Paso Empowered

By Karin Johnson

One of the greatest things I have come to realize at the conclusion of my education at Cal Poly and through recent interaction with Sierra Club staff and members is that the power of community and partnership gets things done.

At a time when the economy is in shambles, our environment unstable, and corruption and greed are commonly associated with the Federal government and corporate America, our future is looking uncertain. A Gallup Poll taken at the time of the second presidential debate recorded that only 9% of Americans are satisfied with the way things are going in the United States, an all-time low.

This is why action at the local level and community support play a huge role in how much we accomplish. Right now, big strides are being made in the North County to establish greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) inventories, and I am excited to be part of this effort, along with several volunteers. With support from city officials in Paso Robles, one of the most challenging hurdles has been cleared: moving from talk to action. To support this effort, the city joined ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) in August in order to access the software and IT support that will be used for establishing baseline greenhouse gas emissions, and later for implementing strategies to cut emissions by 7% below 1990 levels by 2012.

The software is comprised of a Community and Government Sector. We are currently working on the Government sector, which includes buildings, vehicle fleet, employee commute, streetlights, water/sewage and waste.

I have been traveling to Paso two days per week to work on the inventory under the direction of Deputy Building Official Steve Perkins and with assistance from City Planners Susan De Carli and Mathew Fawcett. So far, data has been input for all government-owned buildings, which includes a yearly average for gas and electricity usage dating back to the year 2000.

The issue of climate change and the move to a reduction of GHG emissions has something in it for everyone. Not only will we positively impact the environment for future generations, we will create job growth and economic benefits right here in our local communities. In a 2004 study at UC Berkeley, a team directed by professor Daniel Kammen, head of the university’s Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, found that, “across a broad range of scenarios, the renewable energy sector generates more jobs per average megawatt of power installed and per unit of energy produced, than the fossil fuel-based energy sector.”

I look forward to continuing the progress being made with the city of Paso Robles as part of a county-wide effort – made possible by the SLO Community Foundation, Air Pollution Control District, Local Power, Pacific Municipal Consultants and the Sierra Club – to lower emissions and to create a cleaner and more prosperous future.

Karin Johnson received a BA in Architecture from Cal Poly in June and is working as a subcontractor for Local Power, retained by the Santa Lucia Chapter to assist local cities in completing greenhouse gas inventories and climate action plans.

Morro Bay is On the Way

Sierra Club funds City's effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions

In an unprecedented move on the local front in the battle against global climate change, the Sierra Club is underwriting the City of Morro Bay’s membership in an international organization that will provide software and training assistance to the City in the creation of an inventory of its global warming emissions and a plan to reduce them.

The Santa Lucia Chapter has contracted with the County Air Pollution Control District and received additional funding from the SLO Community Foundation to assist cities and the County in calculating their emissions and setting reduction targets. Funding the membership of ICLEI (Local Governments for Environmental Initiatives), will enable the city
General Meeting

7 p.m. Friday, November 21

In 2007, seven local poets traveled to vulnerable places in San Luis Obispo County to write poems. Their resulting book honours eleven diverse locations on the Central Coast. The “Plen Air Poets” are Sylvia Alcon, Marguerite Costigan, Jane Elsdon, Paula Lowe, Terry Sanville, Cal Vilvert and Rosemary Vilvert, all seasoned writers with numerous publications and awards among them. Jane Elsdon and Rosemary Vilvert have served as poet laureates of San Luis Obispo.

Come hear the tributes of San Luis Obispo’s finest poets to our most beautiful and endangered places. Guitar accompaniment and the art of Marguerite Costigan will be featured. Refreshments served.

“The poems inspire us to pay attention to our precious and vulnerable coastlines, hillsides, farmlands and small towns and protect them for future generations.” - Congressman Luis Capps

Carrying Water

What did Katcho know?

In the story, Suey Ranch owner H.D. Perrett said he wanted the boundary change because he wanted better police protection and more convenience for his workers who live in Santa Maria. Longtime locals say that before he came here, Perrett was in Visalia, where he bought a large parcel with a reservoir on it, which he sold for a handsome profit. He then moved to SLO and appeared to proceed to expand while protecting that land.

Change of Address?

Mail changes to:

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

Visit us on the Web!

www.santalucia.sierraclub.org

Outings, events, and more!
Vote for Our 2009 Executive Committee

Enclosed is your ballot and return envelope for the Santa Lucia Chapter’s annual Executive Committee (ExCom) election. If there is more than one Sierra Club member in your household, you may use the printed ballot printed below or make a photocopy. The winners of this election will start their terms when the outgoing ExCom adjourns their December meeting. The newly-elected ExCom will then convene a brief meeting to elect board officers and set the date for their January meeting.

IMPORTANT VOTING INFORMATION

- Vote for no more than 4 candidates.
- Cumulative voting (more than one vote for one candidate) is not allowed.
- Only one ballot per member. A second ballot is printed below for two-member households.
- Ballots must be received by 5:00 p.m., December 5, 2008, at the Chapter office.
- Tear off your ballot and place it in the return envelope along with ballots of other household members, sign and date in the space provided on the envelope.
- Mail your ballot with sufficient time to arrive by the deadline; or drop it off via the door mail slot at the Chapter at 547-B Marsh St. in SLO. If you have any questions, call 543-9717.

