"It's not wastewater until we waste it." So said Sarah Corbin of the Surfrider Foundation, co-sponsor with the Santa Lucia Chapter of the December 9 forum, "Where’s the Water?" at the Elm Street Community Center in Arroyo Grande. Corbin was joined by Heather Cooley of the Pacific Institute, Corbin Events of the Real Response Group, and County Supervisor Jim Patterson, formerly the Water Conservation Manager for the Amsadero Mutual Water Company. The 3-hour community meeting covered a wide range of water issues, from water quality to conservation to recycling to desalination. The 50+ attendees included elected officials, water purveyors, planners, environmental activists and interested citizens.

"We had excellent representation from the cities & communities of Nipomo, Oceano, Morro Bay, Cambria, Pismo, Grover, the Santa Lucia Chapter Chair, Karen Merriam, "including electeds, appointeds, managers & planners, also some engineering and development folks, and just plain citizens." Los Osos and Cambria are both in water-related building moratoria (of sorts). Nipomo is considering a desalination facility to ease pressure on its depleted aquifer. State water deliveries are in decline and troubling new information is emerging about the Paso Robles aquifer (previously thought to be the only aquifer in the county not in a state of overdraft). The County is facing mounting pressure to safeguard, not squander, it’s water resources.

"Community meetings like this are critical to educate the community about its choices," said Everts, a former member of the Ojai Water Board. "Citizens need to know what their options are, and understand the true cost of those options."

One option for new water is desal, the focus of Cooley’s presentation. "Desal is a reliable water source for drought-prone areas with abundant energy resources, such as the Middle East” said Cooley, "because desal is not dependent on seasonal weather cycles and the energy costs are very high." But she also pointed out that it has environmental and social costs, as well as being the most expensive method of providing water. “You can expect your water bills to increase substantially...and some people will not be able to afford them.” The result? Coastal water for the rich; everyone else can move away. In addition, millions of fish larvae are destroyed by the ocean water intake systems, and the impacts of the brine-waste discharge have not been fully studied.

All speakers agreed that aggressive conservation measures are the most cost effective means of assuring water security for communities. And the most effective way to implement conservation is by adopting a "tiered rate structure" whereby users are charged a higher "per-gallon rate" for increased water use. This creates a financial incentive to conserve, and imposes a penalty on those who waste water or use it inefficiently. Unlike Cambria, which has had a tiered rate structure in place for years, Nipomo does not.

Michael Winn, President of the Nipomo Community Services District (NCSD), lamented the fact that the NCSD has twice considered a desal policy, but has not been able to muster the votes to pass it. Incredibly, NCSD is now considering building a desal facility.

Smaller Scale, Bigger Concept

By David Venhuizen, P.E.

When I was asked to write an article on the decentralized concept of "waste" water management, the request was to offer a “… comparison of centralized and decentralized wastewater systems with the pros and cons of each.” It strikes me that the most important, most practically dominant contrast is continued on page 8
The California Coastal Commission, after three decades of epic battles fought over beach access and shoreline protection involving tens of thousands of activists, billionaire developers, litigious critics and hostile politicians, is now facing the greatest threat to its existence: Its Coastal Commissioners.

For Commission-watchers, this is not new and recent events involving members of the Coastal Commission have run the gamut from passionate coastal advocates to full-blown development zealots to self-interested criminals. More than a few place their own ambitions ahead of their sworn oath to uphold the Coastal Act. Today Commission appointments are, more than ever, the product of intense political lobbying. By law, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Senate Pro Tem Don Perata and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez each have four appointees to the coastal panel, with one half of the twelve representatives also to be locally elected public officials.

As property values have escalated wildly along the coast, so has the intensity of the lobbying amongst developers and wealthy, extremely narrowly focused members of the Commission, developers have used campaign donations to Sacramento politicians in order to control the makeup of the Commission itself. The result is that the Commission is more and more composed of extremely wealthy, extremely narrowly focused pro-development individuals who more resemble the developers they supposedly regulate than the public they are charged with protecting.

Their recent decisions reflect these changes. On November 14, 2007, the Commission, led by Santa Barbara resident Dan Secord, gutted expert recommendations to protect wetlands at Bolsa Chica in Huntington Beach (Orange County) in order to facilitate additional housing for developer Shea Homes. Secord was so zealous on behalf of the developer that he said, in public, “I just want to delete the wetland so houses can be built there.”

The next day, the Commission, led by San Diego City Councilman Ben Hueso, tossed out restrictions of public water supplies and future development and sprawl controls in order to allow construction of the largest industrial desalination facility in the western hemisphere by Poseidon Resources, privately owned by Wall Street investors. In the future, residents of the City of Carlsbad and San Diego County will drink water

owned by Poseidon only if they can afford it. Meanwhile, catastrophic impacts to coastal resources and ocean fisheries resulting from Poseidon’s daily draw of 384 million gallons of seawater (to make 50 mgd of freshwater) will go on in perpetuity.

In the coming months, as developers rush forward to bring damaging projects before one of the most complaisant and disinterested Commissions in the history of the Coastal Act, citizens might ask themselves, “How did the Coastal Act, once considered the premiere environmental law in the country, become so ineffective?” Or, “Why is my coastal neighborhood/favorite beach impossible to access, overcrowded, over-developed and polluted?”

