On May 11, SLO County took a big step toward an ordinance banning the use of both single-use plastic and paper bags by local stores.

At the meeting of the Integrated Waste Management Authority – comprised of all the County supervisors and a representative from each city council – IWMA staff proposed that a long-contemplated, long-delayed ban on plastic bags, the scourge of waterways, trees, landfills and wastewater treatment plants everywhere, be expanded to include a ban on paper bags as well (paper bags having their own set of chemical and tree-related environmental drawbacks.)

Over the last few years, California municipalities seeking to pass ordinances to remove the ubiquitous single-use plastic bag from the local environment have run into the willingness of plastic bag manufacturers to sue anyone who tries it. The manufacturers, operating under the happy group name Save the Plastic Bag Coalition, have won legal judgments by claiming that in removing only plastic bags from the market, cities and counties were increasing the production and environmental impacts inherent in the use of paper bags, and further, they were doing so without first studying the matter via an Environmental Impact Report – and as a means of eliminating the impacts of both paper and plastic and encouraging the use of reusable bags.

At the meeting, staff displayed a capacious nylon bag that folds down to the size of a coin purse, 25,000 of which could be purchased by the County and distributed free to low-income residents, school children and others for one-fourth the cost of the EIR the County won’t have to prepare. The IWMA board members instructed staff to come back in the near future with an ordinance that would do the job, along with a public education component that will help our citizens make the necessary adjustment to their shopping habits.

For good measure, IWMA finished off the meeting with a vote in support of SB 568, a bill before the California legislature that will ban the use of food containers made of polystyrene, aka Styrofoam.

It now seems possible that the eternal questions – “plastic or paper?” – could soon become a dim memory from a bygone era.

Marine Sanctuary Council supports single-use bag ban

Three weeks before the IRWM moved ahead with a single-use bag ordinance in SLO, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary’s Advisory Council (MBNMS-SAC) unanimously approved a resolution to support citywide, countywide, statewide, and even national bans on single-use plastic bags to decrease the threat plastic bags pose for marine species and ocean habitats.

The historic resolution marked the first such statement by a Sanctuary Advisory Council in the nation. SAC members represent business, recreation, fishing, tourism, agriculture, scientists, and conservation interests.

Dr. Geoff Shester of Oceana, the conservation representative on the SAC who authored the resolution, said “Unanimous approval of this Resolution from such a broad group of stakeholders sends a strong message to decision-makers and legislators that plastic bags are a serious and preventable form of ocean pollution. Clearly, reusable bags are readily available and economically viable, so the time is now for our state legislators and regional leaders around the Sanctuary to take action.”

The Resolution recognizes that plastic bags threaten a variety of marine life including whales, sea otters, pinnipeds, sea turtles, and sea birds through ingestion, choking, infection and/or entanglement. The Resolution also supports the efforts of local businesses to transition away from single-use plastic bags, as well as efforts to remove plastic bag litter from the shores, rivers, and waters of the MBNMS. The full resolution can be found at http://montereybay.noaa.gov/sac/acact.html.
The Climate Action Plan is Missing Something

To go all the way, we need CCA

One year ago, Marin County flipped the switch on cleaner, greener, non-polluting energy with a plan called Community Choice. Already, Marin Clean Energy customers are reducing annual greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 70,000 tons, the equivalent of removing nearly 12,000 cars from the road each year. Anybody living in the Marin Clean Energy service area can sign up for “Deep Green”: 100% renewable energy for an extra $10 a month. In March, Marin exceeded the state law to procure 20% renewable energy resources for its customers, raking up 27% of all energy deliveries coming from renewable resources. Those are the results of this policy in less than a year. Need we say more? Apparently, yes. San Luis Obispo County completed the comment period for the Public Review Draft of its Climate Action Plan, the county-wide blueprint for significantly reducing local greenhouse gas emissions, on June 3. In our comment, we pointed out that the Climate Action Plan does not include consideration of Community Choice, and it should.

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), established in 2002 by California Assembly Bill 117, is a major policy innovation that gives local governments new and important rights to take major roles in achieving the state’s most important clean energy and climate protection mandates. It empowers local governments and citizens to address many destructive impacts from the way we generate and use electricity. Basically, SCO County can become its own energy distributor and increase utility and determine the sources of their electric power.

One of the most important clean energy and climate protection mandates is Assembly Bill 117, is a major policy innovation that gives local governments the right to purchase electricity from a source other than the utility and determine the sources of their electric power.

In 2008, the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments directed staff to gather information on a feasibility study for a CCA program. In 2009, county supervisors, planners and city managers attended the Sierra Club Blueprint for Initiating a Community Choice program to exercise local control and determine the sources of their electric power.