Mark Shefrin
As a long-time hiker, cyclist, and bicycle advocate I am especially appreciative of clean air and scenic environments. My background includes running a bicycle shop for over 15 years, building a home powered by solar electric that incorporated many principles of sustainability, managing commercial real estate, and obtaining a Public Policy degree with a concentration on energy and green building. Since relocating to the Central Coast, my wife Elana and I have been participating in the ongoing California Sierra Club work on Energy and Climate Change. We have contributed to policy recommendations for California climate change legislation and are currently working on comments to the US EPA for proposed regulation of the underground storage of carbon dioxide. I appreciate this opportunity to work more closely with the Santa Lucia chapter on local and regional issues that impact our families and environment.

Linda Seeley
I have been a midwife for over 30 years. Seeing the effects of environmental destruction on families and children worldwide, and seeking a wider context in which to use my skills, in 2000 I began studying intensively with systems theorist and Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy. I am an advanced facilitator of the Work that Reconnects. I am a longtime anti-nuclear activist, a board member of the San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, and the director of the Terra Foundation, a local non-profit organization dealing with “Earth Care, Soul Care,” and the opportunities for community resilience that arise from the great changes our world is facing. I facilitate workshops for activists and environmental leaders. I am the mother of three and the grandmother of three grandchildren, and a certified nurse-midwife and women’s health nurse practitioner.

Steven Marx
I am running for another term on the Executive Committee to offer my experience with the Chapter and some time and energy to the tasks it faces. I have enjoyed working with the Chapter Chair, Chapter Director, Chapter staff and fellow ExCom members. During my past term, I have coordinated two Spring Benefits and the Chapter’s Open House. I am hoping that new members of the ExCom will help carry out the Fundraising and Accounting duties required to continue our expanding program of activities.

Cal French
The Santa Lucia chapter of the Sierra Club is strong and dynamic. Our leadership team, headed by Karen Merriam, raises more conservation money per member than any other chapter I know of. That money supports our hard-charging chapter director Andrea Christie, our pivotal lawsuits to protect the Oceano Dunes and the Cayucos Viewshed, our newsletter, and our work on renewable energy. I want to continue as a member of the leadership team, representing the chapter to the national organization and being our spokesperson on the Carrizo Plain National Monument, where I also lead service outings that work to restore the area to a more natural condition. I am a native of San Luis Obispo, a Club member for 42 years, and a retired high-school teacher. Although I have been honored by national Club awards for leadership, I am still more interested in the future, in increasing the activism of our members, and in supporting and mentoring new and young leaders.

Melody DeMeritt
Commitment, vision, and action: I offer these three qualities to the Sierra Club in my bid to become a member of the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club’s Santa Lucia Chapter. During my 4-year term on the Morro Bay City Council, I made progress in protecting trees and refusing the use of City funds for plastic bottles or styrofoam containers. I also convinced the City to use electric vehicles as part of our City fleet. During my term, we signed on to the U.S. Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement and the Green Accords, and we became a member of the CS Coalition. I worked hard for over a year on the New Futures Committee to bring forward alternative uses for the power plant property. I spent several years on the Board of the Coastal Alliance on Plant Expansion (CAPE), fighting the plan to build a new power plant in Morro Bay with continued use of once-through cooling. I’ve been a continuing member of ECSOLO. This position with the Sierra Club attracted my attention due to the high quality and activity of the Santa Lucia Chapter. Please vote for me and I will serve you.

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The Power of Two

For years, Ralph Bishop and Daniel Diaz — aka The Nipomo Creek Dogs — have been trying to draw attention to the plight of the local waterway they have known and loved all their lives, Nipomo Creek (see “Caught in the Black Web,” March 2008 Santa Lucian). One of the main problems among the watershed’s multiple ills: Discarded irrigation drip tubing, loaded with nitrate-laden ag water, dumped in the creek and churning down the Santa Maria River and out to sea, inevitably joining the vast and growing island of plastic pollution making its way around the Pacific Ocean in a traveling “trash gyre” the size of Texas.

Ralph and Dan have worked with local officials and staff from the County and our regional and state water boards, providing hundreds of photos, physical evidence, and guided tours of the creek. Their exposure of the ag drip tubing problem helped regional water board staff solve a mystery that didn’t. It’s more than safe to say that their efforts may have had some impact on the origin of the mysterious nitrate spikes in Nipomo Creek — and got them on local TV news and brought the plight of the creek to the attention of New Times. But nothing happened. Their frustration mounted.

Finally, at the Sierra Club’s urging, they went to a meeting of the Regional Water Quality Control Board in SLO in order to speak directly to the members of the board, after months of conversation with Water Board staff. Both men took their allotted three minutes at the microphone to give the board an extremely candid, plain-spoken, highly informed and articulate earful on the problem of discarded irrigation tubing, illustrated with large color photos of huge, tangled piles of the stuff choking the creek. They got the board members’ attention. Pointed questions for staff ensued, with Diaz summed back to the podium to answer more questions.

It was clear that the board had not heard about the problem from its staff in all the months that Dan and Ralph had been providing them with a wealth of information on the subject and begging for some kind of corrective action.

It’s safe to say that the board was unhappy to find out about they should have known about a long time ago, but didn’t. It’s more than safe to say that staff were unhappy with Ralph and Dan. But within a week of their eye-opening testimony, the memo you see at right was produced by the RWQCB and circulated to the local ag community, advising on “Proper Storage and Handling of Irrigation Tubing and Other Agriculture-related Products.”

