The PG&E Plan: Trick the Voters and Make Them Cry

By Sierra Club California

There are lots of reasons to oppose the PG&E-backed ballot initiative, “New Two-Thirds Requirement for Local Public Electricity Providers.”

We think a better name would be: “The Utility Monopoly Protection Amendment,” or ThUMPA, since this measure would allow utility companies to use the state constitution to beat back local governments that try to provide energy choices for their communities.

PG&E, which provides electricity to about three quarters of Northern California, has put $750,000 into a signature gathering for a statewide ballot measure that is likely to be up for a vote next June. It needs 694,000 signatures by December 21 in order to qualify for the ballot. The measure came to the Attorney General from PG&E’s Beale Street corporate offices in San Francisco and, so far, PG&E is the only contributor to the campaign, according to California’s Secretary of State.

If it passes, the referendum would amend California’s Constitution so that communities that wish to give consumers an alternative to investor-owned utilities would first need two-thirds approval from voters. Why two-thirds? Well, you need a two-thirds vote to raise taxes in California. PG&E is trying to trick voters into thinking that this is about taxes and taxpayers, when in fact it is about choice of energy service.

Most deceptively, PG&E makes it sound like the initiative would give taxpayers a choice. But PG&E has designed this “choice” to be as difficult as possible for voters. That’s why they didn’t offer a majority vote; because a public alternative to investor-owned utilities might actually pass. But a two-thirds vote, where the utility can spend an unlimited amount on the campaign — and local governments are banned from responding —

If you missed it Check out the exposé in the Sept. 10 edition of New Times, “PG&E pushes vote to limit public power.”

Morro Bay and Cayucos Flying Blind

Mayor Peters leads charge to proceed with 2006 sewer plan despite major changes

On September 8, at a packed meeting held in the auditorium of Cayucos Elementary School, the Morro Bay City Council and the Cayucos Sanitary District, acting under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), voted to proceed with a three-year-old plan for an upgrade of their wastewater treatment plant without considering recent major changes in the proposed design. Their staff and consultants had informed them of the changes only the week before.

The JPA members had just learned that the existing plant site is in a 100-year flood plain and therefore would have to be demolished, not upgraded, with a new facility built on the location of the site currently used for sludge drying and composting. The formerly contemplated plant upgrade...
Green Music & Seed Exchange

Sunday, October 18: The Pozo Green Music Festival, a celebration to bring about awareness to the green economy & alternative sources of energy, and support of environmentally friendly goods and services. Local vendors & green information with local organic & vegetarian food and the famous Pozo BBQ. Tickets on sale at Boo Boo Records (SLO), Cheap Thrills (SLO), Boyd’s Tabacco Shop (Paso Robles), Arlington Theater (Santa Barbara) or online at www.pozosalon.com.

Save the date: Sierra Club General Meeting: Protecting our coastal resources and creating sustainable Coastal Communities. Thursday, November 12, 7 p.m., Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo

Friday, October 23, 6 – 9 p.m.: SLO Community Gardeners Seed Exchange in the SLO City Library Community Room is an opportunity to share gardening knowledge and learn more about saving seeds, locally grown grains and herbs, medicinal plants, hybrid vs open pollinated seed, to garden year round in our climate, and plan for attract native pollinators. Free, open to the public, no need to bring seeds. For more information call: 543-5384.

Are we “Protecting Agriculture?”

A view from Santa Barbara

by Bob Field

You may wonder what the ongoing policy struggle over agricultural land-use is about, particularly since both sides in this debate claim to have the same goal: protecting agriculture.

Sometimes when people say they have the same goal they can’t agree, it indicates that they do not have the same goal.

Surprisingly, this issue is about money. Land-use decisions that increase the market value of ag land are profitable to the current owners but are detrimental to the economic viability of agriculture in the longer term. The increasing land cost makes it increasingly difficult for future buyers to make money through agricultural use of the property.

