The Buzz in the Bay

Sierra Club appeals Avila Beach high-speed tour boat license to Coastal Commission

On June 4, the Sierra Club filed an appeal with the California Coastal Commission of the Port San Luis Harbor Commission’s decision to license a high-speed tour boat concession on Avila Bay. Port San Luis has been receiving an increasing number of requests for such concessions, and is issuing licenses without consideration of the potential impacts of such projects under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), or referring applicants to the California Coastal Commission for a Coastal Development Permit.

The hi-speed tour boat license was itself an amendment of a license issued two years ago for a jet ski concession, also without CEQA review or a CDP. Here’s the problem with that, in addition to a growing number of complaints from Avila Beach residents about noise levels on the bay: per the County’s Coastal Plan Policies, this stretch of coast “includes some of the most biologically productive, environmentally sensitive, pristine and irreparable habitats and coastal resources along the San Luis Obispo County coastline. These include the important kelp-bed and rocky-intertidal habitats… and the southern range of the threatened California Sea Otter.”

The hi-speed tour boat concession is operating at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour in those environmentally sensitive habitat areas. Our coastal policies require proof of “no significant impact on sensitive habitats, and that proposed development or activities will be consistent with the biological continuance of the habitat,” and that “the maximum feasible mitigation measures” be implemented. When we filed the appeal with the Coastal Commission, nearly two dozen concerned residents asked to have their names added to the list of “interested persons” wishing to receive notice of any Coastal Commission action on the appeal. Commission staff are investigating and hope to resolve the issues soon.

Sierra Club Joins Carrizo Plain Grazing Lawsuit

The Sierra Club has joined Los Padres Forest Watch as co-plaintiff in a legal challenge to the state’s approval of cattle grazing on the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve. The Reserve is managed by the California Department of Fish and Game and is comprised of more than 30,000 acres of ecologically sensitive habitat, including the 15,000-acre Chimineas Ranch, forming a link between the Los Padres National Forest and...
the future. Without memberships to our Community Supported Agricultural

The Cal Poly Organic Farm needs your help this summer! We are in great need

Local Organic Food Needs You

The Cal Poly Organic Farm needs your help this summer! We are in great need of 25 more members to ensure we can keep educating the organic farmers of the future. Without memberships to our Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) Program, we simply cannot continue.

A produce box grown and harvested by students at our organic farm is only $20/week for a small share (feeds 2) and $26.50/week for a large (feeds 3). To order, visit our website at www.calpolyofarm.com or e-mail me at icdougals@copa.org, or call 756-6139.

www.calpolyofarm.com Thank you!

The Myth of “Golden Rice”

By Jesse Arnold

“Golden Rice” is often cited as a triumph of genetic engineering in which rice is transformed into a crop which provides Vitamin A and saves poor children in Asia from blindness due to a lack of Vitamin A in their diet.

However, a crop of “golden Rice” has never been grown, so no human has eaten it.

How can this be?

People at the Rockefeller Foundation heard that children of poor families in Asia living on a diet of nothing but rice were going blind because they lacked Vitamin A in their diet. (In Seeds of Destruction: The Geopolitics of GM Food, William Engdahl writes that “the Rockefeller Foundation is at the center of the worldwide actions of Monsanto, DuPont, Cargill and Dow Agrisciences, Syngenta, Bayer AG and other major biotech giants” in the quest for world agriculture through control of GM patents and GM crops.)

With the help of any of the affected people what they thought should be done about the problem, the folks at the Rockefeller Foundation came up with a biotech solution to the problem: splice a gene for beta-carotene into the rice, thus making it a source of Vitamin A and turning it a golden color.

The Rockefeller Foundation paid $2 million to develop the prototype “Golden Rice” in a lab in Switzerland. After the “Golden Rice” was developed, no one wanted to grow it. Just another example of people in rich countries thinking up the solution to a problem in a poor country without asking anyone in the poor country what they think.

It is a surprise to me that the “Golden Rice” was not accepted. What the Rockefeller Foundation was telling poor people was “We think it is fine that we can make it possible for you to continue to eke out an existence on nothing but rice. We don’t think you should be paid enough to afford a balanced diet. Nor do we think you should have access to land to grow some vegetables for your family. We are happy to develop “Golden Rice” to help your employer to continue to exploit you.”

The fact that “Golden Rice” looks different than normal rice is an obvious tip-off that it could be genetically engineered and would not be accepted in a traditional culture. So even though employers might be tempted to use it to exploit their workers, they realize they would not be able to convince people to eat it.

There are also reasons why “Golden Rice” probably wouldn’t work as claimed even if you could get people to eat the stuff. First, some fat or oil is needed in the diet to make Vitamin A available in the body. A diet of only rice would not supply any fat or oil. Second, given the amount of beta-carotene in “Golden Rice,” a child could not eat enough of the rice — about 20 pounds a day — to get enough beta-carotene to prevent Vitamin A deficiency.

The ag biotech boosters who speak of “Golden Rice” in glowing terms ignore the fact that it was rejected by the people it was supposed to help and blame its failure instead on the opponents of genetic engineering in the rich countries.

Since the ag biotech companies want their crops to be unlabelled, it is highly unlikely that they would ever develop a crop like “Golden Rice” that would stand out due to its visual difference in color from the normal form of the crop.

