



March 2010
Volume 47 No. 3

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DON'T MISS

**Chapter
General Meeting
Wed., March 24**

**Where the
Wildflowers Are
with Cal Poly Plant
Conservatory
Director Matt Ritter**

-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

Catching Air

The science is in on the health impacts of off-road vehicles on Oceano Dunes. And the struggle is on.

Last December, the County Air Pollution Control District announced the results of its exhaustive, multi-year, two-part study of air pollution on the Nipomo Mesa, the worst in the county, far out of compliance with the safe limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency for "PM10" pollution, particles of sand and dust in the air measuring 10 microns or smaller.

Simply put: off-road vehicles tearing up the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area are responsible for the huge clouds of sand and dust that are blown inland to the Mesa, and there inhaled into the lungs of residents, where they can cause decreased lung function, chronic bronchitis, pulmonary disorders, and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

This announcement was met with denial -- massive, deep-throated denial from the off-road community and local city councils and business interests (see "Pismo vs. Science," page 7). There were calls for another study, this one overseen by State Parks -- which would, of course, be a study in conflict of interest, with the proprietor of the public nuisance tasked with determining just how much of a health hazard the biggest



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Mike Baird, bairdphoto.com

cash cow in the State Parks system might be, and what should be done about it.

The release date of the APCD study and a series of public workshops,

originally set for December, was pushed back to January, then early February. As we go to press, the study

continued on page 7

How Are They Doing?



Over the last five months of 2008, the Santa Lucia Chapter's Executive Committee wrote a series of articles that appeared in *New Times* under the heading "Messages to the New Board." The suggested policy prescriptions offered the newly elected majority on the County Board of Supervisors a potential

roadmap of reforms and opportunities to undo the damage done by more than a decade of regressive, anti-environmental board actions and instead establish environmentally sound policies for a sustainable future -- something that was simply impossible under the old board.

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photo/Karin Walsh

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

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

General Meeting

Wednesday, March 24, 7 p.m.

Where the Wildflowers Are

The Spring Wildflowers of SLO County are with us. What are they and where are they? Matt Ritter, Director of the Cal Poly Plant Conservatory and Professor of Botany, presents our local flora and gives tips on where to find the best blooms in our grasslands, beaches, forests, and wetlands. Come for a beautiful show with this popular speaker and photographer. He will also briefly describe some current projects of the Conservatory. An especially popular slide program, not to be missed! No charge or reservations. Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875.



Elsie's grandmother

Organic Biotech?

Black is white, up is down, war is peace...

By Jesse Arnold

The Monsanto Corporation and other fans of ag biotech know that their genetically engineered crops are unpopular with consumers. That is one reason why they have consistently opposed labeling of their products at the retail level.



If only they could find a way to greenwash ag biotech, maybe they could fool consumers into accepting their genetically engineered crops.

Why not link ag biotech with a concept popular with consumers such as organic growing? Believe it or not, this absurd concept is being proposed. An article titled "The Unexplored Potential of Organic -Biotech Production," by Cyndi Barmore, appeared in the Global Agricultural Information Network report of the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service on May 26, 2009.

"A governmental decision to change organic regulations to permit the use of biotechnology could have far-reaching policy implications for global agriculture. Allowing producers to gain organic certification for biotech crops could encourage the development of a new type of environmentally sustainable agricultural production with greater benefits for the consumer."

Barmore claims that the only reason organic growers oppose ag biotech is because they feel it has not been proven to be safe for people, animals or the environment. Barmore assures us that ag biotech is safe and therefore organic growers should accept it.

Even if ag biotech is proven safe at some time in the future, there are many other irreconcilable differences between ag biotech and organic growers.

Organic growers use methods that are as natural as possible. Genetic engineering is not a natural process. Therefore it is not organic. Organic growers think ag policy should be developed by farmers and consumers. Ag biotech believes in corporate control, that farmers should do as Monsanto tells them to and consumers should be kept in the dark. Organic growers believe in using compost, manure, and other natural fertilizers. Ag biotech people believe in chemical fertilizers. Organic growers use non-chemical methods to control weeds. Ag biotech people use chemical weed killers. Monsanto's most lucrative crops are designed to resist their Roundup weed killer. Ag biotech people have no objection to using chemicals to control insects. Organic growers use non-chemical methods to control weeds and insects.

Organic growers are the real example of sustainable agriculture. Their methods have been proven over the centuries. Ag biotech use of Bt corn and Roundup Ready crops is not sustainable. Insects are developing resistance to the Bt corn. Weeds are becoming resistant to the Roundup weed killer. Soil fertility cannot be sustained long term under a constant onslaught of chemical herbicides.

Organic farmers believe in diversity on farms. Each farm needs to have animals and a diversity of crops. Ag biotech people believe in monoculture. Organic growers do not believe in the patenting of seeds of food crops. Ag biotech companies support patenting of seed crops. Organic growers view the ag biotech companies claims to "intellectual property rights" over seeds to be nothing more than corporate theft of our agricultural heritage. Organic growers believe we should have anti-trust laws that are enforced. Ag biotech companies' think monopoly or oligopoly control of the seed industry is fine as long as they are the ones in control.

So there are lots of reasons, other than very valid safety concerns about ag biotech, that ag biotech and organic growing will never go together, despite a dishonest public relations campaign from the ag biotech industry.

SANTA LUCIAN

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Santa Lucia Chapter

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 MEMBER
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 COUNCIL OF CLUB LEADERS

The Executive Committee meets the third Friday of every month at 1:00 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 547-B Marsh St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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Outings, events, and more!

Here's Your Chapter Ballot

Below is the ballot for the Santa Lucia Chapter's annual Executive Committee election. All current members of the Santa Lucia Chapter are eligible to vote. If there is more than one Sierra Club member in your household, you may photocopy the printed ballot and mail both in the same envelope. The winners of this election will start their terms when the outgoing ExCom adjourns their April meeting. The newly-elected ExCom will then convene a brief meeting to elect board officers and set the date for their May meeting.



IMPORTANT VOTING INFORMATION

- Vote for no more than 2 candidates.
- Cumulative voting (more than one vote for one candidate) is not allowed.
- Ballots must be received by **5:00 p.m., April 5, 2010**, at the Chapter office.
- Address the envelope per instructions on the ballot and sign and date over the flap of the envelope.
- Mail your ballot with sufficient time to arrive by the deadline, or drop it off via the door mail slot at the Chapter office at 547-B Marsh St. in SLO.

Megan Worthington

My affinity for nature began in my early childhood during annual summer trips to the Western Sierras. I would explore the meadows and creeks of the Dinkey Lakes Wilderness and swim in its abundant alpine lakes.

In June 2009, I graduated from Cal Poly with a bachelor's degree in Journalism and a minor in Environmental Studies. My relationship with the Santa Lucia Chapter began with a public relations project that focused on Monterey Bay Sanctuary Expansion efforts, helping organize a portion of the Cal Poly Convergence and assisting Chad Worth at the Sierra Club's Atascadero Energy Town Hall. I am now working as an educational assistant for the California Conservation Corps, where I engage with youth and develop programs that fit their needs. I have been teaching a conservation awareness class that focuses on providing adequate information about global warming and encouraging localized action.

My intention in running for a seat on the Executive Committee is to keep an ear to the heartbeat of local issues and to form a stronger bond with the environmental community of San Luis Obispo.



Jono Kinkade

I first got involved with the Sierra Club with a 10-day summer training program led by the Sierra Student Coalition in Washington State.

In 2004, I joined two other Cuesta College students to start Grassroots, an environmental club that worked with the local San Luis Bay Chapter of the Surfrider to increase recycling and eliminate styrofoam use on campus and engage in local issues.

In 2006, I led the successful effort to persuade the Mayor of Atascadero to sign the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

As a Community Studies major at UC Santa Cruz, I began focusing on cause and effect within the economic, social, and environmental issues in the political economy and led the student newspaper's editorial staff in creating an Investigative News desk.

I work with the Think Outside the Bomb Network, a national anti-nuclear youth network. My two main local interests are responsible land use and a transition to energy that is truly just, clean and safe.

I believe our converging global crises calls for a potent mix of pioneering solutions and tenacious opposition, and fresh and innovative approaches.



