Clean Energy Under Fire

NO on Prop. 23

Proposition 23 would suspend California’s clean energy and clean air law, AB 32. Two Texas oil companies are spending millions to push this deceptive ballot proposition that would continue our addiction to oil and kill off California’s clean energy and air pollution reduction standards. Four years ago, with support from businesses, environmental and health organizations, California passed AB 32, a law that sets new clean energy and pollution control standards in California, holding polluters accountable and requiring them to reduce air pollution that threatens human health and contributes to global climate change. This law has launched our state to the forefront of the clean technology industry, sparking innovation and clean energy businesses that are creating hundreds of thousands of new clean tech jobs. Proposition 23 will kill those jobs, innovation, and billions of dollars of investment in California. The suspension of AB 32 would continue our addiction to oil and kill of California’s clean energy businesses.

Clean energy businesses represent one of the few bright spots in our economy. Since 2005, California green jobs have grown ten times faster than the statewide average. 500,000 employees work in clean technology or green jobs in California. The number of California green businesses has increased 45% and green jobs expanded by 36% from 1995 to 2008. From 2007 to 2008, when state employment fell 1%, green jobs continued to grow 5%. Proposition 23 will put California at a significant disadvantage in the race to be the nation’s clean energy leader. Since the passage of AB 32, California’s clean technology sector received $9 billion in cumulative venture capital investment, including $2.1 billion of investment capital in 2009 – 60 percent of the total for North America. If AB 32 is repealed, it will send a chilling message to investors. According to the State Legislative Analyst, clean energy businesses represent one of the few bright spots in our economy. Since 2005, California green jobs have grown ten times faster than the statewide average. 500,000 employees work in clean technology or green jobs in California. The number of California green businesses has increased 45% and green jobs expanded by 36% from 1995 to 2008. From 2007 to 2008, when state employment fell 1%, green jobs continued to grow 5%. Proposition 23 will put California at a significant disadvantage in the race to be the nation’s clean energy leader. Since the passage of AB 32, California’s clean technology sector received $9 billion in cumulative venture capital investment, including $2.1 billion of investment capital in 2009 – 60 percent of the total for North America. If AB 32 is repealed, it will send a chilling message to investors. According to the State Legislative Analyst,
To equal the climbing prowess of John Muir, there’s only one contender: Norman Clyde. His superhuman feats in completing first ascents of 130 mountain peaks in America—usually with a ninety-pound pack and iron skillet—will never be equaled. Clyde’s curmudgeonly style only added to his legend. Biographer Bob Pavlik presents a slide program with rare photos, stories, and reminiscences of his friends and fellow climbers. Meeting begins with conservation news & letter writing.

Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO
Info: 772-1875.

The View from the Chair

by Melody DeMeritt
Chapter Chair

Several changes have happened in the last six months to encourage me about the health and strength of the Santa Lucia Chapter.

First, many of you generously responded when we called or wrote to ask for financial help last spring. Thank you so much! Even though many of us feel the pinch of recession, including the National Sierra Club, you came through for your local Chapter.

Second, our Executive Committee, the volunteer leaders of the Chapter, reduced the average age of its members by several years when we welcomed three new members, all under 30. And they are already very busy:

- Jors Kinkade will attend this fall’s Council of Club Leaders meeting at Sierra Club headquarters in San Francisco.
- Megan Worthington has brought in resources from the California Conservation Corps, including volunteers who made our move to the new headquarters easy.
- Liz Tracy has brought her expertise with event management to organizing our fall wine & cheese & chocolate third, the aforementioned move to our new headquarters at 974 Santa Lucia Street. By doing this, we

reduced our monthly rent by nearly 60%. This belt-tightening was mandatory to meet the funding reductions meted out to chapters by National Sierra Club. When those funds were reduced by more than 80%, we quickly set about reducing our overhead.

Of course, I have a wish list for the next six months. I wish for great voter turnout at the elections this season.

Sierra Club is the only environmental organization that is national and local at the same time. We have the power of a national organization. But even more importantly, we have the wisdom and street smarts of local people who know what happens in their areas. So here’s my final wish:

I wish for ongoing, sustainable financial support through fundraiser. I wish for ongoing, monthly events, and support the work they do in their areas. So here’s my final wish:

- He was one of the directors of SAVE THE PARK.

Ray was a man of courage focused on social justice and conservation. We will miss him. - Melody DeMeritt
Endorsements continued from page 1

on seeing to it that the Council puts more energy and resources into implementing that agreement, and has pledged to see that the Abuse Principles are embedded in city planning elements, along with green house gas emission targets, requiring all future development to take climate impacts into account at the planning stage. Marc is also an advocate for alternative transportation—by bus, van, bike and foot—with enhanced infrastructure support. Go to jannar.com and lend her your support.

Morro Bay City Council: Jack Smith

In his bid for a seat on the State Assembly, the drumbeat of Katcho Achadjian’s campaign has been about the central myth of his political career: that he is a “moderate.” In his twelve years on the Board of Supervisors, Achadjian allegedly has been the swing vote, the pragmatic centrist, the regular guy who is just there to do the right thing and achieve the greatest good for the greatest number.

It is an image belied by reality and his record. Only two examples need be cited. For the most graphic audio-visual representation of the kind of politician Achadjian is, anyone who has not yet already done so should go to YouTube, type in “kookoo for katcho,” and watch a three-minute video record of Achadjian’s combination of a vindictive temper tantrum and an attempt to exculpate himself for his Nov 2007 vote for the notorious Cayucos Viewsched Ordinance.