And although some folks at the Rockefeller Foundation may want to help poor people, you can bet all the rice in China that helping poor people is not on the agenda of the Monsanto Corporation.
The Lessons of Los Osos

The crescendo of the drama that is the Los Osos sewer played out at the June 11 “de novo” hearing of the project by the California Coastal Commission in Marina del Rey.

The Sierra Club has been engaged with this issue since 2005, when we fought for the deal brokered between the Los Osos CSD and the State Water Board that (almost) saved the project’s State Revolving Fund loan. When that fell through, Sierra Club lobbied hard in Sacramento for the passage of AB 2701, the bill that allowed transfer of the project from the bankrupt CSD to the County. We advocated for the approval of the Proposition 218 vote necessary to assess the funds for the project.

A collaborative effort turned necessarily adversarial as the County’s project took shape within extremely narrow and environmentally unsound parameters—a treat it & toss it approach—and the County made the decision to fiercely defend all components of the project against any alternatives or contrary arguments.

The County—and The Tribune—loudly urged the Coastal Commission to stay out of it. The Commission agreed with our concerns and directed its staff to come up with the best ways in which to address them.

How we got here from there

Not long ago (March 2009), the sewer the County was proposing for Los Osos would have laid to waste hundreds of acres of prime farmland, treated wastewater only to a substandard level, and treating millions of gallons of water without even paying for the conventional process that would assure the environment, and economic issues, future reuse and agricultural diversification were eliminated from further consideration” (Supplemental Notice of Reconsideration). In its most telling passage, the Final EIR noted that “Several commentors focused on how the County is approaching water reclamation, beneficial reuse of treated effluent, and sustainability of the groundwater supplies. Several state that agricultural exchange must be a central component of the LOWWP. Many commentors also point to language in AB 2701 identifying that the County has some legislative ability to implement water resource efforts as part of the waste-water project. Several commentors assert that the Draft EIR is deficient in this respect.

“...Or We Could Do the Smart Thing

Welcome winds of change begin to blow around Morro Bay/Cayucos wastewater project

Common sense has unexpectedly broken out in the projected replacement of the Morro Bay/Cayucos wastewater treatment plant. The communities are now facing a real possibility that the project may utilize a superior technology to treat wastewater to the highest level, which could then be reclaimed and recycled instead of dumped into the ocean, and cost far less than originally proposed. The brick wall on the Morro Bay City Council and Cayucos Sanitary District that had previously met every effort to turn the two communities from the path of the most expensive project with the greatest environmental impact (see “Morro Bay and Cayucos Flying Blind.” October 2009) started to crumble at a hastily called June 16 Joint Powers Agreement meeting. The meeting was called after the JPA board finally grasped how much more they were likely to wind up paying for the conventional treatment plant planned for them by Montgomery Watson Harza than with an alternative being offered by PERC Water Company. PERC’s representatives describe a proposed alternative project that would occupy one-fifth of the physical footprint and deliver high quality effluent, for about $9 million less. They said they could deliver a guaranteed project price in 60 days instead of their rival’s 18 months.

PERC has just completed construction of a treatment plant for the City of Santa Paula that uses membrane bioreactor technology to treat wastewater and is said to be the most.

continued on page 9
State Parks Initiative Will be On November Ballot

Measure will provide reliable funding for California’s parks

On June 10, California Secretary of State Debra Bowen qualified the State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2010 for the November 2 statewide ballot. The measure will provide a stable and adequate funding source to keep state parks open. With passage of the initiative, not only would state parks have a long-term funding solution, but important General Fund dollars will be made available for other vital needs. A wide-ranging coalition that includes business, public health, education, labor, entertainment, public safety, Latino, conservation and environmental interests already support the November state parks initiative. The campaign submitted more than 760,000 signatures, nearly twice the number required to qualify the measure for the ballot.

“Once considered to be among the best in the nation, California’s state parks now face an uncertain future as some of the most endangered sites in the country,” said Elizabeth Goldstein, president of the California State Parks Foundation. “Budget cuts forced nearly 150 of the state’s 278 state parks to close or reduce services last year, and chronic underfunding is forcing the more than $1 billion maintenance backlog to grow. This initiative will provide the stable and adequate source of funding needed to keep state parks open and contributing to our economy, the public’s health and education.”

State parks play an important role in strengthening California’s economy. Annually, California’s 278 state parks attract millions of tourists, who spend $4.32 billion annually in park-related expenditures. In fact, Visitors generate so much local economic activity that every dollar spent on state parks creates another $2.35 for California’s treasury. Budget cuts have forced state parks to accumulate a backlog of more than $1 billion in needed maintenance and repairs. Roofs and seaweed systems leak, restrooms are not cleaned regularly, bridges have collapsed, trails are washed out, campgrounds and visitor centers are shut down and buildings and structures throughout the system are badly deteriorated.

Currently, the proposed state budget provides some General Fund money for state parks, but it is still insufficient to address the ongoing funding needs of the system.

Without the long-term solution offered by the state parks initiative, state parks will continue to slowly starve from underfunding. In addition to providing a reliable funding stream for state parks, through the initiative more than $130 million in state General Fund dollars — that have historically provided a portion of overall state parks funding — will now be available for other vital needs, like schools, health care, social services or public safety.