It’s a start. Ralph and Dan remain unmollified. Nipomo Creek, like all of the county’s southernmost water-sheds, is in serious trouble. Discarded irrigation drip tubing is turning up as a growing problem in rivers and creeks statewide. But the Nipomo Creek Dogs are examples of what you can accomplish by dint of sheer perseverance when you love something, you refuse to watch it die, and you are willing to brave the high seas of bureaucracy to save it.

Catching Up with the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility

By Rochelle Becker, Executive Director, ANR

On Sept 20th, a true hero of the nuclear oversight movement, Ann Harris, received the Special Service Award at the Sierra Club’s annual banquet in San Francisco. Ann was instrumental in founding the Club’s Radiation Committee, which she chairs, and which I have been honored to serve as vice-chair for the last two years.

Ann has protected whistleblowers at TVA nuclear sites in the Southeast and has tangled with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission over safety issues for years. I learned that she had never received an award from anyone and nominated her for this award last June. I was not surprised she won, but it was truly pleasing to find she would be sharing in the award service with Cal and Letty French, who won the William Colby Award, I applauded loudly for the woman I had nominated and cheered for Santa Lucia Chapter heroes Letty and Cal.

Fall is a busy season in “the city,” and just when I was wondering where I was going to sleep after the annual Sierra Club board meeting and awards ceremony, Susan and Jack Biesek donated their hotel points and booked me in a classy joint around the corner from the event so I could meet new and old friends working on the same nuclear issues around the country. Plans were made over breakfast that morning.

Thank You,

The Santa Lucia Chapter is extremely grateful to the fourteen new REC Solar customers who checked the box directing the company to donate a generous portion of their purchase price to the Sierra Club, one of three eligible local non-profits, when they purchased their new PV panel systems throughout this summer and fall. We heartily recommend this marketing option to all local solar companies. Reducing your electric bills, producing clean, renewable power and supporting the work of the Sierra Club at the same time? Priceless.

Ann Harris

Notes from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board — RWQCB says:

Regional RWQCB's regional permits staff have recommended a new permit for the City of Pismo Beach for the discharge of non-biodegradable biologs into San Luis Obispo Bay. These non-biodegradable biologs are primarily found in irrigation tubing and are non-biodegradable. The permit is needed to ensure the health of surrounding marine life. Further information can be obtained by contacting the City of Pismo Beach at (805) 773-3750.

San Luis Obispo County has allocated three minutes at the next meeting of the Regional Water Quality Control Board for Ralph Bishop and Daniel Diaz to speak about irrigation tubing and other agriculture-related products. Staff from the RWQCB have recommended a new permit for the City of Pismo Beach for the discharge of non-biodegradable biologs into San Luis Obispo Bay. These non-biodegradable biologs are primarily found in irrigation tubing and are non-biodegradable. The permit is needed to ensure the health of surrounding marine life. Further information can be obtained by contacting the City of Pismo Beach at (805) 773-3750.
The Toro Creek Alliance had poured hundreds of hours into report preparation, and a considerable outlay of cash into expert testimony. Projecting stark before-and-after photos of the illegal grading at the hearing, showing the extent of the damage done to the hillside, made an obvious impression, with county staff admitting they’d never seen the two photos side by side. This is what citizen activism looks like.

On December 9, the Board will hear staff’s new findings as the basis of a final vote to deny the permit.

**How California Can Achieve a 33% Standard for Clean Renewable Power**

**By Jim Metropulos, Sierra Club California**

California once led the world in renewable energy. Now we have the power to take back the lead. As it stands, our state’s three Investor-Owned Utilities – PG&E, Southern Edison, and San Diego Electric & Gas – will fall short of the state’s current renewables target of 20% by 2010.

That’s why Sierra Club believes the state should reform our renewable energy portfolio standard (RPS) law. Improving this law will help us meet AB 32 climate protection goals, improve the quality of the air we breathe, and reduce our reliance on depleted fossil fuel resources.

Other states have adopted RPS laws and made significant strides in building renewable energy. In 2007, Texas reached a 20% installed wind capacity of over 5,000 megawatts. That same year, California only built about 60 megawatts of wind turbines – a dismal performance. Making California a leader again will require significant reforms to our RPS law to remove current regulations that have a built-in bias against renewable energy, and replace these with rules that support the state’s goals for clean energy.

Although efforts to pass legislation to boost the RPS goal and to make reforms in the program failed this year, Sierra Club California continues to lobby for more renewable power. We are pleased that Speaker Karen Bass has appointed a RPS working group to develop legislation for 2009. Despite the end of the legislative session, this group of lawmakers, which includes Assemblymembers Krekorian, Blakessie, and Levine, continues to meet regularly with Sierra Club California and other stakeholders in Sacramento, soliciting our ideas and listening to our concerns about reforming the RPS law. We have a lot to say about RPS. First, Sierra Club California believes that California needs to adopt a 33% renewable power goal now. To meet our current standard, and work to 20 percent by 2020 and then 50% or more renewable power generation in the future, Sierra Club California supports and advocates for the following:

**Eliminate Market Price Referent.** Currently, state regulation of the renewable power contracts against future natural gas prices by applying the Market Price Referent, meaning natural gas is used as the basis for competition. This outdated practice discourages capital investment in renewables by consistently underestimating future gas prices at the expense of renewable power.