Linda Seeley

I have been a midwife for over 30 years. Seeing the effects of environmental destruction on families and children worldwide, and seeking a wider context in which to use my skills, in 2000 I began to study with systems theorist and Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy. I am an advanced facilitator of the Work that Reconnects. I am a longtime anti-nuclear activist, a board member of the San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace and director of the Terra Foundation, a local non-profit organization dealing with "Earth Care, Soul Care," and the opportunities for community resilience that arise from the great changes our world is facing.

I facilitate workshops for activists and environmental leaders. I am the mother of three and the grandmother of three grandsons, and a certified nurse-midwife and women's health nurse practitioner.



Liz Tracy

I am a recent Cal Poly graduate and an avid hiker and biker.

Last summer I worked on a grant to start a green jobs training program at Cuesta College. This program started in January 2009 and has now provided 30 low-income adults in the community with an opportunity to learn the basics of green technologies.

Currently, I am an Americorps VISTA volunteer at the California Conservation Corps. We have so much to thank the CCC for and I am so thankful I have had the opportunity to work there!

I recently introduced ten Corps members to the hiking leadership training that the Sierra Club offers. I think it is so important for young people to get involved. I am always looking for things that will benefit our community and I think serving on the Chapter's Executive Committee would be a great way to support what I believe in!



*BALLOT
Santa Lucia Chapter Election - November 2008*

Mark an "X" or checkmark in the box next to the candidate's name. Vote for no more than two candidates.

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

Do not write your name on the ballot.

Sign and date your envelope over the sealed flap.

Liz Tracy

Jono Kinkade

Linda Seeley

Megan Worthington

**Place in envelope, sign and date the front of the envelope, and mail to :
Elections Committee
Santa Lucia Chapter
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406**

Want to see the sun up close?

The Central Coast Astronomical Society is setting up special solar observing telescopes on Sun-Earth Day on Saturday, March 20th at Borders Booksellers in San Luis Obispo at 11am. You'll get to (safely) view and hear the sun through special telescopes and take home cool prizes from NASA. This event is free and open to the public, but is also subject to weather conditions. Before heading out, look up at the sky... if it's clear and blue, then come on by!
www.CentralCoastAstronomy.org



How Are They Doing?

continued from page 1

It's now time to grade the new majority on its first year.



Message 1: Political reform

When the new day dawned in San Luis Obispo County and the nascent dream of an open and accessible public process in County government seemed at hand, we formulated the proverbial roadmap for the new Board of Supervisors, hoping to ensure that this opportunity would bring about permanent progress

- We asked the Board to adopt:
- * A formal process of ex parte reports on each issue the board will take official action on;
 - * County policies on keeping phone records, calendar entries and other information regarding the supervisors' county-related activities;
 - * Procedures to establish a credible document-management system for county files to facilitate response to public requests for information – (this is the computer age after all);
 - * Campaign finance reform.

According to Encarta Dictionary, ex parte is defined as "involving one side only. Made or undertaken on behalf of only one of the parties involved in a court case." Certain of the actions taken by the Board require that each Supervisor reveal any meetings or contact with any of the parties with a stake in the outcome. This require-

Minutes of Meetings shows much less detail. Word counts of Minutes for Supervisors meetings in 2008 lasting from 5-9 hours ranged from 5500-

their profit margin. But successful inclusionary programs around the country have provided a reliable source of workforce housing for hundreds of communities without either bankrupting the building industry or giving rise to Stalinist dictatorships.

Five weeks after our Message to the Board appeared in *New Times*, the SLO County Board of Supervisors approved an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance that echoed George Bush's "Healthy Forests Act" and "Clear Skies Initiative." It doesn't actually require developers to include affordable units in their projects. They can if they want to, and if they do, they get some additional incentives to build more houses than they would otherwise qualify for. Or they can build the units somewhere else in the county. Or they can just buy some land and donate it for somebody else to build affordable housing on somewhere else in the county. Or they can just write a check for someone else to build some houses somewhere else at some point in the future, maybe, in lieu of providing any houses or land.

7300 words. Minutes for Meetings in 2009 of 5-10 hours ranged from 3,000 to 5,000 words.

On the matter of the elephant — and the rest of the circus — in the room, campaign finance reform: Nada. Citizens and due process battling 0, special interests holding their own.

Final grade: None of these issues has even been raised by the Board. **F**



Message 2: Affordable housing

Our second Message to the New Board asked "Where's that affordable housing?" and ticked off the components of an effective inclusionary housing ordinance. First and foremost: it should be an "ordinance that emphasizes the construction of units on site, at the same time as market-

Staff, Supervisors and building industry advocates refer to this as a "buffet style" approach to providing affordable housing. So far, these "in lieu" fees have proven to be the most popular item on the buffet. That's not a surprise. Picture crème brûlée surrounded by canned corned beef hash and pickled pigs' feet.

How much housing would builders

make 4% of your units affordable; in year number two, 8% would have to be affordable, and so on. Likewise, the "in lieu" fee was supposed to be increased by 20% each year for five years until the target of approximately \$20,000 per home was reached. This was done primarily at the request of the Home Builders Association, who argued for the phased approach because of the declining economy and the need to adjust their financing models.

It costs about \$100,000 for the County to build an affordable home with in-lieu fees. But because the County is only charging one-fifth of the required fee, in 2009 the County collected only \$6,500 in fees. It is arguably more cost-effective for developers to build affordable units as part of a larger development project, because they have already paid the land costs and insurance, and have economies of scale.

On November 10, the Board was set to embark on Year 2 of the phase-in plan when they heard testimony from the Homebuilders that because of the declining economy, the Board should delay implementation of the second year of the phase-in.

Supervisors Gibson and Patterson pushed to keep to the approved schedule, rightly pointing out that the economy was sputtering when they approved the phased approach the previous year at the request of the Homebuilders, and that if they didn't move ahead with it, they would never meet their target. But Supervisor Hill sided with Supervisors Mecham and Achadjian and gave the builders another free pass, thereby precluding the construction of unknown numbers of affordable units (or "in lieu" contributions toward the construction of affordable units) in 2010.

Ironically, the County's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance won an award from the American Planning Association, which is not surprising, as all the County's worst programs seem to attract recognition from this Association. The County's Inclusionary Ordinance now shares APA honors with the Ag Cluster Ordinance and the TDC Ordinance.

Final grade: Split grade. Overall, the Board gets a **D** for approving the ordinance as written in the first place (so does the Planning Commission, for that matter, with the exception of Sarah Christie, who tried to strengthen the policy but had no support from her colleagues). Supervisors Gibson and Patterson get an **A** for at least trying to maintain the agreed trajectory. Supervisors Hill, Mecham and Achadjian get an **F** for siding with the building industry despite touting their support for "affordable housing."

(And because we can hear it now, we will say in advance: No, Supervisors,

Picture crème brûlée surrounded by canned corned beef hash and pickled pigs' feet.

ment stems from constitutional due process. It is mandatory in quasi-judicial circumstances, where the hearing is required and when it is specific to a project or parcel.

We attended a number of appeals of Planning Commission decisions to the Board last year. An appeal is a quasi-judicial hearing. Not once did the Board offer any ex parte communications, even at hearings where they were specifically requested to do so. Who has your Supervisor's ear? Who knows?

On the matter of written policies on keeping phone records, calendars etc. easily accessible to the public: At a minimum, we'd like to see a return to the days of yore when the appointment calendar for the Supervisors was sitting on outside counter at the Supervisors offices, available for anyone to thumb through. No word on whether a credible document management system is on the horizon.

On government transparency in general, we've seen some serious backsliding. Agenda descriptions are now less informative than they have ever been and a random sampling of

rate units are built, as the rate of 20 percent of the market-rate units. Discourage in-lieu fees, off-site mitigations, and the 'phase in' of requirements."

For good reason. The concept of "inclusionary" housing grew from the failed experiments in warehousing low-income residents in "project" housing that soon deteriorated into slums. History has shown that individuals, communities and economies are better served when neighborhood design creates a housing mix that includes a range of socio-economic status. Having teachers and waiters and artists and their kids living down the street from software engineers and attorneys and architects has a humanizing effect on all involved. But how to accomplish this?

Inclusionary housing ordinances require developers to design and build a certain percentage of affordable units alongside their upscale homes, and make them available to qualified buyers through deed restrictions. Ideological opponents of inclusionary housing claim this is "social engineering." Builders claim it eliminates

have to build? How much would they pay? Alert to the potential problem of causing so much change so fast that someone might actually notice it, the Supervisors approved a five-year phase-in plan to get to the goal of requiring developers to make 20% of new their new homes affordable, with incremental increases each year. So, in year number one, you only have to



“affordable housing” does not mean affordable for developers to build at the lowest possible rates.)

