The official newsletter of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club • San Luis Obispo County, California

The Billionaire Brothers Who Make Us Sick

By Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club

Over the weekend of January 29 in Palm Springs, two billionaire brothers held a private, closed-door meeting of elite and powerful supporters of the oil industry. You can bet that along with cronga lines and Jello shooters, the agenda at Charles and David Koch's little bash included doing everything possible to ensure that nothing gets done that might result in clean energy, green jobs, or a healthy environment.

If you've heard of the Koch brothers, it's probably because of an article that Jane Mayer wrote about them for The New Yorker last year. As a rule, the Koch's prefer to keep a low profile and let their money do the talking — and their combined wealth of an estimated $30 billion from Koch Industries has a very loud voice. When you spend more each year than ExxonMobil to fund climate-opposition groups and obstruct environmental policy, your money is shouting like a street-corner evangelist. In the case of the Koch brothers, the false gospel is spread by think tanks, foundations, and (unfortunately) many of the new faces in Congress — elected with a lot of help from the Kochs.

I don't know a word that means the exact opposite of "environmentalist" — but then we didn't really need one until the Kochs came along. Greenpeace put out a shocking report focused on how Koch Industries and its owners fund the climate change-denial machine, but it also gives some insight into why the Kochs are also going after all environmental safeguards as well as the Environmental Protection Agency.

Koch Industries has a long history of multi-million dollar fines from the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) that bar off-road vehicles from a parcel of County-owned land in the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (ODSVRA). State Parks and off-roaders asked the court to dismiss their lawsuit. At the hearing, the Sierra Club is entitled to attorneys' fees.

The Billionaires' continuing legal battle against the State of California is being funded by Koch Industries, a company with a long history of funding climate change denial. The Koch brothers have a long history of funding climate change denial, and today, they are using their money to try to stop the state from implementing clean energy policies that will help fight climate change.

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The Water War at Home

It’s the reality why Cambria and Nipomo are questing after the chimerical silver bullet of desalination.

It’s the reality the County was ultimately forced to acknowledge and include in the Los Osos Wastewater Project.

It’s the reason why the Board of Supervisors last month certified a Level of Severity III designation on the Paso Robles Basin, portending a significant change of course for future development in North County.

It’s the water.

Eric Greening explores the importance of the board’s Paso Robles Basin vote in “Way Down Deep” (page 4). An event of similar importance occurred at the other end of the county on January 17, 2008, when, thanks to a lot of organizing effort by South County residents, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) turned down Pismo Beach’s request for annexation to facilitate change of course for future development in North County.

It’s the water.

Matt Ritter’s new book! The justly famed Cal Poly professor of botany gives a slide program about our state’s 150 commonly grown trees. Native or cultivated, they all have a story to tell. Be the first to see his Guide, rich in photographs, in advance of its official publication date in April. Come early to assure seating.

Steyn Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info: Joe Morris, 772-1875

WATER WARS continued on page 9

 Visit on the Web! www.santalucia.sierraclub.org

In Memoriam: Catherine Oster

For the last five years, every issue of the Santa Lucia has been labeled and bagged for delivery to the post office, and then to your mailbox, thanks to the efforts of the remarkable group of SLO seniors known as the Silver Streaks.

The woman who spearheaded that operation was Catherine Oster, who continued to do so through most of last year until her “retirement.” She passed away on February 1 at the age of 86.

At the end of March, next month, recent Santa Lucia’s issue was delivered to the SLO Senior Center on a Wednesday night by Print Media Coordinator Denny Mynatt, Catherine’s team showed up first thing Thursday morning, and, fueled by graciously provided coffee, doughnuts and fruits, would blaze through some 2,000 newsletters in about an hour.

True to her professional standards, before her going away party last October, Catherine made sure the Silver Streaks would be able to continue to provide the same high level of volunteer service after she left.

We have lost a great volunteer, but you are holding in your hands a small part of her ongoing legacy and her gift to her community.
Seismic Showdown

The Environmental Assessment/ Mitigated Negative Declaration (EA/ MND) are inadequate as a matter of law and therefore cannot be relied upon in connection with the approval of the proposed coastal armoring and seawall projects. Each project is capable of causing significant direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the environment, the City and the Corps must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). We also note that as proposed, the Project appears to be inconsistent with the policies of the California Coastal Act, including the policy in favor of maintaining and enhancing coastal access and coastal resources.

Background Information is incomplete and inadequate

The EA/MND describes the alleged “need” for the project in a single paragraph in section 1.3. The text of this paragraph is quoted below in its entirety:

The six sites proposed for protection are suffering severe and accelerating erosion. At each of the sites, roadways, utilities, and/or parks and in some cases houses are threatened. Bluff protection in the past has consisted of a hodgepodge of emergency measures, such as revet- ments and seawalls that are unsightly and ineffective. The erosion also makes it difficult and unsafe for the public to access the shoreline. Bluff erosion is an ongoing dynamic process that will continue to impact the Pismo Bluffs. On-going retreat is likely to continue to erode upon existing structures located adjacent to the seacliff, undermine coastal stairways and seawalls, and erode adjacent land and reducing building setbacks. At these sites, increased erosion eventually will result in the loss of utilities, park space and roads, and the construction of stopgap emergency protective structures. For example, Price Street likely will be damaged by erosion within the next decade, and Highway 101 also is in jeopardy. Protection of the bluff toe is needed to keep the seacliffs at these sites from additional wave erosion.

The EA/MND is inadequate as a matter of law to the extent that it includes superficial and conclusory information. There is no information from which the public or the public decision-makers can determine the rate of erosion at each of the sites. With respect to Price Street, the EA/MND claims that Price Street will be damaged by erosion within the next decade, but what about the other sites? See discussion of erosion at the St. Andrews site below. 

