Old Nukes? Whoa, Nukes!

by the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility

This month, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold a public hearing on the criteria in Generic Environmental Impact Statements for proposed reactor license renewals. The NRC has already approved license renewals for 54 reactors at 29 sites without updated criteria. These aging reactors were licensed to operate an additional twenty years without a current assessment of the environmental impacts associated with license renewals.

The NRC scheduled the only California hearing in West Lake – 113 miles north of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, 155 miles south of Diablo Canyon, and 384 miles from oversight agencies and affected legislators in San Francisco and Sacramento. The hearing will be held September 22. Demand NRC hearings on environmental impacts of license renewal beheld near San Onofre and Diablo Canyon. Contact Senator Boxer: http://boxer.senate.gov/contact/email/boxer.cfm. More information can be found at www.ancr.org.

A New Day Dawns for Graywater

Appropriate Technology Coalition publishes San Luis Obispo Guide

A two-year effort by the Appropriate Technology Coalition – SLO Green Build, the San Luis Bay Chapter of Surfrider and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club – has brought forth the SLO Guide to the Use of Graywater, the first-ever guide to installing graywater systems in the county.

Graywater comprises up to 80% of residential wastewater. Increased demand for water and pollution of the water table has adversely affected once-balanced ecosystems and made water an increasingly valuable natural resource. Clean potable water is the most valuable type of water, but graywater can be extremely useful and should not be considered a waste product but a valuable resource that can be applied to irrigation and other non-potable water uses. Harvesting graywater to meet your non-potable water demand utilizes an appropriate technology that can recover initial costs quickly.

The potential ecological benefits of greywater recycling include:
- Lower fresh water extraction from rivers and aquifers
- Less impact from septic tank and treatment plant infrastructure
- Topsoil nutrification
- Reduced energy use and chemical pollution from treatment
- Groundwater recharge
- Plant growth

The added benefits to our watershed and community infrastructure make having a graywater system an environmentally friendly solution to scarce water supplies. Since more than half of your indoor water can be reused as graywater, now is the time to tap in!

The Guide should be available from most municipalities in the county by the end of this month at $10 a copy.

California Approves New Graywater Standard

By Art Ludwig

As of August 4th, 2009, Californians could legally install simple laundry and single fixture graywater systems without a permit. For the first time, licensed professionals can legally help with the 1.7 million existing graywater systems in the state. A collision of world views was in full evidence at the July 31 California Building Standards Commission hearing on the proposed new graywater standards. Highly qualified stakeholders spoke passionately for...
General Meeting

Transition Towns

7 p.m. Wednesday, September 23rd
Stevens Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo

“Transition Towns” swarms across the pond from England and has taken root in the fertile ground of San Luis Obispo County. Looking to address the three toughest challenges of our time—peak oil, economic instability and climate change—by rebuilding community resilience and self-sufficiency, for our September program when Transition Towns activists make a Powerpoint presentation and share their experience organizing local initiatives in North County, South County, the coastal communities, and the City of San Luis Obispo.

Invite your friends/social network to the program at 7 or come early and enjoy the Stevens Gallery’s great selection of drinks and pastries and its always fascinating exhibit of local artwork.

For more information, call 772-1875.

At the Circus

In this summer of “birthers” and “death panels,” Danny Schechter of MediaChannel commented that the birther movement, for all its looniness, is succeeding in making the legitimacy of Barack Obama’s presidency into a widespread topic of discussion. “Our adversaries are chanting ‘We Shall Overthrow,’” he wrote, “sensing possible victory—whatever that means—that the angeroid factions are now seeking to polarize the public to topple the Administration with an electronic coup d’media.” He noted that we need to “realize that all politics does not occur in DC,” and in the county – would include, in all future land and resource decisions on the Carrizo Plain leaned heavily on lobbying for utility-scale power plants because she runs a bed & breakfast.

The Executive Committee meets the Friday of every month at 12:00 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 547-B Marsh St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

Other Leaders
Open Space
Gary Felsman
Sales
Bonnie Walters
Chapter History
John Ashbaugh
Activities
Outings
Joe Morris
Canoe/Kayak
open
Webmaster
Monica Tarzier
Chapter Director
Andrea Christie
Coordinator
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continued on page 10
Localize It

When it comes to the future of clean energy in SLO, there’s one thing the County needs to do above all else.

In the course of a 15 minute Powerpoint presentation at the Board of Supervisors on July 21, Sierra Club interns Chad Worth and Nancy Cole summed up what the Santa Lucia Chapter found over the course of four energy town halls that we conducted across the county over the last six months, attended by hundreds of local residents: When it came to energy generation, “Localize” was a main theme that emerged.

Town hall participants told us of the “need to look in before looking out,” said Worth. “House by house, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood... It was very much let’s do it here, do it in our back yard, do it our way.” That speaks for an overall theme of keeping it locally distributed.