Since the high price of ag-zoned land is a primary threat to the long-term survival of agriculture in Santa Barbara County, it helps to understand the building blocks of the market price:

1) The intrinsic value: This basic value reflects the land’s ability to produce economic profit through agricultural production. Factors include soil, climate, exposure and access to water, labor and markets. Alone, this should never be a problem because rational agricultural businesses would pay more than would allow a reasonable return on investment.

2) The development rights value: Added to the intrinsic value is the value of the development rights available under the zoning. Quite simply, more development rights equals more market value. Aggravating the problem are development rights not related to agriculture, such as bed and breakfast, non-agricultural housing or businesses, and so-called special events.

3) The speculative value: The price rises again when the buyer has reason to believe the market value of the land will go up over time, and return a profit upon sale. A trend in adding development rights in—ceases the speculative value.

4) The size of the parcel is an additional and significant factor. A very reliable rule of thumb is that the smaller the parcel, the higher the cost per acre. A routine practice of allowing subdivision of ag-zoned lands also adds to the speculative value.

So two of the worst land-use decisions we could make would be to add non-agricultural development rights to ag-zoned land, and to allow further subdivisions.

Interestingly, these actions are precisely what some agricultural landowners are lobbying for.

Their first argument goes like this: “Anything that puts money in the hands of the current owners makes it more likely they will stay in agriculture.” In the short term this may or may not be true but in the long term it raises the market price of the land and certainly is detrimental.

Their second argument is the threat that if their requests are not granted, it will lead directly to urban development of the land.

First, this is not true because urban uses are not allowed under ag zoning, Second, and most ironically, the circular argument is that if we don’t limit them to build houses, hotels and businesses on ag land, then the result will be houses, hotels and businesses on ag land. This argument invites intellectual whiplash.

In conclusion: Beware of proposals to “protect agriculture” by taking actions that will increase the market price of the land.
Global Warming and climate change have long been a priority for the Sierra Club even before our Cool Cities Program, a do-it-yourself version of the Kyoto Accord, which now has over 900 U.S. cities signed up to the U.S. Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement or joining the Partners for Climate Protection program. Prominent among the organizations that have recently sprung up to take on the challenge of combating climate change is “350.org.”

The organization was launched in 2008 by Bill McKibben, author of the book Fight Global Warming Now; and a team of young organizers behind the Step It Up 2007 campaign. The “350” concept comes from a path-breaking article by noted climate scientist Dr. James Hansen which found, based on an examination of both current and paleoclimatological records, that over the long run, 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (350 ppm) is the upper boundary for climate that will support life on earth as we know it. The level in 1750 before the start of the Industrial Revolution was 275 ppm. Our current level is 387 ppm and rising at just under 2 ppm per year.

Last August, Rajendra Pachauri, the U.N.'s top climate scientist, said that 350 was the bottom line for the world's governments on climate change. The IPCC’s last report in 2007 didn’t actually set a target for CO2, but it was widely interpreted as backing a goal of 450 ppm CO2. That is a number that many environmental groups and governments, including the Obama administration, seized on as the best science available. But that finding came before the Arctic melted, and before the world’s leading climate scientists started producing reports showing that 350 ppm was in fact the planet’s real threshold. Now Pachauri has given his imprimatur to that message.

October 24 is the day designated by 350.org for an international day of action at hundreds of iconic places around the world—from the Taj Mahal to the Great Barrier Reef—in the hopes of sparking a global movement that will unite the public, media, and our political leaders behind the 350 goal. The International Day of Climate Action is designed to call attention to this “most important number on earth” and show that people around the world are ready to take up this challenge. In the U.S., hopefully, the public will be motivated to weigh in on the Energy Bill now in Congress and urge strengthening of its carbon emission and carbon trading provisions.

