

# SANTA LUCIAN



**Santa Lucia Chapter**

**Jan./Feb. 2020**  
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The official newsletter of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club ~ San Luis Obispo County, California

## Central Coast Heritage Protection Act Moves Ahead

On November 19, the House Committee on Natural Resources passed the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act (H.R. 2199), heeding the call of Californians to safeguard for future generations the state's unique public lands and rivers within the Carrizo Plain National Monument and Los Padres National Forest. A vote by the full House is expected in February.

Representative Salud Carbajal and Senator Kamala Harris introduced the legislation to help ensure clean water for area communities, conserve valuable wildlife habitat, and stimulate the local economy.

The bill's advancement builds on momentum in Congress to permanently protect cherished landscapes and waters across the nation as designated Wilderness Areas, including enactment earlier this year of the John Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. In October, the House passed legislation to protect public



lands in Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico.

“Permanent protection of Carrizo Plain is key to our region’s tourism industry, which attracts visitors from around the globe and reinforces our economic future and quality of life,” said San Luis Obispo Mayor Heidi Harmon. “I commend the House Natural Resources Committee for moving the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act forward and urge swift passage through the full House of Representatives.”

*WILDERNESS continued on page 5*

## A Giant Tunnel Will Not Solve California’s Water Challenges

Last November, at the urging of the County’s State Water Subcontractors Advisory Committee, the three largest state water subcontractors in the county — Morro Bay, Pismo Beach, and the Oceano CSD — voted to “participate in preliminary efforts associated with the Delta Conveyance Project,” aka the Delta Tunnel.

Votes of support by local jurisdictions bring the project one step closer to reality -- reality being a costly giant tunnel that would divert Sacramento River water bound for the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta and transport it directly to Central Valley farms and urban users in the Bay Area and Southern California.

The SLO County Board of Supervisors is the ultimate target of the local charm offensive by project proponents because SLO County will have to agree to support the project in order put local state water users officially on the hook for financial support.

Here’s why that shouldn’t happen.

This plan would accelerate the decline of the largest estuary on the west coast, which provides essential habitat for native and migratory species. Salmon runs and a billion-dollar commercial salmon industry rely on a healthy Delta.

The giant tunnel would ultimately reduce California’s water security by increasing

dependence on unreliable water imports for many farmers and urban dwellers and encourage unsustainable use of water in cities and farms across the state. This project would burden Californians with an enormous financial commitment without guaranteeing any additional water for agriculture or urban areas. If we gamble billions on building a giant tunnel, there will not be enough money to invest in local solutions that would improve water security throughout the state and create local jobs through investment in smaller infrastructure projects.

The Sierra Club supports

*TUNNEL continued on page 4*

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# Sierra Club General Meeting

Wed., Jan. 15  
Copeland Pavilion, 3rd Floor  
French Medical Center  
1823 Johnson Ave., SLO  
Doors open: 6:30 p.m.  
Program: 7-9 p.m.

## What is Environmental Justice?

The Sierra Club is promoting dialogue, increased understanding, and appropriate action in the cause of integrating social justice and environmental concerns. We seek to provide an effective framework for addressing the damage, risk, and discrimination facing many communities today.

Join Jeremias Salazar of Food and Water Watch, Cynthia Replogle from SLO Surfrider and the Oceano CSD, and Carmen Bouquin of the Santa Lucia Chapter's Executive Committee for an exploration of how we can attain the goals of social justice and human rights to secure environmental protections and a sustainable future.



## Wanna Buy a Used Nuke?

By Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

Are you old enough to remember that *National Lampoon* cover photo of a hand holding a gun to the head of a nervous looking dog under the headline "Buy this magazine or we'll shoot this dog?"

If not, you can just check out Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham's plan to change the state constitution and renewable energy policy to bar approval of PG&E's bankruptcy plan unless it includes a plan to keep Diablo Canyon open.

Here I'd like to pause to point out to all our conservative free-market friends that nuclear power has been the ultimate trust fund brat. And even though it was born and raised with every conceivable advantage – six times the amount of federal subsidies that have historically gone to renewable energy, the lion's share of federal energy r&d money, production tax credits, huge loan guarantees and a hard cap on liability – it can't compete. In 2010, the first Community Choice Energy program in California went on line in Marin County. That was the moment when a monopoly nuclear utility

NUKE continued on page 6

Andrew Christie  
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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Denny Mynatt  
PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

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### Santa Lucia Chapter

#### 2020 Executive Committee

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##### delegates

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The **Executive Committee** meets the third Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the chapter office, located at 1411 Marsh St., Suite 204, San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

#### Outings

Chuck Tribbey

#### Webmasters

Monica Tarzier, Stephanie Carlotti

#### Trail Guide

Gary Felsman

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# Dear SLO County:

We Have Good News



and Bad News



## No amount of spin can change what three county supervisors have cost us

On January 1, Community Choice Energy became a reality in the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay.

It did not become a reality in the unincorporated areas of SLO County because Supervisors Debbie Arnold, John Peschong and Lynn Compton have consistently refused to join a Community Choice Energy program.

So what did Morro Bay and SLO just get?

They have joined more than ten million Californians who are now getting their electricity from programs that are community-run, mission-driven, and accountable to the people and businesses they serve.

They have a voice on Monterey Bay Community Power's Policy Board and Operations Board, and their citizens can serve on the MBCP Community Advisory Council. No closed-door meetings. No shareholders raking off profits.

