Sick Transit

by Eric Greening

It is ironic that the same state legislature and governor who passed and signed AB 32 and SB 375, with their calls for transit oriented development, would so readily raid State Transit Assistance money to pretend to balance the budget. This, and the reductions in sales tax revenue, have left transit providers in a difficult fix: at a time when more and more people are flocking to the buses, less and less money is trickling into the system. Nonetheless, on February 4th, the Board of the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority took a step back from implementing service cuts, although this issue will likely be revisited before the next fiscal year begins on July 1st.

Every year, the Council of Governments Board (made up of the same people who serve as the Regional Transit Authority Board—all 5 Supervisors plus one representative from each incorporated city) must find that there are no unmet transit needs reasonable to meet before jurisdictions are free to divert sales tax money intended for transit (with a measly 2% taken off the top for road work). This common diversion, the habit of the county and all cities except Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo, violates the legislative intent of the Transportation Development Act, the 1/4 cent of sales tax receipts governed by the Act. The legislative intent is clear: “Because public transportation systems provide an essential public service, it is desirable that such systems be designed and operated in such a manner as to encourage maximum utilization of the efficiencies of the service for the benefit of the total population.”

The Carrizo Management Plan Needs You

The Bureau of Land Management has released the public draft of the Resource Management Plan for Carrizo Plain National Mangement Plan (RMP). Now they need to hear from you.

Specifically, they need to hear that the Monument is a special and fragile place—that’s why it was given special status, and the way it is managed should be special, too. The Carrizo Plain National Monument is a uniquely diverse landscape. It is a singular place of national and worldwide significance. Its species, communities and ecosystems are extremely rare and imperiled. The very future of its extraordinary plants and animals, unique ecosystems and other outstanding features could very well depend on the decisions made in the RMP.

Because of its significance, designation as a National Monument and inclusion in the National Landscape Conservation System, the BLM should manage the Carrizo Plain National Monument differently than other BLM lands. The BLM should prioritize resource preservation.

The Natural Area Plan and the preferred alternative in the February 2004 draft of the Environmental Assessment provided a solid foundation for future management. The BLM should build upon these recommendations.

The valuable and fragile evidence of pre-historic and historic peoples should be protected. Painted rock and other archaeological and historic sites within the Monument preserve an important span of history. The BLM should ensure that it manages the Monument to provide for their preservation and restoration.

The road system on the ground should support transportation needs for the benefit of the total population.
It was one of those news stories that seems to come into existence just to provide a dramatic illustration of a social divide. The popular imagination; a dramatic tableau with a plague affixed to the bottom of the frame reading something like “A Dilemma For Our Time.” Homeless man gets ten days in the slammer for eating a protected fish.

And so it was. For weeks after reporting the story of the fatefully creekside meeting of Victor Manuel Silva, a victim of economic devastation, and a steelhead trout, victim of environmental destruction – and also, pregnant, the loss of her roe causing a significant blow to the survival of the species – the Tribune editorialized, printed waves of letters, and conducted on-line polling memorializing the incident. What did we all think? Should he have been let off with a warning? Or is the law the law?

The usual sides formed up, holding the incident. What did we all think? And when that day comes, as a class war, as the right to live is a question, and the right to eat? Or is the law the law?

The point of the conference was that focusing economic recovery efforts on building a green economy will actually address and help to resolve several problems at once: Creating new industries, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, cleaning up the pollution of our air and water, and lifting millions out of poverty who have been permanently disenfranchised by the inequities inherent in the old economy. Locally produced, decentralized power is key to that new, green economy. Green job training is essential to making it happen. An end to the dumping of toxic substances on low-income communities is part of that new economy. A carbon-free, nuclear-free model (see facing page) will make it happen. An economic model of corporate trade like the one that drove down wages and living conditions south of the border many decades ago under what was then called colonialism and is now called NAFTA will actually address and help to resolve several problems at once: Creating new industries, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, cleaning up the pollution of our air and water, and lifting millions out of poverty who have been permanently disenfranchised by the inequities inherent in the old economy. Locally produced, decentralized power is key to that new, green economy.

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The Other Side of the Fence: US-Mexico Border Reality Tour
Register by March 6

In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was implemented, leading to a corporate rush for the border as companies hurried to search for lower wages and environmental regulations. As a result, industrial waste continues to pollute the water and air along the border while many factory workers struggle to support themselves and their families on meager pay and benefits.

To see for yourself the impacts of NAFTA and the free trade model on the environment and communities, join the Sierra Club’s Responsible Trade Program on April 24-26, 2009, for a tour of the border in Tijuana, Mexico. Beginning in San Diego on Friday, April 24th, we will cross the border into Tijuana, where, over the course of our two days in the border region, we will visit factories, dump sites and workers’ settlements. Participants will also have the opportunity to speak with factory workers and activists working to improve environmental protections, workers rights, and public health.

Culminating with a stop at the border fence in San Diego, the tour will provide participants with a “one of a kind” opportunity to learn more about the far-reaching impacts of our international trade agreements. Tour costs, including food and local transportation during this three-day, two-night tour, will be subsidized by the Sierra Club; however, participants will be asked to cover a $200 accommodation fee in addition to travel and personal expenses. In exchange, we’ll ask you to share your experience with friends and family upon your return. For a detailed itinerary, visit www.sierraclub.org/trade/bordertour or contact Susan Ellsworth at 202-541-6593 or susan.ellsworth@sierraclub.org.

Note: The Sierra Club is closely monitoring the safety of travel to Tijuana at this time. We will be sure to update participants when and if circumstances change.

No Carbon, No Nukes

The annual election for the Club’s Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club’s website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured, grassroots organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well.

