Why We Need No Nukes

It would cost several trillion dollars and require multiple nonexistent permanent waste repository sites to accommodate the five new reactors per year, every year, for the next 50 years, that would be necessary for nuclear power to make any significant reduction in the U.S. carbon footprint.

If this doesn’t seem like a likely or desirable scenario, you’ll be glad to know it’s also not necessary. On October 29th, the Cal Poly Chapter of the Sierra Student Coalition and Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility presented “California’s Carbon-Free Energy Future: Options and Opportunities,” a talk by Arjun Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research in Maryland.

An electrical engineer and Fellow of the American Physical Society with a specialty in nuclear fusion, Makhijani told the audience that he once believed that nuclear power was necessary to get off our fossil-fueled road to hell. After studying the issue, he no longer does.

Makhijani focused much of his talk on the infeasibility of reliance on nuclear power to get to a carbon-free future powered by clean, alternative energy. Asking rhetorically “When did it become sexy to boil water by sticking radioactive rods in a pot?” and giving succinct advice to the renewable-averse (“Don’t like the view of windmills? Deal with it”), he made a timely economic analogy to the financial meltdown: “Calling nuclear power ‘sub-prime energy’ is being generous to nukes.” He noted the exorbitant subsidies and high real costs required to produce a kilowatt of nuclear-generated energy, and that a single 1000-megawatt reactor consumes 10 to 20 million gallons of water a day. His bottom line: Coal and nuclear power can and should be phased out of the electricity sector simultaneously.

He dismissed the popular myth that France has solved the problem of nuclear waste a day. His bottom line: Coal and nuclear power can and should be phased out of the electricity sector simultaneously.

Our Environment, Energy & Climate Plan for Obama

On November 25, the Sierra Club and 28 other environmental, conservation, and science groups released a detailed roadmap, “Transition to Green: Leading the way to a healthy environment, green economy, and sustainable future,” for the incoming administration of President-Elect Barack Obama. (Read it at www.savoureumvironment.org).

The document lays out a detailed vision for action across the federal government during the first 100 days and beyond, highlights the environmental community’s top priorities and offers an agency-by-agency set of policy prescriptions. The plan, which was given to President-Elect Obama’s transition team, sets out bold measures that will channel America’s ingenuity into solving the entwined economic, climate, and environmental crises.

“Our country and our new president are facing an almost unprecedented set of challenges,” said Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope. “President-Elect Obama has shown unprecedented leadership in the face of these challenges and has charted a course that will put Americans back to work, put our economy back on track, and make the clean energy future a reality. Our community has risen to the occasion and come together with this plan so that we can help the Obama administration achieve these critical goals as soon as possible.”

In addition to the exhaustive set of recommendations contained in the community’s joint action plan, Sierra Club has worked with some of the world’s top climate scientists, engineers, and energy experts to develop a Climate Recovery Agenda that will help our economy recover, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, cut carbon emissions and boost our competitiveness.

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What Lies Beneath
by Ralph Bishop, Nipomo Creek Dogs

For decades, we Creek Dogs have walked the watershed of Nipomo Creek in search of agate, never knowing that concealed beneath our feet were究竟知道脚下的石油遗迹。Our feet were saddened as the song of the lark was silenced in the meadow and the ker-plows of the frogs no longer preceded our footsteps at every pool in the creek. We wonder now if the petroleum leaks that have occurred since an oil pipeline was placed along Nipomo Creek in 1906 might have contributed to the silent springs in what used to be a vibrant stream of life.

In 2003, Conoco, while repairing their modern line, discovered a substantial contaminate plume. To their credit, they reported it to County Environmental Health Services. Conoco hired Terra Pacific, an environmental engineering firm, to investigate the impact of the contamination. Testing began in December 2003, just before the Dana Adobe.

To the public, mum was the word, and only a few landowners and county employees had knowledge of these issues impacting community safety, water quality and ecological detriment. They remained silent for years.

In the summer of 2006, a good Samaritan came to know of the community’s “Out in the ditch,” and decided not to stand mute. Creek Dog Daniel Diaz bought a car from a Conoco employee in Bakersfield. During the pre-sale banter, the employee asked “So what do you think of your oil spill?” Diaz said “What oil spill?”, at which point the employee clamped up, knowing he had let the skunk out of the bag. Daniel, being a no-nonsense guy, said “You do want to sell this car, don’t you?” and the story was soon forthcoming, with the comment “Everybody in Bakersfield knows about it.”

In August 2006, Mr. Diaz told the story at the Fred Collins of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, who took it to KSBY and Tony Cipollina on the 6 o’clock news.

Terra Pacific published a very limited edition of their investigative report in January 2007, and the Creek moves in areas such as energy will be “complicated, controversial and contentious” and “create massive uncertainties for businesses,” and “brussing legislative battles [that] will not bolster confidence.”

Instead, Samuelson counsels “reviving the economy and relieving the financial crisis”—unravel that fast, bold action to curb global warming is what will be required to do just that.

A new economy, not a “stabilized” resurrection of the one that just failed, will be a green-collar economy. As noted by the Apollo Alliance and the American Solar Energy Society estimates that in 2006 alone, renewable energy and energy efficiency were responsible for $970 billion in industry revenues and 8.5 million jobs. This number will grow exponentially if our nation commits itself in earnest to reducing carbon emissions and making economy-wide improvements in energy efficiency.”

While it is tempting — and basically correct — to think of Mr. Samuelson as a relic of a bygone era, along with George Will, the Wall Street Journal editorial board and the rest of the wrong-way wrecking crew whose “free market good/government regulation bad” fantasy world collapsed with Wall Street, none of them are actually likely to be going away any time soon. A lack of ideas and credibility does not, alas, equate with a lack of financing or an audience. The local opposition will do everything in its power to curtail, hobble and hamstring this administration and this Congress, warning loudly of the dire peril of taking action.