The people of San Luis Obispo County will be doing their part; as we go to press, three local events are scheduled for 10/24, and there is time to add more (are you reading this, Morro Bay?)! The event planners are currently in the throes of creation, so to speak, so all the details weren’t available, but the website is constantly updated (www.350.org) and lists events and details as they are added. For those who are still looking for dramatic ideas (there are dancing girls and bubble blowing in Vallejo), the website lets folks go anywhere in the world to see what is planned.
How Base Was My Density

Now is a good time to rethink ag clusters

By Eric Greening

The County is in the throes of updating the Conservation and Open Space Element, which will be finishing hearings at the Planning Commission and moving on to the Board of Supervisors in the next few months. The original Conservation Element which this document is to replace is now 33 years old, so it is about time. The Open Space Element is barely a decade old, and was part of the controversial Agriculture and Open Space Element that itself took close to a decade to produce.

Originally, it was the intent of the Planning Department to bring the whole Agriculture and Open Space Element into the COSE, but one of the last legacies of the previous Board of Supervisors was to detach the Agriculture policies and leave them to stand as is. Since an Environmental Impact Report is being prepared on the COSE, it had been my fervent hope that the Agriculture policies would, at long last, get EIR treatment. (The AG-OS was approved under a Negative Declaration, which Life on Planet Earth challenged, and narrowly lost.) But that is not to be.

Planet Earth challenged, and now 33 years old, so it is about time. The Agriculture policies would, at long last, get EIR treatment. We reject the notion that we have to choose between good jobs and a clean environment. It’s not one or the other. It’s both or neither.

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Why We Support the Employee Free Choice Act

Global warming represents not only one of the greatest challenges we face as a generation, but also a tremendous opportunity to build a clean energy economy where creating good jobs and protecting the environment go hand in hand. It has been projected that a $100 billion investment in the greening of our economy over the course of two years will create 2 million new jobs nationwide. Such investment in green recovery and infrastructure would create four times more jobs than spending the same amount of money within the oil industry, and could roughly triple the number of good jobs paying at least $15 an hour.

One way to help ensure that these green jobs will also be good family- supporting jobs is to allow workers a democratic chance to form unions. That’s why the Sierra Club supports the Employee Free Choice Act, which would give workers a fair and direct path to form unions without the fear of being fired, help employees secure a contract in a reasonable period of time, and toughen penalties against corporations who violate workers’ rights.

Why being Green should mean being Blue too

In recent years, trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have led to the off-shoring of more than 1.5 million jobs. These agreements have enabled companies to relocate to countries with weak or non-existent protections for workers and the environment, incentivizing reckless behavior in pursuit of corporate profits.

In addition, the American worker has been besieged by shrinking wages that fail to keep pace with inflation, increased healthcare costs and uncertain futures as pension plans have been put in jeopardy and retiree funds continue to disappear.

Given the current financial crisis, it is more important than ever to focus on farsighted policies that will strengthen the American workforce. Unions can provide a counter-balance to corporate greed by giving workers a voice on the job about safety, security, pay, benefits and about the best ways to get work done. Union members make on average 30% more than non-union members and nearly 80% of unionized workers receive health insurance, compared with 49% of non-union workers.

However, the current labor law system makes it difficult for workers to form unions. Employees who try to form unions are routinely harassed, and often even fired. Among private sector employers whose workers try to form unions, 25% have illegally fired at least one worker for union activity.

Why Unions Are Better for the Environment

Protecting workers’ freedom of association is closely linked to efforts to protect the environment and communities. Workers serve as the front line of defense against hazardous pollution, chemical spills and other accidents that can devastate communities. Unions are the only workers who are forced to know about the health and safety risks of hazardous chemicals and have greater protections if they blow the whistle on hazards and accidents in the workplace.

Across the country, union workers have worked to hold corporations accountable for pollution that threatens both workers and the environment. As an example, the United Steelworkers filed a lawsuit that forced the state of California to protect its residents from the chemical PFOS(A), used in the manufacture of Teflon, which has been linked to birth defects and increased cancer rates. Steelworker members in New Jersey were also instrumental in preventing a chemical treatment plant from dumping the effluent from treating highly toxic nerve gas agent VX into the Delaware River.