One year after that memorable moment, as the Three Amigos — the pro-development County trio of Achadjian/Ovitt/Lenthall — were coming to the end of their trail, leaving behind them the wreckage of bad land sales policies and willy-nilly deals for developers, the three men capped their record with a career worst: the approval of the Santa Margarita Ranch development—a massive project that, if built, will obliterate the largest privately owned oak savannah left in the state and would mean, as The Tribune noted, “growth so dramatic that the current Santa Margarita, and the quiet lives [residents] live there, would be little more than a memory.”

This time, the vote was so egregious there could not even be an attempt at an excuse. Having obviously agreed on the strategy beforehand, Achadjian joined his two colleagues in near total silence throughout four hearings that went right up to Christmas Eve and the end of the board majority’s term, barely speaking except to vote “no” on any motion to take the time to actually review the project’s massive impacts or try to work out a compromise, and to vote “yes” when it came time to deliver the goods for his friends: a permit for a development project that violated planning standards and the County’s General Plan six ways from Sunday: The late, great Anne McMahon, former district aide to Supervisor Jim Patterson, described the results in an e-mail she sent out the day after the vote:

Supervisors Ovitt, Lenthall and Achadjian—the triumvirate which has presided over so many really awful decisions that I have lost count — sunk to a new, pathetic and shameful low Tuesday evening, voting in favor of the Santa Margarita Ranch developers.

It was almost surreal. After hours of public testimony barely scratching the surface of all that is wrong with the proposed development, it took them almost no time at all to give our buddies three thumbs up, ignoring the preponderance of evidence against the project, discounting and insulting the credibility of their own hard-working staff, snubbing their own Planning Commission and dozens of individuals, and rebuffing strong opposition from the League of Women Voters, the county Air Resources Advisory Committee, Caltrons, the Department of Fish and Game, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resources Conservation District, the county Air Pollution Control District, the Sierra Club, ECOLO, North County Watch, and more.

Why was I expecting anything different? Why did I let myself believe that maybe — maybe just this once — one of them might do the right thing? Maybe because this time the evidence was overwhelming, clear, and decisive and this time there was no outpouring from the Farm Bureau or Cattlemen’s Association mobilizing their members to turn out for the meeting. This time it was so clear that these developers had overreached, blinded by their own arrogance, ambition and confidence that they had the three votes they needed to prevail. How could any reasonable person possibly justify supporting this madness?

Supervisors Patterson and Gibson did their very best to bring some sanity and credibility to the process, both clearly articulating why they could not support the proposal. Sadly, it was the triumvirate of arrogance, ignorance, and sheer absurdity that prevailed.

The hope that “one of them might do the right thing” was primarily directed at Achadjian. Many of those who testified at those hearings implored him to remember that brief, long-ago day — literally from another century — when he really was an occasional swing vote on the board. At the final hearing, the Sierra Club asked that he “acknowledge that we have rules for a reason, that there are some things worth protecting, and there is a value and an imperative beyond the calculation of private profit.”

He didn’t.

We bring you this memory-jogger as a public service, so that you will remember to do three things: 1) make sure you are registered to vote, 2) volunteer with the Hilda Zacarias for State Assembly campaign, and 3) vote for Hilda Zacarias and tell all your friends to do likewise.

This will be well worth your time not just because Katcho Achadjian spreading his brand of crony politics around the state capitol — enriching his friends and impoverishing the environment on a statewide scale — is a distressing thought, but because in her record of public service, Hilda Zacarias is everything Katcho Achadjian is not.

Go to http://hildazacarias.com/ and find out what you can do to help send two people where they belong: Ms. Zacarias to Sacramento, and Mr. Achadjian back to his gas stations in Arroyo Grande.

SLO City Council: Dan Carpenter for SLO City Council

Kathy Smith for SLO City Council

Andrew Carter

Cambria CSD:

Barry Farmer

Valerie Bentz

www.valeriebecsd.org

SLO City Measure H: No position. We encourage the City to stake out the dimensions of the proposed Prado Road extension/widening on site prior to the election so that residents can see exactly what is proposed on the ground.

NO on Prop. 26

Companies that pollute or harm the public’s health should be required to pay to cover the damage they do. Prop. 26 was placed on the ballot by oil, tobacco, and alcohol companies that want the taxpayers to foot the bill instead. Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Phillip Morris provided virtually all the funding to get Prop 26 on the ballot. It will require a 2/3 vote to implement the payments by these companies for harm done to the environment or public health, making these payments much harder to enact and leaving taxpayers to foot the bill. Sierra Club California joins the leagues of Women Voters, American Lung Association, California Nurses Association, Peace Officers Research Association of California, California Federation of Teachers, Consumer Federation of California and local governments in opposing Prop 26.

Katcho’s Way

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Farmers Markets Say No to GMOs

By Jesse Arnold

For the past few years, SLO GE-Free has been educating consumers about the farmers markets that allow the sale of Monsanto’s genetically engineered Bt corn. That work continues.

The good news is that you will not find Monsanto’s Bt corn at the majority of farmers markets in our country. We think it is time to thank those markets and encourage them to see that Bt corn doesn’t come to their market in the future.

So a thank-you to the following farmers markets that have stated their opposition to genetically engineered produce: Cayucos, Avila Beach, Grover Beach, Shell Beach, and the Morro Bay Saturday markets.

The Nipomo Sunday market does not have Bt corn. The manager of the Paso Robles Friday and Saturday markets has said they don’t have Bt corn “so far” and if they did, “We would require labeling.”

Even if a small market doesn’t have a policy against genetically engineered produce, Bt corn is not likely to be sold at a small market because the big growers who control the market, and who are backed by the Monsanto Bt technology would not make enough money to justify selling at a small market. Each of us can exercise our consumer power and spend our money at markets that do not support the Monsanto Corporation. And we can thank the managers and vendors who don’t.