For our last town hall in June, we brought down Dave Erickson, senior carbon analyst for Local Power Inc., a bay area energy consulting firm. As the name of his company implies, Erickson is a specialist in local power, a model which his company helps local governments to implement as they navigate the legal, logistical and financial challenges to creating renewable energy projects. His company led San Francisco’s CleanPowerSF program, the largest local green energy project in the world, has written implementation plans for city and regional governments, and created the first renewable energy financing authority in the U.S.

Erickson talked about the Sonoma Climate Action Plan, on which he served as technical director and which mandates that the County and its municipalities initiate a Community Choice program -- as SLO County’s Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) update recommends -- and exercise local control in choosing their own energy provider and service rates while increasing the amount of renewable energy they use.

Erickson emphasized the benefits Sonoma has found in Distributed Generation over traditional dependency on a few remote, centralized sources of energy – i.e. large power plants. In a Distributed Generation scenario, power is generated from multiple smaller scale sources and used locally. A distributed generation plan can be funded on the public power model, which levelizes costs, and in which rates are 15 to 20 percent lower than with investor-owned utilities.

“From the supply standpoint, it’s a slam dunk,” Erickson said. 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,” he said “or a green economic recovery plan, or an energy independence plan. We’re using Community Choice to achieve the nation’s most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction. It’s essentially a public works project to meet the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2015.”

That’s what distributed generation is. And that’s what you can do when you put policies in place that favor and encourage it.

For the last six months, the residents of this county have been telling us that this is the energy future they want. Our County Supervisors have the opportunity to give it to them.
How to Handle a Bus Strike

Transit users between rock, hard place

By Eric Greening

At the time I write this, it is impossible to know the outcome of the current melodrama on the Regional Transit Authority system that connects Central Coast communities from Santa Maria to San Miguel. A strike vote by drivers and bus workers was held on July 30. Voting, and the motion to strike passed, but as of August 9th, the strike had not yet begun and may not at some time in the future. The action is being taken by the Teamsters Local 800 in a controversy over whether they are the current choice of the employees. Some drivers are decided to renew their Teamster membership and seeking other representation; amalgamated Transit Union or a County Bargaining Group. Those are in a hugely state of flux, and this is very distressing to the riders, especially those who don’t drive or own cars, and who utterly rely on transit for access to work, health care, and other necessities. The Regional Transit Authority carries 2000 riders on an average weekday. Since most of these are making round trips, the number of actual people is probably closer to 1000, but still is a substantial rolling community. Another problem is the connection to Santa Margarita, San Miguel, or Shandon. If you can imagine one of those communities being quarantined, with nobody getting in or out, that gives you an idea of the scale of the impact. In the event of a strike, there might still be buses moving now and then, driven by non-union operators, and a moral dilemma transit riders would face would be whether to put their lives on hold and air their action amount to crossing a picket line. It would certainly go against my own grain to participate in that kind of protest; by the same token, strike would need the support of the public to deprive management of farebox revenue until they address the real needs of underpaid employees. And the drivers are underpaid; they are public safety professionals with our lives in their hands, and they deserve far more than the $12.50 to which they are public safety professionals with real needs of underpaid employees. How to Handle a Bus Strike

Those of us who are not part of the single-occupant vehicle habit that is destabilizing our climate are offered nothing. Not that I personally would choose to allow them to take on the role of drivers on a Board meeting at which this last recourse is attempted, to allow for this resolution to pass and to allow riders to attend this Board meeting. At present, none of the four criteria have been met. If they were, I would like to believe that “choice” riders (those with cars at their disposal who use the bus for economic or environmental reasons) would be willing to car-free and offer rides during the strike—that the diverse rolling community of bus users who could contribute in support of the people who get them safely to their destinations. I do believe that the drivers are intrinsically deserving of support; it is shameful that while people with polluting vehicles are rewarded with up to $4500 for replacing them with somewhat less-polluting vehicles, the people who use most of the single-occupant vehicle habit that is destabilizing our climate are offered nothing. Not that I personally would choose to allow them to take on the role of drivers on a Board meeting at which this last recourse is attempted, to allow for this resolution to pass and to allow riders to attend this Board meeting. At present, none of the four criteria have been met. If they were, I would like to believe that “choice” riders (those with cars at their disposal who use the bus for economic or environmental reasons) would be willing to car-free and offer rides during the strike—that the diverse rolling community of bus users who could contribute in support of the people who get them safely to their destinations. I do believe that the drivers are intrinsically deserving of support; it is shameful that while people with polluting vehicles are rewarded with up to $4500 for replacing them with somewhat less-polluting vehicles, the people who use most of the single-occupant vehicle habit that is destabilizing our climate are offered nothing. Not that I personally would choose to allow them to take on the role of drivers on a Board meeting at which this last recourse is attempted, to allow for this resolution to pass and to allow riders to attend this Board meeting. At present, none of the four criteria have been met. If they were, I would like to believe that “choice” riders (those with cars at their disposal who use the bus for economic or environmental reasons) would be willing to car-free and offer rides during the strike—that the diverse rolling community of bus users who could contribute in support of the people who get them safely to their destinations. I do believe that the drivers are intrinsically deserving of support; it is shameful that while people with polluting vehicles are rewarded with up to $4500 for replacing them with somewhat less-polluting vehicles, the people who use most of the single-occupant vehicle habit that is destabilizing our climate are offered nothing. Not that I personally would choose to allow them to take on the role of drivers on a Board meeting at which this last recourse is attempted, to allow for this resolution to pass and to allow riders to attend this Board meeting. At present, none of the four criteria have been met. If they were, I would like to believe that “choice” riders (those with cars at their disposal who use the bus for economic or environmental reasons) would be willing to car-free and offer rides during the strike—that the diverse rolling community of bus users who could contribute in support of the people who get them safely to their destinations.