Organized labor has played a critical role in passing some of the strongest environmental policies and regulations in the United States, supporting the Clean Air Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, pushing the implementation of the Toxics Release Inventory, and fighting to keep workplaces and communities safe from dangerous chemicals and pollutants.

Allowing workers the basic right to form a union and to play a greater role in the workplace will be essential to the success of a green and healthy economy. The Employee Free Choice Act would give workers the ability to work for decent pay, be treated with dignity, and take care of their families.

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That’s a Lot of Water

By Sue Harvey
Chair, Conservation Committee

Wine growers and residents on the West Side of Paso Robles – the heart of wine country – are experiencing escalating problems with well water supplies and the east side growers and residents aren’t faring much better. There are 32,950 acres of wine grapes planted in the north county according to the Ag Commissioner’s Office – 5,275 on the West Side and 27,675 on the east side within the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. Grape growing and wine production are water consumptive. With the right kind of retentive soils and climate and over 24 inches of rain a year, you may be able to dry farm your grapes but for the most part, vines rely on a combination of rainfall and ground water aquifers. Vineyards require two acre feet of water per acre per year. Rainfall and ground water supply the two acre feet. The more rain, the less ground water needed.

In a June 3 presentation on vineyard management to the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC), industry representatives showed how Best Management Practices could reduce vineyard water consumption to around 1 acre foot per acre of grapes, as practiced by the J. Lohr vineyards. In response to a question posed to Dr. Tom Rice, Cal Poly soils expert, at the August 28 California Wine Month – Sustainability Tour sponsored by the Central Coast Vineyard Team, P.R. Wine Country Alliance, and SLO Vintners, Dr. Rice stated that the west side Adelaida aquifer was millenium old and not subject to recharge by rainfall. That translates to a one-way trip for the depleted aquifer.

And growing the grapes isn’t the whole story for water. Wine production in a carefully managed winery such as J. Lohr adds an additional 1.2 gallons of water per gallon of wine produced. The Lohr operation processes 2000 acres of grapes with a conservative 5.3 acre feet of water annually. Many wineries consume much more water in production. The industry average is 3.3 gallons of water for each gallon of wine produced.

That’s a lot of water. Although some vineyard operations may have replaced high-consumption alfalfa

Take 2 Minutes to Support a Marine Sanctuary for SLO

The movement to get the waters off SLO County declared part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is gathering steam, and you can be part of it!

If you own or manage a business in the county dependent on tourism, the extension of the Marine Sanctuary would be just about the best thing that could happen to your business, and your opinion carries weight. Just go to:

www.santarucia.sierraclub.org/documents/MBSE.pdf

and download the petition, print it out and fill it in — or hand it to your favorite local business owner to fill out and mail to us.

That’s it. We’ll make sure you get the word when your voice is needed at a public meeting to help make this happen. One call, one meeting.

If you or your friend want more information or need any convincing as to why this is a very good thing to do, go to:


The ocean thanks you!

Activists Beat Oil

By Sara Wan, Vote the Coast

AB 1536, the bill that would have handed the PXP oil company the right to drill for oil in state waters for the first time in 40 years, did not find its way to the floor of the legislature this summer. The bill died, and PXP has had its fourth defeat thanks to the great work of lots of people.

