



March 2013
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SANTA LUCIAN



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

The Price of a Canyon

If Pismo Beach okays the Spanish Springs project, south county will radically change

As we go to press, the Pismo Beach city council is preparing to vote on Spanish Springs, a development that would nearly double the size of the city and advance Pismo's northward sprawl up the canyons heading toward SLO, as SLO creeps south toward Pismo.

For the last five years, the Sierra Club has been tracking the City's designs on the Price Canyon area with a critical eye as the various proposed projects have wound through the planning process (see "A Watershed Win," Feb. 2008; "A Very Poor Plan for Pismo," Jun. 2009; "Priceless Canyon," Jun. 2011; "Pismo's Thirst," Sept. 2011).

Spanish Springs' planned 800 residential units, 150 hotel rooms, conference center, vineyards, golf course etc. all depend on the City's certification of the project's Environmental Impact Report, the document required by state law to accurately assess the project's impacts and propose viable measures to avoid or mitigate them.

The Sierra Club has pointed out a number of problems with the EIR, including the project's main conser-



No, and no again On February 5, the Pismo Beach city council had to move to the Veterans Memorial Building to accommodate the number of attendees at its second hearing on Spanish Springs. The council again heard from the majority of people in a packed room that their citizens want the project rejected. The Sierra Club has raised significant issues with the project's Environmental Impact Report.

fragmentation and the permission of activities degrading to the resource are a likely result of the EIR as written.

The EIR also defers to sometime in the future a pumping regime to ensure minimum stream flow is maintained and threatened steelhead trout on site

are protected, nor does it include a meaningful analysis of the project's impacts on the endangered Pismo Clarkia.

Among the other defects we have brought to the City's attention is the lack of analysis of the impacts of the infrastructure needed to support the



project's expected reliance on recycled water, and the EIR's vague reference to the potential to implement onsite mitigation for the project's significant and unavoidable air quality impacts, without specifying what such mitiga-

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Output from municipal wells for Pismo Beach, Grover Beach and Arroyo Grande may be disrupted by seawater intrusion

vation come-on: a 700-acre open space reserve. The reserve will not consist of contiguous acreage, and the EIR defers formulation of a management plan to sometime in the future. Any conservation benefit the reserve may provide is undermined by the EIR's imprecise language and the omission or deferral of important details and key performance standards, including the location of a planned wildlife corridor and the identification and mapping of riparian areas and wetlands. Habitat

40,000 March on Washington

"Forward on Climate" rally demands presidential action

On Sunday, February 17, the day before President's Day, more than 40,000 people marched to the President's doorstep to support immediate action to contain climate change.

People from more than 30 states across the country whose land, homes and health are being threatened by the climate crisis, as well as students, scientists and indigenous community members, participated in the largest climate rally in U.S. history.

Thousands more turned out at solidarity rallies in Los Angeles, San

Francisco, Seattle, Chicago and Denver.

"For 25 years our government has basically ignored the climate crisis," said 350.org founder Bill McKibben. "Now people in large numbers are finally demanding they get to work. We shouldn't have to be here — science should have decided our course long ago. But it takes a movement to stand up to all that money."

Rally participants called on President Obama to reject the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and put limits on

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Sierra Club General Meeting

Thursday, Mar. 14, 7 p.m.

Through Chumash Eyes

"The World Through Chumash Eyes." Don't miss this chance to meet Fred Collins, the energetic Tribal Administrator of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council. He will give us an insider's account of a native culture that has existed in California since the pyramids, yet has profound truths to teach us today about the human connection with the environment. Fred will also discuss his activism in protecting the endangered sacred sites throughout SLO County.



California Missions Resource Center

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

Wicked Plants of Central California

By Joe Morris, Outings Chair

As spring comes to our area, lurking among the innocent faces of poppies, penstemon and other beautiful blooms are some toxic plants up to no good.

Many hikers sooner or later brush against the shrub with that well-known motto: "Leaves of three, let it be." Hours or even days later, the spreading, itchy rash from poison oak confirms their mistake. What did it? Rubbing an arm on a branch, touching pants the next day that picked up the toxin, or maybe petting a dog whose coat contacted the oil—rarely do we know. Poison oak is the most infamous of the poisonous plants in our area.

This plant with the shiny, oak-like leaves, yes, in groups of three, is not really an oak. It's one of the most widespread shrubs in California, yet its appearance frequently deceives. From reddish (fall or early spring) to green in spring, the leaves change color and then drop off in winter, leaving bare twigs that are just as toxic. Clumps of the plant vary from a height of below the knee to over your head. I've several times seen what looked like a tree of the stuff. Look for it especially in moist, shady places below 5,000 feet.

People vary greatly in their susceptibility. One lucky person in five has none, but a few others get severe blistered rashes and swelling in their eyes and throat. Your first inflammation may not be very severe, but successive ones usually are worse. Firefighters are often affected by the smoke from burning poison oak so much that they must go on disability.

If you suspect you've been exposed, the first step is to immediately wash yourself and your clothes with soap and water. Many drugstores sell preparations that either lower the allergic response or relieve the discomfort. Only we humans, not other animals, are susceptible to poison oak. The rashes are not contagious to other people.

Of the five other plants on my personal most unwanted list, close second place goes to oleander—not a native here, but originally from the Mediterranean. These plants impressed our state government enough for workers to plant them on



1 Poison oak

vast stretches of freeway dividers across the state. Staff in many local parks have also favored them as ornamentals. A strong resistance to drought, need for almost no maintenance, and their pretty pink, red, or white blossoms explain their desirability. But I wish they had chosen some other plant.

Oleander is an evergreen shrub, growing 6 feet or more tall, having dark green leaves 2"-10" long, with a lance-like ("lanceolate") shape. All parts of this plant are very poisonous to people, as well as to animals.



2 Oleander

Young children have died from eating only a few leaves, and horses may disastrously nibble some clippings, tempted by their sweet smell. You won't have to wait long to feel very sick. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and irregular heart rates are some of the common symptoms. Get to a doctor quick. Immediate medical treatment is needed.

Poison hemlock, #3 on my list, is actually the same species that the ancient Athenians used to knock off Socrates. A mouthful can easily kill an adult, and it's alarmingly common in urban areas, along roadsides, and in moist places. The plant grows tall on a branching stem, up to 5-8 feet high, and has small clusters of white flowers on the ends of its branches. The leaves are lacy and fernlike. I've seen large clumps of it on the bluff trail in Montana de Oro State Park, barely a minute's walk from the road.

People have confused poison hemlock with fennel, which can look similar in winter. But note the spotted red or purplish coloring on the lower part of the stem and the lack of a licorice aroma—almost always present in fennel.

In childhood, some of us elders remember downing an unpleasant-tasting spoonful of castor oil, given by mothers to deal with constipation. The medicine comes from a plant called castor oil plant or castor

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Lindi Doud
MEMBER

Cal French
COUNCIL OF CLUB LEADERS
Lindi Doud, Patrick McGibney
TREASURERS

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

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We Are the Sierra Club

On the occasion of the Chapter's 45th anniversary, we are pleased to inaugurate a new series featuring interviews with the movers and shakers of the Santa Lucia Chapter. To kick things off, the Executive Committee peppered Chapter Director Andrew Christie with a few well-chosen questions.

So how close is the Chapter to reaching the goal of sustainability via 300 members donating \$20 a month, every month?

It's the journey, not the destination. I think the need for "\$20 from 300" is serving as a good illustration to help our supporters grasp the basic financial requirements for keeping the doors open. We're getting there, but it's going to take awhile, and fortunately our generous members are stepping up and giving us awhile. But in the near future, I don't foresee a time when we can say "Okay, we made it! 300 people are now automatically donating \$20 a month! We're all done with fund-raising!" That would be lovely, but I think there's more outreach to our members and more intensive fund-raising in our future, not less. An endowment I'm pretty sure is the only way you can achieve absolute financial stability -- big hint to the readers! I think what we're going to achieve this year is a heightened level of awareness and more frequent donations, but we're still going to have to put the package together the way we do every year: supplementing donations with fund-raisers, grants, what assistance we can get from the national organization, maybe cutting the newsletter to bimonthly publication, what have you. I'm working three-quarter time; I may go halftime. We'll see.

Are you a Sierra Club donor?

