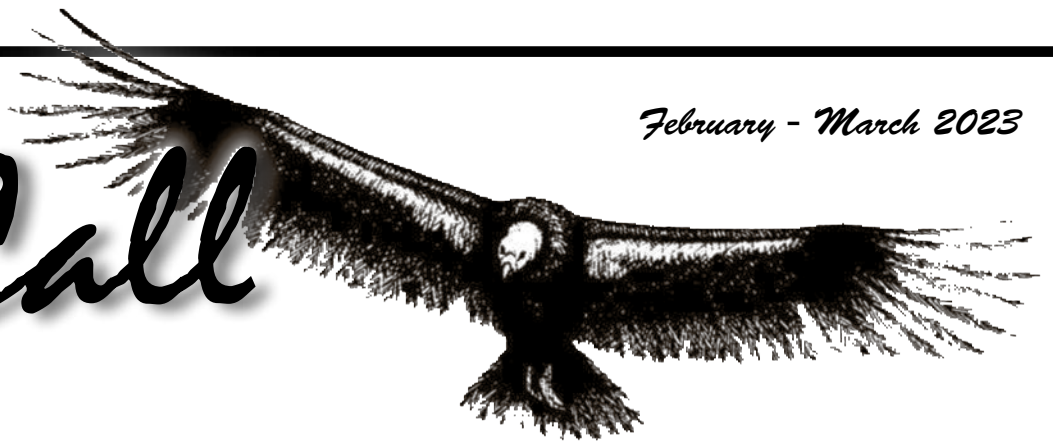


Vol. 23, No. 1 of 6

February - March 2023

Condor Call

Journal of the Sierra Club's
Santa Barbara - Ventura Chapter



© Photo by Ray Ford

Storm shambles... Cleaner energy... 30 X 30... Solar deadline... WBC

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February - March 2023



Ventura County Sheriff's Office Tactical Response Team airlifts Matilija Canyon residents after flooding cut off the only access road. At least 70 residents were airlifted out, but some elected to stay. The community is located a few miles north of Ojai within the LP Forest (Photo courtesy of VC Sheriff's Office)

Massive damage closes forest

Editor's note: Condor Call always has the forest areas listed (on page 6) where you can check out conditions before you go.

Los Padres National Forest officials issued a 60-day closure order on Jan. 13 – March 15 affecting four ranger districts in response to the extreme winter storm that delivered punishing rain and wind across the Forest.

The closure order will be superseded or terminated when conditions and recreational access improves. Forest employees will be assessing the extent of the damage over the coming weeks and months and will scale back the closure based on improving conditions.

Forest Service law enforcement officers will strictly enforce the closure order, which carries a penalty of \$5,000 and/or six months in jail.

The closure order and especially penalties brought an immediate thumbs down from long-time backcountry scribe Jack Elliot, who said "hiking is not a crime . . . six months imprisonment is what they give rapists in Santa Barbara County."

The Los Padres Forest Association (LPFA) has a different take, an-

nounced on its website: "Obviously no one is happy about the closure, but there is just too much damage across the forest at the moment."

"In the days following the last storm, we've had many volunteers attempt to survey trails and forest roads. Literally every report we're seeing, every attempt to drive a road, every attempt to hike a trail, is coming back reporting massive damage."

"We are working closely with the Forest Service to help survey and document the damage and are looking forward to getting our boots on the ground ASAP to repair the trails," it concluded. Meanwhile, LPFA's Trail Fund is in dire need of donations. Do it here:

<https://tinyurl.com/TrailDonations>

LPFA and volunteers who are cleared by the Forest Service are exempt from the closure as they are helping rebuild trails and other chores.

Over the last month, the Los Padres received more than 100 percent of its annual rainfall along with extremely damaging wind events. The "atmospheric river" delivered record rainfall amounts January 8-10 ranging from 17 inches at San Marcos Pass on the Santa Barbara district to

18 inches in the Ojai district backcountry. These weather events have caused flooding, debris flows, slope failures, bridge, road and trail failures, and serious impacts to administrative and recreation facilities.

Future storm events are expected to compound existing damage.

The full extent of damage to the Forest will be known once a full assessment is completed, which will likely take many weeks. Forest personnel are continuing to work with city, county and state partners on post-storm damage assessments and repairs when conditions are safe for work and travel.

"We're taking this precautionary step to ensure visitor safety as we determine the extent of the damage and develop a strategy to prioritize and address the extensive impacts to infrastructure and natural resources," said Los Padres Forest Supervisor Chris Stubbs. "I'm asking the public to heed the closure order while these recovery efforts are underway. My intention is to re-open closed areas as soon as it's safe to do so."

For more information, visit Los Padres National Forest's website at: www.fs.usda.gov/lpnf

Cleaner Energy sources exciting

By Katie Davis

24/7 Clean Energy

With many California energy programs aiming for 100% renewable energy by 2030 or sooner, fascinating experiments and innovations are afoot.

Locally, Central Coast Community Energy which serves Santa Barbara County, recently contracted for energy from a first-ever compressed air storage project being built by Canadian company Hydrostor in Kern County. Compressed air will be stored in underground caverns and then released when needed to spin turbines and create energy. It provides an alternative to lithium-ion battery storage to balance intermittent wind and solar energy.

"We need a diverse fleet of resources. This new technology is a critical component of that," said Robert Shaw, chief operating officer at CCCE. "That's how we get to 100% renewables."

Another community choice organization, Peninsula Clean Energy serving San Mateo County, recently became the first to set a target of 24/7 carbon-free energy by 2025. This is harder than achieving 100% carbon-free energy on an annual basis because it means procuring renewable energy at all times of the day and night, even in periods of peak demand and low supply.

Remarkably, PCE's modeling shows that procuring enough clean energy to supply its customers 99% of the hours of the year by 2025 is expected to cost only 2% more than its baseline energy-procurement plans. They have made their model available so other providers, such as those serving Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, can also experiment

with it.

Oil Permits Up, Regulator Out

We scored a victory last year with the passage of a state law mandating a 3,200-foot health and safety buffer zone from homes and schools. But oil and gas interests immediately began fighting back.

First, they paid to gather enough signatures to qualify for a ballot measure, a stalling tactic that forces the law to be put on hold until the next general election.

EAVESDROPS

"Nancy Pelosi was a stay-at-home mom of five kids, a chapter she credits with teaching her everything she needed to know about how to herd and hound politicians."

~ Annie Karnie, commenting on Pelosi stepping down as Speaker of the House after decades of service.

Then, they started ramming through drilling permits like they found a free vending machine and were pounding the buttons. State regulators should have intervened, but instead they helped the oil industry. In the latest development, State Oil & Gas Supervisor Uduak-Joe Ntuk has been relieved of his job against the backdrop of a 745% uptick in new oil drilling permits issued in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Ntuk heads the CA Geologic Energy Management Division that has been passing out these new permits at a rapid clip. Nearly half of these approvals (at least 100) allow producers to drill new wells within the state-mandated health and safe-

continued on page 2

COVER PHOTO

That's Rik Christensen overlooking Trespass Trail on our cover. Rik was a tinkerer, an inspiration and a legend. He died on Nov. 26, 2022 at 77 and left his estate to Los Padres Forest Assn. which will keep the trails accessible for decades. Rik saved the historic South Fork Cabin along the Sisquoc River, co-founded Trail Ambassadors, Wilderness Rangers and was part of the ultralight hiking revolution. Rik embodied the spirit of volunteerism in the Los Padres Forest. Learn more at:

<https://lpforest.org/>

Photo by outdoor scribe 'River Ray' Ford, who wrote a timely column in Noozhawk here:

<https://tinyurl.com/SafeTrailTips>

Environmental Defense Center is 45 and fortified!

Editor's note: Environmental Defense Center's 45th anniversary in December was an important event and milestone for our Santa Barbara - Ventura Region and for our Sierra Club Chapter which has often hired the EDC for our legal work.

Below are excerpts from a blog by Chief Counsel Linda Krop. To read more and see a graphic of major eco-victories, go here: <https://tinyurl.com/EDCis45>

By Linda Krop

1977: "Education is the first line of environmental defense. Legal action is the bottom line."