In the wake of the wrecks, we can expect plenty of local R. Samuelsons to pour forth their concerns to the new Board of Supervisors should it expect plenty of local R. Samuelsons to pour forth their concerns to the new Board of Supervisors should it take action.

As you can see by our front page, the Sierra Club has a lot of advice for our new president. If you go to the listed website and read the exhaustive document that we published in the December issue of that publication, “That is not merely the same advice that In These Times senior editor David Sirota gave Barack Obama in the December issue of that publication. “It is not merely the better way,” Sirota added, “it is the only way,” pointing to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s commitment to “direct, vigorous action” in his 1933 inaugu-
ral address.

Counseling against this advice, we have Robert J. Samuelson, Newsweek magazine’s conservative economic commentator, who claimed in an article that magazine’s December 8 issue, warned the new president against creating “conflict” and “uncertainty” if he strays from the status quo, Bold
Los Osos Sewer

The Draft Environmental Impact Report for the largest public works project in the county’s history, the Los Osos Wastewater project, was released by the County in November. This document, and the public comments received on it, will determine the nature of the project that is ultimately selected and built, on which depends the fate of a watershed, an aquifer, a National Estuary, a State Marine Reserve, and a community of 15,000.

Local environmental groups met with the County’s Los Osos Wastewater Project Team on December 19 to discuss the Draft EIR in relation to the “Statement of Environmental Issues for the Collection System of the Los Osos Wastewater Treatment Project,” drafted by Surfrider, Sierra Club, SLO Green Build et al and presented to the Board of Supervisors in September. (See www.ourbuildings_sieraglobal.org and click on the link.)

Our KEI statement focused on a comparison of the two primary competing technologies for what will constitute the project’s single greatest expense: The collection system that will convey wastewater to a treatment plant. We weighed the environmental impacts and benefits of a gravity plant. We came out the clear winner. It was a showing all the more impressive in light of the County engineering consultant’s previous estimate that STEP would also be about $20 million cheaper than a gravity system.

Our KEI statement is largely at odds with the evident technology bias of the Draft Environmental Impact Report, which proposes four potential projects, three based on gravity collection, only one utilizing STEP collection, and selects one of the gravity projects as the “environmentally preferred alternative.” But the document’s clearest deficiency comes in the disconnect between the DEIR’s assertion that reclamation and reuse of water and the recharge of the aquifer are key

Grading the Coastal Commission

Chapter meets with NOAA and Coastal Commission Staff

Staff from the California Coastal Commission and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) dropped by the Santa Lucia Chapter office in SLO on December 9. NOAA’s Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management was between public hearings held that week in Southern and Northern California as part of the periodic federal performance evaluation of the effect of coastal management programs. They stopped off in SLO to get the local environmental community’s take on the Coastal Commission’s recent conservation record.

The wide-ranging discussion covered the Commission’s role in the multiple regulatory failures and ongoing environmental desecration at the San Onofre Nuclear Plant, and the failure to require mitigation for the massive marine impacts incurred by the replacement of the steam generators at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, and the political skullduggery attempted by elected officials to jigger the Commission’s membership in an effort to allow Pebble Beach Co. to build a golf course that would decimate the last large stand of native Monterey Pines in the world.

The Commission’s slashed budgets and reduced staff and resulted in critical backlog and delays in permit processing, enforcement actions and installation, Native American cultural sites and energy use — STEP came out the clear winner. It was a showing all the more impressive in light of the County engineering consultant’s previous estimate that STEP would also be about $20 million cheaper than a gravity system.

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Carizzo Solar Projects

There are attractive aspects to Aurora’s Carizzo Energy Solar Farm Project (CESF), the proposal working its way through the permitting process at the California Energy Commission. The thermal-solar technology has the potential to store solar power as heat energy, ending the roadblock that has long been set in the path of solar power, limiting the usefulness of energy that’s only available when the sun is shining. And solar thermal energy is generated at 20-40 percent efficiency, compared to the 15-22 percent efficiency of traditional solar photovoltaic panels.

But no matter how good an idea it is to get more solar power into the energy grid — and thereby less of the coal, gas, and radioactive variety — when it comes to siting solar power plants, the primary concern is the same as for any other type of power plant, and matches the realtor’s mantra: Location, location, location.

The Aurora project is the first out of the gate in a race to place at least three solar facilities in the same area, just north of Carizzo Plain National Monument. How this project is handled and the environmental protections required of it will determine the course of review for all subsequent projects here.

The Carizzo Plain is a biological treasure house for rare, threatened

Let’s Get it Right

Carizzo Solar Projects

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The Carizzo Plain is a biological treasure house for rare, threatened

Cose: Your most important reading assignment of 2009

The update of the County’s Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) — essentially the master plan for all environmental planning in San Luis Obispo — is now underway.

The County has released the draft for public review and comment. The web link at www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning will take you to the website where several COSE-related documents can be viewed and downloaded.

Comments on the draft COSE are due by February 27, Send to:
County Dept. Planning and Building
1050 Monterey Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408
Attn: James Caruso, Senior Planner
Email: caruso@co.slo.ca.us

Public workshops:
January 6, 2009 3:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. 5th Floor Lompoc City Hall, 301 Grand Ave.
January 8, 2009 3:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Arroyo Grande City Council (E. Bradley Ave.)
January 14, 2009 5:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Paso Robles City Council (1000 Spring St)
4th workshop TBA.

KiaK Seafoods

(805) 927-3673
piersfam@charter.net

Left to right: Bob Verseveld of Pt. San Luis Lighthouse Keepers, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management Director Leivlee-Arn McGee, Matt Gove of NOAA, SLO CoastKeeper Gordon Hensley and Congresswoman Lois Capps’ District Aide Greg Haas make themselves comfortable at the Sierra Club’s Santa Lucia Chapter office for the SLO portion of NOAA’s Coastal Commission performance evaluation.
Sludging Toward SLO

December 1, 2008

Rich Lichtenfels
Environmental Health Services
San Luis Obispo County
2156 Sierra Way
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Dear Mr. Lichtenfels,

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club is writing to submit comments on the “Ordinance to Establish Regulations for the Land Application of Biosolids/Treated Sewage Sludge.” While we appreciate the efforts of the Environmental Health Service Division, we share many of the same concerns raised by the Center for Sludge Information (CSI), as outlined by David Broadwater in his memo of November 3, 2008.