I am actually a major donor. Not the most financially judicious behavior for someone in my income bracket, but I can't help it; I'm very fond of our lawsuits, and I've usually kicked in to ensure that the Chapter files or that we can cover fees and court costs.

Who is your favorite environmental hero, living or dead (besides John Muir or anyone on Executive Committee) and why?

Heroism is a tricky business. I think it requires distance from the designated hero figure. Some years ago, Paul Watson, the founder of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, was probably the name I would have picked. He was the reason why I volunteered with Sea Shepherd for three years, then served on staff as media director for four more. But after seven years up close and personal with the man, I felt like I was inside a remake of *Citizen Kane*. I resigned and walked away.

So I'd say my guy would be [former Sierra Club Executive Director] David Brower, whom I only met a few times in meetings. He was, by many accounts, a vexing personality, but there's no arguing with what he achieved or what a staggering list it is.

In the special category of someone who you actually knew well but you can still think of as a hero, that would be [the late California Coastal Commission Executive Director] Peter

Douglas. Another guy with a staggering list of achievements — and while occasionally exasperating, not remotely vexing — and a master of the most awe-inspiring skill set I have ever seen: the smarts of a lawyer, the sophistication of the political operative he had to be to do his job, and the values of the granola-munching, sandal-wearing, deeply spiritual tree-hugger he was. And an iron will when it came to wielding those skills in service to those values. He took on corporations, developers, lobbyists, senators, governors...and beat them. All in a day's work in defense of the natural world. And he was a sweet man. A beautiful soul.

What was your first contact with the Sierra Club?

I was living in L.A. circa 1994 and working with several groups of folks on saving the last big area of coastal wetlands in the county from a massive development called Playa Vista, and we came to the attention of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club, which invited us to form a Club task force. From there I went on the editorial board of their Chapter newsletter and stayed involved with the Chapter for about five years, hooking back up whenever I was back in L.A. after several out of state sojourns.

My first big policy fight in the Club was the immigration wars. Starting around the turn of the century, several internal skirmishes were fought in the Sierra Club over the alleged environmental impacts of U.S. immigration. It built up to an explosion and national headlines in 2004 in what was probably the most bitter and hard-fought board election in the Club's modern history. The immigrants-are-destroying-the-environment contingent lost.

A few years earlier, David Brower observed that poor immigrants come here to share the loot we stole from them. He said "rather than complaining about immigration from Mexico, the U.S. could stop causing it." He had a gift for the succinct turn of phrase that sums up an entire issue. In the aftermath of that fight, I'm very proud that it was the Santa Lucia Chapter — shortly after I arrived in SLO and also signed on with the Club's national Fair Trade Committee — that managed to move Sierra Club policy from "neu-

Russell Baker said "society is teeming with people who become furious if told what the score is."

tral" to an acknowledgment of the central role of corporate globalization — aka "free trade" — as a trigger of forced migration worldwide. It's a side effect of the corporate model that impoverishes millions of Third World people and displaces them from their land. We connected those dots, passed a Chapter resolution up the ladder, with the data to back it up, and eventually drove it into Club policy and into the fact sheets the Club



disseminates on the subject. It was both a big improvement over neutrality, and the perfect rebuke to the blame-the-immigrants contingent. They're still around, clinging to their preferred model. They'll never give it up; they're in the grip of a big, simple, bad idea. They've lashed themselves to that mast, but their influence in the Club now is marginal.

I like to think that I helped make David Brower's common sense into Sierra Club policy.

Where did you get your academic training? What particular (non-classroom) experiences were especially enlightening or instructive for your current role?

Occidental College — a few years before that Obama kid showed up — and UCLA. Co-founding the Ballona Wetlands Land Trust in L.A., hiring on with the aforementioned Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, falling through thin ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence during the seal hunt, getting shot at with a cannon by the Norwegian Coast Guard, going on staff with PETA in research and investigations, all turned out to be useful experiences for later life.

What would be your ideal picture of how the Chapter could function?

Members reporting on and testifying at every city council, planning commission, CSD and Board of Supervisors meeting; a chapter leader training program; all the money we need to hire two or three full-time staff; mounting legal challenges to every destructive project coming down the pike; cultivating political candidates who won't cave and compromise on fundamental principles of environmental protection. And a weekly column. And our own radio show.

If someone wished to volunteer, what are some jobs for which you could use him/her right now?

Unglamorous stuff. I don't think we'll ever have enough trails to accommodate all the people who want to work on trails. Conversely, please find me a student whose prof will give them credit for doing filing and database work -- which is literally how I got my start as an environmental activist, by the way. It, like 90 percent of everything, was just about showing up. But that's a tough sell.

What is the chapter's relationship to

other environmental groups in the county? What are some recent examples of collaboration?

We work with Surfrider in the Marine Sanctuary Alliance. We work with SLO Green Build in the Appropriate Technology Campaign. We're advisors to the Clean Energy Economy Coalition. We've worked with Audubon on protecting cliff swallows, and we had their back when they were taking flak for their proposed Sweet Springs restoration project. We work very closely with the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility. Every year at the Steynberg Gallery we put together the Environmentalists Rendezvous, which brings together as many groups as can make presentations in a 90-minute timeframe, which we've found is about seven or eight. That's always a packed house.

What are three major threats and three major opportunities in SLO County and how should the Chapter propose to address them?

We intend to get the process started for the designation of the waters of the Central Coast as a national marine sanctuary. Shift the county and our cities away from dependency on fossil fuels and into locally generated clean, renewable energy and a significant reduction of carbon emissions. And we

After seven years up close and personal with the man, I felt like I was inside a remake of *Citizen Kane*. I resigned.

need to continue to protect the County and our cities from the ever-present instinct of many of our elected officials to curtail democracy, restrict public participation, and "go rogue" on land use policy. We usually see that in the form of efforts to ignore state environmental statutes, head in the opposite direction of evolving regulatory requirements, and create policies divorced from the regulations in place for the rest of the state.

That will probably always be the main part of our job. We saw it in the County's hell-bent determination to build the Los Osos sewer with no water recycling or conservation components. We got that changed. Same thing with Morro Bay and Cayucos, only worse. We overturned the Cayucos Viewshed ordinance, the most egregious piece of backroom legislation to come out of the County

A Plan for the Pronghorn

Working on a way to help America's antelope survive the impact of a solar power plant

by Sue Harvey, President, North County Watch

Although pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) were historically abundant in California, few remain today, and these are predominantly located on northeastern rangelands.

The impact of development appears deleterious to herds experiencing perilously low numbers south of San Francisco. Recent assessment of pronghorn translocations and urban development projects has revived interest in the legacy of pronghorn in California. These issues are of increased public concern, especially around development projects that impact scarce native grassland – habitat for the few remaining herds in southern California.

The growing consensus is that if pronghorn are to remain part of the

heritage of the southern rangelands of the Golden State, native grasslands need to be perpetuated in healthy condition. Then it may be feasible to perpetuate native pronghorn populations.

North County Watch has partnered with Mid American Solar and First Solar, owners and operators of the Topaz Solar Farm, to facilitate further research into the long-term effects of solar facilities on pronghorn of the Carrizo Plain — home turf for a herd reintroduced by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in 1999.

The agreement that settled the lawsuit filed by North County Watch and Carrizo Commons against First Solar's Topaz Solar Farm provided funding for pronghorn research.

The fastest land animal and only



Pronghorn & friend Dr. Kathy Longshore has a plan for the Carrizo's fastest resident.

endemic ungulate in North America, pronghorn had 19,000 years to evolve their survival skills. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website, Pronghorn need open flat valleys “to make use of their most famous attributes – speed and eyesight. With eyes almost as large as an elephant's on a body the size of a goat, pronghorn are clearly designed for watchfulness. ... They can outrun any predator fairly easily. The herd travels as one, not leaving a single animal open to attack. They keep the pace up for miles, their speed and endurance evolving from the pressure of their traditional enemy, the wolf.”

The focus of the Topaz project is the impact of the Topaz Solar Farm on the reintroduced northern Carrizo pronghorn herd. Of the herd relocations conducted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in the 1980s, the northern Carrizo herd has been the most successful of the reintroductions and has achieved levels of sustainability unmatched by the other re-introduced herds in the area – specifically Cholame and the Carrizo National Monument — per researchers Jim Yoakum and Alice Koch.