So began the Environmental Defense Center (EDC), a unique idea for its time, as our founders embarked on a mission to provide the community with the tools to address emerging environmental threats in the wake of the 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill.

Marc McGinnes, EDC's founder and a local attorney, established EDC with a small team of at-

torneys, interns, and volunteers to empower other organizations. He recognized not only the threats to our region, but also opportunities to address such threats and plan for a healthier future, thanks to the plethora of laws passed by Congress in response to the 1969 Oil Spill and other environmental disasters.

They included National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, and many more passed by a bipartisan Congress. Similar laws were passed at the State level, including the Environmental Quality and Coastal Acts) and signed by Gov. Reagan.

We have much to celebrate after 45 years, from our initial victories protecting Point Conception from a liquefied natural gas proposal and preserving important Chumash sites and public access at Hammonds Meadow, to our recent victories protecting the SB Channel from offshore fracking and obtaining orders to restore endangered

steelhead to our local rivers.

EDC has represented almost 140 community and environmental organizations in hundreds of cases. We have saved more than 100,000 acres of open space that supports wildlife and public recreation, including Hearst Ranch, Fiscalini Ranch, Burton Mesa Chaparral, Sedgwick Reserve, Devereux and Ellwood Mesa, Douglas Family Preserve, Hammonds Meadow, Carpinteria Bluffs, Oxnard Shores, Ormond Beach, and Ahmanson Ranch.

We successfully fought off the powerful oil and gas industry by terminating forty offshore leases, stopping three liquefied natural gas projects, defeating several proposals for onshore and offshore drilling, preventing an increase in oil trains and tanker trucks, and blocking a new gas-powered coastal power plant.

We ensured protection for dozens of imperiled animals and plants, including keystone species such as the southern sea otter and southern

California steelhead. We worked with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary to increase protection for migrating whales, seabirds, and other wildlife.

A lot of our work has focused on protecting the health and safety of our communities, with particular focus on low-income and disadvan-

taged communities.

You can learn more about our achievements and partnerships by reading our case docket and a timeline that highlights a selection of our victories over our 45 years (see link above). As we celebrate, we remain cognizant of all the work we have yet to pursue.



A founding attorney of the Environmental Defense Center in 1977 Marc McGinnes, and later Linda Krop, both attorneys, have an incredible legacy of success. McGinnes visited after the 1969 oil spill at the behest of a politician and was soon embraced by the community. (Photo by Nell Campbell)



Oil sheen off Summerland Beach was spotted on Jan. 6. Natural or oil rig leak? (Photo Harry Rabin of Heal the Ocean)

SIGHTINGS

Diablo, beavers and big waves

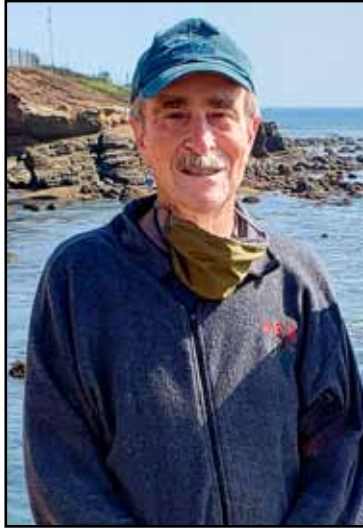
By John Hankins

The last two months had nature showing off its great sunsets but also an atmospheric river that dumped large amounts of rain and caused millions in damage. The ups and downs are reflected in other matters, notably gains against pollution and some advance for climate change locally. Check out the stories and links below.

Please join our activities and activism; see Group News box on page 3 for contacts and links where you can get involved or enjoy free hikes. We encourage all to go outside on your own or by MeetUp; check out lots of outings on pages 6&7.

Donations help a lot, and the money stays here at home; do not pass go, but go directly to: www.sierraclub.org/donate/1000

Jan 29: **Townhall meeting** in Ojai co-sponsored by Regenerate Ojai, Transition to Organics and our Sierra Club. Topic was *The Future of Farming* and its relation to pesticides, alternative farm practices and the like. It featured a film premier about the topic narrated by Laura Dern.



Richard Hunt, a Chapter icon

Jan 25: **Very sad news.** Very long-time (45 years!) SB-V Chapter treasurer Richard Hunt passed away. "It's hard to think of the Chapter without Richard. While no one else wanted the job, Richard accepted the responsibility without a fuss. He was so easy to work with. What a treasure," noted Fran Farina.

Jan 25: **Diablo nuclear plant** extension was rejected by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission's staff, but the utility says it's got a backup plan to keep it running past its 2025 expiration date, via Senate Bill 846. Sierra Club is also against the extension.

Jan 23: **Had fun planting** native

plants, working in the plant nursery, trimming and clearing invasive plants while learning about our local Santa Clara River Watershed. Sponsored by Friends of the Santa Clara River which includes Sierra Club members.

Jan 21: **Beavers in the Landscape**, a program by the Santa Barbara Permaculture Network. Beaver dams are gaining popularity as a low-tech, low-cost strategy to build climate resiliency at landscape scale, said Dr. Emily Fairfax of Cal State University Channel Islands. For information go to: www.sbpermaculture.org

Jan 21: **Environmental Justice** General Plan Element is in the works for the city of Lompoc, followed up by a workshop on Jan. 30. The city wants recommendations from residents, call 805 875-8228 or email: b_halfvorson@ci.lompoc.ca.us

Jan 16: **While shopping** at SB's Terra Sol Garden Center on Jan. 16, Stargazer Ron witnessed a beautiful 180 degree rainbow as the last storm was clearing. "Thank you, Mother Nature!" he said in *Edhat*.

Jan 9: **Increased protections** for endangered blue, fin and humpback whales off the California coast will be implemented this summer via the International Maritime Organization. It expands areas that vessels should avoid and extends vessel traffic lanes west of, in and around NOAA's Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Jan 9: **Over 50 roads** were closed due to flooding and storm impacts, throughout SB County, notably portions of Hwy 101, 154 and mandatory evacuations in Montecito. Ventura County fared better, but still had problems, especially the Ojai area. Schools, businesses, the airport, railroad and buses were laid idle.

Jan. 6: **Oil floating** off Summerland Beach was spotted, covering up to two miles long about five miles off the coast. Much of the oil was deemed too light to recover. While this area experiences regular natural seepage, there are hundreds of historical legacy wells in vicinity. Investigation is underway to

Cleaner...

continued from page 1

ty buffer. It matters who runs these state agencies. We urge the governor to ensure the next appointee weighs public health more highly.

History of Oil, Recent Leaks

On Jan. 6, a 1½- to 2-mile sheen of oil was visible off of Summerland beach, prompting the Coast Guard to search for the cause. That proved elusive. The oil, it concluded, could have been from a natural seep or an old oil well, many of which were never properly abandoned.

Summerland beach was the site of an early 20th century oil boom. First developed in the 1890s, the Summerland Oil Field was the location of the world's first offshore oil wells, drilled from piers in 1896 and left unplugged. Only recently has the state begun plugging some of these old, leaky wells.

In a separate incident nearby, an oil slick contaminated Toro Canyon Creek on Jan. 1. That turned out to be from an 1882 Occidental Oil Company operation, according to the County. The EPA retrofitted the site in the 1990's, but it reportedly sustained damage during the Thomas fire, and the County needs to fix the facility.

Gas Stoves and Health

A recent study found that 12.7% of childhood asthma in the US is attributable to gas stove use. While the health risks of gas stoves have been known for decades, there has been little attention paid to indoor air pollution standards and safeguards.

Now that the health impacts are being more widely reported and better alternatives exist in the form of induction cooktops, the gas industry is in full damage-control mode, helping to foment a conservative freak-out that the government was coming for your stove.

While no one is coming to take away existing gas stoves, cities and states are moving to stop building out new gas infrastructure and make new homes all-electric, saving people money and improving public health.

The City of Santa Barbara and Ventura County have updated their building codes to be all electric, with some exceptions, and the County of Santa Barbara, Goleta and Carpinteria are expected to follow suit. As for that gas stove, you might, like me, voluntarily choose to replace it with induction. It's an easier and more precise way to cook, and it's safer, cleaner and generally delightful.