**Adopt Feed-In Tariffs.** Feed-in Tariffs, which set fixed contract terms and rates for each green technology, would provide a more stable incentive structure, freeing investors and developers from risks and uncertainties. Feed-in-tariff programs have achieved remarkable success in increasing renewable energy generation in Germany, Spain and France.

**Include municipal utilities in the RPS.** The state should include the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and Sacramento Municipal Utility District should achieve the same renewable power levels as the Investor-Owned Utilities.

**Expand the RPS Definition to Allow for Innovation and Energy Recovery Systems.** The RPS should include innovative, less well-known technologies to foster breakthroughs, and all thermal, kinetic, pressure, osmotic sources of electricity using little or no fossil fuel.

**Expand Community Choice.** Sierra Club activists favor community choice clean energy plans that would allow cities to get over half their electricity from renewables. The RPS law should help and not hinder these local efforts to increase renewable power generation.

Above all, in upgrading California’s RPS law we must guard against efforts to undermine it in the name of reform. First, we oppose changing the definition to allow more hydro-power to be considered as renewable. California offers very limited protection in its current renewable law, but does restrict the size of small hydro to 30 megawatts, and forbid new impoundments of water – hardly sufficient to protect water resources and aquatic life. Second, we do not think utilities should get renewable power credit for their energy efficiency efforts. While we have always supported energy efficiency, we believe the RPS should instead encourage investment in new sources of renewable power while other programs focus on energy efficiency efforts.

We should also keep in mind that not all energy sources labeled under current law as “renewable” are equally sustainable in terms of environmental impacts or energy supply. Even renewable energy can have adverse implications for environmental resources. The Altamont wind site in Northern California resulted in excessive bird kills. The impact and

Council of Club Leaders approved a resolution asking the Board of Directors to develop a work plan to coordinate information and funding to a Club-wide campaign for a nuclear-free energy future, preventing the construction of new nuclear power plants, fuel chain facilities and re-licensing of aging reactors.

During this same timeframe, the presidential campaign was heating up and there had emerged a clear choice for the Alliance Legal Fund: a candidate who did not call for 45 new reactors to open in the next 30 years, come hell or high water. So I decided that the Executive Director of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility Legal Fund (me) should go to a “target” state and work for Obama for a week. I chose Virginia, but then checked cost of flights and asked our board about this expense. One wonderful board member, Deidra O’Merde, the Queen of the O’Merde Legal Fund (me) should go to a “target” state and work for Obama for a week. I chose Virginia, but then checked cost of flights and asked our board about this expense. One wonderful board member, Deidra O’Merde, the Queen of the O’Merde...
Litigation Update

California’s energy needs must be considered immediately and strategically. As your legislator, I’m committed to making [redacted] in the state’s consumption while looking ahead to shape our future energy portfolio.

I’m proud to [redacted] Assemblywoman Karen Bass to a Renewable Portfolio Standards working group. This group, comprised of myself, and two Assemblymen, Paul Revere and Lloyd Levine, will be drafting legislation along with Senate leadership to reduce California’s dependence on fossil fuels and increase diversification in our energy portfolio. The aim is to advance the state from its current 20% renewable energy target to a more aggressive goal of at least 33% by 2020. We will collaborate to develop long-term comprehensive plans to reach this standard and I will be working diligently on solutions to this end.

But our energy consumption needs to be addressed now. That’s why I authored AB 2791, which was recently signed by Governor Schwarzenegger. AB 2791 allows entities such as Cal Poly and the California Men’s Colony to achieve real reductions in their energy consumption with a “pay as you save” program designed by the California Men’s Colony to achieve real reductions in their energy consumption with a “pay as you save” program designed by the California Men’s Colony. This program recognizes that energy ranked as the third highest concern for constituents in our district last year. As leader of the Republican Environmental Task Force, I’ve advanced the discussion of renewable energy programs and have made it a priority to promote policies that will address energy needs for today and for tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent you and the needs of the Central Coast for the good of California.

Oceano Dunes

The Sierra Club has filed a motion to intervene in the Friends of Oceano Dunes v. County of SLO case against the County, and the Friends (off-roaders) are likely to intervene in our lawsuit against the County.

Intervention is undertaken to ensure that your group’s views are represented in a legal action in which you have an interest. The Friends want to force the County to state that it will not approve our General Plan to sell the land it currently leases to State Parks in the ONSRA, reversing its decision last year that such a sale would not be in conformity with the General Plan due to the conflicting land use claims in State Parks’ General Management Plan and Coastal Development Permit (which says it’s okay to drive off-road vehicles on the County’s land in the Dunes) and the county’s Local Coastal Plan (which says it’s not). Off-roaders are arguing that the Local Coastal Plan should be ignored and cars continue to be allowed to rump on the 584 acres of County-owned dunes because they always have — i.e. the off-roaders say it’s okay to drive off-road vehicles on the County’s land in the Dunes and the county’s Local Coastal Plan (which says it’s not). 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Even after the state court ordered the Board of Supervisors to vacate a previous decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision to allow off-road vehicles on county-owned dunes when it [redacted], the County Board of Supervisors has not vacated its decision [continued on page 12]
Santa Margarita Agonistes
Planning Commission puts a rush order on holiday gift for developers

Santa Lucian • Nov./Dec. 2008

Check Our Messages

Follow along in the pages of New Times every month as the Chapter gives the incoming County Board of Supervisors detailed policy prescriptions before the new Board convenes in January. All together, these form a blueprint for turning San Luis Obispo away from the paved over & polluted dead end the old board was heading for and onto a path toward a clean, green, sustainable future:

Sept.: Local political reform
Oct.: Affordable housing
Nov.: Protecting our ag land
Dec.: Feeding ourselves
Jan.: Getting energized

Check them out as they appear in print, or linked from our website at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org

Mark your calendars for the second Green Jobs National Conference, to be held in Washington, D.C., February 4-6, 2009. Sierra Club and affiliated Steelworkers – the Blue Green Alliance – will seize the moment right after a new Congress and new Administration are sworn in and work to shape the agenda for the coming green economy, to create jobs that help to solve global warming, increase our energy independence, and explore new technologies that are safe for people and the environment.