In 2008, the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments directed staff to gather information on a feasibility study for a CCA program. In 2009, county supervisors, planners and city managers attended the Climate Action Planning Workshop in Sierra Club National Headquarters in San Francisco, CA 94105-3441. Sierrachange@sierraclub.org.

In 2009, assembly staff and county supervisors supported a bill, Assembly Bill 117, which would give local governments the right to purchase energy from a source other than the utility and determine the sources of their electricity. Basically, SCO County can become its own energy distributor and increase utility and determine the sources of their electric power. Basically, SCO County can become its own energy distributor and increase utility and determine the sources of their electric power.

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For the Birds

AVILA BEACH: Don’t Mess With the Nests

On May 6, the Lower Manhattan neighbors of New York City’s Washington Square Park celebrated the birth of a chick to Violet and Bobby, a pair of red-tailed hawks nesting on the ledge of a building 12 stories above the park. The city parks department, keeping close tabs on the mating pair and their forthcoming brood, had stopped setting out rat poisons in the park weeks before. On the day the first egg hatched, the New York Times reported, a music festival in the park posted signs stating that the day’s music would be kept “at a low level today” because “loud sound can upset the parents and potentially harm the chick.”

Then the swallows started to come back. Then the nests started coming in use. The Act’s enforcement provisions include fines of up to $15,000 and six months in prison. During that time period, it is illegal to intentionally take, kill, or injure any bird from the nest or the eggs of a swallow while the nest is built or being disturbed during the breeding season, approximately February 15 to September 1. During that time period, it is illegal to intentionally take, kill, or injure any bird from the nest or the eggs of a swallow while the nest is built or in use. The Act’s enforcement provisions include fines of up to $15,000 and six months in prison.

These simultaneous events, 2,000 miles apart, had something in common. Both the hawks of New York and the swallows of Avila Beach present an example of a federal law called the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which prohibits the destruction of the nests of these birds during nesting season.

Seven years ago, the Santa Lucia Chapter first had occasion to tell the Avila Beach Post Office — the primary occupant of the Avila Beach Community Center with the Center’s garden hose. Shirley Goetz, a local resident with a big love for the little birds, asked the Sierra Club for help. We directed her to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. She produced flyers and posted them on the Center’s community bulletin board. We called the post office and gave them the information verbally: completed swallow nests cannot be disturbed. In an error, we told them that it is permissible to wash the nests off the building during nesting season “if there are no eggs in them.” (The swallow’s nests on the community center are at least 12 feet above eye level.) She concluded by requesting “that whoever is putting incorrect information on the bulletin Board has an opportunity to look into the issue of potential violation of the noise ordinance.”

If you see migratory birds being harassed or their nests destroyed, call the Ventura office of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 805-964-1776 and ask for law enforcement on migratory birds. Or call the California Dept. of Fish and Game CallTIP hotline, 888-334-2258.

SHELL BEACH: Don’t Discomfit the Cormorants

At the May 17 Pismo Beach City Council meeting, Shell Beach resident Carol Georgi brought to the attention of the City Council the efforts of a local caretaker to scare cormorants and night herons out of the trees on his employer’s property by firing off bird bombs, whistlers, and blanket cartridges.

When her neighbors heard these devices go off around 6 a.m. over the previous week, they called the police. They were told to call the City because the police believed the caretaker had a special permit. They said the City assured them that he did have such a permit. Ms. Georgi spoke to City Council about the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and said that if he had not had an opportunity to look into the issue of potential violation of the noise ordinance.

For Pismo Beach residents who may wish to bring the city attorney, city council or police up to speed the next time they hear noisemakers go off in their neighborhood, here’s the relevant text of the Pismo Beach noise ordinance: A. Noise Disturbances Prohibited. No person shall make, continue or cause to be made or continued, or permit or allow to be made or continued, any noise disturbance in such a manner as to be plainly audible at a distance of fifty feet from the noisemaker; provided, nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit any noise which does not penetrate beyond the boundaries of the noisemaker’s own premises or does not constitute an unreasonable disturbance to people lawfully on such premises. ... Noise disturbance” means any sound which (a) endangers or injures the safety or health of human beings or animals, or (b) annoys or disturbs reasonable persons of normal sensibilities, or (c) endangers or injures personal or real property, or (d) violates the factors set forth in Section 9.24.060 of this Chapter.

Thanks to the efforts of the determined Ms. Georgi, the Fish and Wildlife Service is now reviewing its monitoring data for the Shell Beach cormorant colony to determine how hazing of the birds at the site may affect the colony.

UPDATE: Michael Graver, Associate Planner for the City of Pismo Beach, has contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and asked Carol to send them photos she took of the nesting cormorants, and has told the caretaker of the property to desist in harassment of the birds. As we go to press, he hasn’t.

