

# Chapter Chair Chat

*By Carole Mintzer, Chapter Chair*

In our last issue, I provided a brief overview of Chapter accomplishments in 2022. Now I



will go into a bit more depth. It was a somewhat quieter year on several fronts than 2021 as we waited for government action and court decisions. But the election provided enough activity and to keep us on our toes. Here's what we were up to in 2022.

We held six General Meetings over Zoom on a variety of topics: Mental Health and the Climate Crisis; the Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary; Recycling and Reducing the Use of Plastic; An Evening of California Wildflowers; The Importance of Being Oak Trees; and Going Green with Greywater. We often had 25-30 people in attendance and the Zoom format allowed us to invite speakers from outside SLO County and for people from across and outside the county to attend regardless of their ability or willingness to drive. We also started recording the presentations so those who register can watch later if they can't make the meeting.

Our Outings leaders provided 31 hikes and walks to help people socialize and enjoy the outdoors. The outings ranged from easy and educational walks, such as a historic walk of Old Town Paso Robles, to challenging hikes, like the 7-mile Reservoir Canyon Loop with 1200 feet of elevation gain. I like to think there's something for everyone. And if you'd like to lead hikes, you can do that, too! Check out all the opportunities on our [MeetUp page](#).

After ramping up our communications in 2021, we continued to share important information by email with our members and supporters. We sent a total of 46 emails last year, but it is unlikely that you received that many because some went to small, targeted audiences. In addition to the six newsletter emails, there were fifteen emails announcing meetings/events that we thought you would find interesting, eight publicizing our political endorsements, five fundraising emails, and three reminders to vote in the Chapter ExCom election. We also sent nine emails asking you to make your voice heard in support of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, 30 by 30, community choice energy in Atascadero, and in opposition to trucking oil across SLO County and extending operations at Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant.

Our Conservation Committee met regularly throughout 2022 and kept abreast of ongoing and emerging environmental issues in SLO County, including plans to develop over 1000 mostly unaffordable houses while destroying mature oak trees in Nipomo; plans to expand the Avila Beach Resort; County approval (now rescinded) of the Paso Basin Land Use Management Area Planting Ordinance that would have increased irrigation and accelerated the draw down of an already over-drafted water supply; progress with 30x30 to protect 30

percent of California's land and water by 2030; efforts to preserve 12,000 acres around Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, and opposing the extension of operations at the plant; the status of the polystyrene ban in SLO County; and designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. The Committee formed a Renewable Energy Projects Team to study the renewable energy projects planned for SLO County.

As an election year, 2022 kept our Political Committee busy reaching out to candidates and carefully considering which candidates should be endorsed by the Sierra Club. A total of eleven candidates for federal, state, and local offices were endorsed and all eleven won! We are already seeing changes in policy direction at the County Board of Supervisors as an important reminder of how essential it is to elect pro-environment candidates.

I know many organizations struggled with fundraising in 2022 and our Chapter was no exception. It made us all the more grateful to the 324 people whose donations made up 40% of our operating costs. Of those donors, 59 made monthly donations that provided very welcome ongoing support. We also received a generous bequest from the estate of James Lopes that helped make up for other shortfalls in fundraising. With financial support from the national Sierra Club, we were able to make ends meet, but the support from our local donors was essential to sustaining our operations and effectiveness here in SLO County. Thank you to everyone who supported us in 2022!

What's ahead for 2023? We are waiting for the final public comment documents in the designation process of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary and court decisions on the Coastal Commission's decision to end off-highway vehicles at Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreational Area. We expect action on the Dana Reserve housing development in Nipomo and at Avila Beach Resort. We will continue to fight Exxon/Mobil's efforts to truck or pipe oil across San Luis Obispo County. We will support efforts to preserve the land around Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. We will partner with national Sierra Club to engage more closely on offshore wind energy and battery storage projects. We are committed to having more in-person events for our members and volunteers, especially our new members. Our Political Committee is scheduling meetings with recently elected public officials to share our concerns and goals for 2023. Our Outings program continues to schedule hikes and walks to help people enjoy the outdoors together.

Whew! It looks like we'll be busy this year. We will definitely keep you informed as the year progresses, especially when your voice needs to be heard so you can be part of what makes Sierra Club a powerful and effective organization.

Thank you for all your support, whether as a volunteer, a voice for the environment, or a donor. It's all appreciated!

*Carole*