Somewhere, however, this doesn’t get the attention it deserves. Or the Administration; transit operating funding was almost entirely left out of the transportation bill, and “cash for clunkers” operates on the logic of the protection racket (“You want me to stop polluting, pay up!”). So, dear reader, if the real, day-to-day lives of our transit drivers and drivers are an abstraction for you, get on the bus and get to know the people there. You will meet folks of all backgrounds, ages, and stations in life, and experience the real diversity of the Central Coast in a way you can find in few other places. The RTA, with its 1000+ daily round-trip riders, is only one of the multiple transit providers in our area. Cumulatively, the systems carry multiple thousands of people both ways every weekday, and smaller but significant numbers on weekends. If this is a Central Coast community you have never visited before, and you can’t find it on the map, get to know it; you will never forget the people you meet!

Transit Note

The “Graphic Arts” stop at Cal Poly will be moved in September with the closing of South Perimeter Road; this should affect the SLO City lines 4, 5, and 6, and the Regional lines 9 and 12. Most service will likely be rerouted via a stop to be created near the Kennedy Library. The stop at the PAC will continue in service as is.

Local Food for Thought

Pallet to Plate, the annual SLO celebration of the benefits of buying and eating fresh local food, featured gala dinners, a party and auction, and a market cooking demos throughout the month of August, and also featured a barn-burner of a panel discussion, “Let’s Be Frank...About Local Food,” at the Cliffs Resort on August 16. At $5 a head, including grass-fed pastured beef and pastured turkey hot dogs and salad, it was a bargain by any measure, but the panelists were more than worth the price of admission. The panel, moderated by Cal Poly’s Neal MacDougall, Director of the Sustainable Agriculture Resource Consortium (SARC), featured Larry Bain, a restaurant entrepreneur and co-founder of Let’s Be Frank, which sells those aforementioned grass-fed beef etc. hot dogs via street cart vendors; Bradley Ogden, James Beard Award-winner for Best Chef of California and the creator of the award-winning Root 246 restaurant in Solvang’s Hotel Corque; and Judith Redmond of Full Belly Farm, a 250-acre organic farm in Yolo County, and a family farming advocate who serves on the advisory boards of the UC Agricultural Sustainability Institute and the Sustainable Agriculture Resource Consortium at Cal Poly. The panelists addressed the question: How do we make local food, affordable food, healthy food and great food synonymous? Is this a “lifestyle” issue or a “democracy” issue? Redmond opined that “the best way to get affordable, healthy food is to encourage people to get food that comes fresh from the farm and learn how to cook it at home.” Chef Ogden asserted that it is ultimately cheaper to buy from a farmer’s market than a supermarket because you tend to buy in smaller quantities in the former than in the latter. Audience members insisted that this didn’t change the fact that food that’s fresh, local, organic, etc. tends to cost more than food that’s none of those things. Bain, who ran a social justice non-profit before he started opening sustainable, socially responsible restaurants, urged the audience to “think systemically” and emphatically answered the “lifestyle vs democracy” question: “The stuff we have to buy, like education and health care — unlike countries where you don’t have to pay for those — is what determines what money is left over and what’s affordable for you,” he said.

Local farmers pressed the issue of how we can get actual, sustainable food systems in place and how small farmers can pay and get paid a living wage when their operations “run between the red and the black 99 percent of the time.” Redmond identified the problem as the absence of “infrastructure, incentives and efficiencies,” which “just aren’t there” for small farmers, unlike what Big Ag has managed to secure for itself via a steady stream of federal farm bills and subsidies. The conversation turned to the Food Safety bill, cunningly devised to point at small farms as the source of food-related illness outbreaks while shielding big growers and processors from its onerous requirements despite the fact that more than 90% of foodborne illnesses trace back to feedlot cattle and heavily processed veggie eatables spreading disease through the centralized, industrialized food system.

“Let’s the lobbyists writing the rules, not the politicians,” Redmond pointed out, and Big Ag’s mega corporations out small farms. “We don’t have an organized voice,” she said. “We need to help build the organizations out there that could tell our story in DC and Sacramento.” “You need to get politically active,” Bain agreed. “Voting with your fork works up to a point, but you need to vote with your vote.

