Got Clean Power if You Want It

Sierra Club brings climate action to SLO

From June 11 through June 17, Dave Erickson was a busy man. Not that he isn't pretty busy most of the time. Erickson, Senior Carbon Analyst for Local Power Inc., a Bay Area energy consulting firm, was in SLO at the invitation of the Santa Lucia Chapter. We offered to put him up for a week on our nickel, proposing that he address several groups of local elected officials, planners and managers on the recently completed Sonoma Climate Action Plan, the most ambitious plan to cut carbon emissions to be proposed by any county in the United States. Erickson served as technical director.

He accepted, and proceeded to address meetings of city managers, the SLO Chamber of Commerce Sustainability Committee, the Santa Lucia Chapter’s Energy Task Force, and the Sierra Club’s South County Energy Town Hall in Grover Beach. The discussions were all about Climate Action Plans, policies that municipalities statewide are drafting in order to meet the mandates of California’s Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and a shift to renewable energy sources. SLO County recently completed a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, the prerequisite to embark on the preparation of a Climate Action Plan. As the name of his company implies, Erickson is a specialist in local power, a concept that Local Power Inc. helps local governments to implement as they navigate the legal, logistical and financial challenges to creating renewable energy projects. The company led San Francisco’s CleanPowerSF program, the largest local green energy project in the world, and created the first renewable energy financing authority in the U.S.

Local Power Inc. also authored California’s Community Choice law (AB 117), which allows cities and counties to aggregate the buying power of individual customers to secure alternative energy supply contracts. Community Choice Aggregations (CCA) in Ohio and Massachusetts deliver greener power, charging ratepayers less per kilowatt hour than Investor Owned Utilities. Perhaps the most arresting piece of information Erickson shared with officials from our County and cities about Sonoma’s experience was the finding that staying with PG&E rather than going with a Community Choice energy aggregation plan would result in the county falling short of their Climate Action Plan’s emissions reduction targets by 35 percent. (PG&E procures more than 40

Pre-meeting of the minds: On June 11, Grover Beach Mayor John Shoals, Renewable Energy Secure Communities (RESCO) grant project manager Mark Shefrin, County Supervisors Jim Patterson and Adam Hill and Sonoma County Climate Action Plan Technical Director Dave Erickson met to discuss SLO County’s energy future before attending the Sierra Club’s South County Energy Town Hall in Grover Beach.

To read the Sonoma County Climate Action Plan, go to www.coolplan.org.

No Santa Lucian in August. Have a cool, green summer!
How to Green Our Electricity

By Ray Pingle, Sierra Club California Energy-Climate Committee

How can California encourage investors to generate renewable electricity? How about a guarantee that if they generate the power, they’ll be paid at a good price?

That’s the idea behind the so-called “feed-in tariff,” the most effective, proven strategy to bring renewables on-line—quickly, in quantity, and at appropriate cost. Under a feed-in tariff, a utility pays standardized rates to producers of renewable power so that they can compete against conventional power.

Californians now pay electricity generators (usually a plant fueled with natural gas) according to the “market price referent,” a rate paid to investors to generate renewable energy. Utilities have decades of experience with this technology, and as costs come down, energy can be expected to decrease.

Predicted rate decreases.

Two of the studies showed increases in electricity rates. It concluded that the predicted rate decreases.

On March 1, Gainesville, Florida, implemented the first feed-in tariffs in the U.S. for photovoltaic solar. On March 10 its web site reported: “We have already received enough completed applications to reach our 2009 and 2010 target of 4 megawatts each. We will continue to accept and approve applications in the order in which they are received, to fulfill targets for future years.”

In less than 10 days, Gainesville achieved its goal for 2009 and 2010. Will feed-in tariffs increase electricity bills? In the short term they probably will, since some categories of renewable energy will be more expensive—but not by much. In Germany, the program increased costs to consumers by about $3/month. A 2007 study by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory analyzed 28 state-level studies designed to project the impact of increased renewables on electricity rates. It concluded that the median bill impact would be an increase of 36 cents per month, depending on the type and size of the project.

Over time, as with any new technology, the cost of these new sources of energy can be expected to decrease and become more cost-effective. The state would reap the rewards for each such technology, and as costs come down, new contracts would be pegged at lower rates. A 20-year contract signed in 2010 for a 10 MW wind system might pay $0.08/kWh, while a contract in 2012 for a similar project might pay $0.04/kWh. Germany has built its own such projects.

A European Union Commission analysis found that feed-in tariffs achieve greater growth in renewable energy at a lower cost, than other policies. Due to feed-in tariffs, Germany and Spain have become Europe’s largest renewable energy producers, and Denmark now produces more than 20% of its electricity from wind alone. Spain started working to incentivize the development of renewables in 1980 and also improved its program over time. During 2007, Spain’s wind-capacity additions set a European record with 3,522 MW installed in a single year, and Spain’s photovoltaic market grew by over 300%.

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Outings, events, and more!
New Brooms

A weight has been lifted off the County Planning Department. Can a corner be turned?

The spectacular departure of Chief County Administrator David Edge last May sucked all the oxygen out of the room and buried another story which, on any other day but the day when both stories broke, would have been the top news item of the month: The sudden departure of County Planning Director Vic Holanda.

Holanda’s “retirement,” an event bracketed between two closed-session performance evaluations in as many weeks, was a tangible demonstration of the new Board of Supervisors’ break with the old guard.

Edge underlined the point in his venom-lipped public farewell to the Board on May 19, when he took pains to knock down the official story on Holanda’s near simultaneous departure, saying “I would not have chosen to end my career this way, preferring rather the approach you took with my friend Vic Holanda.”

