year's Eve, but limited to 12 participants. For info, contact Leader: Craig Deutsche, 310-477-6670 or craig.deutsche@gmail.com.

*Activities sponsored by other organizations*

**Sat., Nov. 1st and December 6th, 9:30 a.m. Citizens' Climate Lobby meeting** at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2201 Lawton Ave, SLO. Join us and learn what you can do to slow climate change and make a difference in our community. Become a climate activist and part of the solution to the most pressing issue of our time. For information email: [citizensclimatelobbyslo@gmail.com](mailto:citizensclimatelobbyslo@gmail.com).

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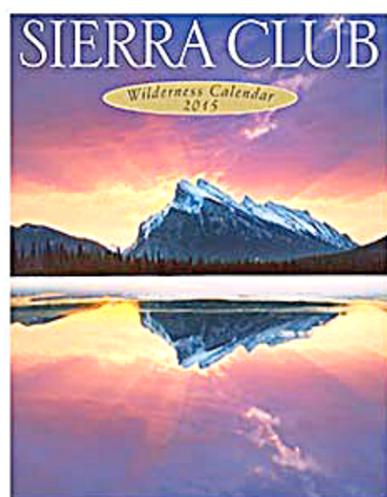
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