USGS researcher Dr. Kathy Longshore was selected to receive the settlement research funds because of her previous research into the Carrizo Plain National Monument pronghorn herd. While assessing the research goals of the original project to measure fawn survival and determine causes of mortality in the areas surrounding solar power development while examining the relationship between fawn habitat selection and survival rate, the need for a long term multi-year study of pronghorn became apparent.

Dr. Longshore predicts that “Results from this study will provide agencies with an important resource for making management decisions to improve habitat on mitigation lands and reduce potential negative impacts of future solar development.... This study will be a valuable extension of previous research on offspring survival in the CPNM, and will contribute to long-term regional management goals for pronghorn.”

The first step to capturing this potential was to find additional funding to purchase fawn collars that had GPS as well as VHF capability. VHF capacity identifies the location of the collared fawn at the time that the researcher is on location in the field reading the location. GPS capability captures the movement pattern of the collared fawn by collecting location data every two hours and storing it for download in the field by a researcher 600-800 meters from the fawn. The original estimate of an additional \$30,000 for 10 GPS/VHF collars

seemed out of reach, but Dr. Longshore contacted one of her vendors who has recently started producing a smaller more affordable GPS/VHF collar. The timeframe was tight; for the spring fawning season, the funds for the collars had to be committed in time to place an order by February 1. North County Watch, Mid American Solar and First Solar quickly partnered to provide the additional \$18,000 for upgraded collars.

Collaring fawns involves numerous personnel in the field during the fawning season from April through June. A doe leaves her newborn in protected places and goes off to feed. Pronghorn fawns less than 7 days old will be approached and carefully handled to record sex, weight, body temperature and measurements and date of birth. At four months, the collars will fall off and be retrieved for re-use in coming years. The goal is to build a more robust, comprehensive model for the Carrizo Plain.

Although mitigation lands to buffer impacts to Carrizo species were set aside in the permitting process, and 9,000 additional acres were obtained through a settlement agreement between the solar companies and Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity and Defenders of Wildlife, Dr. Longshore's proposal echoes concerns raised by these organizations and North County Watch that “it is largely unknown how pronghorn will utilize those lands.” Dr. Longshore's previous studies on the CPNM herd will augment data gathered from this study. The new data will be invaluable in making decisions on restoration and management of the newly acquired mitigation lands. The solar plants are an unprecedented impact, and this research will help avoid some level of trial and error in management of the conservation lands.

Hopefully, this will be the first year of a broader three-year study of the northern Carrizo herd. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has signaled support for a long-term study by working to provide the necessary additional funds. Dr. Longshore will be assisted by fellow researchers Diego Johnson, a biological technician, and Chris Lowry, ecologist and GIS specialist. Dan Meade of Althouse and Meade, who are the biologists for the Topaz Solar Farm project, has offered the assistance of his team of onsite biologists to help during the time-consuming effort of locating birthing does.

This project has generated a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. It's an important study that will contribute to near-term and long-term survival of species, habitat improvement, and how we deal with management and restoration of vital mitigation lands.

Deadly Analysis

By Andrea Caulfield

In the wake of the Fukushima disaster in Japan, scientists have been investigating a potentially dangerous fault system near the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. As reported by Susanne Rust in *California Watch*, “while PG&E maintains the Hosgri fault is too small to threaten the aging plant, some government scientists suspect the fault acting with others in the region could produce an earthquake much more powerful than the plant was built to withstand.”

The central coast earthquake hazard is more complex than previously thought. The Diablo plant is surrounded by over a dozen seismically active faults, of which the characteristics and complexity are poorly understood. Some of these faults are currently being evaluated by leading scientists through the Senior Seismic Hazard Analysis Committee (SSHAC).

According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and PG&E, the nuclear facility is safe. But scientists at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) aren't so sure.

The plant was built to withstand a 7.5 magnitude earthquake three miles off shore on the Hosgri Fault. Dr. Samuel Johnson of the USGS laid out a scenario where the Hosgri Fault could extend 250 miles from Point Conception (near Lompoc) to Bolinas north of San Francisco, much longer than PG&E's estimate. The longer the fault, the more powerful the rupture. Dr. Johnson's scenario shows the Hosgri Fault connecting in a system with the San Simeon and San Gregorio faults to the north of the nuclear plant.

“If the fault were to extend this far, then that would be close to an 8.0,” said Rust. This could occur if the system were to rupture together in one earthquake.

To further add to the uncertainty of the seismic hazard at the nuclear plant, Dr. Jeanne Hardebeck of the USGS discovered the Shoreline Fault in 2008, a few hundred yards from the nuclear facility. Dr. Hardebeck has said that if the Hosgri and Shoreline Fault are connected, that could put a magnitude 7.2 earthquake directly beneath the plant. In sharp disagreement with PG&E, Dr. Hardebeck contends that the Shoreline Fault does connect with the Hosgri Fault. She explains that an earthquake can start on one fault and jump to other faults. This is what happened at the Fukushima plant. Scientists thought there were several unconnected faults offshore, but when the earthquake occurred it ruptured through all of those fault segments, resulting in a 9.0M earthquake.

“If the Hosgri Fault runs up to Bolinas and connects to the Shoreline Fault,” says Rust, “there is a possibility of a magnitude 7.7 earthquake under the plant.”

Even though existing published information provides ample evidence that a dangerous web of active faults surrounds the Diablo Canyon plant, PG&E continues to assure us that the plant is safe, and consistently minimizes earthquake hazards to the plant. Eric Layman describes a 2005 paper published by the Geological Society of America which clearly links the Hosgri Fault with the San Gregorio Fault, which in turn merges smoothly with the San Andreas Fault.

The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility has expressed concern that “the NRC miscalculates in refusing to investigate multi-fault rupture scenarios on the Hosgri and Shoreline Faults,” and is ignoring USGS studies.

“As PG&E asks the federal government to renew its operating license for Diablo Canyon, there are questions about whether the utility has been skewing data to make the plant appear safer from the threat of earthquakes than it really is,” says the Alliance.

If the plant is relicensed for continued operation, as Andrew Christie of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club has written, “down the road, an earthquake greater than what the plant was built to withstand could render a large part of California unlivable and leave the central coast radioactive for centuries.”

Andrea Caulfield -BSW (Social Work), MPA (Public Administration) has 20 years experience conducting research and writing reports related to health and human services.



Of Surveys & Shell Games

SLO is still playing fast and loose with open space, city goals and the will of the people

In our January issue, we reported the results of the SLO city survey on the ongoing update of its Land Use and Circulation Element. We juxtaposed those results against the long history of attempts by the Community Development Department and fellow City staff to deflect, deny and otherwise deep-six the city's natural open space as a funding priority, and/or turn open space into something else.

With more than 2,100 residents responding to the request to rank the services the City should provide, not only did a majority pick "Acquiring and maintaining open space" in every category — peaks and hillsides, greenbelt, creeks and marshes — and not only did a majority go on to affirm that they would support paying more for this particular city service, open space was the *only* category among all listed city services that *did* receive a majority of votes.

We headlined that story: "Can SLO Hear You?" Since then, City staff and

the city council majority have done much to support the conclusion that they are deaf, at least to local residents and nonbusiness interests.

Throughout the course of January, as the City set about setting its major goals for fiscal years 2013-15, open space acquisition and preservation was demoted from its position as the number-one goal of the residents of San Luis Obispo and tossed onto a list of also-rans.

Taking natural open space out of the running as a Major City Goal was accomplished by a process familiar to any enterprising fellow who has ever pulled a rabbit out of his hat, or set up shop on a busy street corner with a card table, three walnut shells and a pea.

First, City staff had to make the LUCE survey disappear. It was part of the wrong process. That was the LUCE process; setting Major City Goals is part of the budget process, which meant dealing with the same



Not feeling it The actions of SLO City staff beg the question: where's the love for the city's natural open space, the most vital component of residents' quality of life?

issues, omitting the LUCE survey's 2,100+ responses from the staff reports and playing up a "Community Priorities Survey" which received about one-fifth the response of the LUCE survey.

The LUCE survey was sent to city residents and city business owners. The Community Priorities Survey was also touted as being all about resident input, but the word "resident" appeared nowhere in the survey instructions or in the survey itself. And to ensure that it would have about as



much validity as a website opinion poll in which you can vote as many times as you like, any motivated individual or group could fill out as many surveys as they wanted — picked up anywhere in unlimited numbers and turned in with no identification of any kind.