“California’s state parks are priceless public assets, and these assets could be lost forever if we don’t invest in them,” said Buskey Hartley, executive director of Save the Redwoods. “Our state parks have been forced to ride a budget rollercoaster, but Californians will have the opportunity this November to vote to stop that sickening ride and ensure that these valuable assets are protected and accessible for future generations.”

Approval of the state parks initiative will provide California vehicles with free, year-round day-use access to state parks, in exchange for a new $18 surcharge. This new surcharge will be assessed as part of California’s annual vehicle registration. All California vehicles will be subject to the surcharge, except larger commercial vehicles, mobile homes and permanent trailers.

Funds from the surcharge will be placed in a trust fund dedicated specifically to state parks and wildlife conservation, which cannot legally be used for other purposes. Approximately $500 million will be generated annually from the trust fund, providing the funding needed to restore, maintain and keep state parks accessible today and for future generations.

Since launching qualification efforts, the campaign has had strong, early support from a group of broad and diverse organizations and leaders throughout the state.

To see what other groups and leaders have to say about the initiative, visit www.YesForStateParks.com.

Environmental Contamination: Time for a Change

By David Broadwater

At its June 14 meeting, the SLO County Health Commission discussed the Precautionary Principle as a means of regulating contaminants in the environment and making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors about county policy and its state and federal legislative agendas.

This was in the context of the release of the annual report of the President’s Cancer Panel. Entitled “Reducing Environmental Cancer - What We Can Do Now,” it addressed, for the first time in the Panel’s 40-year history, the connection between environmental contamination and genetic, immune and endocrine diseases. The panel calls for a revolutionary shift to the Precautionary Principle, away from the reactive approach long established in this country. It also calls for a higher degree of public participation in that regulation, specifically mentioning the role of “environmental and public health advocates,” and for the involvement of “all levels of government, from federal to local” in reforming the current system “through rigorous reassessment of environmental pollutants.”

The report has the potential to be a powerful tool for organizations and individuals working to protect living organisms from what it calls the “unacceptable burdens” of “nearly 80,000 chemicals on the market” from which regulatory agencies fail to protect us.

The Health Commission took the opportunity to take a step away from the ineffective and corrupted regime now used in regulating the vast quantities of poisons being released into our environment, voting to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors supporting the report of the President’s Cancer Panel, calling for the implementation of the Precautionary Principle, and suggesting the Supervisors work with the Health Commission to educate the public about the Precautionary Principle’s ability to protect people and the environment.

The Health Commission was encouraged to recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt a Precautionary Principle ordinance, direct County departments to implement it, and include it in both state and federal legislative strategies. A number of Commission members expressed the opinion that the public is largely unaware of the Precautionary Principle and its implications, and expressed concern over the lack of information about it, while others showed they understood some of the basic elements. Some members suggested forming a task force to study the matter. Most expressed a desire to move forward with the Precautionary Principle in some manner.

The County Health Commission’s action is an opportunity to move county and eventually state and federal policy in the right direction. There are many incidents of people and communities poisoned by numerous contaminants and left defenseless because pollutants have a stronghold on regulatory policies, placing the burden of proof on the victims and blocking the use of less dangerous substances.

Whether the county moves toward implementing the Precautionary Principle will depend, to a large extent, on whether there is sufficient public awareness and interest in advocating that the county move in that direction.

The Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle

The release and use of toxic substances, the exploitation of resources, and physical alterations of the environment have had substantial unintended consequences affecting human health and the environment. Some of these concerns are high rates of learning deficiencies, asthma, cancer, birth defects and species extinctions; along with global climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion and worldwide contamination with toxic substances and nuclear materials.

We believe existing environmental regulations and other decisions, particularly those based on risk assessment, have failed to protect adequately human and ecological health and the environment - the larger system of which humans are but a part.

We believe there is compelling evidence that damage to humans and the worldwide environment is of such magnitude and seriousness that new principles for conducting human activities are necessary.

While we realize that human activities may involve risks, people must proceed more carefully than has been the case in recent history. Corporations, government entities, organizations, communities, scientists and other individuals must adopt a precautionary approach to all human endeavors.

Therefore, it is necessary to implement the Precautionary Principle: When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.

In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof.

The process of applying the Precautionary Principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action.

- The Wingspread Conference on the Precautionary Principle
Science and Environmental Health Network
January 26, 1998

Santa Lucian • Jul/Aug 2010
Chugging up a mountain trail in the Rockies? Foraging family memories in Costa Rica? maybe contributing to service projects in New Orleans? Firm up your plans on one of nearly 200 Sierra Club adventures. It’s not too late to make the most of the summer months on a family trip with the kids, or to fly solo on a backpacking journey through the wilderness. If you prefer awe-inspiring autumn foliage, be sure to check out our fall trips, including service, Alaska, and international. With options for all ages, interests, and abilities, you’re sure to find an experience that’s right for you. Select from our different trip types from our featured trips:

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- Howl with Wolves and Watch for Sheep: Great Sand Dunes National Parkand Preserve, Colorado.
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  - International
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Limited space is available, and many of these are one-time only events you may not find again, so hurry! Or sign-up for our Outings list to receive updates on the latest trips.

sierracclub.org/outings
The Useful Death of Prop. 16

Proposition 16 went down to defeat at the polls on June 8, despite PG&E’s spending some $46 million to pass it, outspending the opposition by more than 500 to 1. Californians sent a message that our constitution is not for sale to corporations. The defeat of PG&E’s naked power grab is a victory for democracy and clean energy. Despite the utility’s ubiquitous deceptive advertising, voters saw through the lies and rejected the brazen effort by PG&E to eliminate competition. PG&E’s customers in Northern California and the Central Valley, who know the utility best, rejected the power grab resoundingly — with San Luis Obispo County also registering strongly in the “no” column.