This year’s conference will also include a Green Jobs Expo that will be free and open to the public. Get excited! And go to: www.greenjobsconference.org

Santa Margarita Ranch, unprecedented in its size and implications for future land use planning, by design the most environmentally destructive private development proposal in county history, has been set on greased rails and given a large push.

With hundreds of millions of dollars in potential profit riding on the approval of Santa Margarita, industrial-strength political pressure has been applied, corners were cut hard, and, as a result, the project went to the Board of Supervisors on appeal this month with its unprecedented number of environmental impacts barely analyzed.

On September 25, County Planning Commission Chairman Bob Roos, Supervisor Ovitt’s appointee, did the heavy lifting for the developers and failed in his obligation and duty as a Planning Commissioner when he chose to short-circuit the process in order to get the project before the pro-development majority on the Board of Supervisors before they leave office at the end of the year. Halfway through that day’s Planning Commisison meeting – one in an agreed-upon series of meetings in which Commissioners were supposed to discuss specific areas of the project’s environmental impacts and take public control on same – Roos cut off discussion, junked the process the Commission had agreed to, and declared that a decision would be made that day on the massively complex project with a full discussion of only one of its unprecedented eleven Class One environmental impacts – i.e. impacts which, under the California Environmental Quality Act, no amount of mitigation measures can reduce to an insignificant level.

Deputy County Counsel Joe Ortin emphatically urged the Commission to cut off the hearing and vote immediately, but was unable to provide a clear legal basis for his advice. What was clear was that the development consortium had sent a nasty letter threatening to sue if the Commission didn’t hurry up, and the developers had become increasingly irate at each meeting of the Commission on Santa Margarita Ranch.

Roos then cherry-picked planning staff’s findings on the project’s impacts that he would allow to be included in the Commission’s report to the Board of Supervisors, keeping the most damaging impacts out of the legal record and thereby making any potential future case against approval of the project as weak as possible.

Roos’ action raised serious questions about due process – people who had planned to speak at a future meeting on the project’s separate areas of specific impacts immediately lost their opportunity to do so — but he was just getting started.

On October 9, when staff findings came back to the Planning Commission for a final vote, Roos, at the last possible minute, switched the time of the scheduled hearing from the end of the afternoon to first thing in the morning, at the developers’ request.

Commissioners Melchichau and Rappa, appointed by Supervisors Achadjian and Lenthall, went along, over the vocal protests of Commissioners Christie and Wyatt, appointed by Supervisors Patterson and Gibson.

The developers were in the hearing room at the crack of dawn, obviously having gotten the word in advance.

Members of the public who showed up for the publicly noticed afternoon session on Santa Margarita found they’d gotten the shaft. Again.

Local attorney Michael Jencks faxed a letter to the Commission that day that underscored the point: “The Commission’s ‘uneasymly haste to conclude its review,’ he wrote, ‘will make the Commission’s decisions, and almost any Board of Supervisors decision based on the Commission’s incomplete and partial record and limited findings, more vulnerable to legal challenge and render the proceedings a travesty of public process… [and] ignores important state laws and policies, and serves as a dangerous precedent for the processing of other major pending County projects.’”

At the end of the Commission’s June 26 hearing — tired and overly candid at the end of a long day — Roos let slip his goal: “I’m trying to get it over with this year.”

This throws an interesting light on his subsequent statement in the October 16 New Times: “You know, there’s going to be people who are going to wonder ‘Well did he just deny it so he could get this decision and move on?’

Actually, we don’t know anyone who’s wondering.

As we write these words, the Board has not yet heard the appeal. But as you read them, they have. The hearing on the Santa Margarita Ranch Cluster Subdivision was held late in the afternoon of November 4th — Election Day, when many concerned citizens were voting, poll watching, working on get out the vote, or otherwise had their focus elsewhere on other matters of importance.

That’s how this Board takes care of business.
Summary: The global food crisis suddenly appeared "over the last several years" and is allegedly the result of a combination of increased demand in Asia, rising fuel prices, demand for biofuels, and new restrictions by alarmed producers on the export of rice, corn, wheat, etc. No other possible cause seems to have crossed the reporter's mind.

Two additional and significant factors have not been widely discussed – the impact of global trade policies on agriculture in developing countries, and the role of speculation in the global food market....

The global food trade never became the kind of well-honed machine that has made the price of manufactured goods such as flat-screen TVs increasingly similar worldwide.

There was one big problem. The global food trade never became the kind of well-honed machine that has made the price of manufactured goods such as flat-screen TVs increasingly similar worldwide. Living poor families in rural areas suggest that it has been the opening of their natural resources to global agribusiness, factory fishing fleets and corporate interests that often leads to real poverty.... Governments of poorer countries are pressing for changes in global trade rules that will give them more "space" to set their own priorities as well as their own industrial and agricultural policies, such as supporting domestic farms and firms over global corporations."