We believe this information is correct, but it’s subject to change and we make no guarantee as to its accuracy. We urge consumers to ask questions and be informed.

Call Jesse Arnold at 927-3096 if you have questions.

Bag It!

By Lesli Daniel

Environmental Advocacy Intern
Sierra Club California

Californians use approximately 19 billion single use plastic bags each year. However, less than 5% of all single use plastic bags are recycled. Instead, many of these plastic bags become litter in our oceans and our communities. The California legislature is poised to pass a bill banning single-use bag bans since 2006, that required grocery stores and pharmacies to recycle single-use bags, but there is still opposition from the American Chemistry Council and other industry groups.

There have been several attempts to pass single-use bag bans since 2000, but this year we have a viable bill in AB 1998. The Single-Use Bag Reduction Act, authored by Assembly-member Julia Brownley (D-Santa Monica). AB 1998 would:

1. Ban single-use plastic bags at grocery stores, retail convenience stores, and convenience stores. 2. Offer recycled-content paper bags for a minimum fee of $0.05/bag. 3. Require the sale of reusable bags. 4. Does not apply to bags for bulk items (e.g. produce) or raw meat.

This bill has the backing of grocers, labor, environmental groups, and ocean protection groups. The Governor has said he’ll sign it. Now we just need that extra push from you to get it through the Senate. Single-use bags have several environmental impacts:

- Ocean pollution: An estimated 60-80% of marine debris is from plastics, and 90% of the floating debris is plastic. Eliminating single-use plastic bags is one way we can stop growing the North Pacific Trash Gyre, which is now estimated to be twice the size of Texas.
- Litter: The aerodynamic namentals of single-use plastic bags have made them a huge source of litter. They are one of the most common waste products collected during coastal cleanups.
- Hidden costs: You might think that single-use bags are free, but is estimated that it costs $18-$30/year on your grocery bill. Then there are the millions of taxpayer dollars spent on litter abatement and recycling.
- Harm to wildlife: Plastic bags (which resemble jelly fish in the water) or pieces of plastic bags can easily be mistaken for food or prey by seabirds, marine mammals, fish, and sea turtles. Littered plastic items harm hundreds of wildlife species, some of which are threatened or endangered species.

A 1997 study found that at least 267 species have been affected by ingestion or entanglement in marine debris worldwide. Currently, 86% of all sea turtle species, 44% of all seabird species, and 43% of all marine mammal species, have had reported problems of entanglement or ingestion of marine debris. Plastic bags were the most common plastic item found in the digestive tract of 408 leatherback sea turtles according to a 2009 study that reviewed historical necropsies.

Recycling isn’t the answer. The California Legislature enacted a law in 2006 that required grocery stores and pharmacies to recycle single-use bags, but that program is capturing less than 5% of bags.

To learn more, visit HealTheBay.org.
Risks and rewards SLO climate change panel deliberates.

Here Comes the Neighborhood

Pismo Beach City Council denies development, saves canyon, open space

Item 7B on the July 6 agenda of the Pismo Beach City Council was the end of a long road, and a happy ending to a distressing story, for many residents of the Pismo Heights planning area (see "A Very Poor Plan for Pismo," June 2009), as well as a textbook example of "how to save your neighborhood" that could serve as a primer for all county residents.

For several years, the residents faced and fought the prospect of their canyon views — designated Open Space in the city’s General Plan — being turned into the "Canyon Oaks" housing development in a swap the city was backing for a developer’s land on Price Canyon Road — 24 not-too-desirable lots that have access and traffic issues, which the owner was very willing to trade for lush canyon lots a short distance away.

Neighbors organized and turned out in droves at every step of the process to oppose the project. Originally denied, the project was resuscitated by the Planning Commission and passed along to the City Council, trailing a list of the zoning code changes and General Plan and Local Coastal Plan amendments necessary to do the deed.

As California Coastal Commission staff pointed out in a letter to the City the week before the city council hearing, the canyon is a protected resource area, impacts to a live oak woodland would likely be significant, and the plan called for building on slopes in excess of a 30 percent grade — all in violation of the city’s Local Coastal Plan.

City staff at the July 6 hearing immediately moved to contradict and disagree with Coastal Commission staff, as did the developer and his representative. As the Sierra Club pointed out: "This project needs to be approved by the Coastal Commission. And they clearly don’t agree with your staff’s or the applicant’s assessment of the project’s impacts to coastal resources.

At the end of long hearing and a parade of speakers opposed to the project along with a smattering of those affirming that it would mean more property taxes for the city’s treasury, the Council voted 3-1 to deny the development permit. Councilman Ted Ehring refused to rezone open space for residential development, and expressed public safety concerns, saying he had seen a fire "sweep up a box canyon in three seconds." Ed Waage said "open space should stay open space." Mayor Pro Tem Shelly Higginbotham was "really uncomfortable" with the increased traffic on a road that is already "horrible," and said of open space, "once it's gone, it's gone, and we'll never get it back." Kris Vardas was the lone dissenting vote.

Good job, Pismo City Council. And great job, Pismo Heights neighbors, who set up a website (welovepismo beach.org), took pictures of the developer’s property and the canyon land he wanted to swap it for, and put them side by side, showing to devastating effect the contrast with the developer’s three scrubby roadside acres and the six acres of beautiful canyon property he coveted.

The residents made sure to keep KSBY and The Tribune updated at every turn as the issue wound its way through the process. Let’s hope this was a prelude of things to come for the Price Canyon plan, a massive proposed commercial/residential development on unincorporated land north of the city involving 634 houses, 200 hotel rooms, conference center, vineyards, etc., much of it on steep slopes.