Plus, the federal government is rolling out rebates for electric retrofits, including for stoves, water and space heating.

Condor Call

SierraClub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura ~ All phone numbers 1-805 area code

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Photos, news, tips always welcome!

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Typography and production by Dan Fuller



Our Wilderness Basics Course has a wide variety of students taking the course: couples, teens and all ages above. The course starts Feb. 15, see back page for details. (Wahl family photo)

help pinpoint source.

Jan 1: **Oil spill in Toro Canyon** on New Year's Day determined to be 'natural' seepage, but from a well built by the Occidental Oil Company in 1882. The EPA retrofitted the site to prevent seepage in the 1990s. Monitoring will continue.

EAVESDROPS

"We passed one of the most historical infrastructure investments and legislation in the history of our county . . . We passed the most significant gun law in three decades (Safer Communities Act), the CHIPS and Science act, the American Rescue Plan, the PAC act that serves our veterans – like I said, \$40 million in projects for the Central Coast."

~ Our House Rep. Salud Carbajal listing what has happened during the last two years."

Dec 15: **"Between the nation's** western space launch range at Vandenberg Space Force Base and the first tranche of Pacific offshore wind energy leases off Morro Bay, two fast-growing global industries are springing up on the Central Coast of California." Opening paragraph of a study released by REACH (Regional Economic Action Coalition). Read this important document here: <https://tinyurl.com/WindSpaceStudy>

Dec 9: **Wildlife trafficking** and poaching ring of 6-7 people based in Oxnard were charged with crimes using e-bikes in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. Dozens of antlers and animal skulls were recovered, including a mountain lion skull and a bear about to be stuffed along with freezers full of animal meats. The suspects falsified and reprinted hunting tags.

Dec 7: **"Congratulations to** heroine Gabby Basua for being the only Oxnard Councilmember last night to stand up for nature and the needs of the community," said our ED Jon Ullman over the contentious Glovis Port Expansion Project to park 4,000 cars on 34 acres in Oxnard.

Carmen Ramirez's own successor Gabe Teran and the rest proved to be major disappointments by quickly approving it.

Dec 6: **Localized Webinar** about how climate change is affecting us right here, by the SB Community Environmental Council. See it on the website: <https://cecsb.org/>

Dec 5: **Tecuya Mountain** fuel break project was cleared to proceed after a District Judge ruled against a lawsuit by Los Padres ForestWatch. The project, over 1,623 acres along the mountain, is above the Lebec, Frazier Park, Lake of the Woods, Pinon Pine Estates and Pine Mountain Club. The fire suppression project will begin in 2023.

Dec 5: **Live Action** against the Port Expansion project in Oxnard. Our E.D. Jon Ullman posted a call to action: "This land is necessary for natural restoration and human rejuvenation. It is a flyway for migrating birds and connects to restored wetlands, high dunes and a spectacular Pacific beach. It should not be Hyundai Kia Glovis' high security, fenced, floodlit car parking lot."

HINES CHRONICLES

House reps attack 30x30

Editor's note: By popular demand, we continue with the Jim Hines Chronicles, which reflects the emails by our premier lobbyist on the ins and outs of environmental activism and is chock-full of information. This covers the last two months and is shorter than usual because of the holidays. Jim is our chapter vice-chair and conservation director who belongs to many wildlife groups.

By Jim Hines.

Jan 26: **Nationwide campaign** launched by the Sierra Club to save the 30X30 Conservation Plan, which is under attack by the new Republican majority in Congress.

Jan 25: **Update on 30X30** conservation plan I've been working on. With the Angeles Chapter, we were able to get President Biden to sign legislation which directs the National Park Service to study lands in coastal Los Angeles County from Santa Monica to Seal Beach for possible inclusion into the National Park System. The study will take about 3 years.

I met with staff at the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's office to express my opposition to expanded hunting on National Wildlife Refuges. Staff says the expanded hunting opportunities fit into the president's 30X30 Conservation Plan which seeks to get more Americans outdoors and hunting allows more people to use public lands.

Congressional attack on 30X30 has begun. The new House Committee on Natural Resources has stated that it plans to stop (or try to) the implementation of the Administration's Conservation Plan, which one staffer called it "flawed". It is requesting Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to appear before them to explain why 30X30 should be funded by congress.

Jan 17: **CA Wildlife Team** is taking on the challenge in 2023 to get the state of California to ban the hunting of Black Bears.

Jan 10: **Folks, we are in** for a rough two years when it comes to protecting our national natural resources and wildlife at the federal level. I spoke this morning with several staff members of the office of Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark), incoming Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, for bills and funding public lands, wildlife, climate change and energy.

Also on the committee is former Trump Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, now in Congress. They could impact legislation protecting the Los Padres National Forest, Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, Rim of the Valley, wildlife protections and more.

Dec 23: **Finally happened** today, the House and Senate passed legislation banning the use of longline driftnets in federal ocean waters, something we have been working on for years with Sen. Feinstein's office. "HUUUUGE!!!!" replied David Gold.

Dec 12: **Mountain lion** of Hollywood (P-22) has been captured

for a health checkup due to "erratic" behavior.

Dec 8: **A sad situation** . . . when a famous mountain lion must lose his life because he is acting like a mountain lion would in an ur-

ban world, there is no winner in this story. (Responding to National Park Service planning to capture the aging Cougar P-22 due to sightings close to home in Griffith Park area, and supposedly killing a leashed pet.)



New bike path website

The Santa Barbara Trees and Trails Coalition has launched a new website in its support for the important Modoc Multi-Use Path of 3/4ths of a mile along the Modoc Preserve that links up with the Obern Trail adjacent to Vieja Valley Elementary School and the and Modoc/Positas Path/

It will ultimately serve as a central link connecting 20+ miles of paths throughout Santa Barbara County.

Trees and Trails was formed last year to support the completion of the Modoc Multi-use path. It is comprised of organizations and local residents who are supporting collaboration between the La Cumbre Mutual Water Company, the Santa Barbara Land Trust and the County to complete a safe, separated path that is accessible for all users.

The website is full of relevant

documents, history and accurate news regarding the Multi-use path. It can be found at:

www.modoctreesandtrails.org

To learn more, check out the latest op-ed by Trees and Trails member, Jim Kemp:

<https://tinyurl.com/modocpath>

Ventura too!

Ventura is also working on trees and trails via its Tree Alliance. Scores of new trees have been planted at parks and along the Westside Bike Path.

"All of these trees are thriving and will help provide shade, clean air, habitat and beauty for decades to come.

It is vital for our community to increase these efforts in 2023," said Christy Weir. Donations go directly toward purchasing trees for Ventura's urban forest. To donate or learn more, go to:

www.VenturaTreeAlliance.com



Ventura Wild's Discover program is now part of the Ventura Land Trust, expanding its education component by leaps and bounds (by the kids of course). Sign them up or learn more here:

www.venturawild.com (Photo by Kaitlyn Newett, Ventura Wild Educator)

Youth getting active

Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas (CFROG) is inviting all Ventura County youth and young adults to join a group to organize around local environmental issues, advocate and educate at the local level, and provide a youth perspective to decision makers.

The non-profit recognizes the importance of youth leadership and empowerment in the climate movement.

Well known internationally is Greta Thunberg who at 15 years old started a "School strike for Climate" to pressure the Swedish Parliament to meet carbon emission targets. Last year during the world's Climate summit, protesters picked up on her disappointment with no real changes, chanting "Blah, Blah, Blah."

Locally, Alex Looz, a Thacher School student in 2011, founded the iMatter March that began in the Ojai Valley and became international. "Our climate, our future, our revolution" was his battle cry.

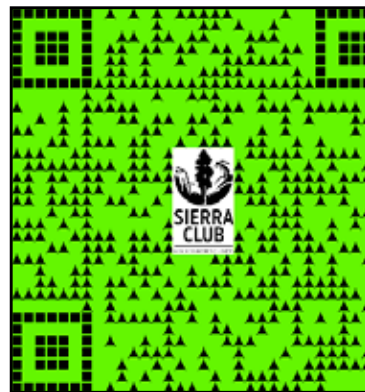
CFROG is a nonprofit organization dedicated to combating the climate crisis by working to shape the transition from fossil fuels in Ventura County and beyond.