Holanda was hired by the infamous Mike Ryan Board, shortly after the new Chief Administrative Officer, David Edge, stripped the position of the civil service protections afforded his predecessor, Alex Hinds. (Not surprisingly, Hinds read the writing on the wall and accepted a more compatible arrangement in Marin County.) Poetically, both Edge and Holanda were swept into the county on a wave that broke in the 1996 election; a wave which has now receded and swept them both out in the wake of election 2008.

Environmentalists and smart growth advocates have been gritting their teeth for twelve long years, as the county Planning Department, under Holanda’s laissez-faire management style, used tortured logic and selective hearing to justify any number of environmentally ghastly projects. Most recently, the Santa Margarita Ranch subdivision, the Shandon Sprawl Town Plan, the San Miguel Ranch General Plan Amendment, the Huasna Valley oil field expansion, and a slew of sand and gravel mine proposals on the Salinas River have collectively required thousands of hours of community volunteer efforts to challenge.

What these projects all have in common: A spectacularly heedless and destructive quality that causes rational, independent minds to ask, “how can they do this?” Whether the planning director condoned them or was oblivious to them, he was responsible for his department’s decisions.

But with Holanda’s departure, Board members now have an ideal opportunity to recruit a planning director with the values, talent, judgment and leadership to achieve the vision they were elected to implement. This vision has been articulated over and over at numerous community planning workshops, summits, and charrettes. It is a vision that is simple to articulate but has been perniciously difficult to produce. Essentially, the public wants the county to:

* Preserve (for real) agriculture and open space.
* Protect scenic views.
* Maintain community separators, so that the North County does not become SanPasoDero.

New Brooms

Now it’s time to say goodbye.... The Holandan Era fades away.

* Provide a housing mix that accommodates public transportation and creates walkable communities.
* The “what” part is easy. The “how” will take backbone, experience and commitment. It will require a combination of General Plan and ordinance amendments, project conditions, and LCP revisions. It will require thinking outside the box. It will require the fortitude to say “no” to those relatively few projects that simply should not be built, and the ability to articulate the legally defensible argument as to why. And most importantly, it will require the management skills to change the fundamental culture of the Planning Department and inspire the staff to pursue professional excellence with future generations in mind, not just the applicants paying the fees.

Undoubtedly, there is untapped talent within the County Planning Department. Although there has been a steady brain drain since 1996, some truly committed public servants remain.

But the Department’s new leader should not be selected from among the current ranks. The bunker mentality that has developed over the last decade cannot be cast off quickly enough to get this urgent job done. The Board needs new ideas and fresh energy to match its own. They have given the department a morale-boost by helping show Holanda the door. Now they need to give their staff the gift of empowerment that can only come from an outside perspective. Cities and counties all over the country are re-inventing themselves to meet today’s challenges with respect to energy, transportation, environmental restoration, local food systems, and more. We need a Planning Director who has walked around and worked within those communities to guide us out of our miasma.

Despite our daunting economic crisis, San Luis Obispo remains a fabulous place to live, and there is still much to save. We have the weather, landscape, academic lure and business opportunities to attract the best and the brightest. We have a refreshing new political climate that promises to support and celebrate bold creativity. The Board should undertake a nationwide talent search to find the person who is best equipped to lead the Planning Department in a new direction. Opportunity is knocking. Let’s be smart, gracious hosts and open the door.

Grand Jury Slams County Planning on Oceano Dunes

Land use issue first raised by Sierra Club results in scathing report

Key information deleted from a crucial County document on a major proposed land deal, an omission first brought to light by the Santa Lucia Chapter over a year ago (“Scandal in the Dunes,” May 2008) has resulted in an investigation by the SLO County Grand Jury and a damning report which concludes that the County Planning Department’s it-was-an-accident explanation was not convincing and the evidence of a deliberate attempt to deceive is overwhelming.

The story began at the February 25, 2007, meeting of the County Planning Commission. The California Department of Parks was seeking to secure permanent title to the land in the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreational Area that it currently leases from the County. County Planning Director Vic Holanda had issued a determination that there would be no difference in the use of the County’s land as a result of selling it to State Parks, and that there was no conflict with the County’s General Plan policies as a result of the sale.

If for the testimony of the Sierra Club at the February 25 appeal hearing, at which we produced the map from the County’s Local Coastal Plan clearly showing the County land in question had been designated as a vehicle “buffer area” since 1983 and ignored by State Parks ever since, the Planning Commission would not have known of the designation. When the Commissioners found out, they declared there was a conflict between the use of the land under State Parks’ Management Plan and the use designated in the LCP, overturning Holanda’s determination...
Sierra Club California held its annual convention at Rancho El Chorro, across from Cuesta College, over the weekend of May 30.

Much of the meeting time was given over to plotting a course through the legislative hazards and opportunities presented by the current climate in Sacramento. Former Assemblymember John Laird, Saturday evening’s keynote speaker, analyzed the epic budget mess and the May special election that was supposed to fix it in “State Politics, Redistricting and Budget: Does the Sierra Club Have a Role?” Laird has introduced the idea of increasing the state vehicle license fee as a way to fund the 220 state parks that the Governor wants to close. (A joint Budget Conference Committee formally proposed the measure in the state legislature on June 15.)

SCC Deputy Director Michael Endicto noted the opportunity to greatly improve the composition of the California Coastal Commission as the terms of two very bad commissioners are expiring, and the Sierra Club is taking the opportunity to press for the appointment of saltwater coastal defenders, San Diego City Councilman Mike Dore and Santa Cruz County Supervisor Mark Stone to replace them.

Endicto was taken aside by concerned Santa Lucia Chapter delegates after his speech and requested to replace them.