Yearly participation in elections at all club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership. Members frequently state that they don’t know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. Visit the Club’s election website: www.sierraclub.org/b36/2009/elections. This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

The candidates are:

Laurence Gibson (TX)
Chris Warshaw (CA)
Frank Morris (NV)
David A. Scott (OH)
Robin Mann (PA)
Rafael K. Reyes (CA)
Lance E. Baldwin (NY)
Phil Wheeler (CA)

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, the user-friendly Internet voting site will save time and postage.

On January 24, the Sierra Club’s California Nevada Regional Conservation Committee voted to approve a “Carbon-Free, Nuclear-Free Statement of Principles.” The Committee recommended that national Sierra Club do the same, and recommend the Statement to the Obama Administration for appropriate consideration in upcoming energy-climate policy decisions.

The Carbon-Free, Nuclear-Free campaign invites everyone to be part of the project of building the world you want to live in by changing your local energy source, getting your voice heard, or influencing national leaders. You can join the CNFN Alliance and they’ll plug you into a network of people working for a carbon-free, nuclear-free future. Go to www.sierra.org/carbonfree.

40 Years with the Mothers for Peace

The San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace invites you to join us in celebrating 40 years of activism on behalf of the land, the people, and future generations of the Central Coast. The celebration will take place April 25, at the Odd Fellows Hall on Dana St. in San Luis Obispo. The festivities begin at 7 p.m., with lots of great hors d’oeuvres and no-host bar with great local wines. The festivities begin at 7 p.m., with lots of great hors d’oeuvres and a no-host bar with great local wines. Donations will be welcomed and no-host bar with great local wines. Donations will be welcomed and no-host bar with great local wines.

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The Mothers for Peace website is www.mfp.org. The Sierra Club is closely monitoring the safety of travel to Tijuana at this time. We will be sure to update participants when and if circumstances change.

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The Grand Jury Wants You

by David Georgi

You Should Consider Applying for the Grand Jury

If you would like to participate in a pure form of democracy and learn about local government, you should consider applying for the Grand Jury (GJ). The GJ has a tradition that dates back to time of the Norman Conquest of England. During the Reign of Henry II (1154-1189), a “jury of presentment” was established consisting of twelve “good and lawful men” to investigate suspected crimes. GJs existed in colonial New England and were included in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. In early California, GJs investigated local prisons and audited county books. San Luis Obispo County, like all other California counties, has a Grand Jury that investigates civil issues. The objective of the GJ is to “shed a light” on all aspects of local government to ensure they are being governed honestly and efficiently. Any citizen can apply at http://slocourt.net/grand_jury/forms. The deadline is March 30. Citizens can also obtain a complaint form at this site and complain about anything having to do with local governmental agencies. GJs do not have jurisdiction on state or federal matters, or on issues under litigation.

I applied last year and was one of 19 jurors selected. One of my main motives was to learn about local government and I was not disappointed. In the first few months, jurors were given extensive training. Key government officials and staffs came to explain what they did in their jobs. I soon was conversant with terms like “Community Service District,” “LAFCO,” “joint powers agreement,” and learned to associate faces with the names that frequently adorn local newspapers. Local news stories now have an operatic drama because I have developed familiarity with the complex political maneuvering and riveting personal motivations that underlie them.

There are many cool features of being on the GJ. In the first few weeks, you get taken to the Sheriff’s Department to be photographed and issued an official GJ badge. You get official GJ business cars and key to a cute little house downtown, known as the “Grand Jury House.” The county pays you mileage for GJ business and you receive the princely sum of $15 per day for jury duty. Along with the 19 selected Jurors, eleven alternates are chosen to fill in as jurors drop out. The GJ conducts regular business two mornings per week and then pursues individual investigations as necessary.

GJs have several specific responsibilities. Jurors tour all holding cells and evidence rooms in the county. They are shown complete tours of the prison and disaster center. Each week, the foreperson reads any new citizen complaints and the jury decides whether to investigate it. Each complaint is given a number, and it is surprising how fast they add up. GJs are also empowered to identify cases, that is, issues generated by jurors. Cases are identified by letters. The SLOGJ usually accumulates several dozen cases and complaint investigations in a year. Grand Juries possess several powers. Witnesses can be asked to testify, and the proceedings are recorded for later reference. Witnesses are admonished that everything asked and answered during the interview, including what is confidential. Breaching this confidentiality is subject to contempt of court. Jurors are under the same admonishment.

Witnesses can be sworn, as in a court case. And, if necessary, witnesses can be subpoenaed. Government agencies are required to provide any documentation needed by the GJ. The GJ is organized into committees and subcommittees for specific investigations. When an investigation ends, the pertinent committee appoints a juror to write a draft report following a prescribed template. The report is reviewed by the committee and then passed to an editorial committee. The revised report is sent to County Counsel for fact checking, and returned to the whole GJ, which votes whether to make it public. It takes 12 of the 19 jurors to approve including the investigation report in its final report. The final report is released at the end of the GJ year and is made available to local news organizations and governmental agencies. It is published on the GJ web site. Government agencies that are the subject of investigations must respond to the report. Each year, the GJ reviews the previous report and investigates any developments.

The composition of my GJ is mostly

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Learn to Lead: We’ll Teach You How!

Sierra Student Coalition Youth Leadership Training Opportunities

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Students at high schools and on college campuses around the country have been busy. Last fall, they collected 350,000 pledges from their peers, committing to civic engagement around building a clean energy economy. This February, they gathered in record numbers (10,000 strong!) in our nation’s capitol for Power Shift ’09 (www.powershift09.org), to deliver a message to our leaders: we need bold climate action now!

Youth are also active at the local level, passing green fees to purchase renewable energy and retrofit old buildings, passing policies that require new buildings to meet LEED certification standards, converting vehicle fleets to bio-diesel, getting their schools to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero over the next couple decades, and demanding national leaders follow their lead. And that’s just the beginning. It’s like the ‘60s without the drugs.