With the Canyon Oaks project, a neighborhood and a canyon were at stake. The impacts of the Price Canyon project — and Pismo’s sprawling march toward the city of SLO — would be felt countywide.

Brace for Impact

Climate change is here. Now what do we do?

The organizers of the July 14 SLO Climate Change Adaptation Workshop were blunt: climate change adaptation measures are like the air bag in your car. We should work to curb emissions to halt climate change, but we are going to need that air bag because a crash is coming. The Local Government Commission has selected one inland and one coastal region in California in which to focus its study of local effects of climate change and potential adaptation strategies. (Go to www.lgc.org/adaptation/slo).

San Luis Obispo is the California coastal county that will serve as the laboratory in the effort to comply with the state law mandating reduction of carbon emissions. The July 14 LGC workshop at the SLO Embassy Suites was the third and final meeting presenting information and getting feedback from stakeholders, elected officials, city managers and the general public. The resulting priorities and strategies will help local governments prepare for the impacts of climate change in a way that provides benefits across multiple ecosystems, and includes consider — continued on page 9

No deal Would-be Canyon Oaks developers (in front of monitor) got a decision they didn’t want at the standing room only July 6 meeting of the Pismo Beach City Council.

Not this canyon Pismo Heights residents organized to save their canyon from development.
Chapter Wins Coastal Commission Appeal

Public access restored for Harmony Coast project

On August 11, after four years of unproductive negotiations with development permit applicants by California Coastal Commission staff, the Commission finally heard the Santa Lucia Chapter’s 2006 appeal of an egregiously wrong-headed decision by the County Board of Supervisors. Coastal Commissioners voted overwhelmingly to uphold our appeal. Under the Coastal Act, new development requires a dedication of public access for the benefit of the public. This is not a point of debate, though the applicants gave it a good try at the Coastal Commission’s August hearing in SLO.

Santa Lucia Chapter Director Andrew Christie pointed out that, in 2006, the SLO County Board of Supervisors, at the behest of Supervisor Achadjian, ignored Local Coastal Plan and Coastal Act policies requiring public access for the Harmony Coast project, actually reducing promised access by deleting a condition from the applicant’s permit that would have required an Offer To Dedicate (OTD) public access along the shore, 25 feet above the mean high tide line.

The property is on China Harbor, used by kayakers, surfers and fishers, and adjacent to a state park. The Harmony Coast is a vital link in the California Coastal Trail. We argued that the project should be conditioned to require a bluff top trail alignment for the Coastal Trail, as even a 25-foot OTD would not provide adequate public access at high tide if located on the beach portion of the property.

As fate would have it, the very same Supervisor Achadjian who pushed the bad Board decision in 2006 is a sitting Coastal Commissioner. His interpretation of coastal law, from his fellow Commissioners thought of his green jobs czar, Paul Stamets just before he was awarded international patents for micro-fungi that eat oil. The list goes on.

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Bioneers is Here

SLO will partner with world’s premier environmental conference

Founded in 1990, Bioneers/Collective Heritage Institute is a nonprofit organization that promotes practical environmental solutions and innovative social strategies for restoring the Earth and its communities. They do this via a radio and book series (you are probably familiar with Bioneers if you listen to KCBX with any regularity), a youth initiative, and, for the last twenty years, one of the world’s largest annual environmental conferences, held in Marin County and augmented by satellite conferences across North America. The Bioneers Conference brings together the most brilliant, compassionate thinkers, innovators, eco-warriors, artists and scientists engaged in the complex mission of saving the planet.

This year, the Central Coast joins the roster of Beaming Bioneers conference partners, with the satellite conference site for our region located at Cal Poly.

“We are thrilled to announce the Beaming Bioneers program allows select communities to broadcast the morning plenary sessions in a simulcast. About a dozen cities around the world participate. In the afternoon, these “Beaming” sites will then hold their own regionally relevant breakout sessions, where topics of local interest will be discussed.”

This year, the Central Coast joins the roster of Beaming Bioneers conference partners, with the satellite conference site for our region located at Cal Poly. “Our inaugural conference will take place at the Spanos Theater in the Performing Arts Center at Cal Poly over the weekend of October 15th,” said Stacey Hunt of Ecologistics, host of the 2010 Central Coast Bioneers Conference. “We are committed to capturing the sense of excitement, hope, connection and inspiration that is so much a part of the Bioneers Conference’s mission.”

That’s not hype. This event can be the single most inspiring, engaging, rejuvenating experience of your year. Because Bioneers is constantly cruising for exceptional talent on the cutting edge, speakers routinely show up at Bioneers just before they break out onto the national/international stage. Attendees heard Wangari Maathai the year before she won the Nobel Prize for environmental protection, Van Jones two years before President Obama appointed him as his green jobs czar, Paul Stamets just before he was awarded international patents for micro-fungi that eat oil. The list goes on.

Space is limited. For information or to register, go to www.ecologistics.org/centralcoastbioneers, or call 548-0257. Get ready to be inspired, fascinated, galvanized, and best of all, recharged.
Examples of various scenarios being considered are the reference case, high environmental damage, project risk reduction, and ramp-up speed. The selected scenarios should also meet other program objectives including cost efficiency, minimal mean vote for Hilda Zacarias to achieve these targets. The optimal portfolio of various portfolios, “scenarios” or “cases” to determine the most likely outcome. Energy Transmission Initiative process, and electrical utilities are all examining the renewable potential of including up to 50% or more of renewable energy by 2020.

Do we oppose what we support, or vice versa?

A few months ago, an interesting dialog took place on The Tribune’s website. Readers were writing in to comment on an article the paper had just printed about the solar power plants proposed for the Carrizo Plain.