The EA/MND refers to “past" emergency measures that had been employed at each site, but does not describe these measures or explain, even briefly, the extent to which these past measures were effective in addressing concerns about coastal erosion or what impacts these measures had on coastal resources and coastal access. It would be important to know, for example, the extent to which the same type of “armoring" techniques proposed here had been used at these sites in the past, and to what effect.

Section 1.3 also hints that at least some of the individual projects will protect private property with public funds. This issue has to be clarified and the need for coastal armoring to address private property concerns must be disclosed and discussed. We question the propriety of expending public funds for protection of private property.

We also note repeated references to reliance on “Moffat and Nichol, 2010," which appears to be a multifaceted study related to the proposed project. Given the EA/MND is near complete reliance on this study, an adequate review is impossible unless we are provided with a copy of this study. Accordingly, we ask that you extend the review period and provide us with a copy of this study.

National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club’s Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This ballot will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club’s website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

Members frequently state that they don’t know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by visiting the Club’s election website: www.sierraclub.org/club2011votingdefault.aspx. This site provides links to additional information about candidates and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

You should use your own judgment in deciding who to vote for. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please...
EPA and Justice Department for everything from oil spills to dumping toxic chemicals. Even the Bush administration financed them for covering up the illegal dumping of 91 tons of carcinogenic benzen—though John Ashcroft got potential fines of $330 million knocked down to a $20 million slap on the wrist for falsifying documents.

What makes the Koch Brothers particularly scary, though, is that they relaexively oppose any change that might hurt their own bottom line. That doesn’t mean they all that different from Massey Energy or Chevron or lots of other big polluters (Ken Lay’s firm was ranked in the top ten of air polluters in the U.S. by a University of Massachusetts study).

What’s different about the Kochs is that they subscribe to a radical libertarian philosophy that opposes any government safeguards to protect people or the environment. It’s a grim vision of our country that few Americans would ever subscribe to, if they could see it plainly, and yet — thanks to the brothers’ enormous wealth — it’s had an outsized effect on both our government and our public discourse. It’s like a hidden rip tide that keeps pulling you out to sea no matter how hard you strike toward the shore. But what makes rip tides most dangerous is that people don’t even know what they’re fighting against. The Sierra Club has put a spotlight on the Koch brothers’ agenda. I encour- age you to join our Facebook cam-paign to help get the word out.

Because when people can see their democracy being hijacked, they refuse to tolerate it. Let me end on a positive note. We’ve trounced the Koch brothers before. Remember Prop 23, the California initiative to roll back efforts to fight climate change? The Koch brothers were one of the proposition’s largest bankrollers, but California voters overwhelmingly rejected their vision. Now it’s time for all Americans to stand up to the Koch brothers’ dangerous efforts to keep as tied to the dirty energy sources which are making people sick and destroying our nation’s economic health.

It’s this billionaire’s good old boy’s club got out of the way of the innovative new energy sources that are producing jobs and prosperity for the rest of us.

### Sign Up to Be a Volunteer Health Keeper

Sierra Club is launching a campaign to Stop Polluters’ attacks on our health, and we need your help. The goal of our campaign is to collect 100,000 petition signatures across the country and deliver to the White House this massive show of public support for protecting our health safeguards.

We already have over 57,000 signatures, but we’re not going to get 100,000 without you.

It’s easy — you can ask your family, friends and neighbors to sign. With you and hundreds of other volunteers collect- ing 30 signatures each, we’ll be there in no time. And we’ll get you the materials you need, connect you with other volunteers and give you support.

Here’s the message we need to deliver:

Dear President Obama:

Pollution from burning oil and coal produces a host of serious, life-threatening health problems for our families and communities, including children with asthma, stifling childhood development and cutting short thousands of lives. Oil and Coal are also destroying our nation’s economic health. By tying us to dirty 19th century energy sources and out- dated technology, these corporate polluters are putting their profit margins before our economy, safety and health.

Fortunately, the Environmental Protection Agency exists to enforce much needed safeguards to keep polluters from making us sick. In the 40 years since Americans demanded its creation, the EPA has set and enforced strong air and water standards. More than 1.7 million asthma attacks and $110 billion in healthcare costs were avoided in 2010 alone thanks to the agency’s efforts.

The nation’s physical and economic well-being depends on passing and enforcing strong standards to protect people’s health. We urge you to stand up for our families’ health by supporting strong EPA standards for clean air and water.

Sincerely,

Eric Greening

### Way Down Deep

When it comes to water, we need to get grounded

A paradox of groundwater is that although most of us are utterly dependent on it, we can’t see it as in its customary abode and have a hard time visualizing it. Technically, when one enters a cave and sees, by artificial light, water flowing or standing somewhere in the depths, one is having a rare encounter with ground- water in its home. But most groundwater basins do not have such a vantage point. Tightly packed sand, fractured rock, and other constituents of our solid earth occupy most of the space, with water occupying whatever gaps it can find. Usually, there is a level above in those spaces that are, instead, occupied by air; the interface is commonly called the “water table.”

In this day and age, it is not uncommon for wells to penetrate the saturated zone and seek there in a cone-like depression in the “table.” As wells proliferate and pump harder, these cones can merge until the “tabletop” itself sags lower and lower. Odd as it may seem, California water law generally treats this realm as private property. No property lines are physically evident in this dark place, but overlying landowners have a right to pump up their property so long as they put it to “beneficial use” on said property.