TAK ACTION

Knowledge is power and in network- ing there is strength. Here are three good ways to start doing more for healthy local food, small farmers and sustainable food systems: Get in touch with the Environmental Working Group (www.epic.org/ferms) and join the Changemaker’s Network at Roots of Change (www.rootsfund.org). And on September 7, join “Time for Lunch,” the national day of action to get fresh food into schools. Go to www.slowfoodusa.org and click on Events.
Taking Issue
problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Remove Sarah Christie from the planning commission,” by Andy Caldwell, New Times, July 23, 2009
“Grand jury biased, critic claims,” by Bob Cuddy, The Tribune, July 25, 2009
“Argument against Sierra Club is silly,” Editorial opinion of The Tribune, August 2, 2009
“Discussion of complex issues is being undermined,” The Tribune, August 6, 2009

Summary: Near simultaneous attacks on the Sierra Club, the County Planning Commission and two reports by the County Grand Jury this summer had a common but hidden thread, which Chapter Chair Karen Merriam subsequently unwound in a Tribune Viewpoint.

W e congratulate The Tribune for debunking Kevin Rice’s accusations against the Sierra Club. (“Argument against Sierra Club is silly,” Aug. 21). Standing up in defense of the natural world for 117 years has made the Sierra Club a target for detractors of many persuasions. We prefer honest, healthy debate on issues. Unfortunately, as the Tribune noted, Mr. Rice’s attack was personal, not substantive; all about individuals and conspiracy theories rather than “focusing on the report itself.”

It’s a political tactic: Change the subject and kill the messenger. The grand jury found evidence of serious misconduct in the preparation of a County Planning staff report which simply deleted a land use policy conflict pertaining to the proposed sale of county land in the Oceano Dunes – land that for off-roadsers like Rice has become the hill to die on. Mr. Rice attacked jurors and the Sierra Club in his attempt to discredit the report.

It’s one thing when such attacks are focused on the Sierra Club over a single issue; it’s quite another when they are fronts for larger political strategies aimed at subverting the will of the majority.

Last year, our country and our county voted for change. That’s why we have a new president, and, closer to home, a new majority on the Board of Supervisors. The voters want big change — strong leadership with a vision for reducing climate change through energy efficiency and renewable energy; promoting smart-growth land use; supporting local sustainable agriculture; and stewarding wildlands and endangered species.

Change will always face resistance from those invested in the status quo. It is in this light that several recent local events are clearly illuminated: The intense, coordinated pressure on the Planning Commission in updating the Energy chapter of the Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE), and the baseless attack against a Planning Commissioner over another grand jury report.

The findings of that report, which exonerated Planning Commission Chair Sarah Christie from ridiculous and insupportable charges, have been distorted. The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB), an organization representing an extreme view of private property rights, is relentlessly calling for Christie’s removal — at public meetings, op-ed pieces, and wherever else anyone will listen. COLAB represents interests that lost some influence when their friends were voted off the Board of Supervisors last year. They want back what they lost.

Then there is the COSE, an update that will serve us well only if it is founded on a clear vision with specific strategies for reaching goals that protect our livelihoods, our health, and the environment. How will our decisions today determine our decisions for decades to come? For example, will we blindly rush to the judgment that we must locate utility-scale solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain to meet energy demands, or will we first consider how rooftop arrays and the development of local, distributed generation of energy could meet our needs with less environmental impact? Are we willing to accept destroying an irreplaceable landscape or will we first consider how rooftop arrays and the development of local, distributed generation of energy could meet our needs with less environmental impact? Are we willing to accept destroying an irreplaceable landscape?

The duty of citizens to stay informed and hold elected officials accountable. It is the duty of our local elected representatives - as the agents for that change — to ignore the distraction of baseless attacks and to exercise the political courage and vision needed to advance the meaningful change that will be their legacy.

Karen Merriam is the Chair of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Upshot: Whether it’s COLAB whipping up a fake scandal in an effort to make County Supervisors cave, unseat a planning commissioner, and fast-track a strategy to put an anti-environmental board majority back in charge of the county in order to cater to their collection of economic special interest groups, or “the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity” employing a p.r. agency that forges letters to Congress on the letterhead of constituent organizations to urge opposition to the energy bill, the same thing is happening everywhere these days. Stay alert.
Coastal Cleanup Day at 25
Saturday, September 19, 9 a.m. to Noon

by Holly Sletteland

The California Coastal Commission is gearing up to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Coastal Cleanup Day. After a quarter of a century, Coastal Cleanup Day is still the largest volunteer event of its kind in the world.

It also remains the largest volunteer event in the County, turning out hundreds of volunteers to remove trash along the coast that has accumulated over the course of the year. We’re hoping that this will be the biggest and best cleanup ever! We’re organizing cleanups at 28 local beaches, from Point Sal to the south to San Simeon in the north. All of them will take place on Saturday, September 19th from 9am to noon.