Message 3: Protect agriculture

How did the County fare on protecting agriculture? We offered a comprehensive list of issues to consider to protect and enhance our ag resources, including:

- * Innovative and tightly written ag policies – including Ag Events and Ag Tourism and reconsideration of the disastrous ag cluster ordinance;
- * Stop the fragmentation of ag land and fix or eliminate the Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) Program;
- * Implement Strategic Growth Principles;
- * Address the issue of defining “secondary and incidental” uses on ag land and revise the list of non-ag uses on ag land;
- * Look at minimum parcel size relative to soils;
- * Take Open Space zoning seriously per California Govt. Code 65910

Some progress has occurred. On the plus side, the Board has authorized amendments to the TDC Program. It remains to be seen what those amendments will entail. Unfortunately, as of this writing, the Board seems poised to approve the subdivision of a rural ag zoned winery using a transfer of development credit – a clear violation of the current TDC Program, which prohibits using TDC’s to subdivide ag land. That amendment was the result of a long, hard-fought battle and was put in place in 2008 by the former Board.

The Board has authorized amendments to the disastrous Ag Cluster Program, passing up the opportunity to end the Program. Originally, the Ag Cluster ordinance was adopted without an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The preliminary environmental assessment of the proposed changes to the Cluster ordinance reveals an astounding 41 Class 1 impacts – impacts that cannot be fully mitigated.

While we agree that the proposed amendments will improve a disastrous ordinance, the clear message from for 41 potential Class I impacts is “end this program.”

On Strategic Growth, we have seen mixed results. The Board authorized the implementation of Strategic Growth Principles, but only one of the five Supervisors supported the theory of Strategic Growth with a real-time vote.

Only Supervisor Gibson voted to support staff by requiring suitable density on multi-family zoning when an actual Strategic Growth project came to the Board. On February 2, the Board of Supervisors reversed a Planning Commission denial of the Creekside Project in Templeton. Staff had recommended denial of the project because it underutilized multi-family - MF - zoning. The project proposed a density of 7 units per acre on property zoned for 15 to 26 units. Underutilizing MF zoning wastes a valuable resource and deprives the county of much needed affordable and entry-level housing for our service industry, tourism and ag workforce.

The issues of parcelization of ag land or the connection between minimum parcel size and soil capacity remain in the realm of an unreachable dream.

One of the most important issues in preserving ag and supporting the farmer in sustaining her ag business is the concept of ag-related “second-

ary and incidental” events and processes. If you have been paying attention lately, you have seen the juggernaut of special interests driving the bus aimed at Ag Policy 6, because this is the policy that allows such uses – ag events, farm stands, farm stays -- only to the extent that they are secondary and incidental to the primary agriculture on site.

We have mixed reviews and results all over the spectrum. The purpose of a proposed package of Ag Tourism ordinances is to offer opportunities to farmers actually engaged in agriculture to supplement their income. The ordinances need to be consistent with Ag Policy 6 which upholds the concept of events as “secondary and incidental.”

A three-vote majority denied an events permit on property with no ag on site (Dancing Horse). The Ag Tourism Coalition (ATC), which the Club supports, had appealed the Dancing Horse project to the Board. ATC also requested an interpretation of Ag Policy 6, hoping for some clear direction to staff. The Planning Commission had responded with clear language supporting AG Policy 6 when the issue came to them. The Board supported the concept of active agriculture but declined to support the Ag Liaison Advisory Board guidelines for “secondary and incidental” and Ag Policy 6. Only Supervisors Gibson and Patterson seem to “get it” on Ag Policy 6. Supervisors Achadjian, Mecham and Hill seem ready to throw Ag Policy 6 under the bus and redefine Ag Policy 31. Ag Commissioner Bob Lilley has explained that the historic intent of Ag Policy 31 pertains to passive recreation opportunities, not events.

Why does “secondary and incidental” matter? If the primary business on ag land become lucrative events, unrelated to any ag use of the land, the de facto value of the land becomes as an event venue, not a valuation based on productive agriculture. The business become events, farm stays and B&B’s.

A sensible Ag Events policy based on secondary and incidental use seems unreachable, and revising the list of non ag uses permitted on ag land isn’t even on the horizon. This Board is carving out a get-out-of-Ag-Policy-6-free loophole for anyone whose ag land isn’t “ag capable” (a new, undefined concept) and looks like it’s headed toward permitting even more events than are allowed under the winery ordinance or yet-to-be-developed rules for “ag capable” lands. This would have the counter-productive effect of encouraging people to make their land look like it cannot support agriculture in order to get a more lucrative set of tourism and recreational uses, completely contrary to the County’s Ag Goals.

The Board, in its heartfelt concern for the economic stress many families face (confusing the plight of small family farmers with the forlorn faces of unpermitted wedding venue owners at Board hearings), may just swing the doors wide open and implicitly rezone ag and rural areas for commercial uses — as though there is no other way to earn a living, or everyone who lives on ag or rural land should be guaranteed a way to make a living without leaving home, even if it imperils agriculture.

This is the age-old struggle between the short-term economics of today versus preservation of the land for the long haul. If the goal is to provide more economic opportunity for all, what will be the cumulative effect on agriculture? Does the Economic Element outweigh the Ag Element?

Where is the tipping point? What are the property rights of rural residents? Gibson and Patterson support a “nuisance” concept to protect ag and rural residents from the over-commercialization of these residential areas; their colleagues seem to think the existing rules are just dandy and the rural residents who complain are NIMBY whiners.

On the plus side, the Board does continue to support Williamson Act tax benefits locally, even though the State is backing away from monetary support of the program (but will the Board’s expansion of commercial uses imperil the Williamson Act and the Right to Farm ordinance?), and we have returned to the historic designation of soils types based on National Resource Conservation District mapping. The issue of Open Space Zoning designations continues to be a swamp of inconsistencies.

Final grade: No lack of action, but headed in the wrong direction. C-

Message 4: Let’s eat local



In this installment, we pointed out that another good reason to protect agricultural land from development — in addition to preserving watersheds, open space, ecosystems and the quality of life on the Central Coast — is the need to protect the places where our food comes from, not to mention the benefits of keeping food resources and purchases local. To that end, we urged the new Board to take note of the Seattle City Council’s Food System Sustainability and Security Resolution, a framework of policy goals that identified actions to strengthen the community’s food system and sustainability. We also pointed to the trail-blazing work of Woodbury County, Iowa, which has passed policies mandating the purchase of locally grown organic food by county government operations, and using property tax rebates to incentivize the conversion of conventionally farmed land to organic practices.

The basic “eat local” concept was

certainly not news to the new Board, which is familiar with the California Farm to School Task Force, whose goal is to bring fresh, locally-grown, and unprocessed fruits and vegetables into school cafeterias. In 2006, the Board of Supervisors endorsed the creation of a Childhood Obesity Prevention Task Force (COPTF) and tasked it with the development a county-wide strategic action plan, which was completed in 2007 and called for “incorporating the use of local food products into the school food services.” (The Task Force is now HEAL SLO -- Healthy Eating, Active Living San Luis Obispo.)

In February 2007, a “New Partners for Smart Growth” conference was held in Los Angeles. One of the conference sessions, “Healthy Eating in the City: Improving Access to Fresh Foods and the Connection to Sustainable Food Systems” featured strategies to increase access to healthy foods and improve health in urban centers, recent policy efforts to support local sustainable agriculture, and a case study of a community working to increase food access and

continued on page 10

The image is a Sierra Club advertisement. It features a dark background with a tree silhouette. The text reads: "A Will is a Way. Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering the Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature." Below this, it says "Contact: John Calaway, Director of Gift Planning at (415) 977-5639 or e-mail: planned.giving@sierraclub.org". The Sierra Club logo is also present, along with the tagline "Explore, enjoy and protect the planet".

Dear NRC: Fool Me Once, Shame On You...

By Rochelle Becker, Executive Director, Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility www.a4nr.org

PG&E intends to complete Diablo Canyon seismic studies in 2013.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission estimates completion of Diablo's license renewal process in Sept 2011.