Specifically, we note that the proposed draft is not consistent with the direction provided by the Board of Supervisors on March, 12, 2002, to draft a permanent ordinance consistent with the recommendations of the Sewage Sludge Land Application Task Force (SSLATF).

In addition to the comments provided in the CSI memo, the Sierra Club would also recommend that any final ordinance include a cap on the amount of biosolids that would be allowed annually, rather than allowing for carryover of any allowable amount that was not distributed in previous calendar years.

Exposure standards in the draft ordinance do not appear to bear any relationship to, or to be based on, dose-response relationships and an understanding of pathways to exposure. The prohibition against land application for food crops in which the edible portion of the plants may come into contact with the sludge does not seem to take into account the uptake of sludge pathogens through the roots of crops. Establishing a limit of five applications to a parcel is not a substitute for the establishment of an actual numeric cap on cumulative levels of pathogens and heavy metals.

Environmental Health Services has ruled out alternatives to land application as having an unfavorable “cost/benefit ratio” without establishing what the costs and benefits would be. We urge EHS to follow the directive it was given by the Board of Supervisors to provide a thorough analysis of alternatives. This analysis should include a comparison of the cost to the benefits to the communities of avoiding the ruined farms, degraded human health, dead livestock, and disrupted aquatic ecosystems that have been documented nationwide in the wake of the land application of sewage sludge.

Troubling information concerning the methods and data used by the EPA to set the federal standards for land application of sludge are now coming to light. We urge the EHS to follow the progress of hearings on sewage sludge disposal, scheduled to be held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW), and to incorporate the information from those hearings into the text of the final ordinance.

We support the comments by CSI, which conclude that the county should either see local control over sewer sludge land application by way of a comprehensive ordinance that is clear and enforceable, or it should move quickly to prohibit the land application of sewage sludge outright.

Thank you for your consideration,

Karen Merrim
Chapter Chair

Update: The County Health Commission has called the proposed regulations for land application of sewage sludge inadequate and urged the County to analyze “all feasible methods of sewage sludge disposal (including energy production) and related impacts on human health and the environment...Before a permanent ordinance is considered.”

What Lies Beneath
continued from page 2

Dogs, with great difficulty, obtained a copy. Here’s the gist: The contaminant plume is larger than a football field and extends 20 feet thick in the vertical sediments column. The most disturbing fact is the petroleum is only two feet beneath the active channel of Nipomo Creek, waiting to be uncovered by the next storm surge and flow all the way to the ocean. We have

Sand Mines & Salinas
How much is too much?
by Sue Harvey, President, North County Watch

The lame-duck County Board of Supervisors has granted a Conditional Use Permit to Paul Viborg for a sand mine on the Estrella River, overturning a denial by the Planning commission.

The Planning Commission decision was based on the demonstrable inadequacy of the project’s environmental review. Numerous documents from various agencies have demonstrated the need for a minimum a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report.

The long-term health of the watershed requires a Specific Plan for the Salinas River Watershed. The county has an obligation to consider the cumulative impacts that might be associated with all of the applications for sand mines.

The courts have found that projects that are undergoing environmental review are reasonably probable future projects. We conclude that any future project where the applicant has devoted significant time and financial resources to prepare for any regulatory review should be considered as a probable future project for the purposes of evaluating cumulative impact.

In the unincorporated areas of the Salinas River Planning Area, there are at least four sand and gravel mining operations along the Salinas River. Others, such as Union Asphalt on the Huer Huer, are on tributaries within the Salinas River watershed. Still others operate within the Paso Robles and Atascadero City boundaries. The four operations on the river outside the cities – Templeton/Oromonde, Miller, Neshitt, and Smith – are located within a several mile stretch of the river in Templeton.

Three of the four mines are currently extracting resources. The total of known permitted and applied for annual gravel removal clustered around San Miguel is 492,000 annual cubic yards.

What has yet to be determined is the actual remaining volume of sand resources that can be extracted from the watershed.

Extension of Comment Period on Sewage Sludge Land Application Ordinance. The comment period on this draft ordinance has been extended to February 1, 2009. Comments may be submitted by mail or e-mail to:

Rich Lichtenfels, REHS
Public Health Department
Environmental Health Services Division
2156 Sierra Way
San Luis Obispo CA 93406

Volunteer Opportunities

Opportunities to volunteer abound at the Santa Lucia Chapter:

- Bookkeeper: Make deposits, simple bookkeeping chores, and assist the Treasurer. 4 hours a month.
- Database Technician: Enter donors, new members, and event/meeting participants into HELEN, the Sierra Club’s national database. Create queries to find existing contacts.
- Fundraising Committee: Identify what sources of funding are available and which ones will fit best with the Santa Lucia Chapter; make basic plan for the sources and programs; identify volunteers for implementation.
- Education Outreach Committee: Tables - Present at Sierra Club booth and special & ongoing events. Program Coordinator - Help coordinate monthly Chapter meetings, select topics and speakers.

For more information, call Linda, 543-8717, Mon.-Tues. 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., or write to brownson.linda40@gmail.com

Where the Wild Things Aren’t

(Submitted by Judith Amber, November 16, 2008)

(The image contains text that is not legible due to the quality of the photograph.)
nuclear waste by recycling the fuel from their nuclear reactors — "a statement that’s less than one percent true" — and said that attempting to kick-start a nuclear renaissance while simultaneously warning the world against nuclear proliferation is a doomed effort, noting that "The days when the U.S. could say ‘do as I say, not as I do’ are dead."

Instead, Makhijani urged an achievable mandate of zero net CO2 emissions in new buildings and communities by 2050 and cited case studies where the energy footprint of houses have been cut by 85 percent even in cold weather climates.