The Sierra Club joined our allies in the consumer and environmental movements in opposing Prop 16 because it would have thrown a huge obstacle into the path of affordable clean energy. The anti-democratic two-thirds vote requirement in the initiative was designed to prevent communities from choosing greener electricity than they are getting from their monopoly utilities.

Under state law, Community Choice is a right that allows local governments to contract for electric power, and make this service available to all utility customers. There is a compelling public interest to make it as easy as possible for communities to promote clean energy, reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases, and increase local and consumer control over energy decisions.

The defeat of Prop 16 by a feisty band of under-funded public-interest groups sets a tremendous precedent for the November ballot, when oil companies and the Chamber of Commerce will be trying to pass a Prop 16 ballot initiative diametrically opposed to ratepayers’ interests. Three supervisors off the hook for cleaning up the damage they cause, again by seeking to enact an anti-democratic two-thirds vote requirement.

Sierra Club’s chapters and activists statewide played an important part in decisively defeating PG&E’s power grab.

Choice electricity aggregation as potentially one of our most powerful tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Paradoxically, PG&E’s strategy has now backfired — the Prop 16 ballot battle has worked in favor of Community Choice: leaders and publics throughout California now are aware as never before of CCAs potential benefits. The Sierra Club can now help many of them to consider moving to operationalize CCAs locally and regionally.

Here are some quotes from the media coverage about Prop 16’s defeat (from “Proposition 16 fails despite $46 million in funding from PG&E,” by Richard Halstead, Marin Independent Journal):

Charles McGlashan, Marin Supervisor and Chair, Marin Energy Authority (CCA): “The voters saw through the attempt to buy the election. They could smell a rat. I’m relieved that communities may be able to join us in creating competition.”

Dotty LeMieux, who managed Marin Supervisor Susan Adams’s successful local re-election campaign against a PG&E-backed challenger: “Proposition 16 was just over the top. I think people saw through it as a big corporate spending a lot of money trying to hoodwink people into thinking they were giving them the right to vote when in fact they were taking away their choice.”

Richard Stapler, a consultant with Kaufman Campaign Consultants in Sacramento who advised the opposition to Proposition 16 without pay. “This was a real grassroots effort. Opponents spent a total of $100,000 while PG&E may have spent a total of $50 million. If it wasn’t the mostlopsided spending disparity in California ballot history, it has to be in the top two or three.”

John Geesman, former Commissioner, California Energy Commission, doesn’t buy the argument that none of the money that PG&E spent backing the proposition was rate-payers’ money: “Every single nickel is collected from the ratepayers. I think it is a bit of a myth that by the tap of a wand that money can be characterized as shareholder money.”

Geesman said enterprising advocates for community choice aggregation and municipal utility models will be able to “go through these election results with a fine-tooth comb and cherry pick. Because there are some communities where PG&E has profoundly offended its customers, and those are natural candidates for somebody with a better idea.”

Mark Toney, director, The Utility Reform Network (TURN), a consumer watchdog group: “PG&E’s strategy for this ballot initiative is going to backfire. Far more people will have heard of community choice and public power than ever heard of it before and some of those people are going to want it. (The Bay Area’s 60-percent vote against Prop 16) shows that the more people know about PG&E, the less popular it is. That’s a problem for any company. It sends a message to corporate America that it doesn’t matter how much money they put into this.”

San Francisco Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, a leader in SF’s CCA effort: “It’s nice to know there isn’t this artificial grim reaper, namely PG&E, looking over our shoulder.”

Lawmakers Seek Limits on Utilities’ Political Spending

by Patrick McGreevy

Political - June 14, 2010

The backlash continued Monday to last week’s election, in which Pacific Gas & Electric Co. spent $46 million on a failed attempt to pass a ballot measure that would have benefited the utility.

Two state lawmakers separately proposed to restrict such activity, including one measure that would bar utilities from using ratepayer funds for such campaigns.

Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) said his proposed legislation would allow corporations to continue participating in political campaigns but prohibit using money from ratepayers to finance the ventures. “PG&E launched a dangerous and
Please raise my rates... IF

a conscious ratepayer's poem

by Eric Veium

I am a fan of PG&E. I appreciate the work that they do. I am grateful for the ability to toast my bread in the morning and take a hot shower in the nude. However my affection for the utility comes with certain caveats:

Please raise my rates... IF Diablo Canyon is deemed safe from earthquakes.

Please raise my rates... IF you will invest in a robust distribution grid that will support our hospitals, data centers, and businesses.

Please raise my rates... IF they are used to help those without enough to pay their own bill.