If you are or know a young person (15 to 30) who is interested in becoming more active, sign at:

bit.ly/CFROGYAB

For questions, contact:

haley@cfrog.org



If you have a printed *Condor Call* in your hand, you can tap into this QR code to get a full color version that has hot links! Try it.

Hike leaders: Sign up for 1st aid class

Our Sierra Club chapter is offering a First Aid training course to its current outing leaders on April 29, presented by Matt May of 4 Points Expedition.

May is a very knowledgeable, experienced educator who makes the content interesting and relevant.

It will be held at the Church of the Foothills, 6279 Foothill Road in Ventura from 9am to 1pm.

Please sign up with your group Outing Leader, Victoria Vohland (Ventura), Alejandro Andreatta (Santa Barbara), or Gerry Lynham (Conejo) no later than a week before the event.

Questions? Contact Maureen Hernandez at:

moenandez@gmail.com

30x30

ORGANIZING TO CONSERVE 30% OF OUR LANDS BY 2030.

SUPPORTING STATE, FEDERAL AND LOCAL CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

- H.R. 973 (Carbajal)
- Chumash Marine Sanctuary
- Carpinteria Bluffs

STOPPING HARMFUL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Oil Extraction and Trucking
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Methane Heating & Cooking Fuel

Sierra Club supports federal legislation- H.R. 973 (Carbajal) would:

- Designate 288,672 acres of wilderness in Carrizo Plain National Monument and Los Padres National Forest
- Create two scenic areas (34,882 acres)
- Establish the 400-mile Condor Trail
- Safeguard 159 miles of wild and scenic rivers

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

- 140 square miles
- Cambria to Channel Islands
- Connects existing marine sanctuaries

JOIN US!

SIERRA CLUB

SANTA BARBARA – VENTURA

Most meetings continue online for now

Group News

The public is welcome to our programs

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

~ Meets 4th Thursday 7pm of every month, via internet for now. Email Secretary Gerry Ching for the agenda: gching@cox.net

~ Chapter website and blog at: www.SierraClub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura

SANTA BARBARA GROUP

~ We meet 1st Tuesdays, noon to 1:30pm of each month. For details and to follow the South Coast area, contact: <http://www.sbsierraclub.org>

<https://www.FACEBOOK.com/SBSierraclub>

<https://TWITTER.com/SBSierraClub>

<https://www.INSTAGRAM.com/SierraClubSantaBarbara>

<https://www.MEETUP.com/SierraClub-SantaBarbara>

<https://tinyurl.com/SBGGroupBlog>

ARGUELLO GROUP

Our North County Group will keep you informed on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/SierraClubArguelloGroup. ~Volunteers needed; your talents could make a difference. Call 350-0629 or: RebeccaAugust@mac.com

VENTURA NETWORK

~ For board meeting dates, times and location email: sierraclubventura@gmail.com

~ Get latest info about the western Ventura County group via Facebook and a blog: <http://tinyurl.com/VenturaSierraClubFB>

<https://tinyurl.com/VenturaSierraClubBlog>

~New MEETUP site for hikes, outings etc: www.meetup.com/SierraClubVentura

CONEJO GROUP

~ Events, outings and meetings will be sent to you if you send an email request to: ConejoGroupHiking@gmail.com.

Or view the Conejo Group website: www.sierraclub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura

www.sierraclub.org/SantaBarbara-Ventura/outings

Climate Watch

Trees are climate warriors

Editor's note: This year we continue to feature specific climate action ideas authored by UCSB lecturer in environmental studies, Deborah Williams.

Let It Grow!

Trees and shrubs are environmental quality warriors. An average mature tree absorbs and stores 48 pounds of carbon dioxide in a year.

This represents one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. If every American family planted one tree, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would be reduced by one billion pounds a year.

Not only do trees remove carbon dioxide from the air and store it (both above and below ground), but they also offer so many other ecosystem

services, including producing oxygen, offering cooling shade, providing habitat for birds and other wildlife, buffering wind, filtering pollution from our water and air, reducing soil erosion, and beautifying our communities and planet.

Planting trees and shrubs is so rewarding, be it where we live, in our communities, on public lands, or internationally.

If you can, it is both beneficial and gratifying to plant a tree where you live. The Arbor Day Foundation provides some good advice on where to plant trees around your home to maximize energy saving benefits. Also, check out this article entitled "10 Carbon-Storing Trees and How to Plant Them," and choose the native tree options whenever possible.

<https://tinyurl.com/TenPlantWarriors>

For a very comprehensive and informative guide on planting and caring for trees in Santa Barbara, the City has produced "Santa Barbara's Community Guide to Tree Planting." For Ventura, the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources Service offers a lot of practical advice.

Planting native shrubs around your home is also a very positive,



Planting for pleasure and the environment is as easy as digging a hole. Following her own advice, Deborah Williams is planting an oak tree. (Photo contributed)



Santa Barbara's Botanic Garden provided this poster about trees and climate change.

climate friendly option. The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden offers a terrific list of Water Wise Native Plants for the region, and Better Home & Gardens offers a list of top native plants of Southern California, which includes shrubs.

If planting where you live is not possible, there are often community planting and public land planting opportunities. County of Santa Barbara hosts native planting events throughout the year at creek restoration project sites which are very rewarding, and then you can go back and visit the trees and shrubs you planted.

The nonprofit organization *Your Children's Trees* also has great tree planting events and welcomes volunteers, as does Ventura Tree Alliance, Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Ventura Land Trust.

If you do not have the opportunity to plant trees or shrubs your-

self, you can donate to programs and organizations devoted to planting trees. Here are a few possibilities: The Eden Reforestation Projects, Trees for the Future, National Forest Foundation, Penny Pines Reforestation Program, Nature Conservancy (Plant a Billion Tree Project), and the Arbor Day Foundation.

Will this really matter? An important study published in the journal *Science* concluded that increasing forested areas in the world by about 25% has the potential to store an equivalent of approximately 25% of the current atmospheric carbon pool, and is "one of the most effective solutions at our disposal to mitigate climate change."

Furthermore, trees can reduce heating costs 10-20% and reduce air conditioning costs by 15-35% (or help reduce the need to install air conditioning at all).

Let's start planting!

Buy solar before April 15

Editor's note: Those who are thinking about solar should be alerted that the rules on how much the electric company pays you will lessen come mid-April. Please notice the ad below, in which the Sierra Club has partnered with SunPower which gives you a discount. Sierra Club also has an agreement with Swell Energy for solar plus battery solutions that people can consider here:

<https://www.swellenergy.com/sierra-club/>

Defying overwhelming public opposition, state officials voted in late 2022 to make drastic changes to California's rooftop solar rules (called NEM "net energy metering").

The decision by the CA Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will make it much more expensive to get rooftop solar starting in mid-April 2023.

However, there is currently an appeal pending on this topic by Center for Biological Diversity. Here's the details:

<https://tinyurl.com/SolarAppeal>

The decision mostly affects those who do not yet have solar, but can affect existing solar users under certain circumstances as well.

Below are answers about the issue.

~ NEM3 is shorthand for the third version of the state's rooftop solar rules adopted by the CPUC in late 2022 and will take effect in mid-April 2023 (unless an appeal is granted).

Solar users under NEM3 will get 75% to 80% less from the utility for the extra solar energy they share with the grid. They will also be put on a rate plan with higher evening electricity rates.

CPUC's new rules will not affect NEM1 or 2 solar users until your lock-in period expires, which is 20 years, which would accrue to a new owner if you sell your house.

If you want to add panels before NEM3 takes effect, your solar company must submit a correct and complete interconnection application to

your utility by April 14th. Construction does not have to be complete by April then.

Unlike adding panels, existing solar users can add a battery at any time without affecting their lock-in status.

Got a question you don't see here? Email: info@solarrights.org

EAVESDROPS

"It's just like a family reunion—aboard the Titanic." ~ Elizabeth May, Canadian environmentalist, who quipped it to Bill McKibben (350.org) in a previous climate summit, noting the "ritualistic quality" of even the latest COP-27 (Conference of the Parties) summit of the United Nations. Despite a world-wide lag, Bill found some hope in the "non-violent social movement" happening worldwide.