One poster claimed that the Sierra Club supports the projects, because the Sierra Club obviously opposes the projects, despite the clean, renewable energy they would bring. Booo, Sierra Club!

There will always be those whose interests are served by scribbling a cartoon on a wall and writing a boorish name under it. We don’t think we can clear up contention for people who don’t understand the goal, but we know there are some honestly confused folks out there. So, let’s clear this up. We support the review of environmentally preferable alternatives to these projects that would meet the project goals, and 2) there is no publicly available plan for a solar power project on the Carrizo Plain, which would meet the project goals. (These words are being written in mid-August, and there likely will be at least one such project, with a second close behind it, by the time you read this – “project” being defined as a formal description of a planned action for a project, submitted to an Environmental Impact Report, submitted to the state for review and available to the public for comment. Meanwhile, there is no project to support or oppose.)

Some of our colleagues, as long-time proponents of solar power, are unhappy with us for not “supporting” these projects. But how do you support a project when you haven’t installed anything yet? The great advantage of DG generators is they can be installed quickly, they do not require new transmission facilities, and they cause little or no environmental damage. In its March 2008 application to build a pilot 250-500 MW urban PV project, Southern California Edison (SCE) stated, “Because these installations will interconnect at the distribution level, they can be brought on line relatively quickly.”

By contrast, the utilities’ primary approach thus far has focused on large utility-scale projects that are capital intensive, located remotely from load centers and in many cases require new transmission facilities. It typically takes several years to build a large solar power plant, and even longer to come online. By their nature, large-scale DG projects are relatively quick. PV project, Southern California Edison (SCE) stated, “Because these installations will interconnect at the distribution level, they can be brought on line relatively quickly.”

Here are two Above and below are two potential alternatives to solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain.

Sierra Club Priority: Distributed Generation for Renewable Energy

To increase the use of photovoltaic (PV) solar as a priority for the rapid increase in the percentage of renewable sources of electricity towards reaching and then going beyond California’s 2020 objective of 33%. We will promote California installing at least 15,000 MW of solar PV capacity by 2020. This resolution was passed on May 16, 2010, by the Club’s California-Nevada Regional Conservation Committee, supporting the California Public Utilities Commission’s “High DG Scenario” with an explicit DG target. California law defines a formal description of a project being served by scribbling a cartoon on a wall and writing a boorish name under it. We don’t think we can clear up contention for people who don’t understand the goal, but we know there are some honestly confused folks out there. So, let’s clear this up. We support the review of environmentally preferable alternatives to these projects that would meet the project goals, and 2) there is no publicly available plan for a solar power project on the Carrizo Plain, which would meet the project goals. (These words are being written in mid-August, and there likely will be at least one such project, with a second close behind it, by the time you read this – “project” being defined as a formal description of a planned action for a project, submitted to an Environmental Impact Report, submitted to the state for review and available to the public for comment. Meanwhile, there is no project to support or oppose.)

Some of our colleagues, as long-time proponents of solar power, are unhappy with us for not “supporting” these projects. But how do you support a project when you haven’t installed anything yet? The great advantage of DG generators is they can be installed quickly, they do not require new transmission facilities, and they cause little or no environmental damage. In its March 2008 application to build a pilot 250-500 MW urban PV project, Southern California Edison (SCE) stated, “Because these installations will interconnect at the distribution level, they can be brought on line relatively quickly.”

By contrast, the utilities’ primary approach thus far has focused on large utility-scale projects that are capital intensive, located remotely from load centers and in many cases require new transmission facilities. It typically takes several years to build a large solar power plant, and even longer to come online. By their nature, large-scale DG projects are relatively quick. PV project, Southern California Edison (SCE) stated, “Because these installations will interconnect at the distribution level, they can be brought on line relatively quickly.”

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Carrizo
continued from page 7
actually see it? And if you throw your hand up before I make a commit to it — on the basis of insufficient information, and if, that — that would become an hurdle
flaws become apparent and it doesn’t measure up to what was promised, will you withdraw your early support and commitment to the project or rationalize it? Raise your hands, students.

The project applicants have not been shy about making claims that their power plants will incorporate measures that will ensure — and even enhance — the survival of the Carrizo’s native species. They have claimed this in mailed flyers, open houses, and newspaper op eds. This is called public relations, but as a public is told these things and assured that the company has “addressed concerns about wildlife” in the design of their project, be aware that those concerns have not been addressed until they are addressed in the environmental review, and those claims will withstand scrutiny by resource agencies, independent scientists and the public.

A宣告 of the project proponents goes like this: if we don’t build all the solar power plants we can, everywhere we can, global warming will get worse, and those endangered species you’re worried about on the Carrizo will go extinct anyway.

This misstates the case. Climate change is caused by all of us, and now the temperature of the planet would continue to rise if all fossil fuel was replaced by clean, renewable energy tomorrow. Threatened and endangered species must adapt to the circumstances of the time. (Raise your hands, and commit to the project or withdraw your early support on the basis of anything I can do or anyone I can send to:
Letters

Carrizo’s native species. They have enhance — the survival of the rationalize it? (Raise your hands, and commitment to the project or will you withdraw your early support and commit to it -- on the basis of actually seen it? And if you throw houses, and newspaper op eds. This is appeal to this decision. Would this be anything I can do or anyone I can

Carrizo's irreplaceable threatened and endangered impacts to threatened and endangered species. Furthermore, large-scale projects, and providing economic growth potential to local communities.