It was, in short, worthless as a resident-based survey. By December 14, when it had received all of 279 responses, "Open space preservation" had slipped to #4 in the list of top ten priorities. By January 11, 151 more surveys were returned, and open space slipped to sixth place. At the city council's January 26 goal-setting workshop, staff presented these meaningless results to the city council, omitting from the staff report the results of the 2,100+ responses to the legitimate LUCE survey on funding priorities. As a result, open space acquisition and maintenance disappeared as a Major City Goal, relegated

to number 8 on a list of 10, neatly missing the cutoff of seven major goals.

Attempts by Mayor Marx and Councilman Ashbaugh to raise the priority level of open space were waved aside by their colleagues. Presto.

Staff put great emphasis on the importance of input from a Community Forum held on January 8. The City's longtime consultant for that goal setting meeting has observed that most residents don't go to meetings. So the Council ignored the 2,000+ valid survey responses in favor of 400+ essentially invalid responses, plus input from a meeting with 170 attendees and 54 speakers — something that the City's consultant affirmed residents don't usually attend, thereby begging the question: who did?

Shunted off to its also-ran category of "Other Important Objectives" -- i.e. things we'll get around to someday -- open space acquisition and maintenance now looks like this:

"Commit funding to expand open space and provide adequate staffing, planning, and other resources to maintain and enhance open space quality and amenities."

For those SLO residents who remember the slash-and-burn debacle that was the Community Development Department's "update" of the Conservation and Open Space Element circa 2005, this is a red flag. Natural open space does not have "amenities," nor does it have qualities in need of "enhancement." It is natural. Undeveloped peaks and hillsides and marshes and creeks are what they are. That's

SHELL GAME continued on page 8

Our Economic Environment

By Andrew Christie

Late last year, the Economic Vitality Corporation delivered an update on its work on the Economic Strategy, a public/private partnership with the County.

The EVC cited the update of the Economic Element in the County's General Plan, amended last October, as a milestone in the implementation of that strategy. Their main point of pride was Policy EE 1.7 of the Economic Element:

"Whenever there is a possibility of economic effects from projects of regional significance, economic impact analyses should be used to enable consideration of both positive and negative effects of proposed plans, policies and projects on capital, jobs, incomes, sales and public revenue.... This information helps the County balance the pros and cons of its significant decisions."

The policy concludes with the caveat: "incurring the cost to produce this economic information may not be warranted in all cases."

While much of the language in the County's Economic Element is rooted in the familiar 20th-century framing of neoclassical economics and economy-vs.-environment, that language can be easily adapted to and interpreted through the evolved 21st-century understanding of the economy as a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.

The term "capital" is a good example. Neoclassical economics doesn't calculate the value of "natural capital" — the environmental services performed by wetlands, estuaries, forests and other natural landscapes. Herman Daly, a former senior economist at the World Bank and author of many of the basic texts in the field of ecological economics, notes that sustainable ecosystems produce goods and services, incur no production costs, and improve economic well-

being. Those services include flood control, storm protection, fertilizer, fish hatcheries, pollination, water purification and climate regulation.

In 1997, a University of Maryland study conservatively estimated the value of natural services provided by the world's wetlands at \$4.9 trillion annually, and coastal estuaries at \$4.1 trillion. A Cambridge University research team found that the worth of an intact ecosystem in terms of natural capital is 82 percent greater than its value after the land has been clear-cut, drained, paved or otherwise developed. An economic impact analysis of a project involving these ecosystems must assess the value of the natural services that would be lost through the conversion of such lands to another use.

While not welcome news to those who prefer to cast environmental regulations or the denial of development permits simply as negative economic impacts, it has become clear that full-cost accounting, which factors in the costs to society of development's "externalities" — including soil erosion, fragmented ecosystems, the conversion of natural assets into liabilities and future cost of restoration, air and water pollution and the cost of their impacts on human health — is necessary for any kind of balanced economic analysis. A calculation of income, sales and property tax revenue that will or will not be realized if a shopping mall is built or not just won't cut it.

As the County moves to implement Policy EE 1.7 of the Economic Element, it will be important to note whether its review of a project or policy's economic impacts is based on these principles. Such analysis will not be simple or cheap. But let's be clear: while it may be true that "incurring the cost to produce this economic information may not be warranted in all cases," no review of the economic

ECONOMICS continued on page 9

Pismo

continued from page 1

tion might be.

Of particular concern to many residents is the requirement that the project secure a reliable water supply, and not draw down the supply of everyone around it.

"The EIR tries to minimize potential cutbacks in the City's water deliveries from Lopez Lake, and does not address the uncertainty of their ongoing reliance on groundwater," said environmental attorney Babak Naficy, representing the Santa Lucia Chapter before the city council. "Output from municipal wells for Pismo Beach, Grover Beach and Arroyo Grande may be disrupted as a result of seawater intrusion or other groundwater contamination, but the EIR just assumes that the City will continue to receive 700 acre feet of water from municipal wells indefinitely, despite the fact that the City was required to reduce its reliance on groundwater a few years ago to protect the resource from seawater intrusion."

In response to the Sierra Club when we pointed out that the EIR fails to adequately describe the Low Impact

Development (LID) measures that are supposed to reduce the project's stormwater runoff, City staff retorted that "subsequent development applications will be reviewed and approved for consistency with the city's adopted stormwater master plan, which reflects RWQCB [Regional Water Quality Control Board] standards." Apparently it is a rather poor reflection, as the comment that the EIR does an inadequate job of describing Low Impact Development measures originally came from the RWQCB.

Likewise, when we pointed out that the EIR cited no support for its conclusion that the mitigation of the project's significant air quality impacts is not feasible, city staff tried to argue with us, though this point of disagreement was first raised by the Air Pollution Control District.

The Final EIR is inadequate and should undergo substantial revision before the Pismo Beach city council considers Spanish Springs for approval. We urge the city council to acknowledge that fact at its March 5 meeting.

Happy Birthday to Us



SIERRA
CLUB
SANTA LUCIA
CHAPTER



Join us on May 11 to celebrate 45 years of saving the central coast

Come to a party and fundraiser marking the last 45 years of the Santa Lucia Chapter's work to conserve the natural treasures that make life here something special. (We'll also be celebrating the next 45 years, which, at a dollar a year, works out to a ticket price of \$90.) On Saturday, May 11, we'll be celebrating with food, drink, music and more at a beautiful home and garden in the Edna Valley.

Music provided by Ranchers for Peace, with beers and wines provided by local brewers and vintners..

Plus:

"John Muir's Yosemite" Outings Chair Joe Morris, who leads our popular SLO city walks, will take you back to Yosemite as John Muir knew it 140+ years ago. With vintage slides and music, you will take a tour of its long-lost sights and pioneers, and hear the stories of Muir's transformation into America's wilderness visionary.

A \$90 ticket gets you all of above plus appetizers & main course. Reserve your place(s) no later than April 10 and get the address & map to the event. Send an e-mail to sierraclub8@gmail.com, or call (805) 543-8717.

Sierra Club National Election

It's time to vote for this years' directors

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors will be held in April. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive your ballot in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option). This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. The Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of



membership.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by visiting the Club's election website: www.sierraclub.org/bod/2013election.

This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote.

Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If you choose the mail option, you will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

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Remember Fukushima



Anne Kellogg

On the 2nd anniversary of the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant in Japan, **San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace** acknowledges those who continue to suffer. Please join us for an evening of shared remembrance through poetry, song, story, and kindness.

Monday, March 11, 6pm
Steynberg Gallery
1531 Monterey Street
San Luis Obispo

MOTHERS
for
PEACE

Rally

continued from page 1

dangerous carbon pollution from the nation’s dirtiest power plants. Much of President Obama’s legacy will rest squarely on his response, resolve, and leadership in fighting the climate crisis. “Forward on Climate” rally participants urged him move forward on his State of the Union declaration, “For the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change.”

“Twenty years from now on President’s Day, people will want to know what the president did in the face of rising sea levels, record droughts and furious storms brought on by climate disruption,” said Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club. “President Obama holds in his hand a pen and the power to deliver on his promise of hope for our children. Today, we are asking him to use that pen to reject the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, and ensure that this dirty, dangerous, export pipeline will never be built.”