An incredible team was working in Sacramento: Michael Endicott (Sierra Club) and Fran Gibson (CoastWalk), with the help of Dan Taylor (Audubon), Don Jacobson and Gina Goodhill (Environment California) Tina Andolina (Planning and Conser-

Now In Color, Thanks to Bill

You hold in your hands the colorful new incarnation of the Santa Lucian, thanks to a generous donation from Bill Denneen, distinguished eco-hooligan, bane of oil-roaders on his beloved Nipomo/Oceano Dunes, and elder statesman of environmental awareness on the central coast. Elder Bill, you’re the best.
What's at Stake for Carrizo

Over September 6-9, The Tribune ran a four-part series by reporter David Sneed on the plans to build three industrial-scale solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain. The series provided an in-depth overview of the issues, and commendably did not shy away from the central fact about the Carrizo: It is the site of the largest concentration of threatened and endangered species of plants and animals in California.

The Tribune erroneously reported that the decision on a request by project applicants to classify the results of the projects’ mandated wildlife corridor study is still pending. In fact, the California Energy Commission emphatically rejected that request for secrecy last May after receiving strong objections from the Sierra Club and intervenors (see “Carrizo Solar: Not Behind Closed Doors,” June Santa Lucian.) The Tribune subsequently editorialized that applicants should stop “squabbling over what is essentially a side issue” and agree to release of the information, accepting at face value the solar companies’ contention that they wanted the results kept secret because they simply didn’t want local land owners to know which land parcels the companies will be required to purchase as mitigation. Not stated: the public also would not have known how much land the companies would have to purchase as mitigation for their projects’ environmental impacts in order to meet the Department of Fish and Games’ mitigation/replacement ratio of 5:1.

Whitting down that number will not be acceptable. Carl Zichella, Sierra Club’s renewable energy program director, summed up the position of the Sierra Club in the Tribune’s September 7 installment: “The solar companies are going to have to take a very serious and coordinated look at the environmental impacts of the plants, particularly concerning wildlife, and offset them. No cutting corners or predetermined outcomes.”

Several readers of the Tribune series attempted to characterize objections to the Carrizo plants as a NIMBY issue. Large, centralized solar facilities will have to be part of the fight to curb carbon emissions and maintain a livable planet, but it is too easy to cast the debate over the sites for such facilities as NIMBYs — those who are willing to make the hard choices about renewable energy. There are real alternatives to centralized, industrial scale, investor-owned utility solar.


Distributed generation is an opportunity to democratize energy production, which, as our front page makes clear, is a goal contrary to the wishes of corporations whose primary goal is the retention of their multi-billion dollar stranglehold on energy generation and transmission. Distributed generation creates more jobs, avoids essentially all environmental impacts, and can be brought on line much faster than massive industrial facilities. What is doesn’t do is preserve the energy companies’ business model and provide profits for their shareholders. Tribune, let’s see some in-depth reporting on that.

Local Boy Makes Good

Proud mom Karen Blake displays the work of her son, Robert, a San Luis High School grad who is now a student at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Robert’s work caught the eye of the Sierra Student Coalition and became the poster for our Campuses Beyond Coal campaign and the inside front cover of the September issue of Sierra magazine.

For information on the campaign or to join the online community, go to www.sierraclub.org/coalcampus.
Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Grunesome chick video has farm industry reeling,” by Nigel Duara, The Tribune, September 6, 2009

“Phased out?” by Jeremy Thomas, New Times, September 10, 2009

Summary: In two bulletins from the realm of industrial agriculture, an undercover video shows unwanted male chicks being thrown alive into grinders at an Iowa hatchery, and local strawberry farmers are making even more intensive use of an acutely toxic pesticide than they did before it was formally banned in 2005. Both reports offer essentially the same conclusion: There Is No Alternative.

A CAFO is an industrial-sized livestock operation. These corporate-controlled units—where tens of thousands of animals are “produced” in factory-like settings—are polluting America’s water and air with animal-raising practices that are neither economically viable or sustainable. Every corporate unit replaces 10 family farmers. A CAFO can house anywhere from hundreds to millions of animals, confined at least 45 days or more per year in an area without vegetation. The Mississippi River bears the brunt of the pollution from Midwest livestock operations, and the pollutants that flow down the river to the Gulf of Mexico have contributed to a dead zone the size of New Jersey.