They now have the power of competition and choice in a local electricity market, providing ratepayers with options about their power supplier and the level of clean energy they wish to support.

They now have a way to support their local economies through job creation and the growth of local power, and access to \$25 million in low-interest loans supporting backup power generation for

**"Not enough information"** Monterey Bay Community Power is one of 19 Community Choice Energy agencies serving more than 10 million customers across California. CCEs have become the primary way Californians support cleaner energy, with local control, cost savings, renewable energy options and delivery of impactful energy programs to local communities.

CCA continued on page 4

## CCA

continued from page 3

facilities providing critical public services — funding that makes a strategic contribution toward greater local energy development, resiliency and economic development.

They're going to see a significant increase in renewable energy generation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

This year, all MBCP customers will see an estimated 7%

savings on their bills vs. what they used to pay PG&E, equating to \$19 million.

Meanwhile, back at the County, ignorance is being pleaded. The County's latest Community Choice Aggregation study will be ready in about a year. Due to the year-long timeframe for

CCA continued on next page

## Tunnel

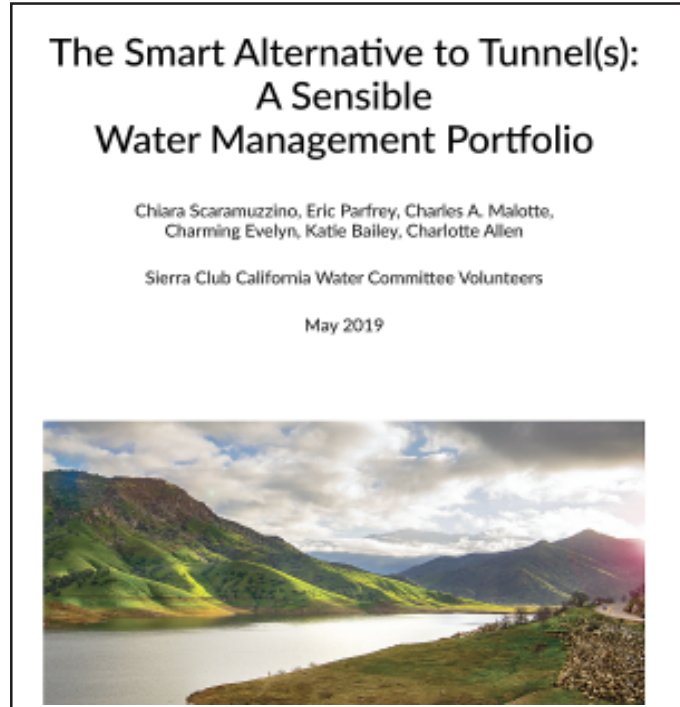
continued from page 1

robust alternatives to the tunnel that would provide better long-term water security for all Californians and would have fewer negative environmental impacts. Those solutions include encouraging water-efficient technologies in urban use, requiring state-wide water meters on an accelerated timeline, and recycling municipal wastewater.

Encouraging the urban uptake of water-efficient technologies would mean replacing thirsty lawns with drought tolerant landscaping, installing smart irrigation technology, using rainwater and graywater, and promoting aggressive rebate programs for efficient appliances, all of which could reduce urban water use by 30%. Landscaping accounts for roughly half of all residential water use.

Accelerating the timeline for every home and business to have a dedicated water meter would be a good idea. Cities currently have until 2025 to install meters. Requiring water meters and detailed usage reports for consumers on an accelerated timeline would likely achieve the kind of results seen in an East Bay pilot study, in which home usage reports led to a 6.6% reduction in water use.

Recycling municipal wastewater could save up to 2.3 million acre-feet annually, according to the Department of Water Resources. A successful water recycling program already exists in Orange County.



Mandating weather-based irrigation controllers, drip irrigation and climate-appropriate crop selection could yield over 3.4 million acre-feet in water savings.

Maintaining existing infrastructure would save the approximately 10% of urban water that is lost through leaks in aging distribution infrastructure, wasting water and energy.

Agriculture uses 75 to 80 percent of California's water. Improving agricultural water efficiency with conservation strategies—including weather-based irrigation controllers, drip irrigation and climate-appropriate crop selection—could yield over 3.4 million acre-feet in water savings.

Current laws requiring water-neutral development should be strengthened to more effectively prevent unsustainable growth. These

and other measures could reduce statewide water demand by 9.7 million acre feet/year. That's more water than is exported from the Delta even in rainy years.

Until 2014, California was one of the few states in the nation that did not regulate groundwater, which has led to unsustainable levels of overdraft, damage to aquifer storage capacity, and dramatic land subsidence. The passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act that year gave California, for the first time in its history, a framework for sustainable groundwater management. The amount of groundwater that could be conserved under SGMA is huge, but the timelines are ridiculous: Under SGMA, the most overdrafted basins must reach sustainability within 20 years of implementing sustainability plans. For critically overdrafted

**The Center for Business and Policy Research conducted a benefit-cost analysis that concluded the project's costs "are four times higher than its benefits, and thus the project is not economically justified."**

basins, that will be 2040. For remaining high and medium priority basins, the deadline is 2042.

That's not the way to respond to a crisis. We must accelerate the implementation of SGMA and aim for an increase in the current levels of groundwater, not just the avoidance of undesirable results compared against a degraded baseline. Groundwater basins must be managed so that no single individual or corporation is able to exploit them.