We need to move away from "the 100-year-old model of doing things" in electricity generation and distribution, he said, and get to a smart grid that deploys natural gas and hydroelectric power differently, uses plug-in hybrid electric vehicles as a Distributed Energy Resource and coordinates wind and solar energy input to balance availability of those power sources at their complementary peak times. "Wind often blows at night, making it very advantageous to join wind and solar development in a way that would reduce costs for the same reliability."

Makhijani’s Institute for Energy and Environmental Research has produced the first diagram of what a renewable, distributed grid would look like. "We’d be happy to sit down with anyone in California and get this done," he said.

Writing on the alleged nuclear resurgence in the April 18, 2008, Baltimore Sun, Dr. Gwen DuBois concluded "As in medicine, when a treatment is associated with rare but serious complications, we choose safer alternatives. Increased energy efficiency, conservation, solar and wind power are the safer alternatives."

Makhijani’s plan to achieve a carbon and nuclear-free U.S. energy system by 2050, along with news reports and case studies, can be downloaded at www.ieer.org/carbonfree.

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**On Smokoska Time**

Herewith, a week in the life of Ken Smokoska, the Chapter’s Community Development Coordinator and chair of Sierra Club California Energy & Climate Change Committee:

On December 3, Ken went to San Francisco to discuss the creation of a workforce for education and training for a green economy. The multi-agency task force meeting, hosted by the Public Utilities Commission and California Energy Commission, was attended by the state’s four private utilities, municipal utilities, community colleges, the University of California, Apollo Alliance, workforce investment board, labor unions, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Ken swung back to SLO in time for our Energy Town Hall the night of December 3rd, where he spoke with a KSBY reporter for the evening news. On December 5th and 6th, Ken attended a solar training for SLO county schools. A $75,000 grant from the Irvine Foundation will make the Irvine Foundation a program for the development of workforce for education and training for a green economy.

Also on December 5th, Ken met with the director and deputy director of communications for Lt. Governor John Garamendi — who is a trustee of CSU and the University of California, and chair of the State Lands Commission and the Commission on Economic Development. The Lt. Governor will keynote “Focus the Nation” on February 5th, of which Ken is a key organizer, as he was last year. Ken suggested fellowships for student leaders to work on economic development for a green economy and briefed the Governor’s staff on the "Behavior, Energy and Climate Change" conference that he attended in Sacramento over November 17-19, hosted by Stanford and the University of California.

Mr. Smokoska is our favorite source of alternative energy.

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**GE Corn Survey Update**

by Jesse Arnold

According to Cal Poly’s Dr. Jeff Wong, Cal Poly is growing Bt corn this year. Bt corn has been genetically engineered by the Monsanto Corporation to produce the toxin Bacillus thuringiensis to kill the corn earworm. The corn is registered with the EPA as a pesticide.

Wong would not say where the Bt corn would be sold and would not agree to label it. Cal Poly could sell its unlabeled Bt corn at a farmers market.

Cal Poly has been selling what the student vendors say is conventional corn at the SLO farmers market. How do we know the conventional corn has not been contaminated by Cal Poly’s Bt corn and Round-Up Ready silage corn?

Your safest option when buying corn from Cal Poly is to require it if comes from the organic farm.

If you think Cal Poly should accurately label whatever kind of corn it is selling, call Crops Department head Dr. John Petersen at 756-1237, or head of genetically engineered crops Dr. Jeff Wong at 756-2429.
SLO Powers Up

An energy town hall

Last December, the City of San Luis Obispo had just become the first city in the county to complete a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, the crucial first step toward developing a climate action plan. It was the perfect time to champion the idea of a local renewable energy economy. So we did, with an Energy Town Hall, sponsored by the Santa Lucia Chapter and held at SLO’s Steinbring Gallery on the evening of December 3rd.

San Luis Obispo’s accomplishment was a major focus of the event, with City Councilpersons Jan Marx, John Ashbaugh and Andrew Carter in attendance and engaging in conversation with the capacity crowd about our shared energy future.

A presentation on the city’s greenhouse gas inventory from Cal Poly Graduate student Geoffrey Chiappella was a highlight, followed by an interactive workshop led by former leaders of the Empower Poly Coalition and current Sierra Club interns Chad Worth and Nancy Cole.

The audience learned the basics about current and upcoming state energy policies. Their responses to questions about what they want to see happen as a community in shaping a future in which local energy is clean, affordable and secure were collected and tabulated for presentation at a future SLO City Council meeting.

Silence and Santa Margarita

Developer lap dogs heel, fetch and roll over but don’t speak

Over the course of four long meetings on November 19 and December 16, 19 and 23, County Supervisor Katcho Achadjian and lame duck incumbents Harry Ovitt and Jerry Lenthall sat silently rather than discuss the Santa Margarita Ranch project’s multiple violations of the County’s General Plan and the failure of the project’s Environmental Impact Report to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

As a parade of wildlife and resource agency and planning staff professionals laid out the problems and painted a painfully clear picture of a project that was simply unacceptable as designed, these three supervisors did not engage the issues. They only came to life in order to break through the unapprovable silence and Santa Margarita permit and the precedent it sets must not stand. The violations are obvious, the record is clear, and a court needs to bring the weight of the law to bear.

North County Watch has taken the lead in preparing the litigation necessary to right the enormous wrong done by K. Achadjian and the lame-duck board of 08. Justice won’t come cheap. You need to give now, and give like your quality of life depends on it.

Send your tax-deductible contribution to: North County Watch P.O. Box 455 Templeton, CA 93465

Pole Cats Can Turn You Into a Quadruped, Part 2

By David Georgi, Pole Cats Leader

Previously: “Pole Cats” is a Santa Lucia Sierra Club group dedicated to demonstrating optimal use of trekking poles on easy day hikes. In part one (Nov/Dec), skeptical trekking pole user Greg had reluctantly agreed to give the poles a try while hiking Kauai’s Alkali Swamp with the author and found that they helped him to negotiate uneven trail stairs and a stream crossing involving algae-covered stepping stones.