Over the last 50 years, USDA economic policies have essentially encouraged farmers to grow as much corn as possible and fatten their livestock en masse in facilities that are known as Combined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Today, instead of a few chickens being raised on a diet of grass and insects on a pasture or chicken yard, thousands are crammed into unimaginably tight quarters where they produce massive amounts of fecal waste. This waste has a nasty habit of flowing into waterways.

- Black Warrior RiverKeeper

Cheap corn is the engine that drives the CAFO and makes our chick-ens cost less. Yet CAFOs do so by externalizing the hidden environmental and health costs of chicken production. As consumers, each of us has a voice that speaks loudly: our wallets. We can buy our meat and eggs from suppliers that raise animals naturally, humanely, organically, and locally. Many supermarket retailers, such as Wal-Mart, are beginning to take notice.

- Black Warrior RiverKeeper

...videos like the one in Iowa stir up people’s emotions without addressing important business considerations — in this case, the need to dispose of male chicks...because they can’t lay eggs or grow large enough or fast enough to be raised profitably for meat.

- Black Warrior RiverKeeper

Upshot: We are swimming in a sea of unexamined assumptions, largely cemented in place by the corporate profit imperative, which began the takeover of agriculture after World War II and has since infiltrated every aspect of our lives. If you grow food or just eat it, you have options. Exercising them is the first step away from an inhume, environmentally destructive, unsustainable system cloaked in the mantle of “the way things are.”
They seem to think there's time to go back and fix it, but no time to do it right in the first place.

September 8 meeting, all groups urged the JPA members to take a month or two to evaluate the changed circumstances before proceeding to authorize an Environmental Impact Report on the project as originally planned. Morro Bay City Councilpersons Noah Smukler and Betty Winholtz agreed with us, and with the overwhelming majority of the members of the public who packed the meeting, but Morro Bay Mayor Janice Peters citing fear of fines, whipped the majority of her fellow JPA members into a vote to proceed without first considering either the implications of the changes in the project or options to what had been placed before them. Councilwoman Winholtz testified that Regional Water Board staff had assured her that there would be no problem with Morro Bay and Cayucos taking time to reevaluate project options and possibly extending the project timeline due to circumstances beyond their control. Winholtz and Smukler urged a meeting of the JPA and the Water Board before voting to proceed with the project as is, but the Mayor wouldn’t hear of it. In a tone notably truculent and antagonistic – the ire Mayor Peters traditionally reserves for environmental concerns and regulatory agencies – she asserted that regulators were not to be trusted and might change their minds in the future, so there was no point in consulting with them now. Proclaiming that she sought to avoid the kinds of delays that have plagued the Los Osos sewer project, Mayor Peters ironically took Morro Bay and Cayucos one big step down the same my-way-or-the-highway path that brought Los Osos sewer projects to grief several times in recent years due to the failure to give adequate consideration to environmental red flags in project design and the regulatory lay of the land, and to do so at the beginning of the process so as not to run into a brick wall at the end of it. “Unfortunately, the majority voted to begin the environmental analysis of the proposed project that does not address water recycling opportunities and sustainable biosolids management and is located in the Farmadero Road floodplain,” said Smukler. “These three details assure that this project will be appealed and ultimately rejected by the Coastal Commission for not adequately addressing the primary challenges of our present and future.”

The majority of the public who spoke from all three Estero Bay communities — Los Osos, Morro Bay and Cayucos — implored the JPA members to rethink and focus on maintaining Estero Bay as a healthy, sustainable watershed. The public, including the NRDC, Sierra Club, Ocean Outfall Group, Otter Project, Surfrider, New Water for Peace, Get Green Los Osos and Concerned Citizens of Cayucos, were ignored by the majority of the Cayucos SD and Morro Bay City Council.