The most notable exceptions are basins in which the depletion — and legal battles over who is responsible and who should be forced to remedy the situation — is so serious that a court case leads to “adjudication.” The Santa Maria Basin, extending into southern San Luis Obispo County, is an example of a basin in adjudication.

With thousands of parties to the litigation, lawyers are making an excellent living from the process. The Paso Robles Basin, occupying much of the northern interior of our county (and parts of southern Monterey County), is following a different course. The County Super- visors just acted to prevent a trip down the path of litigation by certifying a “Level of Severity III” for most of this basin (excepting the Atascadero Sub-Basin), meaning that they recognize that current water use exceeds perennial yield. Different parts of this basin show varying degrees of stress, with the greatest “cone of depression” approaching a 200-foot drop, in an area roughly six miles east of the city of Paso Robles.

In making this certification, the Board of Supervisors took responsi- bility for overseeing a course of action to bring the basin back into balance. Their first hearing on what this course of action, called a “Groundwa- ter Management Plan,” will look like happens on March 22. This process is not tantamount to adjudication, and the Supervisors do not have as much power as a judge or watermaster in an adjudicated basin. They can’t directly override the rights of overlying landowners. But they can make full use of the land use and health and safety authority they do have.

Specifically, it would be wise for them to prevent the creation of further impacts on the basin until or unless its problems are solved.

Two documents currently in process need to reflect this responsibility. The first is the Shandon Community Plan, which is already before the County Planning Commission and likely to receive final action at the Board level this summer. The other is the Land Use and Circulation Element/Rural Area Plan, currently being written at the staff level. This document needs to create a Planning Area Standard, coterminous with the area certified at Level of Severity III, to prevent the creation of new property rights, such as subdivisions and upzonings, that would exacerbate the problems of existing users.

Wherever you live, unless your water comes from a surface source (such as Santa Margarita Lake or the Coastal Branch of the State Water Project), you depend on a resource you will likely never see in its place of origin. Our culture needs to evolve such that, invisible and mysterious as groundwater may be, it becomes a second nature to be aware of, revere it, and protect it.
The Salvador Restoration Federation will host the 29th Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference March 23-26, 2011 in San Luis Obispo. The theme of the conference this year is “Restoring Salmonids—Holding the Line on Species Decline.”

The Plenary Session will feature Michael Pollock from the Northwest Fisheries Science Center of NOAA Fisheries who will discuss the influence of beaver habitat on coho smolt production and ecosystem function.

Paul Jenkin from Surfrider Foundation and Matilija Coalition will discuss an integrated ecosystem-management approach to restoring the Ventura River.

Tommy Williams from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center will present on Restoration of Habitat Capacity for Salmon Populations.

Congresswoman Lois Capps is also an invited speaker. This year the conference will feature workshops on topics including Fish Passage Design & Implementation, Stormwater Pollution Runoff & Water Quality, Invasive Species Management for Salmonids, and Sustainable Water Conservation. Field Tours will include tours of the Morro Bay Watershed from Headwaters to Mouth; a San Luis Obispo and Arroyo Grande Creek Tour; a Sustainable Vineyards and Agricultural Tour; an Instream Structures Tour, and a tour focused on controlling road-related erosion and sediment delivery.

Concurrent sessions include:
- On-the-Ground Salmonid Restoration: Obstacles and Opportunities
- Barrier Identification, Design Criteria, Implementation, and Project Monitoring to Recover Steelhead
- Coho Salmon Recovery Efforts
- Enhancing Instream Flows: Springs, Seeps, and Groundwater Recharge for Salmonids
- Salmonid Strongholds: the Key to our Future
- Climate Change and Salmonids
- Population Status and Trend Monitoring
- The Future for California Chinook Salmon — Fisheries, Restoration, Recovery
- The Role of Lagoons and Estuaries for Steelhead and Salmon

Other conference events will include a film social and dinner on the evening of March 24, which will show the STRAW film, short films by Thomas Dunklin and Damutimot footage by Matt Stoecker. SRF will host a poster session and reception on Friday night, and a cabaret and banquet with a Copper River salmon dinner and Latin dance band.

For more information, please visit www.calsalmon.org.
Green Jobs Conference Report

All future jobs must be green or we have no future

By Andrew Christie
Sierra Club Responsible Trade Team

Lisa Jackson, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, strode onto the stage of the main ballroom of the Washington, DC, Marriott Wardman Park and embraced United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard. She presented him with a pair of Everlast boxing gloves — a birthday gift.

The embattled EPA chief hoisted the gloves in the air as the crowd roared, then parked them on either side of the podium and came out swinging, landing a one-two punch on the favorite anti-regulatory talking points of the EPA's Congressional Republican critics.

"When Americans turn on the shower or make a cup of coffee, they want to know the water is safe from industrial pollution," she said. And by the way, "environmental protection results in broad economic stimulus. A huge market — as big in aerospace and pharmaceuticals — awaits the firms that develop clean energy technology."

"Regulations level the playing field. Rather than hurting growth, EPA standards create business opportunities. EPA labs are teaming up with Chrysler to develop hybrid vehicles. Public health safeguards under the Clean Air Act are responsible for job creation, as they will encourage investments in labor-intensive creation, as they will encourage investments in labor-intensive..."
Director Bob Bingaman: “We have to come together and support each other on these big issues. We have the same values and the same enemies. The people who are denying climate change are the same people who are trying to bust the unions.”

“We know vicious attacks will be coming at all of us over the next two years,” said Margaret Strand, Deputy Director of the BlueGreen Alliance. “The environmental movement will lose if we just stay the environmental movement. We are very much in favor of growing the labor movement.”