Economics of Hunger

People skeptical about the idea that free trade is the best way to reduce hunger point to small-scale projects.... as alternatives to industrialized farming, which is based on costly energy use, chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

"The Green Revolution displaced our local resources," said Mr. León, referring to modern agricultural practices with hybrid crops and chemical fertilizers.

"Our dependence on the outside, that led to our ruin." Mestizo farmers typically grow enough corn to feed their families and sell the excess in local markets. But the price they get has been distorted by subsidized American imports and the dominance of just a handful of large buyers. It does not cover the increase in the cost of fertilizer, which has more than doubled in the past year."

Ways of Ancient Mexico Reviving Barren Lands,

"The True Cause of World Hunger," Anuradha Mittal, The Sun, February 2002

Upshot:

We have an economic system based on greed, theft, lack of accountability, exploitation, colonization, racism, homophobia, sexism. This system has done severe damage to the soul of our society. I know it sounds like a cliche, but revolution is the answer... nonviolent and based on the truth: that the land belongs to the people, not to the wealthy few who control the power. I believe the people of the Third World have no right to be called "poor" when the power集中在 developing countries, which have been keeping ahead of the numbers of people on our earth. This is our acceptance of a power-centralizing, power-concentrating economy, all of the policies of the last several decades that international agencies have been pursuing, in some ways coercively, by making their aid dependent on this kind of policy. Third World countries have been encouraged to grow whatever will bring the highest price in the global market, and then import food when needed, and are therefore set up for this disaster, where we see skyrocketing food prices and the imports become unattainable, and they are on the edge of hunger or starvation.

No single factor can be blamed for the global food crisis. An unlucky confluence of events over the past several years contributed to soaring prices.

There's no food shortage; I want to really underscore that. Food production has been kept ahead of the numbers of people on our earth. There's no food shortage; we are creating scarcity out of plenty because of this power-concentrating model; ideology that says there is only one rule that governs an economy, and that is the highest return to the few who control the power. 

Two additional factors are not being widely discussed – the impact of global trade policies on agriculture in developing countries, and the role of speculation in the global food market. Developed nations, during the past few decades, pushed developing countries to liberalize trade in agriculture, dismantle state-run institutions like marketing boards, and specialize in exportable cash crops at the expense of staple foods. Developing countries were transformed from net food exporters in the 1970s to net food importers today.

Access to food is a basic human right and simply too important to allow too few companies to control its availability and price. We need to ensure that our foreign aid policies support agriculture, and that our international trade rules do not undermine the livelihood of small-scale farmers around the world. Without addressing these factors, the food crisis will deepen and lives will continue to be lost..." - Trading in Human Hunger," Stuart Clark and Cathleen Kneen, Toronto Star, June 02, 2008

Bush Calls for $770M in Food Aid

The Bush administration has slapped a controversial ingredient into the $770 million aid package it recently proposed to ease the world food crisis, adding language that would promote the use of genetically modified foods, it was threatened that GMO foods, it was threatened that GMOs might not be appropriate for developing countries. "You get fantastic yields if you're able to apply fertilizer and water at the right times, and herbicides to go along with that," Zerbe said. "Unfortunately, most African farmers, they can't afford these inputs."


In late 1999 and early 2000, when the Indian state of Orissa was hit by floods, the U.S. sent food aid containing GMOs. The Indian government was not told that the food had been modified, it was threatened that GMO foods might not be appropriate for developing countries. "You get fantastic yields if you're able to apply fertilizer and water at the right times, and herbicides to go along with that," Zerbe said. "Unfortunately, most African farmers, they can't afford these inputs."
We don't act like it

By Eric Greening

If we are land mammals, why do we require clean pools of water to be piped into our homes to befoul with our excrement? Even the hippopotamus, a largely aquatic beast, hauls out of its home river to deposit its feces on dry land.

So far in this culture and many others, we don't act like land mammals. We need to have a conversation about how much befouled water leaves our homes. If it goes into a sewer system (sometimes it goes into a septic tank, and sewage raises its own huge issues, about which you will be relieved to see no more in this present article), it eventually reaches a wastewater treatment plant, from the other end of which we discharge our own cleansed to some degree. The stuff that is left behind after cleaning is officially known as "biodegradable," but speaking realistically, we might as well call it sludge.

One of the most common destinations for sewage sludge is our agricultural land. At first blush, this might sound like a worthy example of recycling. However, sewage sludge is made up not only of what emerges from our bodies, but of everything else that goes into a drain that feeds into the sewer system: household cleaning chemicals, runoff from industrial processes, and all sorts of other things you'd rather not think about. And even what could be considered nutrient-laden land is actually dangerous pathogens and the residues of pharmaceuticals and other non-food items we may have taken in. (If you take a zinc tablet, 80% of the zinc is likely to pass right through you and become a heavy metal contaminant of the resultant sludge.) For this reason, our county, like many others, has sought to regulate the land application of sewage sludge.

The push for local control began almost a decade ago when a major land application project was proposed near San Miguel. The County's certified CEQA lead agency status to the Regional Water Quality Control Board, which held a hearing on their staff recommended Negative Declaration in the convenient location of Salinas. A group of concerned citizens of San Miguel, ably assisted by the erudite David Broadwater of the Center for Sludge Information, and two other heroes who are no longer with us, Dr. Willard Osibin and attorney Lorraine Scarpace, presented such a strong case for the EIR that the Regional Board overrode their staff's recommendation. The County Supervisors decided to look elsewhere for their land application site.

