



May 2014  
Volume 51 No. 5

# Inside

Katcho's sad record	2
Election endorsements	4
Once more, Dalidio	6
Muir's Sierra summer	8
Not this water district	10
Classifieds	11
Outings	12

## Don't Miss:

**Hands Across the Sand - Stop Keystone XL**  
May 17  
- see page 4

**Rebels with a Cause**  
May 18  
- see page 3

**It's the Water**  
May 22  
- 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

## The Way to Wilderness

Central Coast Wilderness Bill proposes protections for the Los Padres Forest and Carrizo Plain

The Central Coast includes some of the most diverse habitats and ecosystems found anywhere in North America. Los Padres National Forest, California's second largest national forest, rises from the Pacific Ocean to over 8,800 feet in elevation and provides habitat for 468 species of wildlife, including the endangered California condor and the southern steelhead. And the Carrizo Plain National Monument is home to an incredible diversity of plant and animal life, containing several threatened and endangered species, as well as the majestic Tule elk, Pronghorn antelope, and invaluable Native American cultural sites.

These public lands have been set aside for watershed protection, wildlife, cultural resource protection, recreation, open space, and other uses. These lands are vital sources of water for local communities and for agriculture, help support our economy by providing world-class recreation opportunities, and contribute to the character and quality of life on the Central Coast.

To ensure these resources are available for generations to come, Rep. Lois Capps has introduced the Central Coast Wilderness Bill, after working closely with hundreds of local stakeholders and public lands experts to draft legislation to permanently protect certain areas and waters within the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument. The draft legislation would also designate the Condor Trail as a new National



**It's a plan** Above: The new wilderness bill will expand the Machesna Wilderness Area to include ecologically vital lands in Los Padres National Forest. Right: Last summer, Santa Lucia Chapter leaders Cal French (far left), Sue Harvey and Greg McMillan met with Laurel Williams (right), Deputy Conservation Director of the Southern California Wilderness Coalition, to review the best potential candidate areas in the county for wilderness designation. The Wilderness Coalition's Central Coast Wild Heritage Campaign seeks to protect over 300,000 acres of wild lands and more than 250 miles of rivers in the Los Padres National Forest, Channel Islands National Park and the Carrizo Plain.



Recreation Trail, which, once complete, will provide a through-hiking or horse-back riding experience that rivals the

Pacific Crest Trail in its recreational opportunities and astounding natural beauty.

As introduced -- subject to amendment -- in accordance with the Wilderness Act, the bill designates the following as wilderness areas and components of the National Wilderness Preservation System in San Luis Obispo County:

- 35,619 acres of land under the purview of the Bureau of Land Management's Bakersfield Field office, and 407 acres of state inholdings, to be known as the "Caliente Mountain Wilderness."
- 13,332 acres of BLM land and 124 acres of inholdings to be known as the "Soda Lake Wilderness."
- 11,300 acres of BLM Wilderness and 20 acres of inholdings shall be known as the "Temblor Range Wilderness."
- Approximately 7,315 acres in the Los Padres National Forest shall be incorporated into and managed as part of the Garcia Wilderness as designated by the Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act.
- Approximately 10,255 acres in the Los Padres National Forest shall be

### Want to Get This On Line?

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Send an e-mail to [sierraclub8@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub8@gmail.com) with "switch to Santa Lucian on line" in the subject line.



**Like they said** At their April 1 meeting, the SLO County Board of Supervisors commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, including our county's "iconic Garcia, Santa Lucia and Machesna, and Silver Peak Wilderness Areas, which harbor remarkable wildlife...and provide exceptional hiking, birding and other recreation for residents and visitors alike."

WILDERNESS continued on page 9

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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.

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

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## Sierra Club General Meeting

7 p.m., Thursday, May 22

*It's All About the Water*

Conner Everts, Director of the Southern California Watershed Alliance and the Desal Response Group, is coming up from L.A. to give us insight about our worsening water situation, what might help, and what won't. Chapter Director Andrew Christie and Conservation Chair Sue Harvey will serve as his interlocutors in an interview format. Come and get the facts on California's most urgent environmental problem.



Conner Everts on "Where's the Water?" panel, Arroyo Grande, December 2007.

Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Information: 549-0355

## The Fence That Katcho Built

Since Katcho Achadjian's election to the State Assembly in 2010, SLO County's most famously affable politico has busied himself with... not very much.

Katcho boasted to *The Tribune* last year that "almost all of the legislation that I have pushed through the process was approved with broad bipartisan, if not unanimous, support." That's true, but there's a trade-off when the legislating you do is the kind that no one could possibly object to. Highlights from Katcho's path of least legislative resistance look like this:

AB 461: Allowed five additional liquor licenses to be sold in San Luis Obispo County.

AB 1998: Authorized counties to donate their old computers to state agencies.

AB 1016: Specified which account the State Controller should use when making reimbursements for costs associated with conducting mentally disordered offender trials for Atascadero State Hospital inmates.

AB 1076: Removed tiered loan limits for loans to officials between state and federal credit unions.

And so on. His most significant legislative effort has been his push to pass a bill to form a water management district for the Paso Robles ground-water basin, despite warnings from the Legislative Counsel that the proposed voting structure of the district presents a thicket of potential legal problems down the road. (See "Tell Us Again What's Wrong with 1 Person, 1 Vote?," March.) The proposed voting structure would give a permanent majority of seats on the district board to ag operations in general and vineyard operations in particular, and a permanent minority to mere district residents who might otherwise vote to curtail the endless expansion and groundwater pumping by vineyards that is making residential wells run dry. Big Grape likes that bill and that voting structure just the way it is, so Katcho does, too. (See "Taking Issue," page 10.)

Other than that, it's been a pretty uneventful four years for our man in Sacramento. Katcho's stated reason for a legislative record that has amounted to keeping a chair warm in the State Assembly: "There are too many laws already."

The real reason: There are 25 Republicans in the Assembly and 55 Democrats, so Katcho has virtually no



say in any substantive legislation. If the kind of big-ticket bills dear to conservative hearts — sweeping measures to advance an anti-regulatory, anti-environmental agenda that would make it easier for polluters to foul the air and water and destroy wildlife habitat in pursuit of profit — had a better chance of becoming law, Katcho's lilliputian legislative ambitions would rapidly scale up.

His minority party status, however, does not mean Katcho can't get up to mischief. He can and he does. In the last legislative session, Katcho the alleged moderate voted against a bill that will help put an end to the detrimental effects of lead in the environment by requiring that hunters use non-lead ammunition. He voted for a bill that will allow regulatory exemptions for the logging of larger trees under the guise of fire prevention, even though removing larger trees actually increases fire hazards. He voted against a bill that will make it illegal to trap bobcats within and around state and national parks and national wildlife refuges, or on property that does not belong to the trapper without written consent from the property owner. He voted against a bill that would have prohibited hydraulic fracturing until adopted regulations take effect, and for a bill that delays regulation and potentially frees fracking sites from environmental review until 2015. It also allows denial of public access to information about the quantities of chemicals used -- essential to any independent assessment of the environmental and public health impacts of fracking -- but not knowing is A-OK with Katcho.

Which brings us to today's lesson in consequences on the ground as a

### Santa Lucian

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*The Santa Lucian is published 10 times a year. Articles, environmental information and letters to the editor are welcome. The deadline for each issue is the 13th of the prior month.*

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### Santa Lucia Chapter

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Outings, events, and more!



