## Law Closing in on Climate Change

### By Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

The state Attorney General’s office and the Local Government Commission hosted the all-day workshop “CEQA and Climate Change” on August 7 at the Fess Parker Resort in Santa Barbara, attended by planners and regulators from San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. They came to get the latest word on the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other regulations now being formulated to deal with the impacts of global climate change.

The legal bottom line: Local agencies must assess whether a proposed project’s greenhouse gas emissions are individually or cumulatively significant. If significant, that impact must be mitigated by any

## Bullet Dodged

### Public outcry halts land planning power grab

As we predicted (“Hold That Line!”, July/August), the lame duck aggressive-growth majority on the County Board of Supervisors attempted a major piece of mischief with five months to go on their terms. But what was supposed to be a quiet coup overthrowing the way land use planning is done in SLO County instead went down in flames at the August 12 meeting of the County Board of Supervisors.

Staff had placed a proposal on that day’s agenda recommending that the Board process amendments to the County’s General Plan that would seize from the Planning Commission and hand to staff the authority to review tract maps, the basis for subdivisions and the heart of all land use planning decisions. Coming two months after elections re-made the ideological makeup of the Board, the attempt to grease the rails for bad projects even after a new pro-environment Board – and their Planning Commissioners – is seated in January was obvious. The authority of the citizen commission that oversees land use planning was to be eliminated.

The plan was exposed by a Santa Lucia Chapter e-mail alert a few days before the hearing and a front-page story in the Tribune (“Applicants for permits plan end run”) published the day before. Protect Our Property Rights (POPR) went on KPRL and desperately tried to rally its pro-development forces for the hearing, to no avail. Alerted residents turned out in force to give the Supervisors an earful about their wish to keep the public process public and to attest to the fact that the Planning Commission works just fine.

(An eerie political parallel, the day before the hearing the Bush administration announced its intention to take authority for Endangered Species Act decisions out of the hands of federal wildlife agency scientists and give it to the agencies overseeing individual developments. Locally and nationally, January can’t come soon enough.)

The “staff proposal” was over-whelmingly rejected by virtually everyone who spoke, all identifying

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The Saturday evening event was dubbed “Focus California!” (handsome t-shirts provided courtesy of the Santa Lucia Chapter) after the “Focus the Nation” event held at Cal Poly and more than 1,200 other college campuses in January. A panel of experts and a series of breakout sessions focused on recent legislation and local initiatives to combat global warming and encourage reduction of energy use and the development of renewable energy.

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## The World They Make

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

Fear and Oil

"So pleased to know that the Sierra Club will soon be bused, along with
the environmental lobby. The mistake was the $4 gasoline or the $5 gasoline
or the $6 gasoline because people were hoping for it is not gonna happen. The
people are listening; they're awake now. They're awake, at least about the
energy costs. So you guys are moving. It couldn't happen to a nicer
team," — anonymous phone call received at Santa Lucia Chapter office, Jun. 20, 2008

"Yeah, Sierra Club, you guys are the reason the [ ] gas is so high! You
several screamed repetitions of popular 12-letter obscenity! I know you're
live, you [ ], got that!!" — anonymous phone call received at home of
Santa Lucia Chapter Director, Jun. 4, 2008

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Outings, events, and more!

General Meeting
Get your hands on global warming

It's time to get hands-on in the fight against climate change.
Join the Sierra Club in a campaign that will make a difference. We're now
recruiting volunteer teams to work with the cities of Grover Beach, Pismo
Beach, Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Paso Robles and Morro Bay in undertaking
programs to cut their green house gas emissions.

Come find out if your city has signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection
Agreement, how you can help them do so, and how you can work with the
Sierra Club and your city's staff to create a climate action plan.
7 p.m., Friday, September 26
St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1334 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo
- Pismo Street entrance,
- parking lot off Pismo
The precautionary principle, which encourages policies that protect human health and the environment in the face of uncertain risks, is a highly controversial topic in environmental debates. The 1989 Wingspread consensus statement characterized the precautionary principle this way: “when an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.” The statement went on to list four central components of the Precautionary Principle:

1. taking preventive action in the face of uncertainty;
2. shifting the burden of proof to the proponents of an activity;
3. explaining a wide range of alternative technologies and actions;
4. increasing public participation in decision-making.

Skeptic often ask: isn’t this just a fancy new name for what any responsible environmental health scientist has always done?

On the contrary, precaution brings important new insights into environmental health policies, and the science which informs them. To illustrate this, it may be useful to give a name to the policy framework in which environmental health research currently operates: it is the reactionary principle. Under this system, anyone is free to introduce a new hazard into the environment, and governments must wait until an overwhelming body of evidence is accumulated before intervening. Each new regulatory action is challenged with the objective of slowing down or stopping public oversight of production and distribution of chemicals and technologies. We can see reactionary principle inaction in the unconsolable delays in regulating a long list of hazards whose risks were clear long before effective actions were taken to control them: asbestos, benzene, dioxins and PCBs. While these are “old” hazards, a reactionary approach is evident as well in many current controversies, including the potential health risks from hexavalent chromium, artificial butter flavoring, and the anti-microbial agent triclosan.