OCEANO DUNES: Pull for the Plovers

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is proposing to designate 28,201 acres of critical habitat for the Pacific Coast population of the western snowy plover. Any project in a critical habitat that requires a federal permit or receives federal funding must insure that any action authorized or funded is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

In 2005, the USFWS proposed to designate a total of 12,145 acres of plover critical habitat in Washington, Oregon, and California. After settling a lawsuit with the Center for Biological Diversity, they are now proposing to more than double that. Per USFWS, seven acres suit the amount and distribution of critical habitat being proposed for designation will allow populations of Pacific Coast plovers to maintain their existing distribution; expand into previously

Photo Credit: Barbara Dietz

Nest on Community Center with the Center’s garden hose.
Priceless Canyon

Heads up, Grover, A.G. and surrounding unincorporated areas: this is not just about Pismo Beach

By Laura Sprague

After intense and widespread criticism, Pismo Beach is modifying its plans for Price Canyon. A new Specific Plan and EIR are forthcoming. We anticipate that it will still be inappropriately large -- approximately 890 acres -- and create urban sprawl. The threat of losing the large, beautiful open space areas currently bordering Arroyo Grande -- and the potential wholesale taking through eminent domain of unincorporated land that currently provides residents with unmatched viewsheds -- is very real.

The May 19 meeting of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) featured a study session on Pismo Beach’s Sphere of Influence (SOI) in connection with the proposed annexation of Price Canyon into the city.

The main issue is whether Pismo should be allowed to expand its SOI to include an area known as the Godfrey Parcel. A parcel of land must be in a jurisdiction’s SOI before it can request annexation. There are four wells on the Godfrey property. Past proposals for Price Canyon development place projects on that land in Phase 1. Immediate annexation will be requested once the expanded SOI is granted. This will raise the same water issues as Los Robles del Mar (see “A Watershed Win,” Feb. 2008).

The County Board of Supervisors officially endorsed expanding Pismo’s SOI to include the Godfrey parcel in a recent memorandum of understanding with Pismo Beach. In addition to water issues, public comments by several of us focused on the following:

- Pismo does not need Price Canyon for either Residential or Commercial Growth. Pismo statistics on existing development potential, current population and occupancy and predicted growth do not support the argument that Pismo needs Price Canyon for either residential or commercial growth.
- Threat of Eminent Domain. The Mankin Ranch is a critical site for Pismo’s plans for an “inland arterial” connection between Oak Park and Price Canyon Road. Pismo’s proposal maps repeatedly illustrate the new road coursing through the Mankins’ property. Mr. Mankin has consistently expressed his position -- “over my dead body” -- on a road going through his property to support Price Canyon development. In the LAFCO meeting, staff noted that discontinuation of the

continued next page

Price Canyon and Climate Inaction

By Eric Greening

Pursuant to state law, local jurisdictions are preparing Climate Action Plans requiring the reduction of carbon emissions. Under County jurisdiction, the undeveloped lands of Price Canyon are a net plus, providing carbon sequestration. If annexed by Pismo Beach and developed with sprawl, they threaten to counter any progress that might be made toward Climate Action Plan goals.

Then there’s the question of the balance of spending among transportation modes for this development: road expansion vs. pedestrian, bicycle, and transit. Despite every jurisdiction’s lip service to multi-modalism, “transit-oriented development,” and reducing vehicle miles traveled, when decision-makers “face reality” (the actual projects before them), they revert to auto-centric planning and then try to find the victims who will pay to make more and bigger roads happen.

Relative to water, when they are looking at any proposal that could convert land out of agriculture, LAFCO has a policy that prohibits damaging the ability of adjacent or nearby properties to continue in agricultural production. The use of wells (and threat of cones of depletion) directly speaks to this, and LAFCO needs to be held to this policy. No doubt some deal with the Central Coast Water Authority will be brought forward as a “supplemental” option, which raises broader issues with the use of the State Water entitlement (aka “paper water”). Again, the whole project is as threatened by sea level rise as is Pismo Beach itself.

We need to keep this on the record in writing by June 27, and then follow through to make sure our questions are answered and our concerns heard.
The Hike-a-Thon is on!

Follow the directions at right, pick from any of these hikes (full listings on page 12 or www.santalucia.sierraclub.org), get out there, get some fresh air and support the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club at the same time!