The Sierra Club supports common-sense alternatives to the costly giant tunnel gamble. So can you. Download *The Smart Alternative to Tunnel(s): A Sensible Water Management Portfolio* at [www.sierraclub.org/california/water](http://www.sierraclub.org/california/water). Then watch the schedule of the meetings of the Board of Supervisors for this item, likely sometime in January. Let the Supervisors know everything wrong with the idea of the County and local state water contractors throwing money at this project, and what we should be doing instead.

Go to: [tinyurl.com/slonotunnel](http://tinyurl.com/slonotunnel)



### CCA

*continued from previous page*

administrative procedures after a municipality formally submits a request to join a Community Choice Energy program, that means there's a good chance the supervisors could blow the deadline for 2022, losing another year via more of the same foot-dragging the troika deployed when it missed the windows for 2020 and 2021.

Learn more (than three county supervisors) at [cal-cca.org/](http://cal-cca.org/).

### Wilderness

*continued from page 1*

Kirsten Blackburn, Advocacy Manager for The Conservation Alliance, which engages businesses to help protect wild places for their habitat and recreation values, said, "Adding lasting protections and special recreation designations to California's Los Padres National Forests helps sustain the health of our environment and our outdoor recreation economy. We are grateful for Congressman Carbajal's continued efforts to protect worthy landscapes such as the Condor National Recreation Trail and Wild & Scenic Rivers like Piru Creek and look forward to H.R. 2199 crossing the finish line in this Congress."

The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act is the product of years of discussion and negotiation involving business leaders, conserva-

tionists, elected officials, ranchers, mountain bikers, and other stakeholders interested in the use and well-being of these iconic lands. It would protect forests, grasslands, and wild rivers across the region by safeguarding approximately 245,000 acres of wilderness, creating two scenic areas encompassing roughly 35,000 acres, and designating 159 miles of wild and scenic rivers in the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument.

Protected public lands enhance the quality of life for residents and attract visitors to the area. The Central Coast is a top tourist destination, home to world class restaurants and wineries, and iconic scenery, all of which yield clear benefits for the region's economy. According to the



**Long range plan** In May 2013, Santa Lucia Chapter leaders Cal French, Sue Harvey and Greg McMillan met with Laurel Williams (right), Deputy Conservation Director of the Southern California Wilderness Coalition, to review the best potential areas in the county for wilderness designation.

Atascadero

# GROCERY OUTLET

bargain market

Welcome to our new regular donors, Pete & Terresa Novak, owners of Atascadero Grocery Outlet Bargain Market, 2100 El Camino Real. Pete and Terresa are all about "Supporting the Future of our Community," and are now supplying the Sierra Club with refreshments gift cards for our bimonthly General Meetings!



Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation generates \$92 billion in consumer spending and 691,000 direct jobs in California.

The rugged coastal mountains and ecologically rich grasslands of California's Central Coast sustain a wide range of recreational opportunities. Visitors to the Los Padres National Forest and the adjoining Carrizo Plain National Monument enjoy backpacking, camping, bird watching, horseback riding, kayaking, and mountain biking. The legislation would designate the approximately 400-mile long Condor Trail

as a National Scenic Trail, connecting the northern and southern portions of the Los Padres National Forest by a single hiking route.

The widely supported legislation is co-sponsored by 30 members of California's congressional delegation.

The Central Coast Wild Heritage campaign includes California Wilderness Coalition, Friends of the River, Keep the Sespe Wild, Los Padres ForestWatch, Sierra Club, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and The Wilderness Society.

Learn more at [www.centralcoastwild.org/](http://www.centralcoastwild.org/).



## TAKE ACTION

Thank Congressman Carbajal for his commitment to expanding and safeguarding the irreplaceable wilderness areas of the Central Coast. Let him know that you support preserving California's Central Coast through the designation of wilderness and wild rivers. Go to:

<http://centralcoastwild.com/get-involved/take-action>

## Nuke

*continued from page 2*

found itself approaching something resembling a free market and a level playing field. Little kids promptly knocked it down and ate its lunch: 52% of the energy once delivered by PG&E is now generated by Community Choice Energy programs and direct access energy providers. (See “Dear SLO County,” page 3.) By PG&E’s projections, that will rise to 58% by 2022.

As its customers depart and the need for the energy Diablo generates goes with them, PG&E has filed a General Ratepayer Case asking the Public Utilities Commission for permission to extract more than \$1 billion from its current and former customers to pay for Diablo Canyon’s operations and maintenance costs, and another \$84 million in capital expenditures for the plant.

As the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility put it in its testimony in that General Ratepayer Case, throwing ever more money at Diablo “would inflict substantial above-market costs on a

dwindling base of bundled customers and unnecessarily penalize former bundled customers, most of whom are now served by CCAs that foreswear inclusion of nuclear-generated electricity in their portfolios.”

They conclude that “PG&E’s unwillingness to respond to the changing market conditions that have rendered DCNPP a hopelessly stranded asset [is] saddling both bundled load and departed load with immense annual deadweight losses to produce increasingly unwanted output,” and surmise that “the only plausible explanation for PG&E’s persistence in operation of such an uneconomic plant is to generate a continuing return on its stranded investment.”

Assemblyman Cunningham claims: “There’s no reason for a bankrupt utility...to shut down a perfectly safe and profitable source of emission-free electricity.”

The risible “perfectly safe” claim is something he should check with Sam Blakeslee, his former Sacramento colleague (and a geophysicist). As to the “profitable” claim, see the

preceding testimony.