The reactionary principle operates through these key components (referring back to the list for precaution may be useful):

1. requiring incontrovertible evidence of harm for each hazard before taking preventive action;
2. placing the burden on the public (or government agencies) to show that a new material or technology is harmful;
3. not considering potential health and environmental impacts when designing new materials and technologies;
4. discouraging public participation in decision-making about control of hazards and introduction of new technologies.

Perhaps framing the status quo this way helps the reader to see the kinds of changes in the science-policy interface which precaution encourages.

What can be done to shift from reaction to precaution? One important step would be to reduce the corrupting influence of economic interests on the scientific evidence used to develop environmental health regulations. Recently, investigators have documented how some corporations seek to impede regulation through the intentional manufacturing of uncertainty about the hazard- ousness of their products. Clearly, removing conflicts of interest and intentional manipulation of data would make it easier to act in a more precautionary way. But there is more that responsible environmental health scientists can and should do. I will mention two examples. A critical step in the recognition and control of environmental hazards is causal inference – deciding if the evidence linking an exposure and a disease is sufficient to judge that this is a real cause, and not simply a correlation or association. A precautionary approach would emphasize that this judgment is not purely scientific, but ethical principle of environmental health scientists – akin to the physician's “first do no harm” dictum – holds that they should ask themselves: “when do we know enough to act as if something is causal?” This will depend not only on the strength of evidence but also on the availability of alternative ways of achieving the same social good and on the consequences of inaction or acting in error.

For example, shouldn't we require less evidence of harm before removing artificial butter flavor from microwave popcorn than before banning a life-saving drug with potentially hazardous side effects? And shouldn't we require less evidence of harm before restricting the use of a synthetic chemical to keep your gym socks smelling good than the same chemical when it is used as a disinfectant to interrupt the spread of dangerous hospital infections? At present, scientists are not taught to think this way about the question of how much evidence is enough to judge an exposure as a real hazard.

A second example of how precaution can change scientific research: when researchers continue to study the same known hazards while thousands of widely dispersed chemicals remain without basic toxicology, they may inadvertently be promoting inaction by implying that more must be learned before action can be taken. To avoid this, environmental health scientists can learn from colleagues in climate science. There is now a (nearly) global consensus that human impacts on climate are likely to have serious negative consequences.

Climate scientists have managed to communicate an important yet complex message: much more needs to be learned about climate and we know enough that we cannot remain silent about the need for action. These scientists have stepped out of their roles as data gatherers and analysts, and spoken publicly about the need for action. While striving to do the best science possible, environmental health researchers should be aware of the potential impacts of their research and of their social responsibility to do science that protects human health and the environment. The precautionary principle is useful in focusing attention on the need for this balance.
SLAPPe d!
Local developers seek to silence opposition

From Chapter Reports

On May 20, three developers sued a Paso Robles resident for participating in the public planning process and writing and speaking about the potential impacts of their proposed sand and gravel mining operations on a tributary of the Salinas River. There have been five such permit applications in the last year.

Paul Viborg, John Pehl and Colin Weyrick are all seeking Conditional Use Permits from the County. In their lawsuit, they demand an unspecified amount in damages, claiming that Colleen Enk -- and “John Does 1-50 inclusive,” a legal placeholder used in lawsuits for co-conspirators to be named later -- by opposing their projects, was responsible for “tortious interference with business, libel and defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress” and “civil conspiracy.”

All this was claimed to have come about by virtue of the defendant “utilizing questionable and often unreasonable methods” -- i.e., she “has personally met with County of San Luis Obispo planners, as well as other government agencies, on numerous occasions, and despite knowing the facts provided to her, has nonetheless submitted a litany of written appeals” and has “recruited others...and in so doing has conspired to attack the projects.” Said actions were alleged to have been “undertaken willfully, wantonly, maliciously, and in reckless disregard for Plaintiff’s rights....”

Are you shaking your head in disbelief? The legal action is known as a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation, or SLAPP suit. The claims of this particular SLAPP suit are based on the premise that the County engaged in “thorough and comprehensive review and analysis...and appropriate environmental

Coastal Cleanup Day
September 20, 2008
Saturday, 9 am to Noon

Last year over 1300 volunteers collected more than 4500 pounds of trash in SLO County alone.

Will you help us do even better this year? Just show up at your favorite beach or visit www.ecoslo.org for more information.
mitigation measures have been carefully evaluated and incorporated into the mitigation agreements with the County—a dubious premise, as we’ll see shortly, but the point of a SLAPP suit is not to win a case on its merits. The point is to make opposition go away by getting the word out in a targeted community: Shut up, or else.

J’accuse! Erin’s Salinas River Neighbors Association has long watch-dogged industrial sand and gravel mining operations on the Salinas. The filing of the SLAPP suit coincided with the failure of Chad Pankey, another Salinas mining applicant, to gain a Conditional Use Permit at a May 8 Planning Commission hearing. The permit would allow 145,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel to be scraped from the river bed annually for 20 years. Accommodating County Planning staff had urged the issuance of the Mitigated Negative Declaration—meaning all environmental problems would be taken care of, no full environmental review required.

