



SIERRA  
CLUB

- 40 Years on the SLO Coast -  
Santa Lucia Chapter  
1968-2008

October 2008  
Volume 45 No. 9

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### General Meeting

#### Green Jobs Now!

Friday, Oct. 24  
St. Stephens Church,  
SLO  
- see page 2



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# SANTA LUCIAN



Protecting and  
Preserving the  
Central Coast

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

## Election 2008

Sierra Club ballot recommendations and endorsements



50 percent by 2030 would create tens of thousands of jobs in growing industries while at the same time saving the amount Americans would have to spend on energy bills.

Other high points of Senator Obama's environmental platform:

- \* Opposes destructive oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and on fragile coasts.

- \* Opposes the storage of nuclear waste at the Yucca Mountain repository being built in southern Nevada.

- \* Promises to restore environmental protections that the Bush administration rolled back by executive order.

- \* Calls for tougher pollution

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### National races

#### President: Barak Obama.

The stakes could not be higher. We believe Senator Obama is the leader who will put America on the path to a clean energy economy that will create and keep millions of jobs, spur innovation and opportunity, make us a more secure nation, and help us solve global warming.

Since June, Sierra Club has conducted a massive mobilization of thousands of members around the country for the Obama campaign—on the phone, on the ground, on the airwaves and online, spreading the message that as President, Barack Obama will lead America into the clean energy future and that we support his plan to solve both our economic challenges and the challenge of global warming at the same time.

Senator Obama has presented a bold and comprehensive plan for addressing climate change that relies on what the world's scientists have told us needs to be done. His plan includes a "cap and auction" system that would cut our carbon dioxide emissions 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. It requires that polluters pay for the global warming pollution they emit, and invests the money generated from the credits polluters would have to buy into clean energy, green jobs and aid for the lowest-income Americans affected by higher energy costs. His plan calls for 25 percent of U.S. electricity to come from renewable sources by 2025, and for improving energy efficiency in the U.S.

### State measures

**YES on Proposition 1A.** This measure would provide \$9.95 billion dollars to begin the development of the 800-mile High-Speed Rail system and to make improvements to existing rail networks. Building High-Speed Rail will promote sustainable land use, significantly reduce global warming pollution, and get commuters off congested roads and out of crowded airports. While it is an extremely expensive project, adding the same capacity by expanding highways and airports would cost at least twice as much.

The fully completed high-speed train system would run between San Diego and Sacramento, with connections to the Bay Area. Trains would run at speeds of over 220 miles per hour, zipping from San Francisco's Transbay Terminal and Los Angeles' Union Station in two and a half hours. High-Speed Rail will help to achieve the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals by replacing car and airplane trips with rail trips. By 2030, when the whole system is in place, rail

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### Local races

**Atascadero, City Council: Pam Heatherington.** Heatherington supports using all eligible TDA funds for public transit, being proactive in



seeking Transportation Enhancement Funds and Environmental Enhancement Funds, "Safe Routes to School" and Mitigation funds for bicycle and pedestrian circulation, and conditioning projects to provide for safe non-motorized circulation. Heatherington has long acted on her belief that the health of our citizens is connected to the health of our environment and for that reason has served on the Sierra Club's National Toxics Committee, chaired the Santa Lucia Chapter's Conservation Committee, served as executive director of the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo for five years, currently serves on both the San Luis Obispo Health Commission and the Atascadero Planning Commission, and acts as treasurer for the San Luis Bay Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation. She is one of the best and most effective public interest advocates in the county.

**Grover Beach, City Council: Karen Bright.** A member of the Air Pollution Control Board, Bright supports incentives for use of alternative transportation options and energy conservation. She is also in favor of increased water conservation efforts by residents and businesses in light of

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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.

**Add your voice to protect the planet. Join the Sierra Club today.**

Join today and receive a **FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!**



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

# General Meeting

Are you ready for a clean energy economy that will create millions of green-collar jobs and help us fight global warming? On Saturday, September 27, the Sierra Club, 1Sky, Green for All and the We campaign co-sponsored a national **Green Jobs Now** day of action to build an inclusive green economy, strong enough to lift people out of poverty and solve the climate crisis. Join us in supporting this effort!

The work to create green jobs is a critical part of our fight to build a new clean energy economy and this is a great opportunity to get involved locally.

Get the update and engage with volunteers inspired by the emphasis on economic and environmental justice in a new clean energy economy.



**7 p.m., Friday, October 24**  
**St. Stephens Episcopal Church**  
**1334 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo**  
**- Pismo Street entrance,**  
**parking lot off Pismo**

## Blame Self, Give Up

When "personal responsibility" is the easy out

Last spring, shortly after the Santa Lucia Chapter's European Smart Energy Study tour group returned from our exploration of the ways in which Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and the U.K. are transitioning from high-carbon, fossil-fueled economies into low- (close to no-) carbon, renewable energy societies, we got together at a chapter leader's house to compare notes.

Most of the study tour alumni were enthusiastic over what they had seen and heard, and were excited by the promise that the European models for high efficiency, low consumption and clean power held for application on the central coast.

Except for one person. She said little or nothing until encouraged to do so. When she finally spoke, she said, "How many of you rode a bicycle here today?" No hands went up. She sighed, and said, "See, that's why I'm not optimistic. I don't see people changing their ways any time soon. We're stuck in our habits. So I don't think we're going to have much luck trying to put these great ideas into practice."

It was a striking sentiment, made more so by the speaker's extensive background in land use planning. She was intimately involved in local planning decisions determining growth, density, zoning, traffic patterns, water use, and the degree to which environmental protections are put in place and enforced hereabouts. We were all sitting in the living room of a house in the Edna Valley, which was sitting on former ag land that was subdivided and built up decades ago. We were miles away from any urban core, unreachable by public transportation. Most of the people in the room lived nowhere near where they work, because they can't afford to. No one had ridden a bicycle there that day because, unless you were in training for the Tour de France, it was simply out of the question. And it had all been planned – poorly planned – to be that way.

A few months earlier, a Farm to School Conference had been held in SLO. Farm to School programs connect school districts and their cafeterias with local, farm fresh foods. The room was packed with dozens of representatives from Southern California school districts. Rod Taylor, Director of Nutrition Services for the Riverside Unified School District, was the most galvanizing speaker of the day. He blazed with the urgency of the need to improve the diets of school-children as they increasingly fall victim to epidemics of obesity and diabetes. His outrage at the statistics was palpable ("A generation is going to see their children die before them. We're living through this right now"), because he knew the answer, knew how simple it is, and how hard it is to convince bureaucracies to put it into practice: A salad bar — in every school, as an option, every lunch period, for every kid. That's what the conference was largely about, the primary basis for and outcome of the farm-to-school concept: Salad. Salad as policy.

Sandra Curwood, Taylor's counterpart at Ventura USD, with thirty years of experience ramming healthy local foods down the throats of recalcitrant administrators and into school lunch programs, summed it up: "People don't do things because they're good ideas," she said; "they do them because there's a policy."

Or as architect David Sargent observed in our last issue, commenting on the ghastly long-term mistakes in our patterns of land use, "People commute 200 miles because the roads have been built that allow them to do that."

How can you stop driving that way, and your kids stop eating that way? "Real change—steep declines in per-capita consumption of energy and raw materials – will occur when Americans are allowed to choose lifestyles that initiate low-consumption patterns of behavior," writes journalist

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## SANTA LUCIAN

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*Outings, events, and more!*

# Defending Estuary

Water Board and Fish & Game must not let Morro Bay's State Marine Reserve fall through the cracks

When the California Mens Colony spilled 20,000 gallons of raw sewage into the Morro Bay Estuary last January – and toxic levels of chlorine and other chemicals for many months before and after that – it wasn't just another case of the waste water treatment plant with the worst record in the county for sewage spills behaving true to form, to be fined again and forgotten until next time. The exact location in the area where the CMC spills occurred was a designated "not take" State Marine Reserve, part of the new Central Coast Network of Marine Protected Areas created by the Fish and Game Commission in September 2007.

That meant this was not just another water quality violation, but a violation of the Marine Life Protection Act, which holds that marine reserves must be maintained "to the extent practicable in an undisturbed and unpolluted state."