# Sierra Club Candidate Endorsements

## June 3 is election day



### U.S. Congress, 24th District: Lois Capps

As you can probably tell from our front page, we think Lois Capps should be any Sierra Club member's obvious choice for another term as our representative in Congress.

In addition to her commitment to wilderness preservation, Capps authored the Coastal Estuarine and Land Conservation Program Act; wrote the Ocean, Coastal, and Watershed Education Act to formally authorize and support innovative environment-based education programs — securing over \$2 million for programs on the Central Coast; introduced the Water Infrastructure Resiliency and Sustainability Act to support projects that increase the resiliency of water systems in the face of climate change, and established the National Marine Sanctuaries Caucus.

To help send our coastal hero back to Congress, go to [Cappsforcongress.com](http://Cappsforcongress.com).

### State Assembly, 35th District: Heidi Harmon

Harmon is in the 2014 class of the Leadership SLO program, serves as Outreach Ambassador for the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the Citizens



Climate Lobby and Program Director for the SLO Chapter of 350.org, and coordinates local educational meetings on climate change. She is also keen on getting her city council to divest from fossil fuel investments. She is also the Chair of the Climate Change Task Force of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

If you need more, here's this: "The Central Coast deserves leadership that motivates and supports our local communities and businesses to become the innovators in clean energy solutions so we may achieve true energy independence and sustainability."

To help send Heidi Harmon to the State Assembly, go to: [Heidiharmon4assembly@gmail.com](mailto:Heidiharmon4assembly@gmail.com).

### County Supervisor, District 2: Bruce Gibson

After two terms on the board, Gibson's strengths and weaknesses are clear, and they largely come to the same thing: When he thinks he's right, virtually no argument can dissuade him or alter his view.

That rubs a lot of people the wrong way and is an obvious liability when, say, he's voting to advance the wrong kind of water district for the Paso Robles groundwater basin or taking a what-me-worry? stance on potential fracking in the county. But that same trait is exactly what you want to see in an elected official when it's time to say "no" to a development proposal that depends on "paper water" (Los Robles del Mar), or push past the raging hordes and do the right thing (plastic bag ban, Paso basin subdivision ban, Oceano Dunes dust rule). A politician who doesn't care if you like



him and who understands why we have a General Plan — and will fight to uphold it when his colleagues are inclined to give a bad project a wink & a nod — is a rare commodity around these parts, and that's more than reason enough to give Gibson a third term. Help out at: [www.BruceGibsonforSupervisor.org](http://www.BruceGibsonforSupervisor.org).

### District Attorney:

#### Tim Covello

A once-in-a-blue-moon race for the open seat of District Attorney gives SLO voters a chance to elect a D.A.

who understands that environmental crimes should be prosecuted. We're pleased to report that of the two D.A.'s office staff vying to succeed the departing D.A., Covello is that candidate. Poachers would have a hard time with Covello as top cop, and we can look forward to a significant reduction in the frequency with which environmental felonies in this county get knocked down to misdemeanors with him in charge.

And we have to say: His opponent's habit of announcing his party affiliation in every speech indicates a willingness to engage in political pandering and an obliviousness to the obvious reasons why the person in charge of the county's largest law firm should not be perceived as or proclaim



himself to be a partisan hack, inclined to do favors for fellow travelers and mete out punishment to political foes.

To help get the right guy in the job, go to [www.timcovello.com](http://www.timcovello.com).

### County Clerk-Recorder:

#### Ann M. Danko, Tommy Gong

In the other once-in-blue-moon race on the ballot, it's a testament to the managerial excellence of departing Clerk-Recorder Julie Rodewald that *both* of her top lieutenants are equally qualified to succeed her.

We can't protect our environment unless we protect our democracy, and when it comes to the constant vigilance necessary to safeguard that heritage, it doesn't get more fundamental than making sure that every ballot is counted, and that the person who is put in charge of the counting does not have some other goal in mind (see: Florida, November 2000). Help make sure of that at [www.anndanko.com](http://www.anndanko.com) or [www.tommygong.com](http://www.tommygong.com).



For Sierra Club endorsements in statewide races in the June elections, go to <http://california2.sierraclub.org/> and click on "Sierra Club's Political Endorsements for 2014."

Note: In order to be endorsed by the Sierra Club, a candidate must request to be considered for endorsement. A local race not included in the above list does not necessarily mean the Sierra Club did not consider any candidate in that race worthy of endorsement, but that no candidate made a timely request for consideration for endorsement.

## Congratulations to the Winners of the California Coastal Art & Poetry Contest

The winners of the California Coastal Commission's 2014 Coastal Art & Poetry Contest have been announced. All the winners and honorable mentions are on the web at [www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/contests.html/](http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/contests.html/).

In addition to being showcased on the Coastal Commission's website, the winners will be on exhibit at the Point Reyes Visitor Center in Marin County in May and June; the Ford House Museum in Mendocino in July, August and September; Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center in Ventura in October and November; and the Birch Aquarium in La Jolla starting in December.

All the 2014 winners and honorable mentions in art are currently available in the Commission's Fine Art America store, where many sizes and types of prints as well as greeting cards can be purchased.

A job well done to the teachers and parents who encouraged their students to think creatively about California's coast and ocean, and to the students whose hard work was evident in every one of the more than 2,300 entries.



Untitled, by Emily Li, 11th grade, High School Winner in Art.

## May 17: Stretch Your Hands Across the Sand and Stop the Keystone Pipeline



Hands Across the Sand is an annual global grassroots event that champions clean energy solutions to our filthy fuels problem.

On May 17, people around the world will join hands at noon local time to say **NO** to offshore drilling, hydraulic fracking, tar sands mining, coal fired power plants and mountaintop removal mining, and **YES** to clean energy.

This year, Hands Across the Sand will also be the site of local actions across the nation as Secretary of State Kerry and President Obama make their deliberations on whether to approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

Come to the beach at the Avila Pier at noon on May 17 as we join hands with people around the world and take a stand against the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and all fossil fuels.

Sign up for updates at [handsacrossthesand.org](http://handsacrossthesand.org)

**NO** TO DIRTY FUELS

**YES** TO CLEAN ENERGY

# California Legislative Priorities for 2014

By Kathryn Phillips, Director, Sierra Club California

Every year in March, after new bills are introduced at the state legislature, the hard business begins of deciding which bills the Club will weigh in on.

This year, the Sierra Club California staff advocates and the volunteers on our California Legislative Committee reviewed about 240 bills.

Then, during a day-long Saturday meeting, we settled on positions: support, oppose, support if amended, oppose unless amended, watch, watch like a hawk, or take no position. Within each of these broader position categor-

ies, there are subcategories to help guide staff about how much focus to place on any bill.

By the end of that Saturday meeting, the number of bills on which we will take a position was narrowed to about 130, with the balance of the bills mostly receiving a “watch” designation. And within all of the bills on which we take a position, for the moment, about 16 rose to the level of being priorities for Club action.

You can see the list of priority bills on our website. Go to [California2.sierra](http://California2.sierra)

[club.org](http://club.org) and click on the “Activist Tools” link.

Check back often -- some of these bills change or fall by the wayside, and as some other bills become more important, our priority list will change.

To track any of these bills or for more information about specific bills, including analyses by legislative committees, go to the official California legislative information website, [www.legislature.ca.gov](http://www.legislature.ca.gov), and type the bill number in the appropriate “Bill Search” box.



## We Support the California Captive Orca Welfare and Safety Act

Sierra Club California supported Assemblymember Richard Bloom’s Orca Welfare and Health Act, Assembly Bill 2140, which would have put an end to the captivity of orca whales for the purposes of entertainment and help the state to rethink its efforts to protect these intelligent animals.