The San Miguel Advisory Council had voted 7-0 to recommend that the county deny the Pankey application and affirmed that the cumulative impacts of all five proposed mines needed to be studied before the County approved any of them. Then the California Department of Fish and Game pointed out some inconvenient truths about the MND’s inadequacies. That was when the writing went on the wall: All such projects should be subject to a cumulative EIR, the most thorough of the project analysis options mandated by the California Environmental Quality Act. Erin was SLAPPed three weeks later.

The intent and strategy was clear. “They tried to serve me at home, the night before the Planning Commission hearing,” said an incredulous Erin, who also notes that someone called her employer the month before to complain that she was inappropriately engaged in non-work related activities on the job. “Customers would come in and say ‘Colleen, what are we gonna do about these sand mines?’ and we’d talk about that,” she said.

The Viborg/Pebl/Wyrrick group’s attorney brought pressure to bear on the Department of Fish and Game via a Public Records Act request demanding all documents and correspondence relating to the DFG’s role in the permit process. For good measure, he fired off a warning to North County Watch on behalf of “a group of concerned sand and gravel operators” alleging “a number of erroneous facts in a letter of comment NCW sent to the Planning Commission on the Pankey mine proposal. The letter admonished the group that in so doing it had exposed itself to ‘legal scrutiny,’” undermined their “‘positive mission, and cause[d] potentially unnecessary injury to legitimate business proposals.”

The lawyer requested “that a letter to the Planning Commission with appropriate corrections to the false assertions be sent.” The request was impossible to honor, as he did not specify what the alleged false assertions were. In their 1996 book, SLAPPs: Getting Sued for Speaking Out, George Pring and Penelope Canan researched the phenomenon of the SLAPP suit since its birth in the 1980s. They found that it “was not just free speech under attack. It was...the right to petition government for a redress of grievances, the ‘Petition Clause’ of the First Amendment. Americans by the thousands are being sued, simply for exercising one of our most cherished rights: the right to communicate our views to our government officials, to ‘speak out’ on public issues. Today, you and your friends, neighbors, co-workers, community leaders, and clients can be sued for millions of dollars just for telling the government what you think, want, or believe in.”

Erin’s crime, and the source of the developers’ ire: The Salinas River Neighbors Association filed a request for review of the proposed Negative Declaration for the Pebl mining project, the County’s assertion that the project would create no significant environmental impacts. Their appeal stated that the County’s assessment failed to recognize or analyze cumulative impacts of proposed and existing sand and gravel operations on the Salinas, therefore the initial study was inadequate and the project requires an Environmental Impact Report.

And, unfortunately for the confident assertions of the people suing her, two regulatory agencies agree with Erin and The Salinas River Neighbors Association. The plaintiffs sued, one might say, despite knowing the facts provided to them.

Facts are troublesome things At that May 8 Planning Commission hearing on the Pankey permit, the Department of Fish and Game stepped in with a position sharply at odds with the County on environmental impacts and the use of a Negative Declaration. Fish and Game affirmed that the project required an Environmental Impact Report, and rapped the County’s once-over lightly analysis for its vague assumptions, lack of a monitoring program or any requirement for an extraction rate as a percentage of replenishment, or an assessment of potential significant impacts to threatened steelhead and their habitat. They pointedly noted that the proposed project is adjacent to Fish and Game’s Big Sandy Wildlife Area and its riparian resources, which the agency is rather fond of.

A month later, the Regional Water...
How Shall We Be Moved?

By Eric Greening

For tons of metal to haul themselves around using scarce resources every time they are used, drivers are more than willing to pay, but wishes to go somewhere is an act of excess that has never before happened in the terms of years of life on Earth, and it requires the conversion of millions of years of stored solar energy into local and global pollution. We have no way to predict the outcome of this uncontrolled experiment. We do know that we confront about our future unless significant changes are made in how we get around.

The latest “Transportation Performance Indicators Report” from the San Luis Obispo County of Government (SLOCOC) shows that vehicle miles traveled in this county still grow at a rate greater than population, an unsustainable and physically and socially poisonous trend. This direction must be stopped.

The seriousness of the challenge should not be underestimated. When California drivers travel over $3 million on funding of alternate options to reduce congestion during the construction period; the result, which they considered a modest success, was an increase in average daily occurrence of 1.24 people to 1.28. After construction was finished and these mitigations ceased being needed, habits returned to their previous rut. In other words, the vast majority of vehicles on the road did, throughout this experience, learn, and still do carry, one person.

Transportation policy in our county should work toward the goals of confronting single-occupant drivers with the true costs of their habit while providing not only a range of other transportation choices, but making sure that these alternate choices do not consign their users to fourth-class citizenship, but are genuinely practical and pleasant. The county’s transportation policies and priorities (and the funding of transportation projects) are primarily the work of SLOCOC. Unfortunately, even if there were a strong local will to make significant changes in the ways we get around (and there has been good lip service and some positive changes amid the backspin), we are hampered by state and federal funding policies that thwart our efforts. The Federal Highway Act’s priorities and policies (and the funding of transportation projects) are primarily the work of Washington. Unfortunately, even if there were a strong local will to make significant changes in the ways we get around (and there has been good lip service and some positive changes amid the backspin), we are hampered by state and federal funding policies that thwart our efforts. The Federal Highway Act’s priorities and policies (and the funding of transportation projects) are primarily the work of Washington. Unfortunately, even if there were a strong local will to make significant changes in the ways we get around (and there has been good lip service and some positive changes amid the backspin), we are hampered by state and federal funding policies that thwart our efforts.