Michael Chiacos of the Community Environmental Council is advising folks to go solar, as is our Sierra Club. (Photo contributed)

Free energy kit from the library

Cut your home carbon footprint and save money with a do-it-yourself 3C-REN Home Energy Kit.

It's free to check out from your library and it has stuff you can keep, including LED light bulbs, weather stripping foam and a low flow shower head.

It also has stuff to use and bring back, including instructions, an infrared thermometer, a kill-a-watt meter, and lots more. You can also check out an induction cooktop kit.

They are provided for free by 3C-REN (Tri-County Regional Energy Network), a partnership between the counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura established to deliver energy-saving programs and industry trainings that help reduce energy use, strengthen local job markets, and support efforts to achieve climate goals. More info at

<https://www.3c-ren.org/diy-savings>.

~ By Joe Connett



SUNPOWER®

Go solar and support the Sierra Club
\$1,000 rebate for you; \$1,000 for the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club has partnered with SunPower to bring you a great deal on solar panels, the future of energy. Editor Condor John did it five years ago and recommends it highly, especially in 2022 with a 26% tax rebate that will drop to 22% in January. Check out this fantastic deal with a simple online appointment here:

<https://tinyurl.com/RunSonRun>

Storm thrashes region, then a rainbow appears

By John Hankins

Well, that was some chunk of weather in January, wreaking havoc throughout our Santa Barbara-Ventura region but helpfully filling our reservoirs. In the first three weeks of January nine atmospheric rivers dumped an estimated 32 trillion gallons of rain and snow on California, but not enough to end our severe drought condition.

One person died locally, Christina Lorenzen, 35, who was in a makeshift home along the Santa Clara River and about 80 homes were damaged, and two destroyed (Matilija Canyon and one along Santa Ana Road). About 20 people were rescued via helicopters from the Ventura River.

Ventura County Sheriff's Tactical Response Team airlifted at least 75 residents from Matilija Canyon after the rains isolated it from the rest of the world. Some residents stayed put while 17 inches of rainfall over the course of one week left "towering piles of rock and mud" as high as 40 feet in some locations, blocking the single road



A not so Happy Canyon Road, or what's left of it, just below Cachuma Saddle. (LPFA Photo by Cragg)

into and out of the canyon.

Montecito was under evacuation orders and on January's Friday the 13th CA Gov. Gavin Newsom visited Santa Barbara County. He was surveying storm damage with local leaders at the Randall Road Debris Basin in Montecito where

members of the National Guard (from Chico!) were working around the clock to clear out debris.

Newsom described how amazing it is that the Montecito community has shown resilience and came together in the Jan. 9 debris flow aftermath that killed 23 people in



While shopping at Terra Sol Garden Center at 4:30pm on January 16, we witnessed this beautiful 180 degree rainbow as the last storm was clearing. Thank you, Mother Nature! (Photo by Stargazer Ron in Edhat)

2018.

Neighborhoods flooded and residents were displaced in SB's North County along Tepusquet Canyon and Bonita School Roads, Orcutt and Guadalupe.

Beaches were bummed out in both counties. Having enjoyed a King Tide earlier in January, the famed Surfer's Point in Ventura was inundated with sewage that poured down the Ventura River from the Ojai region, as well as tons of debris.

So too in Montecito and Santa Barbara. On Jan. 17, about 5,760 gallons of sewage from a compromised pipeline at San Ysidro Creek, on East Valley Lane in Montecito, caused closure of Miramar Beach and Fernald Point. During the Jan.

9 storm, 5,000 gallons of sewage spilled into a storm drain discharging to Mission Creek, closing West Beach in Santa Barbara for several days.

Numerous roads were closed in both counties, notably Hwy 101 for a few days between our two counties, along with train tracks damaged, halting train services.

And to make communications worse, three popular radio stations on the South Coast were off air for over a week due to the loss of power at the Gibraltar transmission site. Two power poles were knocked down along Gibraltar Road cutting power to the site with backup generators failing to work.

Citing the "atmospheric river"

continued on page 7

Wild creatures need our help

Greetings Friends

By Jim Hines

The positive power of working to protect all that is wild is amazing to me. Working on my Protect Wildlife and Wild Places campaigns allows me to focus my positive energy on the goodness that comes from protecting endangered animals and beautiful natural areas across our nation.

Each one of us is filled with positive energy and the ability to make positive change for our planet and the wild creatures.

I feel such goodness after a species is protected or a wild place is saved, but that doesn't come easily many times.

I cannot tell you how many times I have been verbally assaulted by an elected or appointed official as I advocate for wildlife and wild places who do not have a voice.

We must focus, we must not give up, for the price we pay will be that we lose wild places and wildlife.

My passion to fight for what I believe in came early in life for me; my father was my example and my closeness to him and his inspiration has allowed me to have the strength to speak up for what I believe in. I can do it, YOU can do it.

Whether I am lobbying a public official or speaking at an event, I put all of my passion into what I am fighting for. One more dead wolf shot, trapped or poisoned in Montana (145 so far this year) makes

me cry, but those tears do not bring the wolf back. I must, I am driven to work with all the emotional tools I have to stop such horrendous acts that mankind perpetrates upon the innocent wild.

Whales dying from entanglement in nylon driftnets makes me sick to my stomach. I am driven, to the point of doing everything in my power to ban these marine mammal killing nets by working with the staff of U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein and lobbying House and Senate members to get this important bill passed to phase out and ultimately ban those deadly nets (the bill was signed by President Biden

in late December 2022).

Our planet and her wild creatures cry out for help, we are their voice, we are their protectors and we bond with wild creatures and wild places, a bond so tight that it cannot be broken. I see wolves in Alaska, I see logged forests in Montana, I feel the hurt of the wolf, I carry the wounds of a hurt land, I bare these emotions as my reminder to keep going, even when I feel overwhelmed at times by the powerful opposition to protecting all that is wild.

I am inspired by all that is wild, the wild touches my soul.

~ For the wild, Jim



Wildlife are all around us, such as this photo of a local bobcat posing in the foothills (look closely!). Each night bobcats travel along a habitual route, from 2 to 7 miles long, and like most cats, the bobcat is territorial and predominantly solitary. (Photo by Edhat reader Michelle Castellino)



Change Powered By People: Reflecting Back and Looking Ahead

Please support our work at <https://tinyurl.com/SB-VtaDonate>

THANK YOU!

Dear friends and members

In the spirit of giving thanks, we'd like to express our thanks to YOU! Thank you for all you do to support the Santa Barbara - Ventura Chapter even through the toughest of times. You are the backbone of our grassroots team working together to make life better in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

Together we are defending our public lands and wildlife, protecting our shared air and water, and empowering local residents to fight back against pollution and destructive development. None of this would be possible without you. You are helping ensure that everyone has fresh air to breathe, clean water to drink, and wild places to visit. You are protecting the planet and the people we love.

Our local leaders are working closely with President Biden's administration, local county supervisors, and partner organizations to fight climate change and ramp up the fight for environmental justice on all levels. You can check out our blog for updates on local work here:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura/blog>

And, you can also renew/upgrade membership here (free bag): <https://tinyurl.com/SBVclubOnline>

Thank you for believing in the power of our environmental work here locally in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. As we celebrate the end of 2022, we look forward to a brighter future ahead as we continue to gather together in our precious wild spaces on guided [hikes](#) that inspire and delight.

Thank you for your involvement and support throughout 2022!

Santa Barbara-Ventura Sierra Club



What will your legacy be?

Ensure your environmental legacy by naming the Sierra Club Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter in your will or trust. These gifts cost you nothing now, yet enable a powerful movement and vibrant outings programs for years to come.

(805) 617-3106



SIERRA CLUB

jonathan.uillman@sierraclub.org

SANTA BARBARA-VENTURA CHAPTER

Take a Hike!

SANTA BARBARA-VENTURA CHAPTER

Panorama above Goleta by Robert Bernstein

UPDATES: www.sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura



HIKE WITH CLUB



WELCOME HIKERS

The public is welcome at all outings listed, unless otherwise specified. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. If you have any questions about a hike, please contact the leader listed. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805, unless otherwise noted.

A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 14.