The answer is that the Coastal Commission doesn’t care about the 99.9% of the public who cannot afford to live directly on the beach or in coastal luxury enclaves and isn’t interested in the long-term impacts of overdevelopment on and destruction of coastal resources. And the reason they don’t care is that the appointing authorities in Sacramento – the Governor, the Senate leader and the Speaker of the Assembly – make Coastal Commission appointments on the basis of political contributions and campaign donations, not the future health of the coast and beach access. Lobbyists who regularly appear before the commission are now throwing fundraisers for commissioners seeking re-election to local office.

At the same time that Commission membership determines, so does the state budget that funds the work of the Coastal Commission’s expert staff. Governor Schwarzenegger, for all his pro-environment rhetoric, has cut the budget of the Commission every single year since he was elected to office.

At this time, the Commission is facing the prospect of having to lay off more than a dozen core staff from its 120 employees, meaning fewer and fewer qualified planners will be able to evaluate and protect our coastline from thousands of new development and industrial energy and infrastructure proposals submitted. Do the maths!

It is long past time to fix the breakdown of coastal protection in California. Our beautiful, rapidly vanishing coast is perhaps the best argument for campaign finance reform we will ever see. But if we don’t get that reform soon, we won’t be seeing that coast much longer. Tell the Governor that when the people of California passed the Coastal Act, we meant it.

General Meeting

A Fair Trade Evening
Join us for updates from the SLO Fair Trade Coalition and the Sierra Club National Headquarters! Fair trade is based on principles of economic justice and environmental sustainability, market access for farmers and workers, and using your purchasing power for social and economic transformation. Fair Trade organizations, backed by consumers, are actively engaged in supporting producers, raising awareness and campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.

7 p.m., Friday, January 25
St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 1334 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo
Pismo Street entrance; parking lot off Pismo.

On the Rocks
Rough seas for the Coastal Commission & the coast

By Mark Massara, Director, Sierra Club Coastal Programs

Change of Address?
Mail changes to:
Sierra Club National Headquarters
85 Second Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441
or email:
address.changes@sierracclub.org

Visit us on the Web!
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Smart Growth: Lip Service or Substance?

By Eric Greening

It has been close to two years since the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club formally adopted the following “Smart Growth Principles”:

1. Protect space, scenic natural beauty, resources, and sensitive environmental areas. Conserve energy resources and agricultural lands.

2. Strengthen, and direct development to existing, undivided, existing roads and public transportation systems. By doing so, you ignore the planning process, the advice of county counsel, planning staff, and the majority of citizens testifying before you over the last two years. Since the three of you chose to do a service for land speculators and future developers interested in putting development where development should not be, you will have some explaining to do either way. If you do the right thing and pass this ordinance as amended by the Planning Commission, with no attempts to shrink it or weaken it, you can then explain to your constituents why you originally did the wrong thing — that is, why you did the holding of those making arguments about takings of property and impacts to agriculture from an ordinance that is not a taking and would have no, repeat no, impacts on agricultural operations. Or you could vote for POPR’s latest, or vote to keep this ordinance as the answer to a real estate speculator’s prayer, which was what you passed last August.

The Sierra Club is a public interest organization. We have been ungentlemanly on this issue because we serve the greater interest and we sense that you do not.

There are countless details to this, and despite the many times words like “should” and “where practicable” dilute the intent, that intent—to change the course of development to one that embodies the principles laid out here. This ordinance is less than the minimal standards it replaces.

Previously, the County Government has embarked on a serious mission has embarked on a serious intention to change the course of development by requiring that applicants to provide the amenities for a transit stop. That is a maturing. The problem with this is that it replaces.

Thank you.

- Board of Supervisors meeting County Government Center, SLO Nov. 27, 2007

What Makes Harry Wary?

“Hearing the Sierra Club talk about special interests… kinda like the pot calling the kettle….”

Supervisor Jerry Lenthall Cayucos Viesched ordinance hearing Nov. 27, 2007

Dear Supervisor Ovitt,

At your Nov. 27 meeting, in response to the testimony of the Santa Lucia Chapter Director Andrew Christie, you became audibly confused over the definition:...
Letters

Send to: Sierra Club, or P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

The recent article in the Santa Lucian “A Chicken in Every Pot! A Car in Every Garage!” (November issue) blame animal agriculture as a major cause of global warming. The facts quoted are not consistent with the scientific study, are largely erroneous. The article is clearly written as propaganda for a vegetarian diet. I suggest that you give our members a more balanced view.

Most of us have enjoyed the wonderful wildflower displays along Shell Creek Road in years of good rainfall. This area has been grazed by cattle and earlier by sheep for about one hundred and forty years, yet it still produces this natural wonder and is the habitat of many wild creatures, including deer, bears, lions, wild pigs, coyotes, hawks and others. In addition, we pay taxes on it. Take away the right to graze cattle and we could no longer afford to keep it. The land would have to be sold, to become houses and ranchettes. I fail to see how this would achieve the purpose for which the Sierra Club exists.

Jim Sinton
Shandon

Would that all livestock operations were run like the Sintons’ Avenales Cattle Company. Long grasslands and planting oak trees, thereby creating carbon sinks that amount to something close to a wash for the carbon emissions their operations create. The Sintons are genuinely good stewards of the land — and should be getting paid for it. As the thoroughly peer-reviewed report of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Livestock’s Long Shadow, concludes: “improving the resource use efficiency of livestock production can reduce environmental impact…a top priority is to achieve prices and fees that reflect the full economic and environmental costs and benefits, including, inter alia, the contribution to climate change.”