Gasoline Tax falls dismally short of making up the costs of maintaining the federally funded system; notwithstanding, the most substantial infusions of federal “park” into our county are for system maintenance, but for highway expansion (see: Highway 46).

While state funding moves steadily away from confronting drivers with true costs. The current governor’s office on platform of chopping the Vehicle License Fee, thereby relieving drivers of most of the cost of maintaining local roads. Meanwhile, gasoline taxes shrink in the cost of maintaining local roads. Where bikeways provision of Class II bikeways leads to no substitute for a Class I bike path. The distance is short so the cost to leave it home. Thus, express runs need to be seen as a supplement to, not a substitute for, local runs that directly serve the people places live, work, and take care of their needs and desires. Our bicycle infrastructure must be based on the understanding that there is no substitute for a Class I bike path separated from traffic. Class II bikeways subject riders to traffic, people emerging from parked cars into their travel lane, and other dangers and indignities. Often, the provision of Class II bikeways leads to the widening of pavements and an actual increase in automobile dominance of the roads. Where bikeways parallel highways, wide sidewalks, and Class I separate pathways should be investigated as an option to two Class II bikeways on

Rail Development Opportunities on the Central Coast

By Gerald Fox

Eric Greening’s article in the July/August edition of the Santa Lucian (“Is Light Rail at the end of the Tunnel?”) touched on some interesting issues.

Over the past 25 years, Portland, Oregon, has built almost 50 miles of light rail transit (LRT), as well as a 4-mile central city streetcar line and a 15-mile commuter rail line that opens this fall. Over $2 billion has been spent on urban rail projects, which continue to enjoy broad public support.

As Eric points out, the fundamental problem with introducing LRT in SLO is that there are no corridors with enough travel demand to justify the very high cost. (Over $50 million per mile for recent projects). Moreover, the region has yet to adopt the supportive policies (spraw control, increased urban densities, redevelopment of urban land, traffic reduction etc.) that are needed to provide a supportive context for a successful urban rail program. But there are still opportunities to develop rail in the Central Coast region.

Portland was the first U.S. city to introduce modern streetcars, of the type now seen in many European cities. Streetcars are similar to LRT, but unlike light rail, streetcars make extensive use of existing streets to avoid the cost and disruption of acquiring new right-of-way. Where possible the tracks are inserted in existing pavement, and consequently the cost per mile can be far less than LRT. With the slower speeds and more frequent stops, streetcars are most suitable for short urban corridors connecting major activity centers. A number of U.S. cities are now building new streetcar lines as part of their urban enhancement plans. Specifically, streetcars are attractive because they:

- Demonstrate a permanent commitment to enhanced transit service. They provide a framework for urban renewal, enhanced central city density, and auto trip shifts (encourage replacement of surface parking with higher density development).
- People enjoy using streetcars, which is reflected in higher ridership than the equivalent bus service, and like to live within walking distance of a streetcar line.

Streetcars can encourage a car free lifestyle, particularly if there are support programs, such as community car-share services available (as there are in Portland).

Streetcars are environmentally friendly. They are quiet, require no oil, and produce no exhaust. Streetcars go with wind power as part of a sustainable future.

Streetcars offer multiple direct and indirect ways to reduce greenhouse gases and lessen the need for oil.

In SLO, the corridor between Cal Poly and Downtown may be a good candidate for a modern streetcar line. The distance is short so the cost to leave it home. Thus, express runs need to be seen as a supplement to, not a substitute for, local runs that directly serve the people places live, work, and take care of their needs and desires. Our bicycle infrastructure must be based on the understanding that there is no substitute for a Class I bike path separated from traffic. Class II bikeways subject riders to traffic, people emerging from parked cars into their travel lane, and other dangers and indignities. Often, the provision of Class II bikeways leads to the widening of pavements and an actual increase in automobile dominance of the roads. Where bikeways parallel highways, wide sidewalks, and Class I separate pathways should be investigated as an option to two Class II bikeways on
Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The potential impact of trails on wildlife must not be forgotten despite trails’ much smaller ecological footprint than roads, and trails must be designed to minimize intrusion into areas of cover needed by wildlife and fragmentation of habitat. Trails must be recognized as projects under CEQA, even when proposed as mitigation for other projects.

When leapfrog development of all kinds should be halted or at least strongly discouraged, to the extent that agricultural clusters and other rural developments may nonetheless be approved, we need to recognize that a requirement of trails serving such development is not an infringement of private property rights, but a needed mitigation allowing self-possessed circulation to non-drivers such as kids, who would otherwise be isolated from full participation in any nearby community.

Aviation needs to be recognized as an industry that will probably decline as fuel becomes scarcer and more expensive, and we should not be permitting current decisions on its expansion, much less funding such expansion with public money, even when done with the expectation that the money will be paid back by future airport users. It appears increasingly likely that such payback is a fantasy, and funds invested in this unsustainable and environmentally onerous means of transportation would be better used for earth-friendly alternatives. This is particularly true of parking facilities, which bring together the two most unsustainable transportation modes in a co-dependent relationship.