How did they do it? Many of these students attended one of the Sierra Student Coalition’s Summer Environmental Leadership Training programs. In 2009, the SSC will run nine programs across the country (see www.ssc.org/sprog for dates and

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Correction:

The article “On Smokoska Time” (January) referred to Ken Smokoska as chair of Sierra Club California’s Energy and Climate Change Committee. Recent chair from 2003-2008 and is currently a member of the committee. The committee is chaired by Jim Stewart and Ed Mainland.

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The Grand Jury Wants You

continued on page 10

by Jon Barrows, SSC Training Director
**Going to Bat**

Will Montana de Oro State Park remain free to the public, requiring the County to forfeit revenues from state-owned facilities it currently administers, or will a user fee be imposed?

Or is there a third option? When Los Osos resident Gwen Taylor saw the AT&T Asia-America Fiber Optic Cable Project coming down the pike, she thought there just might be. The cable will come ashore at the Park’s Sandspit Beach parking lot, and cross Pecho Valley Road and Clark’s Gap Road. Might the County be owed something for the use of public land?

Taylor contacted the Los Osos Community Advisory Council, who contacted County Supervisor Bruce Gibson. On January 6, Supervisor Gibson, joined by Janice Robin (left) and Linde Owen of LOCAC, attended the State Lands Commission’s presentation of the Environmental Impact Report on the trans-Pacific cable project. Gibson spoke in favor of the idea of including a condition of the project whereby AT&T—either as mitigation, compensation for the use of public land, or just as a gesture of good corporate citizenship—would supply the annual funding for the park that is otherwise proposed to come out of user fees.

Stay tuned.

**Local Opportunities for Renewable Energy**

On Friday, February 6th, close to 200 public officials, educators, and concerned citizens attended the Renewable Energy Education Forum (REEF) at the Veteran’s Hall in San Luis Obispo. Presented by the Strategic Energy Alliance for Change (SEA Change), the event featured keynote speaker Cisco DeVries, Managing Director of Renewable Funding, speaking on AB 811, the recent state legislation that allows for the creation of a community energy financing district. Three panel discussions provided a review of plans and visions for local renewable energy projects on the Central Coast, and an offering of available resources for improving energy efficiency in business and home remodels. Rounding out the renewable energy forum was an all-day exposition of alternative energy options.

Renewable Funding offers a turnkey solution package for a city or county to create a community financing authority for renewable energy and energy efficiency. CityFIRST is a government program that provides a straightforward financing method to help homeowners and small businesses convert their property to clean energy. The CityFIRST program is financed by revenue bonds, which provides participants with a reasonable interest rate, fixed for 20 years. San Luis Obispo County and the Cities of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Maspadero, Morro Bay, Pismo Beach and Grover Beach can implement this program with minimal upfront or administrative costs while providing leadership to dramatically reduce energy costs, boost the local economy and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Sierra Club members can help to provide the leadership for rapid deployment of climate change solutions.

continued on page 5

**My Dear Sooties**

How remarkable they are
the sooty shearwaters
gliding like bomber pilots around the bay
They appear like a cloud of mist
darting in and out of my gaze
as they vanish for a moment, returning when the “white flash” of their wings shimmers in the sun,
a swath of silver in the sky, like a waving flag in a magic trick.

They are the estuary entertainers
zipping high, low, clumped like a swarm of bees
mystifying in their movements;
I give this show—nature’s play—my awe and an ovation.

Kalila Volkov
February 2009

**Art & Adam**

**WHAT:** Meet and greet County Supervisor, Adam Hill at “Art after Dark” **WHERE:** ECOLO (1204 Nipomo Street, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93401) **WHEN:** Friday, March 6th, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. 

Take your part; enjoy Art and your local Supervisor after Dark!

The Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo County (ECOSLO) is participating in Art after Dark by providing an opportunity for our community to meet with a member of the County’s Board of Supervisors while enjoying a local student’s artwork.

On Friday, March 6th, supervisor Adam Hill will be featured along with the artwork of a high school student from his district. Please drop by ECOSLO at 1204 Nipomo Street from 5:30 – 7:30 PM for a chance to mingle with one of our County’s leaders. This is a great opportunity for citizens to get involved.

For more information, call 544-1777 or e-mail info@ecoslo.org.
A Profound Movement

The environment, labor, investment and social justice converge at “Good Jobs, Green Jobs” conference

by Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

In a stroke of incredibly good accidental timing, the second annual Good Jobs/Green Jobs National Conference, an event bringing together more than 2,000 business, labor and environmental advocates to shape the national dialog on a new green economy, took place in Washington, D.C., two weeks after Barack Obama became President of the United States and at the precise moment when the U.S. Senate was beginning to debate the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, including $100 billion worth of clean energy initiatives.

Neither of these things — nor the current economic condition of America and the world — were known to be in the offing when planning for the conference began almost a year earlier, aiming for February 4-6, 2009. That planning was done by the Blue Green Alliance, a national partnership between labor unions and environmental organizations dedicated to expanding the green economy and advancing the rights of workers, comprised of United Steelworkers, Sierra Club, Communications Workers of America, Natural Resources Defense Council, Laborers’ International Union of North America and Service Employees International Union. The three days of “Good Jobs, Green Jobs: Making a Down Payment on the Green Economy” consisted of educational programs, speakers and networking opportunities that all had four goals:

- Bring national focus to the specific policies, public investments and funding mechanisms necessary to accelerate the growth of the green economy
- Illustrate the job growth potential of global warming solutions
- Demonstrate the breadth of the coalition that supports the transition to a clean, renewable energy economy
- Create a vehicle to merge the aims of environmental protection and social justice to a degree that is unprecedented. It is an opportunity that must not be lost.”