The Keystone XL tar sands project would pipe some of the dirtiest oil on the planet through the breadbasket of America to be shipped overseas through the Gulf of Mexico. It would be a disaster for our climate, producing tar sands crude that kicks out two or three times as much carbon pollution as producing conventional crude oil.

“The Yinka Dene Alliance of British Columbia is seeing the harm from climate change to our peoples and our waters,” said Chief Jacqueline Thomas, immediate past chief of the Saik’uz First Nation in British Columbia and co-founder of the Yinka Dene Alliance (People of the Earth). “We see the threat of taking tar sands out of the Earth and bringing it through our territories and over our rivers. The harm being done to people in the tar sands region can no longer be Canada’s dirty secret. We don’t have the billions of dollars that industry has. But we do have our faith that people will do the right thing to protect Mother Earth. The Forward on Climate Rally shows that we are not alone in the fight to stop tar sands expansion and tackle climate change.”

The president has the authority and responsibility under the Clean Air Act to cut the amount of dangerous carbon pollution emitted from dirty power plants. These power plants are the biggest contributors to climate dis-



Joshua Lopez / Project Survival Media



Speak now Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune addresses the crowd at the Forward on Climate rally.

ruption, but are currently allowed to pollute without limits.

“This president has the power to achieve the single biggest carbon reduction ever, by holding our biggest carbon polluters – dirty power plants – accountable for what they dump into the air,” said Van Jones, NRDC trustee and president of Rebuild the Dream. “Cleaning up this pollution and using more clean energy will provide jobs to thousands of Americans, save families real money when it comes to electricity bills and, most important, will make a real difference in our health and the health of our children.”

The historic rally calling for climate leadership reflected Americans’ recognition of the threats of climate change and their support for meaningful action now. Study after study has shown strong public support for climate solutions, including polling conducted by Public Policy Polling immediately after the President’s State of the Union address.

That PPP poll found that 65 percent of Americans think that climate change is a serious problem and a substantial majority of Americans support Presi-

Dear President Barack Obama,

Your legacy as 44th president of the United States rests firmly on your leadership on climate disruption. Only the president has the power to lead an effort on the scale and with the urgency we need to phase out fossil fuels and lead America, and the world, in a clean energy revolution.

WE SUPPORT YOUR DEMONSTRATING THE STRONGEST RESOLVE IN FIGHTING THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON EVERY FRONT.

Thank you.

Michael Brune SIERRA CLUB	Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr. HIP HOP CAUCUS	Bill McKibben 350.ORG	
Van Jones REBUILD THE DREAM	Julian Bond NAACP	Tom Steyer THE CENTER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION	
Adam Levine	Elle Macpherson	Jason Mraz	My Morning Jacket
Alec Baldwin	Evangeline Lilly	Julia Louis-Dreyfus	Ozomatli
Alicia Silverstone	Guster	Linkin Park	Phillipe Cousteau
Bonnie Raitt	Ian Somerhalder	Malin Akerman	Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Darren Aronofsky	Incubus	Medeski Martin & Wood	Russell Simmons
Devotchka	Indigo Girls	Michael Franti	Susan Sarandon
Edward James Olmos	Jack Johnson	Morgan Freeman	Woody Harrelson
Edward Norton			Yoko Ono

ATTEND THE FORWARD ON CLIMATE RALLY IN DC ON FEB 17 FORWARDONCLIMATE.ORG

Dear Sir This letter occupied a full page in the February 11 edition of *The Hill* newspaper.

dent Obama using his authority to reduce its main cause, carbon pollution.

The Forward on Climate rally was

organized by 350.org; Sierra Club, the Hip Hop Caucus; Natural Resources Defense Council and many other organizations.

We Stand with the Planet

by Sarah Hodgdon, Sierra Club Conservation Director

On February 13, I watched history made as Washington, D.C., police arrested Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune, President Allison Chin, and a coalition of almost 50 other climate-crisis activists outside the White House. This protest came because the Club’s grassroots leadership decided that the obligation to address climate disruption has become so urgent, and the opportunity to attain clean energy prosperity so real, that we had a moral duty to act.

This act of civil disobedience, the first in the Club’s 120-year history, was an announcement to President Obama and other leaders that they must take bold action now to address the threat of fossil fuel pollution — with stopping construction of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline as a critically important first step.

I could not have been more proud as I watched the protest unfold in the peaceful, purposeful spirit in which it was intended. Conscientious planning paid off with an orderly event, witnessed by over 300 supporters and more than 100 representatives of print, national broadcast and online media.

Among those arrested were former Sierra Club president Adam Werbach, Nebraska cattle buyer Randy Thompson, labor leader Joe Uehlein, United Church of Christ Reverend Doctor Jim Antal, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., actress Daryl Hannah, and longtime NAACP chair Julian Bond.

TAKE ACTION

The next four years are crucial in the fight against climate disruption. Together, we can make sure President Obama sets America on the right path with bold climate solutions and clean energy innovation. Get updates on planned actions, join our fossil fuel campaigns, get fact sheets and printed materials and get into the social network for 100 Days of Action to Fight Climate Disruption.

You’ll find all that and more at standwiththeplanet.com



Need Land?

Central Coast Grown acquired the SLO City Farm land on January 7, and is excited to announce nineteen acres are available to lease in the beautiful city of San Luis Obispo. This prime location features irrigated Class One and Class Two farmland and an agricultural well and pump. Additional benefits of this project include: easy access from the 101 freeway, flexible lease length, and public recognition through organizational outreach and programming efforts. Whether you are interested in leasing all 19 acres or a portion of this land for production agriculture, please complete the proposal process by following the link at centralcoastgrown.org/site/docs/CCAN_RFP_GROUND_LEASE.pdf. The deadline for applications is March 15.

Interested in the SLO City Farm, Educational Experimental Plots? These ½ – 2 acre plots will be available through a separate proposal process in April. For immediate notification upon proposal release, email info@centralcoastgrown.org with the subject line “Educational Experimental Plots” and contact information including your name, email address, and telephone number.



On Governor Brown's 2013 State of the State

By Sierra Club California

In his January State-of-the-State address, Governor Brown commented on three issues directly addressing the environment: Delta water conveyance, California's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate disruption, and transportation's alignment with environmental needs.

First, we are pleased to join the governor in congratulating the legislature and voters for passing Proposition 30, which helped bring us to the healthiest budget in a decade. Sierra Club California supported Proposition 30. The governor deserves high praise for his leadership in introducing and pushing that measure through, so thank you, Governor Brown.

We also appreciate the governor's continued leadership on addressing climate change and moving ahead to meet the state's greenhouse gas pollution goals. Californians are united in wanting to take a lead on reducing that pollution, and we are all benefiting from the shift to cleaner energy for our electricity and our transportation.

We strongly disagree with the governor's approach to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. Giant

tunnels or a peripheral canal are both out of order and won't solve the water problems we face. Creating infrastructure that will literally suck the life out of a vast ecosystem on which the fishing industry, regional tourism, local farms and California's complex natural environment are all dependent is an outdated idea that needs to be deep-sixed.

A more rational approach makes more sense for the economies of Northern and Southern California, for the environment, and for the people who will need water if and when a massive earthquake strikes. That includes helping plug the leaks in the aging water delivery infrastructure in California's cities and towns; focusing on water conservation and reuse more intensely all over the state, including in the industrial and commercial sectors; fixing the crumbling levy system; and generally reducing Californians' dependence on hundreds and hundreds of miles of quake-vulnerable aqueducts.

Californians have shown time and again their willingness to change and innovate to improve their lives and protect the environment. The governor has proven more than once that he is an innovative thinker. That's why the notion of addressing our water challenges with an outmoded big building project that won't deliver a better economy, better environment or more reliable water delivery is so perplexing. It isn't innovative, it won't protect the environment, and it won't solve the problem.

We are encouraged that the governor has asked the Transportation Agency to review how transportation planning and funding align, including his acknowledgment that Californians have a different perspective on transportation and the environment today than we did in the past, when his father was building highways. We hope the agency remembers that addressing the need to clean up our

Interview

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in many moons. But probably the best example from recent history was the time the Board of Supervisors was about to vote on its legislative agenda for 2010 – the annual list of everything the County's lobbyists are supposed to push for in Sacramento and D.C. Buried at the end of the draft agenda was a directive to get the California Coastal Act amended to require that anyone seeking to appeal a permit issued in the county's Coastal Zone must pay the county's permit appeal fee – northward of \$800 – before their appeal could be heard by the Coastal Commission.