Trash on our beaches and in our oceans doesn’t just look bad, it is bad for the gulls because they feed on those places home and for the people that visit them. Beyond being an eyesore, some trash like broken bottles, jutting nails, and old syringes, can cause injuries to beach goers. Trash can also damage boats, clog intake pipes, discourage tourists and cause other economic hardship. It can also harm ecosystems by transporting invasive species and smothering life on reefs and the sea floor. But most worrisome of all, trash is extremely dangerous for marine wildlife, including seabirds, turtles, seals, dolphins and whales. Every year, hundreds of thousands of animals suffer and die needlessly from eating or getting tangled up in our discard, such as plastic bags, six pack rings and old fishing gear.

Coastal Cleanup Day is very much about getting the trash off our beaches. But it’s more than that. It’s about accepting responsibility for keeping the beaches clean, even if the trash is not our own. It’s about identifying what kind of trash is out there and trying to figure out where it came from. It’s about going back to the source and finding effective ways to stop the flow, whether that be through education, ad campaigns, product redesign (think flip-top caps), incentives (return deposit), disincentives (fines) or other options.

The success of Coastal Cleanup Day can be directly attributed to the tens of thousands of volunteers who have generously given of their time – many over and over again – to clean up our shorelines. In 2008, almost 75,000 volunteers turned out for Coastal Cleanup Day in the state as a whole, a 20 percent jump over 2007. Last year’s volunteers removed a record 1.6 million pounds of debris, of which almost 200,000 pounds was recycled, both record numbers for the Cleanup Program. In San Luis Obispo County alone, almost 1,300 volunteers collected over 4,500 pounds of trash and recyclables in 2008. Unfortunately, those numbers actually represent a decrease over prior years.

We’re looking for your help in reversing that trend. It’s only a few hours. It’s fun – kind of like a treasure hunt. All you need to do is show up at your favorite beach on September 19th to do your part. Bring your water bottle and we’ll fill it up with ice water or lemonade. You’ll walk away feeling good about making a difference and you may even win a prize!

Holly Sletteland is a Volunteer Coordinator with ECOSLO with a passion for getting people involved in projects to help heal the earth. She is a past Chair Chair for the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and a 20+ year member of the Sierra Club.
Sewer Myths Busted

The County Planning Commission hearings on the Los Osos Wastewater Project shone a bright light on various claims asserted by the County and the Public Works Department about the biggest, longest-running public works project in county history. They fell like autumn leaves before the questioning of Commissioners and in the face of hard data.

A short list, with corrections:

Gravity sewers don’t leak: any evidence of such deficiency is a result of old, technology, the failure of 100-year-old clay pipes, etc.

> Major infiltration and inflow of groundwater has been found in gravity systems less than ten years old.

Gravity sewers are environmentally preferable to STEP/STEG collection.

> The only significant environmental benefit of gravity over STEP is the reduction of the amount of sludge produced when a gravity system is used with facultative ponds. If facultative ponds are not used, there is no environmental advantage to a gravity sewer. Facultative ponds are not (yet) required part of the County’s project.

All collection systems would have rough equivalent impacts, and the Coastal Commission has no issues with the selection of one over another.

> Dan Carl, Central Coast District Manager, California Coastal Commission, wrote to County Public Works Director Paavo Ogunen on July 15 to say that sludge reduction should be made a “high priority in the project” and that the Public Works Department should “clarify the collection and disposal methods”.

The Tonini disposal site might not be outside the water basin because, theoretically, there could be connecting strata between the aquifers.

> The Tonini site is outside the water basin. Treated wastewater disposed of at Tonini would be water wasted.

The Andra site cannot be used because PG&E will not allow the hay grass crop that would be required to be grown under power lines.

> PG&E restrictions apply to the heights of trees and structures under power lines, not grass and hay.

The use of recycled water in the Los Osos basin cannot be required until the project is adjudicated.

> PG&E correctly summed up the project's environmental impacts.

“The project now.

When the permit comes before the Board, for the sake of the aquifer, the Morro Bay Estuary and the citizens of Morro Bay and the Morro Bay Estuary and the citizens of Los Osos, those improvements need to stay there, and two more need to be added: an environmentally preferable treatment method, and the consideration of an alternative collection system in the bidding process.

“You’re about to approve a $200 million waste-water project that won’t be worth a dime if the basin is lost.”

- Keith Wimer to the Board of Supervisors, 7/14/09

The estimated progress of seawater intrusion since 2005 is the third, and biggest, bulge: the rate of progress for the prior 20 years is shown in the lay of the line. The rate of seawater intrusion into the basin is now under the Los Osos downtown and commercial area and appears to be four to eight times faster than it was four years ago.
Historic State Ruling: Solar Beats Gas
Energy Commission decision could apply to Morro Bay plant upgrade

by Jack McCurdy

A landmark June 17 California Energy Commission decision ruled for the first time that solar energy is a viable alternative to fossil-fuel power plants. Though the finding is expected to have revolutionary consequences statewide and nationally in recognizing that solar energy can replace conventional energy generation as a more feasible, cost-effective and much more environmentally protective way to produce electricity and meet the public's needs.