If our rail system were up to the standard in many other countries, demand for air service would vanish. This and all other transportation issues can and should be discussed and debated in connection with the update of our Regional Transportation Plan by SLOCOG. On August 6th, the SLOCOG Board let a contract for preparation of an EIR on this document, and the public is encouraged to fully participate in the creation of, and environmental review on, this blueprint for our transportation future. We will continue to haul tons of metal across the landscape every time a medium sized primate needs something, or will we learn to move with efficiency and grace, as befits a primate distinguished by its brainpower?!

Rail Development

continued from previous page

through San Luis Obispo. This rail line would provide reliable train service through the entire corridor between Los Angeles and San Francisco, including all the communities along this route.

This line was built during the stage coach era, and follows a slow and meandering course for 400 miles. It became the premier rail line between LA and the Bay Area, with more than five express trains a day. Since the 1950’s, it has been allowed to deteriorate, with the removal of passing tracks, reduction of signaling, and arrears of track maintenance. Yet this corridor, anchored by the state’s two biggest urban areas and linking numerous medium-sized cities, could become once again a major transportation artery. And with the need to find alternatives to driving, the decline in local air services and the prospect of some changes in federal priorities after the next election, the timing couldn’t be better.

Faced with the converging pressures of peak oil and the need to add regional service to local air services being cut back, and are unlikely to be reinstated. This is a world-wide trend, and could be accelerated by expanding SLO Airport, as the County proposes. One advantage of enhanced rail service is that one train can serve multiple destinations along the route, as it is far easier to stop a train than a plane, and it can provide fast access to Santa Barbara and points south, as well as points north.

In addition, an improved rail line will attract long distance trucks off the freeway system, improving conditions on Highway 101, and reducing fuel needs and greenhouse gas emissions.

And because the rail line already exists, it can be improved incrementally, rather than Highway 101’s extensive signature. Each improvement to the rail line, and each service enhancement will yield more ridership, and greater return to the communities it serves.

An early and relatively low cost start might be to reinstate passing tracks so that the speed and reliability of the existing service could be improved. Then signaling and grade crossings could be improved, and restrictive segments of the alignment straightened out. Eventually major improvements, such as tunneling under the Cuesta Grade (as was proposed in the 1930’s) could result in world class train service on the Coast Route. This is no idle dream. All over the world countries are reinvesting in rail as a strategy to position them for a future after peak oil, when global warming and environmental concerns become a major factor in public policy. It’s time to make a start.

Eric Ahearn of Portland on the High Speed Rail proposal that will be on the November ballot. The high speed rail project would build a new rail line to provide very fast train service (200 mph) between San Francisco and LA, with intermediate stops. The goal of the by-passing this line would be to relieve the overcrowded airports (if they are still overcrowded in a few years), provide a competitive alternative to flying (which may become crucial if air service cuts become more severe), and to provide a high quality alternative to driving. The Coast route will connect with high speed rail at several locations.

The USA has lagged behind the rest of the developed world in rail development, and catching up will be costly. Not catching up will eventually cost far more. If High Speed rail fails in November, many will see it as a rejection of a rail that will set back California for decades to come.

The Sierra Club can play a major role in helping to change our transportation priorities:

1) Advocate for an immediate start on upgrading passenger service on the Coast Route.

2) Support the High Speed Rail Initiative.

3) Encourage the City of San Luis Obispo to study the feasibility of a city streetcar.

Update:

On August 14, the state legislature passed AB 3034, the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Transportation Act, with the support of the Sierra Club. As we went to press, the bill was awaiting the Governor’s signature, caught in the state budget war.

This bill will ensure that the High Speed Rail Bond on the November ballot contains important environmental and fiscal safeguards and according to well help assure voters that their money will be wisely invested in a system that can dramatically improve California’s environment while providing mobility options that improve our quality of life.
the multiple pitfalls of the plan. Outgoing Supervisor Ottiv defended the proposal, giving a strong hint as to who was really behind it), but the vigorous public protest gave an adroit Supervisor Patterson, instead craft a committee of two Supervisors, two Planning Commissioners and two staff who will consider ways to increase the efficiency of the planning process and come back to the Board on October 14. The Board will consider suggestions and submit it to Planning Commission on December 11 for a study session. In its most telling comments, Anne McMahons said that the Board’s attention “might be better spent on assessing how to save energy, global warming, water efficiency measures alone can be had in all the oil we could ever export. Drilled now, oil companies are exporting 1.6 million barrels a day. Energy efficiency measures alone can save more energy than there is to be had in all the oil we ever could extract from our coastal waters and wildlands. The path to energy independence, and, incidentally, away from the brink of global climate change, is through efficiency and renewable energy. This is not what we cared, angry anonymous callers are being told -- not by President Bush or Senator McCain or John and Ken. In the space behind the cloth shirtfronts of those gentlemen, well-remembered finger-grasp the rod that controls the move- ments of the jaws, causing the mouth to open and close as the prepared text is read. The words enrage and inflame. They assure the scared, angry people that the Democrats and the Liberals and the Environmental Extremists and the Sierra Club are making the price of gas go up, and gives them a mission and their marching orders: Force your elected representatives to open up the treasure chest of the nation’s natural resources and shake every last rockfish, cormorant and caribou into the accounts of Big Oil. Drill here, drill now!” And if in the course of carrying out this and any similar such mission, you should happen to make a few annoying phone calls to environmental groups, or grab a baseball bat and head over to a legislator’s office, or, as the Associated Press reported Jim D. Adkisson did last July, grab a shotgun and walk into the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church and open fire because of “his belief that all liberals should be killed because they were ruining the country...” well, that’s your business. Who knows where such unfortunate individuals get such ideas? Who can say how they came to choose their random targets? Except of course, we all know, and we must all say so, loud and clear.