“Okay, I’m starting to see how these things can be useful,” Greg said. They really helped going up and down the stairs and this stream would have been scary without them.”

We finally reached our objective, an overlook above the Na Pali coast. Clouds at first obscured the view, but soon began opening and offering brief glimpses of the jewel-like ocean and verdant valleys below. We took in the beauty around us while enjoying some trail mix and a long drink of water.

On the way back, we ascended and descended the flights of stairs in reverse order. Seeing that Greg’s attitude toward poles was improving, I sought opportunities to elicit positive perceptions from his personal experience as a strong skier. On one strenuous uphill stretch, I asked if he could apply any techniques from using ski poles. He sarcastically responded between exhausted breaths, “I don’t often ski uphill.” I decided not to pursue the issue.

By the time we neared the trailhead, Greg said, “You know, I don’t think I could have made it without these poles.” He didn’t ask for any pointers, however. Weeks later, he told me he purchased a set of his own. And, yes, Greg and I are still friends.

Greg’s response to trekking poles is common. Most people assume you can use them intuitively. I have found that to use poles optimally, training is needed to develop appropriate muscle memory. Then you can realize such benefits as:

* Using all muscle groups for more endurance, strength, stability and efficiency
* Getting a full body workout and cardiac conditioning
* Reducing injuries and impact on hips and knees
* Increasing fat burning

Recent technical advancements make poles high-tech hardware. To optimize these advances, the appropriate software is needed. Physical therapist Jaysh Faye Paley has developed a training program that includes a number of skill sets to develop muscle memory that allows optimal pole usage.

When I first bought some poles, I assumed anyone could use them instinctively. One day, I forgot them at the trailhead after a hike and decided to replace them. Looking through a recreational equipment catalog, I noticed Paley’s training DVD for poles. I ordered it on a whim and upon watching it immediately saw that I was doing everything wrong, including potentially harmful practices. I began practicing using individual skill sets on my hikes and found that my muscles could develop proper memory after applying the training principles for several miles of hiking.

It took me about six months...
Water Futures

Gray water = silver bullet for the central coast

Pole Cats

continued from page 6

to get the entire set of skills down pat. I attended some seminars given by Pole Cats to share this revolutionary technique. All Pole Cats hikes are easy and include uphill and downhill sections and brushed over areas. I demonstrate basic techniques by modeling the use poles by planting the poles a little ahead of short steps and increasing how often I continue on page 12

Carrizo

continued from page 3

and endangered species of plants and animals unlike any other in North America. The area focused on by multiple solar companies here is considered critical to the recovery of state and federally listed species. Its proposed industrialization is not a matter to be undertaken lightly nor bypassed by “streamlining” the permit process so as to get a free pass on environmental review by regulatory agencies.

There is no debate among conservationists: Fragmentation of habitat creates biological “islands,” especially when it involves the severing of wildlife corridors, and significantly increases the chances of extinction for the endangered and threatened species that rely on that land for their survival. In its review of Ausra’s application, the California Department of Fish and Game noted that the application “relies more on characterizing the site as highly disturbed, rather than providing defensible survey data, to rule out species’ presence”; that in several of the species surveys they did conduct, “survey protocol was not followed;” the surveys appeared to be carried out during the time of year when endangered species in the Carrizo area – specifically, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard – “are typically the least detectable, even in good surveys;” and that the applicant had been told in advance that a survey conducted at that time “may not detect the species.”

In hearings before the CEC, the attitude of Ausra’s representatives toward the potential environmental impacts of their project has come across as a mix of unconcern and impatience. They have denied that the 1,040 acres they’ve optioned functions as a north-south fish corridor (contrary to the conclusion of the Department of Fish and Game) or may be serving as foraging grounds for the California Condor and other large raptors. OptiSolar representative Kathryn Arnett, writing in the December 10 edition of the Tribune concerning her company’s plans for a solar photovoltaic facility encompassing nine square miles of the Carrizo adjacent to the Ausra project, was likewise troubling in her description of the site as “nonprime, previously disturbed agricultural land….” echoing the position of Ausra identified as unacceptable by Fish & Game. It is abundantly clear that the impacts of both companies’ projects on foraging area and habitat connectivity would extend far beyond their construction footprint, and that the project sites, disturbed or not, provide open foraging ground and underground refuge, and that the range of the for fish extend through the Salinas and Pajaro River watersheds and from the Salinas Valley to the Carrizo Plain. Ausra should replace lost habitat at a ratio of at least five to one, and it must consist of habitat or equal or greater value, if the project is to be approved, and any subsequent alternative energy projects in the Carrizo must do the same. Options that could meet some of this requirement include purchasing and donating inholdings in the Carrizo National Monument and purchasing the leases of Vintage Petroleum.

Risking the extermination of the San Joaquin kit fox to add solar power to the San Joaquin Valley’s energy portfolio would not be a great trade. Every proposal for every alternative energy plant in the Carrizo, and every agency reviewing those proposals, needs to guarantee that we are not making that trade. The staff of the California Energy Commission is now coordinating a wildlife corridor study for the Carrizo Energy Solar Farm Project.

A postscript: On December 17, as President-elect Obama named his Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, the New York Times reported that “he said their responsibility would be to balance the protection of farms and public lands against the need to find new sources of energy.”

“Mr. Obama said, ‘That means ensuring that even as we are promoting development where it makes sense, we are also fulfilling our obligation to protect our national treasures.’ Let’s do that.

Kudos to the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility for creating this cogent work. See it at: www.everythingannuclear.org
Taking Issue
problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media


**Summary:** A deal to protect Santa Margarita Ranch from development could have been had eight years ago, but local environmentalists insisted on more, and, by way of “secret meetings” and political influence, sabotaged the great deal. Therefore, it is they -- not the developers or the lame-duck county Supervisors who just rammed the horrendously destructive Santa Margarita Ranch development through the permit process -- who are responsible for the project that was approved.