The Commission ruled that “photovoltaic solar arrays on rooftops and over parking lots may be a viable alternative” to a gas-fired plant, a ruling that applies in principle to expansions by conventional plants. The length of the California coast that have long used fossils, primarily natural gas.

Locally, the ruling could prevent a proposed upgrade of the 55-year-old Morro Bay Power Plant and further extension of its life, which its owner previously had said would end in 2015. Under the Commission's precedent-setting decision rejecting proposed gas-fired “peaker” units at the Chula Vista plant near San Diego in favor of considering solar as a substitute source, solar energy from panels installed on residential and commercial buildings could be required in place of proposed new peaker generation by that plant.

The Chula Vista peaker project proposed by MMC Energy, Inc., the plant owner, was rejected primarily because of zoning conflicts, but the solar finding established a new far-reaching standard. If that finding on solar were applied here, it could mean there would be no further need for the Morro Bay plant because electricity volume equivalent to what the peakers would produce could be generated by photovoltaic (PV) solar off the plant site.

The testimony of Bill Powers, an engineer with more than 25 years of experience in the energy field, was instrumental in the Commission's decision. Powers is president of B. Powers & Associates, a Southern California-based consulting engineering firm.

The Chula Vista peaker project proposed by B. Powers & Associates would have produced 30 megawatts of power at a time when demand is lowest. The finding is expected to have far-reaching consequences as the state moves to meet its 2030 goal of 50% renewable energy generation. The decision is expected to open the door for the development of rooftop solar generation in the state. The decision also includes provisions for the development of energy storage systems for intermittent renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind.

The decision is a major victory for environmentalists and renewable energy advocates, as it recognizes the potential of solar energy as a viable alternative to fossil-fuel power plants. The decision is also expected to have implications for the development of solar energy projects in other parts of the state and country. The decision is a significant step towards a cleaner, more sustainable future for California and the world.
**FOCUS ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

A PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP FOR YOU

Learn to communicate your passion for the natural world through still photography. The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club is offering a series of monthly workshops led by local professional photographers.

“**The New Nature**” with Gary Dwyer

Saturday September 12. 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Gary Dwyer has documented World Heritage Sites for UNESCO in Vietnam, and as a resident artist at the American Academy in Rome he photographed Architecture in Danger of Disappearing for the World Monuments Fund. His work has been exhibited in Washington DC, Oakland, the Canary Islands and at several locations in France. View his work at: www.calpoly.edu/~gldwyer/index.html.

**Let’s Paddle**

It’s time for Surfrider San Luis Bay Chapter’s annual benefit paddle for the Central Coast Junior Lifeguard Program

**What:**
17th Annual Ken Harmount Pier to Pier Paddle, A benefit for Central Coast Junior Lifeguards.

**When:**
Saturday September 12th at Old Port Beach, Avila Beach
Registration 7:00-7:45 a.m.
Event begins 8:00 a.m.

**Who:**
All paddle craft are welcome—kayaks, paddleboards, stand up boards, etc.

**How long:**
Two distances to choose:
6.5 miles from Cal Poly Pier to Pismo Pier (the Classic), or
13 miles round trip (the Endurance)

**How much:**
$30 advance registration or $40 day of. Registration includes t-shirt, water, and equipment transportation back to Avila. All proceeds go to Junior Guards.

**How to:**
Pre-register at Central Coast Kayaks in Shell Beach at 805-773-3500.

**Who to call:**
For more details, call Paul Schiro at 773-3500.

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**SLO Community Gardeners 3rd Annual Seed Exchange**

Seed Exchange takes place on Friday, October 23, from 6 – 9 p.m. at the SLO City Library Community Room. It’s free and open to the public.

This event is an opportunity to share gardening knowledge and learn more about saving seeds, locally grown grains and grasses, medicinal plants, hybrid vs open pollinated seed, how to garden year round in our climate, and plants that attract native pollinators.

You don’t need to bring seeds, just your curiosity and interest.

--SEEDS
Vegetables, flowers, specialty domesticated plants, native plants, and trees are welcome.

--BULBS & ROOT STOCK
Welcome

EVENT SPONSORS:
SLO City Parks & Rec
Clark Valley Farm
Cal Poly Organic Farm & SARC/Sustainable Ag Resource Consortium
Growing Grounds Santa Maria
Growing Grounds Downtown
ECOSLO
Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter

For more information call: 543-5364.

Save the planet – grow organic!
Letters
send to: sierrachchb@gmail.com, or Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

The off-road threat
Thank you for exposing SLO County’s deliberate omission of important documents concerning the proposed sale of buffer lands to the ODSVRA (“Grand Jury Slams County Planning on Oceano Dunes,” July-August). You can’t know how happy it makes those of us who’ve been struggling with this issue—we residents and business owners who’ve felt utterly defeated by this burgeoning threat to our quiet enjoyment of our dunes and beaches.

Our threat of off-road not only to our area, but to natural areas throughout the country, and am convinced it’s one of the worst threats to our environment. The constant erosion, not to mention loss of habitat to so many flora and fauna, is reaching critical proportions, while the so-called “sport” grows unabated. In some areas, it’s tripled in the past 5 years!