That's what the County charges to appeal a development permit in our inland area. But in the Coastal Zone, the waiver of any fee to appeal a project permit is central to the California Coastal Act. The appeals process is the way that coastal projects in local jurisdictions are brought before the Commission, the arbiter of the Coastal Act. That's how the law gets applied to coastal planning issues. It's how precedent is set for coastal development statewide. The legislature wanted to ensure that any party with concerns about a project would have a direct, unencumbered path to appeal at the Coastal Commission, which would determine whether the issues required its intervention. That's why they set no fee for the appeal process.

The Santa Lucia Chapter spotted the Coastal Commission appeal fee item in the supervisors' legislative agenda a few days before it was scheduled to be ratified by the board. We alerted the Coastal Commission that a dagger aimed at the heart of the Coastal Act was nestling in the legislative agenda of the SLO County Board of Supervisors. The day before the vote, Peter Douglas called up the chair of the Board of Supervisors to inform him of the reasons why appeals to the Coastal Commission must remain free of charge for all citizens of the state of California, including the ones who happen to live in San Luis Obispo County. The next day, the Board dropped that item from its legislative agenda.



highly polluting goods movement system must be part of any review. It would also be good for that agency to bring a broad range of stakeholders to the table, including representatives of communities that have suffered the most from the old ways of doing transportation planning.

Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the Sierra Club's 13 chapters and more than 150,000 members in California.



Some think that our chapter is overly confrontational. What is your response to that?

I always recommend that those folks bone up on their Frederick Douglass: “Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are people who want crops without plowing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning,” etc. That's the quote that concludes “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

But there's another problem, which is some people see pretty much anything and everything as overly confrontational. Last year, I wrote a letter to the *Tribune* about the Keystone XL pipeline. I included a quote from a press release about the “do-nothing Republican Congress” which was cheerleading for the pipeline because of a few thousand jobs it would allegedly bring with it, but had killed bills that would have created millions of jobs. Now calling the 112th Congress a “do-nothing Republican Congress” is a statement of fact. There are charts showing the number of bills passed by every Congress in our history. In terms of successful legislation, the 112th Congress barely budged the needle. So it's factually correct on all counts: the Republican Party controlled Congress in 2011, and Congress got virtually nothing done. But how the letters poured in! By citing that phrase, I was allegedly spewing vitriol. I was engaging in hate speech. I was “compelled to verbally annihilate anyone who might express a contrary opinion,” and on and on. Excuse me, but I don't think so. Russell Baker, who was a columnist for the *New York Times*, said “society is teeming with people who become furious if told what the score is.”

So we get “confrontational” thrown at us on any pretext. But yes, the Chapter does genuinely confrontational things. We call out politicians for bad votes. We insist on enforcement. We sue to prevent environmental harm. We let the chips fall where they may. What “be nice, don't be confrontational” seems to come down to is a preference that we not mention problematic things our elected officials do or say, and not connect the dots between words and actions and unspoken motives based on money or power or political calculation. That is fundamentally an insistence on unreality. It requires sweeping things under the rug because you never want to risk confrontation. And unless something personally radicalizing happens to someone who subscribes to that philosophy, he's not likely to change his mind.

But if Frederick Douglass doesn't do it for you, there's also what Peter Jackson said in response to people who don't like the look of the High Frame Rate version of *The Hobbit*. It was something like “I like root beer. If you don't like root beer, I can't make you like it.” And it's very generous of me to cite that as an example, because I actually hated the High Frame Rate version of *The Hobbit*. I think it looks terrible. But Peter Jackson thinks it looks great.

Shell game

continued from page 3

the point.

But city parks and athletic fields do have enhancements and amenities. And conflating SLO's open space with parks and athletic fields is exactly what City staff tried to do eight years ago in the COSE. They were beaten back by determined residents.

It is hard not to look at the results of the latest “update” and goal-setting process and avoid the thought “here we go again.”

Get Green at the SLO International Film Festival

The SLO International Film Festival, March 6-10, will feature a cornucopia of films about nature, politics and economic as well as profiles of individuals who have stood up to powerful interests to preserve the natural world. The following films should be of particular interest to Sierra Club members.

Pipe Dreams deals with opposition to the Keystone Pipeline by landowners, farmers and people living near the path of the proposed pipeline; it will be shown at the Downtown Theatre in SLO, Friday, 3/8 at 1 p.m.

Bidder 70 tells the story of a university student who foiled President Bush's 2008 fraudulent oil and gas lease auction by bidding \$1.8 million to save 22,000 acres surrounding Utah's National Parks—he had no intention to drill or to pay but is now paying with his future. The film will be shown at the Downtown Theatre on Friday, 3/8 at 1 p.m. and at the Palm Theatre in SLO on Saturday, 3/9 at 11 a.m.

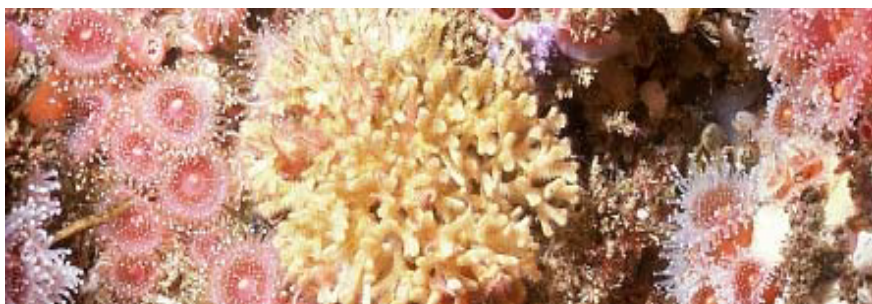
Congo follows four of the world's most fearless paddlers as they attempt the first kayak descent through the world's biggest rapids— on the Congo River; it will be shown in Avila Beach Community Center on Thursday, 3/7 at 4 p.m. and at the Palm on Saturday, 3/9 at 1 p.m.

Santa Ynez River Wilderness has been described as “a love letter to the upper Santa Ynez River watershed” and features beautiful images of the birds, plants and wildlife of the Valley. It will be shown at the Palm on Sunday, 3/10 at 10 a.m.

Shadow of the Condor follows biologist Joseph Brandt as he reveals the realities of bringing the California condor back from the brink of extinction. The film will be shown at the Downtown Theatre on Sunday, 3/10 at 10 a.m.

The Ivory Crisis is a short film on the African Elephant poaching crisis, sharing experiences from researchers and local communities. It will be shown at the Palm on Sunday, 3/10 at 4 p.m.

“Between The Tides” at Filmmaker Showcase



Former SLO County Supervisor returns as film producer

Bud Laurent, who served two terms on the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors from 1991-1999, will return to his native habitat from his current home in Oregon for a screening of his highly acclaimed film *Between The Tides* at the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival.

Laurent is a marine biologist and former manager of Central Coast Marine Resources for the California Department of Fish & Game. His film looks at the pioneering marine ecologist Ed Ricketts (1897-1948) and some of Ricketts' spiritual descendants whom Laurent knew during his years as a researcher and SCUBA diver on the central coast.

Nobel Prize winning author John Steinbeck turned his friend Ed Ricketts

into the legendary “Doc” character in his novel *Cannery Row*, but it's the real Ed Ricketts whose spirit permeates this remarkable film.

Most of *Between The Tides* was shot at central coast locations familiar to local residents, including the Abalone Farm in Cayucos, Avila Beach and the tidepools of Montaña de Oro. One sequence takes place at Bahia de Los Angeles in Baja California, where Ricketts and Steinbeck journeyed for their famous adventure aboard the *Western Flyer*.

Laurent teamed with Southern California filmmaker Peter Coonradt to make the film. The Festival showing will be its first local screening. More information at www.betweenthetides.net.

4:00 p.m., Sunday, March 10, Perla del Mar, 205 Windward Ave., Shell Beach

The Hike

We stood in a circle
at the base of Cerro San Luis
He passed the clipboard
for each to sign in.

This was my first hike
up a mountain
for I'd long trod
naught but the beaches
of Orange County.

I whispered to a woman nearby,
“I'm a volcanic virgin
from the flatlands.”
“Oh, my,” she said, “go slow.”