The conference was the hottest ticket in town, quickly growing to more than twice the size of its first-year convocation in Pittsburgh. The Blue Green Alliance had sold out the hall and been forced to shut down online registration weeks before, but requests for registration kept coming in. All of the participants who packed the plenary sessions and workshops for all three days at downtown D.C.’s Omni Shoreham and Marriott Wardman Park hotels were aware of the historic moment. Conference goal #3 — “demonstrate the breadth of the coalition” — was front and center throughout in the visible convergence of the interests and strengths of the labor, social justice and environmental movements.

That this agenda came to unfold a few blocks away from the simultaneous deliberations of the Senate over the administration’s $800 billion effort to dig us out of the hole that decades of unfettered predatory capitalism have dropped us all into (“We now see the collapse of an economy built on ever-increasing inequality,” as Apollo Alliance Chair Phil Angelides put it) lent immediacy to the proceedings. “How’s it feel to be in the right place at the right time?” asked a smiling Sierra Club President Allison Chin, as a crowd of 2,000 roared back.

Scheduled presenters such as Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Sherrill Brown (D-OH) had to rush back to the Senate immediately after speaking in order to vote on amendments to the Recovery Act. “We’re getting a lot of opposition from the same folks whose policies put us where we are today,” Stabenow said. “We want to be bipartisan, but we don’t want to go back to that.”

United we stand

Conference participants — including many of the 250 Sierra Club members who attended from chapters across the country — returned the favor, dropping in on legislators in their Capitol Hill offices to bring them the message that we are in the midst of an environmental and economic crisis and we want to see policies that match the problem and an investment in job-creating clean energy that will lift us out of economic struggle and poverty, improve public health and at the same time strengthen our middle class.

Or as Robert Pollin, author of Green Recovery: A Program to Create Workin It: Sierra Club stalwarts man the booth at the Green Jobs Expo on exhibition floor.

Good Jobs and Start Building a Low-Carbon Economy put it, writing in the February 16 issue of The Nation, “The transformation to a clean energy economy can…”serve as a major long-term engine of job creation [and] can also become a cornerstone of a long-term full employment program in this country, which in turn will be the most effective tool for moving people out of poverty and into productive working lives. In short, the transition to a clean energy economy has the capacity to merge the aims of environmental protection and social justice to a degree that is unprecedented. It is an opportunity that must not be lost.”

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Barbara Byrd, Secretary-Treasurer of Oregon AFL-CIO, at the Regional Climate Policy workshop.

Environment America Energy Program Director Rob Sargent; Keith Reopelle of Clean Wisconsin; and President Emeritus of Stanford and Chair of the Sierra Club’s new Climate Recovery Partnership, also got right to the point, echoing a passage from President Obama’s inaugural address: “The good news is: Science is back.”

And on global warming, “the case is closed,” said Kennedy. “The Sierra Club has launched what we’re calling the Climate Recovery Partnership, a groundbreaking effort to solve the climate crisis and help our environment recover using new technology. We will be a serious effort in half a dozen sectors to evaluate new technology, support the political will needed to bring it to us, and empower the Sierra Club membership, one million three hundred thousand boots on the ground with an abundant supply of sweat equity in making this a better planet to live on, by bringing them the innovations that they need in support of their efforts.”

A Regional Climate Policy panel brought together representatives from the three regional climate change initiatives in the U.S.: The Western Climate Initiative, (involving seven states and four Canadian provinces); Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, (ten northeastern and mid-Atlantic states); and the Midwest.

continued on page 10

*Whoever said you can’t herd cats never tried a can opener* — Jim Hightower knocks em dead at the evening reception.
around the Monument, but must also support protection of the Monument’s natural values.

The natural splendor of the Monument is best protected by limiting the number of roads. The BLM should limit the roads in the Monument to those that support the mission of protecting the Monument’s values.

The BLM should consider the road network and lensing across the Monument in the context of the connectivity of the landscape.

The BLM should consider removing fences which inhibit the movement of pronghorn.

The BLM should consider closing and rehabilitating redundant roads, roads that serve no visitor or administrative purpose, and roads in sensitive resources areas.

There are a number of locations where off-road vehicle use is occurring contrary to the Monument proclamation and the current management plan. The BLM should document off-road vehicle use, analyze its impacts and develop a plan to address the impacts including signage, law enforcement and restoration.

Grazing/invasive species need to be managed to protect the natural environment. The BLM should analyze the impacts of livestock grazing to plant and animal species and ecosystems. The BLM should permit livestock grazing only if it can be demonstrated to benefit native species and ecosystems.

The BLM should consider phasing out the remaining long-term grazing leases and replacing them with annual fee use permits if grazing is used as a resource management tool.

To control exotic plant species, the BLM should analyze and consider the use of prescribed fire in conjunction with or as an alternative to livestock grazing and other methods.

The BLM should develop fire management policies and prescriptions for the Monument which provide for use of naturally occurring fire to restore and maintain the Monument’s species and ecosystems.

Oil and gas drilling can impact the natural landscape, plants and animals. The BLM needs to address the potential impacts of oil and gas drilling on split estate lands.

Hunting is one of many ways that visitors use the monument. However, the BLM should consider the impacts of non-game hunting to the Monument’s ecosystems and threatened and endangered species found on the Carrizo Plain, including the San Joaquin kit fox and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel. The BLM should consider limiting hunting to game species in season.

The BLM should consider prohibiting the use of lead bullets, because lead poisoning from those bullets can kill the California condor, an endangered species, golden eagles, and other raptors.