When Southern California Edison shut down the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, the settlement authorized cost recovery for SCE over a 10-year period, characterized by SCE’s chief economist as a means by which SCE could recycle its capital into investments that the Public Utilities Commission and intervenors would find worthwhile. For PG&E, this would include renewables, energy storage, and higher priority fire-hardening investments in the grid. (In the 2016 Joint Proposal to retire Diablo Canyon, PG&E agreed to the “orderly replacement of Diablo Canyon with a green-house gas free portfolio of energy efficiency, renewables and energy storage [as] the reliable, flexible, and cost-effective solution for PG&E’s customers” -- a point routinely omitted by nuclear advocates relentlessly attacking Community Choice in our local media.)

Enter Assemblyman Cunningham, whose magic wand seeks to turn back time, wave away those aforementioned

changing market conditions, and render meaningless the distinction between conventional and renewable energy, a distinction that is the basis of California’s wildly successful Renewables Portfolio Standard, the bedrock of the state’s energy policy, which correctly defines conventional power as “power derived from nuclear energy or the operation of a hydro-power facility greater than 30 mega-watts or the combustion of fossil fuels.”

Assemblyman Cunningham wants to change that because the trust fund brat needs yet another advantage. And, according to his press release, Diablo Canyon “needs to be part of the answer” in “fighting climate change.”

Here’s the bitter truth: the inflexible baseload power generated by Diablo Canyon – always on, with no way to scale up or down – requires the *curtailment* of the production of wind and solar energy, forcing them to ramp down and displacing them from the energy grid.

That’s not part of the answer. That’s the trust fund brat blocking the door.

## In Charge

*continued from page 9*

restrict activities to protect our coastal areas. Just as smoking prohibitions and leash laws regulate smoking and dogs, the Coastal Commission must protect the coast. Smokers, dogs, and OHV rough-riders are not “grandfathered” in.

The Air Pollution Control Districts have the same power, and it is absolute. If some activity is causing degradation of air quality, the APCD is empowered to terminate or curtail that activity.

Every few years, you have to have your car smog tested. If the emissions from your car exceed the acceptable standards, you have to get your car fixed. If you don’t get your car up to standards, you can’t drive your car on public roads. The DMV will not send you the little sticker to put on your license plate. No negotiating, no side deals, no time extensions, nothing half way. You do it because it’s the law.

The Coastal Commission met in SLO last July to consider and review non-compliance with conditions of cooperation at the Oceano Dunes. The Commission caved in to a very assertive bunch of OHV activists. The Coastal Commission is dealing with the State Parks system, which seems equally intimidated by the OHV crowd. The Oceano Dunes are a part

of the State Park system, which is in charge of managing OHV activities in the dunes. Shame on both of those agencies.

The SLO Air Pollution Control District hearing board met on Nov. 18 in Arroyo Grande to consider enforcing the reduction of dust emissions at the OHV driving area in the dunes. When the OHVs ride on the dry sand, they stir up particles of dust. The tiny particles become airborne and get into everything, as far away as the 101 near Santa Maria. They land on cars and structures and get inhaled by creatures who breathe air. Again, there was a willy-nilly action by the APCD that didn’t get to the heart of the matter.

OHV activities are messing up the dunes and everything that lives there and nearby. Both the Coastal Commission and the Air Pollution Control District have the absolute power and obligation to curtail these activities. And they should do it right now.

*Evelyn Delany was SLO County District 3 Supervisor from 1985-1997.*



# Join the Circle



Every year, we come closer to our goal of raising the equivalent of automatic monthly donations of \$20 or more from 300 members and supporters, the amount needed to cover the Chapter's annual operating expenses and give us a secure basis on which to advocate for the protection of the treasure that is the Central Coast; our land, water, air, and wildlife. We need to protect healthy ecosystems and the the health of residents.

This is the Cal French Circle, named after a legendary Sierra Club activists in our midst, a group that your friends and neighbors (at right) have joined, becoming sustaining members of the Sierra Club's Santa Lucia Chapter.

Now is a great time to join the Cal French Circle via a \$20 monthly donation or lump sum annual donation of \$240. Membership in the CFC confers special benefits in addition to knowing that you are a big part of the reason why the Sierra Club can continue to work on behalf of the environment in San Luis Obispo County. In years past, members have gotten a private reception with Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune at Cal Poly, a vip tour of the Tolosa Winery at one of our annual fundraisers, advance tickets to an evening with Jean-Michel Cousteau and a luncheon with his field producer.

See you in the Circle!

You can become a member of the Cal French Circle of supporters by authorizing an automatic contribution of at least \$20 a month for at least 12 months via monthly bank check, sending an annual donation of \$240 to the Santa Lucia Chapter, or going to [www.sierraclub.org/santa-lucia](http://www.sierraclub.org/santa-lucia) and clicking on "donate."

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*Our thanks to Kathleen Long for her generous donation in honor of David and Naomi Blakely.*

*Our thanks to Martha and Fred Goldthorpe for their donation in memory of John Osterman.*

## Thank You, Succulent Squad!

When the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in Lyndsey Weisenberg's science class at Old Mission School in San Luis Obispo started a project on Human Impact on the Environment, each group of students chose an environmental issue affecting the local community, then wrote an action plan to address the issue.

One of the groups in her 6th grade class chose the air quality surrounding the Oceano Dunes as their environmental issue and identified the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club as an organization they would like to support.

They sold succulents so they could donate the profits -- \$100 -- to us. We issued Awards of Appreciation to all at their Dec. 20 assembly.