Foster also sought to bridge the frequent disconnect between the corporate sector, pointing to the list of the conference’s corporate sponsors and drawing the parallel to “enlightened management and enlightened citizens brought together in common cause.”

Gerard noted “Opponents used to say you’ve got to choose between clean jobs and a green environment. We say you’ve gotta have both or you’re gonna have neither. We need to create a domestic supply chain and you’re gonna have neither. We need to create a domestic industry. We need a manufacturing plan attached to a greenhouse gas emissions plan. We have an obligation to tell our kids that our generation saw the problem and was courageous enough to say ‘it doesn’t have to be that way.’”

**Why one loves the Sierra Club**

One of the most electrifying moments of the conference came the night before it officially began. At a meeting of the Sierra Club delegation, Bob Bingaman laid out the Club’s Strategic priorities: 1) confront the promethean powers of coal and oil, 2) build a movement, and 3) build a powerful alliance with those who have a vested interest in a clean and just society. He said that the Club has a strong relationship with nearly every national union, and we had that week succeeded in defeating plans for another new coal plant, bringing our total of coal plant victories to 156. A soft-spoken factory worker stood up and told the room that he and a colleague had come to Washington from Las Cruces, New Mexico, to meet with EPA chief Jackson after the conference’s opening public session. They wanted the EPA to declare their factory a Superfund clean-up site. They said their factory had been doing weapons decommissioning without proper permits or oversight, and the toxic chemicals were leaching into the ground, and into the water table. “People have died,” he said. “More people are going to die.”

Bingaman stepped back to the microphone. “I grew up in New Mexico,” he said. “After you see Lisa Jackson tomorrow, come talk to me.” Then he surveyed the room, filled with over a hundred Sierra Club delegates, “Anybody here from New Mexico? Any of the southwest chapters?” The woman sitting next to me raised her hand. “I’m from Las Cruces,” she said. “Okay,” said Bingaman, and turning back to the factory workers, said “Thank you for coming. We’ll be happy to help you in your fight.”

As the session ended, the two workers were immediately encircled by Sierra Club activists with questions and advice.

**Tired of losing?**

The two days of conference workshops brought together 700 organizations and 2,500 attendees from 48 states to interact with leaders from labor, environment, government, trade associations and industry. Sierra Club organizers admitted that not all unions support EPA crackdowns on polluting industries when it’s their industry. Some do, some can’t support it publicly, and others will be lobbying against us on that issue.

“We don’t have to agree on everything,” said Glen Bisa, Director of Sierra Club Virginia. “You don’t have to have a perfect fit. The 2010 midterm were a disaster. I’m tired of losing, how about you?”

Foster was candid in surveying the current political landscape and the failed effort to pass climate and energy legislation. “It was like building a prefab house. We put all the pieces together in the House of Representatives in 2009, then went to the Senate, the people and the work crew never showed up.”

Larry Cohen, President of Communications Workers of America, representing workers in industries ranging from broadband to flight attendants, was equally candid in laying out the sobering political reality of America in 2011, where labor and the Club’s environmentalists are hammered by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and their allies, who can now pour as much money as they want into any political race thanks to the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision.

“We are at an all-time low in collective bargaining agreements for the public sector for the last 50 years — 6.5 percent,” he said. “Among the world’s democracies, only Colombia — where you have a good chance of being shot for being a trade union advocate — has a lower percentage.”

“Green jobs,” he said, “are also jobs where we have rights.”

Jared Bernstein, Vice President Biden’s economic advisor, said “I like the way the BlueGreen Alliance combines climate science, collective bargaining and green investment.” On the matter of economic recovery, he said “there’s a debate going on about what role government should play in this. It’s a variable role, not static. In a financial calamity, we had to pump the status quo. But now we have an opportunity to replace some of the lost demand and prevent a recession from becoming a depression. Afterward, government has an important role to play in fostering innovation. There is a danger of under-investment at this critical moment.”

As if to underscore the point, as the conference was convening President Obama gave a speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, pointedly noting that American businesses are sitting on $2 trillion in cash rather than investing in their workers or reinvesting in America. “I just want to encourage you to get in the game,” Obama said.

Actually, if Congress can avoid shredding the Clean Air Act, there will be no need to ask cash-hoarding corporations nicely to please consider investing their mountain of money back into the society that made them rich. A recent EPA white paper found that updated public health safeguards under the Clean Air Act will encourage investments in labor-intensive upgrades that will put currently unemployed or under-employed Americans back to work.

**A whole lot of good stuff**

While it was impossible to attend all of the conference workshops — more than 60 over two days — your correspondent did his best to dip in for a representative sample of current thinking in the conference’s seven focus areas: Investment and New Markets, Clean Energy Manufacturing, Emerging Green Sectors, Green Infrastructure & Transportation, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, State and Local Partnerships and Workforce Economic Development and Youth Education.

At “Leaving Prop 23 Behind and Forging Ahead in California: The Fight to Defend California’s Landmark Clean Energy Policies In California,” it was clear that last November’s defeat of Proposition 23, the attempt by oil companies to kill our landmark clean energy/clean air law, had the bonus of creating the Communities United Coalition, which brought together people of color and a lot of big companies in common cause. In the aftermath of that battle, California is moving ahead with aggressive energy-efficiency programs and a new renewable energy goal, as well as clean cars and fuel standards. The panel discussed how the coalition built the successful campaigns to defend California’s Global Warming Solutions Act from Prop 23’s attack, how the state’s clean energy economy is growing and creating good green jobs, and the importance of the defeat of Prop 23 to other state and federal efforts to address climate change and promote clean energy.