SANTA LUCIA • Sept. 2008

Call for Candidates

In November, Chapter members will vote for the candidates who will lead the Santa Lucia chapter on its Executive Committee in 2009. We encourage members to become a part of the dynamic action of Sierra Club leadership and the National Sierra Club. Candidates are elected for a term of three years. Deadline for nominations is September 15. Contact Letty French at lettyfrenc@gmail.com or call Andrew at the Sierra Club Office, (805) 543-8717. Sierra Club leader Ken Smokoska (fourth from right) huddles with fellow Focus California organizers in Cal Poly’s Chumash Auditorium.

FEAR & OIL

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after President Bush warned Congress that they had better not get home for the Independence Day weekend without taking action to relieve the pain of public anxiety -- i.e. open up more public lands to oil drilling.

The day before, Senator John McCain, in what was billed as “a major address on energy,” said pretty much the same thing.

In a word, no.

In June, the House Committee on Natural Resources issued a report on the recent history of permits to drill for oil on public lands and the calls to open more federal land to oil development. The report made it clear: The oil companies and their political backers, including Senator McCain and President Bush, are not telling the truth. It found:

- Of all the oil and gas believed to exist on the Outer Continental Shelf, 82% of the natural gas and 79% of the oil is located in areas that are currently open for leasing.
- The number of permits issued for oil development on public lands increased more than 361% between 1999 and 2007. The price of gasoline went up right alongside them, at about the same rate.

The report goes on, at devastating length, but that’s all made by the end of page two: “There is simply no correlation” between more drilling and lower gasoline prices.

Of the oil that is being drilled here, drilled now, oil companies are exporting 1.6 million barrels a day. Energy efficiency measures alone can save more energy than there is to be had in all the oil we could ever extract from our coastal waters and wildlands. The path to energy independence, and, incidentally, away from the brink of global climate change, is through efficiency and renewable energy. This is not what we cared, angry anonymous callers are being told -- not by President Bush or Senator McCain or John and Ken. In the space behind the cloth shirtfronts of those gentlemen, well-remembered finger-grasp the rod that controls the move- ments of the jaws, causing the mouth to open and close as the prepared text is read. The words enrage and inflame. They assure the scared, angry people that the Democrats and the Liberals and the Environmental Extremists and the Sierra Club are making the price of gas go up, and gives them a mission and their marching orders: Force your elected representatives to open up the treasure chest of the nation’s natural resources and shake every last rockfish, cormorant and caribou into the accounts of Big Oil. Drill here, drill now!” And if in the course of carrying out this and any similar such mission, you should happen to make a few annoying phone calls to environmental groups, or grab a baseball bat and head over to a legislator’s office, or, as the Associated Press reported Jim D. Adkisson did last July, grab a shotgun and walk into the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church and open fire because of “his belief that all liberals should be killed because they were ruining the country...” well, that’s your business. Who knows where such unfortunate individuals get such ideas? Who can say how they came to choose their random targets? Except of course, we all know, and we must all say so, loud and clear.

Our legislators return to Congress this month and will immediately face enormous pressure to lift the moratorium on offshore drilling. More than 40,000 people have signed the Sierra Club’s letter telling Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi that we know “drill here, drill now” is a Big Lie, and we want her to stand up to Big Oil. Go to: www.santalucia.sierracclub.org and click on “Tell Congress: No drilling off our coasts!”

TAKE ACTION

Students vs. Climate Change

continued from page 1

Local Governments for Sustainability; the Sierra Student Coalition have sprung up on campus; the Strategic Energy Alliance for Change has formed and hosted two major energy conferences; the SLO Chamber of Commerce has established a Sustainability and Resources Committee based on the Seattle model; and the Santa Lucia Chapter sponsored a European energy study tour this spring that included Denmark’s Samso Island, which converted to 100 percent renewable energy in ten years.

Panelists Jim Patterson, Chair of the County Board of Supervisors; California Air Resources Board attorney Leslie Rins; County Air Pollution Control Officer Larry Allen; and Anne McMahon, Federal Program Manager for the California Coastal Commission, fielded questions on policy and activism. Singled out for special emphasis was the scoping of AB 32, California’s landmark Global Warming Solutions Act. Students were urged to familiarize themselves with the scoping process for the new law and form groups to comment on it and improve the measures proposed to implement this crucial measure.