See updated listing of all outings via the QR code (above) or: <https://www.sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura>

This website also contains links to Group web pages and other resources. Some regional Groups also list their outings on Meetup sites. See Group News on page 3 for links.



HIKE LOS PADRES

CONDITIONS

Campgrounds trails and roads in Los Padres National Forest can be closed, have restrictions due to habitat protection, repair or weather. Before you go into the backcountry ensure you check conditions with rangers. Numbers to call (805 area unless noted) are:

Los Padres Forest Districts

Headquarters	865-0416
Ojai-Ventura	646-4348
Mt Pinos	(661) 245-3731
Santa Barbara	967-3481
Santa Lucia	925-9538

Other Areas

Santa Monica Mtns	370-2301
Conejo Park	381-2737
Simi Valley	584-4400
Montecito	969-3514

Forest Information

For updated info, maps, news releases, and other goodies:

<http://FS.USDA.gov/LPNF>

Regional Hike Info

Lots of local info on websites that give you varied info on outings, trail profiles, wildflower alerts, work opportunities and much more.

www.sierraclub.org/santabarbara-ventura

www.LPForest.org

<https://LPFW.org>

www.HikeLosPadres.com

www.SBSierraClub.org

www.SantaBarbaraTrailGuide.com

www.SantaBarbaraHikes.com

<https://SBTrails.org>

www.VenturaCountyTrails.org

<http://Hikes.VenturaCountyStar.com>



Al Sladek's Friday evening hikes, this one to Hidden Benches and Edison Catway. It's an easy-to-moderate 2-4 mrt night hike in the Santa Barbara front country, beach or back roads. Meet 6pm at the Santa Barbara Mission, leaves 6:15pm sharp! Bring a flashlight. Optional potluck or pizza afterward. (Photo by Robert Bernstein)

From our Mountains to the Sea where to go?

"Maybe they shouldn't be called hikes. Maybe that defeats the joy and the purpose. I don't like either the word [hike] or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains - not 'hike!'"

It's a beautiful word and originated away back in the Middle Ages. People used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages asked where they were going, they would reply, 'A la sainte terre' (To the Holy Land). And so they became known as 'sainte-terre-ers' or saunters.

Given that Sierra Club's co-founder John Muir was one of history's greatest saunters, we should not only allow him his grumpiness, but give it profound consideration. And there is no better place than the Ventura - Santa Barbara region to amble in the great outdoors and give anything consideration.

As a wise soul once said, "It's only in the great open spaces that we find ourselves."

(Editor's note: Taken from *Visit Ventura* website with light editing to include Santa Barbara! Photo:

<https://www.facebook.com/SteveACattanach>

Click to access all hikes

Most of the many free Sierra Club Outings are usually listed here for a two-month period. However, we have found that planning that far ahead may change due to weather, Covid restrictions, closures etc.

So, we ask that you now rely on the many Meetups and websites for the chapter and some others. For our chapter Meetups go to Group News box always on page 3, otherwise, here we go:

The chapter's website:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/santa-barbara-ventura>

A very special personal website run by Diane Soini which includes our chapter hikes, blogs, connections and a dragonfly on the screen:

www.SantaBarbaraHikes.com

Visit Ventura has a lot of information about hikes in the county and the Channel Islands. Go here:

<https://visitventuraca.com/biking-hiking/>

Los Padres National Forest is the turf for Los Padres Forest Association and it's the 'bible' for the forest as it shares amazing information gleaned from hikers and others outdoor sites.

Here's its hiking site (see QR code too)

www.HikeLosPadres.com

Ojai Valley Land Conservancy has a handy Trailfinder for our phone. Go to:

www.ovlc.org/trailfinder

Going a bit more afield, the LA Times has published a trail guide for the SoCal region here:

<https://tinyurl.com/NearUsGuide>

Even more! UCSB's Deborah Williams created a new and expanded website as part of her "Public Lands and Waters" class. Here's the link:

<https://50greatpubliclanddestinations.org/>

LOS PADRES FOREST

Venders share in fee hikes

Fee increases went into effect this year affecting 33 developed campgrounds and one day-use site operated by a concessionaire in Los Padres National Forest.

There are more than 50 undeveloped campgrounds in the Forest that are free to public use along with camping opportunities available at www.usda.gov/lpnf

Forest Service said the fees at campgrounds and day-use sites have been unchanged since 2016 when the Forest authorized this concessionaire permit.

Individual campsite fees will increase \$10 per night and group campsites between \$25 and \$50 per night. Day-use sites on Los Padres will remain at \$10 per day. An additional \$2 per night increase for reservations on weekends and holiday periods was also authorized.

Forest officials said the fee increased are necessary to offset rising operational costs, inflation-related price spikes, fuel costs, and the jump in California's minimum wage from \$10 an hour in 2016 to \$15 an hour. The state minimum wage is set to increase again on January 1, 2023, to \$15.50 an hour.

The additional fees collected will provide for facility improvements and fund ongoing maintenance.

But that's not the whole story, according to Los Padres ForestWatch: "Parks Management Company

-- a privately-owned corporation that now operates most campgrounds and day use areas in Los Padres National Forest -- requested the fee increases. ForestWatch is opposed to the privatization of public lands and requested a copy of the company's proposal, but the Forest Service has refused to provide it because the company marked it as 'Confidential Internal Proprietary Information' to evade public disclosure," wrote LPFW Director Bryant Baker on its website.

Last year, the agency refused a ForestWatch request to reign in the extreme prices that the concessionaire charges for firewood and other camping necessities such as propane, water,

and first aid supplies, some of which are up to three times the normal retail price, Baker wrote.

"ForestWatch filed a lawsuit in Washington DC, seeking to compel the Forest Service to release the requested records. That lawsuit is awaiting a final ruling by the judge," he concluded.

In December 2022, ForestWatch filed a suit seeking to compel the Forest Service to release public documents relating to its controversial plan to log trees and remove vegetation across extensive areas of Los Padres National Forest in Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and Kern counties.

Mushroom Adventure

As you walk the meadows, mountains and valleys of Southern California, do you find yourself wishing you knew more about the elusive mushrooms you encounter?

Turn your wishing into learning on Saturday, Feb. 18, from 9am to 3pm when Herb Walks with Lanny Kaufer hosts a workshop in Ojai with acclaimed forager/chef Jess Starwood, author of *Mushroom Wanderland: A Forager's Guide to Finding, Identifying, and Using More Than 25 Wild Fungi*.

Starwood will join Kaufer, author of *Medicinal Herbs of California: A Field Guide to Common Healing Plants*, at a diverse Ojai habitat that is

home to several species of fungi and native plants.

The workshop starts at 9am at the Ojai Meadows Preserve for some plant ID and mushroom foraging. At noon the group will move indoors to Fisher Hall (at St. Andrews Episcopal Church) for a wild food lunch demonstration, followed by more learning.

This will be Starwood's only Ojai workshop during mushroom season this year. All three of her 2022 mushroom workshops sold out.

The cost for the workshop, including all materials, is \$145. Registration and more information can be found by calling 805-646-6281 or: www.HerbWalks.com

EVENTS

Feb 5: **Full Moon & Sunset** Nature Hike by Ojai author and naturalist Lanny Kaufer. Hike to a vista point above Ojai Valley where you can watch the near-simultaneous sunset and moonrise. Meet at the trailhead at 3:45 p.m. for a 4:00 p.m. start, then gradually hike about 1.5 miles to the viewing site learning about native plants along the way. *Condor John Approved!* Bring flashlight to return. Register by calling 805-646-6281 or to:

www.HerbWalks.com

Feb 11: **Coyote Rescues Hawk**, book is featured at the SB Maritime with Chumash Elder Puchuk Ya'ia'ic (Alan Salazar) and Mona Lewis, at 1pm. Details at:

www.sbmm.org

Feb 12: **Family Day** at the Wildling Museum in Solvang from 11am to 4pm. Free admission that will include an animal visit and art activities for all ages. More info at:

www.WildlingMuseum.org

Feb 15: **Wilderness Basics** Course starts, Feb. 15 through April 5, eight classes Wednesday evenings from 7-9:30pm, held at St Paul's Episcopal Church 3290 Loma Vista Road Ventura. See story on pg 7 or follow this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/WBCopen>

Feb 16: **Conquering the Pacific**, An unknown mariner and the final great voyage of the Age of Discovery, from 7-9pm at the SB Maritime Museum.

www.sbmm.org

Feb 25: **History of Rincon**, Squatters, Scandals, and Surfing from 3-4:30pm with authors Stephen Bates and Vincent Bu8ms. Free admission at the Museum of Ventura County and more here:

<https://venturamuseum.org/>

EAVESDROPS

"I'm profoundly concerned because if Yosemite National Park can start a large-scale commercial logging program, then this can happen in any national park in the country."