What is wrong with this picture?

Several hundred San Luis Obispo residents, utility executives, attorneys, and elected officials filled the Embassy Suites on February 9 to hear the NRC discuss its process for extending the license for Diablo Canyon from 2025 to 2045. They came to ask questions regarding local concerns about a twenty-year extension of nuclear operations and production and storage of radioactive waste located less than three miles from two major, active earthquake faults.

The community asked questions, but there were few answers at hand.

Did the NRC bring experts on security? They did not.

Did they bring experts on radioactive waste? They did not.

The single expert on seismology was represented by a disembodied voice on the phone from Berkeley—where she was attending an "event" apparently more important than the relicensing of a nuclear reactor located on two active earthquake faults.

So who did that leave in the SLO community to answer questions about an additional twenty years of operation and highly radioactive waste production and storage on our fragile coast? The answer: Experts on

environmental impacts – but that list of potential impacts currently does not consider the consequence of a major quake on either of the two known faults.

Also present were experts on the safety of aging components—even though there is only one reactor in the nation that has operated into its 40th year (Oyster Creek in New Jersey), and it has "crossed the threshold" for number of unplanned shutdowns and is now operating under additional NRC oversight.

The final panelist was the NRC's Region IV staffer charged with overseeing license renewal, whose cavalier attitude and misstatements were an insult to this community. With the exception of the Region IV representative, the NRC license renewal panel appeared to be sincere in their willingness to listen, but they failed to hear our concerns.

An aging and controversial reactor with an onsite high-level radioactive waste facility only three miles offshore of two major active earthquake faults is the reason the California Legislature, Energy Commission and Public Utilities Commission required advanced seismic studies. The state's required seismic studies should be complete and reviewed by the NRC, the US Geological Survey and state oversight agencies before a costly license renewal proceeds. The state and PG&E ratepayers deserve to have California withhold any funding for license renewal until the required seismic studies are complete.

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She has the floor Rochelle Becker (left) had a few questions for Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff when they came to the SLO Embassy Suites in February.

2010 Western Wilderness Conference: April 8 - 11

Wilderness preservation has never been more important -- or more possible.

In the last 4 years, wilderness advocates have succeeded in establishing over 2 million acres of protected wilderness. Curious about what it takes to succeed on this scale and what new campaigns are moving forward right now? Come to the Western Wilderness Conference 2010 at UC Berkeley from April 8-11th 2010.

Sponsored by the California Wilderness Coalition, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and numerous other organizations from all 13 western states, including Hawaii and Alaska, the Western Wilderness Conference 2010 highlights new campaigns, connects wilderness and climate change, and emphasizes engaging young people in the effort to preserve wild places free from development. Come meet new allies and discover strategic tips to strengthen your own environmental campaign. Together we can preserve the wilderness.

Hear speakers like Doug Scott, Dave Foreman, Bruce Hamilton, Dr. John Harte, Laurie Wayburn, Chris Arthur, Sal Ramirez, Ann Ronald, Tom Killion, Roger Kaye, Juan Martinez, representatives from federal wilderness management agencies, and more address the role of wild lands in an era of climate change and deliberate on how to gain new allies to the cause of preserving wild places. Hear college

and high school youth discuss what wild places mean to their generation. See the film "Forever Wild" and enjoy music by Walkin' Jim Stoltz and I See Hawks.

And help celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of the most remote but fought-over wild places in America – the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a symbol of America's will to set some special places aside from commercial

exploitation.

Planning organizations include: Sierra Club, California Wilderness Coalition, Northwest Wilderness and Parks Conference The Wilderness Society, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Desert Survivors, Audubon California, Tuleyome, Californians for Western Wilderness. The Santa Lucia Chapter is a sponsor of the big event.

Visit the conference website, www.westernwilderness.org for information on speakers, program, outings, and online registration!

Other questions? Contact Vicky Hoover (45)977-5527, Vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.



"Mammoth Hot Springs"
Yellowstone Park, N.P.S.

"Painting With Light"

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A Journey Thru the National Parks

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Catching Air

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had not yet been released, with no new release date announced. It is not hard to read between the lines of that scenario to detect the unmistakable imprint of pressure being applied.

That's not acceptable. But the Air

Pollution Control District has already announced the primary conclusion and plan of action dictated by what the study's data clearly shows: "OHV activity in the SVRA is a major contributing factor to the high PM

concentrations observed on the Nipomo Mesa." The APCD proposes to work with State Parks and the California Air Resources Board "to develop a process and aggressive timeline for State Parks to research,

select and implement control strategies sufficient to significantly reduce the particulate emissions from the SVRA that are impacting the Nipomo Mesa."

It's time to get on with that task.

Oceano Dunes Without Tears

Are cars on the beach an economic anchor or a ball & chain?

By Evelyn Delany

Getting cars off the beach has been the single most important occurrence bringing about the economic transformation of Pismo Beach from a "honky tonk" town to the destination jewel that it is today.

When we moved to Pismo Beach in 1970, none of the motels were four-star rated, except for the Shore Cliff and the Sea Crest (which actually are a little outside of downtown). Tourist cabins, left over from the 30s or 40s, were rented by the month by people who couldn't afford an apartment. There were a few sit-down restaurants, but mostly the paper napkin variety.

Comedians on radio and TV and in the movies made jokes about Pismo Beach. I once told my friend Harry, a fellow easterner, that Pismo Beach reminded me of Ocean City, New Jersey. Harry responded that Ocean City was never that bad. It was kind of embarrassing to tell people you lived in Pismo Beach, so those of us who could tell people we lived in Shell Beach or Pismo Heights. Pismo Beach was the laughing stock of the county. Nice families went elsewhere.

The ramp to the beach was a wooden affair at the end of Ocean View Avenue. Vehicles were permitted south of the pier, but not to the north.

One year in the mid-1970s, storms ripped the coast, much like this year. The wooden ramp washed out to sea. The city got a grant and build a new ramp; this time, a hefty, engineered one of cement.

Another stormy year came along, and the new ramp gracefully floated into the ocean, as though God herself was sending a message.

There was no new grant money for another ramp, and the City did not have money for a new ramp without financial assistance from another entity. After much debate, vehicles on the beach were prohibited on the beach south to Grand Avenue.

If the Pismo Beach City Council and the business community thought that vehicles on the beach were an economic boon to Pismo Beach, they would have found money and a new ramp would have been built.

That was circa 1974. Over the next

two years, Pismo Beach was transformed. In rapid succession, upscale hotels were built – the Sea Gypsy, the Sand Dollar, the Sea Venture, Shelter Cove Lodge, Pismo Lighthouse Suites and the Kon Tiki. The Shore replaced the obsolete cabins. Shore Cliff and the Seacrest expanded. Other older motels remodeled to keep up. The new hotels had restaurants with cloth napkins and expanded menus. We got

a Marie Callendar's. Souvenirs became a little more classy.

All of a sudden, Pismo Beach was a destination resort. People came to walk on the beautiful beach. It was quiet. It was safe for dogs, children and granny. People came and spent money. People who had money to spend came.

That is not to say that ordinary folks were excluded. The city built a beach

parking lot for day users. The older motels still accommodate people who aren't big spenders. RV campgrounds at the south end of the city and the state park accommodate people who prefer more rustic accommodations. We even have a Motel 6 in the city limits. There are still restaurants that don't cost an arm and a leg. Pismo

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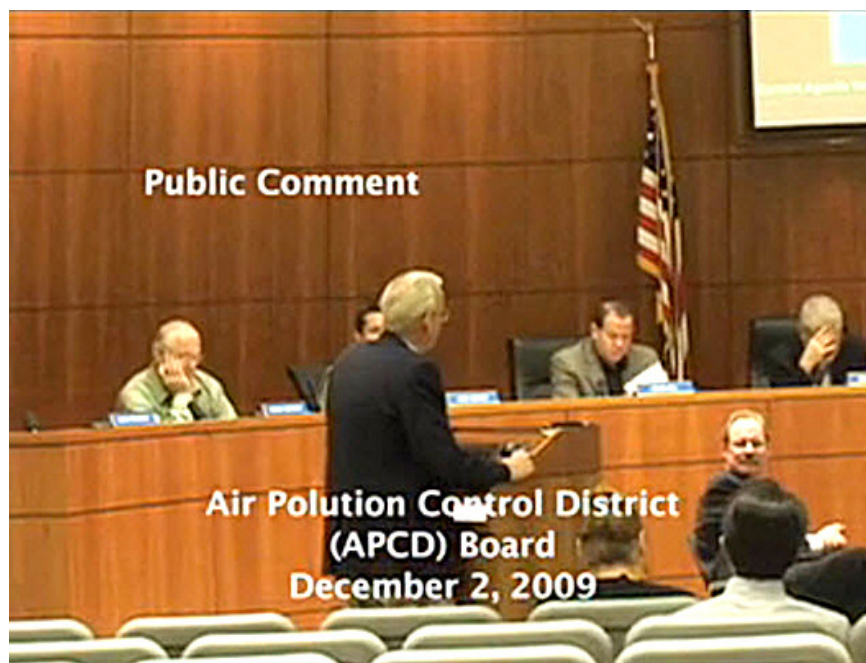
Pismo vs. Science