In the run-up to the election, the coalition did polling and found that more than 60 percent of voters who were inclined to vote against Prop 23 were also inclined to vote for Jerry Brown for governor. The two campaigns joined forces, and the ancillary benefits paid by the joint effort to defeat Prop 23 and elect Governor Brown now include two very good governor’s appointments to the California Public Utilities Commission — Mike Turner and Catherine Sardowal — and a truly inspired appointment to the California Energy Commission, Carla Peterman, a specialist in the economics of renewables.

An energy efficiency panel revealed that efforts to make buildings more energy efficient are failing because owners who want to retrofit their buildings can’t get the financing. Public policy always favors the supply side — bringing more energy sources on line — whereas we need to emphasize the financing of energy efficiency. Energy audits tend not to be holistic, plagued by a “silo” mentality (put in fluorescent and new windows; ignore heating ducts) because the people
Green Job Action on the Hill

The day after the formal close of the Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference, about 300 attendees reconvened on Capitol Hill, specifically, in Room 106 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building — for the most important part of the conference: delivering the message of the previous two days to our Members of Congress and their staff.

We received our briefing packets and appointment schedules (back-to-back meetings from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with one break for lunch, in all six House and Senate office buildings, which are spread across the east end of the National Mall. Rides don’t try this at home), and were directed to our team leaders, who divided us up into some thirty delegations.

All the California delegations, consisting of members of labor unions and environmental organizations, trade associations and community advocates, converged for our first meeting of the day in the office of Senator Diane Feinstein. In discussing the broad menu of “asks” — sponsoring or co-sponsoring bills to create clean energy jobs, 21st-century transportation, and protecting the health of communities and workplaces — the Senator zeroed in on the Clean Ports Act (HR 572), introduced in the House by Congressman Jerrold Nadler the day before.

Saying “it is indefensible that ports are being challenged from enforcing clean air standards,” Nadler introduced the bill as a way to allow the nation’s ports to develop programs to get rid of dirty trucks, optimize port operations and clean up the environment in regions that routinely violate federal air quality standards. The legislation would protect bold policies like the Los Angeles Clean Truck Act, optimize port operations and clean up the nation’s ports, improve working conditions for 100,000 truck drivers, create jobs and protect the health of 87 million Americans. Not bad for a half-hour meeting.

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All the California delegations, consisting of members of labor unions and environmental organizations, trade associations and community advocates, converged for our first meeting of the day in the office of Senator Diane Feinstein. In discussing the broad menu of “asks” — sponsoring or co-sponsoring bills to create clean energy jobs, 21st-century transportation, and protecting the health of communities and workplaces — the Senator zeroed in on the Clean Ports Act (HR 572), introduced in the House by Congressman Jerrold Nadler the day before.

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elected officials to give them whatever they asked for. That “crunch all you want, we’ll just make more” philoso-
phy has resulted in the county’s average loss of 1,300 acres of farm-
land a year to “ranchettes” and sprawl over development in places like the Nipomo Mesa. But if you don’t have the water, you don’t have the water.

For several years, the County’s verbal promises of a new policy of “smart growth” has been belied by the County’s business-as-usual permitting of “dumb growth” (see “Not So Smart Growth,” page 5). Arroyo Grande rising up against Los Robles del Mar, the Level of Severity III designation for Paso Robles and the refusal to sell by the Oceano CSD may mark the starting points of the beginning of smart growth for real:

not virtue by choice, but virtue by necessity; not the confident assumption
that the water will be there in the future, in the quantities in which it has been there in the past; grasping the fact that global climate change is kicking over all the boxes and changing the rules. And proceeding to make planning decisions on that basis. But if the insistence on short-term profit and political expediency should continue to rule the day, how bad could it get? As bad as it’s gotten in large parts of the world, where 4 of every 10 people do not have access to even a basic latrine and nearly 2 in 10 have no source of safe drinking water.

The Pacific Institute, based in Oakland, conducts interdisciplinary research and partners with stakeholders to produce solutions that advance environmental protection, economic development and social equity in California, nationally, and internationally. They note that “Water resources around the globe are threatened by climate change, misuse, and pollution, but there are solutions: we can provide for people’s basic needs while protecting the environ-
ment, improving efficiency and conservation strategies, community-scale projects, smart economics, and new technologies.” We have succeeded in focusing water policy-makers at all levels to look at the risks of climate change. The 2003 California Water Plan officially acknowledged[1] this issue for the first time and other ones are also beginning to consider the effects of global warming on water supply.


Waves vs. shore continued from page 5

Analysis of Project Impacts is inadequate and incomplete. A number of observers have commented that, contrary to assertions of “no negative impacts,” the St. Andrews Lift Station is not subject to extensive erosion, as the base of the cliffs at this location are accessible to the public, including beach-combers and surfers who visit and recreate at the site on a daily basis. The assertion that a revetment at this location would not affect the public’s access is without basis. The EA/MND itself acknowledges that there is public use of this beach, but dismisses this use for reasons that are not clearly explained. Accordingly, we reject the assertion that the proposed project would not affect public access at this location. It will.

We also question the EA/MND’s analysis of cumulative impacts, particularly impacts to the intertidal rocky zone which will likely be significantly affected.

The EA underestimates the impact of sea-level rise that will result from climate change

The EA/MND claims that the six proposed armoring projects have been ade-
quately sized to account for the expected sea level rise that will result from climate change. Accord-
ing to the EA, the sea level rise in the project area will be between 1.9 to 1.4 meters, 3.2 to 4.6 feet by 2100. EA/
MND page 87. Yet, in analyzing the project, the EA/MND inexplicably asserts that “[h]e low range of the projected sea level rise is 0.51 feet in 50 years, the intermediate rate is 1.23 feet, and the high rate is 1.75 feet.”