~ Ecologist Chad Hanson director of the John Muir Project, which is suing the National Park Service via its parent Earth Island Institute to stop the logging and require an environmental impact report. More information here:

<https://tinyurl.com/LoggingYosemite>



The key founder of our Wilderness Basics Course, Teresa Norris, making sure everyone is happy. Class starts Feb. 15, see back page story. (Photo by Armando Hernandez)

Trails trashed, now what?

Editor's note: More than 19 inches of rain fell on Santa Barbara County on Jan. 9 alone and the South Coast took the brunt of it. Ventura County also got hit with about 10-13 inches near populated areas was much more in the mountains. Here LPFA has information on the Trails, as of our press time (Jan. 30).

By Los Padres Forest Assn.

It's been a busy month and beyond the January storms and we've been fielding a TON of questions about the current storm related closure that is impacting most of the Los Padres National Forest. Information is changing by the hour but here's the latest..

By the way, if you can volunteer to help trail crews, call 805-405-8628 or email: info@lpforest.org

~ Most of the Los Padres remains closed through March 14. This includes all the Ojai, Santa Barbara, Santa Lucia and Monterey Ranger Districts. The Mount Pinos RD is open, yet all the usual winter seasonal gate closures are in effect. Check with CalTrans and Ranger Districts before you go.

~ The whole mountain buried a portion of the San Ysidro Trail.

~ Forest Service has been busy primarily working on clearing roads and assessing infrastructure damage. As of late January, there remain over 150 people stranded.

Most of the access roads into the forest are closed and, in some cases, may remain closed for quite some time.

~ In support, the LPFA has started surveying many of the front country trails above both Santa Barbara as well as Ojai. While the backcountry may be closed for

some time, the strategy is to get the front country reopened as soon as possible and then work out and back from there.

~ Unfortunately, we're seeing substantial damage (slides, washouts, gullies, sinkholes, etc.) across most front country trails and in a few cases showstopper damage that won't be repaired anytime soon.

~ The LPFA Trail Crew has been working with Montecito Trails Foundation to repair some of the trails within and above Santa Barbara. We will be preparing weekly progress reports.

~ We've also been collaborating with Santa Barbara County Trails Council to restore some of the trails that are outside the current forest closure. Meanwhile, if you are looking for a trail, explore your local parks, open spaces and managed lands.

~ Several SB County parks are closed because of flooded access roads or damage to park infrastructure, including the popular Jalama Beach and Cachuma Lake Recreation Area (day use). The county also closed Guadalupe Dunes because the entrance road is flooded. Goleta Beach Park is closed to vehicles to allow access for dump trucks bringing in mud, silt and rocks for disposal on the shoreline.

~ State Parks fully closed include Carpinteria State Beach, Chumash Painted Cave State Historic Park, El Capitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park.

More information from the Sierra Club's Outings Chair, Maureen Hernandez:

We have done hikes in Satwiwa Park, and the upper trails are open.

Sulphur Mountain drained well and is open. Otherwise, we have been staying flat and dry... Harbor Island, Bubbling Springs, Ventura Mission to Grant Park, Canada Larga, and Calleguas Creek bike path are dry. We've been staying away from any trail with a water crossing such as Ventura River Preserve and Sisar Canyon and, of course, upper Ojai.

And Ventura Land Trust (VLT):

Ventura County sat squarely in the path of an atmospheric river that dumped historic levels of rainfall on our state.

The Ventura River watershed received the brunt of the impact, and VLT's two Ventura River preserves (Big Rock and Willoughby) were inundated with rushing water. The water pushed debris through the riverbed like a bulldozer, carving new river channels, carrying an astonishing amount of sediment downriver, and rearranging the riverbed channels.

Trails throughout Big Rock and Willoughby were destroyed.

Harmon Canyon Preserve at the east end of Foothill Road also received an historic amount of rain, excising streambed crossings, carving deep ruts, triggering landslides, and causing massive sinkholes. It is an immensely popular hiking and biking destination that just opened in 2022.

Due to unsafe conditions, all VLT's public preserves are closed for an indefinite amount of time and the public is asked to respect these closures.

To keep apprised of the status, or donate with your time and talents, go to:

www.venturalandtrust.org



Before and after photos of Big Rock next to the Ventura River. All trails and recent plantings were washed away, so Ventura Land Trust has it closed for now, but if you'd like to volunteer bringing it back, go to:

www.VenturaLandTrust.org

Storm thrashes region...

continued from page 5

event that delivered record rainfall amounts January 8-10 ranging from 17 inches at San Marcos Pass on the Santa Barbara Ranger District to 18 inches in the Ojai backcountry, Los Padres Forest ordered a 60-day closure to four districts on Jan. 13. Mt. Pinos District was not included in the order and the Santa Monica mountains remain largely open.

The forest will be open "as soon as it's safe to do so," said Supervisor Chris Stubbs. Violating the order might bring fines of up to \$5,000 or six month incarceration (see story pg. ?)

For those who incurred damage, call 800 621-3362 or log onto: www.disasterAssistance.gov

But is climate change the culprit?

So far, this winter's storms have been largely in line with past ones except in their unrelenting pace, said Michael Anderson, California's state climatologist. "This is where we're getting hit this year: We're seeing a lot of big storms fairly quickly."

The storms in January were called "atmospheric rivers" which

form when winds over the Pacific draw moisture from the band of warm, moist air over the tropics and channel it toward the West Coast. When it hits the Sierra Nevada and other mountains, it is forced upward, cooling it and turning its water into immense quantities of rain and snow.

While such intense storms have happened over years, heating the atmosphere via burning fossil fuels would exacerbate the effects. Scientists are studying whether global warming might be shifting the way winds carry moisture around the atmosphere, potentially influencing the number of storms that sweep through California each year and how long they last. They have not yet come to firm conclusions on these questions.

But one study last year by the National Center for Atmospheric Research concluded that the chances of having such damaging storms was 1 in 50 in the last hundred years, but climate change today has at least doubled those odds.

For more information, visit the Sierra Club's robust climate change pages here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ClimateStats-Action>

VLT celebrates 20 year battle

By Melissa Baffa

Around the turn of the century, the verdant hillsides behind the city of Ventura were targeted for development.

Developers came with proposals to build housing on the steep hillsides overlooking the city, and repeatedly, citizens banded together to fight back the attempts. Their belief was that hillsides are better left for wildlife, for hiking and mountain biking, exploring and for admiring from afar, as the chaparral-covered hillsides provide a wild and beautiful backdrop to a vibrant and historic city.

The effort spawned two new organizations: Ventura Citizens for Hillside Preservation became the political organizing and advocacy arm of the effort, and the Ventura Hillside Conservancy (VHC) was formed with a mission of protecting and managing the hillsides.

The Conservancy rebranded in 2017, becoming the "Ventura Land Trust," to reflect that fact that in the years since, the organization's focus had broadened.

On Feb. 24, 2023, Ventura Land Trust (VLT) and community will proudly celebrate its 20th anniversary.

Starting with 100 acres along the river, VLT now owns seven pre-

serves across Ventura County, totaling 3,877 acres.

This includes the 1,645-acre Mariano Rancho Preserve above the city, acquired in 2020 (which inspired the

founding of VLT), that should open by 2025, partly thanks to a state grant of \$7.2 million.

Already open and so popular it attracts more than 100,000 annual visitors is the 2,123-acre Harmon Canyon Preserve off Foothill Road in East Ventura with miles of trails for hikers and bikers, which is often used for Sierra Club hikes. But it is not open (as of press time Jan. 30) due to the intense rain storms.