RESOLUTION OF THE CHAPTER
In recognition of the need to protect listed species and to sustain vital habitat such as the Carrizo Plain, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club recommended the distributed decentralized generation of energy in commercial and residential areas and the development of utility-scale renewable energy facilities on degraded/ contaminated sites, as well as environmentally superior alternatives to the siting of power plants in areas that involve potential impacts to threatened and endangered species.

Executive Committee, Santa Lucia Chapter, 5/21/2010

Distributed Generation
continued from page 7
up to ten years to plan, propose, site, gain approvals, and construct new transmission facilities upon which many of these large-scale generation projects depend. Transmission facilities are inefficient due to electrical energy losses over long distances.

Furthermore, large-scale projects, be they solar thermal, PV solar or wind, can themselves be environmentally destructively. They normally require large tracts of land. For example, a typical solar farm with a capacity of 500 MW (similar to a standard-sized gas-fired generation plant) would require about 5,000 acres of land. Landowners and environmentalists often oppose these projects on the grounds that the costs due to lawsuits can add substantially to project costs. With no need of new transmission lines and land acquisition, DG can be installed in months rather than years, for immediate greenhouse gas reductions.

Black and Veatch, the primary consultant leading the analysis and project work on RETI, presented a report in December 2009 which indicated, utilizing fairly conservative assumptions, that there is a potential of 15,000 MW of PV solar DG capacity on large urban rooftops throughout the state of California. Based on this information, we believe that setting this as a minimum target is achievable and a concrete value that should be communicated to regulators and others to achieve a large expansion of DG.

Utilizing DG to provide a majority of renewable energy reduces the need for large-scale solar projects, thereby greatly reducing the need for new transmission facilities, reducing the need for new lease agreements from both the transmission lines and the large-scale projects, and providing economic growth potential to local communities.
Taking Issue
problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media


Summary: The free-marketeers at the Cato Institute are saddened that "environmentalists are using the [BP oil] accident as a political club against expanded drilling on public lands." Accidents happen, there’s no such thing as zero risk, the value of the offshore oil and gas deposits probably exceeds the theoretical cost of environmental damage, etc.

Yes, accidents will happen. And sometimes when they happen, they reveal the existence of fake response plans that claim oil companies can contain spills that they can’t, and illustrate the fact that our technological ability to drill for oil has outstripped our ability to cope with the catastrophes caused by those accidents when that technology fails. These are the kind of accidents that make it clear we need to stop doing what we’re doing and do something else. (You know what happens when windmills collapse into the sea? A splash.) - Bill Mahler.

Aside from the fundamental immorality of this calculation – wildlife is worth more money than oil, so sayonara, sea turtles – it is also economically wrong. The costs of pollution are the costs to society of destroyed ecosystems, plus the costs of converting natural assets into liabilities and their attempted restoration. The authors are comparing the monetary value of oil and gas — sold in predictable, closed systems — to the monetary value of fishing, tourism, and recreation. But the real comparison is to the value of ecosystems. In the model of ecological economics, the worth of a wellland or estuary is calculated as the cost to replace the services they provide (flood control, pollination, water purification, fish nursery, climate regulation, etc.) On this basis, the dollar value of the world’s wetlands is estimated at $4.1 trillion, forests at $4.7 trillion (An Introduction to Ecological Economics, St. Lucie Press). And those $4 trillion plus valuations represent environmental services provided annually, year in and year out, not a one-shot $1 trillion worth of offshore oil & gas to be extracted and burned up, while the world picks up the tab for the damages. Sustainable ecosystems and ecological landscapes provide goods and services, improve economic well-being, and incur no production costs, as pointed out by H.E. Daly and J. Farley in Ecological Economics – principles and applications (Island Press). The Cato Institute is ignoring – or is ignorant of — the value of environmental services.

The central question is whether the cumulative environmental hazards from oil drilling will likely exceed $1.3 trillion (the speculative estimate of how much oil and gas could be produced from offshore areas currently off-limits to industry).

If this is an unlikely proposition, (the minerals service estimates that the total costs of any spills, conventional air and water pollution and lost tourist and recreational dollars would be about $700 million), then we are better off opening up those fields.

Note the careful yet caustic-seeming insertion of the word "environmental" before "air pollution." The authors clearly don’t wish to upset their deliberately narrow calculations by having to factor in the costs of rising greenhouse gas emissions, which the EPA, despite the best efforts of Congressional Republicans, now regulates along with the "conventional" varieties of air pollution. Add the costs of climate change induced by the extraction and burning of fossil fuels — flooding from sea-level rise, salting of deltas where both farmers & municipalities use for fresh water, the drastic reduction of snowpack, all at costs far beyond any society’s capacity to pay to alleviate if allowed to happen under a business-as-usual scenario — and the authors’ speculative $1.3 trillion worth of oil & gas starts to look tiny. And more to the point, not worth its true cost.

Upshot: A one-mile-per-gallon improvement in fuel efficiency by car manufacturers would result in a reduction in fuel consumption equivalent to all the offshore oil that exists under US waters. One month into the worst environmental catastrophe in U.S. history, the Cato Institute failed to grasp its meaning, or the meaning of the word "value." In the words of Naomi Klein, the BP oil disaster is about "our culture’s exacerbatingly dangerous claim to have such complete understanding and control over nature that we can radically manipulate and re-engineer it with minimal risk to the natural systems that sustain us."

Brace for Impact
continued from page 3

ation of ecosystem services.

The LGC report on adaptation strategies for San Luis Obispo identifies vulnerabilities and strategies in public health, agriculture, water and wastewater management, infrastructure and natural.

One of the essential texts cited in the meetings is California Climate Risk and Response, a Next 10 report that found that if California were to take no action to reduce or minimize expected impacts from future climate change, that inaction would incur tens of billions of dollars per year in direct costs, with even higher indirect costs, by the end of the century.