We are extremely fortunate that she welcomes Dawn Ortiz-Legg, who is known as one of the worst Commissioners placed in the Hands of SLO’s own Katcho Achadjian. Way to go, Katcho: You’re still number one!

Although budget cuts have reduced staff, Sierra Club California’s advocacy team continues to speak out on the full range of environmental issues faced by the state. In April, Capitol Weekly named Sierra Club California Director Bill Magavern to the 38th spot on its “Top 100 List” of the most influential non-elected political players in the state, saying “Magavern is a critical environmental voice as it relates to government policy and legislation. He and his colleagues weigh in on all things environmental: water, air, timber, land use and increasingly, global warming.” (No other environmentalists placed in the top 50.)

The dismal condition of the state’s budget is currently posing a threat to a number of important environmental programs. In addition, the polluters and their allies are attempting to use the economic downturn as a rationale for rolling back our delaying some of our most important protections.

We are fighting global warming, generating clean energy and stimulating green jobs. Sierra Club California is working with the Legislature, Governor and Air Resources Board to speed our state’s transition to a green economy that sustains both jobs and our atmosphere. We can make national- leading progress this year by:

* Raising the Renewables Portfolio Standard to 33% or higher by 2020, and improved implementation.
* Requiring major polluters to pay for greenhouse gas emissions, revenues go to clean energy, public transit, green jobs, low-income consumers.
* Protecting community health while we address global warming by including strong smart growth measures and safeguards against “hot spots” of local pollution, and limiting loopholes like excessive offsets.

California’s current water policies are failing to provide our people, our economy, and environment with adequate clean, affordable water. We must respect, and adjust to, the natural limits on our waters and waterways. To that end, Sierra Club California is seeking to:

* Promote statewide water conservation and efficiency, including enacting legal requirements for water metering and a 20% reduction in per capita water use statewide by 2020. To enhance a comprehensive solution to the problems of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta that restores the Delta ecosystem while providing a reliable water supply for the state.
* Build best management practices for urban water agencies by revising existing BMPs for water loss detection, and developing new BMPs for water recycling.

We are protecting Californians from toxic threats. Bipartisan 2008 legislation gives the Department of Toxic Substances Control the authority to ensure that consumer products sold in California are safe for our families and our environment.

Sierra Club California is taking the opportunity to help Sierra Club California pass our remaining bills as the session winds down; hot issues this year are renewable energy, water conservation, air quality, park protection and resilient habitats.

You will find out that it is possible to have fun and save our environment at the same time! Past participants have found it to be an eye-opening and rewarding experience. Participants should expect to pay some costs, but some travel and lodging reimbursements will be available, depending on location.

For more information, please contact Annie Pham, Legislative Aide at lobbysd@sierractcbcalifornia.org or (916) 557-1100 ext. 107.
GOP Wool-Pulling Tour Comes to SLO

On May 28, Representative Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield) anchored the Central Coast edition of a series of “energy summits” that Republican Congressmen staged around the country that month as the American Clean Energy and Security Act was making its way through legislative subcommittees. Their message to their SLO audience: Let’s relax the meaning of the word “renewable,” build lots of nukes, and make greenhouse gas emission caps voluntary.

McCarthy was accompanied on the stage by fellow Republican Representatives Devin Nunes from Tulare, Bob Latta of Ohio and Lee Terry of Nebraska. Their attempt to pull green wool over the audience’s eyes could not obscure their records: All voted against the American Investment and Recovery Act, which funded renewables; and against the energy bill, which included dedicated funding for renewables; and against a recent school construction provision that included funding for renewable energy for schools and would be putting solar panels on our schools right now but for their opposition. They now style themselves as supporters of renewable energy.

We cannot improve on the response to the GOP’s energy summit penned by Sierra Club volunteer Ken Smoshoka, printed as the Viewpoint “Strengthen, don’t weaken, energy act” in the Tribune’s June 16 edition. If you missed it, go to www.santaluisapost.com/letters-to-the-editor/21309.html.

Are we green yet? Rep. Kevin McCarthy told the audience at Cal Poly’s Spanos Theater that we should not “make the mistakes that Spain made” in creating green jobs through its renewable energy program. See discussion of the debunked charges of Spain’s “mistakes,” Letters, page 11.

There’s the Water

New report: California businesses could save more than enough water to supply Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco. Innovative businesses, agencies show how to save money with water efficiency

In the midst of a third dry year, California’s water supply continues to shrink as the state’s population grows, but according to a new report by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the state’s commercial, industrial and institutional (CII) sector has the tools to save more than enough water to meet the annual needs of Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego combined. Some leading California businesses and institutions are already catching on - saving water and money at the same time.

“If our water supply and save money. And some trailblazing California businesses and water agencies are already showing us how it’s done.”

The complete report, Making Every Drop Work: Increasing Water Efficiency in California’s Commercial, Industrial and Institutional (CII) Sector, is available online from NRDC. In February 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger called for a 20 percent reduction in per capita water use by 2020, and legislation to help reach that target is pending in the State Assembly (AB 49). California’s CII sector - which includes office buildings, hotels, oil refineries, golf courses, schools and universities, restaurants and manufacturers - is responsible for one-third of urban water use, making progress in this sector essential to reaching this reduction goal. The CII sector uses the equivalent of more than a million Olympic-sized swimming pools of water annually. NRDC estimates California businesses could save about 25-50 percent of that water with efficiency measures, or as much as 700,000-1.3 million acre-feet - the equivalent to 350,000-650,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Water efficiency improves water quality, supply and ecosystem health by reducing polluted landscape runoff.
About That Budget...  
Interpreting the Failure of Prop 1A

by Sheila Kuehl

The Problem With the Rhetoric

Immediately after last May's special election, the Governor announced that the “voters had spoken” and that the defeat of Prop 1A “clearly” meant that Californians stood adamantly against any new taxes or fees. He must have been reading the learning in the bottom of his tea cup in order to come to a favored conclusion, however, because there was no evidence to support his assertion. Quite the opposite, as a poll taken between May 16 and May 20 showed.