Despite the outcome of the meeting, “the community’s strong turnout and comments are an inspirational reminder that this is not over by a long shot,” said Smukler, adding that the level of citizen participation and “the passion for our future made it a night I’ll never forget and, more importantly, gives me reason to believe we will ultimately succeed in the quest for a project we can all be proud of.”

Take a lesson from Benji and Joseph Lipper, and donate your hard-earned change to support the work of your local Sierra Club. The Lipper family understands the value of contributing to help preserve and protect the environment of the Central Coast.

As a tribute to Benji and Joseph’s wonderful donations to the Santa Lucia Chapter, we are designating October our Month of change. Bring us the change you’ve saved up in a piggy bank, a drawer, or secret place. No donation is too small. And no donation is too large. If you’re in the habit of saving bills rather than coins we won’t turn them down. The point is: take the opportunity to stop by the office any day, Monday – Friday, from noon to 6 p.m., to say hello and give us your donation. And you can pick up a swell Sierra Club tattoo.

Make October your month of change.

See you soon,
Karen Merriam, Chair Executive Committee

Sierra Club’s Call to Action on Global Warming and Energy

We are at a historic crossroads in the fight against climate change. The Sierra Club is asking its activists and chapters to help in this critically important fight by committing to daily, weekly or monthly actions as a Sierra Club Climate Leader. Please go to: www.sierraclub.org/climateleaders and sign up.

Our top priority is an education campaign to encourage people to support the Obama Administration’s use of rules and regulations by the EPA and other agencies to address climate change.

We call this campaign “the Big Picture.” Using a very successful online petition and massive phone call outreach, activists are asking Senators to urge President Obama to create rules as quickly as possible that will regulate coal ash, mercury, mining, soil, smog, and carbon pollution more effectively. Visit the Big Picture Campaign to learn more: www.sierraclub.org/bigpicture
production, most vineyards are located on lands previously dedicated to dry farming and grazing.

North county growers are increasingly coming face to face with these realities. West side growers Justin winery and Hastings Vineyards are just two of the vineyards that have had multiple new wells drilled to replace dry wells in an attempt to get enough water. Justin is importing water to sustain his vineyard while Walter Vineyard has replaced some irrigated acreage with newly planted dry farmed vines.

Controversy over water capacity swirled around the approval of Heart Hills Vineyards a few years ago. The contractor has had to import water just for construction purposes because the wells on the property can’t sustain the relatively low water needs of the building process. Justin is shifting most of his wine processing from its west side vineyard to its east side Golden Hills facility located on the Paso Robles aquifer, which is also in stress.

The Paso Robles Ground Water Study has identified a large area of depression underlying Paso Robles, the east side of Paso Robles and into the Estrella/Po marca Creek areas due to pumping of ground water. The Estrella area exceeds all the other areas by a factor of three, with a total of 15,843 acres of irrigated vineyards, according to the May 2009 Todd report on the basin. The area is considered to be equivalent to a Level of Severity 1, which means that projected demand over the next nine years will equal or exceed dependable water supplies. This area has shown a sustained decline in groundwater levels from 1980-2006 and shows a minus 20-foot change in ground levels from 1980-2006 and shows a sustained decline in groundwater levels from 1980-2006 and shows a minus 20-foot change in ground levels.

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Got Graywater if You Want It

The Sierra Club has on hand a limited supply of *The San Luis Obispo Guide to the Use of Graywater*, the new manual produced by the Appropriate Technology Coalition – SLO Green Build, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the San Luis Bay Chapter of Surfrider. Graywater systems turn a waste product that can comprise up to 80% of residential wastewater into a valuable resource for irrigation and other non-potable uses. Harvesting graywater to meet your non-potable water needs utilizes an appropriate technology that can recover initial costs quickly. No permit required.

$10 each, while supplies last. E-mail kim.sierraclub@gmail.com, or call (805) 543-8717 to reserve your copy.
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 Outings Chair Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the outings leader.