Fri-Mon, June 10-12, Black Canyon Archaeology Survey & Carcamp. Black Rock National Conservation Area about 150 miles north of Reno. David Book, 775-843-6443. Great Basin Group-Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club will section hike. Total distance is 5 miles, 700 ft. gain, taking about 3 hours. Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Sat., June 11, 9 a.m., Irish Hills Natural Reserve. Total distance of hike is 5 miles, 700 ft. gain, about 3 hours. Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Saturday, June 11th, 10:30 a.m. Walk with San Luis Obispo Mayor Jan Mars, thru Poly Canyon. Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sat-Sun, June 18-19, Telescope Peak. 14 miles rt, 5000-ft. gain. Moderate/slow pace for well-conditioned hikers only. Lygeia Grande, P.O. Box 204726, Phelan, CA 92329, 760-868-2179. CNRCC Desert Committee.


Hike-A-Thon to Support the Work of Your Local Chapter

"Keep close to nature’s heart... and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." —John Muir

Celebrate National Trails month in June by getting out on our great local trails, supporting your local Chapter of the Sierra Club, and seeing what we’re working to save, all at the same time.

How to get started:

Step 1: Download pledge forms from www.santalucia.sierraclub.org and choose a hike from the June issue of the Santa Lucia or visit the website at http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/calendar.html in June for a calendar and description of hikes and outings.

Step 2: Spread the word. Set a goal of how much you’d like to raise. Ask everyone you know – friends, family and co-workers. They will want to support you, but they won’t know unless you ask. Carry your sponsor forms with you. Remember – sponsors don’t have to participate, your support can come from near and far away.

Step 3: Make the ask. Approach small businesses where you spend your money, ask people in clubs you belong to and people at the gym. Use social networking, like Facebook and Crowdrise.com.

Step 3.5: Donations are tax-deductible. To receive a tax deduction, tell donors they must make out checks to "The Sierra Club Foundation" and write "SLO Land Preservation Fund" in the Memo section.

Step 4: Track your progress. A minimum fundraising goal of $100 per hiker is suggested, but any amount is welcome. People will be more generous than you think. IT ADDS UP FAST – 4 people pledging $25 each or 10 people pledging $10 will get you $100 for your hike.

Step 5: Hike and have fun! Invite your friends!

Step 6: Show me the money. Send donations to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 or drop it off any time at the Chapter office at 974 Santa Rosa Street, San Luis Obispo (use the mail slot in the front door).

If you have questions, email Kim at kkimlannes@yahoo.com or call the Chapter at 547-8717.

Williamson Act by the state might change Mankin’s mind.

Air Quality. LAFCO is not considering the recent county-wide Climate Change Plan to address greenhouse gases. Traffic congestion induced by development that outpaces circulation capacity will adversely affect air quality and contradicts this program.

Traffic. The numbers in the MSR for traffic analysis appear outdated and are misleading. Not only will we suffocate on car exhaust while imprisoned in traffic, Price Canyon development will affect quality of life for all of us.

Wasteful transformation of a priceless natural landscape for developers financial gain. Several photos were shown, some depicting current barren residential developments in Pismo that sit empty because there are no buyers. Pismo’s population has actually decreased.

Inconsistencies with prior actions and established policies; Altered Definition of SOI and Creation of Leapfrog and Sprawl. The SOI is defined in the Cortese Knox-Hertage Act and SLO County LAFCO written policies as representing the “probable” physical boundary of a city in 20 years. Although every past document referred to that definition (including Pismo’s prior MOA), the most recent and applicable MOA defines it as the “potential” for 20 year growth. The Board of Supervisors recognizes that expanding Pismo’s SOI is stretching the meaning of the term. Also, annexing and beginning development on the Godfrey property in Phase 1 will create leapfrog and sprawl — something the County’s general plan and LAFCO guidelines oppose.

Residents in Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, and the immediate surrounding unincorporated area of the county are disenfranchised by the process. Price Canyon development will affect quality of life for all of us.

There was very little discussion by the commissioners.

June 27 is the final date to submit written comments. LAFCO must address all comments provided in writing (e-mail okay). These will be discussed in a follow-up report that will be presented to LAFCO in a session expected to result in a vote on the issue, which may be held as early as July.

TAKING ACTION

Save Price Canyon

Please send your concerns to LAFCO, attention David Church, with a cc to your County Supervisor, by June 27. (Please also cc laurs2800 vernon.net). Insist that your questions be answered. Some questions may be impossible to adequately address, but the burden of proof is on the proponents of the expansion of Pismo’s Sphere of Influence.

Your letter can be as simple as saying that you are opposed to expanding Pismo’s Sphere of Influence to include the Godfrey property because you have concerns about water and/or traffic, air quality, loss of priceless landscape, etc. What matters most is making your voice heard.