Years ago, off-road promoters talked government agencies into setting aside areas of public lands for them to ride on with the argument that if they didn’t, enthusiasts would run roughshod over private lands. I’m sure it wasn’t this argument alone that got politicians to go along with this—but big bucks change hands, all kinds of things happen. But the BLM and States went along with this reasoning, and now we’ve been taken over by minority interests who have a sense of entitlement promoted by the tacit approval they receive from politicians who benefit from the “sport.”

The ODSVRA is an abomination, and everyone with half a brain in their head realizes it’s causing millions of dollars of damage each year to public health and wealth, yet it goes on with the approval by local governments influenced by interagency collusion. And everyone who’s been encouraged to participate in off-road over the years now has an ingrained sense of nostalgia about having had the opportunity to ride around wherever they please. They cite a rhetoric we used to hear about cowboys and wilderness—making it really difficult to use logical arguments in the discussion. If their daddies did it, it’s good enough for them, etc.

Clearly this is a huge problem, not restricted to a few state parks, but nationwide, and internationally as well. Off-roads have been encouraged to demote anyone wanting to curtail their activities. I see bumper stickers with “death to the Sierra Club” messages, etc. They personally attack people in our area who are fighting against expansion of their parks.

I’d like to see environmental groups working shoulder to shoulder to bring about a sea change concerning off-roading. We need to go looking for the arguments that focus on a single endangered species, such as the snarlo parker, in order to gain the support of middle America. They need to understand how it is causing irreparable harm to our lands, and diseases such as mesothelioma, cancers, and heart disease to populations afflicted by dust.

I’d also like to see a complete investigation of the Chappie-Z'berg Act of 1971 that continues to swindle us out of gas taxes to finance off-roading. And the practice of off-roads financing the cost of hauling their vehicles using tax deductions for “business and farm” vehicles to the tune of $25,000—another loss to taxpayers.

All this has to change because it’s enabling people with little education to purchase and operate the very vehicles that are the nemesis of beaches, mountains, and streambeds throughout the country.

Thank again for your support on this. Let’s keep the heat on. There’s so much at stake.

SM
Grover Beach, CA

You’re welcome. SM, (And we’re just printing your initials because a local off-roading representative and avid reader of this publication has a well-earned rep for the “investigation” and harassment of folks who hold opinions such as yours, and would surely add you to his enemies list if we printed your name.) If you have not yet read the Foundation for Deep Ecology’s Thrillcraft: The Environmental Consequences of Motorized Recreation, we recommend you — and everyone else — do so. Go to www.stophillcraft.org.

Circus
continued from page 2
environmentally destructive projects or against policies necessary to maintain a healthy environment and sustainable resources. Once targeted officials have been persuaded to turn against their own constituencies and have lost their compass — whip-sawed, compromised and alienating the people who elected them to head in a new direction rather than allow themselves to be lashed back down the path of the old direction — they become easy pickings in the next electoral cycle. The developer-backed “business candidates” sweep back in, and get back down to business; the business of long-term destruction for short-term profits.

That’s the playbook these plays are being called from, both at the national level and in our neck of the woods. In both arenas, one great truth pertains: When the circus comes to town, we all have to sweep up after the elephants.

Fall Lodge Calendar
By Olivia Diaz
Fall at Clair Tappaan Lodge is golden. Located 7000 feet up in the Sierra Nevada, the lodge experiences sunny days and crisp nights. In late September and October the leaves turn and change the color of the mountains. The Clair Tappaan Lodge and Hutchinson Lodge are located at 19940 Donner Pass Road in Norden/Soda Springs, California. This fall there are two national outings and fall program offered by Lodge staff.

* September 4, Full Moon Hike
* September 20-26, National Outing
* October 4-10, Pastel Painting along Sierra Trails, Tahoe National Forest, CA
* October 11-November 1, Halloween party and Day of the Dead commemoration. Bring a costume, pumpkin(s) to carve and your tools, and a remembrance of a loved one who is no longer in this world.
* November 20, Thanksgiving dinner at Clair Tappaan Lodge is always a fun event.
* December 31, Traditional New Year’s celebration.

Reservations required. Call 1 800 679-6775 for information and reservations or check out our website at www.sierrachclub.org/outings/lodges/ctl.

Santa Lucian • September 2009
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is September 10.
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
sierrachub8@gmail.com

The Shade of Trees

If my skin could smile, it would, whenever I step into you.
Your scattered oases bring relief during my warm weather walk.
Under you, the air, considerably cooler, lifts some of the sweat from my body.
Those big green umbrella leaves beam up my beads of human dew
and I feel instantly soothed.
The tree is a comforting mother because in those pleasant moments,
it pats me down like an overheated baby
and I am renewed.

- Kalila Volkov
July 2009
Outings and Activities Calendar

Sellers of travel registration information: CST 2087764-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All 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 the Outings Chair, Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the outing leader.