Please raise my rates... IF you will develop advanced smart distribution grids.

Please raise my rates... IF I hire more employees locally to design, build and maintain a system that supports the integration of large percentages of solar, wind, biomass, combined heat and power and other distributed renewable energy technologies.

Please raise my rates... IF it will help California to get off its addiction to fossil fuels and to fight climate change.

Please raise my rates... IF it will help our economy and communities become more resilient.

Please raise my rates... IF they go towards innovation and not towards ballot measures that stifle competition.

Please raise my rates... IF they don't go towards innovation and not towards ballot measures that stifle competition.

Please raise my rates... IF they don't go to buy the voices of our trusted business leaders and politicians and the loyalty and silence of our needy community organizations.

Please raise my rates... IF they will internalize the REAL costs of energy instead of externalizing them to our ecosystems and to our future generations.

This testimony was read into the General Rate Case record by Eric Veium during the June 15 California Public Utilities Commission General Rate Case Hearing at San Luis Obispo's Meadow Park community building. Eric Veium is a ratepayer, a nine-year citizen of San Luis Obispo, and a human being. He is a graduate Engineer working locally on issues around local renewable energy systems. He can be contacted at eveium@gmail.com
Taking Issue
problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media


Summary: The columnist is indignant that the State Water Board is requiring the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant to replace or modify its seawater cooling system by 2024 to avoid further degradation of the marine environment. A flurry of letters to the editor the same week – one from Diablo Canyon’s former public relations chief, unidentified as such – echoed his opinion.

The Department of Fish and Game, that PG&E’s data contained only informa-
tion that showed the plant had little or no effect on the marine environment around its reactors. “Evidence indicates PG&E omitted more than half of the actual test results which showed up to a 90 percent reduction in sea life as it passed through the cooling system,” the state and federal environmental protection agencies said in a joint statement after the

That’s not a great comfort for residents of the County as Diablo Canyon prepares to double- and triple-rack the waste stored in its spent fuel pools, increasing the risk of fire and radioac-
tive release as the space between the fuel rods narrows. The fruitless sixty-
year search for a safe place to permanently store the “nasty stuff” also bears some evidence as to how easy it is to deal with, volume-wise or otherwise.

The Department of Fish and Game stated that, as a result of the nuclear power plant’s ongoing operation, Diablo Canyon’s mortality does occur in species found in Diablo Cove and that substantial decreases in formerly indigenous species con-
tinue to take place. The department concluded: “This is because the temperatures that are found in the affected areas are in excess of the upper temperature limits for survival, growth, reproduction of several indigenous species.” The agency concluded: “The question presented is

Upshot: PG&E’s track record of withholding data, for years and even decades, on the reactors’ actual discharge impacts has further undermined the company’s credibility. These revelations have led to extensive litigation between PG&E and state water authorities, revealing the lengths to which PG&E is willing to go to cover up facts, avoid mitigation, and stall or withdraw from negotiations. Meanwhile, Diablo Canyon’s ongoing operation further degrades the marine environment. - “Licensed to Kill,” Nuclear Information Resource Service.
Political mailer, paid for by Blakeslee for Senate 2010, June 2010.

**Summary**
In honor of the extended political season, “Taking Issue” breaks with our usual format to take a closer look at a political mailer -- in particular, one that portrayed state senate candidate Sam Blakeslee as a friend of the coast and champion of opposition to offshore oil drilling.

**Upshot:**
Tallying up real, non-symbolic votes on real issues, where a legislator’s vote will actually have an effect on our lives and the world we live in, Assemblyman Blakeslee’s Sierra Club environmental voting scorecard stands at a career average of 25 percent. In his six years in the State Assembly, John Laird has not only opposed offshore drilling, he has actually crafted measures that have blocked it. Blakeslee moved heaven and earth to bring oil rigs back into state waters, and is now trying to “spin” those actions away. In honor of the extended political season, “Taking Issue” breaks with our usual format to take a closer look at a political mailer – in particular, one that portrayed state senate candidate Sam Blakeslee as a friend of the coast and champion of opposition to offshore oil drilling.

As a member of the Assembly Budget subcommittee that approves all budget items for environment-related departments, Blakeslee consistently voted against any budget augmentation for the California Coastal Commission, including funding that would have allowed the Commission to work on alternative energy projects. The PERC proposal includes a strong competitive element to the design process and provides us a platform that required PG&E to do more testing of the earthquake fault along Diablo Canyon, rather than requiring consultation with the Coastal Commission in setting up the models for the testing. Blakeslee refused to amend the bill to include the Commission. Blakeslee has voted to avoid both the legislature and the State Lands Commission in order to get the PXP deal done.