The logical assumption would be that the range of sea level rise 50 years after the project is implemented (i.e. 2062) would be closer to 1.2 to 2.3 feet. The EA/MND therefore clearly underestimates the potential sea level rise on the project sites. The EA/MND must be revised to either correct or adequately explain these assumptions. We also note that according to the Pacific Institute’s 2009 “California Coastal Erosion Response to Sea Level Rise: Analysis and Mapping,” by 2100, San Luis Obispo cliffs will recede on average a distance of 78 meters, up to a distance of 280 meters. As this report illustrates, sea level rise alone is not a good barom-
eter of assessing the likely rate of coastal erosion. Other factors, such as geological features, slope, size, direction and frequency of waves etc. could be considered.

Based on the foregoing, we cannot determine whether the proposed project adequately considers the cumulative impacts of coastal resources in the long run. It appears that the Corps has seriously underestimated the expected sea level rise in this area. Moreover, no justification has been provided for assessing the project sites. The EA/MND does not include any calculations it is impossible to access the degree to which these additional factors were considered.

The EA/MND fails to adequately consider the Project’s cumulative impacts

[“An agency is required to consider more than one action in a single EIS if they are connected actions, “cumulative actions,” or “similar actions.” Kloppe v. Sierra Club, 427 U.S. 390, 408 (1976). Likewise, CEQA requires analysis of cumulative impacts. Here, the EA/MND fails to ade-
quately consider the cumulative impact of the six proposed projects. Moreover, the EA/MND fails to consider the cumulative impact of the project in addition to the existing armoring that has already been built in the City of Pismo Beach and surrounding areas. Much of the St. Andrews Lift Station, for example, has already been armored with sea walls and concrete sand bags. The EA/MND fails to consider the cumulative impact of the proposed revetment in addition to existing armoring both on the rate of sand loss and erosion in nearby beaches and cliffs.

Inadequate Analysis of cumulative impacts by using innuendo, abstracts, or assumptions.”]
Green jobs

continue from page 8

oppose climate change legislation. Laurence Hanley, International President of the Amalgamated Transit Union, said there is “no discernible urban policy in America today. We’re seeing the dismantling of mass transit. There are unlimited funds for war; but for sustaining America’s mobility, there’s not only no will; there’s no money. We’re working on getting more transit funding, but it’s not going to happen until we get transit riders to stand up and start screaming about what’s happening to their systems. Public transit is a civil right.”

Republican officials have picked up the “sustainability” message, Hanley noted, and “declared that health care and a living wage are not sustainable,” recasting the interest of workers and unions in securing jobs and a living wage as a matter of craven financial self-interest. “But that interest secures a public interest. Funny thing, they never point to millennials crying for tax cuts as self-interest. But I don’t see those tax cuts as being in the public interest.”

Clark Mamis, President of the American Institute of Architects, agreed that energy and building efficiency matters in everyone’s interest. “We’re seeing people moving back to the cities, which is good; rural and suburban development simply isn’t sustainable. We’re finding we don’t have the resources we thought we had.”

(Still listening, SLO planners?) EPAs Jackson said “We realize two dollars in savings for every dollar invested in energy efficiency. The President’s Better Building Initiative sets a goal of a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020, challenging the private sector to act.”

Ralph Gerwig, Environmental Stewardship Officer at Kaiser Permanente, said “one myth I’d love to bust is that going green costs more. Companies that don’t invest in sustainability are throwing money away.”

Underscoring the point, at an earlier panel on Recovery Act funded projects in 2011, Kaiser Permanente, said “one myth I’d love to bust is that going green costs more” in procurement for the project, but showed the chart where the agency predicted and budgeted for steeply increasing expenses for each set of green criteria set out for contractors before the project was put out to bid. Next to it was a chart showing declining costs, reflecting the actual bids they got, with project costs getting lower as they met each successive threshold.

The cheapest proposals were the greenest proposals.

The need is great.

At the end of the final plenary session, Dave Foster dryly noted that later that day, the same downtown DC hotel ballroom where we were gathered would be occupied by the annual meeting of CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Committee. The stage on which he was standing would be commanded by masters of disaster like Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, who would be showered with adulation and awards. Foster seized the comparative moment.

“When I hear people discussing the results of the last election,” he said, “it’s as though people in our country live in two parallel universes. I don’t think you can organize people who live in a parallel universe with a thirty-second sound bite on TV, thirty days before an election. We need to meet each other as neighbors. The Blue Green Alliance speaks with a common voice for a common future. And ‘Good Jobs, Green Jobs’ is coming out to all of you around the country next year,” when the conference will leave the confines of DC and adapt to a regional schedule.

Not a moment too soon. Fred Huette, Chair of the Sierra Club’s Global Warming & Energy Committee, writes “If there has been progress in the last two years, the environmental community as a whole was slow to unite on climate and energy strategy, disagreeing on mechanisms, message and political direction, and took even longer to embrace a much broader ‘big tent’ coalitional strategy to overcome the united opposition of fossil fuel plus allied business and ideological interests. ”

To achieve our climate, energy and resource protection goals will require transforming the American economy in a single generation. The result will not be an era of scarcity but instead its opposite: one more comfortably situated in the limits of our natural world, with less economic turbulence and greater individual and community well being."

Okay, You Want Budget Cuts?

Capps joins her colleagues to unveil $40 billion in cuts to big oil subsidies

On February 10, Representative Lois Capps (D-Calif) joined her colleagues Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore), Ed Markey (D-Mass), John Conyers (D-Mich), Jim Moran (D-Va), Peter Welch (D-Vt) David Price (D-NC) and others to introduce legislation to cut the budget by ending roughly $40 billion over five years in wasteful subsidies to the oil industry.