I trailed behind the group
up and up

into the sheer beauty
of sky and bulging rock.

I stopped halfway,
rested on a rare plateau,
inhaled the crisp air
and city sights so far below.

The Sierra Club group
suddenly appeared
on their descent
They'd reached the top long ago,
now greeted me with joy.

I'd made it half way
up this huge mountain
and all the way
into the club.

Evyy Cole Turrill



The Urban Forest has SLO City as its setting for this exploration of urban trees— their benefits and the unique environmental challenges they face. It will be shown at the Palm on Sunday, 3/10 at 10 a.m. along with the Santa Ynez River Wild film.

Festival tickets are not pre-sold, so the best way to guarantee your seat is to buy a festival pass. For all regular screenings, all passes allow priority admission for up to 15 minutes before screen time. After that, seats are first-come, first-served.

Economics

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impacts of a major project or land use policy can claim to “balance the pros and cons” if it is not based on the principles of ecological economics. If the County can't afford to perform full-cost accounting and assess the value of natural capital as part of an economic impact analysis of a project or policy, then it can't afford to do an economic impact analysis.

When such an analysis is prepared, it will be up to the public to look for key phrases such as “natural capital,” “natural services” and “non-market valuation,” and to ensure that

these concepts are present, accurately described, fully assessed, and appropriately valued.

This will be necessary in order to avoid the outcome that Kenneth Boulding, former president of the American Economics Association, once summed up poetically:

*So cost-benefit analysis is nearly always sure
To justify the building of a solid, concrete fact,
While the Ecologic Truth is left behind in the Abstract.*

Wicked

continued from page 2

bean, that is quite common in disturbed areas and is poisonous in an unrefined form. The seeds are the most toxic part, several of which can kill an adult. The plant grows 3 to over 10 feet tall, has a red stem, large-lobed leaves, and greenish flowers in clusters. Especially distinctive are the fruit capsules, spiny things about an inch or less long, that contain shiny seeds the size of kidney beans. They contain ricin, one of the deadliest poisons known—though it's been used in chemotherapy for cancer.

Finally, Jimson weed deserves mention. Like castor bean, its deadliest parts are the seeds, though all parts are toxic. It grows 2-4 feet tall and displays striking white or pale violet trumpet-shaped flowers, about 4-10 inches long. Native Americans apparently brewed a narcotic drink from the leaves, but these days, it's more likely to be young teenagers using it for a narcotic high, but often experiencing hallucinations, seizures, or even death instead.

All of these plants are common in southern California as well. Many dozens of other poisonous plants grow locally, e.g., tree tobacco and scotch broom. Nature wasn't designed expressly for our safety, but I wouldn't have it any other way.



SIERRA CLUB Now on Facebook
SANTA LUCIA CHAPTER

search: “Santa Lucia”
and become our friend!

Let it Rain



Harvesting the Rain: Storage and Use is the latest how-to guide from the Appropriate Technology Campaign -- SLO Greenbuild, Sierra Club and Surfrider. Hot off the press, and a worthy companion to our *Graywater Guide and Rainwater Management for Low Impact Development*. \$10 postage paid, while supplies last. Mail your check to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

Taking Issue

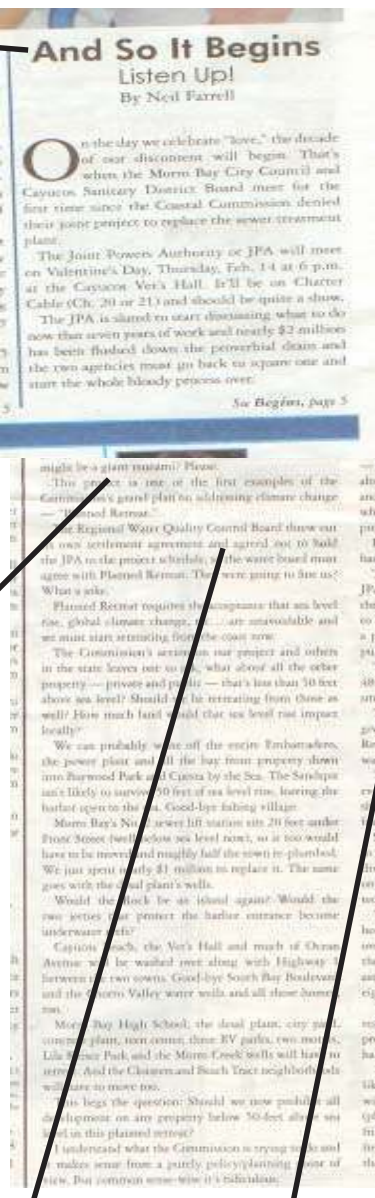
Reviewing problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“And So It Begins,” by Neil Farrell, *Bay News*, Feb. 14-20, 2013.

Summary: Now that the Coastal Commission has rejected the first try at a sewer replacement project under Morro Bay and Cayucos’ Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), people are going to start being annoying by insisting on being part of an open public process. And what’s all this nonsense about climate change?

The reference is to the “fight-[ing], bickering and stress” the *Bay News* fears will now ensue. We could have sworn it began in 2006 when Morro Bay -- part of the National Estuary Program and home to a depleted and sick population of California sea otters -- agreed to abandon its notorious status as a community with one of the only waivers from the standards of the Clean Water Act on the West Coast, and upgrade its wastewater treatment plant in a reasonable period of time. Then in 2007, the JPA voted to upgrade to the highest tertiary standard of treatment (both votes taken under enormous public pressure to do the right thing -- aka bickering and stress). Then in 2009 came the Morro Bay City Council’s disastrous decision to certify the Environmental Impact Report even though it had just been disclosed that the existing plant is in a 100-year flood plain and could not be upgraded but would have to be torn down and a new one built. Then came the knockdown, drag-out of 2010-12, when the JPA could not be dissuaded from their determination to submit a doomed project design to the Coastal Commission for a permit they couldn’t possibly get. “Now” it begins? Has the *Bay News* been asleep for the last seven years?

And So It Begins



And are we THAT positive of climate change and sea level rise? The predictions seem to get more and more dire every week; the evidence in support of climate change becomes more “overwhelming” with each new study. If sounds more like propaganda than scientific research and discovery.

Yes, we are that positive. And no, it sounds exactly like scientific research and discovery when every scientific study confirms previous studies and builds on them with additional hard data, all of which validate the original climate models and point to impacts from climate disruption that are more severe and happening sooner than even the least conservative models predicted.

So why do I say “Heaven help us” and compare us to Los Osos? I predict that this project will divide us and we’ll be bombarded with arguments on where to put the plant, annexing land and what technology to use.

It’s called the public process. Ask the SLO County Public Works Dept. if they’re not kind of glad the public process nixed their original project design for the Los Osos sewer and turned it into a project that could get a Coastal Development Permit. And pursuant to our previous question of whether the *Bay News* was asleep circa 2006-2011, where were they during the 2012 Morro Bay City Council election, in which all concerned were “bombarded with arguments” about the sewer plant, resulting in the ouster of the mayor and turnover of the city council?

The Coastal Commission dashed all hopes of doing this project in an orderly, uncontroversial and relatively inexpensive manner. And why? Because the sea level is going to rise 30-50 feet due to climate change, and there might be a giant tsunami? Please.

Every editor lives in fear of his Roseanne Rosannadanna moment, and here is Mr. Farrell’s. He missed a decimal point. The Coastal Commission -- in addition to denying the permit for the project on the grounds of half a dozen other violations of the Coastal Act and Morro Bay’s Local Coastal Plan -- noted that, when sea level rise is factored in, “the depth of flooding at the existing site expected in a 100-year event has been estimated to range from 3.4 to 5.5 feet” -- not “30-50 feet.” The next nine paragraphs premised on this math error.

The Water Board will indeed fine a community for any public works project that incurs avoidable delays. It will not impose fines for delays beyond that community’s control -- such as a permit being denied by a state regulatory agency. We suspect the residents of Morro Bay and Cayucos may not share the disappointment of the *Bay News* in the Water Board’s failure to impose fines -- or, unmentioned here, in the offer by the State and Regional boards to help review alternative siting options and locate funding for the project, including funding sources keyed to global climate change and adaptation planning, funds unavailable to the original project.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board threw out its own settlement agreement and agreed not to hold the JPA to the project schedule, so the Water Board must agree with Planned Retreat. They were going to fine us? What a joke.