After humans, killer whales are the most socially and ecologically complex species on Earth. For the last four decades, we have been capturing and

confining orcas on a small scale in the name of research. However, nearly all whale capture and confinement has been for the purpose of entertainment. It has become abundantly clear this complex species requires a lot of space and regular social interaction with members of the same species. Long-term confinement does not meet these needs. Many scientists agree that holding orcas captive has few or no conservation benefits for orcas in the wild.

AB 2140 was written to put an end to performance-based entertainment for all orcas in the state and will end captive-breeding programs to ensure that the descendants of existing captive whales do not share the same fate. AB 2140 is the first step to refocus orca whale conservation efforts in a smart and beneficial direction.

Writing in the April 8 *Sacramento Bee*, Sierra Club California policy advocate Edward Moreno wrote: “Controversies about the use of majestic wild animals to entertain are reminders that humans and wildlife have an unbreakable bond. We share the same air, water and land. We are struck by the same natural disasters, and many species seem to share similar

desires for connection with loved ones that ultimately brings meaning to our lives.”

Seeking to avoid a vote on a contentious bill, an Assembly committee has deferred the legislation to 2015. Under the circumstances, this was the best achievable outcome. It allows for continued discussion, including public hearings, and creates the opportunity for a statewide campaign. We have no doubt this bill will ultimately prevail in ending a practice whose time has passed.

“Just as Japan must limit its hunting of whales for food, California must put an end to enslaving for entertainment,” said Moreno. The ultimate passage of the legislation will “speak well of our state’s character, and of our commitment to protecting natural areas and wildlife, both on and off our shores.”

### TAKE ACTION

Thank the sponsor for his bill:

The Honorable Richard Bloom  
State Assembly  
State Capitol  
Sacramento CA 94249

## We Oppose AB 2453 Unless Amended



The 10,000 North County residents who live over and depend on the Paso Robles ground water basin deserve a voice in the policies put in place to manage the basin, and that means a water district whose directors are elected on the basis of “one person, one vote,” not “one acre, one vote.”

As written, AB 2453 denies them that right, and puts in place a “hybrid” voting structure that will give land owners a permanent 3-seat majority on a nine-member board of directors. The vote to form a district will be decided by the largest land owners, who will have the most votes, sweeping aside and drowning out the votes of non-land owner residents.

### TAKE ACTION

Tell the sponsor to withdraw his bill or amend it to affirm the fundamental democratic principle of one person, one vote:

The Honorable Katcho Achadjian  
State Assembly  
State Capitol  
Sacramento CA 94249



Where they belong An orca pod in Prince William Sound, Alaska.

## We Oppose AB 2145, the Energy Monopoly Protection Bill

As we go to press, the most serious threat to the future of clean, renewable energy in California in years is heading to its first hearing in the Assembly.

In 2002, the legislature passed AB 117 to give California cities the option to purchase greener and cleaner energy through Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). Assembly Bill 2145 (Bradford) will essentially kill existing and new Community Choice Aggregation programs. In the name of eliminating competition for PG&E, it would eliminate an important option for ratepayers, undermine California’s environmental goals, and infringe upon local government decision-making.

The law that created CCA programs in California provides more options to communities who have chosen to create a local, public, not-for-profit energy alternative. It was structured as an opt-out program to make it feasible for CCAs to enter a market dominated by big utilities.

By requiring consumers to actively opt-in to get energy from a CCA program, AB 2145 would eliminate the level playing field established by AB 117, limit communities’ choice of energy sources, and further entrench the ability of big utilities to monopolize California’s energy market.

Via its CCA program, Marin Clean Energy (MCE) provides more than twice as much renewable energy to customers as PG&E, and MCE’s most recent published emissions rate is 19% lower than PG&E.

If passed, AB 2145 will undo progress in increasing renewable energy and energy efficiency, and curtail California’s progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

## Letters

Send to [sierraclub8@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub8@gmail.com) or Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

Dear Editor,

The front page of the April issue of the *Santa Lucian* concerning oil and Phillips 66 refinery (“Oil Train Hits a Bump”) may have some merit. However your statements about the “rickety” rail system have none. Since 1998, an oil train has been rolling through San Luis Obispo three times a week from the San Ardo oil fields to Wilmington oil refineries. In general, the “oil can train” was about 80 cars with some 1.8 million gallons of oil on its way to

Wilmington. Regularly, this train runs through at night except for empty cars returning on weekends. As *Trains* magazine points out, California has led the way for safe movements of oil by rail for more than 30 years. These trains have run over the mountains of the central valley as well as down the central coast with pride by the Union Pacific railroad. It is far from “reckless.”

John F. Turrill  
Arroyo Grande

*Our apologies to all the local train fans who may have taken umbrage at the “rickety” editorial shorthand we used to convey the impacts of the explosive growth of oil train rail*

*traffic. But we note: In its 2013 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the U.S. rail system a grade of C+. Last February, in a posting on the increasing volume of oil by rail, the industry website Shale World observed that “rail incidents occur at almost four times the rate of pipeline incidents” and “the frequency of incidents sets a worrying precedent for the ramp-up of shale by rail.” They wondered: “With [the oil by rail] business having grown by more than 40 times in four years, can the U.S. rail system take the strain?” U.S. trains spilled more oil last year than in all of the previous four decades. As Shale World concluded, “With increased*

*volumes, logic dictates there will always be more accidents, be they derailments, spillages or worse.”*

*But that’s not necessarily because of poorly maintained railroads, and when bestowing that mediocre C+, the American Society of Civil Engineers also noted approvingly the aggressive efforts over the last ten years to improve U.S. rail infrastructure. However one judges the current state of our rail system, the fact remains: regulators have not been able to keep up with fracking, the huge and sudden increase in oil by rail and the explosive new reality of Bakken shale crude oil, and the strain is showing. “Reckless” accurately describes this situation.*

## Dalidio 3.0

### For developers' third try, SLO should require maximum, not minimum, land preservation

Here's a thumbnail history of the efforts to annex and develop the 131 acres of prime ag land next to Highway 101 at the entrance to San Luis Obispo under development plans that have gone by the names Dalidio Ranch and San Luis Marketplace:

- 1: Permits denied by the SLO city planning commission.
- 2: Denial overturned and permits approved by the city council.
- 3: Approval overturned and permits revoked by a vote of city residents.
- 4: City vote overturned and county development plan approved by a vote of county residents ("Measure J").
- 5: County vote overturned and development plan revoked by a superior court ruling.
- 6: Court ruling overturned on appeal and plan for development in the county reinstated.

Obviously, there are some issues here. But here is the heart of the matter: The general plan of the City of San Luis Obispo requires that any proposed development of that property retain at least 50 percent of its prime ag land as open space. Ernie Dalidio just couldn't bring himself to do that. He

started out low-balling that minimum requirement, and then got lower. A new developer is now preparing to bring the new San Luis Ranch proposal to the city. He, too, would rather not meet the 50 percent bar. He is proposing to come within the ballpark — 43 percent — and then make up the difference elsewhere by conserving the remaining equivalent acreage of comparable land — i.e. "off-site mitigation."

This is not exactly raising the bar or breaking with the fundamental problem that attended the previous proposals. That's why the city council needs to pay close attention to an alternative plan proposed by Jamie Lopes, a retired county planner. On April 1, in a presentation to the council unfortunately cut short by the three-minute limit on public testimony, Lopes showed the council how they could move the requirement for the preservation of at least 50 percent of the Dalidio site as open space to more than 75 percent open space. Lopes' alternative would reduce the proposed development of 75 acres of the site to 30 acres and preserve 77 percent of the property as farmland. It would also create a pedestrian-friendly commercial center

and add traffic-calming measures to Prado Road.