This is a misuse of the word “entitlement.” The ranch owners were not legally entitled to 550 homes or anything else. That is the ceiling in terms of what they could apply for. Any approvals or denials are entirely discretionary on the part of the Board of Supervisors, as any development on the ranch would have to comply with all state and federal environmental laws, as well as local ordinances.

Under the conservation proposal, the total number of homes would have been limited to 60 and vineyard plantings reduced from 5,000 to 2,000 acres.

Not surprisingly, this proposal was met with mixed reviews. Many were offended at the idea of allocating valuable and highly competitive state conservation dollars to a plan that conserved relatively little. Others were simply happy to see the number of homes on the ranch reduced, and to gain “closure” on the development issue, irrespective of the merits of the actual outcome. Also not surprisingly, when the proposal was reviewed by state and federal agencies, like the Wildlife Conservation Board and General Services, and by the private funding foundations who would also need to participate, it was summarily rejected as not being worthy of public conservation efforts.

In about 2000, the new owners of the ranch approached The California Rangeland Trust regarding a conservation easement to potentially limit development while providing for some compatible private recreational uses, limited home sites, farming and vineyards.

The very real consequences of suborning the sabotage of conservation efforts are abundantly evident and a small group of hard-core environmental fundamentalists squandered a rare and unique opportunity.

The idea that anybody here in SLO has the ability to either scuttle or consummate a statewide conservation deal is preposterous. Any conversations, or “secret meetings,” would simply have been held to confirm with agency and foundation staff what was obvious upon an analysis of the proposal by any knowledgeable person: It was a development plan masquerading as conservation, in hopes of turning a quick buck without significantly diminishing future development rights.

Rossi entered into private negotiations with The Nature Conservancy. The details of those negotiations, as with all such negotiations, were confidential. TNC has very specific criteria for preserving biodiversity on properties it gets involved with.

One may assume, given Rossi’s subsequent actions, that TNC refused to accommodate the level of development that Rossi wanted to pursue because it was inconsistent with TNC’s mandate to preserve biodiversity.

**Rossi**

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Unfortunately, a small local faction...publicly inserted themselves into the process to try to stop it.

Margara...
Meet Our 2009 Executive Committee

The votes are in for the Chapter’s 2009 Executive Committee election:
1. Cal French: 3-year term, ending Dec. 2011 (second term)
2. Melody DeFerri: 3-year term, ending Dec. 2011
3. Steven Marx: 3-year term, ending Dec. 2011 (second term)
4. Mark Shefrin: 2-year term, ending Dec. 2010

The Committee accepted with regret the resignations of John Ashbaugh, who must devote attentions and undivided efforts to his new job as a SLO City Councilman, and Cleve Nash, whose personal obligations no longer allow him to fulfill his duties to be involved with the chapter to the degree he’d wish. Linda Seeley was appointed by Chair Karen Merriam to complete Nash’s term.

Terms are determined on the basis of numbers of votes received, and seats to be filled. The chapter has term limits of two consecutive terms.

Climate Plan
(continued from page 1)

Go Big
who got accustomed to getting everything they wanted out of the old board and will try every trick in the book to stop the new board from implementing the policies need for affordable housing, smart growth, sustainable ag land, food security, clean money elections and clean energy under local control. As the County moves forward with major initiatives such as the update of the Conservation and Open Space Element and the Regional Transportation Plan and the implementation of Strategic Growth policies, much of this resistance will come in the form of urgings to slow down, whittle away, exempt and delay.

These urgings need to be ignored. Conservation and community do not constitute an ultimate good, or a value on a par with Truth and Beauty. They are not at all time inevitable, in all circumstances. The policy prescriptions the Sierra Club has set before the Board over the last five months are a minimum, the initial effort necessary to begin the project of securing a sustainable future. When demands for compromise require veering away from the path that’s laid out, then the right direction, that’s not compromise but an invitation to wander off into the weeds, losing time that we don’t have to lose. In 1996, Michael McCloney, then chair of the Sierra Club board of directors, circulated a memo to his colleagues that warned of the limits of collaboration. “If the status quo is environmentally unacceptable,” he wrote, “collaboration gives minorities a death grip over reform; any recalcitrant stakeholder can paralyze the process and defy the popular will. As a result, only ideas of the lowest common denominator survive. The public and the environment deserve better.”

It is not the time for any of us to go home and take a nap, but to press the case for environmental and energy responsibility harder than ever. As new SLO Councilwoman Jan Mars told the crowd at our December 3rd Energy Town Hall, “Elected officials tend to get insulated, listening mostly to staff or permit applicants rather than the public. Mostly they don’t mean to do that; it’s just something that tends to happen. I don’t want that to happen to me. If you see me doing that, I want you to give me a hard time.”

Our local elected need a lot of feedback and backup if their spines are to be sufficient to the task of acting on the mandate they received from the voters, and if they are to know that they may safely ignore the bleating from the vocal forces of eternal self-interest that put short-term profit over long-term survival. Our president needs the same.

In both cases, they need to know that the majority, the people who put them in office, will back them up. We need to tell them: Go big, and we will go with you, because it’s not just the better way, it’s the only way. Go big, because if you go any other way, we will go under.

Peter Ridley
Sierra Bay

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
desk calendar: $13.50
To order, call 543-7051

Climate Plan
(continued from page 1)

1. Invest $150 billion in clean energy to create millions of new, high-quality jobs.
2. Reduce our dependence on oil by making cars that run on a gallon of gas, deploying innovative technologies, low-carbon fuels, and more transportation choices.
3. Move America to 100 percent renewable energy for electricity and drastically reduce carbon emissions. Ensure that carbon permits are auctioned, not given away. Action by Congress will provide leadership on the international stage to both work with and be competitive with other nations as we invest in these advanced technologies.
4. Acknowledge the consequences of global warming are occurring and the need to protect vulnerable communities, wildlife and their habitat from drought, flooding, wildfires, and other dangerous impacts.
5. The American public overwhelmingly voted for change and the ‘New Energy for America’ offered by Barack Obama and Mary Wells, Sierra Club Deputy Conservation Director. “President-Elect Obama has reaffirmed his commitment to big, ambitious goals he laid out during the campaign: an economic recovery and millions of new jobs based on investments in clean energy, an economy-wide cap-and-trade bill to address global warming, and a serious commitment to reengage with the international community on climate issues. We will do everything we can to help the Obama administration achieve these goals, using the Climate Recovery Agenda’s plan to Repower, Refuel, and Rebuild America as a roadmap.”