Target shooting can result in the accumulation of litter, soil contamination by lead and wildfires. It can also impact the safety and experience of visitors. The BLM should maintain its current policy of directing target shooters to facilities outside the Monument.

Now is the time to develop a smart approach to managing visitors to the Monument. Visitor use is expected to increase and the BLM should identify ways to accommodate current and future visitor use in a way which will prevent or lessen the potential impacts of visitor use.

**T A K E A C T I O N**

Copies of the CPNM Draft RMP/Draft EIS are available online www.ca.blm.gov/bakersfield. Comments are due by April 22. Send your comments via fax: (661) 391-6143, email at cacarrrizonmp@ca.blm.gov, or mail to:

CPNM RMP
Bureau of Land Management
3801 Pegasus Drive
Bakersfield CA 93308

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**Letters**

**CFLs: Other questions, not so frequently asked**

The CFL article by Dr. Wollman ("Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs: Frequently Asked Questions," February) was very informative and helpful. I do believe there are several other things to ponder, before jumping on the CFL bandwagon.

What about our economy and jobs? The congress has mandated CFL use in phases over the next several years, but no USA manufacturer produces these light sources, and is unlikely to begin production in our nation. This likely means all CFL lights will come from China. This hurts our trade deficit, and China does not have a good reputation for non-polluting manufacturing processes. Are we just going "green" to go green, and thereby have those problems grow in China? What about clean-up of those inevitably broken CFL lamps? Here is an EPA website that addresses the dangers we may be putting into our homes. www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.html#fluorescent

What about our health? The government says those mercury dangers are minimal and reasonably safe. That would be the same government that said "xx" radiation levels were safe in the 1950’s, then reduced the safe level exposure several times over the next few decades. Are they right about mercury now, or will they be right about mercury later? What health price might we really pay for this version of energy efficiency?

What about our electrical systems? When you turn on and off incandescent lamps, there are no voltage spikes in your wiring. When you do the same with CFLs, the voltage in your home wiring can spike to over 500 volts. Studies show that these voltage spikes damage computers and other electronic devices on an ongoing basis, which may well lead to their premature failure.

With the rise of "smart homes and appliances", and the fact that almost all our phones, TV’s, alternative energy systems, etc. have electronic controls in them; how will these voltage spikes affect the operation of our energy efficient systems? If even one "smart appliance” is damaged by these spikes, did we save any money by using CFLs? If one child breaks a CFL during “horseplay”, and breathes in the fumes, or gets the mercury powder on their face, are we doing the “right thing”?

The problems of power quality (voltage spikes, harmonics, etc.) are already raising concerns throughout the industry, and changing to CFLs will likely make that concern grow. There are devices we can install onto our electrical systems to reduce the issues, but they will cost more money, use more energy, need to be manufactured somewhere, and add to electrical system complexity.

Am I against using CFLs? No, but I think it best to put all the facts out to the members, so they can make their own decisions, based on knowledge and logic. I use CFLs, but only in select and safe physical locations, and only on circuits that do not also have electronic devices on the same circuit breaker.

I hope these infrequently asked questions will provoke research and discourse that leads to intelligent choices in energy conservation.

Joseph Furino, electrician

Most of these arguments are well known and readily answered: Incandescent bulbs are also made in China; parents should instruct children not to play with any potentially hazardous household item; mercury hazards are far better known and more accurately characterized today than radiation was in the 1950s, etc. The point about voltage surge, however, is a new one on us. According to Energy Star: "While there is a brief surge in energy use when a CFL is turned on, with today’s starting technology, that surge usually lasts about a tenth of a second and consumes about as much energy as five seconds of normal operation. So, even when turned on and off frequently, a CFL uses less energy than its incandescent equivalent. But because turning a CFL on and off more frequently can shorten its life and CFLs are more expensive than incandescents, we recommend consumers use CFLs in applications where they are on for at least fifteen minutes."

No word about potential harm to other appliances. Anyone out there have more info on this?
Sick Transit
continued from page 3

transportation system of the state and all the people of the state, including the elderly, the handicapped, the youth, and the citizens of limited means of the ability to freely utilize the systems” (Public Utilities Code 99220). Nonetheless, $3 million in the current year are being diverted from transit to road work by the six jurisdictions that have this habit.

Since RTA service CUTS were to be discussed later on the same morning that the SLOCOG Board convened to hear requests for service IMPROVEMENTS, many of the public spoke to the unmet needs that would suddenly befall them if it were no longer possible to travel among our communities evenings and Sundays. RTA passengers have recently stepped forward with a meaningful fare increase, and presented compelling arguments at the hearing, from personal stories to civil rights claims based on disability.

Thus, the decision makers issued a temporary reprieve from the service cuts, while creating a task force to search for efficiencies among our fragmented and sometimes redundant transit systems that could be implemented without compromising the ability of the carless public to get to work. After all, the RTA is only one of many systems providing transit in our county, albeit the one with the widest coverage. In the two cities that use all their eligible TDA for transit face challenges in balancing needs of their local systems with their proportionate contributions to the RTA system that connects us all. Indeed, the system in the City of San Luis Obispo faces its own prospect of significant service cuts, without the wiggle room of being able to redirect TDA funding from roads to its proper use. Thus, it is incumbent on all of us to continue to lobby the state and federal governments to provide or restore operating assistance for public transit in any way they can.

It is important to lobby our senators and congresspeople to be more generous with transit (whose funding in the federal “stimulus” bill was a pale shadow of road money) and to make the use of transit money flexible so that it can be used for operations as well as capital needs. The purpose of stimulus is to arrest the layoff-driven slide into depression, and prevent the layoff-driven slide into depression, thereby to arrest the layoff-driven slide into depression.