We know many people would say that this property should not be developed at all; we should not be discussing losing even one more acre of irreplaceable prime ag soils to a developer's dreams of condos and high-end retail. But this property is going to be developed. The developer has Measure J in his back pocket. Thanks to county voters and the Third District Court of Appeals, there would be no way to oppose, reduce, modify, or mitigate the impacts of that bigger, badder project — or even require it to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act — if the City denies annexation and a development permit and the developer decides to develop in the County instead, with no requirement at all to comply with the City's general plan.

At the April 1 meeting on the developer's proposed Memorandum

of Understanding with the City on how to proceed with project review, the Sierra Club reminded the city council that the minimum 50 percent open space requirement "is a floor, not a ceiling." Prior to the meeting, Lopes wrote to the council "I have confidence that your Council can and will direct staff to *set a goal* of increasing this requirement for *environmental review as a project alternative*, and possible inclusion in the upcoming Hearing Draft LUCE [Land Use and Circulation Element]."

The council should also remove from the LUCE the unhelpful concept of

*DALIDIO continued on page 10*



## Water (Barely) Under the Bridge

*An opinion by the Nipomo Creek Dogs*

Santa Lucian readers may remember the issue of the routine dumping of used irrigation tubing in the watershed above Old Town Nipomo, a significant contributor to the disastrous flooding in Nipomo in 2001 and 2006, causing millions of dollars in flood damage and nearly drowning two children. (See "The Power of Two," Nov. 2008.)

Daniel Diaz, aka Creek Dog, was elected head of the Nipomo Creek Committee in 2006 to represent his home town on community safety issues, including the negative impact of upstream unpermitted dumping. Despite his position, he had little success at the County level. It was only after taking the issue — and photographic documentation — to the Regional Water Board that he attained success when truth prevailed over power in the form of a toothy new regulation. (See "Thank You, Provision #28," June 2010.) That regulation has been a profound success in eliminating the impacts of ag tubing in Nipomo Creek and bringing about dramatically higher levels of responsible use and disposal practices in the Santa Maria Valley.

### A chronic problem

To his credit, when he was a county supervisor, Katcho Achadjian supported building new bridges in Nipomo addressing the symptom of flood destruction. But not to his credit, he didn't lift a finger to curb the disease of unpermitted activities like streambed alteration or dumping construction waste in stream channels. This effectively made trashing the creek into a de facto entitlement. A few upstream ag operations were enthusiastic in asserting their private property rights but refused to take moral or monetary responsibility for the consequences of their actions. This lack of responsibility is an insult to the vast majority of the ag community and the main driver of dreaded new regulations.

Soon after Katcho's new bridge at Tefft and Burton was finished, with a 30 by 10 foot opening, a flood event occurred. The space under that bridge

was filled with noticeably foreign silt studded with asphalt chunks. It took five days to clean it out. The source of the problem was obvious: a large section of partially eroded creek channel above Old Town filled with construction waste — sandy silt, asphalt, concrete, logs and root wads. Daniel contacted Katcho and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), citing the problem and the exact source, to no avail. Month after month, dump trucks drove by his house, even stopping once to ask if he had anything to dump upstream. Daniel continued to contact DFW but was ignored. The department didn't get around to a site visit for seven months, when they finally stopped the dumping. The channel had been effectively plugged, waiting for the next high water and history to repeat itself.

And history repeated itself. Just after the new bridge at Tefft Street and Avocado was finished, a moderate storm blew through Nipomo. Daniel woke up to find the 30 x 7-foot space under the span nearly filled with sandy silt and asphalt, leaving essentially a crawl space for water to flow through. Equally troubling, high levels of siltation raised the level of the creek channel basement downstream of the bridge.

Daniel took his concerns to Supervisor Paul Teixeira with a photo-documented report entitled "Water Under the Bridge?" The Supervisor agreed that the problem was obvious. After Teixeira's death, Daniel contacted Supervisor Caren Ray, who expressed honest concern over the health and well-being of Old Town citizens and the \$30,000 cost of excavating the channel under the bridge. A total of four bridge clean-outs that probably cost taxpayers \$100,000 can be traced to unpermitted dumping.

Will the candidates for the Fourth District seat on the Board of Supervisors go on record concerning the unpermitted upstream dumping in Nipomo? If elected, will they support the continuation of illegal upstream activity? Will they commit to support



**Before and after** After the rains came, Dan Diaz took the measure of just how fast it filled up under the new bridge over Nipomo Creek.



the community and the safety and well-being of the citizens who can be negatively, and disastrously, affected by such activity?

For the people of Nipomo concerned about their safety, and county taxpay-

ers concerned about the waste of their money, these questions should be answered without dodge or equivocation by any candidate professing to represent the interests of our citizens on the County Board of Supervisors.

# The People Prepare to Take Back Price Canyon

By Mary Parker Malotte

Save Price Canyon, a group of local activists, has succeeded in gathering the necessary amount of signatures for an initiative that takes Price Canyon zoning out of the hands of Pismo City Council and puts it into the hands of voters.

The grassroots movement has kept their message simple and efficient.

"We are collecting signatures for an initiative which would ensure that the City Council alone will not be able to approve high density development in the Price Canyon Area without a vote of the people of Pismo Beach," reads the pitch that the volunteers use when going door to door.

"We'll probably have about 1,000 signatures," said Sheila Blake, a volunteer with SPC, during the petition drive. "I think that will get their attention."

By April 10, 919 signatures had been obtained. They were handed to the city clerk shortly thereafter. SPC will be presenting the initiative to the City Council for adoption by the council or placement on the ballot in November.

Preventing large housing and commercial development in the pastoral area east of Pismo Beach is at the heart of the initiative. "Most of the people who live here have 'been there, done that,' and they don't buy the fairy tales that developers tell them," said Blake.

South County residents have long worried about the kind of mega-development proposed by the Spanish Springs project: 416 single family homes, 73 apartments or condos, 120 senior units, 150-room hotel, 10,000 square foot conference center, nine-hole golf course, restaurant, wine center and retail, parks and vineyards. "People live here for a reason," said Blake, and overdevelopment is really "about the dissolution of a quality of life that they have sought out."

Environmentalists have also been raising the alarm, citing urban sprawl, traffic expansion, damage to water resources and destruction of wildlife corridors. The Sierra Club has closely tracked the recent history of attempts to develop Price Canyon and supported the successful efforts to block those projects. (See "A Watershed Win" February 2008; "A Very Poor Plan for Pismo" June 2009; "Priceless Canyon" January 2011; "Pismo's Thirst," September 2011; and "Go Jump in a Spring," Jul./Aug. 2013.)

Cynthia Hawley is an environmental attorney who has been working with Save Price Canyon. In a recent interview with Dave Congalton on KVEC, she summarized the process that eventually led to the initiative: "What the city council did was send the developers out, have them produce a specific plan that had all their dreams in it for developing the area, bring it back to the city council, and the city council approved it. So that was basically land use planning by corporation," she said.

In response, SPC secured a referendum, also by collecting signatures of Pismo Beach voters. Faced with the specter of a ballot referendum, the City Council quickly rescinded its previous votes to approve the general plan amendments. The Sierra Club filed a lawsuit which resulted in the revocation of Spanish Springs' Environmental Impact Report, the necessary basis for any future project permits.