Patterson and Allen cited the County’s collaboration with the Sierra Club on putting the Air Pollution Control District’s Climate Action Plan into effect. Allen urged students to get involved with the Sierra Club’s Climate Action Groups, working with cities in the County to create a baseline for each city’s greenhouse gas emissions, the first and most crucial step in any climate action plan. (See this month’s General Meeting, page 2.) To the question of what college students can do, Allen replied “If you move together, you cannot be stopped.”
Faith & the Environment

Representative Lois Capps hosted panels bringing together the environmental and faith communities at “Faith, the Environment and You,” held at SLO’s First Presbyterian Church on the evening of August 6.

“I sense a new movement,” said Congresswoman Capps. “People of faith in increasing numbers are turning their attention to environmental issues. From abortion to women’s rights to workers’ civil rights movement, people of faith have urged us to do the right thing. I expect to be urged this evening.”

Reverend Susan Brecht agreed, saying “Evangelicals have opened their eyes and ears to what is happening.” According to a survey conducted by the Biodiversity Institute, 47% of Americans say that they care about the environment because nature is God’s Creation.

The Sierra Club’s Environmental Partnerships Program is dedicated to building coalitions with communities of faith. Through public education, organizing resources and materials creation, the Partnerships Program supports Club volunteers and people of faith who want to work together to explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org/partnerships/
faith/
Tuesday in several quake-affected areas. "We have some outages on our landfills," said SLO County Verizon spokesman. "We're not sure yet if it's physical damage or just due to high voltage calls.

The Associated Press noted that "Santa Cruz became a place where one percent of the population in the county took a crash course in land use law and development," finding that "those who lack resources and environmental stamina to play out the 'game' face an uphill battle with developers despite meritorious defenses or being brought to their knees to settle. Short of a gun to the head, a greater threat to First Amendment expression can scarcely be imagined."

The public process in SLO County currently seems in need of the legal system to assimilate actual community input and consideration. The public interest group SLO Smart Growth has been vocal in its criticism of the current process. The group has called for a "full EIR" and has threatened to sue if the project is approved without such an analysis. The group has also expressed concern that the project will have a "negative environmental impact" on the region.

The Sierra Club has been actively involved in the process, advising residents to participate in the EIR process and to request a full EIR. The organization has also supported the idea of a "cool cities" program, which it believes can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality in the region.

The Santa Lucia Mountain Group, a local environmental group, has also been active in the process, calling for a "full EIR" and expressing concern about the project's potential impact on the region's ecosystems.

The Santa Lucia Mountains are home to a variety of unique and endangered species, and the group has expressed concern that the project could have a significant impact on these organisms.

The project, however, has been supported by some local residents and businesses, who see it as a way to boost the local economy and create jobs. The project is expected to create over 400 new jobs and has the potential to bring in millions of dollars in revenue to the local economy.

The project is also supported by some environmental groups, who see it as a way to improve the local economy and create jobs in the region. The group has been vocal in its support of the project, and has called for a "full EIR" to be conducted to assess the project's potential impact on the region.

The project is currently under review by local and state agencies, and it is expected to take several months to complete.

Full text at www.sierracalifornia.org
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is Sept. 15. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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Meetings of Note

9/13: Saving Our Water...One Drop At a Time. An open house with water purveyors, local businesses and non-profit groups, activating water conservation through self-education. Learn about water audits, plant and garden tips, no-salt water softeners, on-demand hot water systems, conservation tips, irrigation demo, appropriate technologies and partnerships in water quality. Booths 1-4 p.m., Potluck and ice cream social 5-6 p.m., followed by HopeDance presentation of FLOW: For Love of Water, a documentary about the global water crisis, Organized by Water Health 2 Outreach and friends. Free, Saturday, Sept. 13, 1-4 p.m., South Bay Community Center, Los Osos. More information at www.wateroutreach.org

9/19: Los Osos Town Hall: Collection System Alternatives. Hear the experts on the history of wastewater collection systems, regulatory environment, STEP vs. gravity, Q&A, inspect a gravity grinder pump and the inside of a cutaway STEP tank. Friday, Sept. 19, 7-9 p.m. South Bay Community Center.

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www.ca-elderlaw.com

NURSING HOME?
If you have loved ones in a nursing home or about to enter a nursing home – do not “spend down” their assets. Nearly ALL the assets of nursing home residents can be SAVED. Their care will remain the same. Nursing home residents have legal rights. Learn federal and state health insurance laws that work for the resident.
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 outings policies or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Leader Gary Felsman (473-3647). 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 = 6-12 mi., 4 = 12-20 mi., 5 = 12-20 mi.
- **Elevation Gain:** A = 500’, B = 1000’, C = 1500’, D = 2000’, E = 2500’, F = 3000’ or more.

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Mon., Sept. 1st. 0930 LABOR DAY BIKE -TOUR OF WOODLANDS. Meet at Willow X Albert Way. Easy ride with many stops to see the instant city. Call (929-3647) or e-mail <bdenneen@kcbx.net> a few days before for details. Helmets Required Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location prior to bringing your pet.)

Wed., Sept. 3, 10, 17, 24, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes. See website, or e-mail Gary Felsman for details. E-mail is located on the website, www.santalucia.sierraclub.org

**OCTAGON BARN - South Higuera, SLO, 2nd & 4th Saturdays, 9am-12pm. Roofers and other volunteers willing to climb and swing a hammer are here to help skilled craftsmen in replacing the final roof panels at the Octagon Barn. Additional volunteer work is needed to sort shingles, spread up the site, and organize tools & materials. Learn first-hand how historical restoration works and be part of the transformation of Santa Luis Obispo’s iconic Octagon Barn. Stop by to check it out! If you’re not “handy” contact us about joining the Barn Committee to plan and strategize on opening the Barn for community use next year. Call 544-9096 for details. Sponsored by The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County.