**Blakelys author[ed] the successful DREAM Initiative that protects twelve miles of our scenic coastline near Montana de Oro State Park.**

**Blakeslee author[ed] the successful DREAM Initiative that protects twelve miles of our scenic coastline near Montana de Oro State Park.**

**He supported a bi-partisan plan to “early retire” oil drilling platforms to stop tragedies like the Gulf oil spill.**

**Morro Bay/Cayucos continued from page 3**

Cost-effective MBR plant in the world. At the meeting, hours of debate ensued over whether to accept a $75,000 Construction Design Report (CDR) from PERC on their $28 million project and find out exactly how much the proposed alternative would cost. Lame duck Morro Bay Mayor Janice Peters, leading the reactionary/obstructionist contingent, tried to divert the discussion to a comparison of technologies instead of the federal offshore oil moratorium – a subject on which a state legislature is free to express its opinion – that could have no effect on actual policy. As far as breaking with his party, if Blakeslee wants to assure voters that once in a while he doesn’t vote like the rest of the Republicans in the legislature, always eager to run over the environment to deliver the goodies for big business backers, then voters should be glad to know that Blakeslee’s opponent, John Laird, never does that.

Blakeslee author[ed] the successful DREAM Initiative that protects twelve miles of our scenic coastline near Montana de Oro State Park.

**Sam Blakeslee has led the fight to protect our scenic coastline...**

**As a member of the Assembly Budget subcommittee that approves all budget items for environment-related departments, Blakeslee consistently voted against any budget augmentation for the California Coastal Commission, including funding that would have allowed the Commission to work on alternative energy projects.**

**This was a non-binding, symbolic vote on the federal offshore oil moratorium – a subject on which a state legislature is free to express its opinion -- that could have no effect on actual policy. As far as breaking with his party, if Blakeslee wants to assure voters that once in a while he doesn’t vote like the rest of the Republicans in the legislature, always eager to run over the environment to deliver the goodies for big business backers, then voters should be glad to know that Blakeslee’s opponent, John Laird, never does that.**

**This is another entry from the realm of symbolic votes. The DREAM Initiative, a local ballot measure that urged future long-term conservation of the lands around Diablo Canyon, was merely advisory, an unenforceable set of goals that “protects” nothing.**

Upshot:
Tallying up real, non-symbolic votes on real issues, where a legislator’s vote will actually have an effect on our lives and the world we live in, Assemblyman Blakeslee’s Sierra Club environmental voting scorecard stands at a career average of 25 percent. In his six years in the State Assembly, John Laird scored 100 percent -- every year, for six years. In his 23 years in politics, Laird has not only opposed offshore drilling, he has actually crafted measures that have blocked it. Blakeslee moved heaven and earth to bring oil rigs back into state waters, and is now trying to “spin” those actions away.

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**Morro Bay/Cayucos continued from page 3**

Cost-effective MBR plant in the world. At the meeting, hours of debate ensued over whether to accept a $75,000 Construction Design Report (CDR) from PERC on their $28 million project and find out exactly how much the proposed alternative would cost. Lame duck Morro Bay Mayor Janice Peters, leading the reactionary/obstructionist contingent, tried to divert the discussion to a comparison of technologies instead of costs, delay the practical move of accepting a CDR, perhaps forever, and instead initiate a value-engineering peer-review study of... well, no one was sure of what... and they think about asking PERC for a Construction Design Report or not. (Cayucos Sanitary District member Hal Finnes inspired, “Why would we do a study of value engineering when we don’t know what we’re studying?”)

Morro Bay Councilwoman Betty Winholtz wasn’t having it, and vocally and successfully insisted that the purpose of the meeting, and the focus of the discussion, should be how much each project would cost the citizens of Morro Bay and Cayucos. City staff stood mighty mightily to cast doubt on the interloper company, emphasizing all the extra work they would have to do, threats to their project schedule, etc. Mayor Peters, ever mindful of the need to restrict and marginalize the public, limited all speakers to one minute. Members of the public were eloquent nonetheless, and spoke overwhelmingly in favor of their communities taking a serious look at an alternative that promises to deliver greater benefits at substantially lower cost. “Give us a technol-
Thank You, Mr. Ripley

The most important single environmental improvement won for the Los Osos project — over the protests of the Public Works Department — is the recycling of wastewater, which will do more than anything else to reduce pumping of the aquifer and curb seawater intrusion. The plan for the agricultural reuse of that water in over-the-basin aquifer recharge was Dana Ripley’s plan, prepared for the Los Osos Wastewater Project Technical Advisory Committee — and the riparian community — who would have been damaged if the project had proceeded without it.

Thank You, Ms. Christie

The County can thank its lucky stars that Sarah Christie was Chair of the Planning Commission when the Los Osos Wastewater Project came before them for a permit. She showed the County Supervisors what a civic process is. Under her leadership, the Planning Commission didn’t just give people three minutes or less to talk about the Los Osos sewer project, was steadfast in sounding the alarm on wastewater conveyance technology, was more robust and creative in its ability to address the complex environmental issues of this project, and was more inclusive of public input to guide a remake of the project, making it possible for it to be salvaged.

Thank You, Troublemakers

A frame has been placed around the Los Osos sewer saga that is in need of adjustment. The need for that adjustment can be detected in a web post by the State Water Quality Control Board.

To that end, after we helped persuade the Commission to take jurisdiction over the project, the Sierra Club urged SLO Green Build to bring its expertise and badly needed focus on planning, design, and construction of the project to the table in order to assure the development of an effective water conservation plan. We advised and consulted with SLO Green Build on a proposal they submitted to the Coastal Commission for a conceptual framework for a conservation program.