The Governor didn’t stop there. Building on his unsubstantiated assertion, he went on to maintain that he, therefore, had no choice but to propose a budget that would put the wrecking ball to California’s safety net for healthcare, children, the elderly and schools.

As shown below, his conclusion as to the meaning of the “No” vote on Prop 1A is not true, and, therefore, these proposed cuts, and a budget with no new revenues, is not the most acceptable answer for California’s voters.

What Would Prop 1A Have Done Again?

Many voters indicated they were confused by Prop 1A, and with some good reason. Like every one of the Propositions on the May 19 ballot, Prop 1A was originally constructed to satisfy Republican demands in exchange for a minimal number of “aye” votes on the February budget. As such, Prop 1A would have placed a spending cap on future budget expenditures. Then, in order to placate Democrats who did not agree with the spending cap as drafted, an extension to the new sales tax was added to the Proposition, giving virtually everyone something to hate.

An Interesting Irony

It seems sadly ironic that, just as the rest of the United States is rejecting the right wing’s long stand against our rhetoric, California, the long hold-out, is embracing it. Years ago, Grover Norquist, one of the right wing’s mouthpieces, said that his goal was to shrink government down to where it could be drowned in a bathtub. By patiently denigrating government, valorizing private enterprise, establishing flexible term limits to guarantee an inexperienced legislature, setting up a 2/3 vote requirement to raise a tax but only a majority to lower one, government in California was set up for the shrinkage. But California proved stubborn. Support of schools and the safety net continued. Since, by definition, these are jobs only the government can perform, government continued to be an important part of all solutions to poverty, education and healthcare.

Until now. Even our moderate Republican Governor, along with a seemingly cowed Democratic majority in both houses, contemplates throwing in the towel by balancing the budget with nothing but cuts, cuts, cuts, thus fulfilling Grover Norquist’s desire.

But the call for these cuts is predicated on misunderstanding the tea leaves of the defeat of Prop 1A, in an election in which only 23% of registered voters voted (4 million out of 17.1 million, or about 10.5% of Californians).

What Did The Voters (and the Non-Voters) “mean” by the Defeat of Prop 1A

The only real information we have about voters’ intentions is a poll conducted between May 16 and May 20 of 603 people who voted in the election and 405 who did not. According to several sections of the poll:

1) 4 out of 4 voters and non-voters simply thought these propositions should never have been put to them for a vote.

2) 7 out of 10 did not like that the Governor and the Legislature keep balancing the budget “on the backs of average Californians” instead of requiring special interests to pay their fair share. Only 20% thought all Californians were being asked to share the pain equally.

How About the “No on 1A” voters specifically?

This is the result that puts the lie to the Governor’s interpretation. Of voters who voted “no” on Prop 1A, less than half said the government should rely entirely on spending cuts and not increase taxes. 65% of all voters agreed that shared responsibility should be part of the solution and not simply reliance on spending cuts to balance the budget.

Do “No” Voters on Prop 1A Support Any Taxes?

According to the poll, 62% of “no” voters supported increased taxes on alcohol (75% of “yes” and “no” combined supported this tax), 62% supported increased taxes on tobacco (74% of all voters), 60% supported an oil extraction tax on oil companies drawing oil and gas in California (73% of all voters), 58% supported not allowing corporations buying property to be protected by Prop 13 (63% of all voters), 55% supported not allowing tax credits for companies to go over 50% of what they owe in taxes (59% of all voters).

Conclusion: Voters Would Support a Balanced Approach

Even so, the budget will have to incorporate deep cuts no matter what the solution. The only question is how much, and whether some of the cuts can be made less deeply because revenue solutions are part of the answer.

Sheila Kuehl is a former California State Senator. If you want to read her follow-up essay “Next: A Possible, Though Still Painful, Way to Balance the Budget” or subscribe to her essays, please go to her website at www.SheilaKuehl.org.

There’s the water

continued from page 5

and the amount of water taken out of rivers and streams - making it an important tool in managing the troubled San Francisco Bay-Delta and restoring the state’s quarter billion dollar salmon fishery. Water efficiency has also proven to be good for the bottom line of businesses, as it lowers water bills and energy costs, as well as wastewater charges and costs for chemicals and water purification.

Payback for investing in water-efficient technologies is between one and four years. Many water agencies help accelerate payback by providing free water audits, equipment and technology rebates, and in some cases, free-water-efficient products and installation.

While the CII sector has made some progress over the last decade, there is still a tremendous potential for improving water efficiency and lowering bills. The report reveals:

* Commercial dishwashers use 25 percent less water in commercial kitchens. A water-efficient commercial dishwasher would reduce water use by 25 percent. Commercial kitchens can also save up to $1,050 a year on energy and water bills with a water-efficient pre-rinse spray valve, and cut faucet water use and related bills in half with a low flow faucet aerator, which run less than $5 each.

* The average hotel will use more than 604,000 gallons of water every year just to wash bed sheets and towels. If that hotel installs a water-efficient washing machine, it can cut that number by 58 percent.

* Landscaping, such as at office parks, schools, parks and street medians, is responsible for one-third of the CII sector’s water use. But with just a few irrigation controllers that adjust for weather conditions, commercial-sized landscapes can reduce water use by 40-50 percent.