In an effort to formalize the energy

behind the referendum, SPC moved forward with the current initiative. Its purpose is to "preserve and maintain the natural resources supply, scenic vistas, and small town character provided by Planning Area R in Price Canyon for the benefit of Pismo Beach's residents, visitors, future generations and the economy," as outlined on [savepricecanyon.com](http://savepricecanyon.com).

California is one of 25 states that allow this method of referendum and initiative, or direct democracy.

Hawley underscored the good fortune and influence of this process. "We are so lucky to have it in this state. The initiative process is legislation by the people. It's so powerful. It's not used enough."

The initiative amends the Pismo Beach General Plan by creating a new land use designation, called Watershed and Resource Management, and then applies this new designation to the Price Canyon sphere of influence. The initiative also updates the General Plan to include all parcels in the Price Canyon sphere of influence.

The new land use designation does allow 40-acre minimum parcels, with two residences per parcel. The



**That was then** Save Price Canyon waged a years-long campaign to kill the sprawl development project proposed for their neighborhood; now they want to make it stick. *Left:* A 2011 LAFCO field trip to the site drew a crowd.

amendments will also allow certain kinds of development with permits, such as farm stands for produce grown on the parcels, publicly or privately owned parks, trails, recreational uses, facilities and structures, public buildings, public and/or private schools, and public infrastructure, services and facilities.

There are also allowances for uses without permits such as dry farming, dry farming vineyards, grazing, animal raising and keeping, storage of farm equipment and supplies, agricultural accessory structures and residential structures.

Hawley was unable to predict whether or not the city council would

act to accept the initiative, or wait to put it on the ballot in the fall. But as a litigator, Hawley welcomes the opportunity to work on protecting 1,140 acres in Price Canyon at this juncture. "I'd much rather work ahead of bad decisions."

The members of Save Price Canyon are feeling encouraged. Blake said that talking with Pismo Beach residents about the initiative has been a very positive experience.

"I'm just thrilled," said Blake. "It really wasn't hard to get the signatures. When it comes to sprawling development in Price Canyon," she said with a smile, "the people just don't want it."

## Save the Date Sierra Club

### Fundraiser: "The Face of the Wild"

Celebrating Our Commitment to Protecting & Preserving Nature  
Sunday, August 3rd, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Tolosa Winery, 4910 Edna Road, San Luis Obispo

2014 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, and we're going to celebrate! Get ready to enjoy the ambiance of warm summer air, live music, artisan foods and drink at the Santa Lucia Chapter's 2014 fundraiser. There will be unique silent auction items, including local art, African safari trips and animal masks of our favorite wild creatures for you to get into the spirit! Your ticket will include delicious tapas, a glass of wine and dessert.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club depends on your participation to continue protect our open space and natural resources. Come to share and hear about our accomplishments, connect with your community, and contribute to your local chapter. Tickets will go on sale in June. Watch our website and the Santa Lucian for details.

#### Volunteers Wanted!

You can help make this an event to remember!

- Telephone calls - invitation follow-up
- Sponsor solicitations
- Set-up and take-down on August 3rd
- Silent auction mgr. and event team members
- Help with mailings
- Sign maker

Contact: [sandysimon2010@gmail.com](mailto:sandysimon2010@gmail.com) or call 543-8717.

Dues, contributions or gifts to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.



1964-2014  
YOURS TO ENJOY TO PROTECT

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, WILDERNESS

Celebrating 50 years of American Wilderness

1964  
2014

From the pen of

# John Muir

Excerpt from *My First Summer in the Sierra* by John Muir, introduction by Mike Davis, published by The Modern Library Paperback Edition.

*In the summer of 1869, Muir set out on his first summer in the Sierra.*

In the great Central Valley of California there are only two seasons - spring and summer. The spring begins with the first rainstorm, which usually falls in November. In a few months the wonderful flowery vegetation is in full bloom, and by the end of May it is dead and dry and crisp, as if every plant had been roasted in an oven.... I was longing for the mountains about this time, but money was scarce and I couldn't see how a bread supply was to be kept up.

While I was anxiously brooding on the bread problem, so troublesome to wanderers, and trying to believe that I might learn to live like the wild animals, gleaning nourishment here and there from seeds, berries, etc., sauntering and climbing in joyful independence of money or baggage, Mr. Delaney, a sheep-owner, for whom I had worked a few weeks, called upon me, and offered to engage me to go with his shepherd and flock to the headwaters of the Merced and Tuolumne rivers, - the very region I had most in mind.

I was in the mood to accept work of any kind that would take me into the mountains whose treasures I had tasted last summer in the Yosemite region.... I judged, however, that I was in no way the right man for the place, and freely explained my shortcomings, confessing that I was wholly unacquainted with the topography of the upper mountains, the streams that would have to be crossed, and the wild sheep-eating animals, etc.; in short that, what with bears, coyotes, rivers, canyons, and thorny, bewildering chaparral, I feared that half or more of his flock would be lost.

Fortunately, these shortcomings seemed insignificant to Mr. Delaney. The main thing he said was to have a man about the camp whom he could trust to see that the shepherd did his duty, and...the difficulties that seemed so formidable at a distance would vanish as we went on....

I was fortunate in getting a fine St. Bernard dog for a companion. His master, a hunter with whom I was slightly acquainted, came to me as soon as he heard that I was going to spend the summer in the Sierra and begged me to take his favorite, Carlo, with me, for he feared that if he were compelled to stay all summer on the plains, the fierce heat might be the death of him....

Carlo knew we were talking about him, watched our faces, and listened so attentively that I fancied he under-

stood us. Calling him by name, I asked him if he was willing to go with me. He looked me in the face with eyes expressing wonderful intelligence, then turned to his master, and after permission was given by a wave of the hand toward me and a farewell patting caress, he quietly followed me as if he perfectly understood all that had been said and had known me always.

**June 3, 1869.** - This morning provisions, camp-kettle, blankets, plant-press, etc., were packed on two horses, the flock headed for the tawny foothills, and away we sauntered in a cloud of dust: Mr. Delaney, bony and tall, with sharply hacked profile like Don Quixote, leading the pack-horses, Billy, the proud shepherd, a Chinaman and Digger Indian to assist in driving for the first few days in the brushy foothills, and myself with notebook tied to my belt....

About noon the heat was hard to bear; the poor sheep panted pitifully and tried to stop in the shade of every tree they came to, while we gazed with eager longing through the dim burning glare toward the snowy mountains and streams, though not one was in sight. The landscape is only wavering foothills roughened here and there with bushes and trees and out-cropping masses of slate.

The trees, mostly blue oak (*Quercus Douglasii*), are about thirty to forty feet high, with pale blue-green leaves and white bark, sparsely planted on the thinnest soil or in crevices of rocks beyond the reach of grass fires. The slates in many places rise abruptly through the tawny grass in sharp lichen-covered slabs like tombstones in deserted burying-grounds. With the exception of the oak and four or five species of manzanita and ceanothus, the vegetation of the foothills is mostly the same as that of the plains.

I saw this region in the early spring, when it was a charming landscape garden full of birds and bees and flowers. Now the scorching weather makes everything dreary. The ground is full of cracks, lizards glide about on rocks, and ants in amazing numbers, whose tiny sparks of life only burn the brighter with the heat, fairly quiver with unquenchable energy as they run in long lines to fight and gather food. How it comes that they do not dry to a crisp in a few seconds' exposure to such sun-fire is marvelous. A few rattlesnakes lie coiled in out-of-the-way places, but are seldom seen. Magpies and crows, usually so noisy, are silent now, standing in mixed flocks on the

ground beneath the best shade trees, with bills wide open and wings drooped, too breathless to speak; the quail also are trying to keep in the shade about the few tepid alkaline water-holes; cottontail rabbits are running from shade to shade among the ceanothus brush, and



occasionally the long-eared hare is seen cantering gracefully across the wider openings....