The “Ending Big Oil Tax Subsidies Act” (H.R. 601) eliminates subsidies that have worsened the deficit, weakened our energy security, undermined our ability to drive investment in sources of renewable energy, and damaged the environment.

“I can think of few better ways to ‘Win the Future’ than by eliminating these wasteful subsidies to Big Oil and investing the savings in the energy of the 21st century—solar, wave, and wind energy,” said Rep. Capps. “Eliminating subsidies for some of the world’s wealthiest companies should be a ‘no-brainer’. We know Big Oil and their friends in Congress will stand in the way of this important legislation, and we’ll hear some of the same false arguments we always hear. But the American people know better. They know it’s time for a 21st century energy policy that creates jobs, gets our economy growing again, and protects our health.”

The Grand Jury Wants You

by David Georgi

If you would like to participate in a pure form of democracy and learn about local government, you should consider applying for the Grand Jury (GJ). The GJ has a tradition that dates back to the time of the Norman Conquest of England. During the Reign of Henry II (1154-1189), a “jury of presentment” was established consisting of twelve “good and lawful men” to investigate suspected crimes. GJs existed in colonial New England and were included in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. In early California, GJs investigated local prisons and audited county books.

San Luis Obispo County, like all other California counties, has a Grand Jury that investigates civil matters. The objective of the GJ is to “shed a light” on all aspects of local government to ensure they are being governed honestly and efficiently. Any citizen can apply at http://slocourts.net/grand_jury/forms. The deadling is March 18. Citizens can also obtain a complaint form at this site and complain about anything having to do with local governmental agencies.

EPA cleanup projects, a project manager said we thought going green would cost more” in procure-

ment for the project, but showed the chart where the agency predicted and budgeted for steeply increasing expenses for each set of green criteria set out for contractors before the project was put out to bid. Next to it was a chart showing declining costs, reflecting the actual bids they got, with project costs getting lower as they met each successive threshold.

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Surfrider Wades Into Sewer Woes

The South San Luis Obispo County Sanitation District (SSLOCSD) owns the wastewater treatment plant and ocean outfall pipe that serves the communities of Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, and Oceano. The treatment plant and ocean outfall in Oceano play a vital role in safeguarding public health.

Recently, local press has brought to light allegations against the chief plant operator, who, according to the State Water Resources Control Board, “failed to ensure the sewer plant was operating properly and did not update its maintenance manual, keep raw data collected by plant operators, or report disciplinary action to the state” (“Sewer plant operator in hot water,” Tribune, Feb. 1).

Poor performance and misconduct at the plant are an injustice to the communities served. The Surfrider Foundation’s San Luis Obispo Chapter has asked the Arroyo Grande City Council to pass a resolution calling on the mayor and the other SSLOCSD board members to look further into this matter and to investigate potential malfeasances by the Wallace Group, which is the contract administrator for the wastewater treatment plant and plays a role in water quality monitoring and reporting for the plant. To prevent future malfeasance and protect coastal water quality, it is important to get to the bottom of this matter and determine if the fraudulent monitoring and reporting is a problem that extends beyond the individual plant operator.

South County residents can help by taking a quick minute and sending a letter to your local elected officials. Go to: http://slo.surfrider.org/?p=651.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is March 11. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact: Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter P.O. Box 15735 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 sierracub8@gmail.com

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ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
Sat., Mar. 12th, 8:30 a.m. Beginner’s Bird Walk, Sweet Springs. Can’t tell a wigeon from a pigeon? Try out the great fun of birding on an easy stroll along the edge of Morro Bay with an Audubon Society expert, Jennifer Moonjia, as guest leader. Scopes, binoculars, and bird calls recommended. Kids are welcome. Sweet Springs Nature Preserve includes 24 acres of beach, salt marsh, and ponds, with plentiful wildlife. Reach it from Hwy 101, taking Los Osos Valley Rd. west, then right on 5th St. and left on Ramona Ave, for 5 blocks. Park on street and meet at the entrance. Leader: Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the outing leader.

Sat., Mar. 12th, 8:30 am, Reserve Canyon. Join us for a moderate hike through the lushly wooded Reserve Canyon located directly behind San Luis Obispo and then over the backbone ridge, ending at SLO High School. Wildflowers will be at their peak and this hike covers some of the best display areas around the city. Meet at the eastern corner of SLO City School parking lot near the corner of Johnson and San Luis Dr. A few car will ferry hikers to the trailhead in Reserve Canyon (first right turn off north Hwy 101 after leaving SLO City) hike distance is five miles, elevation gain 1000 feet, total hike time 3 hours. Drivers with cars parked at the trailhead will be driven back to retrieve their cars. Plants, animals, and the geology of the area will be topics during the hike. Rain cancels. Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress in layers; hat and sturdy shoes advised. For info, call Mike at 459-2103 bill.westcott@gmail.com.

Sun., Mar. 20th, 9:00 a.m. Over the Top, Cerro San Luis. Meet at the parking lot/restrooms (dog park) at Laguna Lake for a walk up and over Cerro San Luis. We will go at a moderate (not slow, not fast) pace but there are a few steep uphill and a rocky section during this hike. Hike cancels. Round trip is approximately 5 miles, 2.5-3 hours depending on how long we spend enjoying the views of SLO. For more information call Mike Sims at 459-1701 or email mjsims@slonest.org. Rain cancels.