Letters to LAFCO can be sent either via e-mail or USPS:

David Church/LAFCO
defchurch@santalucia.com

David Church/SLO LAFCO
1043 Pacific Street, Suite A
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

E-mail for the Supervisors:

Frank Mecham
fmecham@co.slo.ca.us

Bruce Phelan
brucephelan@slo.ca.us

Adam Hill
ahill@co.slo.ca.us

Paul Tostiura
paul@co.slo.ca.us

James Patterson
jtpatterson@slo.ca.us

Letters to LAFCO can be sent either via e-mail or USPS.
The Kids Are All That

Students give updates on environmental work

Teachers and students from Atascadero and Morro Bay High Schools and members of the Sierra Student Coalition at Cal Poly discussed their diverse projects to protect the natural resources of San Luis Obispo at our Chapter’s May 24 general meeting at the Steynberg Gallery in SLO.

The evening’s program, “Local Youth Working to Heal the Earth,” featured students from Atascadero High School’s “GreenHound Academy,” who are creating a sustainable organic garden on campus; Morro Bay High School’s Environmental Club, which is building a compost/vermiculture bin for the school garden that can accommodate food waste from the cafeteria; and the Cal Poly chapter of the Sierra Student Coalition, which, in line with its mission statement, “education through exploration,” is starting a Youth Outings Program for mentoring children in conjunction with the Santa Lucia Chapter.

The Coalition boasts about a dozen other active projects at any given time and members from almost every major on campus. “We’ve made a point of reaching out to the most diverse group possible,” said SSC v.p. Karen Douglas.

The high school groups received eco mini-grants from the Santa Lucia Chapter this year to help fund their projects, along with groups from Templeton High School and the Outside Now Academy who are working on water quality and hydrofarming projects.

At the meeting, the GreenHounds and the Morro Bay Environmental Club agreed to “cross-fertilize” and join forces to assure the success of their composting and gardening projects.

As one Atascadero GreenHound put it in describing the program and her work on their school’s organic garden, “You know how when you love something, you can’t shut up about it? When you’ve made a difference, when you’ve actually started something, it’s the greatest feeling in the world.”

Cal Poly student honored for activism

Cal Poly junior Victoria Carranza, an Environmental Management major and president of the Cal Poly chapter of the Sierra Student Coalition, was honored by the Bill Denneen Environmental Award Trust in Grover Beach on May 6.

The award, presented to Carranza at the monthly meeting of the San Luis Obispo chapter of Surfrider, recognized in particular her recent work with the Marine Sanctuary Alliance, formed by the local chapters of the Surfrider Foundation and the Sierra Club, in seeking to include the waters of San Luis Obispo county in the National Marine Sanctuary system.

In April, Carranza raised the funds to attend Power Shift 2011 in Washington, D.C., along with more than 10,000 young people from across the country who converged to press the government for progress toward a clean energy economy.

The Sierra Student Coalition (SSC), the youth-led chapter of the Sierra Club, is a national network of high school and college-age youth working to protect the environment. “When it comes to passion and commitment, Victoria is at the top of her class,” said Andrew Christie, director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. “As a representative of the next generation of activists, she gives us all hope for the future.”

Since its founding in 1996 by the retired high school biology teacher and fervent environmental advocate who is its namesake, the Bill Denneen Environmental Award Trust has let 83 residents know “the Central Coast is a better place to live because of you.”

Top: Victoria Carranza, center, briefs Sierra Club and Surfrider activists in the Marine Sanctuary Alliance on her Power Shift trip to D.C. Above, left to right: SLO Surfriders and Sierra Clubbers Jeff Purak, Karl Kempton, Victoria Carranza, David Georgi, Carol Georgi and Andrew Christie with Victoria’s Bill Denneen Environmental Award.

Right: The Sierra Student Coalition in action.
Stacy’s Garden

Cal Poly students Stacy Shuttus and Jordan Baxter – majoring in Environmental Management & Protection and Agricultural Business, respectively – are starting a student organic garden in the University’s Poly Canyon Village.

“This space is intended to facilitate community involvement in gardening and awareness,” says Stacy. “It will allow students to connect to the land that grows their food while understanding how their food is grown. Support for this project will provide much opportunity for the growth of this garden and student community space.”

Stacy and Jordan say they are grateful to live in San Luis Obispo where there are organizations such as Sierra Club to support these projects. Starting with small-scale gardening at the campus garden will allow students to learn about gardening without being intimidated. They want this effort to share the community values of taking the time to cook for ourselves, spend time on the land that produces the food we eat, and share that outdoor experience and food with others, which will provide students a venue to engage in their community.

“Sierra Club’s philosophy of education through exploration is one that we both respect and believe in,” says Stacy. “This mission also parallels the goals and intentions of this garden project. The efforts of organizations like the Sierra Club will help to make this project a success.”

