

SANTA LUCIAN



Santa Lucia Chapter

Nov/Dec. 2019
Volume 56 No. 6

The official newsletter of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club ~ San Luis Obispo County, California

Community Choice Energy Coming to (Most of) the Central Coast

By John Smigelski

Exciting news! Nearly all the Central Coast decided to join Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP) this summer. Paso Robles, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach voted nearly unanimously to join the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay, who joined last year. Also joining this year were the County of Santa Barbara and the cities of Guadalupe, Santa Maria, Carpinteria, Goleta, Buellton and Solvang.

That's a unified Central Coast with only two exceptions: Atascadero and the County of San Luis Obispo.

This means local control, choice and savings. Municipalities within five counties will be working together to choose carbon-free energy, develop programs to support customer efforts to reduce carbon emissions and provide significant savings to customers. Carbon-free electricity is the foundation for climate change efforts. EV's can provide emission-free transportation; electrifying buildings means zero emissions.

Starting January 1, 2020, residents and businesses in the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay will begin to receive carbon free-energy and save 7% on the energy portion of their electric bill through rebates. Starting January 1, 2021, the additional ten cities plus the county of Santa Barbara will begin receiving carbon-free energy. MBCP is an experienced and well-run organization that can provide carbon-free energy at a much lower cost PG&E. MBCP has already built up \$94 million in financial reserves. By 2021, MBCP anticipates reaching their financial reserve target of \$175 million and will be providing customers even more savings. Customers could save 20% on the energy portion of their electric bill!

Since MBCP's base offering is 100% carbon-free and PG&E's is 80% carbon-free (including 30% nuclear), there will be about 120,000 more megawatt hours of carbon-free energy

being delivered to the cities in San Luis Obispo County — a significant step in addressing climate change.



While MBCP will be supplying the energy, PG&E will still be responsible for transmission and distribution of electricity, billing, and customer service. You will still be calling PG&E if you have any problems. Over 50% of the energy PG&E delivers in its service territory already comes from direct access and community choice programs like MBCP.

So how did this expansion happen? To paraphrase Margaret Mead, the only way it ever happens: a few caring people changed the way we get energy. Concerned citizens spoke out at budget priority meetings and asked their elected representatives to take up the issue. The SLO Climate Coalition took the lead in SLO County, and Community Environmental Council did the same in Santa Barbara County.

If you live in these areas, you don't have to do anything to receive this service from MBCP. Those who don't like carbon-

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Super Star!



P.J. Webb, Cambria-based Chair of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's Advisory Council, was presented with the first annual "Sea Star Panetta Award" by Leon Panetta at a Sept. 22 ceremony in Marina, CA.

Now is the Time to Become a Monthly Donor

If you are a member of the Sierra Club, in a few weeks you will receive our year-end pitch for the funds the Santa Lucia Chapter needs to do our work, because we can't survive on membership dues alone. While we appreciate all donations of any kind, **automatic monthly donations** are especially valuable. You can do this via our website -- www.sierraclub.org/santa-lucia/donate -- if you have a Paypal account, or you can set up a monthly donation with your bank with a bank check. (Paypal keeps @ two percent of your do-nation as service fees; your bank does not.) You can walk into your bank and set it up, or do it online at your bank's website. This service, called Bill Pay, is free to anyone with a bank account. All you need to give the bank besides your account info is the amount of the check, the date on which you want the check sent every month, and the name and address of the recipient:

Sierra Club
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Sierra Club General Meeting

Wed., Nov. 20
Copeland Pavilion, 3rd Floor
French Medical Center
1823 Johnson Ave., SLO
Doors open: 6:30 p.m.
Program: 7-9 p.m.

The ABCs of Climate Action: What YOU Can Do to Help

You've seen the headlines. You want to know what you can do.

On November 20 and 21, around the globe, in schools, workplaces, and community centers, Climate Reality volunteers trained by former Vice President Al Gore will participate in "Climate Reality: Truth in Action," a series of public presentations and conversations on the climate crisis that will be a chance for us all to learn how we will overcome this existential threat together -- now, while we still have time.

Join Climate Reality volunteer and Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter Vice-Chair Jennifer Bauer at the Copeland Pavilion on Nov. 20 to hear the truth about what's happening to our planet and start turning truth into bold solutions and real action.



At Last, the Reckoning

By Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club

For anyone who cares about the climate crisis, public lands, clean air and water, or any other environmental issue, Donald Trump's policies have been catastrophic.

But horrible though they are, Trump's policies are not why the Sierra Club supports the impeachment inquiry now underway in the House of Representatives. We've opposed the policies of other presidents—but always by harnessing the power of democracy and invoking the rule of law.

It's Donald Trump's flagrant contempt for those foundations of fair government that makes this different. You can argue about when it became undeniable that Trump does not care about his oath to preserve and protect the Constitution and the United States, but his admission that he asked a foreign power to investigate a political opponent no longer leaves room for doubt: This is a man who will do anything—including abusing his power, obstructing justice, and operating outside of the rule of law—to protect himself.

Here's how that affects the Sierra Club (and all of us): If our democratic norms and the law mean nothing, then the legal and democratic tools

Santa Lucian

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

send to: **Editor, Santa Lucian**, Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. sierraclub8@gmail.com

Santa Lucia Chapter

2019 Executive Committee

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 Chuck Tribbey (12/19) MEMBER
 Heather Howell (12/20) SECRETARY
 Violet Sage Walker (12/20) MEMBER
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The **Executive Committee** meets the third Monday of each month at 4:15 p.m. in the chapter office, located at 974 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

Outings

Bill Waycott

Webmasters

Monica Tarzier, Stephanie Carlotti

Trail Guide

Gary Felsman

Chapter Director

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Printed by University Graphic Systems Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
 Mailing preparation services courtesy of the Silver Streaks

Election Day is March 3

The California primary is more than an opportunity to select a presidential nominee; it can be your first and last chance to elect candidates for crucial local offices. If only two candidates are running, or one receives more than 50% of the vote, your first chance will also be your last chance. We will post more Sierra Club endorsements as election day nears; here are our first two.