How to prosecute or enforce against

such violations? Nobody knew. There is as yet no procedure for the review and assessment of liability for violation of a State Marine Reserve, nor is there a mechanism for the prosecution of violations of a Marine Protected Area under the Marine Life Protection Act.

Correspondence and several discussions between Santa Lucia Chapter staff and the Department of Fish and Game's Deputy Manager for Marine Protected Areas ensued over several months on the issue of the precedent-setting nature of a sewage spill into a Marine Reserve and what do to do about it. The Chapter then sent a letter to the Regional Water Quality Control Board recommending the Water Board establish a "Water Quality Protection Area" as an overlay for State Marine Reserves, "an allowable multiple complementary designation." We noted that "the State Water Board has identified all MPA's as Critical Coastal Areas, prioritized

for restoration efforts. This could be used as the basis for a framework in which to establish stronger guidelines and protocols and add the violation of a Marine Protected Area as a factor to consider when assessing a discharger's liability." We concluded that "The Central Coast MPA network was established as a pilot program for the rest of the state, and potentially the nation. The Central Coast should thus provide the model for enforcement of MPA violations."

At their Sept. 5 meeting to assess liability of the CMC, the Water Board discussed the Sierra Club's suggestion of multiple designations. Executive Director Roger Briggs was dismissive, saying that there are plenty of protective or restoration designations but insufficient understanding of how they could work together. Board director Monica Hunter replied with the pointed question "If we can't enforce in designated areas, how are we going to do it where there is no

designation?," and suggested that it would behoove the board to consider how those designations might be integrated into an ecosystem management approach.

Hunter made the point that the Water Board is the only entity in a position to protect wildlife and habitat from water pollution, and that the CMC spill was not the only spill that is going to happen in a Marine Reserve.

The Water Board agreed to look into the issue of impacts on aquatic species, not just public health, when assessing liability for violations of clean water standards. Lower levels of pollution can cause significant harm to aquatic species, a much more sensitive threshold than human health.

Meanwhile, the Department of Fish and game has decided to start linking other resource management designations to Marine Protected Areas. It's a start.



The State Marine Reserve in the Morro Bay Estuary

## A Carbon-Free, Nuclear-Free Energy Future

Yes, we can! And if you don't think so, here's where you need to be

On October 29, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, in association with the Empower Poly Coalition, provides an evening of presentations and discussion with distinguished authors and energy experts S. David Freeman and Arjun Makhijani. Anyone who believes we can't cut our carbon emissions enough to beat global climate change, or that we need nuclear power to pull it off, must hear these men.



Freeman

In his new book, *Winning Our Energy Independence: An Energy Insider Shows How*, Freeman's

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## An American Revival Hits SLO!

Diane Wilson's back in town

What happens when a "Holy Roller" meets the "Holy Road?" You can find out for yourself when Diane Wilson, renowned environmentalist, author and co-founder of Code Pink, makes an appearances in San Luis Obispo to read from her latest book, *Holy Roller*, on Sunday, October 19, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Chumash Auditorium on the Cal Poly Campus.

Joining Diane for a rollicking evening will be progressive performing artists Lizzie West and Baba Buffalo, and their Holy Road musical tour cabaret.

In her new memoir, Wilson, a Texas Gulf Coast shrimper and the author of the highly acclaimed "An Unreasonable Woman," takes readers back to her childhood in rural Texas. Wilson got religion from Brother Dynamite, an ex-con who found Jesus in a baloney sandwich and handled masses of squirming poisonous snakes under the protection of the Holy Ghost. *Holy Roller* is the prequel to Wilson's first book, telling the story of a fierce little girl who will grow up to become

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## 2009 Sierra Club Calendars



They're here, they're gorgeous, you have to have one for your desk, one for your wall, and a great many more for friends and family! And when you buy direct from the Chapter, you support our conservation work in San Luis Obispo County.

wall calendar: \$12.50  
desk calendar: \$13.50  
To order, call 543-7051

## Give Up

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David Villano in the article "A Future of Less" in the September issue of *Miller-McCune*. (The title is optimistic; the article is an exploration of ways out of the trap of over-consumption.)

The Farm to School conference participants did not urge the abandonment of farm-to-school lunch programs, despite the failure of children to go out on their own and get food that's good for them, toting the ingredients for their own personal salad bar to school every day. Aren't they stuck in their habits?

The answer is "no," and that's why the leadership of the Santa Lucia Chapter is in the midst of a five-part series of suggestions for the incoming County Board of Supervisors, appearing monthly in *New Times* through January. These opinion pieces are essentially extended memos outlining some changes we'd like to see implemented in this county, the kind that will preserve our agricultural land, create affordable housing, encourage locally grown organic food production, improve our electoral process, and get

us to that future of clean, renewable local power that we have seen first-hand across the Atlantic, and which we know to be more than possible because whole geographical regions very similar to our own are doing more than debating whether it can be done. They have the policies in place that are actually making it happen.

People don't do things because they're good ideas. They do those things because there's a policy.

## Nuke Free

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message is that enough renewable energy is available to us to wean ourselves from foreign oil, coal and nuclear power to create a sustainable future for our planet. Trained as both an engineer and a lawyer, Freeman speaks—with humor and frankness—from half a century of experience working in the energy industry and as a federal energy policymaker, including top positions at the New York Power Authority, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Arjun Makhijani is President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research in Takoma Park, Maryland. He earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences at the University of California, Berkeley in 1972, specializing in nuclear fusion. A recognized authority on energy issues, Dr. Makhijani is the author and co-author of numerous reports and books on energy and environment related issues. He was the principal author of the first study of the energy efficiency potential of the U.S. economy published in 1971. He is the author of *Carbon-Free and Nuclear-Free: A Roadmap for U.S. Energy Policy* (2007).

California is uniquely poised to

## Appropriate Technology Campaign

# Let the Rain Come Down

Music, pizza, beer, live entertainment and descriptions of low impact development projects in San Luis Obispo County were on the program on Sept. 2nd and 3rd when keynote speaker and rainwater harvesting expert Brad Lancaster came to Los Osos and Morro Bay at the invitation of the Appropriate Technology Campaign.

SLO Green Build, the San Luis Bay Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club partnered with the Morro Bay National Estuary Program to sponsor the educational fair, raffle, slide show, lecture and book signing with Lancaster, who -- literally -- wrote the book(s) on rainwater catchment.

Harvesting rainwater was once a worldwide technology, but was replaced by pipes, canals, and sprinklers—inefficient and wasteful strategies that are starting to run dry. In his new book *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond* and its follow-up volume, *Water-Harvesting Earthworks*, Lancaster shares techniques for designing landscapes that passively harvest water using brilliant, low-tech, regenerative systems to hydrate the land and maximize the benefit that water brings to plants, animals and people.

Lancaster is a permaculture teacher, designer, consultant and co-founder of Desert Harvesters ([DesertHarvesters.org](http://DesertHarvesters.org)) who has taught programs for the ECOSA Institute, Columbia University, University of Arizona, Prescott College and Audubon Expeditions. He has helped design integrated water harvesting and permaculture systems for homeowners and gardeners, including the Tucson Audubon Simpson Farm restoration site, the Milagro and Stone Curves co-housing projects.