Thus, we have the “green climate fund” that agrees that livestock is a source of carbon emissions. This makes it a target for “carbon taxes”. The Sintons have found a way to offset their carbon emissions. For years, the Santa Lucia Chapter and the Sierra Club’s California Nevada Regional Conservation Committee have sponsored weekend “Antelope Protection Camps” – social events, to give you our members a more balanced view.

By Louise “Letty” French

A Gift for the Carrizo Plain Pronghorn

By Louise “Letty” French

For years, the Santa Lucia Chapter and the Sierra Club’s California Nevada Regional Conservation Committee have sponsored weekend “Antelope Protection Camps” – social events, to give you our members a more balanced view.

Santa Lucian • Jan. 2008
“Nuclear waste could travel through SLO,” by David Sneed, Taking Issue

It is, in fact, an impossible number of new plants. About 1,500 according to an MIT study, at a cost of over a trillion dollars and with no place to store the waste, would be needed to make a significant reduction in global warming emissions. It is clear that nuclear power is not helpful at addressing the climate crisis. Indeed, because of its high costs, long construction times, and its own considerable carbon footprint, its use would actually make matters worse by diverting necessary effective steps to end carbon emissions.” (- Michael Mariotte, executive director, Nuclear Information and Resource Service.)

“We do not support construction of new nuclear reactors as a means of addressing the climate crisis. Available renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies are faster, cheaper, safer and cleaner strategies for reducing greenhouse emissions than nuclear power.”

- Statement signed by 515 U.S. and international organizations, December 17, 2007

Focus the Nation
continued from page 1

issue during the race for the presidency. At Cal Poly, the day-long teach-in will feature presentations and panel discussions by two dozen faculty and staff experts in various fields including physics, biology, architecture, engineering, agriculture, business, economics, psychology and religious studies. All are open to the public free of charge.

Focus the Nation will conclude with a workshop on the public policy issues associated with climate change solutions. The workshop will feature a non-partisan examination of the 2008 Presidential candidates’ plans for climate change solutions from Cal Poly Political Science professors. It will culminate with keynote speeches from Congresswoman Lois Capps and State Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee during which students will have the opportunity to engage with visiting local, state, and federal representatives.

Additional Focus the Nation events include a Green Job Fair and Trade Show, an art display and installation, a dinner for university officials and elected officials, and “The 2% Solution,” a national webcast taking place on the night of January 30th.

Climate Scientist Stephen Schneider, sustainability expert Hunter Lovins and green jobs pioneer Van Jones.

“Focus the Nation: Global Warming Solutions for America” is being organized by Cal Poly’s Empower Poly Coalition, the coalition of sustainability-related clubs and organizations on campus, Santa Lucia Sierra Club Chapter leader and Cal Poly English Professor Steven Marx has been integral to the creation of the event. “Steven worked hard to secure Congresswoman Capps and Sam Blakeslee as keynote speakers,” said event co-director Chad Worth. “He also has been helping compile educational materials for professors to use in their classrooms and a lot more.”

For more information about the local events visit the website: http://focusthenationslo.gbulki.com

For information about the national movement on over 1100 campuses, visit http://www.focusthenation.org

For information in person, contact Chad Worth, Co-director, Focus the Nation and President, Empower Poly Coalition, at focusthenationslo@gmail.com or (925) 595-5539.

2008 Sierra Club Calendars

They’re here, they’re gorgeous, you have to have one for your desk, one for your wall, and a great many more for friends and family!

When you buy direct from the Chapter, you support our conservation work in San Luis Obispo County!

wall calendar: $12.50
desk calendar: $13.50
To order, call 543-7051
The Year in Review

In January…

The latest round in a 20-year development fight began when the seventeen-acre Santa Margarita Ranch Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) hit the table with a hollow thud and a resounding eleven “Class One” unmitigatable impacts – a catalog of the irreparable loss of mature oaks, groundwater, air quality and more if developers Rossi, Filippinoni and Wittstrum get all they want in the county of reigning over the largest privately owned valley oak savannah in the state for subdivisions, wineries, golf course, ranch, convention center, etc. The Chapter joined with Santa Margarita Area Residents Together (SMART) and other concerned citizens in demanding, and getting, the recirculation of a revised DEIR, as this one did not address significant areas of new information. Onward.

Chapter Director Andrew Christie and environmental attorney Bahak Naficy slammed the brakes on the proposed purchase of 584 acres of currently leased County land in the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreational Area by State Parks when they pointed out to the county Planning Commission that the land in question was supposed to be a “buffer” area, not a riding area, according to the county’s certified Local Coastal Program. The Commission agreed and reversed the approval of the Planning Director. The deal that had been quietly proceeding on greened rails in order to secure permanent use of the land as an off-road vehicle sacrifice zone was suddenly making local front-page headlines. Our successful appeal triggered four frantic appeals of the Planning Commission’s decision, a task force, a series of town hall meetings and massive local resistance to the sale, greatly raising the profile of the issue. The Board upheld the Planning Commission’s decision that the sale would not be in conformity with the General Plan. The off-roaders sued. Negotiations are ongoing.