Adam Hill for 3rd District County Supervisor

I very much appreciate and proudly accept the endorsement of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club for my re-election to 3rd District Supervisor of San Luis Obispo County.

This endorsement helps illustrate the important role the county Board of Supervisors plays in safeguarding our county's air, water, open spaces and marine resources and cementing our legacy as a national leader in coastal protection.

As a community, we face in coming years one of the most critical environmental challenges in this county's history: how to preserve the 12,000 acres of relatively pristine coastal coves, bluffs and chaparral surrounding the Diablo Canyon power plant after it closes in 2025.

The Board of Supervisors has taken on the role of lead agency in developing a plan for this significant undertaking that will affect us in the near future and for generations.

Work has already begun in determining the fate of the Diablo Canyon lands. It's going to take measured, experienced leadership to assure the best outcome for the community.

I view the Sierra Club's endorsement as affirmation of my necessary experience, project history, key relationships with important state and federal leaders, and my keen understanding of the complex set of issues relating to Diablo.

Decisions made in the next few years will impact our community for the next 50. I hope you agree that now is not the time for on-the-job learning for this momentous challenge.

Nor is it the time for critical decisions affecting our entire county to be based on ill-informed, partisan thinking. This is especially true when one of our major political parties has made the denial of climate science and the rollback of environmental protections fundamental planks in its political and governing platforms.

Given that my announced opponent for this seat is an active donor to Republican candidates and causes supporting President Trump's disastrous environmental record, it must be assumed she supports Trump and his policies.

This isn't a good fit for District 3 residents nor is it for

Ellen Beraud for 5th District County Supervisor

From proposed oil extraction in our nature preserves to the irreverent destruction of endangered wildlife, the natural beauty and serenity of the Central Coast is under constant threat. I'm honored to be endorsed by the Sierra Club and to continue working alongside those fighting to protect our environment and preserve it for future generations.

I am a former Atascadero Mayor and City Councilmember. I'm running for 5th District County Supervisor because SLO County is facing some of our greatest challenges ever. Our environment and our region's natural beauty, our economic prosperity, and our way of life is under threat. We need creative solutions and bold leadership to guide our county forward. I'm running for Supervisor because I have the experience and vision to lead our county at this important moment.

I am a small business owner, a 30-year healthcare professional, and a lifelong environmentalist. Together with my husband of 30 years, Francois, we own and operate an electrical contracting business. I also work as a registered dietitian at the Atascadero State Hospital.

My husband and I are both proud union members, and I am the Facility Chief Steward of AFSCME 2620.

I have served 16 years as a board member of the Atascadero Land Preservation Society, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the oak woodlands of North County. My family loves the outdoors, and enjoys swimming, mountain biking, and hiking.

The key issues that I want to address while in office include adopting a Community Choice Energy (CCE) program, supporting renewable energy projects, and prioritizing public health. As a strong advocate of CCE, I want to see our county join Monterey Bay Community Power (MPCP) so the residents and businesses of unincorporated SLO County can choose to save money by receiving their energy from carbon-free sources. With the looming closure of Diablo Canyon Power Plant, I would also like to see investment in renewable energy projects that could developed through support from MBCP. As our region looks for new economic opportunities, our county should be exploring

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BERAUD continued on page 6

It's a Wrap About a Basin

SLO County bans Styrofoam

By Janine Rands,
SLO Foam Free

Every year, millions of tons of plastic get dumped into the ocean. We can stop that, or at least start to address our part, with a serious plan to stop using non-recycled products like expanded polystyrene (EPS) in foodware, packaging, plastic cutlery, lids, etc., and halting the use of exposed EPS in marine buoys.

On October 9, SLO County's Integrated Waste Management Authority voted overwhelmingly for a county-wide ordinance prohibiting the use of polystyrene containers, trays, cartons, and non-encapsulated products in San Luis Obispo County. The vote was 8-2, with Supervisors John Peschong and Debbie Arnold voting "No."

The ban will go into effect on April 9, 2020. All businesses: use up your stock and don't buy any more.

California now has 130 cities and nine counties that have passed a "full ban," including retail sales and restaurants. SLO County has one of the more progressive ordinances, banning foam meat trays and egg cartons, and requiring that marine buoys be encapsulated.

In SLO County, many of us worked for six years on this effort. We had to overcome industry opposition, and opposition from Supervisors Peschong, Arnold and Compton, who questioned the environmental harms.

Removing expanded polystyrene from the waste stream is a major game-changer in curbing the noxious trash littering our streets and pouring into our creeks and the ocean.

We will see some major changes in our communities next spring!

A Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) must fulfill the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) for the Paso Robles Subbasin of the Salinas Valley Basin, describing the subbasin, developing quantifiable management objectives that consider the interests of the subbasin's beneficial groundwater uses and users, and identifying management actions and conceptual projects that will allow the subbasin to achieve sustainability by 2040. The Sierra Club filed the following comments on the GSP.

Sept. 27, 2019

To: Angela Ruberto, County of San Luis Obispo Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Dear Ms. Ruberto,

We have reviewed the public draft of the Paso Basin GSP.