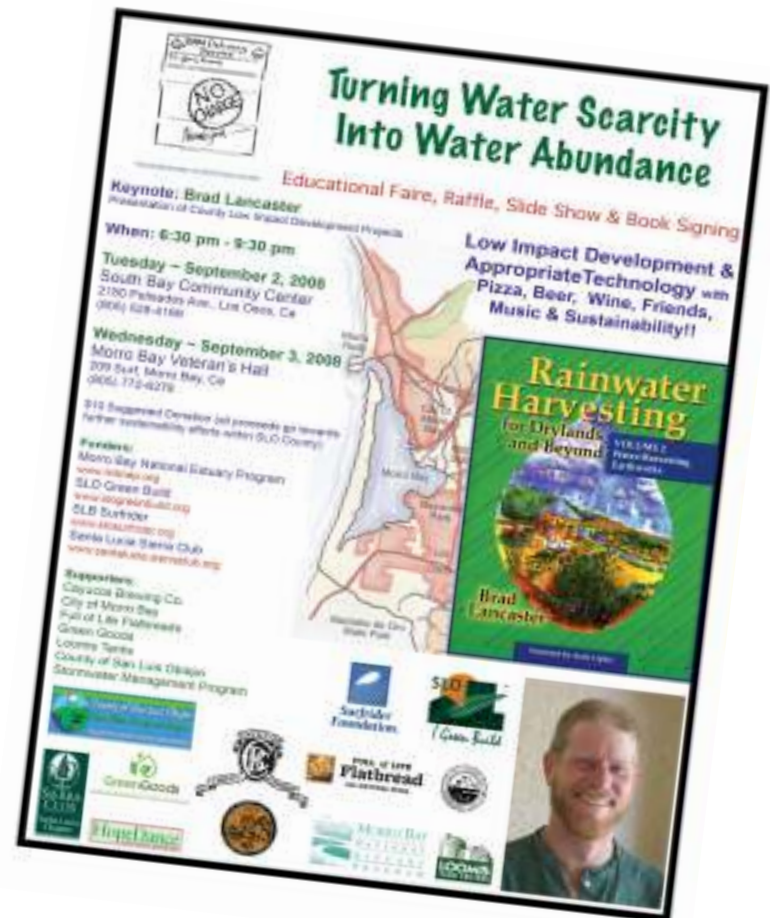
Check it all out at: [www.harvestingwater.com](http://www.harvestingwater.com)



Makhijani

become a national—or international—leader in renewable energy. The state hosted many of the innovative technologies that first put astronauts on the moon, and could be the launching pad for a similar Apollo project for sustainable energy.

This event starts at 6 p.m. and is free to the public. For those interested in having a personal discussion with the authors, a reception featuring light refreshments will be held prior to the Cal Poly event. The reception will be in a private home at 217 Westmont Ave, San Luis Obispo, and will take place from 3:30 to 5:30. Admission to the party is \$30. For reservations or more information, contact Rochelle Becker or David



Surfrider's Mary Fullwood (left) welcomed Lancaster to the Morro Bay Vets Hall. At right, an enthusiastic audience member tries out the water-saving goods at the South Bay Community Center event in Los Osos.

Weisman at 858-337-2703 or 805-704-1810.

More information at: [www.a4nr.org](http://www.a4nr.org) and [http://empowerpoly.calpoly.edu/Empower\\_Poly\\_Coalition.html](http://empowerpoly.calpoly.edu/Empower_Poly_Coalition.html)

## Wilson

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"An Unreasonable Woman," willing to take on Big Industry and Big Polluters. In the process, Diane becomes a keynote speaker at the Bioneers conferences, winner of the Blue Planet Award, and an outspoken defender of the earth.

Lizzie & Baba are progressive performance artists and social activists. Their 2008 release, *The Tumbleweed Cabaret*, is an interactive peace revival that is bringing hope to people across America. Their hit, "19 Miles to Baghdad" has been heard frequently on "Democracy Now."

Books and CDs will be available. This event is sponsored by the Cal Poly Progressive Student Alliance

(PSA).

Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Event held at Chumash Auditorium, McPhee Student Union, (located at the corner of Grand and Perimeter Roads) Cal Poly. PSA, Sierra Club members and Students with I.D. admitted free; others—suggested donation \$20 but all are welcome. Free parking in lots A-1 and H-4.

For more information, visit [www.a4nr.org](http://www.a4nr.org)



Wilson

# SLO GE Free 2008 Corn Survey

By Jesse Arnold

Genetically engineered Bt corn was developed by the Monsanto Corporation. It is created by inserting into the DNA of the corn a gene from a bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* which produces a toxin that kills the corn earworm. Bt corn is registered with the EPA as a pesticide, but approved by the Food and Drug Administration for human consumption and no labeling is required.

From May through July, SLO GE Free conducted a survey of all the growers of sweet corn we could find in San Luis Obispo County. The results are reported in the grid below. SLO GE Free thanks all those who responded to the poll.

Growing & Selling	Chaparral Gardens	Chase Farm	Chesebrough Farm	Clark Valley Farm	Huasna Valley Farm	Jack Creek Farm	Mt.Olive Organic Farm	Overly Growers	Park Organics	Rutiz Farms
Are you growing genetically engineered (GMO) corn, also known as Bt corn or Roundup Ready Corn?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
If you are growing genetically engineered corn, are you labeling your corn as genetically engineered/GMO?										
Are you growing certified organic corn?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
If you are growing certified organic corn, are you labeling your corn certified organic?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes		No	
Do you sell your corn at retail?	Avila & Shell Beach markets	CSA Subscription Farm	Farm stand	Farmers markets & CSA	CSA	Farm stand	Farmers markets, Farm store		Farmers market	Farm stand
Contamination Concerns										
Are you aware that genetically engineered corn is being grown at two locations in San Luis Obispo County?	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Are you concerned that genetically engineered corn being grown in the County might contaminate your field or seeds?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Undecided	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

**Notes:** The Avila Valley Barn, owned by Dr. John DiVincenzo, did not respond to the survey. Dr. DiVincenzo has stated publicly that he grows genetically engineered Bt sweet corn. In 2007, at the urging of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Avila Valley Barn started labeling the Monsanto Bt corn that it sells as "Our own G.E. corn."

Cal Poly is growing Bt corn this year and plans to sell it at the San Luis Obispo Farmers Market. Consumers should ask of any corn coming from Cal Poly: Is it genetically engineered? If it is not, can Cal Poly guarantee that it has not been contaminated by GE corn grown at Cal Poly?

Hayashi & Sons of Arroyo Grande did not respond to the survey or phone calls. On August 7, I learned from Robert Hayashi that he is continuing to sell genetically engineered Bt corn and not labelling it. As far as I know, this puts Hayashi in the lonely position of being the only person in San Luis Obispo County selling GE corn at his farm stand at his farm stand and at farmers markets without labeling it. If you think Mr. Hayashi should label his GE corn, you can tell him so at the next farmers market or at his farm stand, or call his office at 489-2595. For more information, go to our website at [www.slogefrees.org](http://www.slogefrees.org).

# Too Many People

By Bill Denneen

Recently the unplanned pregnancy of an unwed 17-year-old has been in the news. This is a common event, except that the mother of this gal is against sex-education, against Planned Parenthood, against contraception, against evolution, against abortion and for "abstinence only" until marriage—and she has a high potential of becoming the first female President.

Since the Bush administration has come into power, it has spent over \$1.5 billion in taxpayer money on their abstinence-only sex-education programs that studies have shown are not only ineffective but counterproductive. Planned Parenthood is an advocate for and provider of real-world sex education and reproductive health care.

When I was born, there were less than 2 billion humanoids on this small fragile planet—we are now approaching 7 billion. In other words in just one person's lifetime (mine) we have added 5,000,000,000 more people. This is a "population explosion," which in nature is always followed by a "population collapse"—basic biology.

A century ago, the average life expectancy was 40. Now it is 80. There will be an increase in the death rate unless we lower the birth rate. Europe in general now has a birth rate lower than the death rate—not so for the U.S. & most of the world.

When I first came to California, there were about 12 million people which became 27 million in 1986 and which is now approaching 40 million. Drive the roads, sit in traffic, drive to L.A., go to Pismo Beach on a holiday, recall once rural Nipomo Mesa—too many people & too many cars. I call it "losangelification"

Italy is 97% Catholic yet it's birth rate is so low Italians are not even replacing themselves. The Pope issues "rules" against contraception and abortion but educated Italians aren't listening. As education increases, birth rates decrease.

Meanwhile, back to California, which is adding a half million more people each year, mostly through immigration. My suggestion is condom dispensers in all restrooms and free vasectomies to any man who wants one. It is a simple operation. Planned Parenthood offers it for free for men who can't afford it.

Social change is slow, while technological change (e.g. cell phones) is rapid. It has taken so long to even talk about contraception and sexuality. Over half the pregnancies in our country are accidents. Every child has a right to be born wanted, planned & loved.