The full document is available at www.saveourearthenvironment.org.
goals of the project, and the absence of measures that would secure these outcomes. The DEIR largely ignores this, and excludes the use/reuse/reclamation from the proposed project designs.

AB 201, the state law that allowed the transfer of responsibility for system design and construction from the bankrupt Los Osos CSD to San Luis Obispo County, went out of its way to state that the County’s efforts to construct and operate a wastewater treatment system “may include programs and projects for recharging aquifers, protecting groundwater resources, and managing groundwater resources to the extent that they are related to the construction and operation of the community wastewater collection and treatment system.” (Government Code, Section 25825.5 c). Failing to implement measures to reduce pumping from the lower aquifer and maintaining recharge of the upper aquifer as a full component of the project should not be an option. If the project alleviates the seawater intrusion problem that is its primary goal but the aquifer is lost to saltwater intrusion, nothing is gained.

The means the Draft EIR proposes to address this are problematic: 1) Disposal of treated effluent via spray fields beyond the boundary of the water basin, and 2) a leachfield at the Broderson site, eight acres just south of Los Osos Valley Road, for the disposal of treated wastewater. The County asserts that Broderson site will return sufficient water to the aquifer to make up for the loss of groundwater recharge provided by Los Osos’ system of septic tanks and leach fields, the water on which the wetlands and trees in the area’s environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs) largely depend.

No one can afford for the County to be wrong in its assessment of this key component of all the proposed projects for reducing the pollution problem. The EIR does not explain other alternatives surrounding the science and regulatory complicity in the selection of Broderson as a viable site for disposal of effluent and recharge of the aquifer. The Final EIR needs to provide, at a minimum, a comparison to绿色发展 Broderson can accommodate the high rate of effluent proposed, at the proposed level of treatment levels that this is the best means by which to replenish the aquifer and significantly reduce saltwater intrusion. If these proofs cannot be made, other options should be pursued.

Most of these issues were raised in the course of the National Water Research Institute (NWWRI) review of the Los Osos Wastewater Project last November. The County Board of Supervisors and the Department of Public Works have subsequently shown a distinct lack of interest in pursuing clarification of these issues. That needs to change.

The DEIR contemplates only secondary treatment of effluent. The evolution of state and federal standards for wastewater treatment has been heading in only one direction – up – and it is likely that tertiary treatment will be required by law by the time the Los Osos wastewater treatment project is completed. Morro Bay and Cayucos, with significant encouragement from the environmental community, are writing on the wall when they decided to upgrade their wastewater treatment plant to bring it into compliance with the Clean Water Act, and went beyond the current legal minimum of secondary treatment, mandating a tertiary component.

Wastewater treated to the tertiary level is a key requirement for what needs to be the essential component of the project: “ag exchange,” taking wells out of production in exchange for recycled water, thereby reducing both the pumping of the aquifer and the use of nitrogen fertilizers that contribute to the pollution of groundwater.

When Diablo Goes

Diablo Canyon and San Onofre, the sites that it was not the only finding that is shaking up California’s nuclear utilities. On the same day, it was reported that mitigation for the devastating impacts to the marine environment caused by the once-through cooling systems of coastal power plants could cost nuclear operators $5.6 billion. Other recommendations of the Energy Commission included requiring the CEC and the California Public Utilities Commission to develop a plan for reviewing the overall costs and benefits of nuclear plant license extensions, in addition to setting the scope of the evaluation, and criteria for the assessment. These should include plant safety culture and maintenance, waste storage, transport and disposal plans, seismic hazards, comparisons of other generation and transmission alternatives, and contingency plans for long-term outages.

PG&E and SCE had hoped to complete their own in-house reviews of the feasibility of license renewal for Diablo Canyon and San Onofre with little, if any, input from the state. While PG&E has received funding for its in-house study, it will still need to consider all of the Energy Commission’s recommendations and receive additional approval from the state before a license renewal can be filed at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. All that said, the Energy Commission did not conclude that the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility has been the only participant that has ensured that our community’s dependence on “benefits” from Diablo will be addressed in the context of the possible phasing out of the nuclear power plant by the end of its current license. We requested that energy generation and job replacement be given a priority in SLO, if Diablo Canyon does not operate beyond the expiration of its current license. We requested that SLO be included in all decision-making. With the exception of a resolution passed at the request of the Alliance in 2006 to support the Energy Commission’s analysis, SLO County has not bothered to participate.

With the discovery of the new fault—and other “unknown” considerations—operation of Diablo beyond its existing license is questionable. None of the local governments involved have taken a position on Diablo Canyon’s future. Diablo Canyon with clean renewable energy. The Alliance will continue to monitor the status of a permanent waste facility and proposed radioactive waste transport route. The Alliance will continue to be an active partner in this process. We urge Sierra Club members to seek participation by SLO County in Energy Commission reviews. The opportunities to replace Diablo Canyon with clean renewable energy—creating new jobs and infrastructure—are exciting, but we need you to support our call to guarantee that those opportunities will be located in San Luis Obispo County.