At our general meeting, Cal Poly profs Hamilton Leong and Matt Ritter dined in attendance. The facts on eucalyptus slammed the brakes on proposed eucalyptus trees in the name of agriculture. Our Conservation Chair, Pam Heatherington, stepped down to fill a seat on the Atascadero City Planning Commission, thus becoming part of the refreshing change in the political wind in north county.

In February…

The California Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision for the Sierra Club and co-appellants in Vineyard Area Citizens v. City of Rancho Cordova, with ramifications for planning and development statewide. The Court revoked the approval of an 18,000-home suburban Sacramento development because the County Board of Supervisors approved construction despite a failure to prove long-term water supply.

Our appeal of the Cabrillo Community Services District’s ill-starred San Simeon Beach deal project nearly sailed at the monthly meeting of the California Coastal Commission. Commissioner Kata McGahan delayed a vote by requesting a continuance. We relayed concerns to the Commission over the condition of the native vegetation under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Parks at Oceano Dunes that resulted in an investigation and mapping of the vegetation islands at the dunes.

In March…

The proposed County AgTourism Events ordinance began seeking the rounds of local advisory councils, and the Chapter helped sound the alarm on this extraordinarily expansionist policy for many more “special events” with unlimited attendance on rural and agricultural land throughout the county’s unincorporated area and no regard for impacts on infrastructure or neighbors, or what such events might have to do with agriculture.

In April…

Following a year of meetings with Chapter staff and volunteer leaders, the Board of Directors of the SLO Chamber of Commerce voted to “take a leadership role in building consensus for a national marine sanctuary along the central coast.”

An historic win: Sierra Club’s Great Coastal Places Campaign helped mobilize opposition to the proposed Malibu/Oxnard Liquefied Natural Gas terminal. More than 3,000 opponents turned out at the April 9 meeting of the State Lands Commission, the best-attended environmental hearing in California in 40 years. Faced with overwhelming opposition, the Commission voted not to allow the dirty and dangerous terminal off our coast, and was shortly joined in a united front by the Coastal Commission and the Governor.

The Chapter received a plaque from the City of San Luis Obispo and SLO Land Conservancy in recognition of its role as a major donor in the acquisition of the Brundall Ranch and other San Luis Union Pacific properties below the Cuesta Grade. The Chapter’s contribution helped the Collaborative Conservation Project preserve the headwaters of Steamer and Chorro Creeks and keep the 390-acre Brundall Ranch in agriculture.

In May…

The Chapter secured $2,150 in grant funding from the Sierra Club Chapter & Group Educational Project to assist the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility in its “nuclear decommissioning project,” heading off the rubber-stamp renewables of operating licenses for nuclear power plants.

After year of pressure from the Santa Lucia Chapter, Surfrider, Natural Resource Defense Council, Otter Project and others, Morro Bay and Cayucos voted to bring their wastewater treatment plant up to the standards of the Clean Water Act and further upgrade to the highest level of treatment—tertiary—which produces reusable water.

Supervisor Jerry Lenthall’s “Fossil Point Advisory Committee” was abruptly shut down by the developer-paid facilitator when it became clear that most of the local citizens on the committee didn’t want the Muffs above Avila Beach to be developed and preferred they remain open space. The Tribune headlined its May 18 story of the committee shut-down: “Citizens group called a front for builders.” Back in March, when the Tribune was still praising Lenthall’s efforts to quarter-to-quarter back private development via his Fossil Point Group, the Santa Lucia had noted that the committee was an example of focus groups “used by developers to create the illusion of public process and buy-in, helping grease the wheels for the de levee’s project in the permitting process.”

In June…

The Bureau of Land Management resumed the long-dormant management planning process for Carrizo Plain National Monument. The Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Los Padres Forest Watch, California Wilderness Coalition, Defenders of Wildlife, Center for Biological Diversity, Californians for Western Wilderness and the Natural Resources Defense Council jointly filed comments on the BLM’s draft environmental impact statement. Among other things, the comments noted that the BLM’s current plans would result in a blueprint of what the Bureau should do to protect this priceless jewel of natural landscape in San Luis Obispo County. Text at: http://santalucia.sierraclub.org/carrizo.html under “2007 developments.”

On June 7, the Chapter and several other environmental organizations attended a meeting in Morro Bay with the Los Osos Wastewater Project Technical Advisory Committee, County Public Works, the Chumash Tribe and the TAC Environmental Working Group called the meeting to ensure that the environmental community was involved and engaged in the effort to create a wastewater treatment solution that best addresses pollution of the estuary and depletion of the aquifer.

It was a month of special recognition for several Chapter stalwarts: Outings Leader Gary Felsman won the Chapter’s Kathleen Goddard Jones award; Harleine Felsman, co-founder of the San Luis Obispo County Trail Guide, won the Chapter’s Starshine Award; Ken Smokofka received the Empower Pole Coalition’s Agent of Change award; Dirk and Bonnie Walters won the SLO County Community Foundation’s award for Sustained Environmental Contribution.

In July…

The Chapter officially took up residence in its new abode at 547-B Marsh Street. The Chapter officially took up residence in its new abode at 547-B Marsh Street. The Chapter officially took up residence in its new abode at 547-B Marsh Street. The Chapter officially took up residence in its new abode at 547-B Marsh Street. The Chapter officially took up residence in its new abode at 547-B Marsh Street. The Chapter officially took up residence in its new abode at 547-B Marsh Street.