We are assuming that the underlying data supporting the inflow and outflows are accurately interpreted within the limitations of the data gaps that are carefully laid out in the Plan. Once the GSP is adopted, the first project undertaken must be in-fill of monitoring well data to collect the information necessary to plug the data gaps.

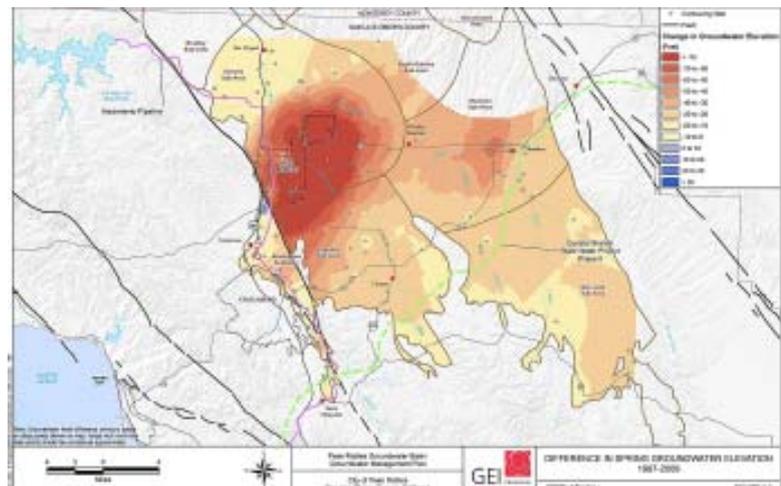
The Plan estimates that it will take five years to enact a pumping reduction ordinance. The Plan relies on identifying "exceedance levels" of minimum thresholds (groundwater levels) for purposes of triggering pumping cutbacks. How will "exceedances" be addressed while an ordinance is being enacted? There must be some intermediate plan of action identified to mitigate current over-pumping during the period before an ordinance is adopted. Violations of "exceedance levels" will be meaningless and cannot be remedied without an intermediate plan. Ground water levels will continue to decline. Five years is too long to wait to start to reverse over-pumping. The Plan correctly emphasizes that pumping cutbacks are necessary as extensive over-pumping is already occurring.

Plan Chapter 7 "Monitoring Network" and Chapter 8 "Sustainable Management Criteria" are commendable. Implementation would show positive results as soon as the first annual review, subsequent annual reviews, and the five year review.

Chapter 9 "Management Actions and Projects" is misplaced thinking. The Projects, while possible and of benefit, are too far distant to be viable management options for addressing the immediate problem of reversing depletion of the basin. Chapter 9 offers little realistic planning, cost, or engineering information. Projects 2, 3, 4, and 5 dangerously offer "overproduction surcharges" as a reliable funding mechanism for the projects. "Overproduction surcharges" are not defined in the plan. Over-pumping can't be managed through a system of surcharges because entities will merely treat this as a cost of doing business and make no effort to change their business model, and the surcharges would end up becoming a necessary component of the financial survival of the agency leveling the surcharge. Thus there is little incentive on anyone's part to come into compliance. The history of Fox Canyon Water District should provide ample caution. Chapter 9 should be relegated to the Appendix.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment,

Sue Harvey, Chair
Santa Lucia Chapter
of the Sierra Club



No Borders, No Nations, No Coal Power Stations

By Chance D. Coates, © Toward Freedom 2019

The simmering heat of the September sun above Atascadero did not dissuade dozens of people from rallying and picketing in front of City Hall on September 20. We joined millions of others around the world to participate in the Global Climate Strike.

As a young adult who is studying history at the local college and who is active in environmental and immigration justice as well as anti-war organizing, I decided to attend the climate strike for a variety of reasons. Humankind is facing an existential crisis, a choice that we have relegated to non-existence

for too long. If we are to make a choice about the future according to any positive framework, we must come together as an affected people. My curiosity about the Global Climate Strike and the leading philosophies behind this movement also motivated me to join the strikers in the streets.

Climate apartheid has become a well-deserved flashpoint in politics across the planet. Those “in poverty are responsible for just a fraction of global emissions” yet “they will bear the brunt of climate change,” according to Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur

on extreme poverty and human rights. Meanwhile, he notes, “the wealthy pay to escape overheating, hunger and conflict while the rest of the world is left to suffer.” In light of this, who could be surprised that youth have risen up together around the world in a brave act of defiance?

The protest in Atascadero, a relatively quiet city of just over 30,000, was a fascinating and beautiful sight. One striker carried a sign painted with skull and crossbones, settled in between the words: “6th Mass Extinction.” Another high-school aged youth had a handmade poster

4 million people
5,800 actions
163 countries

with two eyes, with both sides of planet Earth as pupils, to capture the peoples affected by climate change. The poster read simply “OPEN YOUR EYES.” Another sign featured the blunt declaration: “Planet Over Profit.”

Greta Thunberg, the superstar sixteen year-old Swedish environmental justice advocate, was mentioned by those who spoke at the event; as was the Green New Deal, popularized by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Among the activist community, Thunberg, Sanders and

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Now hear this Above: County Courthouse, 9/27. Above right: Emmet Arries, Sunrise SLO Action Team Lead, created a march banner at Sierra Club h.q. and led the way down Monterey Street the next day.

A Week of Climate Action in SLO County and the World

Students in San Luis Obispo County walked out of classrooms on Friday, September 20 (see above), joining millions of young people around the world to demand real climate action and beginning a week of climate-related events, ending on September 27 with a rally outside the SLO County Courthouse and a sidewalk march.

These local events take place when communities across the globe are coming together to rally for clean jobs, clean air and water, healthy food and a sustainable environment. The impacts of climate change, with more extreme wildfire and drought seasons and record high temperatures, are already being felt with threats to the world’s food supply, public health, clean water and air.