Climate response, on the other hand — mitigation to prevent the worst impacts and adaptation to climate change that is unavoidable — can be executed for a fraction of these net costs by strategic deployment of existing resources for infrastructure renewal and replacement (transportation and energy) and private investments that would enhance both employment and productivity.

Our local decision-makers will need to be encouraged to act on the LGC reports and recommendations, particularly recommendations to change land use policies, protect migration corridors and habitat, and otherwise do what’s necessary to protect species and ecosystems at risk.

The Sierra Club’s Resilient Habitats campaign does just that. Setting aside areas where development is restricted is no longer enough — we must now actively work to create habitats where plants, animals, and people are able to thrive on a warmer planet.

Animals like grizzly bears, salmon, panthers and the San Joaquin kit fox will face a race for life as their food sources and habitat change. We need to help them survive. The Resilient Habitats campaigns is focusing efforts on ten key ecoregions nationwide, including the California coast.

A Close One!
Public power gets last-minute save at climate change workshop
Breakout sessions at the Climate Change Adaptation Workshop covered the primary strategy areas of climate change impact as identified by the Local Government Commission: Health and Emergency Preparedness, Agriculture, Water Supply, Coastal Marine, and Infrastructure/Energy. Each session consisted of two groups of workshop attendees rotating through in

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Now you see IL... That’s a Community Choice Power logo on the back of BLOCOO’s Ron DeCirk at the climate change workshop. He’s about to make it disappear.
An Oil Spill of Our Own

By Ralph Bishop, Nipomo Creek Dogs

For the second time in as many months, this humble Creek Dog has received a communication from the Regional Water Quality Board. The first, as documented in the Santa Lucian, concerned solid waste clogging Nipomo Creek (“Thank You Provision #28,” June 2010; “Caught in the Black Web,” March 2008). This one concerns Conoco Nipomo Creek Pipeline oil spill, which is now just two feet under the basement of the creek.

A few years ago, fellow Creek Dog Daniel Diaz learned from the loose lips of a Conoco employee about the spill, the knowledge of which had been concealed for several years. Having been a Reagan Republican, I was an unlikely person to join Daniel in taking an ecological stance on oil, but my maturity away from ideology and my lifelong interest in geology made me realize the gravity of this particular spill and that the long suppression of this information was a betrayal of the community that crossed a moral line.

I have worked for years digging fossils in Pleistocene tar pits and Miocene agatized oil. Just as the Chumash did, I realized fossil tar was a useful, benign and integral part of our environment. On the other hand, I had worked as a “wurm” in the oil fields, with subterranean oil that for the good of the environment should be left where it is.

And once again the irrepressible Santa Lucia Chapter has supported our efforts to bring ecological integrity to Nipomo Creek. The Santa Lucia was the only local newspaper that quoted the scholars to confront with honesty the collusive power structure that for years betrayed the trust of the community of both man and nature. God bless our fellow trouble-makers.

Having had success with the RWQCB when I presented my first photo-documented report “Destructive Failure of Creek Restoration in Nipomo Creek,” I provided another report to the water board in which I laid out common-sense concerns based on fifty years experience in the area below the Dana Adobe. I also used data from Conoco’s own report on the spill (which read like CEO Tony Hayward’s testimony at his Senate conflag). The reality of the situation was difficult to fumble or finesse.

My proposal — a temporary stream channel to recirculate contaminated zone until a long-term solution could be implemented — was not meant to be the solution of neutralizing this huge swath of contaminated soil that mingles with pressurized ground water, a virulent and complicated situation, but rather a stop-gap procedure to stop erosion from popping the cork and spreading the oil downstream.

The Water Board didn’t go for that, but they did go for this, per their Public Notice of Corrective Action Plan, released on June 23:

The proposed Cleanup Approach to mitigate the potential for exposure of crude-oil impacted soil below Nipomo Creek is to excavate the bottom of the creek channel to a depth of 4 feet over a distance of approximately 300 feet. Impacted soil removed from the excavation will be transported to an authorized waste disposal facility. The excavation will be lined with an impermeable geotextile fabric to prevent recontamination of the clean backfill material. The excavation will then be backfilled with native or imported low-permeability materials. To prevent downward and lateral erosion, the clay barrier and banks of the creek will be capped with an artifacting concrete block system. Following installation, the new cap system will be packed and covered with native soil. The concrete cap along the bottom of the creek will be buried with natural sand and gravel deposits. Bio-degradable vegetation mats may also be installed over the capping system on the banks to facilitate and speed the growth of vegetation.

Site restoration includes replacement of removed trees, shrubs, plants, and native grasses within the areas disturbed by the construction activities. The types of riparian and non-riparian vegetation to be planted will be selected in collaboration with the landowner and The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County.

It appears that common sense supported by photographic corroborations has been embraced by the Water Board.

But after that paragraph, under the heading “Next Steps,” come the words “…all appropriate administrative means,” and the need to obtain same before anything can be done.

I know how that goes.

How many more winters shall pass before any implementation can occur while permittees chase their tails? The vagaries of weather do not surrender to the sloth of man while years pass on our environment pays for inaction.

And the other big question: How many more leaks — in the active Conoco pipeline that caused this problem and the old pipeline next to it — have yet to be discovered?

A Close One

continued from page 9

discussions of 45 minutes each. In the first Infrastructure session, attendees put Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) — the public power sector energy law that was recently the target of Proposition 16, PG&E’s $42-million anti-competition initiative attempt to kill it — into the top echelon of energy infrastructure priorities for the county.