* Restrooms are responsible for 15 percent of CII water use. Low-flow showerheads, which can be purchased in bulk for $5-12 each, can save 2 to 3.5 gallons of water per shower. More efficient toilets and urinals could save 35,000-84,000 gallons a year.

The report provides case studies and a reference for other CII facilities and urban water agencies to begin taking advantage of savings opportunities.
Chapter Awards Banquet an Enchanting Evening

The SLO Botanical Garden provided an enchanting setting for the Santa Lucia Chapter’s fourth annual awards banquet & fundraiser on May 30.

The theme “Landscapes of Change” was chosen to celebrate 2009’s new legislative terrain and to highlight the Chapter’s work over the past year to advocate new government policies in smart growth, appropriate technology, food security, clean energy, protections for ag land, and affordable housing. From start to finish, the event was designed to illustrate models of sustainability found on the Central Coast.

A walkway of bright orange California poppies, golden mustard, lavender, and olive-toned rosemary plants provided a painterly background of Mediterranean colors to welcome guests. Matt Bitter, Director of the Cal Poly Plant Conservatory, opened the festivities with a tour of the Garden, which showcases plants in our Mediterranean climate that don’t need fertilizers or pesticides and can live with limited water. Traditional and Latin jazz vocal stylings by Lynn Manzella, with pianist Bob Harway, bassist Dylan Johnson and drummer Jim Stromberg filled the courtyard where guests enjoyed food, drink and appetizers generously provided by local businesses. Judith Bernstein solicited the donated wines, which were all certified as Sustainable in Practice, denoting the wineries’ commitment to protecting both natural and human resources. We’re grateful to Castoro Cellars, Halter Ranch, Pomar Junction Vineyard & Winery, Robert Hall Winery, Sauveteau Canyon Vineyard, and Wolff Vineyards for allowing us to offer their SIP wines. SIP Certifications address sustainability issues such as energy conservation, employee benefits, wildlife habitat and water quality.

We were also pleased to serve organic, fair trade Yerba Mate provided by Guayaki, founded by two Cal Poly students who developed a restorative business model linking consumer purchases of healthy Yerba Mate products in North America with indigenous South American communities engaged in sustainable agriculture and reforestation projects. Thanks to Michael “Don Miguel” Newton, their Orange County & Southern L.A. area manager, for personally delivering a variety of delicious donated desserts generously provided by Melody DeMerritt, Mary Fullwood, Evi Justesen, Leslie Knisk, Karen Merriam, Brandy Michelle, Kim Ramos, New Frontiers and Splash Café.

The entire evening flowed smoothly due to the efforts of an amazing group of volunteers who met up an hour before the event and melded their efforts seamlessly to organize, set up, serve, respond, clear, and break down all the elements required to create this wonderful evening. Our heartfelt thanks go to our volunteers, whose help we appreciate their help more than they could know. Many, many thanks to Sean Basalyga, Val and Tirtza Abuan of Andalouise Mediterranean Cuisine orchestrated a subtly-blended vegan menu of Vegetable Eggplant Moussaka; Balkan Salad, Lime, Celery and Cabbage Salad; Orange Spring Mix Salad along with a Taguine of Chicken and couscous, almonds and cranberries. Tirtza was assisted in performing her magic by her incredible crew, Danielle Abuan, Mark Summer and Chas Partridge.

The meal was followed on a sweet note with an array of delicious donated desserts generously provided by Melody DeMerritt, Mary Fullwood, Evi Justesen, Leslie Knisk, Karen Merriam, Brandy Michelle, Kim Ramos, New Frontiers and Splash Café.

Cape Ann, a fine wine importer and distributor, generously provided a wide selection of wines for our guests. SIP Certified Wines are produced by Santa Lucia Chapter member Michael Flitts of the Endangered Habitats League and Allison Chin, President of the Sierra Club Board of Directors, who inspired us with speeches based on their vast experience in land use activism and organizing.

Coordinating it all was the Chapter’s wizard of Administration and Development, Kim Ramos of Americorp’s Central Coast Volunteer Corps.

Karen Merriam, Chair of the Santa Lucia Chapter’s Executive Committee, presented the evening’s awards: - Steven Marx received the Chapter’s highest honor, the Kathleen Goddard Jones Award, named for our founder, for his sustained commitment and dedication to the mission of the Club to explore, enjoy and protect the planet. - Bill Denneen received the Inspirational Outings Leader Award for his decades of Outdoor leadership. - Eric Veium, who collaborated on an award-winning grant to help the County to assess and deploy renewable energy. - John Johnson for her work collecting data for greenhouse gas inventories, and - Veium, who collaborated on an award-winning grant to help the County to assess and deploy renewable energy.

Daw Barbosa, Judith Bernstein, Kathy and Kristin Filipponi, Laura Reller, Cyndee Jones, Rebecca Larsen, Nicole Panos, Liz Tracy, Barrie Valencia, Mac VanDuzer, and Nali Weinstein. Special thanks, of course, to our keynote speakers, Michael Flitts of the Endangered Habitats League and Allison Chin, President of the Sierra Club Board of Directors, who inspired us with speeches based on their vast experience in land use activism and organizing.

Clockwise from top left: Michael Flitts of the Endangered Habitats League delivers the keynote speech; guests arrive at the Botanical Garden; Executive Committee member Holly Oelofse and Morro Bay City Councilwoman Betty Winholtz kickin’ it; Chapter Chair Karen Merriam congratulates Steve Marx on receiving the Kathleen Goddard Jones Award; Bill Denneen receives the Inspirational Outings Leader Award.

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Climate Action Plan

percent of its power from natural gas, and despite its high-profile solar power procurement plans and other “green” measures, the overall carbon intensity of its energy emissions is projected to remain essentially the same.