The 9/27 rally was supported by local organizations that share the strike’s commitment to climate justice and the living planet, including the SLO Climate Coalition, SLO Women’s March, San Luis Obispo Sunrise Movement, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and numerous collegiate clubs and organizations.

These sponsors asked the Board of Supervisors to take the Sunrise Movement’s “No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge” and to support Community Choice Energy. Supervisors Gibson and Hill signed the pledge. Supervisors Arnold, Peschong and Compton did not.

Reckoning

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that we use to protect clean air and water, public lands, and a safe climate will also become meaningless. The Sierra Club—and every other group working for positive change in this country—requires a functioning, law-abiding government and democratic access to that government. Without that, we can’t protect people or the environment.

For the American people, though, the stakes are even higher. This is a struggle between deceit and transparency. Between corruption and integrity. Between darkness and light. To defend our democracy and restore the integrity of our institutions, Congress must carry out its constitutional duty to fully investigate this president’s actions and hold him accountable.

You can email Michael Brune at michael.brune@sierraclub.org and follow him on Twitter (@bruneski) and Facebook.

ODSVRA

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birds that appeared to have been run over by vehicles. This OHMVR park has a long history of harm to endangered species and their habitats due to off-road vehicle activities. Pint-sized plovers don't stand a chance if vehicles and dune buggies are tearing through their beach and dune habitat. OHMVRD needs to immediately control off-road vehicle use and rein in riding in areas where protected species are in harm's way. The Division should start by implementing the measures recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Coastal Commission to avoid plover deaths.

And while OHMVRD promised that a draft Habitat Conservation Plan would be released by August of this year, that document is still unavailable. OHMVRD has provided no explanation as to why the release of the draft has been delayed. Further, of great concern is the passage in the 1/11/18 Federal Register Notice for State Parks OHMVRD's Draft HCP proposing "reduction of the Boneyard and 6 enclosures" as "HCP Covered Activities."

Third, we have observed an increasing number of vehicles with light bars entering the park, so it appears night-riding, which is detrimental to wildlife, may be on the rise. The

ongoing lack of a special events protocol means harmful environmental impacts of such events will continue to occur.

Fourth, a recent study by the San Francisco Estuary Institute and The Aquatic Science Center revealed that the biggest source of microplastics in California's coastal waters is vehicle tires. Normally, tires shed tiny plastic particles on streets, and they wash into the ocean during rain events. We can assume that allowing vehicles to drive directly on the beach inserts a high load of microplastic fragments into the sea off of the ODSVRA. We can also assume that vehicles are depositing oil, brake dust, gasoline and wastewater on the beach, in Arroyo Grande Creek and in the ocean. Since no one is monitoring the water quality, the impact is deliberately unknown.

Fifth, of continued concern is the protection of the Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area. Although the Coastal Commission had noted in its recommendations to State Parks' OHMVRD that development of that area as a new southern entrance, vehicle staging area, and other intensive uses was moving in the wrong direction, it continues to be considered by OHMVRD, which has stated that Oso Flaco development is still "on the table." As

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Beraud

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energy projects of the future instead of supporting the desecration our environment and sacred places with new oil extraction projects.

I am gravely concerned about the public health crisis facing residents in South County. The poor air quality stemming from activity on the Oceano Dunes is well documented. Residents of the Nipomo Mesa are in desperate need of relief that our county government is failing to provide. I support the staff recommendations of the California Coastal Commission that would implement reasonable conditions on the Oceano Dunes SVRA in order to help mitigate the root causes of some of the worst air quality in the nation. Through the APCD and the Board of Supervisors, I intend to pressure State Parks to ensure the health and safety of our community is prioritized above all else.

Most importantly, I want to serve the interests of the people of our county. I first ran for office in Atascadero because I had a vision for a local government that listened to the wishes of the community and promoted a welcom-

ing environment.

Incumbent supervisor Debbie Arnold fails to do what's best for her constituents. Instead, campaign donors and special interest groups influence most decisions. Perhaps the most egregious example came when the overwhelming majority of Santa Margarita residents opposed the Las Pilitas Rock Quarry. Debbie Arnold ignored their pleas and supported the project anyway. I am running to restore people's confidence that our government is here to serve them and will do the right thing for our communities.

I am running a grassroots funded campaign made up of mostly small dollar donations from people across SLO County. In contrast, the incumbent has received half as many individual donations, and donors include money from the fossil fuel industry and other dark money sources.

I am proud to be endorsed by the Sierra Club and others on the Central Coast who wish to preserve this special place. I hope you will go to ellenforsupervisor.com and join my campaign.

Hill

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any of San Luis Obispo County. Consider, in the past two and a half years, Trump has:

- Rolled back the Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act.
- Attacked California's longstanding right to establish its own automotive tailpipe emissions standards.
 - Shamefully used environmental regulations as a fig-leaf excuse to try and forcibly remove homeless people from our state's major urban centers.
 - Demanded oil drilling in the Carrizo Plain National Monument area in eastern SLO County, and in the environmentally critical Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
 - Demanded increased oil and gas drilling off our nation's coasts, including the Central Coast.
 - Shockingly, opened Alaska's 16.7 million-acre Tongass National Forest to logging and mineral extraction. The Tongass is the

largest intact temperate rainforest on earth, representing more than half the world's such flora and fauna. The Tongass absorbs some 8 percent of the globe's CO2 emissions and is home to rare old-growth spruce, hemlock and cedar, rivers running with salmon, and dramatic fjords.