The Alliance will be working in local, state and federal versus this year. We ask Sierra Club members to join us. Many of you have dedicated your lives to saving this beautiful county, and are working on creating a new energy paradigm here. We have 2,000 megawatts of power that may need to be replaced. Join us and become part of the transition to non-nuclear megawatts and a limit to the production of highly radioactive waste on our earthquake-active coast. It’s time for a clean, efficient future—whose trademark glow does not come from the atom, but the sun.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is Jan. 14. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
sierraclub8@gmail.com

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Outings and Activities Calendar

All of our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter’s outing policies or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Leader Gary Felsman (473-3694). For information on a specific outing, please contact the outing leader. Outings Leaders please get your outings or events in by the 1st for the next month’s outings.

Hiking Classifications:

- **Distances**: 1 = 0-2 mi., 2 = 3-5 mi., 3 = 6-9 mi., 4 = 10-12 mi., 5 = 12 mi. or more.

Pole Cats

continued from page 7

triceps and other muscle groups. Think about it: if Tyrannosaurus rex had used poles, he would not have evolved those puny little arms. (Or better, don’t think about it.)

When encountering brushy trails, I use the cruising mode, in which I point my thumb and index fingers straight down and lift the poles off the ground with my ring finger and pinky. Holding the tips of the poles together behind me lets me walk through brush over trails easily.

The benefits of using trekking poles extend to those with mobility issues. Poles give strength, confidence and stability to those who may be frail or have limited movement. (Sponsored by The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County)

Sat., Jan. 10th, Informal Mystery Hike (Tentative), Location to TBD depending on the weather and my schedule. Possibility location Big Sur, Big Falls, or Sapsek Camp on Santa Margarita Lake. Details Gary (473-3694)

Sat.-Sun., Jan 10-11, El Paso Wilderness Restorations: A visit to the Ridgecrest BLM in protecting this beautiful wilderness area from OHV abuse by helping to block off and disguise illegal routes. Meet late Friday afternoon near the wilderness area and car caravan to our camping area near Sheep Springs or meet near the work site on Saturday morning. Saturday evening happy hour and potluck. For more information contact leader: Kate Allen, kj.allen@wildblue.net or 661-944-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun., Jan 11, 10 a.m. The Eagle Rock Nature Trail: Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling optimal techniques for using trekking poles. The Eagle Rock Nature Trail is located across from Cuesta College at El Chorro Regional Park. Confirm with David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com 458-5575 for info.

Sat., Jan. 17th, 9 a.m. - Noon, Johnson Ranch Work Party, SLO. Bring gloves, water, snack and dress for the weather. Meet at the Intersection of Ontario Road and S. Hiiguera Street.

Jan. 24, Sat., 8:00 a.m. Hike to Alder Camp via the Cruikshank and Buckeye Trails. Join the hike and hike off the holidays on this winter hike in southern Big Sur. This is a moderately strenuous hike of 12 miles with about 2900 ft. of elevation gain. There are good views of the Vila Creek drainage and the coast. Meet at the Washburn day use area of San Simeon State Park which is just past the Hamlet Restaurant at the north end of Cambria. Bring lunch, snacks, water and dress for the weather. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. For info call Chuck at 805-441-7297.

Sun., Jan 25, 10 a.m. Quarry Trail, Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling optimal techniques for using trekking poles. Meet at the Quarry Trailhead. Confirm with David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-5575 for info.

Mon.-Wed., Feb 9-11, Gold Butte Midweek Magic: You’ve heard about the new bill for a national conservation area in Gold Butte, and you wondered “where is that place?” To find out, join us in this exploratory tour. Petrifiedpens, peak scrambling, redrock and granite, Joshua trees, old mining ruins. Car camping with central commissary by Vicky Hoover. Contact Vicky (415)677-5217, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org, CNRCC Wilderness Committee.

Sat., Feb, 21st, 9 a.m. - Noon, Johnson Ranch Work Party, SLO. Bring gloves, water, snack and dress for the weather. Meet at the Intersection of Ontario Road and S. Hiiguera Street.

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

Call for Yosemite Valley Volunteers

LeConte Memorial Lodge is a 105-year-old visitor center, environmental education center, and library operated by the Sierra Club in Yosemite National Park. We are looking for Sierra Club members who have visited Yosemite at least once within the last five years and are interested in volunteering for one week between May 2nd and September 26th. Hours of operation are from 10 am - 4 pm, Weds.-Sun. and 7:30 - 10 pm for weekend evening programs on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. All volunteers arrive on Saturday by 3 pm and volunteer at LML that evening, and depart the following Saturday between 1 and 4 pm, after volunteer- ing. Training takes place on Sunday morning at 9 am. Volunteers enjoy free entrance to Yosemite National Park, free camping at the campsite during the time they volunteer, and Monday and Tuesday to spend at their leisure. To provide the best opportunity for visitors, excellent communication skills are essential. For more information visit www.sierraclub.org/education/leconte/volunteer.Warning or contact Bonnie Gesel, the LeConte Lodge curator, at gcslodge@sierraclub.org or (209) 403-6676 (before May 2). After May 2nd call (209) 372-4342.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Funding Cruises in 2009

May 1-4
July 17-20
August 7-10
September 11-14

Come and explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. In spring, the islands are ablaze with wildflowers. The pristine waters of the Marine Sanctuary will entice both snorkelers and kayakers in all seasons. Watch for the highly endangered Island Fox, Marvel at the sight of whales, dolphins, sea and land birds, endemic plants, and reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. All islands are ringed with rugged shorelines and dotted with sea caves. Each island offers special charm: San Miguel for white sandy beaches and a huge congregation of elephant seals; Santa Rosa for a rare stand of Torrey Pines; Santa Cruz for high mountains, deep valleys and the famous Painted Cave. Anacapa for the brown pelican rookery, a picturesque lighthouse, excellent snorkeling waters and a colony of friendly sea lions who will swim with snorkelers and follow kayakers. Cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ twin diesel Truth. The fee, $950, 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 present evening programs. The proceeds from these fundraising cruises will benefit Sierra Club’s political programs in California To make a reservation mail a $100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader: Joan Jones Holte, 11820 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information (626-443-6700; holtehln@aol.com)