The county Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWM) took back-programs into effect – one of the first in the state to supply drop boxes at re--
tained outlets for batteries and fluorescent lights. Teddy Llovet of Bulbs Across America persuaded RWMA to affix warning labels to all the drop-off boxes cautioning against breakage of fluorescent due to their mercury content.

In August...
The Central Coast Regional Energy Planning Conference at Cal Poly brought together for the first time representatives from local governments – mayors, planners, supervisors, city managers, etc. – to talk about energy policy. The leap forward for regional planning was sponsored by the Strategic Energy Alliance for Change, co-founded by the Santa Lucia Chapter in 2005.

On August 21, the aggressively pro-development majority on the County Board of Supervisors, after two years and six continuances, arrived at the

In September...
The California Coastal Commission upheld our appeal of the Cambria Community Services District’s proposal to drill desalinization wells on San Simeon State Beach, an impermissible commercial use of public lands.

The Chapter submitted comments to the Local Agency Formation Commission on the ability of the Oak Park aquifer to sustain the proposed 300-home Los Robles Del Mar development in unincorporated Arroyo Grande and its annexation to the City of Pismo Beach, which would then get to stick its straw into the development’s well in support of its own future development. The EIR made a string of false assumptions based on omitted or inaccurate data which overestimated the amount of water in the deep aquifer, underestimated the amount of pumping from the aquifer, ignored impacts on streams, springs and wetlands, and assessed future water demands as though the area were a still-life painting rather than a complex ecosystem surrounded by planned development projects. LAPFCO postponed the hearing until January 13.

The Sierra Club, Surfrider and SLO Green Build shared a room at the Sept. 29 Los Osos Wastewater Treatment Project Open House at Los Osos Sunnyvale Elementary School. We spent the day discussing with attendees, Supervisors and Public Works staff the notion of wastewater as a resource to be utilized rather than a pollutant to be disposed of, and recycling as a way to reduce use and demand, and saltwater intrusion into the aquifer.

Chapter Election Returns

Thanks to members who took the time to vote in our Chapter’s Executive Committee election. Here are the election results and appointments for the year 2008:

Karen Merriam, elected Dec. 2007 for a first three-year term
Jack Morrow, appointed Dec. 2007 to fill a two-year vacancy

Continuing ExCom members:
Cleve Nash, elected Dec. 2006, 1st three-year term
Cal French, elected Dec. 2005, 1st three-year term
John Ashbaugh, appointed Dec. 2006 to fill a two-year vacancy

On December 8, 2007, the 2008 Executive Committee made the following decisions:

ExCom meetings will be held on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. in the Chapter office, except March 18 (Old Times) Chapter members welcome.

Officers elected by ExCom:
Karen Merriam, Chair
Jack Morrow, Vice Chair
Cal French, Council of Club Leaders delegate
John Ashbaugh, member
Cleve Nash, member
Judith Bernstein, member (Recording Secretary - Letty French)

Committee Chair appointments:
Conservation: Sue Harvey
Political: John Ashbaugh and Richard Kranzoff
Legal: Andy Greensfelder
Membership: Cal French
Commissions & Awards: Letty French
Fundraising: Steven Marx and Judith Bernstein

Other appointments:
Chapter Historian: John Ashbaugh
Nuclear Task Force: Rochelle Becker
Water Issues Task Force: Jack Morrow

Rochelle Becker receives her award and congratulations from Sierra Club President Robin Cox.

In December...
On December 1, we co-sponsored the “Santa Barbara Edges” concert at the Cayucos with Surfrider and SLO Green Build, an all-day music fest that raised money for public education on sustainable technologies. On December 9, “Where’s the Water?” said page 1 be came the first educational forum to come out of that venture.

Three days later, the Cambria CSO’s dead plan received its final rejection from the Coastal Commission.
Conservation needn't mean brown lawns, shorter showers or mandatory rationing. It is about doing what we want, but with less water.

We use far more water today than is necessary, whether for flushing our toilets or cooling our swimming pools. Our conservation efforts have eased this inefficient use, enabling us to grow our economy and population over the past several years without increasing our water demand. But far more could be done.

Efforts to improve water-use efficiency have slackened off in the past decade. Even without the judges' decision, the overall cost of water agencies and utilities should have been implementing new efficiency programs. Why should we wait any longer? The faster we reduce inefficient uses, the longer we can delay or avoid mandatory cutbacks.

While predictions of economic collapse arising from the Delta decision may come true, the judges have not had to. But it will take a re-evaluation of our ideas about water-use and political courage by the governor and legislature to get all water users to open and honest discussions about how to redesign our water systems. The goal is efficient and sustainable. Only then can we transform this water crisis into an opportunity.

Peter Gleick is president of the Pacific Institute in Oakland. A version of this essay was originally printed in the Sacramento Bee on September 9, 2007.

Santa Lucian • Jan. 2008
from drivers to children through their obstructed roadway (including an interest) of Proposition 1B money over the next 30 years, and to users of conventional sewers through their use of the County General Fund to take care of roads—supplemented by the crumbs that they can get from the tax revenues.