Flexible so that it can be used for

thus, it is incumbent on all of us to continue to lobby the state and federal governments to provide or restore operating assistance for public transit in any way they can.

solutions. We can learn about the state laws, such as AB 811, AB 117, and SB 375 which require and enable significant and rapid changes in our energy procurement, production and use. We can tell our elected officials and decision-makers that we favor the creation of a community energy financing authority to assist local citizens, businesses, and governments to bring renewable energy to San Luis Obispo County.

So what are these laws?
AB 811 is one of several creative measures that will assist California cities and counties to implement AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. AB 811 allows for the creation of a community energy financing district. The Santa Lucía Chapter and Sierra Club California has also identified AB 117, the Community Choice law, as an important tool to provide local funding opportunities to communities around the state, including San Luis Obispo County. The County has included Community Choice in its Draft Conservation and Open Space Element update as follows: Chapter 5, Goal #1 (Energy), Policy E 1.2 (“Local Control”), which states: “Determine if Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) or a similar program is a cost-effective and low-risk strategy to increase use of renewable energy. If CCA is a feasible option, consider joining the program.”

Water Experts on Tap

provide for protection and efficient management of water resources to the extent practical, conservation and high standards of environmental quality in all areas, as well as consideration of a variety of water supply sources, including reclamation.”

Event attendees may bring a brown bag lunch or reserve a box lunch for $15. To reserve a lunch or for more information, call 543-2220 or email sharri@sharriwhitney.com.

For more details about the event, visit the League website at www.LWVSLO.org.

Grand Jury
continued from page 4

retired people who have an active interest in local government. Even though we represent many different political views, we have bonded with a mutual respect borne of intense investigation of often thorny issues.

My experience on the GJ has benefited me in several ways. I achieved my objective of learning the process and players in local government. I gained enormous respect for the various governmental officials, staff and citizens who interact in this grassroots dance of democracy. And perhaps most fulfilling has been a sense of achievement at putting in many hours of hard work and study to understand contentious issues and make coherent recommendations that may have positive effect in our local community.
Green Jobs

continued from page 7

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord (six states and Manitoba). The business and investment communities were well represented at the conference workshops. Demis Bode, CEO of AWEA, provided an update on “the fastest growing energy industry in the U.S.—85,000 people directly employed; almost double that number indirectly employed; capacity growth of 32 percent in the last 4 years in the U.S., which is now beating Germany for the first time. (See www.newwindagenda.org).”

Cliff Majersik of the Institute for Market Transformation (www.imt.org) pointed out that “utilities lose money on energy efficiency unless you decouple energy sales from utility profits,” meaning the key to selling electric utilities on energy efficiency is not to tie their profit to the amount of energy they sell. But “the biggest obstacle to effectuating the lack of trained people to do green building.”

Weighing in with good news on that front was Michael Caplan of Berkeley’s East Bay Green Corridor Partnership between the city, UC Berkeley and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. The partnership has founded a Green Academy—with a four-year program in green energy management, engineering and architecture; a Green Economy MS and PhD; and community college bridge programs and certificates into green building trades.

The other kind of green

Others had tips for investing in the new green economy. Sheri Behrenbach of the Calvert Foundation, community lenders who specialize in poverty alleviation through the creation of green jobs and the sale of “community notes,” urged cities to avail themselves of the bond market, issuing bonds to raise capital for refineries. Nancy Plunt of the venture capital firm DML Investors, the San Francisco outfit that bankrolled the Tesla electric roadster, specializes in tiny companies that can have “an embryonic influence” on the next generation of companies while “enabling social, environmental and economic improvement in the San Francisco Bay Area’s low and moderate income neighborhoods.” She proclaimed her firm’s intention (take heed, SLO) “to fight the lie that you can’t do manufacturing in California. You can, if you put together the right inventive package.”

United Nations Under-Secretary General Achim Steiner asked “How many people know there are already more jobs in renewable energy worldwide than in the oil and gas industries?” But he did not stint on the dire statistics: “We have managed to reduce the biomass of large commercial fisheries by 90 percent; 25 countries have eliminated their entire forest ecosystems; another 29 have 90 percent of their forest ecosystems depleted... and our loss of fisheries, forests, biodiversity, desertification is not an inevitable outcome of their being six or seven billion human beings on the planet; it is the outcome of an arrogance, an ignorance and a lack of responsibility, as individuals, as communities, as societies.”

He expressed the hope that in a green New Deal, we would exercise our prerogative to shape the marketplace in a way that “serves the long-term objectives of our society.” Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN), who founded Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota before coming to Congress, defined the difference between this movement and the movements for civil rights, women’s rights and gay rights, noting that if you weren’t black, a woman or gay, respectively, you could be an ally of those movements, but you would never feel the direct weight of the injustice you opposed. “This movement doesn’t have ‘allies,’ he pointed out. “You are all directly affected. Everybody counts. Everybody matters.”

The conference closed with an address by Van Jones, the charismatic leader of Green for All, one of those speakers that no other speaker ever wants to have to follow. “We can’t just stop at solar power and not do anything about the water, the air, toxic waste and the way we treat each other... but water, I’ll wind up with green bulldozers and biofuled bombers and we’ll still have a dead planet in a hundred years.”

For Jones, “This is a profound movement, a noble movement: something that’s been torn apart too long, coming back together.” We’ve been “waiting and wishing for a long time,” he said, and we now have “a chance to take the struggle from the ballot box to the workplace. The sacrifice zones of the gray economy will be the sacred zones of the green economy we’re making.”

Sierra Students

continued from page 4

locations. The demand for these trainings has grown exponentially in recent years. We trained twice as many youth in 2008 as in 2007. While the demand is intense, we need as much help as we can get to spread the word about the programs. If you are a high school or college-aged youth, or know any; if you are a teacher or know one, please pass the word along about these programs.