The County Environmental Health Department has finally come forward with a draft of a permanent ordinance which would replace the interim version. It is available on the Environmental Health website, and public comments are being solicited.

In my opinion, it has some solid virtues and some significant flaws. The first virtue is the reservation of a numerical limit similar to that in the interim ordinance, although it is allowed to creep upward in proportion to population growth. (It would start at 1,500 cubic yards of sludge. That is what is known as "EQ" for "Exceptional Quality"). But the greatest flaw is the absolute lack of any public process and of any recognition that land application of sewage sludge is a project requiring compliance with CEQA. The process in the draft ordinance includes notification of the Public Health Department 30 days prior to proposed land application, and, presumably, referral to the Planning Department to see if the project is eligible for the site (which must be agriculturally zoned and in active production). It does not specify any notification of neighbors or of communities downwind or downstream.

There is no mention of a public hearing before any public body, nor of any process of appeal from the Public Health Department to any public body. It is unclear how CEQA could be complied with without a public certification hearing by the County Supervisors or by some body whose decisions can be appealed to the Board.

Given the risks posed by this potentially dangerous substance, we need to make the strongest possible case for serious environmental review of each project in all its specifics, and for a process that gives the public the opportunity to confront threats to its well-being.

Until our habits and our building codes reflect our true identity as land mammals, we have to deal with the messy results of what we flush away. In truth, there is no "away." There is only land, water, and air, and the creatures who depend on them, including ourselves.

TAKE ACTION

Attend the County Health Commissioner's hearing on the Draft Ordinance at 6 p.m., on November 17th, in the chambers of the SLO County Board of Supervisors.

2009 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! And when you buy direct from the Chapter, you support our conservation work in San Luis Obispo County.

Wall calendar: $12.50
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To order, call 543-7051

Carrying Water

Water is a threat to be dealt with by all of us, not just the dreams of the Ag Board. The Ag Board declared that it wasn't really their job to be looking out for the hopes and dreams of the City of Santa Maria or further its goals by facilitating the future development of this property. That is left to the Ag Liaison Advisory Board (not the Ag-Until-You-Can-Subdivide-And-Develop Advisory Board) recommended that the County Supervisors not support the boundary change proposal, a motion that passed with only one vote opposed: Richard Quandt.

It is safe to say that if the proposed boundary change ever occurs, it would be a (brief) matter of time before the City of Santa Maria moved to annex and entertain subdivision proposals. So that may explain the primary motives involved. Or maybe Mr. Perrett really did just want to make it easier for the River Ranch employees to access community services in Santa Maria (in which case, SLO County Planning Staff pointed out, the matter of the location of the ranch in either SLO or SB County was of absolutely no consequence). Let the reader decide.

But that still leaves the mystery of the man who tried to make it happen. Katcho had a story, too: He voted for preliminary approval for the boundary change, he said, because he hoped to make Santa Maria feel warm and friendly towards Nipomo, and maybe extend to give it more water.

The Tribune scratched its head, calling Katcho's explanation "clear as mud." Nipomo CSD reps expressed incredulity at Supervisor Achadjian's notion, and that was pretty much the end of that. Katcho's peculiar rationale was heard no more.

This leaves one free to speculate. Achadjian is widely expected not to run for reelection to the Board in 2010. His likeliest next attempted political perching: A termed-out Sam Blakeslee's State Assembly seat. If so, his greatest need: A broader base of support in the district, meaning the acquisition of generous friends in Santa Maria and northern Santa Barbara County, all grateful and indebted to Katcho, the Bringer of Water to Estate Homes.

But who can say? Life is a mystery.

One thing that's known for sure: Once again, we have had placed before us the willingness of this Very Bad Board to get up to even more mischief at the expense of our county's health.
Morro Bay Power Plant Nears End of the Road

A new plant can’t be built, ending the facility’s 54-year life

by The Coastal Alliance on Plant Expansion

After years of sharply-reduced use and partial retirement, the 54-year-old Morro Bay Power Plant will be shut down for good in a few years and no new replacement plant can be built. Newly revealed plans of the plant owner cite a proposed new state policy prohibiting the plant’s continued use of water from the Morro Bay National Estuary, which has killed countless billions of small fish and other marine life over its lifetime.

The existing plant with its 450-foot tall smokestacks would be closed by 2011. In either time frame, the two remaining operational generating units—the other two were retired several years ago—would continue to operate occasionally and minimally in the summer, the most productive time for aquatic life, but not all.

In a letter to the Morro Bay City Council dated Sept. 9, the plant’s owner, Dynegy, said “continued operation of the plant is unlikely” due to a virtual ban on “the use of sea water for once-through cooling of power plants proposed by the California State Water Resources Control Board.” The letter was placed on the agenda of the Council Monday night (Oct. 13) for planned discussion in closed session later this month.

The city has no plans for the plant, with its four towering smokestacks. It’s about 200 yards from the Morro Bay State Park, the winning bidder for the site in 2008, could look at a future moratorium on new power plant development.

For several years, the state Board has been developing a new policy restricting use by plants of “once-through cooling” (OTC)—in which a steady flow of water from the ocean or estuaries is withdrawn to cool plant generators and is then discharged as heated water back into the ocean—and is scheduled to adopt the policy as binding regulations early next year. The policy was prompted by a landmark federal appellate decision in January 2007 that ruled the U.S. Clean Water Act prevents use of once-through cooling by new or existing power plants throughout the nation.