Yet, if we are serious about a more “transit oriented” county, our General Plan should be about public transit. The TIFA money in be in line with the act’s legislatively intent and our stated priorities.

A. Public Works Commissioner Sarah Christie proposed the following language as one of the implementations of Smart Growth Principle #5: “Utilize 100% of the county’s share of TIFA funds, outside of the bicycle allocation, for transit projects.”

Public works staff was not happy with this proposal. Their first memo in reaction to the proposal did not just disagree, but vehemently disagreed! Public works proposed alternate language as follows:

“Exercise maximum flexibility in the programming of Local Transportation Funds (LTF-TDA) to fully fund public transit, multimodal connections to public transit, and to facilitate strategic growth.”

“Maximum flexibility” presumably translates unfettered control on it by on roads, depending on the definition of “fully funded” as applied to public transit. Is the address dispersed treatment centers, and the Regional Treatment System “full”? The system is so starved that drivers work for less than 2/3 of the bill of the Regional Treatment System for people in the profession—and let’s not forget that people have their lives in their hands!

This was the view that presented itself to the Planning Commission at their meeting of November 29th. After long wrangling, transit users ended up with half a loaf: “Give highest priority in the programming of Local Transportation Funds (LTF-TDA) to fully fund public transit operations.”

The bad news is that this language is not enforceable by a 10% directive; the good news is that it also indicate a genuine change of heart for the County, although citizens may need to remind decision makers of what their General Plan says.

First, however, this verbage has to survive the rest of the process. The Planning Commission will be finalizing its work on Smart Growth Implementation shortly (they meet the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month) and the language may or may not retain its present form—along with the hundreds of other issues that are under the Planning Commission’s jurisdiction. All readers of the Santa Lucian are encouraged to follow and participate in this process as it works its way through the Planning Commission, then, in February and March, makes the rounds of local advisory committees, before going for the action that truly counts: adoption by the Board of Supervisors sometime in the spring.

Public works staff was unhappy with the key language: the recent travesty of the Cayucos Viewshed shows that the Supervisors do not always take the advice of their Planning Commission.

Will vehicle miles traveled ever actually diminish in this county?

Will the dense nodes that pass for “Smart Growth” be livable communities with people walking, bicycling and catching buses, or will they be congestion of cars to match the density of people?

You can make a difference!

system generally remain very low; so that the consequences of any mishap would be small.”

That likelihood of mishaps—leaks, backups, overflows, etc.—would be lower in a decentralized concept. In a centralized concept, at least as I envision and practice it, is almost the exclusive use of inefficient and expensive systems that is required, and the use of more “fail-safe” treatment methods. The conveyance system that remains is built “tight” with cleanouts in place of manholes, and is, of course, of limited extent and capacity, and the costs of problems caused by wet weather surge flows in conventional systems. Because treatment systems require minimum or are eliminated or greatly reduced in a decentralized concept system, further lowering the potential for failures.

“Fail-safe” treatment methods are those that, if anything is wrong or resistant to bypassing poorly treated effluent. An excellent example of this is the effluent treatment systems (e.g., a “sand” filter)—the type of technology highly favored for use in the decentralized concept and activelodged sludge plant most often used at the end of conventional centralized collection systems, but the activated sludge plant depends for its treatment effect on very few trophic levels of organisms. This is because organisms higher than first order anywhere in nature, so the process is inherently unstable. It depends upon constant inputs of energy and close attention to process function in an attempt to prevent “upsets” which can happen if the system is quite quick if optimal conditions are not maintained. Typically there is no physical barrier to passage of poorly treated effluent in that system, so any upset results in release of poorly treated effluent in short order. Once off track, it often takes some time for the process to “settle down” and all the while an out of compliance discharge is occurring. But by the contrast, the biosystem driven process depends upon many trophic levels of organisms for its operation, and is usually more stable, so it is inherently more stable. The filter bed also presents a physical barrier to passage of poorly treated effluent in that system.

The filter bed also presents a physical barrier to passage of poorly treated effluent in that system, and this is something that is utilized to its maximum potential on roads, depending on the definition of “fully funded” as applied to public transit.

The decentralized concept system has its place, but also quite clear is the reason for that place if it is everywhere that an “organizational“ paradigm is under review, several comparisons indicate that the decentralized concept system could be privatized to those who directly benefit from those investments—engineers who serve them, and regulators who permit and oversee them. They feel they have more control over a single centralized facility than they could over many dispersed facilities.

That view is colored, I believe, by experience with conventional treatment methods and lack of familiarity with “alternative” methods. And, as one reviewer, described, “control” of conventional technologies is often illusory. Any attempt to define or determine of much of the conventional system, the use of lower cost surface sewerage systems, and the need for many closely coordinated treatment methods that are cost effective to deploy at small scale, a decentralized concept system will reach quite often, be less expensive to install, and to operate and maintain than a conventional centralized concept system, particularly when the facilities have been generated all over the country. Perhaps the greatest testimony to the institutional resistance to the decentralized concept is that these cost advantages are not compelling; rather, uncertainties about how to manage the system and/or a view that anything but the “sewer” is a secondary good tend to dominate these considerations. I clearly recall the time a woman stood up during a meeting and asked, “Why don’t we just pay more and get a real sewer system?”