- Attacked some 84 environmental rules protecting our wildlife, water, air and public health from toxins and poisons.
- As stated above, repeatedly denies climate science and constantly undermines scientific research into the harmful effects of fossil fuel use on ice cap and glacial melting, sea level rise, drought, famine and human migration patterns.

Again, I thank the Sierra Club for its vote of confidence. In turn, I'm confident in the voters of District 3 to recognize true friends of the environment and its champions. Please visit adamhill.us to help out.

Strike

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Ocasio-Cortez are symbolic icons that push youth to action.

Standing in the shade, beneath a large oak tree, a child was carrying a sign that had three different trees drawn upon it, all stylized in the fashion of Dr. Seuss's ecological tale, *The Lorax*. Written in the middle of the sign in bold letters, was the phrase: "We Speak for the Trees." This was a marvelous piece of art, which displayed some of the youthful inspiration channeled as part of the global action.

Eric Greening, a longtime local activist, said his presence at the strike was due to a variety of related circumstances, but especially to the legacy of planet Earth. "How can I show my appreciation [to the earth]?" he asked. "The human community, of which I am a part, is why I am an activist." As I spoke with Greening, protesters chanted condemnations against global oil corporations.

A spirit of radicalism permeated the air, as if just bubbling underneath the



surface. "We know that stopping economic inequality and climate change are one and the same thing," organizer and activist Carmen Bouquin told the crowd. "We cannot solve climate change without addressing economic inequality."

Climate change is impacting "the most vulnerable... Women, people of color, Black and Brown communities, low-income communities," Bouquin declared. As the chanting began, she decided to add in a new chant, dedicated to climate refugees. The crowd eagerly joined, chanting: "No Borders, No Nations, No Coal Power Stations."

Making these connections, according to Bouquin, "embodies the idea" that the "crisis happening with

asylum seekers is a part of the climate crisis and comes from the same sources."

There is widespread acknowledgment that a choice has been made for the vast majority of global residents, one involving a race to the precipice in a lustful drive for short term profits. The Global Climate Strike seeks to channel that animosity, especially in its demands for dramatic carbon emissions cuts and diversions to more sustainable energy, promising that young people will no longer be complacent in the face of such un-democratic narcissism.

The Global Climate Strike is in its infancy with regard to environmental justice. Protestors like myself in the countries that are the largest emitters of emissions are

following in the monumental footsteps of a diverse array of Indigenous communities. I brought my own sign to the march, which sought to add a new voice, or inspiration, to this small city. It read, quoting the words of Honduran Indigenous martyr Berta Cáceres:

Let us wake up. Let us wake up, humankind! We're out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism and patriarchy that will only assure our self-destruction.

The first victims of global climate apartheid are the most marginalized people, as was emphasized at the protest in Atascadero. Indigenous peoples have been fighting this battle for decades, if not centuries. If mainstream environmental justice activism seeks to remedy the issues plaguing this planet, the toxic intersectionality that is climate change must be at the fore.

Chance D. Coates is a student, essayist, and aspiring teacher of history, who is hoping to specialize either on the Middle East or Latin America.

ODSVRA

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you know, Oso Flaco Lake is a uniquely beautiful area, stretching from prime agriculture and rich soils to the east, with a footbridge and boardwalk that connects a rare, coastal freshwater lake to riparian areas of willows and wax myrtle, through vegetated dune-scrub habitat that leads to the Pacific. Over 300 bird species have been counted there, along with numerous species of special concern. Further, Oso Flaco Lake is designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) by the California Coastal Act and wetlands regulations, and contains numerous special-status wildlife and plant species. It also contains the largest concentration of Class I and Class II soils in San Luis Obispo County and is classified as prime agricultural land under the Coastal Act. It is the very last place that should be considered for off-highway vehicle activity, and we hope that the Commission will stand firm in its protection.

Finally, in light of these concerns and because the Commission will continue to monitor Oceano Dunes SVRA activities over these next several months and years, we invite all Commissioners and staff members to visit the Central Coast and see for yourself the Oceano Dunes and adjacent Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area. We invite you attend a tour on Friday, January 10 (a month without a Coastal Commission Hearing) or on Tuesday, March 10 (the day prior to the Commission's meeting in

Monterey) or at another date of your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued diligence in ensuring the safe and environmentally sustainable use of the entire Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes complex.

Sincerely,

- Herbert Smith, Board Member
- American Woodland Conservancy
- Andrew Christie, Director
- Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter
- Rebekah Venturini, President
- Oceano Beach Community Association
- Brad Snook, Chair
- Surfrider San Luis Obispo
- Jeff Miller, Senior Conservation Advocate
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Kara Woodruff, Representative
- Friends of Oso Flaco Lake
- Doug Tait, Conservation Chair
- Morro Coast Audubon
- Mary Ciesinski, Executive Director
- ECOSLO
- Gordon Hensley, Executive Director
- San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper



ODSVRA at D Minus 8

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 hence, with quarterly updates as that date approaches. In agreeing to await the arrival of that plan, the Coastal Commission stayed 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 the plan will need to incorporate and effect the changes that the Commission would otherwise have compelled via those conditions to the permit.

As we approach the date of the meeting of the Coastal Commission at which it will either approve or reject State Parks' plan for the future management of the ODSVRA, the Santa Lucian will be devoting space to a series of articles that examine the issues swirling around the longest running environmental problem on the Central Coast. In this issue, with one progress report filed and eight months to go until Dunes Day, we peer into our crystal ball and predict that off-roaders will be kicking up a lot of dust, so to speak.

When first they practiced to deceive

The bloodiest of bloody shirts for the off-road community at Oceano Dunes has long been the dust abatement order and Air Pollution Control District study that found the off-roaders' favorite recreational activity was a major cause of the hazardous dust plume that regularly envelops the Nipomo Mesa in the embrace of the worst air in the nation.