Sun.-Fri., Mar. 20-25th, Wildflowers and Fences in the Carrizo. Three and a half days of service to the Carrizo Plain National Monument removing and modifying fences to allow pronghorn to travel more widely. This is the early spring wildflower season, and our schedule allows at least a day to explore the Monument, hiking or driving back roads. Because we are privileged to be staying at one of the old ranch houses, our trip is limited to 14 participants, $30 covers five dinners. Contact leader: Craig Deutsche, 501-747-6870, craig.deutsche@gmail.com. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun., Mar. 26th, Corral Rocks. A 10-13 mile hike with unknown elevation gain, this is an exploratory hike on the Avenales Ranch East of Poto. We should have plenty of wildflowers, and pleasant weather. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes and plan to hike all day. Meet at 8 a.m. The Pacific Beverage Company in Santa Margarita. This is not a beginner’s hike. Limit 20 people. For details, reservations and meeting place call Gary (473-3606) Rae or threat of rain cancels.

Sat.-Mon., Mar. 26th-28th, Whipple Mts. Wilderness. Join our CANV Wilderness Committee and Mojave Group on their annual joint outing to help BLM’s Office needs envelope wildflowers characteristics in desert wilderness. The Whipple are our planned destination and the rumor is that there will be Saguaros cactus involved. Contact Vicky Hoover at 415-977-5527 or vicky.hoover@saratogabib.org. CNRCC Wilderness Committee.

Wed. Mar. 30th, 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly Meeting: “A Californian’s Guide to the Trees.” The public debut of Dr. Matt Ritter’s new book! The justly famed Cal Poly professor of botany gives a slide program this evening about California’s 150 common grove trees. Native or cultivated, they have many intriguing stories. Be the first to see the Guide, rich in photographs, in advance of its April publication date. Come early to assure seating. Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO, Leader: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Fri.-Sun., Apr. 1st-3rd, Carrizo Plains Outing. Join us on our annual pilgrimage to possibly another year of floral splendor in this special place. The plains are always worth seeing in the spring. Stay at Simms or Rocky Camp. No charge, open to the public. Rendezvous for a Saturday hike at 9 a.m., in location TBA. Bring your own food, water, and sturdy footwear. Info: Carlos, 546-6317.

Fri.-Sun., Apr. 1st-3rd, Golden Valley Wilderness Area Work Project with the Student Conservation Association in the Golden Valley Wilderness. Near Ridgecrest, Friday and Saturday are workdays; Sunday will be a hike in the wilderness area, where we might see wildflowers. Call or e-mail for more details. Leader: Kate Allen, kcallen@wildblue.net. 661-944-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat.-Sun., Apr. 2nd-3rd, Mojave Preserve Exploration. Meet Friday afternoon at the Sunsite primitive campground located on Cima Road, 11 miles from the I-15 on the left past the Teutonia Peak Trailhead. Saturday hike to Teutonia Peak, 4 miles round trip. Sunday we will go to Hole-In-The- Wall visitor center and hike six miles on Barber Peak Loop Trail. Those who want to spend another night can camp at Mudhills Campground. Fees $12 per site ($6 with Senior Access Pass). Bring warm clothes, lots of water and food for entire weekend. For reservations, contact Carol Wylie at Desertlby@verizon.net or 760-245-8774; CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sponsored by Other Organizations

Ventana Wilderness Alliance Trail Workdays in the Big Sur Area. The Ventana Wilderness Alliance hosts many volunteer opportunities to help clear and maintain trails on the Big Sur Coast. No experience is necessary—just the desire to be outdoors and work with others. You may be able to just come for the day or spend the weekend, depending on trip location.

Sat.-Sun., Mar. 5th-6th VWA Trail Work: Upper Carrizo Trail. The Carrizo Trail near Cone Peak is an historic trail that links the San Luis Obispo and the Gold Ridge Memorial Park with the North Coast Ridge Trail. This trail has become overgrown and needs to be maintained. We will work on the upper section of this trail. This is a one-night overnight, with a 3-mile hike from the vehicles to the work site. Hike in has 1000 ft. gain, making the return easy. We will camp at Cook Springs Camp. Contact Leader for more details. Leader: Betsy MacGowan trailcrew@ventana-wild.org.

Sat.-Sun., Mar. 12th-13th VWA Trail Work: Upper Carrizo Trail. Same as Mar. 5th-6th above. To sign up or for more information contact Dave Knapp, Trail Crew Leader at email davetknapp@ventana-wild.org.

Wed. March 23rd, The Last Great Fight is Brewing: Bristol Bay Salmon vs. the Pebble Mine. Sun.-Mon., May 8-10; July 16-19; August 6-9; September 11-13; October 16-18. CA’s Channel Islands are Galapagos USA. Marvel at the sight of whales, seals, sea lions, rare birds & blazing wildflowers. Hike the wild, windswept trails. 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 fundraisers benefit Sierra Club political programs in California. Cruses depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ Truth. The fee ($590 for May and Sept & Oct.; $785 for July & August) 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 make a reservation mail a $100 check payable to Sierra Club to daveknapp@ventana-wild.org.

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

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Reserve early!

May 8-10; July 16-19; August 6-9; September 11-13; October 16-18
CA’s Channel Islands are Galapagos USA. Marvel at the sight of whales, seals, sea lions, rare birds & blazing wildflowers. Hike the wild, windswept trails. 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 fundraisers benefit Sierra Club political programs in California. Cruses depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ Truth. The fee ($590 for May and Sept & Oct.; $785 for July & August) 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 make a reservation mail a $100 check payable to Sierra Club to leaders: Joan Jones Holtz & Don Holtz, 11306 The Wye St. El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leaders for more information (626-443-0706; jholtzhhn@aol.com)

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.

Sellers of travel registration information CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.