Succulent Squad members, it was wonderful to meet you, and great to know that our local environment will be in good hands for many years to come!



The Squad on the job Thanks, Jaden, David, Silas, Daly, and Marshall!

# ODSVRA at D Minus 6

*At the July 11, 2019, meeting of the California Coastal Commission in San Luis Obispo, The California Department of Parks and Recreation promised to deliver to the Coastal Commission a Public Works Plan for the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area one year from that date, with quarterly updates as the date approaches. In agreeing to await the arrival of that plan, the Coastal Commission suspended action on more than a dozen conditions that had been drafted to compel State Parks to end chronic violations of its permit and the California Coastal Act at the dunes. Commissioners made it clear to State Parks that their plan will need to reckon with the changes that the Commission otherwise would have compelled via those conditions to their permit.*

*As we approach the date of the meeting of the Coastal Commission at which it is supposed to either approve or reject State Parks' plan for the future of the ODSVRA, the Santa Lucian is devoting space to a series of articles that examine the issues swirling around the longest running environmental problem on the Central Coast.*

*With six months to go until Dunes Day, we contemplate an alleged "conflict" between state laws and take a look into the past to discover what the future should hold for the Oceano Dunes.*

## Can the Coastal Commission support the Coastal Act?

It seems to have become fashionable lately for some California Coastal Commissioners to point to the conflicting legislation and mandates of the Off Highway Motor Vehicles Recreation Division and the Coastal Commission.

Some Coastal Commissioners sound like they are hoping that suggesting that this is a stand-off that cannot be resolved except by the legislature will relieve them of responsibility to act.

For any Commissioners hoping to pass the buck in that fashion, here's what the Commission's July 11 staff report had to say about that alleged conflict:

"On that point, it is important to note that that legislation... supports and encourages OHV recreational use, but at the same time it does not support it at all costs. In fact, the legislation is clear that when OHV use is leading to problems, such as is the case at ODSVRA, then it is appropriate to shut down that use if necessary to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. For example, PRC Section 5090.02(a)(3) states that the Legislature finds: 'The indiscriminate and uncontrolled use of those vehicles may have a deleterious impact on the environment, wildlife habitats, native wildlife, and native flora'; and PRC Section 5090.02(c)(4) states: 'When areas or trails or portions thereof cannot be maintained to appropriate established standards for sustained long-term use, they should be closed to use and repaired, to prevent accelerated erosion. Those areas should remain closed until they can be managed within the soil conservation standard or should be closed and restored'; and PRC Section 5090.35(a) states: 'The protection of public safety, the appropriate utilization of lands, and the conservation of natural and cultural resources are of the highest priority in the management of the state vehicular recreation areas.' Thus, although it has been argued by some that this enabling legislation does not allow for the phasing out of OHV use, the legislation itself paints a different picture, one that clearly recognizes that it does not stand for OHV use at all cost, and rather requires such use to be undertaken in a manner consistent with long-term sustainable use where the conservation of natural and cultural resources is prioritized; and it certainly



allows for closing off OHV use where it is causing the types of problems it is causing at ODSVRA. In addition, and perhaps just as compelling, PRC Section 5090 does not somehow preempt other State laws, including the Coastal Act (and by extension the LCP). On the contrary, as with other laws affecting the same resources, it is important to harmonize the laws as much as possible. On that point, here, proper application of both laws based upon facts on the ground would appear to suggest the same outcome: namely that OHV use at this location is not sustainable, and the time has come to transition to other appropriate recreational uses."

It is also worth noting that the California Coastal Act was passed five years after the passage of the Off-Highway Vehicle Act of 1971, further indicating that the intent of the legislature was that the provisions of the Off-Highway Vehicle Act must conform to the protections of the Coastal Act.

Coastal Commissioners: Sacramento is not going to fix this. Sacramento expects you to fix it. And you won't fix this by claiming helplessness in the face of the legislation that created the OHV program, but by acting on the authority vested in you by the legislation that created the California Coastal Act. As the date nears for your required approval or denial of the still unknown commodity called the State Parks Public Works Plan for Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA, this will become a crucial point.

If any Coastal Commissioners think the law that created the OHV program supersedes the law that created the Coastal Act, they should just say so. If they don't think that, and don't think that agency paralysis was the intent of the legislature, they should stop talking as though they do.



# Getting Cars Off the Beach in...Morro Bay

The Coastal Commission wants State Parks to imagine a different future for the Oceano Dunes. That future happened 50 years ago, a few miles north.

As most Central Coast residents know, you used to be able to drive cars on the beach and through the surf in Pismo Beach (see “Who’s in Charge?,” below).

This was back when Pismo was a punchline in Bugs Bunny cartoons. Then, in 1974, after losing its second vehicle beach ramp to storms, the city council gave up on the cars-on-the-beach thing.

Within two years, the depressing little town had become a resort destination.

Much less well known: you used to be able to drive cars on the beach in Morro Bay, until the city council and the State Parks and Recreation Commission halted the practice, some three years before Pismo did.

A city ordinance passed in November 1970. It was

immediately attacked and repealed via a petition to the city council, along with threats of a recall for city council members and Mayor Dale Mitchell. The ban became the subject of a special election in April of the following year. It survived.

The ban on vehicles on the city’s beach also generally blocked access to the state beach, the sand spit of Morro Bay State Park. The ban became total and official when the State Parks Commission quietly ordered the sand spit closed to vehicles in May 1971. The closure was so quiet that no one knew it had happened until a month later, when Parks Commissioner Ian Macmillan asked for clarification of the minutes of the commission’s May

meeting.