**June 4.** - ...This day has been as hot and dusty as the first, leading over gently sloping brown hills, with mostly the same vegetation, excepting the strange-looking Sabine pine (*Pinus Sabiniana*), which here forms small groves or is scattered among the blue oaks. The trunk divides at a height of fifteen or twenty feet into two or more stems, outleaning or nearly upright, with many needles, casting but little shade. In general the appearance of this tree looks more like a palm than a pine. The cones are about six or seven inches long, about five in diameter, very heavy, and last long after they fall, so that the ground beneath the trees is covered with them. They make fine resinous, light-giving camp-fires, next to ears of Indian corn the most beautiful fuel I've ever seen....

**June 5.** - This morning after setting out with the crawling sheep-cloud, we gained the summit of the first well-defined bench on the mountain-flank at Pino Blanco....

After gaining the open summit of this first bench, feeling the natural exhilaration due to the slight elevation of a thousand feet or so, and hopes excited concerning the outlook to be obtained, a magnificent section of the Merced Valley at what is called Horseshoe Bend came full in sight - glorious wilderness that seemed to be calling with a thousand songful voices.

Bold, down-sweeping slopes, feathered with pines and clumps of manzanita with sunny, open spaces between them, make up most of the foreground; the middle and background present fold beyond fold of finely modeled hills and ridges rising into mountain-like masses in the distance covered with shaggy growth of chaparral, mostly adenostoma, planted so marvelously close and even that it looks like soft, rich plush without a single tree or bare spot. As far as the eye can reach it extends, a heaving, swelling sea of grass as regular and continuous as that produced by the heaths of Scotland.

The sculpture of the landscape is as striking in its main lines as in its lavish richness of detail; a grand congregation of massive heights with the river shining between, each carved into smooth, graceful folds without leaving a single rocky angle exposed, as if the delicate fluting and ridging fashioned out of metamorphic slates had been carefully sandpapered.

The whole landscape showed design, like man's noblest sculptures. How wonderful the power of its beauty! Gazing awe-stricken, I might have left everything for it. Glad endless work

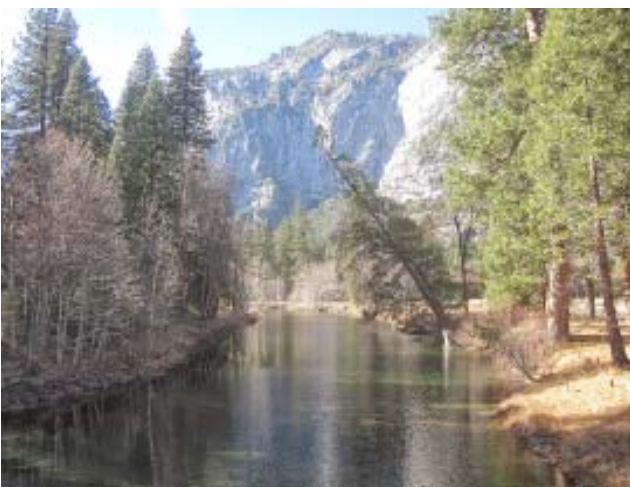
would then be mine tracing the forces that have brought forth its features, its rocks and plants and animals and glorious weather. Beauty beyond thought everywhere, beneath, above, made and being forever....

**June 6.** - We are now on what may be called the second bench or plateau of the Range, after making many small ups and downs over belts of hill-waves, with, of course, corresponding changes in the vegetation. In open spots many of the lowland compositae are still to be found, and some of the Mariposa tulips and other conspicuous members of the lily family; but the characteristic blue oak of the foothills is left below, and its place is taken by a fine large species (*Quercus Californica*) with deeply lobed deciduous leaves, picturesquely divided trunk, and broad, massy, finely lobed and modeled head.

Here also at a height of about twenty-five hundred feet we come to the edge of the great coniferous forest, made up mostly of yellow pine with just a few sugar pines. We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us. Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, as if truly an inseparable part of it, thrilling with the air and trees, streams and rocks, in the waves of the sun - a part of all nature, neither old nor young, sick nor well, but immortal. Just now I can hardly conceive of any bodily condition dependent on food or breath any more than the ground or the sky. How glorious a conversion, so complete and wholesome it is, scarce memory enough of old bondage days left as a standpoint to view from! In this newness of life we seem to have been so always....

We are near the North Fork of the Merced. The night wind is telling the wonders of the upper mountains, their snow fountains and gardens, forests and groves; even their topography is in its tones. And the stars, the everlasting sky lilies, how bright they are now that we have climbed above the lowland dust! The horizon is bounded and adorned by a spiry wall of pines, every tree harmoniously related to every other...divine hieroglyphics written with sunbeams. Would I could understand them! The stream flowing past the camp through the ferns and lilies and alders make sweet music for the ear, but the pines marshaled around the edge of the sky make a yet sweeter music to the eye. Divine beauty all. Here I could stay tethered forever with just bread and water, nor would I be lonely; loved friends and neighbors, as love for everything increased, would seem all the nearer however many miles and mountains between us.

Alicia Bien



The Merced River



## It's Time for a Green Burial Site in SLO County



By Rosemary Wilvert

For as long as humans have been dying, we have reunited our bodies with the earth, usually through burial or cremation. Cremation requires as much fuel as driving a car 5,000 miles! In recent years, a nationwide movement has been growing for a return to the more earth-friendly, or natural, burial.

Last year a group of San Luis Obispo County citizens began to investigate the possibility of a local preserve. The

group became acquainted with John Harden, who has long desired to turn his land into a natural burial preserve. He owns 34 acres off Highway 46 in the rolling hills of west Templeton and has recently applied to the County for a zoning permit. He has a website in progress: [www.livingoaknaturalburials.com](http://www.livingoaknaturalburials.com).

Hardin's goal is to steward the land, to restore the native habitat and wildlife of the original oak woodland with minimum impact on the water table. By contrast, many of the surrounding properties have been bought up by developers and turned into irrigated vineyards.

Hardin's vision is guided by the standards of the Green Burial Council, a national nonprofit organization that encourages "environmentally sustainable death care and the use of burial as a new means of protecting natural areas. Green burial promotes habitat conservation and restoration, the planting of native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, and the nurturing of wildlife." See [www.greenburialcouncil.org](http://www.greenburialcouncil.org).

Natural preserves do not allow embalming fluids and cement vaults. Burial is in a shroud or biodegradable box. Besides being more economical, these simple burials provide a dignified ending to one's life and foster the serenity the family can find in being close to nature.

The group has found a wide interest among residents of San Luis Obispo County for a local natural burial preserve. With the growing awareness of climate change, people who have tended toward green living naturally prefer green dying, a last act toward lowering our carbon footprint.



**A better way to go** Rosemary Wilvert and Rob Caughlan spoke on green burial at the Sierra Club's March 28 general meeting at the Steynberg Gallery in SLO.

## Katcho

continued from page 2

result of bad votes in Sacramento. If you've had occasion to hike Ontario Ridge above Avila Beach in the last few months and to curse the eyesore that is the long, illegal fence that now stands between you and the formerly unobstructed view of the coast and ocean, thank Katcho.