The decision and the proposed new state policy require a cooling technology—“closed-cycle cooling”—that recycles a limited amount of fresh water in the plant much like a radiator and does not use sea water for cooling, avoiding destruction of the marine environment.

The Futures Group, a citizens committee appointed by the Morro Bay City Council, recommended last year that the city consider engaging in a thorough study of non-plant uses, possibly through the establishment of a redevelopment agency. The city is in the process of seeking a planning grant from that purpose. A number of visitor-serving uses of the 107-acre site have been discussed over the past several years, including a marine museum, an arts center and restored natural habitat for public use.

The plant’s current outfall lease with the City expires in 2012. Dynegy proposes extending it to Dec. 31, 2014, just before the new state policy’s deadline for halting the use of once-through cooling takes effect in 2015.

The proposed state policy says all “new and expanded coastal power plants using seawater for cooling” must use “the best...technology...to minimize the intake and mortality of all forms of marine life.” In addition, “An existing power plant must reduce intake flow and intake velocity, at a minimum, to a level commensurate with that which can be attained by a closed-cycle cooling system.”

There are 19 power plants along the California coast, including Morro Bay and Diablo Canyon, that come under the new state policy restriction on use of once-through cooling. Under the proposed policy, most non-nuclear plants would have to comply by 2015 and nuclear plants by 2018.

A state study called the Electric Grid Reliability Impacts from Once-Through Cooling in California, issued last April, concluded that “more than enough power plants are expected to be operating in 2015 to more than compensate for any and all OTC plant retirements,” and its investigation showed “that given sufficient time to react, the electric industry could likely tolerate and compensate for mass OTC plant retirements at relatively modest costs to the ratepayer.”

“The most ‘realistic scenario,” the study said, “in which some OTC plants would be retired while others repower or convert their cooling systems, showed potential for significant benefits to the environment because the overall power sector would be more efficient and produce fewer emissions, and because marine ecosystem impacts caused by use of OTC technology would be greatly reduced.”

Morro Bay GHG

continued from Page 1

to take part in ICLEI’s Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. The international association of local governments and national and regional local government organizations provides region-specific software and technical assistance to aid municipalities in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

“This issue is the Sierra Club’s highest priority, and we are allocating funds accordingly,” said Santa Lucia Chapter Chair Karen Merriam. “This is the most important single step communities can take in reducing the carbon they’re putting into the atmosphere.”

“City Staff is very aware of the implications of State Assembly Bill AB 32, which mandates cuts in greenhouse gas emissions,” said Morro Bay Associate Planner Rachel Grossman. “Though the California Air Resources Board has not yet established standards to implement the bill, AB 32 requires early action measures to be implemented by January 1, 2010. The City feels fortunate to have the assistance of the Sierra Club in getting a jump start on these regulations.”

At the Club’s urging, the Morro Bay City Council voted to endorse the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement two years ago. More than 800 cities nationwide have signed the agreement, in which cities pledge to under-take an inventory of their greenhouse gas emissions and implement policies and programs to reduce emissions. Encouraging cities to sign onto the Mayors agreement is the cornerstone part of the Club’s national “Cool Cities” program.

Club staff and volunteers are assembling Climate Action Groups consisting of Cal Poly students and local volunteers who will work with cities and the County in the task of crunching the numbers to provide baselines with the intention of assessing every aspect of municipal operations.

Morro Bay is the third city in the County to sign up for membership in ICLEI, following San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles, which joined earlier this year. ICLEI’s Cities for Climate Protection campaign is active in Austra-lia, Canada, Europe, Japan, Latin America, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and the U.S.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is Dec. 12. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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with those? You look like an Edmond Hillyar wannabe.”

“I saw that Greg was resistant to the idea that poles could help his hiking and decided, ‘I just know that poles give me more stability and endurance and I don’t know what sort of conditions we’re hiking on this trail.”

Greg relented, “OK, bring them along and I may use them.”

“Greg was eager to demonstrate some ways to use the poles.

He replied, “Look, I’m going to carry them and I may even use them, but you have to promise not to pester me or I’m not going.”

I extended mine and took a series of short steps with the poles firmly planted in the ground, giving me support and confidence. Greg awkwardly attempted planting his poles and was able to save several slips.

The trails of Alakai Swamp meander through dense jungle and marshy swampland, connected by many steep and uneven paths. We came to the first of many downhill steps built of wood, some steps as high as 18 inches. I was able to plant both poles on the next step down and then gracefully hopped down, with the hips serving as absorbers. After a while, I looked back and saw Greg following my technique.

When we encountered our first uphill stairs, I confidently planted both poles at the base of the next step and used my triceps to push my body up to the next level. It felt great to be using both upper and lower muscle groups to ascend the series of steps that would have quickly exhausted me otherwise. I noticed that Greg was using the same technique.

We came to a stream with algae-covered stepping stones and the carbide tips securely grab the slippery surface. Greg placed both poles alongside the first stone and felt the carbide tips securely grab the slippery surface. I supported the large part of my body weight and the next step without slipping. I noticed that Greg was using the same technique.

I extended mine and took a series of short steps with the poles firmly planted in the ground, giving me support and confidence. Greg awkwardly attempted planting his poles and was able to save several slips.

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