The commission went on to extend the city’s vehicle ban on the beach north of Morro Rock to include closure of the beaches of Morro Bay State Park and Morro Strand State Beach “to protect and preserve the rare ecological and archaeological values there.”

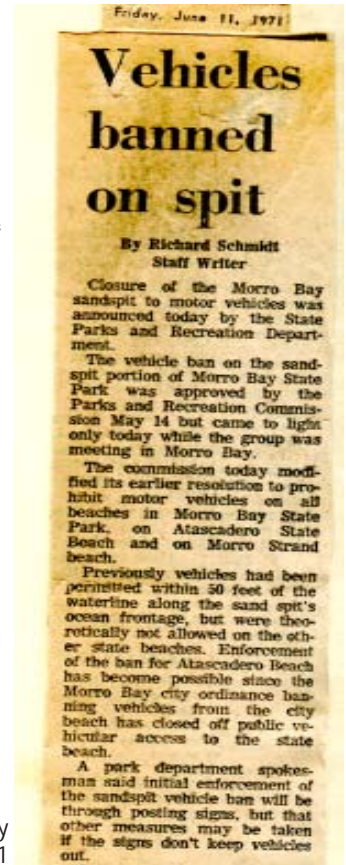
At that point, the news finally made the papers (right).

Harold Miozzi, president of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, said “The ban was well-debated before the sand spit closure. It’s the result of the public pulse and I’m glad to see that public opinion has been endorsed. The sand spit is highly vulnerable. It’s not a place just to have fun.”

In other words, Mr. Miozzi, the Parks Commission, and

the voters of Morro Bay in 1971 agreed in advance with what a California Coastal

MORRO BAY continued on page 10



Morro Bay is a tourist town. Why? Because there are beaches to drive cars or race motorcycles on? Is that the only attraction in the area? Will we lose vast sums of tourist money because of closing the beach? Does the economy of the town depend upon tourists driving on the shore? If so, we are in a deplorable financial condition!

- Vera A. Barnes, Morro Bay  
Letter to the editor, *The Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1971

## Who’s In Charge?

by Evelyn Delany

Years ago, people smoked everywhere; in bed, driving their cars, at work, in restaurants. Now, not so much. Laws have been passed and now smoking is prohibited on public transportation, in restaurants, and just about everywhere else there are indoor crowds. Smokers accept this and only smoke in their private places.

Laws dictate where you can take your dog, and dog owners go along with the rules.


A long time ago, people began riding vehicles in the Oceano Dunes. There weren’t many people doing it, and there weren’t many people living here. Gradually, our population increased in towns. In the dunes, the riders became more numerous and daring. The dune riders began intruding into sensitive areas and some species were threatened and harmed. Noise and dust abound. Last year, six people died in the dunes while riding

OHVs.

In 1972, the Coastal Act was passed with the intention of protecting the environment and resources of the entire California coast. It has been tweaked several times since then, but the intent is still the same. That means that protection of the sand, the vegetation, animals, and the air is their obligation. The Coastal Commission has the power and the responsibility to

IN CHARGE continued on page 6





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**Morro Bay**

*continued from page 9*

Commission staff report was to conclude about the Oceano Dunes in a 2019 review of State Parks' Coastal Development Permit:

"OHV use in [Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area], and the amount of problems engendered by it, renders this use not appropriate in this setting in light of the serious issues and constraints identified herein."

"There may be other options that would make sense for both State Parks and the public, including updates to ODSVRA operations and management that might retain some non-OHV vehicular use, not only based on its designation as a State Vehicular Recreation Area, but also based on the Park's history in providing for and accommodating other forms

of vehicular use that don't have the same level of adverse impact on coastal resources as OHV use."

"Street-legal vehicle camping on a limited portion of the beach may be able to provide a unique, lower-cost, overnight coastal camping opportunity that ties into the history of ODSVRA and continues its rich camping tradition, but with a significantly reduced impact on sensitive coastal resources and surrounding communities."

"It is time to start thinking about ways to transition the Park away from OHV use to other forms of public access and recreation that better respond to the current realities that affect and are affected by activities at this shoreline location. In short, a Park that is fully consistent with on-the-ground realities, and with today's laws and



VEHICLE ON THE BEACH—A view of Atascadero Beach in Morro Bay. The vehicle on the beach is the subject of controversy and a special election April 23.

**Morro Bay**

## Voters debate beach ban

By Richard Varenchik Staff Writer

Five issues in Morro Bay history have evoked more controversy than the ordinance banning vehicles from the beach.

Opponents have successfully blocked the law with a petition campaign.

A group petitioning the ban has organized to campaign for it.

And the city's voters will be asked on 12 to decide its fate at an April 23 election.

The ban's main target is Atascadero Beach, north of Morro Bay. However, it covers more territory than that.

It says motor vehicles will be prohibited "on any public property within the City of Morro Bay unless such property has been approved for the purpose of parking of motor vehicles."

"Public property as any property owned by the city, county, state or United States."

"For instance, we could use this ban against anyone who drives a car or motorcycle up and down Black Mountain, near the golf course," said Marlene Kirk, city administrator.

There are three exceptions written into the ban: golf carts on golf courses; the beachfront within the city limits; and any

group of people opposed to the law that circulated a petition forcing the council to set it aside. The council then voted to put the matter before the public at the April election.