Last year, AB 976 would have given the Coastal Commission an urgently needed enforcement tool to protect coastal resources. The Commission currently cannot impose reasonable penalties for intentional violations of the Coastal Act. The measure passed both the Senate and the Assembly, then died on a procedural concurrence vote because Katcho -- doing the bidding of the big developers that have underwritten his political career -- refused to vote. (See "Katcho to Coast: Drop Dead," Oct. 2013.) Katcho's last-minute abstention defeated a measure that would have meant egregious violators would have been compelled to pay for and undo their damage. By abstaining rather than voting no, Katcho sought to avoid the appearance of responsibility for the bill's death.

On Ontario Ridge, the Coastal Commission told the County it had erred in determining that the property owner did not need a permit for the fence and that they could not stop him from erecting it. The Commission told the property owner to take down his unpermitted fence blocking access to the popular trail and public views of the coast. In response, the owner simply opened the gate and left the fence up, replete with "no admittance"

signs. His defiance of the order and open flouting of coastal law got added to the Commission's mountainous case backlog of coastal scofflaws. He knows that because AB 976 failed, the Commission cannot enforce compliance by fining him until he complies, and the odds of the Commission initiating the costly, time-consuming procedure of taking him to court to enforce compliance are roughly equivalent to his chances of being struck by lightning. So the fence is still there.

As a county supervisor, Katcho was long the dependable third leg of a

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conservative majority that voted to approve development without regard to its impacts on water resources, air and water quality or traffic, handing out project permits like party favors in the name of growth. In the years since, drivers attempting to traverse the south county and finding themselves caught in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the 101 due to the over-development of the Nipomo Mesa could all thank Katcho for that particular contribution to the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County.

Now hikers on Ontario Ridge can do the same.



Tarran Collins

**Enjoy your view of the fence** Katcho's damage done above Pirate's Cove.

## Wilderness

continued from page 1

incorporated into and managed as part of the Machesna Mountain Wilderness as designated by the California Wilderness Act.

● Approximately 3,153 acres land in the Los Padres National Forest shall be incorporated into and managed as part of the Santa Lucia Wilderness as

designated by the Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978.

Nearly 300 local landowners, businesses, elected officials, farmers, ranchers, civic leaders, wineries, recreation leaders and outfitters are supportive of additional wilderness, wild and scenic rivers and scenic areas in our region. A full list of supporters and more information can be found at [centralcoastwild.org](http://centralcoastwild.org).



## In Memoriam: George Lacy Harper



We were saddened to learn that George Harper passed away on April 8.

Dr. Harper came to San Luis Obispo in 1960 and served as County Public Health Officer, created Operation Head Start in conjunction with the Office of Education, and advocated for the natural environment, a passion he shared with his children.

George is survived by his children, Jennifer Harper Stevens, Julie Rose Harper, Nancy Jane Nolan and R. Dan Harper; daughter-in-law, Shawn

Hitchcock Harper; grandchildren Megan and Chelsea Stevens, Elle Nolan and Nicolas, Lucas and William Harper; and the mother of his children, Ellen Harper Luschei. For those who wish to honor his memory, a donation may be sent to the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406; or San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, P.O. Box 3608, San Luis Obispo, CA 93403.

## Update: 20 from 300

We are more than halfway to our goal of financial stability via automatic monthly donations of \$20 or more from just 300 of our 2,000 members in San Luis Obispo County. This can be done via PayPal using the "Donate" button at [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org), or through your bank's bill-pay service, or with a check for \$240 covering a year's worth of monthly donations. Whichever way you choose, you will automatically become a sustaining member of the Santa Lucia Chapter's Cal French Circle -- a vibrant, empowering group of friends. Dues, contribution or gifts to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible as charitable contributions. Additional information at [https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/PageServer?pagename=donate\\_Financial\\_Regulatory\\_Info](https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/PageServer?pagename=donate_Financial_Regulatory_Info).

# Taking Issue

Reviewing problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Hybrid water district should go to a vote,” *The Tribune*, April 11, 2014.

**Summary:** *The Tribune* ironically hopes that Assemblymember Katcho Achadjian’s bill to create a water district that will serve the interests of agricultural operators over the distressed Paso Robles groundwater basin survives the legislative process and gets to a floor vote -- ironically, because a vote is exactly what the non-acreage-owning class living over the basin will *not* get if Katcho’s bill survives. Big Grape would get to form the kind of district it wants instead, and the vote for the formation of that district would be based on how much land voters own.



The proposed district requires special legislation to advance...

...for the same reason that Frankenstein’s monster required lightning bolts.

...because its board would be made up of some directors elected by popular vote, and others elected by property owners.

Specifics are helpful, so here’s the specific meaning of “some” and “others:” Ag land-owners: 6 directors.

Residents: 3 directors – after the district itself is established by a vote of land-owners only, with one vote per acre. In other words, the people who use more than 70% of the water pumped out of the basin and have spent the last 18 months vigorously opposing any suggested reductions in the intensity of their water use, fighting any move to curb the expansion of irrigated ag over a distressed basin, and clamoring for exemptions from the mild measures that have been put in place would be permanently calling the shots on water policy for that basin. The people watching their residential wells run dry as the vineyards drill deeper would be permanently shut out. And it’s not hard to guess how much enthusiasm there would be among that district’s permanent board majority for the idea of leaving enough water in the aquifer to avoid the environmental havoc wrought upon streams and wetlands by groundwater depletion.

Other districts in California are composed of either one group or the other.

Again, specifics are good. The water districts in California that consist almost entirely of agricultural operations with very few residents – think San Joaquin Valley – are *irrigation* districts, with representation based on the amount of acreage owned. Areas that have significant residential populations have water districts with directors elected by popular vote. More than 15,000 people live over the Paso Robles groundwater basin.

See: most of the aforementioned 15,000 residents of the proposed district under the “not everyone” category.

Not everyone in the basin embraces the idea of a hybrid district. We get that.

And they’re not alone. We reprint herewith for the edification of *The Tribune*’s editorial board this illuminating exchange between Supervisor Caren Ray and Debbie Michel, senior consultant to the Assembly Local Government Committee, at the February 18, 2014, meeting of the Board of Supervisors:

*Michel:* These types of issues bring a lot of support and opposition based on resident voting and land owner voting.... The general trend over the last hundred years, I would say, in spite of irrigation districts, is to move away from landowner-based districts and voting. So I don’t know –

*Ray:* And toward...?

*Michel:* And toward resident voting, or one person per parcel, one person per vote. Away from land owner but more a registered voter type designation.

However, this is the compromise reached after much negotiating by disparate groups – one made up of large vineyard owners and other agriculturalists, and the other of rural residents and small farm owners

The “compromise” that gave big ag what they wanted was reached due to the collapse of PRO Water Equity, the group that was supposed to represent the interests of rural residents and small farm owners and was

created specifically to advocate for a district based on the principle of “1 person, 1 vote.” When one group in a negotiation decides to place the goal of a compromise – any compromise – ahead of the interests it is supposed to represent, the result is not a legitimate compromise, as attested to by the multiple resignations from the board of PRO Water Equity after it capitulated to Big Grape. The formation of a district on the basis of an acreage-based vote is also opposed by the Farm Bureau, Cattlemen’s Association, and Creston Advisory Body.

**Upshot:** Supervisor Ray and Supervisor Arnold both balked at the idea of a water district that shuts out the voices of residents, and voted against endorsing the language that Katcho put in the bill that he is now trying to push through the legislature. The sooner Katcho’s water-grab bill dies, the sooner the county’s most serious groundwater crisis can be seriously addressed, whether via a “1 person/1 vote” water district, County oversight via its floodwater district authority, or adjudication of the basin.