To Outings Leaders: E-mail your outings write-ups to Gary Felsman no later than the 10th of the preceding month. Write-ups may be edited for space and consistency.

Web, September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30th. 5:30-8:30 p.m. Informal Hikes around San Luis Obispo, approximately 5 miles with 1200 foot elevation gain. Bring water and dress for the weather. E-mail: backpackingy2@gmail.com for details.

September 5-7, Thousand Island Lake via River Trail Backpack. Strenuous. 18 miles round trip. 2000’ gain. Saturday, Day 1, hike 7.5 miles to Thousand Island Lake. Sunday, Day 2, day snack at the camp and hike to Kern Lake and vicinity, Day 3, Return via Pacific Crest High Trail which provides 180 degree views of the mountains, lakes. Possible we will see fall colors, Golden Aspens. Bring goodies to share for Friday and Saturday happy hour. Send 2 SASE with resume of recent backpacks or conditioning and 2 checks: $25 refundable at the trailhead and 5 for the permit fee (non-refundable) to: KULHP BHADWARL, 420 Carnation Place, Oxnard 93036, 815- 544-918 (SP) (Sponsored By Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club).

Sat, September 12, 8:30 a.m., Big Sur Coastal Hike. At least 8 miles approx. 2000 foot elevation gain. Each destination is unknown at this time, but may be Vicente Flat on the Kirk Creek Trail. It will depend on the weather. Meet at the Washburn Day Use Area, San Simeon State Park, SLO Carpools should meet at Santa Rosa Park and leave by 7:45 a.m. Bring lunch, plenty of water and non-slip shoes. There maybe poison oak and ticks along the trail. Details, call Gary (473-3894).

Sat, September 12, 10 a.m., Islay Hill Open Space. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles. 1 mile/400 feet elevation change. Join us for a hike with skilled leader, Dan Capacchione. Beginners to highly skilled all welcome. Bring all art supplies needed, hat, water, comfortable walking shoes, and optional stool. Meet at Cayucos Pier for short ride. Leader: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Wed, October 7, 14, 21, 28, 30th, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes around San Luis Obispo, approximately 5 miles with 1200 foot elevation gain. Bring water and dress for the weather, E-mail: backpackingy2@gmail.com for details.

Wed-Sun, October 3-4, 11-12, 19-20, 27-28, 30th, 10 a.m. Coyote Creek Trail. It will depend on the weather. Meet at the Goodwin Visitors’ Center at 9:00 am Sat. We are making improvements for the Soda Lake Team Cleanup. Contact Dave Rau at 544-9096 ext. 14 to reserve a site or get more info. Sponsored by the Land Conservancy of SLO.

Sat, October 3, 9am-12pm, Creek Cleanup Day - Sites throughout SLO County. Consider building a group of co-workers, neighbors or friends for team cleanup. Contact Dave Rau at 544-9096 ext. 14 to reserve a site or get more info. Sponsored by the Land Conservancy of SLO.

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

Study/Work Party). With little rainfall and few water sources, the species that live here on the Carrizo Plain are thin and hardy and endangered. Particularly beautiful are the pronghorn antelope which evolved in these wild, open spaces. Then cattle ranching left a legacy of endless fences - which are deadly to the pronghorn. We’ve been removing barbed wire for several years and have cleaned up the American Ranch area! Join us as we work on the Panorama Ranch.

Camping at Seby campground, bring food, water, heavy leather work gloves, and camp gear for the weekend. Potluck Sat night. Rain cancels. Meet at the Goodwin Visitors’ Center at 9:00 am Sat. We are making a difference! Resource specialist: Alice Koch. For more information, contact Leaders: Cal and Letty French, 14140 Chimney Rock Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446, (805-239-7388). Prefer e-mail lethetref@mail.com

Sponsored by other organizations

Sat, September 19, Coastal Clean Up Day, Help clean beaches around the County. Sponsored by ECOSLO. See page 6.

September 26-29, WKA Trail Work Trip. Come help us celebrate National Public Lands Day (Sept. 26) on a Ventura Wilderness Alliance Trail Work Trip! Come for the day, the weekend, or all four days. The air will be fresh, the views amazing, and this is your chance to have your own Ventura Wilderness Adventure! Bring a friend or just make some new ones! We’ll meet at 8:30am on Sat., Sept. 26, at the Entrance to Cone Peak Road, which is at the intersection of Sacramento Pass Road, between Kirk Creek Campground and Port Hunter Lagoon. We’ll be hiking in from the end of Cone Peak road to Trail Springs camp - a moderate hike of about 1.5 miles (water at Trail Springs). There are 7 trees down on the trail between the North Coast Ridge Trail and Trail Springs, and many down past Trail Springs. There is also about 1 mile of trail that needs brushing. So our goals will be 1. Be Safe! 2. Have Fun! 3. Use the crosscut saw skills to clear as many trees off the trail as we can. 4. Clear as much brush off the trail as we can using loppers and pruning saws. David Knapn will be leading the trip. RSVP to gavelnapp@ventanawild.org.