Check out the Sierra Club Population & the Environment Program at [www.sierraclub.org/population](http://www.sierraclub.org/population)

## Local Races

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the City's year-old Stage One Water Shortage Conservation Alert, passed when the city logged 44% of anticipated normal rainfall. Noting the frequency with which trees are removed because "they're in the way" rather than giving thought to "how do we keep them?" – Bright helped save an 80-year old Cypress downtown that was otherwise for the axe. She is determined to initiate a "heritage tree" ordinance.



**Los Osos CSD: Alon Perlman.** With experience as a research and clinical microbiologist, project manager and consultant, Perlman knows how to develop assays and interpret water quality data, write



legal contracts, report budgets and resolve crises. Elected to the Los Osos Citizens Advisory Council in 2006 and with experience on multiple LOCAC and LOCSO committees, Perlman is a constant presence at LOCSO meetings and the relevant meetings of the County, the Technical Advisory Committee and Regional Water Board. In addition to the fact that he's almost frighteningly well qualified for the job, we like it that Perlman is looking several years down the road to the hand-off of a completed wastewater treatment system from the County to the CSD, and is alert to the potential for additional services or levels of processing and water reclamation. Perlman has advocated that the LOCSO implement a tiered water use rate schedule as a crucial economic disincentive to consumption. They decided to go with an across-the-board increase instead. They were wrong and Perlman was right.

**Los Osos CSD: Karen Venditti.** As a member of the County's Los Osos Technical Advisory Committee for the Los Osos wastewater treatment project, Venditti is a tireless critical analyst of information and emphasizes the necessity of triple bottom-line sustainability and the importance of engaging the public in the process. She wants to see the upper aquifer treated to meet potable standards, allowing reduction of pumping from the lower aquifer, and water re-use as a core component of the wastewater project, including the use of treated wastewater effluent on crops instead of potable water. We like Venditti's commitment to restructuring rates to reward water conservation and discourage overuse; provide cost incentives for people to install drought-resistant landscaping and drip irrigation; provide access to the tools and technologies to reduce, reuse, and recycle water; seek grant

funding for rainwater harvesting and gray water systems; and work with the county and state to enact codes that allow for greater use of gray water.

**Morro Bay City Council: Noah Smukler.** Smukler is a mainstay of the local Surfrider chapter, a natural organizer and champion of the urban forest and public transportation, with an encyclopedic grasp of water



conservation, treatment and sustainability issues. His resume includes founder of the Estero Bay Community Garden, coordinator for the School Recycling and composting program, restoration volunteer on the Spencer's Market Pocket Park, and Vice Chair of the Morro Bay Public Works Advisory Board.

**Morro Bay City Council: Roger Ewing.** Ewing's 15 years of protecting the urban forest and support of the efforts to end once-through cooling at the Morro Bay power plant should commend his candidacy to the attention of Morro Bay Sierra Club members. He's informed, intelligent and experienced, as well as articulate and diplomatic, with the courage to act on behalf of the environment and the welfare of the people of Morro Bay, not just talk about it. Ewing almost ran two years ago and decided against it; voters should take full advantage of their opportunity now.

**Paso Robles, Mayor: Gary Nemeth.** Nemeth began re-imagining Paso's downtown core in 2003, and the document he circulated then, "Rethinking Downtown," looks a lot like what became Paso's Town Center Specific Plan. Nemeth advocated for a "compact high-density area" in which "local and regional businesses combine a potent blend making our downtown a major destination for the entire region.... A strong network of public and private open spaces (streets, sidewalks, public parks, plazas, passageways, alleys and courtyards) that create a socially active and pedestrian-oriented downtown core should be emphasized." Above all, "land use, urban design, and circulation policies within downtown should be aimed at ensuring compatibility of scale and use with the surrounding area." Nemeth made sure that bikeways and nature trails were included in both the Town Center and Uptown plans. He's clearly the man to preside over the cutting-edge sustainable strategies proposed by Moule & Polyzoides. We encourage Paso's voters to give him the job.

**Pismo Beach, Mayor: Bill Rabenaldt.** Ten years on the City Council has served as Rabenaldt's road to Damascus in terms of his evolving position on development, to the point where he now sharply disagrees "with cities and our county giving away the farm

in favor of development." He was part of the successful fight to deny annexation for the aquifer-busting Los Robles del Mar project. He actually gave a damn when the trees of the rapidly diminishing Shell Beach heron rookery started falling with accelerating frequency for the convenience and ocean views of property owners on the bluffs. But in terms of qualifications for the Mayor's job, this is the one that tops the list: The current occupant and the rest of the City Council censured Rabenaldt for doing the right thing. He communicated with California Coastal Commission staff in an attempt to resolve Pismo's downtown paid parking issue. (Apparently realizing this was problematic as a basis for censure, the Council dropped this charge after early media reports and substituted a mildly risible e-mail that Rabenaldt sent to a city staffer as the basis for censure.) Memo to the Pismo Beach City Council:



*More communication with the Coastal Commission, not less, should be your priority when proposing projects that may not comply with the Coastal Act. It's how you avoid additional expense and project re-design. Fortunately, Rabenaldt seems to know this.*

**Port San Luis Harbor Commission: Stew Jenkins.** During his ten years on the Commission in the 1980s, Jenkins was instrumental in beating back offshore oil, fostering the work of Central Coast Salmon Enhancement, and acquiring the Point San Luis Lighthouse for restoration. Now on the Board of Directors of the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers, Jenkins was part of the public advocacy effort that made it possible for the Coastal Commission to require PG&E to open – and for the way-too-reluctant Harbor Commission to accept – some public access to the Pecho Coast Trail. Jenkins will provide the leadership the Harbor Commission needs to achieve additional public access and protection of these important coastal areas. He'll also push to open the long overdue camping area at Harford Terrace, restore its wildlife habitat and reduce the siltation impacting local fisheries and harbor operations.

**San Luis Obispo, City Council: John Ashbaugh.** One of the brightest lights on the SLO City Planning Commission, Ashbaugh knows what "smart growth" really means. He has made the case that vehicle replacement purchases for *all* City vehicles should target fuel-efficient hybrids, biodiesel, and battery-powered vehicles as they become available, argued for every building the city owns being reviewed for incorporation of solar PV arrays or other means of reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and a requirement that all federal and state revenues *intended* for use by local transit systems actually be used for transit purposes. He would not allow the city's water supply to be allocated to expansion areas completely outside the city's General Plan, as the current City Council appears ready to do in blithely green-lighting annexation of

the outer Foothill Blvd/LOVR area. A thirty-year member of the Sierra Club and a leader of the Santa Lucia Chapter's Executive Committee, Ashbaugh is one of the most obvious choices on the ballot for our SLO members.



**San Luis Obispo, City Council: Jan Marx.** Former Councilwoman Marx obviously has the experience for the job and, along with John Ashbaugh, is our best bet to replace the voice for environmental advocacy we will be losing with the departure of Councilwoman Mulholland, maintaining representation for that constituency on the Council, and, between the two of them and a swing vote or two, giving the Council the green majority it needs to make good on the City's existing commitments to sustainability. In her previous stint on the Council, Marx spearheaded the City's wildly successful Recycled Water program. She is keen on seeing to it that the Council puts more energy and resources into actually



implementing that agreement, and will see to it that its policies, and the Ahwahnee Principles, are embedded in the Land Use and Circulation Elements Update. She notes that the City has a long way to go on completing its greenbelt, and she will seek more funding to complete it as soon as possible. The Sierra Club strongly recommends that our SLO members vote for Marx and Ashbaugh to fill the two open seats on the City Council.

**Action Short of Endorsement**  
*Candidates who do not meet all criteria to warrant a full Sierra Club endorsement but may warrant your consideration.*

**Atascadero City Council: Bob Kelley.** While Kelley participated in the general plan amendment that would permit a somewhat reduced Wal-Mart — and he opposes the local ballot measure that would block Super-Center-sized big boxes — he shows an inclination to listen to Sierra Club's position on other issues. Kelley supports energy conservation and solar and wind power, and would like to see an initiative put forward that would reward an initial investment in alternative energy with tax incentives. He also suggests that he would try to find ways to use redevelopment funds to increase bike paths and pedestrian pathways.

# Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

## “The Tribune Endorses Paul Brown,” editorial opinion of The Tribune, Sept. 21, 2008

**Summary:** The *Tribune* wants you to vote for SLO City Councilman Paul Brown for his “fresh outlook” and “practical approach to governance.”

The *Tribune* would be right to cite Brown’s position on Measure J and the lawsuit that punched its ticket as an election year issue... if they were advising voters on reasons to turn Councilman Brown out of office. Otherwise, it’s hard to fathom why they would focus attention on his position on the Measure J lawsuit. At the time he made that statement he didn’t know that Measure J was illegal and should not have been allowed to be on a ballot. Writing after the fact of the court’s ruling, the *Tribune* has no such excuse. The General Plan-busting proposal by Ernie Dalidio’s development consortium tried to carve out a fiefdom by the 101 and make them lords of their own land use category by usurping the authority of government agencies and handing it to voters. As everyone should know by now, that was against the law. The Dalidio property now has a chance of being developed in accordance with the policies of the General Plan, for which fact SLO residents owe eternal thanks to Citizens for Planning Responsibly and ECOSLO for challenging Measure J, and no thanks whatsoever to Councilman Brown. His statement on the subject, cited by the *Trib* to show that he “studies the issues” is evidence of cluelessness about fundamental land use issues and rules of governance.

That fact, and Brown’s vote to cancel the plan to turn part of Mitchell Park into a community garden and pave it over for a parking lot instead, at a cost of \$20,000 per parking space, should be sufficient grounds for SLO voters to send him back to private life.

... he works hard, studies the issues, then explains his positions clearly and candidly. An example: In a Letter to the Editor, he issued this public chiding to the group that sued the county over Measure J, the Dalidio initiative, “Quit picking at this contentious scab and let this wound heal!”



## “A wish list for the new board,” editorial opinion of The Tribune, Jun. 8, 2008.

**Summary:** Noting that there will be “a green majority on the Board of Supervisors for the first time in many years” when it convenes in January, the *Tribune* cautions the Supervisors to “rise above dogma” -- a caution, oddly enough, the *Tribune* never thought to make in the “many years” prior to now.



Be prepared to compromise and be willing to say no, at least occasionally, to a special interest group that supported your candidacy – be it the Sierra Club or the Home Builders.

Right-wing web surfers on the *Trib*'s website squeaked with joy when this posted there, beside themselves with delight

that the *Tribune*'s editors had called the Sierra Club a special interest. Alas for their happiness, words have meaning. The *Trib* here engages in an increasingly popular abuse of what was once a perfectly clear and useful term, an abuse the deliberate and purposeful origins of which the *Santa Lucian* has previously explored at length (“You Are Not a Special Interest,” May 2007).

A high summit of the attempt by special interests to reverse the meaning of the term so as to exclude themselves from it is on view at the website of COLAB (Coalition of Agriculture, Labor and Business), a confederation of industry lobbying shops spreading through California’s rural counties and currently looking to gain a foot-hold in North County as ABLECO. Here’s how they sum up their mission:

*The idea was that if business people testified at Board of Supervisor’s [sic] meetings and other various public hearings, it would serve as a counter-balance to the views put forth by special interest groups, including county staff.*

Translation: Businesses advocating the cancer cell model of growth and insisting on a right to pollute, in league with the developers-in-cowboy-hats crew, seeking to beat back environmental regulations and enrich their membership by shoving destructive proposals through the pipeline, are not special interests. Civil servants and the public – both of whom may occasionally speak up for the protection of resources and the public interest, thereby complicating the plans of COLAB/ABLECO — are.

The next time the *Tribune*'s editorial board calls the Sierra Club a “special interest,” we urge our members to ask them to get specific. Are we presumed to be funneling contributions to congressmen from snail darters and giant kangaroo rats? Contracting with Sequoias to put in a good word for them with the Forest Service? Soliciting slush funds from wetlands?

Our local news hounds know that details matter and they appreciate feedback that assists them in assuring accuracy in their reporting, so they’ll be glad to hear from you.

## “We must keep the Dunes under the county’s control,” editorial opinion of The Tribune, Sept. 7, 2008.

**Summary:** The *Tribune* has discovered another reason why the County should not sell the land it currently leases to State Parks at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area.



The county’s local coastal plan calls for the acreage to be managed as a vehicle-free buffer zone between the off-road recreation area and more ecologically sensitive land.... The two agencies have been locked in a power struggle over which plan takes precedence. Until we have some more definitive answers, we believe the county should retain ownership -- and control -- of this valuable property.

In January 2007, the Santa Lucia Chapter succeeded in overturning on appeal the Planning Director’s decision that the County’s sale of the

land would be “in conformity” with our General Plan. We then sued State Parks for ignoring the buffer designation in the Local Coastal Plan. Had we not done those things, not only would the *Tribune* never have known about the buffer zone or the conflict between State Parks’ management plan and the County’s Local Coastal Plan, the land would have been sold over a year ago as an unnoticed “consent agenda” item at the Board of Supervisors. In that January 2007 staff report, the policies that mentioned the buffer zone were deliberately omitted from an allegedly verbatim reprint of the relevant County policies, keeping the existence of the buffer designation from the Planning Commission when it was deliberating on the sale of the land. The *Tribune* has known the details of that incident for six months. They have never reported it.

And that, as Paul Harvey would say, is the rest of the story.

## National Races

continued from page 1

controls in concentrated animal-feeding operations (CAFOs).

\* Primary cosponsor of the Lead Poisoning Reduction Act, which aims to protect children from toxic lead poisoning.

Sierra Club was also an early backer of State Senator Barack Obama in the Democratic Primary of his run for the U.S. Senate, basing our endorsement on what was already his strong record of support for clean air, clean energy and wetlands protection.



### Congress, 23rd District: Lois Capps.

Congresswoman Capps continues to be our environmental champion in D.C. On Sept. 22, the House passed her bill to establish a

competitive program providing coastal states with federal matching funds to acquire sensitive coastal areas. The Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Act will make permanent the temporary funding program Capps was able to use to help secure federal funds for the land protection initiatives at Morro Bay Dunes and Piedras Blancas. The week before, she courageously voted against legislation that would weaken the ban on new offshore drilling within 200 miles of California's coast, saying: "I cannot in good conscience vote for this legislation. We just can't drill our way out of this mess because we simply don't have the resources."

"President Bush's failed energy policies have, to a great degree, brought us to this point. His relentless push to expand domestic drilling while only paying lip service to conservation and the development of alternative and renewable energy sources has been a complete failure."

Capps read the polls, disregarded them, and did the right thing.

## State Measures

continued from page 1

travel is anticipated to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions by up to 12 billion pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

Over the past four months, Sierra Club and other organizations have worked to put important safeguards into the original bond measure, including protections for the Grasslands Ecological Area, allowing bond funds to be spent on improvements in the Altamont corridor connecting the Bay Area to Modesto and Stockton, and strong financial accountability provisions. At its September 2008 meeting, the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board approved a goal of using 100% renewable, carbon-free electricity to run the system. One of the most daunting challenges is the cost of the system - especially with our state budget in crisis. Although the price tag is steep (over \$30 billion to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles through the Central Valley), it pales in comparison to the cost of new highway and airport expansions. Caltrans estimates it would cost \$6 billion to widen Highway 99 alone from four lanes to six. Widening this one highway to eight lanes, now being discussed, is estimated to cost at least \$20 billion.

It's time to develop a zero-emission high-speed train system that propels California into the 21st century. Vote YES on Prop. 1A.

### YES on Proposition 2

Sierra Club supports Proposition 2, the Standards for Confining Animals Initiative, formerly known as the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act. This Humane Society-backed initiative would set minimum standards for the humane treatment of confined chickens, requiring that they be able to stand up, turn around and fully extend their limbs.

Currently in California, approximately 19 million egg-laying chickens are packed into tiny "battery cages" in factory farms and are unable to extend their wings. California's enormous chicken factories, besides being cruel to animals, seriously pollute the air and water, in part due to the density of the confined animals. Prop. 2 would reduce the density of the animals, and therefore the intensity of the air and water pollution.

Many family farmers who raise animals humanely support Prop. 2, because the cruel (but profitable) practices of large factory farms make it difficult for small farms to compete financially. Sierra Club supports family farming, and this initiative helps level the playing field by requiring big agri-business to apply some basic standards to their treatment of animals. Vote YES on Prop. 2.