The measures we drove into the project to recycle wastewater on agricultural land and for Low Impact Development via “green streets” (bioswales that keep rainwater on site, replenishing groundwater no longer led by leach fields instead of letting run off) are crucial to assure protection of the aquifer and sensitive habitat.

The County will post its draft plans for the conservation and recycling programs (right, Supervisors?). If the past is predictive, these plans will need public input before they can be approved.

Loo Osos continued from page 3

main environmental “opponents” of the project, County officials called our national offices in hopes of getting the local chapter to stand down. Attempts were made to split our chapters’ governing bodies and to agitate other members to come forward and that our boards change their position, roll over, and play along with whatever the local leadership directed the project to be. The County was promoting at the time. Other environmental groups from out of town made no effort to involvement in the project were solicited to write letters to the Coastal Commission supporting the County’s position and opposing ours. When it was suggested that the site the Public Works Department had chosen — which would have impacted 600 acres of prime farmland with a waistful outside-the-basin springfield disposal scheme — was a bad idea, Public Works staff editorialized in The Tribune that such criticism was “inaccurate,” “inflammatory,” and “irresponsible.” The County’s “community survey” distributed to residents of Los Osos would rather have a gravity system or a STEP system, was virtually a parody of the “pick a card, any card, pick the one in the middle” genre of stacked-deck push-polling, with leading questions designed to elicit only the desired (gravity) response.

In short, instead of conducting a genuine public process, the County behaved as though it were running the war room of a political campaign and trying every trick in the book to get its guy elected.

The outcome

On the down side, the County and the Coastal Commission brushed aside copious evidence that the world’s oldest wastewater collection and conveyance technology is more environmentally destructive, more prone to leak and overflow, and more likely to undercut the measures included in the project for water conservation than newer, cheaper gravity-sewered communities, money promised to be spent on maintenance will be insufficient, and the project will end to local needs that, unlike sewer issues, aren’t open of out of mind until they turn into crises. Inevitable sanitary sewer overflows are in the future for Los Osos and the Estuary. All this could have been avoided.

On the up side, we (hopefully) saved the aquifer, and saved the project from certain denial of the development permit by the Coastal Commission by forcing improvements into the permit, always one of Public Works’ vigorous resistance and denial that any changes were necessary. The Coastal Commission must now approve plans for water conservation and the recycling/reuse of wastewater as conditions of the project’s permit.

The most important single environmental improvement won for the Los Osos project — over the protests of the Public Works Department — is the recycling of wastewater, which will do more than anything else to reduce pumping of the aquifer and curb seawater intrusion. The plan for the agricultural reuse of that water in over-the-basin aquifer recharge was Dana Ripley’s plan, prepared for the Los Osos Wastewater Project Technical Advisory Committee — and the riparian community — who would have been damaged if the project had proceeded without it.

The County can thank its lucky stars that Sarah Christie was Chair of the Planning Commission when the Los Osos Wastewater Project came before them for a permit. She showed the County Supervisors what a civic process is. Under her leadership, the Planning Commission didn’t just give people three minutes or less to talk about the Los Osos sewer project, was steadfast in sounding the alarm on wastewater conveyance technology, was more robust and creative in its ability to address the complex environmental issues of this project, and was more inclusive of public input to guide a remake of the project, making it possible for it to be salvaged.

The 2005 Los Osos Community Services District board fought the entire state of California and incurred a loan default, bankruptcy, and a tidal wave of lawsuits to keep that sewer from being built on that spot. Subsequently, the Ripley Pacific Study, the National Water Research Institute, the Los Osos Wastewater Project Technical Advisory Committee, and the County all confirmed that a gravity sewer in that location would have been a bad idea. A better project ensued.

In the end, the Los Osos sewer saga was not a spectacle or a soap opera, nor endless, wall-to-wall strife and divisiveness for its own sake. Enough of the dust has settled for this much to be clear: The citizens of Los Osos have racked up a record of civic courage above and beyond the call of duty. And as it turns out, that was a smart move. A sewer never been built three decades ago, or even ten years ago, that project would not have contemplated groundwater loss and the peril to the aquifer from seawater intrusion, let alone ways to solve those problems. Instead, it would have greatly aggrandized them, and disaster would have followed.

The “secondary issues” have been forced onto the table, where they can no longer be dealt with later. They must be dealt with now.

County’s Los Osos Wastewater Project team when it bloggers the following last December:

We believe that the changes that have occurred since the 2005 LOSCSD Project provide an excellent opportunity to deliver a Project for Los Osos that will cost less, provide greater equities, and be will better and more acceptable than the 2005 Project.

And in this footnote from the Coastal Commission’s June 11 staff report:

•   Jul/Aug 2010
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is August 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
sierrac8@gmail.com

Thanks to Nicolette Hightower, Ginny Dawkins, and Frank and Nancy Butz for their donations to the Chapter in lieu of gifts in honor of the wedding of Chuck Tribbey and Kathryn Reid.

Thanks to Kathleen Haruf and Eric S. Jacobson for their donations in memory of Gary Brockett.