Those who oppose the ban list three reasons:

- It is unfair to fishermen and clambers; they have to carry heavy bags of equipment to the beach and bags of equipment, fish, and clam back from the beach.
- It is a long and difficult walk to the beach for all people.
- It hurts tourist trade because tourists like to drive on the beach.

It closes an area of recreation to youth who like to drive motorcycles and those joggers on the beach.

People who are far from the beach from the beach make the following points:

- It is not safe and people walk on the beach when motor vehicles are being driven on it.
- It is especially unsafe for little children.
- Vehicles on the beach destroy plants and animal life.
- Tourists in their thousands are afraid to go on the beach.
- Motor vehicles, and especially if it doesn't work that way.

Dr. Wayne Williams, a 28-year science teacher at Cal Poly, says he is for the ban for ecological reasons.

He said the sand at Pismo Beach is the coarsest from being occupied by cars. The same thing will happen at Morro Bay, Williams said.

When the beach is compacted it is difficult for shore birds to probe through and reach worms, shell fish, and other food, Williams said. He added that compacting the sand will also compact and destroy the bird and animal life in the ocean food chain.

The Pismo Beach Chapter of Conservationists cars on the beach are a definite source of erosion and has gone on record as wanting motor vehicles to be allowed continued use of city beaches.

The California Highway Patrol investigated an injury accident on county Route 101.

Witness Scott of the San Luis Obispo Highway patrol office said the patrol investigated 18 beach accidents with 12 people injured and two killed in 1971.

"There were many accidents south of the Grover City beach. Most and he said even, guess how many non-injury accidents there were or how many injury accidents there were?"

Grover City awarded the injury and two non-injury accidents on the beach in 1971. Allison said there is also a problem with vehicles getting stuck in the sand and having to be towed out.

Records show three serious accidents on Morro Bay beaches since 1961. In June 1967, a man was knocked unconscious by a four-wheel vehicle.

A 10-year-old boy was killed in April 1968 when the vehicle he was riding flipped over on him. A girl was killed by a motorcycle in 1971.

The August 1970 accident was also reported to state park rangers as the only case they investigated in 1971 on Atascadero State Beach.

A San Luis Obispo doctor, who asked that his name not be used, said he has reservations about old people and their use of beaches. He feels that a person with a heart condition walking on the beach shouldn't go alone.

"The combination of cold water and carbon in too much for them. The hot air patterns in the dunes," the doctor said.

An Morro Bay, Thomas County with the Dan's a Morro Bay while observing on a Morro Bay beach on Jan. 28.

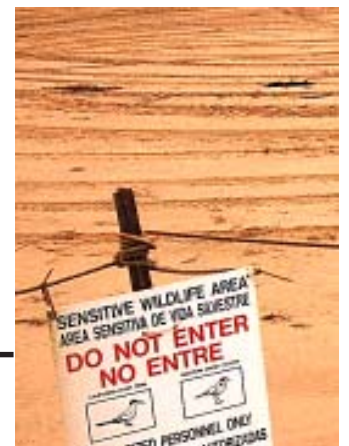
People who are for the ban say they will attempt to see an

Everything old is new again *The Tribune*, Jan. 26, 1971.

requirements, does not include OHV use."

The Chair of the Commission reiterated this last point in a letter to the Director of State Parks the day after that permit hearing. There is no evidence that State Parks and the OHV Division got the message, or remembers 1971.

**TAKE ACTION**



State Parks will continue to hold public workshops and open houses and invite comments on its Public Works Plan, a vision document for the future management of the ODSVRA, in the lead-up to the promised submission of a draft to the Coastal Commission this summer. At every meeting, they should be asked where in their draft document is a vision for a future of the dunes that includes the vision the Coastal Commission told them it wants to see.

*Thanks to Henry Rible for making available the files of his late wife and Sierra Club stalwart Dorothea Rible.*

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**Outings**

*continued from page 12*

**Saturday, Jan. 25th, 9:00 am, Colson Canyon Exploration.** A moderate, 8 mile, in-and-out hike to explore Colson Canyon on the forest road to La Brea Creek. Dress in layers and bring lots of water, hat, good hiking shoes. We will park before the forest road gets too difficult and hike from there. From SLO, take Hwy 101 south to Bett-eravia Rd. in Santa Maria. Meet to carpool at the side of Men-chie's Frozen yogurt in the Crossroads Center, 2202 S. Bradley Rd. Rain or threat of rain cancels. Contact Andrea, 805-934-2792.

**Saturday, Feb. 1st, 8:30 am, Rinconada, Big Falls, Little Falls**

**loop.** This is a strenu-ous hike of 16 miles and 2,500 ft. elevation gain, and will likely take most of the day. Carpool in front of the Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita at 8:00 am or meet at the Rinconada trail-head at 8:30 am. The Rinconada trailhead is located on Pozo Road, 2.5 miles southeast of the Santa Margarita Lake Road intersec-tion, with signage just ahead of a righthand turn. Bring adequate water and food, a hat, sturdy waterproof shoes or sandals/flip-flops for stream cross-ings, and dress in layers. There will be poison oak. Dogs are welcome on a leash. Contact Bill, 805-459-

2103. Rain or the threat of rain cancels.

**Saturday, Feb. 8th, 9:00 am, Gibraltar Reservoir and Canyon Hike.** Moderate, six-mile loop hike from Paradise Rd. to Gibralt-ar Dam with option to continue to Sunbird Quicksilver Mine, for a six mile extension. See the Los

Padres mountains, amazing vistas, river pools, and rock formations. A road creek crossings is possible with heavy rain. Bring hat, water, snacks, sunscreen, and dress in layers for weather. From Hwy 101, take Rt. 154, then left on Paradise Rd for 10 miles to end. Meet in the restroom area near parking lot. A \$5 user parking fee is required. Significant chance of rain cancels. Contact Andrea, 805-934-2792.