Participants learn from some of the top youth organizers in the nation in these peer-to-peer training programs. Over the course of the week, partici-
pants learn how to start or sustain a group, recruit and develop new leaders, engage in strategic campaign planning, plan effective events, work with the media, engage their leaders and much, much more. Additionally, participants will enjoy playing games, hiking, and meeting other like-minded students. Every year, the program changes lives. Participants leave inspired and empowered to be leaders and bring out leadership in others. This is the way we build a movement.

Past participants have gone on to become National Director of the Sierra Student Coalition, sit on the Sierra Club’s National Board of Directors, land jobs working for the Sierra Club, SSC and other environmental groups and dozens of other prominent leadership positions on national and local levels.

Take a Hike!

continued from page 1

those not members yet, applications will be available as well. Partial scholarships may be available upon request.

The day’s schedule:

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.: First Aid Training hosted by the American Red Cross, along with being a member of the Sierra Club, one of the steps to becoming an official leader is to be First Aid certified. At the end of this short class, you will be certified and receive your First Aid card in the mail. (CPR certification is not required.)

30 minute break

1:30pm to 4pm: An exclusive Outings Leadership Training Seminar led by veteran leaders. This afternoon segment will consist of a mini-course, “Outings Leadership Training 101,” a curriculum of practical information for leading a safe, enjoyable, and informative outing. The Sierra Club believes this for all who desire to conduct outings. To make the material more relevant to our area, three veteran leaders will give pointers, interspersed with sometimes hilarious examples of things to do and avoid when leading hikes in the great outdoors.

4pm on: Pizza, beer, and refreshments, provided by the Sierra Club. If you are so inclined, bring a side dish to share. This is a chance to share your ideas and get to know other new and old members of Sierra

Outings Leaders. Come prepared to talk about a hike/outing you want to lead. We are not limited to just trails; ideas relating to urban, historical, or botanical tours are just the beginning of a list of varied types of outings. During this gathering, you will also have the opportunity to sign up for a hike with one of our established Outings Leaders, during which you will “shadow” the leader to become more accustomed to the nuances and protocols of leading.

Share your passion for exploring the beautiful Central Coast by becoming a Leader! Please RSVP for this event, as we have a limited number of spots available for First Aid, and space in general.

Contact Carrie Valenzuela at the Sierra Club office, 805-543-8717, by March 23.

Santa Lucian • March 2009

Labor takes the stage: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka, Sharon Board of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and Blue Green Alliance Executive Director Danita Foster field questions from the audience.

Lab
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is March 11. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
sierraclub8@gmail.com

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If you have loved ones in a nursing home or about to enter a nursing home – do not “spend down” their assets. Nearly ALL the assets of nursing home residents can be SAVED. Their care will remain the same. Nursing home residents have legal rights. Learn federal and state health insurance laws that work for the resident.

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Outings 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, question 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 in by the 1st for the next month’s outings.

Sun. Mar. 1st, 0930, Bike Ride Through Nipomo: Meet at junction of Willow * Albert Way for a tour of this tiny town. Easy ride, no dogs, kids welcome. Call (209-3647) or e-mail bdenneen@kcbx.net a few days before for details. Sponsored by Elder Bill.

Sat., March 7th, 9 a.m. - Noon. City of SLO, Johnson Ranch Trail Work Party: Bring gloves, water, snack and dress for the weather. Meet at the southern intersection of Ontario Road and S. Higuera Street. This City is trying to open up this are by next spring. But needs to build 3 miles of trail to make this happen. The more volunteers the better to make this happen.

Mar 8th, 0930, Sun. NATURE HIKES: NIPOMO AREA: Easy hike. Kids & dogs welcome. Call (209-3647) or e-mail bdenneen@kcbx.net a few days before for details. Sponsored by Elder Bill. (Dog Owners be sure of location prior to bringing your pet.)

Sun, March 8, 10 a.m. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles (see Pole Cats Can Turn You Into a Quadruped), Join us for an easy hike on the Eagle Rock Nature Trail. The trailhead is located across from Cuesta College at El Chorro Regional Park. From SLO, take Highway 1 North and turn east (right) at the first of two turn signals to El Chorro Regional Park. Follow the signs to the Day Use area, passing the ball fields and Botanical Garden. Park in the Day Use area at the end of the park, just before the locked gate. Confirm with Dam. Mar 8 at polecat@kcbx.org, or call 458-5575 for more information.

2nd Saturdays, 9am-12pm, OCTAGON BAR: South Higuera, SLO. We are walking on the southern - just south of San Luis Obispo. Restoration and development is ongoing at this Historic 1890’s old building site. We are in preparation to open the Barn as part of our 25th Anniversary Celebration Come join us on the 2nd Saturday of each month. Learn first-hand how historical restoration works and be part of the transformation of San Luis Obispo’s iconic Octagon Barn. Stop by to check it out if you’re not “handy” contact us about joining the Barn Committee to plan and strategize on opening the Barn for community use next year. Call 546-0996 for details. (Sponsored by The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County.)

Sat., March 14th, 8 a.m. Gifford Rike: Here’s a new place to check out off Route 166 east. It is not a spectacular hike, but still worth the drive. There is no data as of yet distance and elevation gain. The walk is up and back on the same route. There is some very steep terrain in the latter part of the hike which some individuals may not want to do. Estimated length is 8-10 miles. 1100’ of elevation gain and rating is moderately strenuous. Expect to be gone most of the day. The trailhead is 27 miles east of the Pacific 101 on route 166. There is very little poison oak. Ticks are probable. Rain postpones this to Sun, March 21st. Meet at Santa Rosa Park, SLO. Other pick up locations Halycon Exit commuter parking lot in A.C. and the dirt pullout at beginning of Route 166 in Nipomo as the meeting spots. If you want to meet in one of the latter places or want more information please contact Carlos to coordinate at 546-0317 prior to the hike.