The Comrades, grassroots auteurs of the ongoing video documentary "Danger Downwind of the Oceano Dunes," have done the public service of videotaping members of the Pismo Beach City Council in the act of attacking the Air Pollution Control District's study of air pollution on the Nipomo Mesa prior to its release. Several Councilmembers have made it clear that their priority is maintaining the perceived economic benefits that the city receives from off-road vehicles on Oceano Dunes, not the health of the residents of the Nipomo Mesa.

(Last December, new resident Rachele Toti wrote a letter to *The Tribune* with a suggestion that had to give pause to all those who believe the ORVs must keep on roaring because the local economy depends on them: "Include the air quality issue in the disclosures for real estate purchases on the Mesa.")

In a video clip filmed at the December 1 Pismo City Council meeting, Councilman Kris Vardas, who also sits on the APCD Board, can be seen questioning the scientific validity of the study before its release, along with two other council members who agreed to challenge the upcoming study at the APCD board meeting the next day, December 2.

The video then cuts to the testimony of Pismo Councilman Ed Waage at the APCD meeting. Councilman Waage argues that a peer-reviewed scientific study should be treated like



Never mind Pismo Beach City Councilman Ed Waage gets a lesson in map reading from the Air Pollution Control District.

a draft policy document and pre-viewed by the public for comment and revision prior to its release.

He then tries to discredit the study with the claim that off-roading has actually resulted in a dramatic increase in native vegetation on the dunes, and therefore the study's finding that off-roading has denuded the dunes, increasing windblown particulate matter pollution, is invalid. He presents a progression of Google maps of the dunes to the

board and argues that they show increasing vegetation over a 13-year period.

Immediately following Waage's testimony, County Air Pollution Control Officer Larry Allen quietly refutes the Councilman's claim, using the same Google maps to show that the increase in vegetation has occurred in the areas of the dunes that are off-limits to off-roading.

Watch the video at www.vimeo.com/8240488

NRC

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The last time the NRC came to town to discuss the draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for license renewal was October 2009 – and that happened only after local, state and federal representatives demanded that the meeting be held here instead of over 100 miles away in Westlake Village. The concerns voiced that evening will be unheeded, as the NRC's current schedule calls for it to finalize a decision on Diablo Canyon's license renewal by September 2011. Citizen comments on the draft GEIS will be "considered" and the final rules will be released in 2013. Diablo will be relicensed under the old rules.

The last time the NRC denied seismic contentions proffered by local residents was when they licensed the onsite storage of high-level radioactive waste on our coast. Independent experts offered evidence of additional faulting near the Diablo site, but the NRC did not want to hear it. A few years later, PG&E disclosed that indeed there is at least one additional fault 1800 feet offshore of Diablo.

And yet, the NRC seems determined to go forth with costly license renewal proceedings before PG&E completes the state-mandated seismic studies. The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility and Supervisor Adam Hill, who represents the district that incorporates Diablo Canyon, have sent a letter to the NRC requesting a stay of the license renewal process until the state's seismic studies are complete. In addition, the Alliance has requested that the NRC create a joint seismic panel to review PG&E's completed studies before the license renewal process proceeds.

It is not only a seismic safety concern that motivates California's actions: It is also economics. At a time when individuals, agencies and governments are all feeling the financial crunch, can we literally afford to throw good money after bad? PG&E claims they too are interested in the results of seismic studies, but left to their own devices, they don't plan to complete those studies until 2013 — two years after the NRC intends to have completed review of the relicensing application.

And if the seismic results indicate that plant operations should not be extended or continued, then what becomes of the more than \$100 million sunk into the procedure — money coming from wallets of hard-pressed ratepayers? Wouldn't it be better to have conclusive seismic information in hand first?

Why are San Luis Obispo residents so concerned that these seismic studies are completed and reviewed before Diablo's license renewal goes forth? Because those with long memories are watching history repeat itself. They remember that when Diablo was granted its permit in 1967, PG&E claimed there were no known earthquake faults within 20 to 50 miles. They remember a series of news bulletins that look uncannily contemporary now:

● "PG&E expert says faults

shouldn't peril Diablo" (*Telegram Tribune*, November 28, 1973)

● "Hosgri fault—its discovery a big surprise" (*Telegram Tribune*, May 21, 1976)

● [PG&E spokesman Richard] "Davin countered, 'it wasn't apparent to PG&E that it as a fault of major significance until further investigation was done.'" (*San Jose Mercury News*, October 28, 1981)

● "14-year 'cover up'—PG&E declined to pursue fault" (*Telegram Tribune*, November 5, 1981)

● "Yet, in a private 1967 Atomic Energy Commission memo describing a meeting to discuss PG&E's application for a construction permit, the agency noted that "PG&E 'does not intend to do further trenching at the risk of uncovering geologic structures which could lead to additional speculation and possible delay in the project....'" (*Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1982)

Finally, in a June, 20, 1988, legal brief, CPUC staff concluded: "Approximately \$4.4 billion in project cost was imprudently incurred on the Diablo Canyon project.... Although the necessary techniques were available, PG&E failed to conduct studies to locate potential earthquake faults offshore of the Diablo Canyon site in their initial siting studies in the mid-1960's."

The NRC is complicit in this failure, strikingly noted in their 1981 decision to withhold further review and study of the foundations for the Diablo seismic design, "...proceeding in view of the discovery of a nearby earthquake fault after plant construction was well under way..."

In their dissent from this NRC lapse, commissioners Bradford and Gilinsky noted, "Altogether we cannot escape the impression that the commission is declining to review not because the opinion is essentially sound, but because it is unsound and the prospect of reviewing it is so unsettling."

At this time, can either the utilities or the regulators be trusted? As the L.A. Times commented on February 10, 2010, "Speculation has been raging over whether the U.S. Supreme Court's recent junking of federal campaign spending limits on corporations will be very bad for democracy, or not so bad.

As with many important trends in American society, California was there first, and we have the answer. Thanks to a nakedly cynical \$6.5-million ballot campaign launched by our biggest utility, Pacific Gas & Electric, we can say this: It's going to be worse than you can possibly imagine."

TAKE ACTION

The NRC will return to San Luis Obispo on March 3 to discuss the scope of the license renewal review.

Tell them that the scope must include finalized and reviewed seismic studies required by the state of California – anything else defies the "Openness and Transparency" that the NRC claims to seek. As citizens and ratepayers, we can ill afford to be fooled again.

And if you are reading this after March 3, send comments to:

diablocanyonEIS@nrc.gov

or:

Chief, Rulemaking and Directives Branch
Division of Administrative Services
Office of Administration
Mailstop TWB 5B-01M
US Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington DC 20555-0001

Some Cutting Remarks

By Eric Greening

The other day, the Governor was in town to congratulate himself on being green and working to create new "green jobs," with a select audience of people gathered to agree with his self-congratulation.

Like a bored two-year-old with a just-broken toy, reaching for something new, he would rather not contemplate the destruction he leaves behind, the green jobs lost through his policies. Transit workers all over the state have been and are being laid off as systems are cut and dismantled. Billions have been stolen from transit operations in the last several years of state budgets, and all of this theft has been the Governor's idea.

Now, on the losing end of a lawsuit by the California Transit Association, he is blatantly defying the ruling by reclassifying funds, and he is seeking, in his proposed budget, a PERMANENT diversion of all four state funds constitutionally meant to flow to transit: the "Spillover," The sales tax on diesel, the sales tax on 9 cents of the excise tax on gasoline, and the transit portion of Proposition 42, voted in by the people.