### NO on Proposition 4

For the third time in four years, Californians are faced with a proposed constitutional amendment that would create new notification requirements for women under 18 who are seeking an abortion. Sierra Club opposes Proposition 4. For four decades, the Club has supported open access to family planning services, and Prop 4 creates a new obstacle to access. Prop 4 would require women under 18 to wait 48 hours before obtaining an abortion and would require notification of parents or grandparents or permission from the court before proceeding. This initiative attempts to create better family communication through a constitutional amendment. While legislating better communication is unlikely to succeed, it is likely that young women caught in abusive family situations will be put in an impossible situation and will end up pursuing black-market abortions. Because Prop 4 is likely to end up sending young women to seek dangerous amateur abortions,

organizations such as the California Medical Association and California Nurses Association oppose the proposal. For more information, visit [www.noonprop4.org](http://www.noonprop4.org).

### NO on Proposition 7

Sierra Club California stands firmly behind the idea that clean, renewable energy and alternative vehicles can create jobs and help our economy while fighting the pollution that causes global warming.

That's why we only very reluctantly opposed Propositions 7 and 10.

Proposition 7 promises to put California out in front of the clean energy market - but actually contains serious flaws that mean it will almost certainly fail to deliver on its promise that half of California's energy will come from renewable sources by 2025.

Prop 7 contains loopholes for compliance and lacks a steady source of funding for renewable power development. Instead of creating a funding stream that power generators could tap into, the measure creates an uncertain system of penalties that may or may not provide enough money to fund new renewable sources of energy. The proposition even lowers some current penalties.

Further dampening any potential market for clean power, Proposition 7 locks in energy rate increases for renewables to just 3 percent annually - even though power generators that use fossil fuels face no such limits. It also continues energy regulators' current practice of tying renewable prices to natural gas prices, a practice that has proven ineffective.

Proposition 7 sets a dangerous precedent by removing local control over energy policy. Sierra Club's energy experts know there's a lot of potential in "community choice," a practice that consolidates a community's energy-purchasing power in the same way co-op grocers have more power to buy produce because they work together.

Sierra Club California supports current efforts underway by the Legislature and the Governor's office that would reform California's Renewable Portfolio Standard Law and increase the current goal for renewable power generation in California to 33% by 2020 from 20% by 2010.

To ensure California's clean-energy future, vote NO on Proposition 7.

### NO on Proposition 10

Proposition 10 promises alternatives to our gas-guzzling, carbon-emitting

vehicles, but actually would block the path to cleaner technology and end up digging the state further into debt. It also fails to help California meet its ambitious goals under the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 to combat global warming.

Prop 10 fails to promote the development of true alternative fuel vehicles and protect California taxpayers. It offers little for better and cleaner fuel alternatives like battery-electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids.

Sierra Club has favored alternative fuel vehicles for years, but we just cannot support this shaky proposition," said Jim Metropulos, Sierra Club California's Senior Advocate. "We want to see much cleaner alternatives to the cars and trucks we're driving now."

Although its supporters claim the proposition promotes energy independence and clean air, the measure would offer taxpayer money in the form of rebates to consumers that have purchased vehicles that create "no net material increase in air pollution." That sets the bar too low to reduce the pollution that causes global warming and that affects the health of Californians living near freeways and high-traffic areas.

Taxpayers would subsidize the purchase of these vehicles via expensive borrowing, since Proposition 10 doesn't offer a way to pay back the general fund for these rebates. Instead, it relies on future state tax collection to pay back these bonds. Traditionally, bond funds pay for large public works projects that would normally be too expensive for the state to afford. Sierra Club questions the use of state-issued bond funds for rebates to the purchasers of cars that would do little to combat global warming.

Proposition 10 would also duplicate existing state and federal incentives for alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles. For example, the state already has a \$200 million incentive program that promotes clean fuels. The federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 provides for a tax credit for the purchase of a new, dedicated alternative fuel vehicle.

With little bang for five billion bucks, California cannot afford to waste money and time on technologies that won't address global warming or promote clean air. Vote NO on Proposition 10.

Go to our elections page to learn more about the propositions: [www.sierraclubcalifornia.org/elections.html](http://www.sierraclubcalifornia.org/elections.html)



On September 14, the Huasna Valley Association brought out throngs of Arroyo Grande and Huasna residents for the first fundraiser of their reconstituted association, held in and around A.G.'s Portuguese Hall.

Last heard from 28 years ago, the HVA has been revived to fight the Excelaron Oil proposal that promises to bring twenty years of expanded drilling and 87,600 tanker truck trips to the barely two-lane roads of the region, whose hairpin turns wind through the hills directly above Twitchell Reservoir.

HVA members and Arroyo Grande residents would also do well to read up on the tender environmental concerns of oil companies, now on display in the multi-billion dollar class-action lawsuit filed against Chevron/Texaco by the people of Ecuador, and well depicted in *Crude*



*Reflections: Oil, Ruin and Resistance in the Amazon Rainforest*, by Lou Dematteis and Kayana Szymczak. The book thoroughly details the toxic ruin left by Texaco after three decades of drilling in Ecuador's Oriente region of the Amazon, an environmen-

tal legacy that has included hydrocarbon-related cancers and birth defects that started appearing a decade after Texaco's oil operations in the region ceased.

The Planning Commission will hear Excelaron's permit request on October 9. Go to: [www.huasnavalley.org](http://www.huasnavalley.org)

**KAREN Venditti**  
for Los Osos CSD

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**Measure D-08**

# Atascadero, Save Yourself

Back in May, in our “Taking Issue” feature, we published a selection of passages from the book *Big Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-Retailers and the Fight for America’s Independent Businesses* by Stacy Mitchell, a researcher with the Institute for Local Self Reliance. The entire book served as a cogent response to a crop of editorials that were popping up in the local papers last spring under headlines like “Wal-Mart Isn’t a Threat” and “After All, It’s Just a Store.”

But Mitchell’s book is not simply a compendium of rebuttals to big box cheerleaders and Wal-Mart public relations campaigns. It does demonstrate that Wal-Mart’s promises to boost employment, expand local economies and provide a sales tax bonanza for the towns that welcome it are myths, and plenty of evidence is provided that big box stores depress property values and that their promise of lower prices than local competitors is more than offset by the payment of far lower wages. The generally poor quality of their goods, resulting in their disposal and the manufacture of replacements, means greater impacts on the environment.

More importantly, however, the book provides a wealth of ideas, with real-life examples, that cities and towns can use to nurture local businesses and revitalize themselves without throwing themselves at the mercy of the big boxes. By attracting entrepreneurs and helping local retailers expand, other cities have managed to maintain their economic and political power in thriving, self-reliant communities.

Several of the book’s points are worth recapping as Atascadero residents prepare to vote on Measure D-08:

\* If a town has a National Main Street Center (Atascadero does), it

should be recruiting entrepreneurs to fill gaps for goods and services not currently provided.

\* Business incubators, created by community groups, buy or lease large storefronts and divide up the space for new retailers, who can spend a year getting up to speed and building a customer base, then move into a permanent space.

\* Community Land Trusts (CLTs), with initial capital funding from community development block grants, lease at cost or sell retail spaces like condos, retaining ownership of the underlying land. The spaces can be reserved for locally owned businesses only.

\* Community owned businesses – including department stores and food stores – are thriving in Montana and Massachusetts, where residents pooled their money, sold shares and raised resources to start community-owned corporations. Green Fields Market in Greenfield, MA, owned and operated by its thousands of members, did more than \$5 million in sales in 2005. Surplus revenues are rebated to members annually.

\* Cities that take the route of equity investing rather than subsidizing projects shape development by maximizing community benefits. Austin, Texas, mandated that at least 30 percent of a 2004 redevelopment of five city-owned blocks go to locally owned businesses. Such policies create a direct return on investment rather than siphoning profits off to absentee owners hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Mitchell cites “the growing body of sociological research that has found that local businesses play a crucial role in the social and civic health of our communities. Studies have found that places that have a larger share of their retail activity taking place at locally owned businesses, rather than chains, rank higher on a wide range of



*“Spirit,” said Scrooge, “Show me no more!”*

social, economic, and civic measures. Poverty, crime, and infant mortality are all lower.”