**Sunday, Feb. 9th or Saturday, Feb. 15th, 10 am to 12 Noon, REI Wilderness Navigation Classes.** REI is holding two

special Wilderness Navigation classes for Sierra Club members. We will learn basic principles of finding trail routes, then visit a local open space for practice. Maps and compasses will be pro-vided. Cost is \$20.00. Class size limited, and response has been high. Contact Lisa: 310-864-4679 as soon as possible and indicate which of the two class dates you want to attend. Please put "REI Navigation Class" in the subject line.

**Sunday, Feb. 16th, 2 pm, Historic Walk: SLO's Secret Past.** A guided, exploratory stroll to discover the original site of the Mission, the 1860's stagecoach stop, home of SLO's first million-aire, and other hidden landmarks near down-town SLO. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet at corner of Nipomo and Dana Streets. Contact Joe, 805-549-0355.

**Saturday Feb. 22nd, 8:30 am, Cruikshank to Alder Creek Camp**



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- Make new friends
- Protect the environment
- Get healthy exercise



John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, in Yosemite

*For further information contact:*

**Bill Waycott, Outings Chair**  
(805) 459-2103 or  
bill.waycott@gmail.com



**Ground Truth**

Thanks to everyone who signed postcards to Santa Barbara's County Supervisors opposing the plans of ExxonMobil and Plains Pipeline Co. to restart offshore drilling platforms and ship the oil to facilities in San Luis Obispo and Kern counties.

The Supervisors are expected to vote on the first proposal early this year.

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**Saturday, Feb. 1st, SLO Guild Hall: Bioneers.** Ecologistics celebrates 10 years of bringing the Bioneers conference to the Central Coast. This year's theme is "2020 Vision," featuring local implementation of the Green New Deal. <https://ecologistics.org>

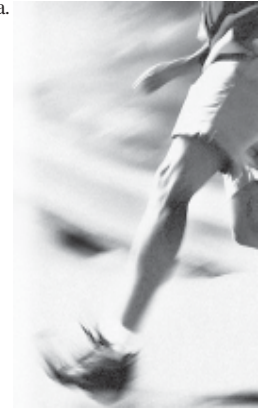
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# Outings and Activities Calendar

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 Chuck Tribbey, (805) 441-7597. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.



**Wednesday, Jan. 1st, 9:00 am, the 9th Annual Bob Jones - Up and Over Hike.**

Join us on a leaderless hike starting at the Bob Jones trailhead. Your choice of routes: 1. walk the Bob Jones trail directly to Avila, or 2. walk down the Bob Jones trail to the Sycamore Springs Bridge and hike up the Sycamore Trail to the top of the ridge. Then hike down the steep fire break to the Pirate's Cove access road, then off to Avila and stop at Hula Hut (380 Front Street, Avila Beach) for beverages, etc. Use menu link. Big Al's and Kracken Coffee are closed on

January 1st. We'll get beverages and food at Hula Hut on the Front Street Promenade. After that, we'll head back to the parking lot via the Bob Jones Trail. Rain Cancels.

**Saturday, Jan 11th, 8:00 am, Fernandez Semi-loop Hike.** This hike is on a remote trail northeast of Pozo in the La Panza Range. It is maintained by our friends in the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Biking club. The route is a strenuous 11 mile, 1,600 feet of elevation gain. Part of our trek will go off the trail to follow Fernandez Creek and later return to the trail.

This off trail section makes it more of a challenge in that it can be on a slope with the chance there will be brush that gets in the way of our route. If anyone wants to cut brush with hand clippers along the way, it would be helpful. There will be some poison oak exposure. Meet in front of the Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita. Dogs on leash are welcome. Rain will postpone this to a later date. Contact Carlos, 805-546-0317.

**Sunday, Jan. 19th, 9:00 am, East Cuesta**

**Ridge to towers atop Mount Lowe.** Total outing is 7 miles up and back, with a 900 feet elevation gain.

This is an unpaved road which makes for easy hiking and no chance of poison oak. There are panoramic vistas towards the ocean with beautiful oaks and pines all around. Dogs are permitted on leash. Dress for the weather and bring water and snacks. Meet at the top of Cuesta Grade on the

east side summit pull-out, 150 yards beyond the sign "Cuesta Grade 1522 feet." Rain cancels. Contact Bonnie, 805-801-6148.

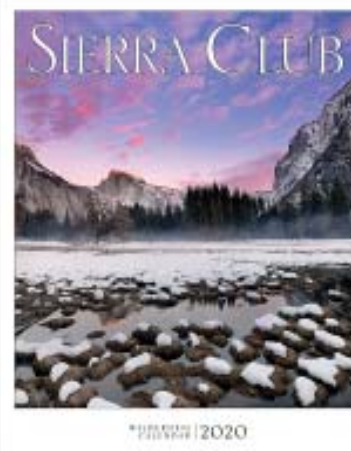
This is a partial listing of Outings offered by our chapter. Please check the web page [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org) for the most up-to-date listing of activities.

*OUTINGS continued page 11*

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