Community Choice, a state law that allows communities to break with their local utility and purchase as much clean, renewable energy as they want, is the silver bullet of climate change and energy policy, bringing more renewable energy on line faster than any privately owned utility has been able to, cutting pollution, improving public health, and incentivizing the growth of the green economy, at a cost to ratepayers generally 20 percent less than what the utilities charge. Everywhere a CCA program has been proposed, PG&E has fought it with the kind of ferocity displayed by tobacco companies in fighting product liability lawsuits.

When it came time for the workshop’s Local Government Commission organizers to catalog the priorities voted on by each breakout group, Infrastructure group spokes¬man Ron De Carli, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), read off the top five issues as determined by the two groups. But when it came to CCA, De Carli said that the second group had assigned the same level of priority to “working with private interests on incentive programs” and therefore the equivalent CCA priority, as determined by the first group, should be deleted and replaced by the second group’s priority.

As the LGC organizers dutifully began deleting and replacing CCA on the appropriate Power Point slide projected on the screen at the front of the room, Ken Smokoska, director of training for the Green Tech Program at Cuesta College, shouted out from the back, “Did you just delete CCA after PG&E spent $50 million trying to delete CCA?”

The room cracked up. De Carli clarified that the tie score for the two issues at the same priority level called for the addition of the number one and at a number-six spot, and the retention of the first one, CCA, where it was.

The LGC organizers dutifully undeleted and restored CCA as a recommended priority climate change adaptation strategy for the County of San Luis Obispo.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is September 14.
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
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Sierra Club
Santa Lucia Chapter

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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, Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes Around San Luis Obispo. 1-2 hour hikes around San Luis Obispo, 5-6 miles, with elevation gain around 1200 feet. For more information or to sign up, please list send an e-mail to Gary Felman.

**Sat-Sun, Sept 4-5, Tamarisk Bash in Surprise Canyon. Help remove invasive tamarisk from Surprise Canyon north of Ridgecrest, CA. It is warm weather, but the year-round stream will let us soak and cool. We will work Saturday with Marty Dickes, our coordinator from the BLM. Sunday is reserved for a hike to cooler elevations above the desert. Enjoy car camping, a potluck dinner Saturday, and campfire stories. Contact leader Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com, (310-477-6670) CNRCC Desert Committee.


**Wed., Sept. 22, 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly Meeting: “The Greatest Mountain Ever!” To equal the climbing prowess of John Muir, there’s only one contender: Norman Clyde. His superhuman feats completing over 130 first ascents of mountain peaks in N. America—usually with a ninety-pound pack and iron skull—will never be matched. Clyde’s curmudgeonly style added to his legend. Biographer Bob Pavlik presents a slide program with rare photos, stories, and reminiscences of friends and fellow climbers. Meeting begins with conservation news & letter writing. Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St. SLO. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

**Sat., Sept. 25, National Sierra Club Awards Banquet, San Francisco. The Club’s annual National Awards Banquet will be held at Empress of China, 838 Grant Ave., San Francisco. The bar will begin serving at 6 p.m., dinner served at 7 p.m. There will be entertainment and some 20 awards presented. Awards Banquet tickets are $50 each and will be reserved upon receipt of your check. Make check payable to Sierra Club and mail it with the names of your guests to Sierra Club 2010 Awards, 85 2nd Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105. All tickets will be at will call the night of the banquet. For questions, contact Cindy Holtz @gmail.com, (310-477-3535 or felicia.gotthelf@sierrabc.org. For travel arrangements or to reserve a hotel room, contact Beyond the Bay at www.beyondthebay.com/schoardmeeting.


**Fri-Sun, Sept 24-26, Service and Learning about the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. Or just for fun, experience the magic of Channel Islands National Park. Kayak the rugged coastline. Snorkel in pristine waters. Hike the wild, windswept trails. Bring water, lunch, and dress for weather. Ticks and poison oak a possibility. Meet at Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ Truth. $590 price includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks & beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes on each island and point out interesting features. To hold a reservation, mail a $100 check payable to Sierra Club to leaders Joan Jones Holtz & Don Holtz, 1126 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leaders for more information: (626) 443-0706; jotzhln@aol.com.  

**Sat., Sept. 25, 9 a.m. Valencia/Oats Peaks Hike. Loop hike, 9 miles rt, in Montana de Oro State Park to summits of Valencia and Oats pks with great views of coastline, plus lunch in cypress grove and bluff walk. Return via Coon Creek and Bluff trails. Bring water, lunch, and dress for weather. Ticks and poison oak a possibility. Meet at Valencia Pk. trailhead just past visitor center. Possible “refueling” stop afterwards. Info: Chuck, 441-7597.

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Sponsored by other organizations:

**Sat., Sept. 25, 9 a.m.-12p.m., Coastal Cleanup Day at any of local beaches. For 26 years, the California Coastal Commission has featured Coastal Cleanup Day at the annual highlight of the state’s “Adopt-a-Beach” program. Each year, site captains and volunteers swarm the designated beaches and pick up every scrap of garbage they can find. The stacks of trash are carefully accounted for through data cards and weighed for reporting to the Ocean Conservancy. This data assists with the development of environmental policy. Call ECO SLO for locations or if you would like to bring a group of five or more. (805) 544-1777, ccd@ecosal.org.

**Sat., Sept. 25, 9 a.m. Valencia/Oats Peaks Hike. Loop hike, 9 miles rt, in Montana de Oro State Park to summits of Valencia and Oats pks with great views of coastline, plus lunch in cypress grove and bluff walk. Return via Coon Creek and Bluff trails. Bring water, lunch, and dress for weather. Ticks and poison oak a possibility. Meet at Valencia Pk. trailhead just past visitor center. Possible “refueling” stop afterwards. Info: Chuck, 441-7597.

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