If measure D-08 passes, Atascadero will still have the same problems it has right now, and will still need to

engage in the hard work of implementing some or all of the above measures. If D-08 does not pass, Atascadero is likely to lose any chance of ever solving those problems.

## Morro Bay Power Plant: Endgame Approaching?

By Jack McCurdy

Historic changes may be coming in the regulation of coastal power plants and the most damaging industrial practice impacting California coastal resources, including those of San Luis Obispo County.

The technology known as once-through cooling, by which power plants suck up millions of gallons of coastal waters and billions of marine organisms, killing them all, will be the subject of a new policy by the State Water Board, expected early next year, that (may) severely restrict if not eliminate the withdrawal of water from the Morro Bay National Estuary by the 55-year-old Morro Bay Power Plant. This would probably end the plant’s operating life as a facility using once-through cooling, a momentous development in the nine-year efforts to preserve marine life in the estuary, one of only two estuaries along the California coast, designated an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area and impacted by a power plant.

The water board’s decision to develop a new state policy on this destructive practice came as the result of years of appeals by environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, to stop depletion of California’s coastal resources, which has been strongly condemned by other state agencies, such as the California Coastal Commission, the Ocean Protection Council and the State Lands Commission.

Beyond that, the Second Circuit federal appellate court ruled in January 2007 that “best available technology” is now required for cooling of all existing plants — a de facto ban on once-through cooling. The U.S. Supreme Court is considering an appeal to one aspect of the appellate court’s decision — whether the cost of the technology must be considered in requiring it by regulatory agencies.

The California Supreme Court is reviewing a state appellate court

decision last December that would invalidate most of the federal decision as it applies to California, and thereby allow once-through cooling to continue virtually unrestricted, unless the appellate decision is

overturned.

Clearly, the final battles are underway in the long struggle to save our coast from the enormously destructive effects of once-through cooling.

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**SUNDAY  
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proceeds benefit the Mothers for Peace scholarship fund

Tour sponsors:  
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Sustainable Planning Green Architecture Appropriate Technology

# Los Osos: STEP Up

**Los Osos Townhall Meeting:**  
**Collection Systems for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Sustainable Sewers?**  
**It's No Pipe Dream!**

**STEP or Gravity?**  
 (Learn about both options)

**It's your chance to ask questions & hear what experts have to say**

**Don't Miss This EVENT!**

**Friday-Sept. 19th**  
**7:00 PM**  
**South Bay Community Center**

## Sustainable Sewers: Collection Systems for the 21st Century

The South Bay Community Center, site of many a skirmish in the Los Osos sewer wars, was the site of a well-attended September 19 meeting dedicated to providing information to residents on the most critical component of their forthcoming waste water treatment project: The waste water collection system. The town hall was hosted by the Sierra Club, Surfrider and SLO Green Build, and moderated by Karen Venditti.

In the audience were County Supervisor Katcho Achadjian, Los Osos WWTP Technical Advisory Committee chair Bill Garfinkel, County engineer Rob Miller and several Los Osos CSD board members. The panel of experts consisted of David Badgley of the American Public Works Association Greenbook Task-force on Pipeline Rehabilitation, a 35-year veteran of sewer pipeline development and assessment; Joseph Leach, a civil engineer (Cal Poly '92) and Vice President of Development Resource Consultants, Inc.; Dana Ripley, CEO of Ripley Pacific Co., and Bill Cagle of Orenco Systems, Inc.

The panelists' presentations ranged from the dawn of sewers (Pompeii figured out a way to make use of the snowmelt runoff from the big volcano in their back yard) to the just-concluded but not yet released NWRI peer review of the Los Osos Waste Water Treatment Project. (The peer review agreed with all four points of sustainability cited by the Sierra Club, SLO Green Build, Surfrider, et al in our Key Environmental Issues Statement, at right).

In evaluating gravity vs. STEP, the two potential collection systems under consideration for Los Osos, it was, in the end, simply no contest. Ripley cited the significant benefit that a STEP collection system delivers water to a treatment plant that has already been subjected to better than first-stage treatment. Leach, with twenty years of experience working on gravity systems, noted the low-end capital cost estimates for gravity and STEP systems reported in the project's Fine Screening Analysis — \$82 million versus \$65 million, respectively — and also noted that STEP systems are easy to operate, have no manholes, and do not present

## Environmentalists urge STEP system for Los Osos sewer project

A consortium of local environmental organizations and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council presented the County Board of Supervisors with a 22-page "Statement of Key Environmental Issues for the Los Osos Wastewater Treatment Project Collection System" at the Board's September 9 meeting.

The report's evaluation of the two primary rival technologies for the transport of sewage from residences and businesses to a treatment facility — a gravity system or STEP/STEG wastewater collection system — concluded that STEP was the environmentally friendly way to go when the County builds the sewer.

"A few weeks ago, Board Chairman Patterson asked us for our analysis and recommendation of what we believe would be the environmentally preferable wastewater collection system," said Dr. Mary Fullwood of Surfrider, who presented the report to the Board. "From our review of the Los Osos Waste Water Project reports and our own research, we found that a STEP/STEG collection system would afford significantly greater protections to the groundwater, sensitive ecosystems, and culturally significant sites in the area than any type of gravity collection system."

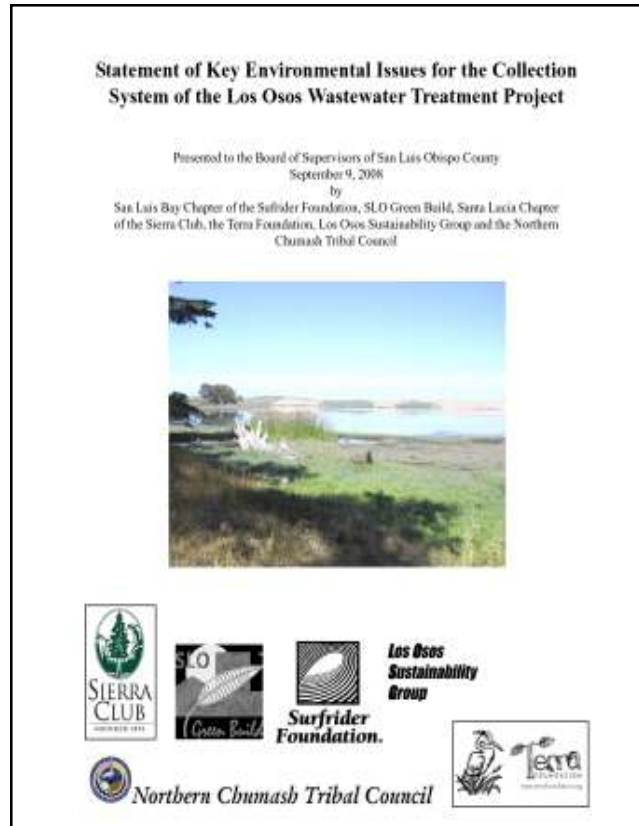
The report also found that a STEP system would likely entail lower energy consumption than a gravity system and would be compatible with solar power as an energy source. A STEP system, determined to be \$25 million cheaper than a gravity system in the County's "fine screening analysis," would produce an even larger cost advantage once an exchange of treated water, STEP's lower maintenance costs, reduced

the significant environmental and dewatering challenges of open trenching that come with gravity systems.

Several panelists cast grave doubt on the County's assertion that STEP tanks would have to be pumped out as often as every five years, the primary basis for the County's finding that operation and maintenance costs for STEP would be somewhat higher than for gravity. Ripley was particularly pointed in remarking that the state law that the Regional Water Board cites to support the necessity of pumping every five years, AB 885, requires five-year inspections, not five-year pump-outs. All agreed that STEP and gravity both would result in on-site disturbance.

Leach ended his presentation with the observation that groundwater, lifecycle costs, environmental impacts and benefits, and sustainability all need to be part of the analysis for the Los Osos waste water project, and that "Los Osos deserves the best solution possible."

DVDs of the three-hour program are available at the Los Osos Library and the Los Osos CSD offices.