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FAX: (805) 927-1599
CELL: (805) 919-7630
MacVanDuzer@aol.com

555 Main Street
Cambria, CA 93428

GREEN HOMES
Pismo to San Simeon

Join the Sierra Club in the Edna Valley on Saturday, October 16, for an evening of wine, cheese, & chocolate

To donate silent auction items, contact Liz Tracy (805) 558-2947, lizmtracy@gmail.com

CYNTHIA HAWLEY
ATTORNEY
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
LAND USE
CIVIL LITIGATION
P.O. Box 29 Cambria California 93428
Phone 805-927-5102 Fax 805-927-5220

Sierra Club
SANTA LUCIA CHAPTER

Now on Facebook
search: “Santa Lucia” and become our friend!
Outings and Activities Calendar

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 outing leader.

Wednesday, July 7, 14, 21, and 28, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes Around San Luis Obispo. 1-2 hour hikes around San Luis Obispo, 5-6 miles rt, with elevation gain around 1200 feet. For information or sign up for Hikers List, send email to Gary Felsman (check website).

Sat., July 10, 9 a.m. Explore the hills at Montaña de Oro State Park on this 8 mile 1500 foot elevation outing. Bring water, snack and dress for the weather. Poison oak may be present along the trail. Meet at Ridge Trail Parking Area MDO 4P. Possible eats after for those interested. Details: Gary 369-494.

Saturday, July 17, 8:30 a.m. She’ll Be Comin’ Round the Mountain Wi the Sierra Club. Meet at the main parking lot at Laguna Lake for a walk around Cerro San Luis. Moderate pace with one steep uphill near the beginning. Enjoy views of most of SLO. Information: Mike Sims, 459 1701 or email msims@slonet.org

Sat., July 18, 9 a.m. Ontario Ridge Shell Beach Bluffs Hike. Meet at east end of Sycamore Mineral Resort parking lot, on Avila Beach Dr., one mile E of Hwy 101. Walk to top of Ontario Ridge and ocean bluffs for magnificent ocean views. 4 mile r-t hike, 1500 feet gain, duration about 2 1/2 hrs. Bring sturdy hiking shoes, clothing for range of temperatures, water, snacks. Please note: there is very steep descending portion of trail for about 300 feet, suitable only for those with adequate hiking experience. Hiking poles useful for this descent. Info: Bill Waycott, 459-2103, bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Fri., July 23, 10 a.m. City Walk of Victorian-Era SLO. A guided stroll past some of SLO’s historic houses and churches in the “Nob Hill” district of downtown SLO. See the homes of the then mayor, newspaper editor, and founder of Cal Poly. Learn about the ranches, coming of the railroad, and the lives of the newly rich who transformed the city. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet in front of Jack House, 536 March St., SLO. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sat-Mon, July 24-26, Guzzler Camp in Surprise Canyon. Join us on an easy stroll past the Mission, adobes, and the first physician, the founder of Chumash. Walk by the homes of the Chumash. Meet at NW corner of San Luis Obispo, CA. Warm weather, year-round stream will let us soak and cool. Work Saturday with BLM coordinator; Sunday hike to cooler elevations. Car camping, potluck dinner. Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com, (310)-477-6670 CNRCC Desert Committee.

Wednesday, Aug. 4, 11, 18, and 25, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes Around San Luis Obispo. 1-2 hour hikes around San Luis Obispo, 5-6 miles rt, elevation gain around 1200 feet. For information or sign up for Hikers List send email to Gary Felsman.

Sat-Sun, Aug. 21-22, Bristlecone Pines Car Camp. Come to beautiful White Mountains to camp, hike & relax. Saturday, we’ll hike the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest on a moderate 5-mile round trip interpretive trail, followed by lunch and short optional hike to a mining cabin. Back at camp, we’ll enjoy Happy Hour, potluck and campfire. Sunday pack up optional & head home. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (Sierra Club) to: Large SASE, H&W phones, email, ride shares info to: Leaders: Jolyne Houston 459-977-5077. CMC Land Conservancy’s vision to open the site for community use. Receive a limited edition Octagon Barn Hat for donation of $100. Suggested donation $5, $10 per family. 4400 S. Higuera Street (4400 Octagon Way). For more info call (805)-344-9696.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park Jul 16-19; Aug 6-9; Sep 10-12

California’s Channel Islands are Galapagos USA! Marvel at the4h gulls, seals, sea lions, rare birds & blazin wildflowers. Hike the wild, wondewst rnr s. Kayak the rugged coastline. Snorkel in pristine waters. Discover remnants of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or just relax at sea. These 3 & 4-day “live aboard” fundraiser cruises are sponsored by the Angeles Chapter Political Committee & Sierra Club California Political Committee. Depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ Truth, $590 for Sept; $785 for July & August, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks & beverages, plus the services of a naturalist/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes on each island and point out interesting features. To make a reservation mail a $100 check payable to Sierra Club to leaders Joan Jones Holtz & Don Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leaders for more information (626) 443-4706, jholtzhln@yahoo.com.

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.

Outings Sponsored by Other Organizations

July 4, 1-4 p.m. Octagon Barn Center Open House. Enjoy the Octagon Barn on this wonderful day. Enjoy a tour of the Historic Barn every half-hour and learn about the Land Conservancy’s vision to open the site for community use. Receive a limited edition Octagon Barn Hat for donation of $100. Suggested donation $5, $10 per family. 4400 S. Higuera Street (4400 Octagon Way). For more info call (805)344-9696.