## Dalidio

continued from page 6

using land for off-site mitigation. This is a great out for developers, but serves only to fragment remaining open space and agricultural land into smaller fragments.

In testimony at the April 1 meeting, Santa Lucia Chapter Director Andrew Christie reminded the council that forty-five years ago, visionary SLO mayor Ken Schwartz led the charge

that gave the city a center and genuine public space in Mission Plaza, and that this was a better idea than the parking garage that the Chamber of Commerce wanted to put in that space. Then as now, somebody came up with a better idea for a crucial project that would play a large part in determining what the city’s future would look like.

This is not the moment for SLO to opt for the dead minimum on open space

and go for the okey-doke on off-site mitigation. This is the time for the SLO City Council to raise their gaze, and raise the 50 percent open space requirement in the LUCE, include Lopes’ 75%+ open space alternative plan in the San Luis Ranch Environmental Impact Report, and select that alternative when it’s time for them to vote on the project. And it will be up to the citizens of SLO to prevail upon the

council to do those things.

The draft LUCE EIR is expected to be released by the end of May, at which time the City will begin accepting public comments. There will be a workshop on May 31, followed by ten public hearings over the next five months at the planning commission and city council. Check the project website regularly for more information at [www.slo2035.com](http://www.slo2035.com)

# Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **May 12**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:  
Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter  
P.O. Box 15755  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406  
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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.

**Sun., May 4th, 9 a.m. Santa Margarita Lake Nature Walk.** With skilled leaders from the Sierra Club, California Native Plant Society, and Morro Coast Audubon Society, come on an easy saunter of 3-4 miles to view and identify spring wildflowers and migrating birds near Santa Margarita Lake. Bring water and snacks and dress in layers for changing weather. Hat, sunscreen, and sturdy walking shoes recommended. From Hwy 101, drive about 15 miles east on Hwy 58 and Pozo Rd, passing the Santa Margarita Lake turnoff, then crossing a small bridge. Turn left after the bridge onto River Rd, continuing 2.3 miles to park entrance on left side of the road. Allow 40-50 minutes drive time from SLO area. To carpool, meet at Santa Rosa Park in SLO at 8:20 a.m. or in front of Pacific Beverage Co., 22255 Camino Real in Santa Margarita, at 8:30 a.m. Information, contact Leader: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or

**Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park. 3-Days, 3-Islands: May 4-6, June 8-10, July 22-24, August 24-26, September 14-16.** Join us as we explore these enchanting islands! 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 highly endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the



Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or just relax at sea. A ranger/naturalist will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest and present evening programs. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara. The \$590 cost includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, and beverages plus the services of a ranger/naturalist.

To reserve space, send a \$100 check, written to Sierra Club to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. For more information contact leader; 626-443-0706; jholtzhl@aol.com.

[bill.waycott@gmail.com](mailto:bill.waycott@gmail.com) Rain cancels.

**Sun., May 4th, 10 a.m. Quarry/Canet/Live Oak Trails Hike** Join us on an easy 2 1/2-mile loop hike, 450 ft. gain, in Morro Bay State Park. View dacite boulders below Cerro Cabrillo's Tiki Rock, grass and sage meadows, oak groves, and distant ocean sand dunes on well-marked dirt trails. Duration about 2 hrs. Meet at Quarry Trail parking area off South Bay Blvd., 1.3 mile from Hwy 1 or .7 mile from Turri Rd. Leader: Vicki Marchenko, 528-5567 or [vmarchenko57@gmail.com](mailto:vmarchenko57@gmail.com).

**Sat., May 10th, 8:30 a.m. Rinconada/Little and Big Falls Loop Hike.** Strenuous, 14-mile, 2000 ft. gain, hike, mostly in the scenic Lopez Canyon area. Several stream crossings, so bring sandals or appropriate footwear while crossing. Some poison oak present. Bring lunch and water

and prepare to be out most of the day, though a shorter in-and-out hike is possible for those desiring it. Meet in front of Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita. Extreme heat will postpone until May 17th, the following Saturday. Confirm beforehand that you are coming with Leader: Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317.


**Sun., May 18th, 10 a.m. Sycamore Springs Trekking Pole Hike.** "Polecats" is dedicated to leading hikes, modelling the benefits of using trekking poles effectively. Today's hike is 2 miles, 600 feet elevation gain. Meet at entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Drive. Confirm beforehand with Leader: David Georgi, 458-5575 or [hikingpoles@gmail.com](mailto:hikingpoles@gmail.com).

**Thurs., May 22nd 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly Meeting: An Activist's Primer on Drought.** Conner Everts, Director of the Southern California Watershed Alliance and senior mentor for Environmental Justice for Water, in the California, is traveling from L.A. this evening to give us insight about the worsening water situation, what might help, and what won't. Chapter Director Andrew Christie and Conservation Chair Sue Harvey will serve as his interlocutors in an interview format. Come and get the facts on California's most urgent environmental problem. Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

**Sat., May 24th, 10 a.m.. Historic Walk: San Luis Obispo, 1914.** Travel back in time and stroll past century-old homes in the Mill Street Historic



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




**The Sierra Club Needs You!**

**Become an Outings Leader**

- Lead hikes and camping trips
- Introduce others to nature
- Explore the outdoors
- Make new friends
- Protect the environment
- Get healthy exercise

*For further information contact:*

**Joe Morris**  
Sierra Club  
(805) 549-0355  
[dj1942@earthlink.net](mailto:dj1942@earthlink.net)



John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, at Yosemite

District to learn of public life in the era of bungalow houses, the first automobiles, World War I, and the early years of Cal Poly. Learn the stories of some of the rich and powerful who shaped the city of today. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet at corner of Monterey and Johnson Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

## Bring Youth to the Movement

Sierra Student Coalition Seeks Nominees for SPROG



For over 20 years, the Sierra Student Coalition has been connecting young people with the skills, knowledge, and networks necessary to become agents of real environmental change through the Sierra Student Coalition's Summer Program.

Sprog is a week-long, summer camp style training event for high school and college-age youth. Know a young person ready to make their mark on the world? Nominate them to attend a Sprog this summer! Contact Tim Harlan-Marks at [tim.harlan-marks@sierraclub.org](mailto:tim.harlan-marks@sierraclub.org) with any questions.

### Activities sponsored by other organizations

#### Central Coast Mountain Bikers

**Sun., May 18, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Combined FASTA and Santa Margarita Lake Workday.** Trail maintenance. Meet at White Oak picnic area. Wear work clothes, hat and gloves. Bring water. Tools and snacks provided. Parent needs to sign waiver for volunteers under 18. Contact: [Gregbettencourt4408@gmail.com](mailto:Gregbettencourt4408@gmail.com).

**Sat., June 7, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Montana de Oro trail work.** Meet at Park HQ above Spooners Cove. Wear work clothes, hat and gloves. Bring water.

Tools and snacks provided. Parent needs to sign waiver for volunteers under 18. Contact: [Gregbettencourt4408@gmail.com](mailto:Gregbettencourt4408@gmail.com).

#### Citizens' Climate Lobby

**Sat., May 3rd, 9:45 a.m.** at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2201 Lawton Avenue, San Luis Obispo. Get ready to get involved and make a difference! For more information, [www.citizensclimatelobby.org](http://www.citizensclimatelobby.org). Contact: [citizensclimatelobbyslo@gmail.com](mailto:citizensclimatelobbyslo@gmail.com).