As a handy refresher, we commend to the attention of the *Bay News* this article from the October 2009 *Santa Lucian*, which records the precise moment (Sept. 8, 2009) when Mayor Janice Peters led the Morro Bay city council -- members Betty Winholtz and Noah Smukler dissenting -- in the decision to disregard the public, the California Environmental Quality Act and a 100-year flood plain and set off down the road to sewer purgatory and a head-on collision with the Coastal Commission. It’s now the job of the current city council to clean up the mess left by the previous two.

Let me ask you which is more likely -- the sea level will rise 50 feet and tsunamis will wipe out the site where the sewer plant now sits...or that our friends and neighbors will get caught up in a political frenzy and fight, bicker and stress over this project for the next decade?



Moving the sewer plant does nothing to prevent sea level rise.

It’s not supposed to. In the event of a community being inundated by any method -- tsunami, hurricane, or sea level rise -- the one public structure you most want to protect from harm and disruption in order to avoid compounding the disaster and health hazards a hundredfold is a wastewater treatment plant.

Upshot: Let the *Bay News* join the ousted 2012 Morro Bay city council in writing two million times on the blackboard “The California Coastal Act is the law and bad things happen when I try to get around it.” Or as the Coastal Commission put it, much more politely: “There is no question that the additional costs and time that would be required to construct a WWTP at the Righetti site (or another alternative site) are impediments to a new WWTP. At the same time, given the WWTP is not approvable at the existing location, it is not an either/or question. Rather, this represents the practical reality of where this Applicant finds itself at this juncture...because they pursued a project at the existing location notwithstanding the issues associated with it that have been highlighted for many years, including prominently that alternative siting was necessary.”

Classifieds

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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.-Sun, Mar. 2-3 (Fri. and Mon. optional) Death Valley Tour. Meet in Shoshone, Nevada, south of Death Valley, 8 a.m. Saturday, for tour of Badwater, Natural Bridge, Golden Canyon, and Artists Drive. Sat. night camp at Texas Springs (fee). Info.: Carol Wiley, 760-245-8734 or desertlily1@verizon.net Mojave Group/CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Mar. 9th, 8 a.m. Pozo/Los Machos Hills. 10-13 mile, 2000' gain, hike on the Avenales Ranch, east of Pozo—not for beginners. Plenty of wildflowers and pleasant weather are likely. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes, and plan to be out all day. Meet at Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita. Hikers must previously RSVP leader, as the number of hikers must be limited. For details, reservation, and meeting place, contact Gary Felsman, 473-3694. Rain or threat of rain cancels.

Sat., Mar. 9th, 8:30 a.m. Willow Springs Trail. Moderate, 4.2-mile hike on trail with scenic views of Los Padres backcountry. Bring hat, sunscreen, plenty of water, long-sleeve shirt and pants, and sturdy walking shoes. Carpool pt. at intersection of Hwys 101 and 166. Get off at 166, turn west toward Hutton Rd., south on Hutton Rd. Park on Hutton Rd. by Cuyama Lane. Those wishing to meet at the trailhead, 9 a.m., go to Willow Spring Trailhead off Hwy 166, approximately 20 miles from Hwy 101, on right side, heading east. Park on the right by the gate. Info.: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792.

Sun., Mar. 10th, 2 p.m. Guided Walk of Mission-Era San Luis Obispo. Do you know where SLO's first physician lived, locations of the "hanging tree" and stagecoach stop, or the oldest building in town? Find out and more on an easy stroll past the Mission, several adobes, and old Chinatown. Hear stories of the early days of SLO, the Chumash, and Gold Rush pioneers. Families welcome. Meet at NE corner of Monterey and Osos Sts. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Thurs., Mar. 14, 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly Meeting: "The World Through Chumash Eyes." Meet Fred Collins, the energetic Tribal Administrator of

the Northern Chumash Tribal Council. He will give us an insider's account of a native culture that has existed in California since the pyramids and has profound truths to teach us today about our connection with the environment. Fred will also discuss protecting endangered sacred sites in the county. Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Fri.-Sun, Mar. 15-17, Mojave Nat. Preserve Outing. Meet Friday, 1 p.m. at Sunrise Rock primitive campground for hike to Teutonia Pk., 4 miles rt. Sat. and Sun. include Barber Peak

Sat., Mar. 16th, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. St. Patrick's Day Potluck Hike at Reservoir Canyon. 6-mile moderate hike past wildflowers, caves, waterfalls, riparian vegetation, and vistas. Potluck at top of Reservoir Canyon, overlooking Avila Valley. Bring 6 servings of a delicious, local produce dish to share with fellow hikers. Pack dinnerware, plate, cup, and bring water. We may spot edible trailside plants to incorporate in lunch and discuss what wild plants can be harvested. Poison oak common on area trails. Directions: Hwy 101 north from SLO for one mile, right on Reservoir



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

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

April 7-9; May 5-7; June 2-4; July 21-23; Aug. 25-27; Sept. 15-17

Join us for a 3-day, 3-island, live-aboard cruise to Channel Islands National Park. Hike wild, windswept trails bordered with blazing wildflowers. Kayak rugged coastlines. Marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds. Watch for the endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who were here for thousands of years. Or just relax at sea. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel Truth.

The cost, \$590, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks and beverages plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest, and



present evening programs. To make a reservation send a \$100 check, written to Sierra Club, to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte,

CA 91732. For more information call or e-mail 626-443-0706 or jholtzhln@aol.com.

Loop Trail and Kelso Dunes. Info.: Carol Wiley, desertlily1@verizon.net or 760-245-8734. Mojave Group/CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Mar. 16th, 8:30 a.m. Exploratory Hike—American Canyon to Buckeye Camp. 12-mile strenuous hike in beautiful Garcia Wilderness, 1800 ft. gain, not for beginners, an all-day hike. Some poison oak on trail. Bring lunch and water. Meet in Santa Margarita at Pacific Beverage Co. Info.: Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317.

Canyon Rd. to end (trail-head). Info.: Victoria Carranza, 459-6752 or vcarranza@gmail.com.

Sat-Sun., Mar. 16-17. Ghost Town Extravaganza. Camp at historic ghost town Ballarat. Hikes to Lookout City and Riley townsites. Send \$8 per person, 2 large sase, H & W phones, email, rideshare info to leader: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 721039, Pinon Hills, CA 92372. Info.: 760-868-2179. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun., Mar. 17th, 10 a.m. Trekking Pole Hike at Sycamore Springs. Two-mile, 700 ft. gain, hike to model benefits of trekking poles. Meet near entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Dr. Confirm with David Georgi, 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com.

Fri-Sun, Mar. 29-31 Wildflower Characteristics Inventory with Needles BLM. Annual Sierra Club service trip to document area adjacent to wilderness area. Car camping and optional central commissary, small fee. Info.: Vicky Hoover, vickyhoover@sierraclub.org or 415-977-5525.

Sat., Mar. 30th, 8:30 a.m. Reservoir Canyon and Bowden Ranch. Moderate 5-mile hike, 1000 ft. gain, through Reservoir Canyon and over

backbone ridge, with spectacular views of SLO, ending at the high school. Duration 3.5 hrs. Meet at east corner of SLO High School parking lot, near corner of Johnson Ave. and San Luis Drive. Car shuttle to Reservoir Canyon will be arranged. Bring water, snacks, hat, sturdy shoes, dress in layers for the weather. Info.: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com. Rain cancels.

Sat., Mar. 30th, 8:30 a.m. S. Big Sur, Lion Den Camp. Strenuous, 13-mile hike with 3000 ft. elevation gain, following Cruikshank Trail to camp, then to Silver and Lion Den camps. Not for beginners. Beautiful views from rock outcroppings. Bring water, lunch, and dress for weather. Ticks and poison oak are possible. Meet in Washburn day use area, San Simeon State Park, one mile north of stoplight at Windsor and Main St. in Cambria. Refueling stop after hike. Info.: Chuck Tribbey, 441-7597.

Fri-Sun., Apr. 5th-7th Carrizo Plains. Two nights at Selby Rocks car camp, free, no reserved sites. Hikes through areas of often stunning wildflowers. Gather at camp on Sat. 9 a.m., carpool to day hike, tbd. Bring your own food, water, sturdy shoes, camping material. Info.: Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317.

2013 Sierra Club
Calendar

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