Mon-Tue, October 5-6. Wilderness Restoration in Death Valley National Park. We plan to finish the conversion to the southern entrance on the old Mesquite Flats/Death Valley crossover road which used to join the Scenic Drive in the vicinity of Red Wall Canyon. Meet Sunday evening or early Monday morning. Work Monday and Tuesday. Break for lunch. Packed lunch and dress for the weather. E-mail: backpackingjay1@gmail.com for details.

Sat, October 10, 8:30 a.m., Big Sur Coastal Hike. Approx 8-12 miles and approx. 2000 foot elevation gain. Exact destination is unknown at this time, but may be Pescadero State Park. Bring water and dress for the weather. E-mail: Rich.Sac@pacbell.net, 916-294-2672, Phelan, CA 92329; (760) 868-1675, CNRCC Desert Committee for details.

Sun, October 11, 2:00pm, Sierra Singles – Bishop Peak. Come hike leader Stacy Tabbert for this 4.4 mile moderate hike with an elevation gain of 1200 feet. At an elevation of 5559, Bishop Peak is the tallest of the Nine Sisters, a volcanic range that extends from Morro Bay to San Luis Obispo. Please be sure to bring sturdy hiking shoes, hiking pole if you desire, and plenty of water. We will meet at the Patricia Drive trail head. From Santa Rosa St, heading towards Los Osos Valley Road, turn right on to Patricia and follow it to the 800 block. The "TRAIL" sign will be on the left, if possible please park on the Bishop Peak side and be mindful of the neighbors. Call Stacy for any questions or more details (818) 472-6827.

Sat Eve – Sun, October 17-18. Exploring the Soda Mountains – Mojave Desert. We will explore the ridges and deep washes of this relatively unknown and rugged Wilderness Study Area (WSA), located east of Barstow and north of I-15. This moderate hike on Sunday will help us appreciate a unique place and to comment upon the future of this WSA which is currently uncertain. Hike is moderately difficult. For details contact leader: Craig Deutschle, (310) 477-6670, craig.deutschle@gmail.com. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun, October 24, 8:30 a.m., Rinconada, Little Falls, Big Falls Loop Hike. Join us for this strenuous straight for .2 miles and look for the dirt parking lot on the left. It is easy to miss. Do not wait at the Live Oak trailhead, which is shortly after the Quarry trailhead. Confirm with David George at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipes welcome.

Sat, October 24, Eagle Cliff Mine Hike – Joshua Tree National Park. Eagle Cliff Mine is a 4.5 mile loop hike in a very pretty area of the park. The hike is strenuous, with some off-trail and rock scrambling. Near the mine are a cabin and other points of interest, both historic and natural, and an excellent overlook. Bring a couple of quarts of water, decent boots, a snack and lunch. Contact Ann and Al Murdy at murdy@ gmail.com or 760-366-2932 (no messages) Tahquitz Group (San Gorgonio Chapter).

Sun, October 25, 2 p.m. Guided Walk of Mission-Era SLO. Join us on an easy stroll past the Mission, old Mesquite Flats, and other historic sites in downtown San Luis Obispo and learn about the padres, the Chumash, and Gold Rush renegades. Stride by the location of the town gallows, home of the first doctor, and the store owned by the kindred man in town. Meet corner of Monterey and Osos Streets. Duration 1 1/2 hrs. No reservation needed. Leader: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sun, October 31, 8:30 a.m. Salmon Creek/Spurce Creek Trails to Dutra Flat. On Halloween, join the leader on this medium 8-mile hike in the southern Big Sur region. There will be about 2200 ft. of elevation gain. We will enjoy coastal views, streamside environments, and grasslands. This is also the last day before the time changes. We will meet at the Washburn Day Use area at the State Park entrance. Continue .2 miles and look for the dirt parking lot on the left. It is easy to miss. Do not wait at the Live Oak trailhead, which is shortly after the Quarry trailhead. Confirm with David George at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-5575 for upcoming activities. Bipes welcome.

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