Miraculously, and thanks to some good planning and budgeting in the past, our local systems have been spared the draconian cuts that have occurred elsewhere in the state. But our luck, and the mobility of those who do not drive, may be about to run out.

The Regional Transit Authority connects our County's communities and provides thousands of rides a day. Other more local systems are also threatened, and indeed, may enter a drama of fighting over crumbs with the Regional system. But the Regional system is the most important component in our battle against greenhouse gas emissions and climate destabilization, and it will soon be the subject of a decision that could harm it irretrievably.

The recent greenhouse gas inventory performed in our county showed that over two thirds of our emissions come from road transportation, and that over 78% of that comes from highway rather than local travel. Thus, the single most important feature of our soon-to-be-written Climate Action Plan should, by rights, be a strengthening of alternatives to the single-occupant auto, of which robustly supported transit, particularly that which connects our communities, must be a critical component.

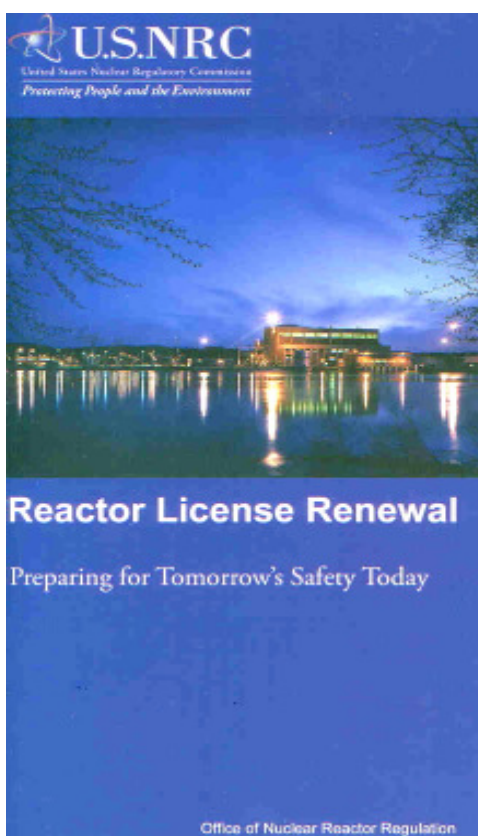
Nonetheless, on the agenda for the Regional Transit Authority Board on March 3 lurks an item with the innocent title "Fixed Route Performance Productivity Standards" that is actually a recipe not only for cutting, but weakening and ultimately dismantling the Regional system.

I will give Administrator Ed King and the RTA Board credit for keeping the system largely whole when many other systems in the state are hemorrhaging jobs and service. It has taken a recent fare increase and another pending one, and depends on drivers who work for far less than the nationwide pay standards, so it is not a happy status quo, but in our hostile state environment it is still something of a miracle. But this fragile miracle is under attack, and the consequences for non-drivers (a group which includes the old, the young, many disabled, many poor people, and those who want to be part of the solution) could be dire. While in a large urban system, cuts can mean more crowded buses or trains running every 15 minutes instead of every 10, here such cuts add up to such consequences as the loss of mobility on evenings and weekends, period.

What is on the March 3 agenda is not specific cuts, but a method for cutting. It has the virtue of being non-sudden, and of calling on strategies of analyzing and marketing targeted runs before pulling the plug, but it is structured to lead inexorably to cuts. Rather than targeting runs that fall below a particular passenger-per-hour count or farebox ratio, it draws a bead on any run that averages less than 75% of the system-wide average. In other words, no matter how successful the system as a whole, there will be runs that lag behind, unless we are like Lake Wobegon where all the children are above average.

So why not strengthen the system by pruning the less productive runs? Because doing this would weaken the system, just as pulling threads out of a fabric weakens the fabric. If a "weak" run is chopped, not only would its own riders be dropped from the system, but riders transferring to or from stronger runs would also be lost (and stranded, unless they are "choice" riders who can resort to their cars). This would, in turn, weaken the performance of these other runs.

Or let's say the last run of the weekday evening is chopped, so that the last departure from San Luis Obispo is at 6:33 instead of 8:33. As the riders thereof are lost to the system (stranded or driven to cars), these riders would also disappear from the daytime runs that brought them to San Luis Obispo in the first place. As ridership drops on these daytime runs, they, too, would go under the knife. As thread after thread gets



LBAM!

The state has hit a wall in its rush to eradicate the light brown apple moth, which doesn't seem to need to be eradicated



In February, the California Department of Food and Agriculture was preparing to set out "twist tie" pesticide traps for the light brown apple moth around the Nipomo Mesa. The plan came to an abrupt halt shortly after a citizens' group in Davis filed suit to stop the twist tie plan there.

The suit charges that CDFA is violating state law by proceeding with apple moth treatments before completing the Environmental Impact Report on the apple moth program that two judges ordered in the spring of 2008.

CDFA's abrupt postponement of twist ties in Nipomo came one day after the announcement that they would be deployed; no reason was given for the postponement. Twist ties were proposed for Davis last month.

UC scientists say that the moth likely has been in the state for up to 30 years. There has been no documented damage in the state from the apple moth. Damage to three berry fields in Watsonville last year has been widely exaggerated in media reports and attributed to the apple moth even though the moth larvae found in the fields could not be positively identified.

A recent report by a team of scientists from New Zealand concluded that the apple moth is a minor pest in New Zealand, responsible for crop damage of less than 2% over 100 years, and is readily controlled there mainly by natural predator insects. CDFA's proposed program, in contrast, relies on a suite of chemical and other methods in residential communities as well as agricultural areas across the state. CDFA and federal officials are also imposing LBAM quarantines that create significant hardship for nurseries and farmers.

In September, the National Academy of Sciences released a report on the program that concluded it was not based on robust science and that agriculture officials had made numerous flawed assumptions in building a case for the program. The pheromone pesticide in twist ties may be toxic to aquatic species, and the draft EIR for the program notes that it could harm birds if ingested, and affect "closely related" species attracted to the chemicals, including butterflies.

Oceano Dunes

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Beach is now a resort that everyone can enjoy.

Those who want to drive their vehicles on the beach must enter from Grover Beach or Oceano "pass through" areas. If vehicles on the beach were an economic asset to a community, why hasn't a Pismo style boom hit Oceano or Grover? The answer is simple: This is not an economic asset.

Let's look at those who drive motorcycles and ATVs on the beach. Most of them don't live here. They come in their rigs and sleep in them or on the beach. They don't sleep in motels. If they did, there would be motels in Grover Beach and Oceano for them to use. They bring their own food and cook it on the beach or in their RVs. I've seen some of them eating a celebratory meal in the IHOP on Grand Avenue as a last stop before they leave town.

But the IHOP closed a month ago. Businesses open on Grand Avenue based on the expectation that some of the thousands of people who drive down it each day will stop in and buy something, but the failure rate of Grand Avenue businesses is an

embarrassment. KFC is gone, as are other restaurants too numerous to list. Even beer bars come and go.

Businesses on Pier Avenue, except the ATV rental places, suffer even more than those on Grand. Pier Avenue is little more than an on-ramp for the beach, with backed up traffic blocking driveways and cross streets. On weekends, there is constant noise and pollution.

They might buy gas on their way out of town for the trip home, or maybe not. Only pennies on the dollar spent for gas stays here for local government to use. They buy their RVs, ATVs, motorcycles, riding gear, food, gas, and other paraphernalia where they live, not here. They may be big spenders, but they don't spend big here.

Use your own common sense, and do not be fooled by the lobbying of the thrill-seeking ATV users from elsewhere. Vehicles on the beach are not good for business or the well being of the people who live here.

Evelyn Delany was SLO County District 3 Supervisor 1985-1997, County Planning Commissioner 1978-1984, Pismo Beach Planning Commissioner 1975-1978, and Pismo Beach Parks and Recreation Commissioner 1972-1974.

Letters

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

Cambria's mercury problem

Hearty thanks to Lynne Harkins for writing and to the Santa Lucian for publishing her essay, "Cambria Activists & Mercury Put Desal Plan in Retrograde," in the February 2010 issue. Ms. Harkins has been diligently investigating the mercury contamination of Santa Rosa Creek (she neglects to give herself due credit in the essay). My grateful applause to her and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club for their cooperation in that study.