The two properties along the Ventura River are also closed until flood damage is repaired.

Nevertheless, VLT will be celebrating its 20th Anniversary all year long, with a myriad of special events and programs. For details, go to:

www.venturalandtrust.org/events

VLT also has a goal of boosting memberships by 20% in our 20th year. Help us crush this goal by becoming a member today:

www.venturalandtrust.org/membership

Your support allows us to continue caring for the open space our community fought to preserve.

SIERRA CLUB TRIPS



Red Rock in Utah is just one of the hundreds of trips offered by the Sierra Club this year. An expanded selection of specialty trips for beginners, teens, seniors, women, younger adults and LGBTQIA+ will take you practically anywhere in the US of A and internationally. See all of it here:

<https://tinyurl.com/2023SClubTrips>

Nature talks at library

Santa Barbara Public Library is hosting two free talks, one featuring live raptors and the other on our plant diversity.

On Feb. 16 6:30-7:30pm join Hannah Atkinson, Director with Eyes in the Sky, for a special talk featuring live raptors. Hannah will share the stories of these avian ambassadors, and the audience will have the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the birds.

Eyes in the Sky has been Santa Barbara Audubon's key wildlife education program since 2000.

On March 16, also from 6:30-7:30pm, trail guide and writer James Wapotich shares images and stories entitled "Wildflowers and Wanderers of the Santa Barbara and Ojai Mountains."

James is a UC Certified California Naturalist, Volunteer Wilderness Ranger and the author of the

Santa Barbara News-Press hiking column, Trail Quest.

He notes that California has some of the highest plant diversity in the world, and our local area is considered a biodiversity hotspot in terms of wildlife, habitats, and plants. This talk will highlight both the common and unique wildflowers found in our local mountains, and feature a mix of trails where a variety of wildflowers can be found and the best times to look for them. Check out his website:

www.songsofthewilderness.com

Both talks will be in the Library's Faulkner Gallery at 40 E. Anapamu St. The talks are also part of the Library's Trail Talks series, which features presentations on hiking, backpacking, and our local natural history. Funding is part of its CA Parks Pass Grant programing.

App map tells trails

After the January rains and the trail closures, comes a new interactive map/tool that will give you the status of trails and roads throughout the southern Los Padres National Forest, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and dozens of local parks and preserves. Here it is:

<https://lpfw.org/trails>

Los Padres ForestWatch hopes to turn it into a full mobile app in the future.

It covers the region stretching from Morro Bay to Santa Monica and inland to the Carrizo Plain National Monument, with hopes to expand the database to areas like Channel Islands National Park and Big Sur. It's interactive and you can check it out here:

The Forest and surrounding region is home to hundreds of incredible trails normally open to hiking, biking, horseback riding, or other activities. However, due to damage caused by severe winter storms earlier this month, many trails and roads have been closed to public access. The Forest Service intends to reopen certain trails as soon as they are inspected and cleared for safe access. As this process unfolds, it's important that you know where you can and can't go.

"Check out the app before heading out on an adventure. Perhaps it will lead you to new trails as your normal stomping grounds recover. Just be sure to give trails a chance to dry out after significant rainfall before you recreate responsibly," said ForestWatch Conservation Director Bryant Baker

SIERRA CLUB

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Outdoor class is back!

By John Hankins

The public enjoys Sierra Club's free hikes numerous times during every week, but for those who want to go beyond, overnight or to remote campsites, it offers the Wilderness Basics Course (WBC).

After a three-year hiatus due to Covid restrictions, the ever-popular course is back to give you the skills and knowledge to confidently go hiking and backpacking in comfort.

As important is the fun and camaraderie that can literally change a person's life and outlook as we enjoy our local trails and camps.

"I'm so thankful for the return of WBC, I missed it so much. WBC is back," wrote Alisse Fisher who's been there from the start in 2008.

Dates are from Feb. 15 through April 5, 2023, consisting of eight classes Wednesday evenings from 7-9:30pm, held at St Paul's Episcopal Church 3290 Loma Vista Road Ventura, CA 93003. While the classroom is in Ventura, hikes, camps and enrollees come from both the chapter's area in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

Students will gain experience by participating in several outings including day hikes, a car camp and backpacking trips in our local mountains. All outings offer stu-

dents a choice of difficulties ranging from low-moderate and strenuous with multiple trip options.

You will learn and enjoy new skills with a dedicated and trained volunteer staff and meet new friends interested in the outdoors. The course is presented by the Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter of the Sierra Club and more details and registration are here:

<https://tinyurl.com/WBCopen>

The class features local experts in the field who will demonstrate backpacking equipment, wilderness ethics, wilderness first aid and safety, weather, water filtration, cooking, map & compass instruction, back-country clothing, and many other topics.

Speakers typically include Search and Rescue, fitness instructors, outdoor book authors, first aid and hike leaders trained under Sierra Club standards honed over decades.

Class outings are scheduled on weekends for the following dates in 2023:

- Feb. 18: Conditioning hike
- March 4-5: Car Camp (overnight)
- March 18-19: Backpack Trip 1 (overnight)
- April 1-2: Backpack Trip 2 (overnight)

There are some restrictions due

to Covid that you are agreeing to follow when you sign up for the class, they are:

Class indoors, face masks covering the mouth and nose is required. Lecturers will be unmasked and socially distanced while presenting.

~ Vaccine or tests are not required for the course but note you will be potentially on a trip with individuals who may be unvaccinated.

~ Please stay at home if you are sick or have any Covid symptoms; make-up days are possible.

Covid policies are set by the National Sierra Club nation-wide and will be reviewed on Jan. 31.

Discounts are available for Sierra Club members and for students (ID required).

Couples enrollment options can be applied to any two people signing up together for additional savings.

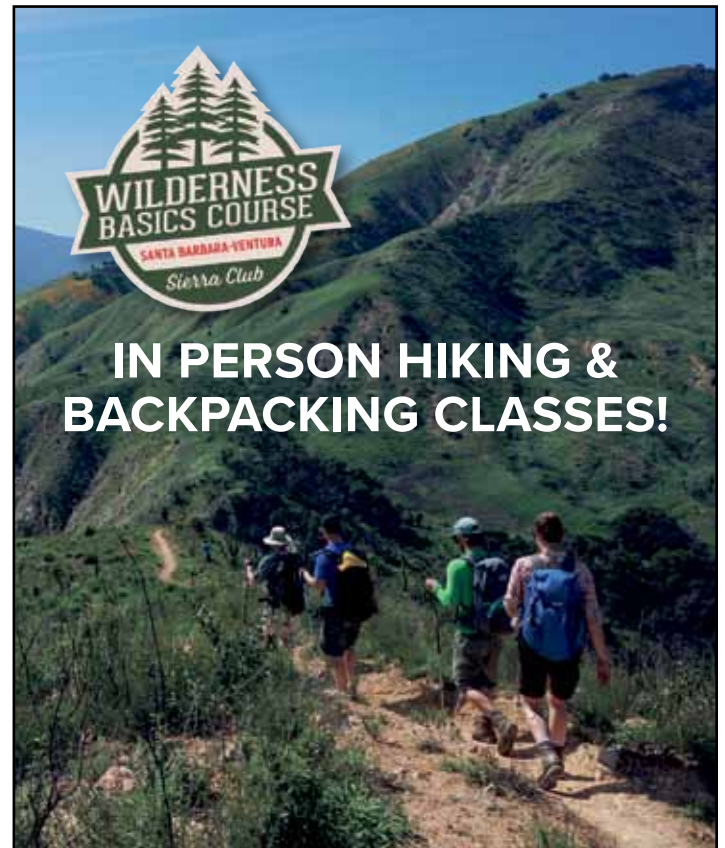
Students are expected to provide their own equipment for outings (backpacks, hiking footwear, tents, etc.), although WBC does have some equipment for loan and rentals are available through local outdoor stores.

Go the link below to sign up or learn more:

<https://tinyurl.com/WBCopen>



Overlooking a forest valley during a prior Wilderness Basics Course that is guaranteed to convey camaraderie and knowledge, fun too. (Photo by Arturo Hernandez)



STARTING FEBRUARY 15, 2023

Scan the QR code or visit lospadreswbc.org to register!