“Besides the environmental and fiscal aspects, a number of “societal” factors differentiate the two concepts. One, referred to previously, is that beneficial effluent can get from a decentralized system more efficient than into the decentralized concept. The reclaimed water can be used within the area served by the decentralized system, or it can be used outside the system, nearer to points of potential reuse, decreasing the cost of the reclaimed water. Also, demands such as landscape irrigation, toilet flush supply, and cooling tower makeup supply could be served with appropriately treated reclaimed water. In many areas, this could be a significant contribution to the regional water economy, a factor that will likely become more important as fresh water supplies become increasingly strained worldwide.

Regarding water conservation, a little noted feature of the decentralized concept system is that they would accommodate any level of water conservation found to be necessary for either ecological or ecological necessity. Only liquid effluent is transported, so reduced wastewater flows due to water conservation measures would not cause clogging problems in the collection system, as has occurred in conventional centralized systems.

A decentralized concept system can also be easier to plan and finance. Each project would be small in comparison to the typical “regional” system expansion. The management and control over a new development would be considered and could be generated independently. Also, much of the cost of the decentralized concept system could be privatized to those who directly benefit from those investments—engineers who serve them, and regulators who permit and oversee them. They feel they have more control over a single centralized facility than they could over many dispersed facilities.

And, as just one illustration of the time value of money. In a decentralized concept system, all project benefits them in any way except the conventional paradigm by operating entities, engineers and regulators.

And the biggest “pro” of the conventional, centralized system is its familiarity; and the biggest “con” of the decentralized concept is that very few people understand it. This is unfortunate, because the two concepts should complement each other, not be mutually exclusive. The decentralized concept is, in fact, an overarching concept that can include centralized systems, making it the truly regional strategy for planning and implementation of waste water management systems.

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Worse than Nothing
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POPR ordinance takes that discretion away, precludes relocation, and deems structures to be “not visible” if they are screened by 50%. It exempts additions up to 25% of the total area of the structure, with no limits on serial additions. Thus, you could add 25% every year for 4 years, double the size of your house (or winery) and be totally exempt. Nothing in the ordinance gives the county the ability to relocate a structure off a ridge or hilltop, even if another, less visible, feasible site exists on the property. There is virtually no circumstance in which an applicant can’t successfully argue that the ordinance doesn’t apply to them. The definition of “ridge” is so tortured almost nothing qualifies as a ridge, and even when it does, “hills that are exempt, and hilltops can be ridgelines so...

The private development agenda surronding the public interestmade it...
Local Government Meetings

City of SLO—1st & 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 781-7103
Arroyo Grande—2nd and 4th Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 473-5404
Atascadero—2nd & 4th Tues.; 466-8099
Cambria CSD — 4th Thurs.; 927-6223
Grover Beach—1st & 3rd Mon., 6:30 p.m.; 473-4567
Grover Beach Planning Commission—2nd Tues.
Morro Bay—2nd & 4th Mon.
Paso Robles—1st & 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 237-3888
Pismo Beach—1st Tues., 5:30 p.m.; 773-4657
Los Osos CSD board—1st Tues. & 2nd Mon., varies
California Coastal Commission—3rd Tues., varies
SLO County Board of Supervisors—every Tues., 781-5450
SLO Council of Governments; 781-4219
SLOOG Citizens Advisory Committee—1st Wed. every other month, 6:00 p.m.
SLOOG Board—1st Wed. every other month, 6:30 a.m.

There are four spaces left on the Santa Lucia Chapter’s

**EUROPEAN SMART ENERGY TOUR**
March 24 to April 5, 2008

We will tour facilities that offer real-time examples of cutting edge technology for production and distribution of renewable energy, green building, innovative transportation, energy efficiency & conservation in numerous applications. Included are carefully selected visits to locations in England, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

Land package includes: 11 nights hotel with breakfast, welcome dinner and farewell dinner, Eurostar from London to Brussels, First Class Thalys Train to Amsterdam, ferry to Samso, plus all motor coach transportation, entrance fees for special tours. A guest energy expert will accompany the tour.

**LONDON:** Tour the BedZED project, meet with national and city planners...**BRUSSELS:** Meet with EU officials...**AMSTERDAM:** Energy Research Center, Netherlands Wind Energy Association...**DENMARK:** Samso “Energy Island,” Riso Institute.**SWEDEN:** Malmo Western Harbor District.

Tour Costs: $2,200.00 per person/ double occupancy. A deposit of $500 is required to secure your reservation. Please make your check payable to Gulliver’s Travel and send it directly to them. The group is limited to 40 participants. Payment for airline ticket will be due upon reservation. Final payment will be due by January 15th, 2008. Upon receipt of your reservation, a full packet of information will be sent to you.

Airfare is separate. Please call Maureen at Gulliver’s Travel to confirm the best price and schedule. You will need to arrive London by noon on March 25th in order to take advantage of our airport shuttle. Travelers arriving after 12 noon will be responsible for their own transportation to the London hotel.

Gulliver’s Travel
605 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo
CA 93405
805-541-4141
www.slohill.com
CST # 20-10100-10
Outings and Activities Calendar

All of our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. 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 Leader Femmy Felzmann (471-3694). For information on a specific outing, please contact the outing leader. Outings Leaders please get your outings or events in by the 1st for the next month’s outings.