So often those insisting on thorough environmental analysis of the components of the proposed desalination plant get called "nay sayers" by one or another CCSD director,

because we don't agree with the board. I've decided to call Lynne Harkins a Champion Nay Sayer. She says no to over-consumption of natural resources, no to ignorance of how humans have damaged the environment, no to continued endangering of species, no to greedy life styles, no to releasing toxic chemicals. The nay list goes on.

Thanks, Lynne Harkins, *Santa Lucian*, and so many others, for being Champion Nay Sayers, all for the sake of a resounding Yes! to responsibility for the Earth's welfare.

Elizabeth Bettenhausen
Cambria

Our Environmental Rendezvous Packs Steynberg Gallery



More than eighty people took advantage of the opportunity to hear what the county's major environmental groups are up to at Sierra Club's first Environmentalists Rendezvous on January 26. Representatives of the Mothers for Peace, Audubon Society, ECOSLO, Morro Bay National Estuary Program, SLO Land Conservancy, Pacific Wildlife Care, Surfrider and Sierra Club discussed their projects and plans for 2010 with the SRO crowd at Steynberg Gallery.

How Are They Doing?

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municipalities were stepping up to the plate (no pun intended) while SLO pondered its options. San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom partnered with a local food advocacy non-profit to form the Urban-Rural Roundtable, a group of 50 City officials, environmentalists, and regional food activists tasked with devising future recommendations for the success of a Local and Healthy Food Procurement Policy. A similar effort is underway in Los Angeles. Last June, Mayor Newsom issued a Healthy and Sustainable Food Directive, the first phase of implementation of a local sustainable food policy.

The directive requires eight major departments to conduct audits of land under their jurisdiction to identify land suitable for gardening, and new health and sustainability measures for food vendors under city permits. With a nod to the Woodbury County policies that we pointed out to the SLO Supervisors over a year ago, the San Francisco directive also mandates a "healthy meetings policy" for all City meetings and purchase of only healthy and locally produced food, and creates an ordinance requiring food purchased by the City to be locally grown (within a 200-mile radius) using sustainable methods.

Per Green Cities California (GCC), a coalition of ten local governments throughout the state that have implemented groundbreaking environmental policies, "Future, more general expectations incorporated in the policy are the improvement of healthy food distribution to low-income neighborhoods and residents; the promotion of urban agriculture through community, backyard, rooftop, and school gardens; the creation of green jobs and support of local food business; and the advancement of public education concerning healthy and local food choices."

And, just as we suggested to the

SLO County Supervisors, San Francisco has created a Food Policy Council to carry out the goals of the new policy. The Council consists of eight City departments, representatives from the Food Security Task Force, Southeast Food Access Working Group, Tenderloin Hunger Task Force, San Francisco Unified School District, and individuals with expertise in urban agriculture, nutrition and food retail.

Local food may be our strongest path to economic recovery. And with 7 out of 10 of the primary causes of death related to food, change is imperative. The Board could convene a summit with cities and community groups such as CCAN, HEAL SLO, Farm Bureau, SARC, EcoSlo and the Sierra Club to begin implementation of a food systems council, including a food systems assessment and farm to school programs.

Final grade: SF has a plan, not to mention Woodbury County, Iowa. Where's ours? C

Message 5: Renewable Energy

Our last Message to the New Board was about energy policy, specifically the use of the biggest tool in California's tool box to move communities into a renewable energy future: AB 117. This bill, the Community Choice Act, made possible Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), which galvanizes the creation of incentives toward emission reductions, the widespread use of clean, renewable energy, a revitalized local economy, and improved public health.

Implementing CCA is the best way to create a market for clean, green energy by pooling the buying power of municipalities in aggregate and allowing them to increase the amount of renewable energy in their local energy purchase mix. It also puts rate setting under local control and generally delivers power at rates at least 20 percent less than what investor-owned utilities charge.

Early in 2009, things were not looking good for local implementa-

CCA, the Pacific Gas & Electric Company. Seeing CCA as a competitor peeling away ratepayers, PG&E has used its considerable resources as an energy monopoly to fight every CCA program that has been brought forward in California. In April 2008, the utility was forced to file a settlement agreement with the Public Utilities Commission after the San Joaquin Valley Power Authority complained about PG&E's conduct in seeking to undermine and interfere with the SJVPA's community choice aggregation program. The San Francisco district attorney is now contemplating legal action against PG&E's violations of the provisions of AB 117 as the utility seeks to hamper CCA implementation in both San Francisco and Marin Counties.

Proposition 16, headed for the November ballot, is a PG&E-backed initiative that would amend the state constitution to require a two-thirds vote of the community before a community choice plan could be put into effect. Yes, PG&E wants the same mechanism that cripples the state budget process every year placed between you and your right to choose your energy service – with PG&E pouring cash into the defeat of community choice in every such election, essentially killing off CCA for good statewide. As Sierra Club California has observed, "communities don't need a vote every time they decide who's going to collect the garbage or pave the roads."

Interviewed by *New Times* last September, Supervisors Patterson, Hill and Gibson appeared to grasp the problem. All condemned the PG&E ballot initiative (which will appear on your ballot as the "New Two-Thirds Requirement for Local Public Electricity Providers"), calling it "the most anti-competitive act I could imagine" (Hill), a way to "limit communities from exercising local choices for energy independence" (Patterson), and a move "to stifle competition" that "just rubs me the wrong way" (Gibson).

But in their own jurisdiction, the big question is whether the Board majority comprehends just how deep PG&E's tentacles extend into local institutions, businesses, nonprofits and government. (As a member of the Strategic Energy Alliance for Change, a broad-based SLO county coalition advocating for clean energy solutions, PG&E has forbidden even the mention of CCA at any SEA Change sponsored educational event or workshop.)

It's no surprise that a utility that has earmarked millions of dollars to defeat community choice would exert its influence in every way possible. Before push comes to shove over CCA here, as it has in San Francisco and Marin, it remains to be seen whether our elected officials are up for the fight over public power.

Final grade: They have the general idea. B



tion of this vital policy. The SLO Council of Governments, a body that includes all County Supervisors, allowed a CCA feasibility study to be postponed and tabled into oblivion. That's bad.

But then the County commenced a 20-year update of our Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) that specifically mandates a full evaluation of CCA in the quest for "a cost-effective and low-risk strategy to increase use of renewable energy." That's good.

But now, Jekyll & Hyde style, County Planning staff is urging the Supervisors to either delete all references to "local energy" from the final draft of the COSE or define local energy as "energy produced in the county," a definition so broad as to be meaningless. That's bad.

The electric elephant in the room (why do elephants spend so much time in rooms?) is the arch foe of

Cutting Remarks

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pulled from the fabric, the current rhythm of runs and transfers would fall apart.

I know that drivers sometimes see a bus going by with only a few heads in the window and think: "What a waste!" But what they are seeing may be a bus near the emptying end of a full run. They may be seeing a bus traveling in a "deadhead" direction, getting back to where it filled before and will fill again. Rest assured that the system as a whole is USED and NEEDED.

If we are to live up to the lip service in our general plans, our "Sustainable Communities Strategy," our endless talk sessions about "transit-oriented development" and "Vision 2050," we need to be protecting transit, not dismantling it.

Despite the assault from the state, there is no financial excuse for cutting the service (or for underpaying the employees). The one remaining funding source, in addition to fares, is local TDA, a quarter cent of locally collected sales tax. Public Transit has first call on this source (and in more urbanized places gets it all except for 2% off the top for bikeways), but in this county, millions of dollars a year get diverted from

transit to road work. In the current fiscal year, the total diverted – in the County and all cities — is over \$3 million; the county's share of diversion is \$1.3 million. The main excuse for not tapping this source is that some jurisdictions actually do use all their eligible TDA for transit (San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay top the honor roll; Paso Robles is getting close) and the discussion about funding the regional system always collides with the question of whether it is fair to make these jurisdictions contribute more than their TDA to do their share. But every jurisdiction that doesn't should feel PRIVILEGED to live up to the language of their policy documents, and to support what they pay lip service to.

We owe the RTA Board thanks for not making major cuts yet, but we must hold firm against adoption of a policy that will soon make cuts routine. March 3rd, 8:30 am, County Government Center is where the decision will take place; imagine the crowd if the proposal were to close every county road that got less than 75% of average traffic!

