

# Say It Ain't So!!!

By Carole Mintzer

Or as Jonathan Ullman, Director of the Sierra Club Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter said, "Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

On December 31, Andrew Christie retired as the Director of the Santa Lucia Chapter, a position he held for 20 years. To say the Chapter won't be the same would be an understatement.



I think we've all come to appreciate Andrew's writing as editor of the Santa Lucian since May 2004. This is the 171st and last issue with Andrew in that role. He is a master of droll headlines. Check out all the past issues [here](#). But his writing extended beyond this newsletter. He helped draft testimony and letters for Chapter leaders (including himself) to support good decisions by government bodies and oppose ridiculously bad options. I know I am grateful for his support in this way.

Starting in March 2018, Andrew also wrote a monthly column for *New Times*, taking on a wide range of topics. You can find all 68 articles in the [New Times Archives](#). [His final article](#) delves into rights of nature laws.

As word got out about Andrew's pending retirement, I heard from several of Andrew's friends and even a family member about what Andrew has meant to the Chapter. Here's a

sampling, because it's hard to improve upon their words.

From **Karen Merriam, former Chapter Chair**: “I think Andrew’s commitment to advocate for sound land use planning and policies is central to his accomplishments. There is no other environmental group or organization in this area that has done that with the same effectiveness and tenacity as has Andrew in his representation of the Santa Lucia Chapter.”

**Sue Harvey, our Conservation Chair**, wrote: “Andrew worked tirelessly with and guided community folks on how to participate in the administrative process to bring attention to local neighborhood concerns and issues. He guided and encouraged emerging activists, neighborhood groups, and coalitions.

“He is outstanding at bringing together and working with coalitions to protect diverse cultural, and underserved community environmental goals and special habitats that preserve biological diversity. Examples include preservation of complex Nipomo dunes and ocean habitat, Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, conservation of Diablo Canyon NPP lands, and advocacy for preservation of unique Carrizo Plain endangered habitats and species.”

From **PJ Webb, Advisor to the Northern Chumash Tribal Council**: “Andrew Christie’s collaborative leadership in the efforts to establish the designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary has spanned decades of involvement with the Northern Chumash Tribal Council in protecting Mother Earth and Grandmother Ocean. He has been a tireless partner and provided expertise, encouragement and engagement for environmental justice.”

**Jim Miers, a member of the Chapter Conservation Committee**, wrote: “Andrew is the finest example of a dedicated environmental advocate that I have had the privilege of knowing. Looking back through his body of work in the Chapter Newsletter and his New Times articles, I am amazed at the broad range of issues on which he developed expertise and his skill in communicating that to our membership and the public. I especially enjoyed the sense of humor he displayed in the articles and in meetings.”

Some of the best insights came from **Andrew’s sister, Sarah**, who obviously shares his sense of humor and writing skills. She noted that Andrew “first became involved with resource protection efforts in San Luis Obispo County in 1998 as a volunteer on the campaign to save the Hearst Ranch. He has been an exemplary ambassador for the environmental movement, exhibiting patience, tact, diplomacy and aplomb in circumstances of extreme pressure, stress and idiocy far beyond the capacity of normal mortals. His quiet, focused, unflappable advocacy on behalf of wildlife, habitat and community health has contributed immeasurably to the benefit of San Luis Obispo County.”

Sarah assured me that “Webster’s Dictionary has a picture of Andrew Christie in the definition of the word “Persistence, (see *indefatigable*).”

She also noted that Andrew, “swore he would never work for another nonprofit after spending several Orwellian years at Greenpeace and PETA,” but was “persuaded to give the NGO world one last chance when he accepted the position as Chapter Director at the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. The third time was obviously the charm.”

In researching this tribute, I ran across Andrew’s October 2018 *New Times* article, which celebrated the Chapter’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and in which he explained why he loves the Sierra Club. “Over the last 50 years, the Santa Lucia Chapter has acted without fear or favor, regularly offending friend and foe due to the fact that we stick to principles, not strategic maneuvers. That’s been the case in all the fights we’ve been through, from the proposed development of Hearst Ranch or the Cayucos Viewshed to the Los Osos and Morro Bay sewer projects, the Carrizo solar projects, Oceano Dunes, and the Cambria desal saga. Our participation in the process that designated California’s Marine Protected Areas almost got me beaten to a pulp one night outside the Morro Bay Vets Hall, courtesy of several large, angry gentlemen who thought the marine protected areas we were advocating for were too big. Later, I got a phone call from an angry Fish and Game commissioner when we editorialized that the areas they eventually designated were too small. All good reminders that if I wanted to be universally beloved, I’m in the wrong job.”

I have news for you Andrew, you are universally beloved by the environmental community and for the last 20 years, you’ve been in the right job.

### **What’s next?**

The Chapter Executive Committee has developed a job description for a Chapter Coordinator that is awaiting approval by the national Sierra Club. When the job announcement is ready, we’ll share it with you.

In the meantime, volunteers are taking on tasks that were previously done by Andrew, so if it takes a little longer to get a reply to your email or phone message, and the newsletter is a little thinner for a while, we’re sure you’ll understand.