That existential threat to their hobby turned the off-roaders into the dusty, local equivalent of the climate change denial lobby – attacking the science, the scientists, the methodology, the data, and any elected officials who took action based on the reality the study presented.

For a case study of the techniques employed in the effort to discredit the science, we can reliably turn to local right-wing gadfly Kevin P. Rice, and let just one of the many example he provides speak for all the efforts to create “controversy” over the issue of how mile-long dust plumes leave the dunes and enter the lungs of residents. It should be the only example anyone needs.

As the self-appointed champion for the local off-road community, Rice posted the following to the CalCoast News website on April 24, 2013:

“The most recent 2010 study again found direct emissions impacts from OHV activity ‘is not the major factor responsible for the high PM levels downwind from the SVRA....’ Therefore, the APCD study says dust kicked up by vehicles is NOT A MAJOR FACTOR and does not correlate to blowing dust episodes.” [emphasis his].

That same partial quote was also deployed by the attorney for Friends of Oceano Dunes in a 2010 comment letter submitted to the APCD, one of many attacking the dust study. It’s drawn from the last sentence of a paragraph in the APCD study discussing direct and indirect impacts on dust pollution by off-road vehicles on the dunes.

Right after that sentence about direct impacts comes the first sentence of the next paragraph, where we learn about *indirect* impacts, namely vehicle-induced “de-vegetation, destabilization of dune structure and destruction of the natural crust on the dune surface. All...act to increase the ability of winds to entrain sand particles from the dunes and carry them to the Mesa, representing an indirect emissions impact from the vehicles. The data strongly suggests this is the primary cause of the high PM levels measured on the



Let the circle be unbroken Tribune front page, Oct. 6, 2019.

Nipomo Mesa during episode days.”

Further:

“The major findings resulting from detailed analysis of the diverse and comprehensive data sets generated during the Phase 1 and Phase 2 South County PM Studies clearly lead to a definitive conclusion: OHV activity in the SVRA is a major contributing factor to the high PM concentrations observed on the Nipomo Mesa.”

To sum up: Mr. Rice and the off-roaders’ legal counsel read those two paragraphs and said to themselves, in effect, “we don’t agree with the study, so let’s find a clever way to make it look like the study *disagrees with itself*. Let’s surgically extract this part that says *direct* emission impacts from OHV activity are not the major factor responsible for the high PM levels downwind from the SVRA and hope nobody checks the context. Let’s see if we can convince

DECEIVE continued next page

Dear Coastal Commission

October 11, 2019

To: The California Coastal Commission

Re: Public Comment on October 18, 2019, Agenda Item 8a - ODSVRA PWP Update

The Dunes Alliance is a coalition of community and environmental organizations active on the California Central Coast and dedicated to the safe and environmentally sustainable use and enjoyment of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes complex. We continue to support the directives of the Coastal Commission staff regarding the management and future of the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (ODSVRA, located in the heart of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes), and hope that the Commission will ensure those recommendations are incorporated into the ODSVRA Public Works Plan. We offer the following comments for your further consideration.

First, not only is State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVR) continuing business as usual at the ODSVRA, it is refusing to live up to promises it has already made. In September, San Luis Obispo County’s Air Pollution Control Board (APCD) rejected OHMVRD’s second dust control plan for failing to include foredune restoration as recommended by the Scientific Advisory Group, describing it as “critically deficient.” As a result, the APCD will convene a hearing board in November to review OHMVRD’s violation of the Stipulated Order of Abatement and consider corrective action, possibly including forced closures of portions of the ODSVRA.

OHMVRD seems to consider itself above the law. Indeed, OHMVRD Deputy Director Dan Canfield told *The SLO Tribune*: “the scientists don’t need to be concerned with tangible, real world issues,” unlike State Parks. And contrary to the scientists, he’s stated that a 48-acre foredune “would be detrimental to shorebird conservation and would prohibit visitor

public access.”

Second, protection of endangered species at the ODSVRA has been continually lacking. Environmental monitors at the ODSVRA reported finding dead western snowy plovers on four different occasions recently, including three of the protected

ODSVRA continued on page 6

Deceive

continued from previous page

people that the Air Pollution Control District does not know what their own study concludes.”

It was a juvenile attempt to deceive at the dog-ate-my-homework level; an act of creative fact-fudging that can be discovered by simply going to the source and reading the sentence immediately following the sentence quoted.

This is how “controversy” was manufactured around this issue years ago and continues to be peddled to this day. The people who attempted to disseminate a cherry-picked distortion as their back up for the straight-faced claim that the central finding of the APCD dust study says the opposite of what it really says are the same people who flog

“new facts,” assert that crucial data was not considered, insist on flaws in the study, the methodology, the peer review, and on and on.

They blew their credibility when the lawyer for Friends of Oceano Dunes submitted that partial quote in 2010 and Mr. Rice brought it back in 2013. They flagged themselves as dwelling outside the bounds of acceptable public discourse, demonstrating their belief that trying to put one over on one’s fellow citizens is a legitimate form of argument.

And once someone does that, and gets caught doing it, he can’t be called a serious advocate for his cause or a government watchdog. He should just be sent to bed without supper.

Outings report

Oso Flaco Lake Slow Hike

By Heather Howell, Santa Lucia SC Executive Committee

On October 12, a beautifully clear, cool and sunny autumn day, we gathered at the trail head of Oso Flaco Lake — nine of us, ages 8-78 — to assess the current state of this threatened waterway for migrating birds. (Wheelchair accessible, with loaners available from the Grover Beach State Parks kiosk on Grand Ave.)