If you believe that the mobility of non-drivers is equally important, you can show up in support of those with the smallest ecological footprints. You can even get to this hearing by bus!

Advertisement for Mac VanDuzer Broker Associate, including contact information and logos for e-PRO and Sand Shell Realty.

Classifieds

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

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Got Graywater if You Want It

The Sierra Club has on hand a limited supply of *The San Luis Obispo Guide to the Use of Graywater*, the new manual produced by the Appropriate Technology Coalition -- SLO Green Build, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the San Luis Bay Chapter of Surfrider.

Graywater systems turn a waste product that can comprise up to 80% of residential wastewater into a valuable resource for irrigation and other non-potable uses. Harvesting graywater to meet your non-potable water needs utilizes an appropriate technology that can recover initial costs quickly. No permit required.



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Springtime Unveiling

I turn my focus away
 From the music and chatter in my head
 To the more elemental world
 Of leaf buds and spider webs
 And from that choice
 What delight I feel
 To simply notice
 The many bird voices of the morning
 The great dampness of my muddy shoes
 The warm sun bathing my eyelids
 And the pretty pattern of a finch's wings.

A soft spring bud pokes out from a branch
 Its skin, cracked open, reveals a birth of bunny tail whiteness.

A single bare tree stirs my soul
 I admire its uncovered anatomy
 Magnificent in its unique design
 Its layout of branches is simple, perfect architecture;
 Its outstretched limbs resemble handprints.

The frame of a naked tree
 reminds me of my own inner beauty
 uncllocked.

Outings and Activities Calendar

Seller of travel registration information: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter's outing policies, or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Chair Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the outing leader.

Sat-Sun, March 6-7, Death Valley National Park Exploratory Tour.

Experience some of the many wonders in this national park. Beginning in Shoshone on Saturday morning, we will travel north on Hwy 178 with a stop at Badwater, and do easy two-mile hikes at Natural Bridge and Golden Canyon. Camp at Texas Springs (\$14/site). If time allows, drive to Zabriskie Point and Dante's View. Sunday morning, visit the museum and visitor center in Furnace Creek, see the rare pupfish at Salt Creek, and take a two-mile hike to the highest sand dune. Possible hike into Mosaic Canyon. For those who want to stay Sunday night, camp at Stovepipe Wells (\$12/site). Option of primitive camping on Friday night. For reservations, contact leader, Carol Wiley at desertlily1@verizon.net or call (760-245-8734). CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sunday March 7, 10 a.m. Eagle Rock Nature Trail. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles. 2.2 miles/720 feet elevation change. The trailhead is located across from Cuesta College at El Chorro Regional Park. From SLO, take Highway 1 North and turn east (right) at the first of two turn signals to El Chorro Regional Park. Follow the signs to the Day Use area, passing the ball fields and Botanical Garden. Park in the Day Use area at the end of the road, just before the locked gate. Confirm with David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

Saturday, March 13, 9 a.m. Canoe/Kayak Morro Bay Sand Spit Hike.

Let's go for a paddle and beach comb the sand spit. Bring your kayak, and we will launch from Morro Bay State Park marina behind the Bayside Cafe, do a short paddle across bay to sand spit, and then walk for about an hour. Be at marina by 9 a.m., launching by 9:30. PFDs are required wearing. Bring hat, sunscreen, water. Rain/high winds cancel. Please reserve/confirm at least 1 day in advance: Leader, Mike Simms, 459-1701 or msims@slonet.org.

Saturday, March 13, 10 a.m. Rinconada Trail. Join us on a hike to Bell Mountain via the Rinconada Trail in the Los Padres Nat. Forest, passing through oak woodland and chaparral to a ridge-top saddle with 360-degree views. Lunch on the mountain top. 4 miles rt with 800 ft. gain, duration about 4-5 hrs. Naturalist leader will discuss local plants, animals, and area geology. Bring water, hat, sack lunch, and dress in layers for weather. Meet at trailhead, about 10 miles east of Hwy 101, on Pozo Rd. (3 miles past turnoff for Santa Margarita Lake, 25 miles from SLO). For info or ridesharing, contact Bill Waycott at 459-2103 or at bill.waycott@gmail.com. Asst.: Joe Morris.

Sat-Sun, March 13-14, Fence Removal, Hiking, Carcamp - Carrizo Plain. Come help remove fences on the Cal Dept of Fish and Game Reserve. At this time of year, the

Carrizo may be turning green, and if the winter has been wet, there should be wildflowers. Work Saturday, camp and potluck dinner that evening. Hike Sunday. Bring leather gloves, warm clothes with long sleeves and legs, dish for potluck on Saturday night. Leaders will be at Selby Camp on Friday night for those who want to arrive early. Leaders: Cal and Letty French, (805-239-7338). Prefer e-mail lettyfrench@gmail.com. Santa Lucia Chapter and CNRCC Desert Committee.

Wednesday, March 24 and 31, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes Around San Luis Obispo. 1 to 2 hour hike around San Luis Obispo. 5 - 6 mile hikes with elevation gain around 1200 feet. For more information or to sign up for Hikers List send an e-mail to Gary Felsman.

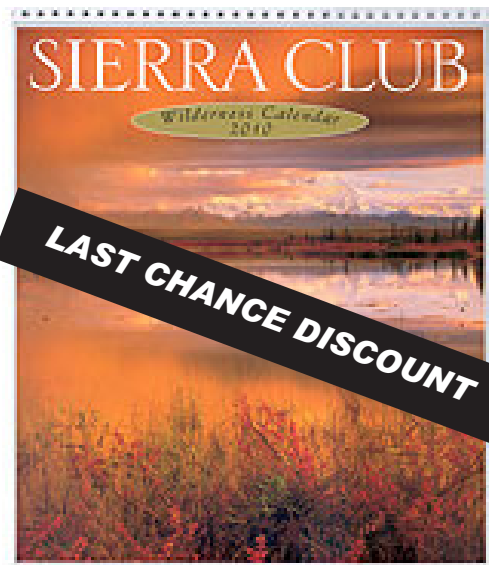
Wed., Mar. 24, 7-9 pm. Bimonthly General Meeting: Spring Wildflowers of SLO County. Matt Ritter, Director of the Cal Poly Plant Conservatory and Professor of Botany, presents our

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.

local flora and gives tips on where to find the best blooms in our grasslands, beaches, forests, and wetlands. Come for a beautiful show with this celebrated speaker and photographer. He will also briefly describe some current projects of the Conservatory. An especially popular slide program, not to miss! Meets at Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sat., Mar. 27, 8:30 a.m. Cruikshank Trail to Lion Den. Join the leader on this beautiful hike in southern Big Sur to welcome the beginning of spring. Great canyon and coastline views. This is a 12-mile hike with about 3000 ft. of gain, not for beginners. Plan on an all-day excursion, great way to celebrate the time change. Meet at the Washburn day use area of San Simeon State Park. Entrance is a right turn a few hundred yards past the Hamlet Restaurant at the north end of Cambria. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. Bring plenty of water, snacks, lunch, and dress for the weather. We will refuel at the Main Street Grill in Cambria after the hike. For info, call Chuck at 805-441-7597.

2010 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 the Sierra Club's conservation work in San Luis Obispo County.

Wall calendar: \$12.50 — \$9.00
Desk calendar: \$13.50 — \$9.00
 To order, call 543-7051

Sat-Wed, March 13-17, Death Valley Photo Trip. Join retired photographer & teacher Graham Stafford on a car camp trip to Death Valley, a photographer's wonderland. Visit Eureka Dunes, dunes at Stove Pipe Wells, dunes at Saratoga Springs, the Racetrack, and Artist Drive. All levels of photography experience accepted—beginners encouraged. Lessons with class handouts will cover all aspects of your digital camera and general photography. See Graham's work at www.grahamstafford.com. Leader: Graham Stafford (775)686-8478 graham@grahamstafford.com. Great Basin Group-Toiyabe Chapter.

Sat., March 20, 8 a.m. Corral Rocks. Come take a 10 - 13 mile, with unknown elevation gain, as this is an exploratory hike on the Avenales Ranch East of Pozo. We should have plenty of wildflowers, and pleasant weather. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes, and plan to be out all day. Meet at the Pacific Beverage Company in Santa Margarita. This is not a beginner's hike. Limit 20 people. For details, reservations and meeting place call Gary (473-3694) (5e) Rain or threat of rain cancels.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

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

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