The Sonoma plan mandates a break with PG&E as a provider (it will continue to maintain the wires) so the County and its municipalities can initiate a CCA program and exercise local control in choosing their own energy provider and service rates while increasing the amount of non-polluting renewable energy they use.

Erickson emphasized the benefits Sonoma has found in Distributed Generation (DG) over traditional dependency on a few remote, centralized sources of energy—i.e., large power plants. In a DG scenario, power is generated and used locally, derived from multiple smaller scale sources. A distributed generation plan can be funded on the public power model, in which public utilities traditionally offer rates 15 to 20 percent lower than investor-owned utilities and levelize costs, making green power competitive with natural gas.

“From the supply standpoint, it’s a slam dunk,” Erickson said, noting that the end result of full implementation of a localized power plan is 100 percent energy self sufficiency for the county. “Sonoma could just as easily have called our Climate Action Plan a jobs plan, or a green economic recovery plan, or an energy independence plan,” he said.

Erickson pointed out that a Climate Action Plan means “huge savings to the extent that your greenhouse gas reduction measures free you from the fossil fuel markets.” And forming a Community Choice Aggregation in order to do so provides access to municipal bond financing, the lowest cost capital available.

“The Sonoma Climate Action Plan is

Energy Town Hall: Grover Beach

About fifty people— including County Supervisors Adam Hill and Jim Patterson, Grover Beach Mayor John Shoals, Santa Maria City Councilwoman Hilda Zacharias and members of the Grover and Pismo Beach city councils and the Nipomo Community Services District — turned out for the Sierra Club’s South County Energy Town Hall on June 11.

Mayor Shoals welcomed attendees to the event, held at the Ramona Garden Park Center, a major public transit hub for South County which Shoals has big plans for by way of making it even moreso in the future, expanding bus service and reconfiguring the Grover Beach Amtrak station.

“We’re living in exciting times,” he said. “Educate your elected officials. It’s through your efforts that they will find the fortitude and the political will to do the right thing.”

The highlight of the evening was Dave Erickson’s riveting presentation on Sonoma County’s Climate Action Plan (see our front page.) Let us do likewise!
Fall at Clair Tappaan Lodge

By Olivia Díaz, Co-Chair
Clair Tappaan Lodge Committee

Fall at Donner Summit in the Sierra Nevada is a bit of a secret. Most people associate Donner Summit with snowy road conditions, skiing and frosty breath. If you only know it in the winter, you are missing a real treat.

Clair Tappaan Lodge, located among four popular ski resorts on Donner Pass Road, is open all year long. But it seems as though a bell rings on Labor Day and our guests forget about the Lodge until the onset of winter. However, September is peaceful and the weather is clear and sunny. Most of the hiking trails are empty, not the busy thoroughfares they are during summer. In October the evenings get cooler and the colors begin to change.

If you look at the CTL webpage at www.sierraculo.org/ outings/lodges/ctl/activities.asp you will see that on September 4th there is a full moon hike. If you haven’t seen the moon rise over the Sierras, you are missing something grand.

Have you considered coming to the Lodge for Thanksgiving? The food is great and someone else does the cooking. The costs at Clair Tappaan Lodge are so reasonable, that you can invite family and friends to join you. You always get a good value at CTL. Remember that overnight fees include 3 meals.

Check out the website, or call the Lodge at (800) 679-6775 or (530) 426-3632.

Help save the Oceano Dunes and the Cayucos Viewshed: Fund the Sierra Club’s public interest litigation

The Sierra Club is suing the State of California to establish a vehicle-free buffer zone in the Oceano Dunes, as was promised twenty years ago in the Local Coastal Plan. We are using the County of San Luis Obispo to fix a “whacked protection” ordinance written by special interests that opens up the Cayucos Viewshed to regulations-free development. Litigation requires a significant outlay of funds. Please donate at the highest level you can. Your donation is tax-deductible.

[Read the 'Oceano Dunes Sale' Grand Jury report at: www.slocourts.net/grand_jury/reports]

Smoking gun: There was just one, small detail...

Naficy pointed out the omitted text to the County Supervisors during their deliberations on the proposed sale of the County property at their board meeting of April 15, 2008. New Times broke the story in their May 22 edition. Chapter Director Andrew Christie urged the board to investigate the matter at their June 3 meeting.

Planning Director Holanda went on vacation and into retirement on June 1, 2009. The Grand Jury, after a year of interviews and file reviews, released its report on June 15. We concur with the findings of the Grand Jury. Someone evidently went to unacceptable lengths to close a land deal that would have meant a $5- million payday and put nearly 600 acres of County land in State hands, but for the existence of current land use policies that clearly don’t permit the use to which the land is being put.

The Sierra Club has a particular interest in the Grand Jury report. Our lawsuit against State Parks seeks to compel Parks to declare those 584 acres of County land in the dunes off-limits to off-roaders precisely because of the LCP policies that someone in the SLO County Planning Department tried to erase. State Parks and the local branch of the off-road lobby have contended that the map from the LCP is inconsequential and is superseded by State Parks’ general use policies that clearly don’t permit the use to which the land is being put.

If you want to change this...

If you want to save this...

...then you need to support us.

For more info on the Oceano Dunes and Cayucos Viewshed, contact us at: info@sierraculo.org.
Renewable energy will kill us all
Santa Lucia Chapter - Sierra Club,

The public has been misled into believing that "renewable" energy is a good thing, but the provable facts show just the opposite. Hobbies may be a waste of time, but not enough to waste the energy from the wind, the sun and the soil. The true facts show that real human beings need concentrated and nonrenewable energy to survive.