The willow-lined dirt road is well maintained, flat and wide. No potholes, but plenty of poison oak, all cleared behind the road edge. Sierra Club hike leader Andrea Fischer-Ortiz immediately began identifying flora and fauna, pointing out the pumpkin spiders and wood rat nests that are constructed with long branches and twigs to frustrate their predators and allow many emergency exits.

We were passed by local fisherfolk coming and going, many with children, geared up to surf fish. Two stood on the bridge



Let’s ride! Non-motorized vehicular recreation at Oso Flaco.

OSO FLACO continued on page 10



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Oso Flaco

continued from page 9

over the lake, mostly meditating. Any fish caught there shouldn't be eaten, per a warning sign at trailhead, because of agricultural chemical run-off polluting the lake. There was a significant algae-bloom, which looked like guacamole heaped on the water. The grebes and ducks paddled through it unperturbed. Also spotted: white herons roosting at shoreline and a solitary white pelican, masquerading as a swan.

The hike is an easy 4-mile round trip walk, even for mobility-compromised seniors like myself! As maintained, the continuous boardwalk leads to the terminus overlooking the Pacific, where an hour later we spotted whales spouting offshore. The environment all the way was pristine, lightly covered with the full variety of native dunes plants, with mock heather, yellow primrose, and coastal aster blooming now. Our budding naturalist, Carrie Palacios, did spot and remove two small pieces of trash and one cigarette filter. Good job, Carrie!

However, desecration threatens from the neighboring dunes. We watched a small contingent of ATVs persevere to the top of the huge back dunes, their fat tires spewing and kicking out plumes of sand, leaving trenches where they'd been. It also was the only noise, which reached us from at least a mile distant, other than the distant roar of the ocean and a few bird calls.

We didn't come across any off-roaders on this hike, but the thought of the road to the lake being "improved" and trafficked by RV's, 'doolies', and toy haulers per the Public Works Plan of State Parks is horrifying. It's impossible to imagine the carnage and destruction of habitat which will occur if the State Parks plan is approved for expansion of vehicular traffic in the Oceano Dunes Preserve.

Everyone should unite to protect this unique local treasure for generations to come. Watch the 25-minute YouTube video,

"Easing the Throttle II," co-produced by the Sierra Club. Download it and show it to all your friends and colleagues. It's a great explanation and visualization of the issue, which, unhappily, grinds on while the Coastal Commission waits for State Parks to do the right thing.

Next Oso Flaco slow hike: Dec. 7.



Choice

continued from page 1

free energy or saving money will have four months to opt out. About 3% do.

So what happened with SLO County and Atascadero?

Neither would put Community Choice on their agenda to take action. I never heard arguments against joining MBCP that were based in fact or sound logic. There was a tendency to say "we have questions," but no curiosity to find the answers to questions.

Paso Robles provides a contrast. After the city council received an MBCP presentation, there was a 3-2 vote to agendize sign up. Two council members who voted "no" shared their concerns with MBCP. Dialogue continued.

Financial information was shared. Questions were answered. Paso requested another presentation before the council so more residents could learn about the opportunity. The result was a 5-0 vote to join. As a result of the council's efforts, almost \$3 million will be staying in their community starting in 2021, and 35,000 mW hours of carbon-free electricity will be generated.

This did not happen with the Atascadero City Council or the San Luis Obispo County Supervisors. If you live in Atascadero or the unincorporated areas of the county, that lack of curiosity and any effort to seriously consider the issue is why you

will continue to have no choice but to get your energy from PG&E. It is why you will see no local control and no savings.

Instead, the county supervisors voted 4-1 to do a study that may enable them to join two years hence. Supervisor Debbie Arnold voted "no" even to that.

Timely action would have meant the residents and businesses of San Luis Obispo County would be on target to save over \$10 million a year in energy costs in 2021 while reducing carbon emissions.

Hopefully, SLO County can join the other four counties that make up MBCP, and county residences and businesses will begin seeing savings in 2022.

MBCP will soon be sending out mailings to the residents and businesses in the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay. Don't be surprised if a misinformation campaign starts as well. If you have questions, get your answers from MBCP. A good place to start is www.mbcommunitypower.org/enrollment/.

If you can't find the answers to your questions there, you can e-mail me at John@carbonfree.slo.org.

John Smigelski is a member of the SLO Climate Coalition Task Force and frequent supporter of Team Sierra. He is an Engineer and MBA who has spent his career in the energy industry.



Village Creek Plaza

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170 **Cutting Edge Salon**
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172 **Bend Chiropractic**
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174 **House 2 Home Interiors**
(805) 489-5233

168 - 174 Station Way, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420
Along Arroyo Grande Creek next to AG Post Office

Outings

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Sunday, Nov. 24th, 2:00 pm, Intertidal flora and fauna at Montaña de Oro St. Park. Join us for a super low tide with Faylla Chapman, Central Coast Natural History Museum docent and intertidal expert. Faylla will discuss the diversity of kelp species that inhabit the zone and the fauna that co-exist among them. Meet at Hazard Canyon parking among the eucalyptus trees, at the big curve. Wear waterproof shoes, dress in layers. Contact Bill, 805-459-2103. Rain or threat of rain cancels.

Saturday, Dec. 7, 9:00 am, Anniversary hike to Cerro Alto. A moderate 7-mile loop hike in the Los Padres National Forest. Elevation gain @ 1,800 ft. starting from Cerro Alto campground. We will ascend through wood-land to the Cerro Alto summit. On descent, we will go through the eucalyptus grove to the Boy Scout trail, which leads to the road back to the campground. Shorter option available for those who do not want to hike 7 miles. Talk to the leader at the start of the hike if interested.