**Hiking Classifications:**

- Distance: 1 = 0-2 mi., 2 = 3-5 mi., 3 = 6-9 mi., 4 = 10-12 mi., 5 = 12 mi. or more.
- Elevation Gain: A = 0’00’, B = 100’, C = 150’, D = 200’, E = 250’, F = 300’ or more.

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**Elevation Gain:** A = 0’, B = 100’, C = 150’, D = 200’, E = 250’, F = 300’ or more.

Meet at the SLO Vets Hall or at the Top of the Grade.

**JAN. 6, 0930, Sun., DANA MONTEANA**

Meet at Adobe in Nipomo, we’ll hike Nipomo Creek, talk about history of the Adobe, see contaminated area. Dogs & kids welcome. Confirm or information a few days before at <b>denneen@kcbx.net</b> or 929-3547.

**Sat., Jan. 12, 8:30 a.m.**

**SALMON CREEK TRAIL AND SPRUCE CREEK TRAIL TO DUTRA FLAT**

Celebrate 2008. Join the leader on this moderate 8.4 mile hike which has about 2000 ft. of elevation gain. We will hike the Salmon Creek Trail for about 2 miles and then take the Spruce Creek Trail to Dutra Flat camp, which is the site of an old homestead. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. Bring lunch or snacks, water, and dress for the weather. Meet at the Wathieu day use area just north of Cambria on Highway 1. There will be an optional rehaling stop at the Main Street Grill in Cambria after the hike. Rain cancels. For info call Chuck at 441-7597, (ED) .

**JAN. 20, 0930, SUN., BLACK LACIE CANON**

Meet at junction of Laguna Negra & Guad. Rd. to hike into cym & Xeron Rd. See erosion ditch, crude invasion and Native Oak Woodland. Dog & kids OK. Confirm or information a few days before at <b>denneen@kcbx.net</b> or 929-3547.

**Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2008, 8:30 p.m.**

“Land Conservation of the Santa Lucia” by Dennis Okiros of the Santa Lucia Conservancy. Meet at the Montaña de Oro State Park Spooners Cove Visitor Center, MDO SP.

**FEB. 1, 0930, SUN., SUSPENDABLE LIVING**

Tour my farm to see pastures, windmill, clothesline, solar panels, compost, orchard, garden, goats, pig, heat source, & waterless toilet. Meet at 1840 Cielo Ln (off Primavera off Orachard) in Nipomo., friendly dogs welcome. Confirm or questions at <b>denneen@kcbx.net</b>.

**FEB. 10, 0930, SUN., BIKE NIPOMO**

Meet at Nipomo Library to tour Nipomo Garden, new bike-to-Creekside, Dana Adobe etc. Kids welcome (no dogs) Confirm or information a few days before at <b>denneen@kcbx.net</b> or 929-3547.

**FEB. 17, 0930, SUN., BIKE WOODLANDS**

A bicycle tour of the ‘instant city’ with many stops. Meet at junction of Willow Rd. & Albert Way. Must wear a helmet. With bikes we can go on golf cart trails. Confirm or information a few days before at <b>denneen@kcbx.net</b> or 929-3547.

**JAN. 9, 0930, SUN., BLACK LAKE CANYON**

Rain cancels. For info call Chuck @ Stree Grill in Cambria after the hike. Washburn day use area just north of Nipomo., friendly dogs welcome. Confirm or information a few days before at <b>denneen@kcbx.net</b> or 929-3547.

**Sat.-Sun., March 15-16, GHOT TOWN EXTRAVAGANZA**

Come with us to this spectacular desert landscape near Death Valley to explore the ruins of California’s colorful past. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Sat, do a very challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this wild west town. Later we’ll return to camp for Happy Hour, a potluck feast and campfire. On Sun, go to the infamous Riley town site before heading home. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sax. H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Lyesia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329, (760) 868-2178, Co-ldr: Don Peterson (760) 375-8599 CNRCC/Desert Committee.

**Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park**

Six Sierra Club California Fundraising Cruises Scheduled for 2008

February 9-11, 3 islands ($475) April 4-7, May 2-5; July 18-21; 4 islands ($775) August 23-27; September 13-17; 5 islands ($925)

Explore the wild, wind-swept isles of Channel Islands National Park. In spring the islands are ablaze with wildflowers. In summer, the pristine waters of Channel Island National Park entice swimmers, snorkelers and kayakers. All year long, enjoy unusual plants and flowers, seals and fiddling sea lions, sea and land birds. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ twin diesel Tarth. Fee includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes on each island and point out interesting features.

To make a reservation mail a $100 deposit, payable to Sierra Club to leader: Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information (626) 443-0706; (jho2330@aol.com)

Looking for a real wilderness vacation? Come rent Canyon Creek Lodge.

In the mountains near Smithers, British Columbia. Designed for groups and families. Easily accessible by air, road or rail, yet located in a true wilderness setting. Canoe, kayak, raft, bike, hike, fish, ski, or view the abundant wildlife. The Lodge accommodates up to 10 with 5 bedrooms and 2.5 baths. It’s like your own private wilderness area, but with all the comforts of home. Also great for retreats, mini-retreats, courses or club outings. We can connect you to local outfitters, guides or instructors. Visit <a>www.canyoncreekbritishcolumbia.com</a> or call 250-847-4349 (Roger McCollm). Mention this ad and 5% of your rental goes to the Santa Lucia Chapter.

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.