Renewable energy schemes other than hydroelectric power take up too much land area and produce far too little energy to be of significant value. Wind power is a useful way to pump irrigation water, and solar panels are a responsible way to power a few light bulbs in a remote vacation cabin, but they are both terribly inefficient ways to power an entire nation. Humans need affordable reliable power 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, just when the wind blows and the sun shines. Barack Obama and T. Boone Pickens claim that building wind turbines in America will provide many “green jobs,” yet a study of Spain’s energy program found that for every new job created by state funded wind power schemes, 2.2 jobs were lost due to higher energy costs, and each new wind power job cost almost $2,000,000 in government subsidies.

Advanced civilization demands the use of highly concentrated, noninterferable forms of energy. ... It is a mathematically provable fact that the only way Americans can escape the fossil fuels with the inherently weak energy of wind, solar, and biotufes will cripple our economy and create massive starvation on a global scale.

Christopher Calder
Eugene, Oregon

Trend-spotters, take note: As it becomes increasingly obvious that global warming denial is absurd and indefensible — with shrinking ice caps, rising sea levels and a growing checklist of consequences that were predicted in climate change models ten and twenty years ago all coming true, those dire forecasts now appear too conservative compared to the even more dire reality — look for an increasing migration from the ranks of GW denial into renewable energy denial. Those shots are being called, as before, by corporate think tanks, their “studies” disseminated by foot-soldiers of a libertarian bent, determined to defend the last redoubts of a fossilized regime. Mr. Calder provides two cases in point. When citing studies to support one position, it’s always a good idea to check the source, and the numbers. Criticisms of Denmark’s wind power program trace back to a report by the UK Centre for Policy Studies, an ultraconservative political think tank founded by Sir Robert Thatcher in 1974 to “roll back the state” and “30 years of socialist fashion” by championing free market economics and deregulation. That this experiment recently collided with economic reality and has gone horribly wrong for most people on the planet has not stopped the defenders of these impulses from spinning their theories from digging their trenches deeper and firing away at anything that looks like it might be threatening "The Anything Things, High on that list: Any shift away from fossil fuels and makes to renewable energy.

Sigrud Lauge Pedersen, Senior Adviser to the Danish Energy Agency, refuting arguments such as Mr. Calder’s that rely on the CPS report, has replied that Denmark currently gets “about 20 percent of its energy from wind power,” has in fact “closed several coal and oil fires plants in the last 10 years,” and that “the 2008 electricity price in Denmark to medium-sized industries is 7.85 euros/kWh, which is below the European average of 8 euros/kWh.” Last May, the Energy Collective blog reported that the construction of oil for electric power producion in Denmark “has fallen (from over 47,000 terajoules in 1980 to just over 11,000 TJ in 2007); as has consumption of coal (from near 214,000 TJ in 1980 to almost 167,000 TJ in 2007).” The Spanish study on the alleged failure of Spain to create jobs through its commitment to renewable power, which was seized upon by the ultra right using Heritage Foundation to make the case for fossil fuels forever, was authored by the head of a politically think tank and recipient of Exxon-Mobil funding. It has been thoroughly debunked. In “Heritage Promotes ‘Completely Untrue’ Attack On Green Jobs,” available online at The Work Room, one finds that “The report, based on bad numbers, grossly underestimating that Spain’s renewable power created only 50,000 jobs, when official estimates are 188,000. Indeed, the study is claiming that ‘government spending on renewable energy is less than half as efficient at job creation as private-sector spending,’ the Wall Street Journal’s Keith Johnson explains. Critics neglect to say that ‘Spain’s support for renewable energy came out of existing tax revenues,’ so ‘it’s hard to see how it could have edged out private-sector spending, especially when the Socialist government there has reduced corporate income-tax rates, most recently this past March. The motion that wind power in the U.S. has received more government subsidies than the nuclear and fossil fuel industries is at odds with the historical record. We assume Mr. Calder was unable to come down from Eugene to join us at our Energy Town Hall in Grover Beach last month, where he could have heard from Local Power Inc.’s David Erickson about Sonoma County’s Climate Action Plan, which provides a roadmap that will lead to the kind of carbon reduction objectives Mr. Calder insists cannot be met without recourse to the dinosaur technologies he insists on, demonstrating how the methods and renewable sources he insists cannot possibly meet those objectives will do just that. Mr. Erickson, writing with Paul Fenn and Robert Freling, punctures Mr. Calder’s nuclear balloon with a paragraph in their article “Carbon reduction tax dollars better spent on demand reduction, not maggieard schemes” in the May 2009 issue of Natural Gas & Electricity: “Many in industry and government are considering ways to decarbonize the fuel supply through nuclear power, but this option is not viable. Even if nuclear were given the green light today, it would be a decade before significant new capacity can come on line. From that point, one new nuclear plant would have to be built every five years to replace the existing 100 gigawatts of nuclear capacity as it retires over the next 40 years.” In other words, that four-nukes-a-gear pace of construction, at $10 billion a pop, would have to be maintained to preserve the status quo, before even turning to the question of how many additional nukes it would take to start reducing greenhouse gas emissions below current levels, with all financial risk borne by taxpayers. Advocates for the technology that holds the distinction of being the most expensive way ever devised to boil water are now jockeying to win for their industry the distinction of being the way to cut carbon emissions. That’s one of the reasons why the Sierra Club will continue to press for carbon reduc- tions through means that are faster, cheaper and more effective than the nuclear option.

We commend to Mr. Calder’s attention the editorial “Let’s Clear the Table” in the June Santa Lucian, which cited FERC Chair Jon Wellinghoff’s statement that the U.S. may not need to build any new coal or nuclear power plants at all. We also recommend the New York Times article reporting that speech, as Chairman Wellinghoff went on to explain to the reporter the reasons for his statement, which directly challenge many of the core beliefs and fears about renewables and baseload power expressed by Mr. Calder, folks of a reactionary mindset, and the nuclear and fossil fuel lobby.