Bring water, snacks, and dress for weather. Possibility of ticks and poison oak. Meet at Cerro Alto campground, half a mile off Highway 41. Small day use fee. There will be a stop at Taco Temple for lunch after the hike. Dogs ok on leash. Contact Chuck, 805-441-7597.

Saturday, Dec. 7th, 11:00 am, Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area slow hike. Wheelchair accessible/parents and strollers. An easy 2-mile one-way hike along a shaded paved road to the boardwalk over the lake and on to the dunes for a view of the beach and ocean beyond. Hikers can continue onto the beach. From Highway 101, take the Main St. Exit towards Guadalupe. Drive west 9 miles toward Guadalupe. Turn right at Highway 1, go 3 miles, over the Santa Maria River to Oso Flaco Lake Rd. Turn left and drive until it ends at the parking lot. From Arroyo Grande, drive south on Highway 1. After the Nipomo Mesa, turn right on Oso Flaco Lake Rd. and drive until it ends at the parking lot. \$5.00 parking fee, or park a short distance outside the gate. Meet at the

picnic tables. Contact Andrea, 805-934-2792.

Saturday, Dec. 14th, 8:30 am. Trail Work at Beginning of Buckeye Trail, Big Sur. We will work the half mile section of Buckeye Trail, from the Salmon Creek Ranger facility to the top of the hill. We can start at the bottom and work our way up. If you have a McCloud, pick-hoe, rake, hand clippers, loppers, folding saw or bow saws, please bring or you may borrow the leader's tools. Wear clothes that can get dirty and bring gloves. There will be some poison oak. We will probably work 3-4 hours but you may work less. Bring water, lunch, snacks. Rain will postpone. We'll meet at Washburn Day Use Area at 8:30 a.m., 1.5 miles north of Windsor St. stop light in Cambria and carpool from there. Contact Carlos, 805-234-0291.

Sunday, Dec. 15th, 5:00-6:30 pm, Victorian Christmas Historic Walk of San



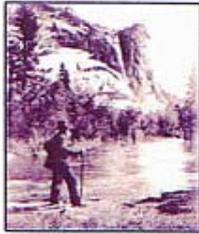

The Sierra Club Needs You!

Become an Outings Leader

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

For further information contact:

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



John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, in Yosemite

Luis Obispo. Guided stroll past 15 holiday-lit Victorian houses in the Old Town historic district, recalling Christmas customs, events and locales of the 1890s. Children over 7 with parents welcome. Flashlights recommended. Meet in front of St. Stephen's Church, corner of Nipomo and Pismo Streets. Contact Joe, 805-549-0355.

November to March (various), Salt Tram Protection Project. Help the Wilderness Coordinator for Ridgecrest BLM, with a project to protect the historic Salt Tram in the Inyo Mountains from fire damage. The Saline Valley Salt Tram was

built in 1912 to transport salt 13.4 mi. over the Inyo Mountains to the Owens Valley. Last used in 1935, its wood towers and steel machinery remain as a National Register Historic Site. Small trees have taken root near the towers, making them susceptible to wildfire. With a BLM crew, volunteers will help establish firebreaks around several of the structures. Carpool to the Inyo Mts. crest in 4WD vehicles for a two-night car camp at 8,700 feet. Volunteers will reach work sites on foot and use hand tools to remove small pines. For dates and details contact Marty, 760-384-5444.



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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 Bill Waycott, (805) 459-2103. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.



Friday to Monday, Nov 15th -18th, Death Valley Natl. Park Service Trip (or later for those that would like to stay longer and do more). We will be helping long time park volunteer Birgitta Jansen finish her Viewshed Assessment Project. Birgitta will brief us on what we need to know Friday night. We will camp as near the trailhead as we can Friday night and climb Tele-

scope Peak on Saturday to do our first assessment. For those able to stay longer, there is the possibility of doing Wildrose and Grapevine Peaks. Contact Kate, 661-944-4056.

Saturday, Nov. 16th, 8:00 am-12:00 pm, Sierra Club New Outings Leader Training. If you are interested in becoming an outings leader on

the Central Coast, this training is for you! The training starts with a 4-hour class at the Sierra Club office, located at 1411 Marsh Street, Suite 204, San Luis Obispo. We will go over the guidelines and handbook issued by the Sierra Club. To be certified, in addition to this 4-hour class, you will need to complete a basic First Aid course, as well as create and lead a provisional hike along with one of our current outings leaders. To enroll, please contact Bill, 805-459-2103 at least one week prior to the start

date.

Saturday, Nov. 23rd, 10:00 am, Fall Bike Outing on Santa Rosa Creek Road, Cambria.

Join us for a view of Fall colors along this coastal canyon. An out and back ride of about 2 hours with a one-way distance of @ 8-10 miles on a paved road. Moderate hills. Bring your bike, hel-met, other appropriate gear, and water/snacks. Meet in the Coast

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

Union High School parking lot, near the tennis courts, at 2950 Santa Rosa Creek Road, Cambria. Bill, 805-459-2103. Rain or threat of rain cancels.

OUTINGS continued page 11

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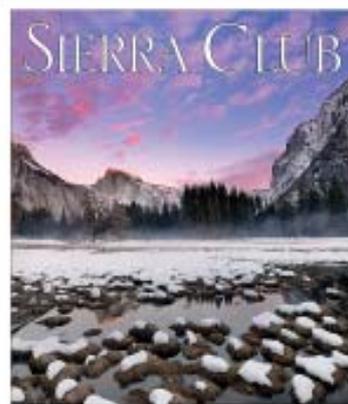
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