This endeavor has been in the making for over a year, and is now taking shape as Stacy and Jordan have gained monetary backing or supplies from organizations whose support will help cover the cost of the initial construction. On completion of construction, the garden club will continue to plan events to introduce, educate and excite the students of Cal Poly and community members about organic gardening.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club is pleased to be a financial sponsor of the organic student garden. Sierra Club members can make contributions that will be recognized at the grand opening and with the addition of informational signs in the garden.

You can contribute to the purchase of:

- Ten raised beds (36") including mulch, seeds, and wood = $700.00
- Sixteen 6'-posts from Ace Hardware @ 6.99 each = $139.80
- Four shovels @ $14.75 each = $59.00

Make your check out to ECOSLO, write “Poly Canyon Garden” in the memo section, and send to:

Stacy Shuttus – Poly Canyon Garden
2052 Johnson Ave.
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Your donation is tax-deductible.

Anne McMahon’s Legacy

by Alycia Kiley

Donna Helete, Brian Engleton and Susan Pendergast received Anne McMahon Scholarship Awards last year. Awarded to people involved in journalism or education, the scholarship enabled recipients to attend the 2010 Central Coast Bioneers (CCB) conference.

Central Coast Bioneers is the satellite conference partner for the San Luis Obispo County, Santa Barbara County and Monterey County region for the annual global Bioneers conference series. Bioneers is inspiring a shift to live on Earth in ways that honor the web of life, each other, and future generations.

Anne McMahon, a much respected and beloved local journalist, political aide and staffer and dedicated environmental activist, graduated from Cal Poly with a degree in Journalism. She served as the legislative aide for SLO County Supervisors David Blakely and Jim Patterson, served as the local director of the Nature Conservancy, a congressional staffer for Walter Capps, and as the coordinator of federal programs for the Coastal Commission. She passed away from cancer in December of 2008.

Scholarship recipient Donna Helete is the director of the Outside Now Academy. A small private school program, Outside Now emphasizes the connection between individuals, the natural world, and community.

“Outside Now’s program is mostly about living together,” Helete explained. “The students rarely ask the question ‘Why?’ By connecting everything with nature, what they learn makes sense. It fits into the larger scheme of life and our world.”

Helete believes participation in CCB is an important way for Outside Now to connect with the community. Last year, Outside Now established a well-attended youth center at the Conference and organized demonstrations of fire-making and other outdoor skills. Helete continues to assist Central Coast Bioneers by providing input on the content of the Youth Track at the Conference.

Many thanks to the support of the McMahon family and to the many donors, the friends and colleagues of Anne, who gave generously to the Anne McMahon Scholarship Fund. If you are interested in donating to the Fund, or in applying or nominating someone for a scholarship, please see www.ecologistics.org/centralcoastbioneers for details and application/nomination forms.

Supercharged Science Camp!

by the Cal Poly Wildlife Club

The Cal Poly Wildlife Club focuses on the conservation and preservation of the wildlife community through projects, presentations, and events that facilitate networking and promote connections with other environmental members of the community.

Future goals for the Wildlife Club include outreach to more student members in the departments of Biological Sciences, Natural Resources, and Animal Science. The current officers have many ideas for the future direction of this pre-professional club and are motivated to begin promoting ways to accomplish this.

One of the ways that this was implemented in the past quarter was through the attendance of six Cal Poly Wildlife Club members at the Western Section of the Wildlife Society Conference in Riverside. At this three-day conference, the students were able to meet members of the professional wildlife community who shared similar interests in research, study, and education. These profes...
A Water Expo in Cambria

GreenSpace, The Cambria Land Trust, hosted a Water Expo on May 14 at its Creekside Reserve.

The focus of the expo was practical and effective water conservation solutions such as rainwater catchment and gray water systems. From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., local businesses, engineers, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the Sierra Club held forth on water-related issues in our region. An informative time was had by all. Check out the expo coverage on the Greenspace website, www.greenspacecambria.org.

Wildlife

Students took the time to have one-on-one conversations with many students about research, job history, previous education, and general knowledge about job searching and career choices. It was a unique opportunity for Cal Poly students to converse in a more casual setting with professionals who are well established in their field. The student-professional luncheon was another great opportunity for the students to mingle with speakers and researchers in an informal and inviting atmosphere.

Students were also able to attend a Poster Conference, with posters ranging from graduate student projects to professional research presentations. It was a great opportunity for students to get ideas about future projects and gain interest in potential areas of study as well as talk to advisers of research projects that could be potential employers in the future.

The last aspect of the conference was the career fair that hosted many different regional companies that offered a wide range of part-time, full-time and summer internship jobs.