Sat., Sept. 6, 9 a.m. Informal East Cuesta Ridge Hike. Destination the Radio Towers, approx. 8 miles rt. This is a dirt road walk. Meet at the top of the Cuesta Grade. No Northbound 101. Dress for the weather, hope it is cool. I may or may not be there. Gary

Sat., Sept. 14th, Sun., 0930 BIKERIDE in NIPOMO JAREA. Easy ride with many stops to see the kids welcome. Call (929-3647) or e-mail <bdenneen@kcbx.net> a few days before for details. Helmets Required Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location prior to bringing your pet.)

Sun., Sept. 13, 10 a.m. Pole Cats - Eagle Rock Nature Trail is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling effective techniques for trekking poles. Join us on Sept. 14, 10 AM for an easy hike on the Eagle Rock Nature Trail. Treelined trail is located across from Cuesta College at El Chorro Regional Park. Follow the signs to the Day Use area, pass the ball fields and Botanical Garden Park. In the Day Use area at the end of the park, just before the locked gate. Contact David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-3575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

Sat., Sept. 20, 0930, POINT SAL CLEAN-UP Meet at end of Brown Rd. With road being closed, nothing like the old days when we got tons at parking lot on PS Beach - now, maybe 30 items. Call (929-3647) or e-mail <bdenneen@kcbx.net> a few days before for details. Helmets Required Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location prior to bringing your pet.)

Sat., Sept. 27th, 9 am-12 noon, SLO County Creek Cleanup Day. Join hundreds of volunteers county-wide in removing trash from local creeks. The Land Conservancy is hosting a cleanup in the City of San Luis Obispo. Register at Mission Plaza. Additional sites need volunteers throughout the County. Visit www.SLOCreekday.org for more information & to sign up.

Sat., Sept. 27, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm. TogetherGreen Days at the Sweet Springs Nature Preserve. A new initiative from Morro Coast Audubon. Even the biggest environmental challenges can be tackled. Help restore the Sweet Springs preserve. Divers of opportunities just waiting for your talents — whether it’s pulling invasive weeds, removing eucalyptus debris, stabilizing banks, planting native plants or watering new seedlings. Gloves, long pants, sturdy shoes. Mushies and a chance to win a free “Together Green” T-Shirt and cap. Ramona Avenue, between 4th and Broderson, Los Osos. Visit www.morrocostaudubon.org or call Holly at 238-3928.

Sun., Sept. 28, 10 a.m. Pole Cats - Quarry Trail. Dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling effective techniques for trekking poles. Join us on Sept. 28, 10 AM, for an easy hike on the Quarry Trail. Meet at the Cabrillo Peak trailhead. From SLO, go 11.5 miles north on Hwy 1 to Los Osos/ Baywood Park exit just before Morro Bay. Go south on Southbay Blvd. and drive .7 miles to the State Park entrance. Continue straight for .2 miles and look for the dirt parking lot on the left. It is easy to miss. Do not wait at the Live Oak trailhead, which is shortly after the Quarry trailhead.

Contact David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-3575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

Sat.-Sun., Sept 27-28, Service and hiking in the Carrizo Plain: This is an opportunity to visit and to assist an outstanding and relatively unknown national monument. Saturday is the National Public Lands Day and we will assist monument staff and join with other volunteers working on improvements for the Selby Campground. Sunday is reserved for recreation. Our group will plan a moderate hike in the Caliente Mountains. The views are spectacular; and the monument is known for the number and variety of raptors present. Contact leader Craig Beetzke, 310-677-6679, or deutschp@earthlink.net CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun., Sept. 28, 0930 NATURE HIKES in the Nipomo Area Call (929-3647) or e-mail <bdenneen@kcbx.net> a few days before for details. Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location prior to bringing your pet.)

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**Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park**

**Sierra Club California Fundraising Cruises Scheduled for 2008**

**When:** 3-6 p.m.

**Where:** Sierra Club Office, 547 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo.

**What:** A complete overview of what our Chapter is up to, our various programs, campaigns and committees, and the opportunity to sign up and get involved where there are passionate and feel you can help the most! Enjoy a beautiful garden setting, plus food provided by the Chapter, and meet our staff and committee members. These are exciting times to be involved, to get engaged! Sunday, October 5th. RSVP required: E-mail Shaba Mohseni at sbjaha.sierraclub@gmail.com or call 543-8717.

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**Join us on October 5th for a Special Volunteer Orientation Gathering**

September 13-17: 5 islands (8925)

Explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. In spring the islands are abuzz with wildflowers. In summer, the pristine waters of the Marine Sanctuary entice swimmers, snorkelers and kayakers. All year long, enjoy unusual plants and flowers, seals and frolicking sea lions, sea and sand birds.

Cruise departs from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ twin diesel Teth. 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 check, payable to Sierra Club, to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information 626-443-0700, jholtzrh@cox.com.