- Provide the greatest possible protection against overflows and other releases of partially treated or untreated wastewater from the system, which could pollute Morro Bay Estuary and other sensitive coastal ecosystems such as the Sweet Springs Nature Preserve
- Provide the greatest possible protections to the groundwater of the Los Osos water basin
- Avoid environmental impacts related to construction and installation of the system to the greatest extent possible, including the impacts of open trenching — dewatering, soil stabilization, and

street reconstruction.

- Avoid impacts to Native American Chumash sites to the greatest extent possible
- Provide the most energy-efficient solution and enable the use of clean, renewable energy sources, avoiding environmental impacts related to non-renewable energy production (greenhouse gas emissions).

The Statement of Key Environmental Issues can be read on line at [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org) and [www.slosurfrider.org](http://www.slosurfrider.org)

The County's Los Osos Waste Water Project team expects to release a Draft Environmental Impact Report for public comment in November.

pumping and sludge hauling fees are factored in.

The report is endorsed by the Sierra Club, Surfrider, SLO Green Build, the Terra Foundation, the Los Osos Sustainability Group and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, with input from wastewater treatment specialists.

We considered the site-specific characteristics of Los Osos — proximity to the Morro Bay National Estuary and State Marine Reserve, hilly terrain, sandy soil prone to liquefaction, high ground water, and sites of cultural significance to the Chumash — and set criteria for a collection system that would:



Cameron Ripley addresses the audience on methane capture and use as a treatment plant power source while collection system panelists Dana Ripley, Bill Cagle and David Badgley look on. Right: Moderator Karen Venditti.

# Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **Oct. 13**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:

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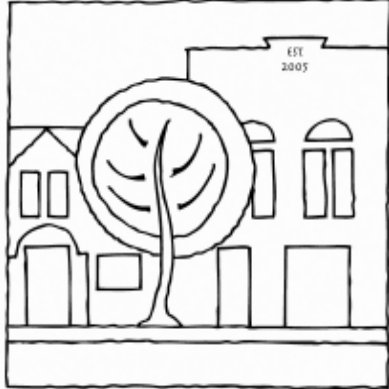
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# Outings and Activities Calendar

All of our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter's outing policies or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Leader **Gary Felsman (473-3694)**. For information on a specific outing, please contact the outing leader. Outings Leaders please get your outings or events in by the 1st for the next month's outings.

## Hiking Classifications:

**Distance:** 1 = 0-2 mi., 2 = 3-5 mi., 3 = 6-9 mi., 4 = 10-12 mi., 5 = 12 mi. or more.

**Elevation Gain:** A = 500', B = 1000', C = 1500', D = 2000', E = 2500', F = 3000' or more.

**Wed., Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes.** See website, or e-mail Gary Felsman for details. E-mail is located on the Website.

**Sat., Oct. 4th, 8:30 a.m., Tentative Informal Big Sur Coastal Hike.** Most likely destination is Dutra Flats. 9 miles, 2200 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Washburn Day Use Area, San Simeon State Park. Bring Lunch, Water and dress for the weather. Poison Oak will be present along the trail. Details call Gary (473-3694) (3D).

**Oct. 5th, Sun., 0930 BIKERIDE in NIPOMO AREA.** Easy ride with many stops. Kids welcome. Call (929-3647) or e-mail [bdenneen@kcbx.net](mailto:bdenneen@kcbx.net) a few days before for details. Helmets Required Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location

prior to bringing your pet.)

**OCTAGON BARN - South Higuera, SLO, 2nd & 4th Saturdays, 9am-12pm.** Roofers and other volunteers willing to climb and swing a hammer are requested to help skilled craftsmen in replacing the final roof panels at the Octagon Barn. Additional volunteer work is needed to sort shingles, spruce up the site, and organize tools & materials. Learn first-hand how historical restoration works and be part of the transformation of San Luis Obispo's iconic Octagon Barn. Stop by to check it out! If you're not "handy" contact us about joining the Barn Committee to plan and strategize on opening the Barn for community use next year. Call 544-9096 for details. (Sponsored)

**Sat., Oct. 11, 7th Annual Condor Lookout Open House** at Hi Mountain near Pozo. For a complete list of detailed activities and directions. Visit the web-site at <http://www.condorlookout.org>. Sponsored by MCAS.

**Sun., Oct. 12, 10 a.m., Pole Cats.** Dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling effective techniques for using trekking poles. Join us on October 12 at Islay Hill Open Space for an easy hike with spectacular views of Edna Valley to the south and morros to the north. From Broad, go east on Tank Farm, turn right on Wavertree, left on Spanish Oaks and veer right onto Sweetbay and park near cul de sac. Contact David Georgi at 458-5575 or [polecatleader@gmail.com](mailto:polecatleader@gmail.com) for upcoming activities. Bipedes welcome

**Sat., Oct. 18, 8:00 a.m., TRAILWERKS - Elevator Trail - City of SLO Work Party.** Come help the CCCMB build a new trail on the Stenner Creek Railroad Property. Bring water, snack work gloves and dress for the weather. Ride or Hike in. Meet at end of Stenner Creek Road off Highway 1 about 1/2 mile north of Highland Drive Turn to the right, then drive approx. 2 miles past the Cam poly Ropes Course to the end of the road. Watch for signs and directions. Barbecue to follow the work party for all volunteers. More details can be found on the CCCMB Website: [www.3cmb.org/](http://www.3cmb.org/). (Sponsored by the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers.)

**Sat., Oct 25, Hike to Stubbe Springs.** We will start at Keys View and hike north-northwest along the rim of the park, enjoying the wonderful views, then start towards Stubbe Springs. Lunch at the spring. We'll pick up a horse trail and head towards the Keys View Road to our shuttle car. Hike is strenuous, lots of ups and downs and cross country hiking. Nine miles and 1,000 foot eleva-

tion gain, with a car shuttle. Call Al and Ann Murdy (760-366-2932) or email ([al.murdy@gmail.com](mailto:al.murdy@gmail.com)). Taquitz Group/San Gorgonio Chapter.

**Sun., Oct. 26th, 10 1.m. Pole Cats.** Dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling effective techniques for using trekking poles. Join us on October 26, 10 AM for an easy hike on the Maino Open Space trail. The Maino Open Space trailhead is located off the Marsh Street onramp of southbound Highway 101. From downtown SLO take Higuera Street to the intersection with Marsh Street and proceed as if to take 101 South. Immediately after the freeway underpass, bear right into the parking lot. Contact David Georgi at 458-5575 or [polecatleader@gmail.com](mailto:polecatleader@gmail.com) for upcoming activities. Bipedes welcome.

**Oct. 26, Sunday. 0930 NATURE HIKES in the Nipomo Area.** Call (929-3647) or e-mail [bdenneen@kcbx.net](mailto:bdenneen@kcbx.net) a few days before for details. Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location prior to bringing your pet.)

**Fri. – Sun., Oct. 31 – Nov 2 Conglomerate Mesa Exploration/ Carcamp.** Come with us and explore this little visited, wilderness quality area near the eastern edge of Death Valley National



Photo by Joaquin Palting

Park. We will meet Friday evening and car-caravan to our camping location. Strenuous hike on Saturday followed by evening social and pot luck. Shorter hike on Sunday. Drive to campsite requires high clearance vehicle, carpooling at meeting point may be possible. Contact leader for more information. Kate Allen [kj.allen@wildblue.net](mailto:kj.allen@wildblue.net), 661-944-4056 CNRCC Desert Committee

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.

## Join us on October 11th for a Special Volunteer Orientation Gathering

**When:** 3 - 6 p.m.

**Where:** Sierra Club Office, 547-B Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo.

**What:** A complete overview of what our Chapter is up to, our various programs, campaigns and committees, and the opportunity to sign up and get involved where you are passionate and feel you can help the most! Enjoy a beautiful garden setting, plus food provided by the Chapter, and meet our staff and volunteer committee members. These are exciting times to be involved, so get engaged! Sunday, October 11th. RSVP required: e-mail Shaba Mohseni at [shaba.sierraclub8@gmail.com](mailto:shaba.sierraclub8@gmail.com) or call 543-8717.



Pole Cat David Georgi demonstrates pole trekking.