Overall, the experiences that were offered at this conference were incredibly beneficial for the students and professionals alike. Students had opportunities to become involved in the planning phases of different conservation projects between professionals, and were able to better understand the difficulties that face the scientific community when trying to begin research or establish conservation plans. Professionals benefited by meeting the next generation of students and giving direction to students for future focus on conservation needs.

When the students returned to SLO, they raved about this conference to friends and members of the Cal Poly Wildlife Club, explaining the incredible opportunities that are available.

In November, the Wildlife Society is hosting its annual national conference in Waikoloa, Hawaii. This conference is five days long and includes Wildlife Society members and students from all over the nation, not just the Western Section. This is an opportunity for students who are looking to pursue a job outside of California, even just as an internship for the summer.

Now eleven Cal Poly students will be making the trip out to the big island to meet researchers and other students that are interested in the same field of study.

A five-day trip to Hawaii is by no means cheap, and college students struggle enough with affording to make ends meet on a daily basis. The Wildlife Club began fund raising at the end of May and will be continuing throughout the summer and into the fall quarter up until the time of the conference November 5. Students are looking into volunteering during the conference, aiming to minimize the cost of the hotel fees.

Students are also initiating a letter-writing campaign through the Wildlife Club and are looking for donations from members of the local community as well as the Central Coast Chapter and the Western Section of the Wildlife Society.

Any amount will help out the Club; donations are tax deductible and Cal Poly students will be able to send out paperwork to donors who wish to write their donation off their taxes. These donations will help to cover the cost of flights, gas, parking, hotel fees, airport transfer, conference fees, and meals during the conference.

Please contact calpolywilflifeclub@gmail.com for any questions and for an address to send donations.
occupied areas so as to offset habitat loss and fragmentation: move between areas in response to the changing nature of coastal beach habitat and support genetic inter-
change; increase the size of each population to a level where the threats of genetic, demographic, and normal environmental uncertainties are diminished; and maintain their ability to withstand local environmental fluctuations or catastrophes. The critical habitat would include 1,652 acres in the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (ODSVRA) and the Guadalupe Dunes in Santa Barbara, designated "Unit CA-31" in the proposed rule. The off-
road lobby is predictably displeased, and has mounted a national letter-
writing campaign urging the service to remove the ODSVRA acreage from the proposed rule.

The Santa Lucia Chapter limited our comments on the proposed critical habitat to Unit CA-31: Pismo Beach/Nipomo Dunes. We noted that this area is well known to and frequented by our members. The Sierra Club prosecuted the lawsuit Sierra Club v. Areias, which we set-aside in May 2011, the result of a study of snowy plover research and recovery measures and the closure to riding of half a mile of plover nesting habitat within the proposed Unit CA-31. Our intervention in a subsequent lawsuit resulted in the court upholding the validity of the County's Local Coastal Plan in barring off-highway vehicle use on county-owned land within the ODSVRA. Chapter members have testified at California Coastal Com-
mission permit review hearings for the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area and served on the ODSVRA Technical Review Team. We told the USFWS that critical habitat designation for Unit CA-31 is essential. Within this area, the California Department of Parks and Recreation continues to permit virtually unlimited numbers of off-
highway vehicles in western snowy plover habitat. For over twenty-five years, State Parks has failed to study or even consider limiting the number of people or off-highway vehicles in the area as a way to protect the snowy plovers that nest there. Special management consider-
ations" pertain to the critical habitat designation for Unit CA-31 because State Parks has resisted implementing meaningful resource management measures. State Parks declined to follow a California Coastal Commis-
sion recommendation that "Expansion of the enclosure area, in conjunction with strong predator manage-
ment, is the best way to maximize protection of plovers and their habitat at Oceano.s" State Parks has repeatedly refused to comply with the recom-
mendations of the ODSVRA Technical Review Team's Scientific Subcommit-
tee and Coastal Commission staff to institute the habitat value of year-round closure of nesting areas. Because State Parks has yet to release a Habitat Conservation Plan -- promised for the last seven years -- Parks' management of the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area continues to result in the take of snowy plover, in violation of both State and Federal Endangered Species Acts, the California Coastal Act, and California Fish and Game Code Section 5080.

Off-roaders have told the USFWS that adverse economic impacts from the designation of Unit CA-31 would result due to potential limits on off-highway vehicle use. We told the Service that any economic impact would be a more likely outcome in that event, as the intensive use of off-highway vehicles has actually enhanced the economic vitality of the immediately surround-
ing community relative to the beach communities to the north and south. Local studies that have sought to portray off-highway vehicle use as an economic boon to the area have traditionally failed to note the economically distressed nature of the surrounding community, or the historical fact that the economic fortunes of Pismo Beach, the commu-
nity immediately south of Unit CA-31, saw a significant upturn due to an influx of traditional coastal tourism after it banned the practice of driving vehicles on the beach.