Put yourself on the SLO Sierra Club E-Alert list
Get immediate news on events of environmental interest, public meeting and hearings where your attendance could make the difference, and the low-down on the issues that matter.

Drop a note to sierracalifh8@gmail.com and ask to be subscribed to Sierra Club e-alerts for San Luis Obispo.

Support a Marine Sanctuary on the Central Coast!
Biologist Terri Lilly’s amazing HD underwater footage is used in National Geographic documentaries with Sylvia Earle. Come see Lily’s documentary of rockfish of the SLO coast. Learn about our rapidly changing marine environment. See hundreds of unusual creatures, including some new species never before filmed. Help protect and preserve our central coast.

Fri., July 10, 6-9 pm, La Perla del Mar Chapel, 205 Windward Ave., Pismo Beach. $5 admission. A portion of the proceeds will support our efforts to expand the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to include the Central Coast. For more info & location, contact: Terri Lilly, 441-2206, or Barrie Valencia 543-8717.
Early morning, the dog and I start upon my favorite path here and I begin chalking up the joys I encounter in this spot by the sea: the whisking of feathers in the underbrush - the skittering of lizards across the trail - rampant color in yellows and tangerines (the waves of lavender and blue have receded) - grey sky offset by the emerald patches of estuary, where clumps of exposed eel grass cluster - the delicate padding of little bunny feet in the sand - and bands of swallows careening past, as if to bid me welcome.

My being takes refuge in this place where the rhythmic meter of my pace seems to make music - the soft percussion of steps onto the creaky boardwalk, alternating with small thunks when my feet meet rotting lumber. Then into the composition comes the quartet of Brant geese, their tinny sounds punctuating the pieces of quiet. Suddenly I sense I am hearing the spirits of the Chumash speaking to me through the voices of the dove, hawk and quail - their tender murmurings seem to say, “Take this tranquility and this sweet simple music into your center and be humbled, once again, by our mysterious universe.”

- Kalila Volkov

(The Elfin Forest is a small wilderness preserve in Los Osos)
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 (473-3604). For information on a specific outing, please contact the outing leader. Outings Leaders please get your outings or events by in the 1st for the next month’s outings.

Wed., July 1 & 8, 15, 22, 29; August 5, 12, 17, 25 @ 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes around San Luis Obispo. approx 5 miles round trip. Limited to 10. Bring water and dress for the weather. E-mail: backcountryguy@gmail.com for details.

July 4-6, COTTONWOOD LAKES BACKPACK: Moderate backpack, 12.5 miles round trip with 1000’ gain to Muir Lake. Saturday, day-1, hike in. Day-2, 6-9 miles route with 1000’ gain to Muir Lake. Sunday, day-3, return to the trailhead. approx 6 miles with 1200 foot elevation gain. Bring sturdy shoes and water. Meet at the locked gate before the locked gate. Confirm with David Geogheen at policellaler@ gmail.com. Call 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipeds welcome.

Sat-Sun., July 11-12, White Mountains Canyon Exploration. Camp in the Hammel Valley east of Bishop and explore Pellissier and Birch Canyons in two day hikes. I know the Birch Canyon narrows can be surmounted, but there may be some route-finding involved. We won’t attempt any real rock-climbing. Limit 12. Leader: John Wilkinson, johnwilson1@mac.com (408) 876-8829

Sun. July 19, 5:00pm, Sierra Singles - Lemon Grove Trail Loop/Maino Loop. Hike to the Cerro Alto Summit where you can see the volcanic chain known as the Nine Sisters. Moderate 5.1 mile hike with an elevation gain of 1600’. Bring sturdy hiking shoes and water. Meet at the parking lot to the trail head off of the Marsh Street onramp to the 101 South. Possible gathering for ice cream/snack afterwards in celebration of National Ice Cream Day. Call Stacy (818-472-6827) or Karen (544-6628) for more details.

Sat., July 25th, 9 a.m. Anniversary Hike Up Shoshone and Down Morning Glory Loop. Join Gary and Darlene as they start their day-long celebration with a hike and eats in on West Pole Cats is dedicated to the coming of the railroad produce many instant millionaires? Learn these stories on a guided stroll past century-old homes and shops in downtown SLO. Children welcome. Meet at Jack House, 536 Marsh St., SLO. Info: Joe (772-1875)

Sun., Aug. 9, 9:00a.m. Hike Islay Road to Barranca Trail to Ridge Trail. 1.2 mile hike on Montana de Oro. Moderate with 1600 ft. elevation gain. A pleasant loop hike with great coastline views from the top of Hazard Peak. Bring water, snacks, dress for the weather. Meet at parking area across from Ridge trailhead. Typically 4-5 hours. For info, call Chuck @ 805-441-7597.

Sat., August 15, 9:00am, Sierra Singles - Cerro Alto Shores hike. Hike to the Cerro Alto Summit where you can see the volcanic chain known as the Nine Sisters. Moderate 5.1 mile hike with an elevation gain of 1400’. Sturdy hiking shoes, water, snacks. Meet at day use parking area at the back of the campground. $5 day use fee per car at Cerro Alto Campground. Call Stacy Talbert (818-472-6827) for more details.

Sat-Sun., Aug. 22-23, Ancient Brittlebush Pine Forest. Come to the White Mtns for a moderately 5 mile loop interpretive trail hike, picnic lunch, optional hike to mining cabin. Group size limited. $20 per person. 2 large SASE, contact & rideshare info to Reserv/Ldr: Lygeia Gardner, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329, (760) 868-2179. CNRCC Desert Committee.

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