Sat-Sun., March 14-15, Ghost Town Exploration: Come with us to this spectacular desert landscape near Death Valley to explore the ruins of California’s colorful past. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Sat, do a very challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this wild west town. Later we’ll return to camp for Happy Hour, a potluck feast and campfire. On Sun, a quick visit to the infamous Rhyolite ghost townsite before heading home. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Logenia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Pheonix, CA 92329, (760) 968-2179. CNRRC Desert Committee.

Sat., Mar. 21st, 8:00 a.m. - Rocks Corral Exploratory Hike: Come take a 10 - 13 mile, with unknown elevation gain as this is an exploratory hike on the Avenales Ranch East of Pozo. We should have plenty of wildflowers, and pleasant weather. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes, and plan to be out all day. Meet at the Pacific Bever- age Company in Santa Margarita. This is not a beginner’s hike. Limit 20 people. For details, reservations, and meeting place (473-3984) (5e) Rain or threat of rain cancels. 

Fri.-Sun., March 20-22, Califonia Desert Wilderness Spring Service: Enjoy our traditional spring expedition (ing) in far eastern California desert helping BLM’s Needles office wilderness coordinator Mona Daniels restore and improve wilderness - car camping with central comissary by Vicky Hoover. Contact Vicky, (415)777-5557, vicky@hooveri sierracountys.com, CNRRC Wilderness Committee and Mojave Group.

Sun, March 22, 10 a.m. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles (Pole Cats Can Turn You Into a Quadruped). Meet at the Quarry Trail at the Cabrillo Peak trailhead. From SLO, go 12 miles north on Hwy 1 to Los Osos/BarrelWood park exit just before Morro Bay. Go south on Southbay Blvd, and drive .7 miles to the State Park entrance. Continue straight for .2 miles and look for the dirt parking lot on the left. It is easy to miss. Do not walk at the Live Oak trailhead, which is shortly after the Quarry trailhead. Confront with David George at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

Wednesday Hikes Return, March 25th 5:30 p.m.: 1 to 2 hour hike around San Luis Obispo - 4 or 5 miles with elevation gain around 1200 feet. Sign up for the Hikers list for information.: backpackingary1@gmail.com

Saturday, March 28th: Outings Leaders and Others Training Day: If you are interested in improving your outdoor skills and taking on a first aid course this activity may be for you. Come meet other like minded people and see what it takes to be a leader for the Sierra Club. For more details and reservations, call 543-8717.

Sat., April 4th, 9 a.m. - Noon. City of SLO, Johnson Ranch Trail Work Party: Bring gloves, water, snack and dress for the weather. Meet at the Pacific Beach Commuter parking lot in A.G. and the dirt pullout at beginning of Route 166. There is very little poison oak. Ticks are probable. Rain postpones this to Sun, March 22nd. Meet at Santa Rosa Park, SLO. Other pick up locations Halycon Exit commuter parking lot in A.C. and the dirt pullout at beginning of Route 166 in Nipomo as the meeting spots. If you want to meet in one of the latter places or want more information please contact Carlos to coordinate at 546-0317 prior to the hike.

Sat-Sun., May 15-16, Ghost Town Excursion: Come with us to this spectacular desert landscape near Death Valley to explore the ruins of California’s colorful past. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Sat, do a very challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this wild west town. Later we’ll return to camp for Happy Hour, a potluck feast and campfire. On Sun, a quick visit to the infamous Rhyolite ghost townsite before heading home. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Logenia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Pheonix, CA 92329, (760) 968-2179. CNRRC Desert Committee.

Sun, May 24, 10 a.m. - Rocks Corral Exploratory Hike: Come take a 10 - 13 mile, with unknown elevation gain as this is an exploratory hike on the Avenales Ranch East of Pozo. We should have plenty of wildflowers, and pleasant weather. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes, and plan to be out all day. Meet at the Pacific Beverage Company in Santa Margarita. This is not a beginner’s hike. Limit 20 people. For details, reservations, and meeting place (473-3984) (5e) Rain or threat of rain cancels. 

Fri.-Sun., May 29-31, Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park: A 4-day backpacking trip through Channel Islands National Park. In spring, the islands are ablaze with wildflowers. The pristine waters of the Marine Sanctu-ary will entice both snorkelers and kayakers at all the eight of whales, dolphins, sea and land birds, endemic plants, and reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands thousands of years. All islands are ringed with rugged shorelines and dotted with sea caves. Each island offers a very special charm:  San Miguel for white sand beaches and a picturesque lighthouse, a rookery, a picturesque lighthouse, excellent snorkeling waters and a colony of friendly sea lions who will swim with snorkelers and follow kayaks.

Sun.-Fri., April 5-10, Fences and Flowers in the Carrizo Plain: a service opportunity: This National Monument is famous for open spaces, for abundant wildlife, and for its springtime wildflowers. Fences significantly restrict the movement of the resident pronghorn antelope, and our service will be in modifying and removing fences for their benefit. We will plan a work party on April 5, three and half a day of service, and a full day for exploring the monument. Use of accommodations at Goodwin Ranch included. Limited to 12 participants: $10 covers 5 dinners. For more information, contact leader Craig Deutsche, deutsche@ earthlink.net, (310-477-6670), or co- leader Melinda Goodwater, mgsowater@scbglobal.net, (408)-774-1257). CNRRC Desert Committee

Santa Lucian - March 2009

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

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Cruising Dates:

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

Cruises leave 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 Califor-nia. To make a reservation mail a $100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader: Joan Jones Holtz, 11320 The Wise St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information: 626-443-0706; boltzhrn@aol.com