We told the Fish and Wildlife Service that we support the proposed rule designating critical habitat for the Pacific Coast popula-
tion of the Western Snowy Plover and urged special management consider-
ations and protection for Unit CA-31 as required to minimize habitat destruction, degrada-
tion, and fragmentation associated with recreational activities and off-highway vehicle use.

Plovers

Under consideration The cross-hatching represents the area proposed as Critical Habitat for the snowy plover in the Oceano and Guadalupe Dunes. Nests

providing contact information for two regional pest control companies that could satisfy persuade swallows to build their nests elsewhere.

To no avail. Sometime before 6 a.m. on May 6, someone blasted the swallows' nests off the building with a garden hose. A broken swallow's egg was found below the location of one of the destroyed nests, wedged between the wet concrete wall and the pipes of one of the building's cooling units.

A Fish & Game warden arrived. The ABCA finally believed what they had been repeatedly told. An investigation is ongoing. Then something good happened. Local Sierra Club and Audubon representa-
tives met with the Civic Association board shortly after the May 6 incident. The Sierra Club got an okay from Fish and Game for installing netting during nesting season so long as it was done ASAP and swallows were kept away from the nest during installation. Audubon connected the ABCA with a local pest control company who agreed to install the netting on the Community Center immediately, at their cost. Meanwhile, the ABCA made sure the swallows' mud daubs got washed off the building so no more completed nests got built.

So here's the simple rule: if you see a completed, or nearly completed nest anywhere on the central coast between February and September, hands off. You're stuck with it. What the ABCA should have told the public is what the Association of Oregon Counties tells their constituents about nest removal or modifying habitat to discourage nesting: "Avoid during peak breeding season (May through July); minimize around peak (March, April, August); unrestricted outside of breeding season (September through February)."

"Violations of the MBTA," they conclude, "are examples of strict liability crimes, meaning that a party can be convicted under the statute without demonstration of specific intent or guilty knowledge."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service notes instances in which it can be 'difficult to detect whether or not their nests are occupied by eggs or nestlings or are otherwise still essential to the survival of the juvenile birds... Due to the biological and behavioral characteristics of some migratory bird species, destruction of their nests entails an elevated degree of risk of violating the MBTA. For example, colonial nesting birds are highly vulnerable to distur-
bance; the destruction of unoccupied nests during or near the nesting season could result in a significant level of take." (Cliff swallows are colonial nesters.)

In short: do not try to interpret the law so that you can spin it in the direc-
tion of making it okay to knock down a nest.

Laws aside, this is a story about adaptation. Cliff swallows were using handy rock formations for their nests when that was all there was. With many of those sites now replaced by development, they adapted (showing a marked preference for earth tones). We must do the same. Let's all get along.
greenhouse gas reduction in the nation.

At the Climate Change Adaptation Workshop held in SLO last July by the Local Government Commission, Community Choice was one of the top five recommended priority measures for the County and was included in the LGC’s November 2010 final report, Integrated Climate Change Adaptation Planning for San Luis Obispo County. The County’s Climate Action Plan website, under “Climate Change Adaptation in SLO County,” states that this Local Government Commission report “provides a suite of adaptation strategies that…should be viewed as a critical first step in what will need to be an ongoing process as the climate, other stresses, and the scientific understanding of the earth’s processes continue to change over time. The County hopes to use this report as a foundation for the adaptation chapter of the County’s Climate Action Plan.”

Also last year, the update of the County’s Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) included Policy E 1.2: “Assert more local control of energy decisions and sources.” This is to be achieved via the implementation of “Strategy E 1.2.1 - Evaluate Community Choice Aggregation to determine whether it could be a cost-effective and low-risk strategy to increase use of renewable energy and realize a low-carbon, local energy portfolio.”

And this year, state Senator Mark Leno introduced SB 790, establishing rules and enforcement procedures to smooth the path for Community Choice aggregators.

Yet, with all this encouragement, Community Choice is mystifyingly absent from the Public Review Draft of the San Luis Obispo County Climate Action Plan. The CAP represents the county’s effort to develop policies that enhance the efficiency with which electricity is used in buildings, build renewable energy generation and develop programs for clean energy. However, all of these measures and policies are of limited scope by comparison to Community Choice. All require continued, unfunded dependency on electric power from the sources provided by utilities, over which local governments and utility customers have no decision-making authority. A Community Choice program, on the other hand, can include access to energy efficiency, the ability to set and charge rates, and the ability to manage and redirect the revenue stream from utility bills toward clean energy projects. For these reasons, no measure in the public review draft of the Climate Action Plan comes close to the GHG-reduction and clean energy benefits that could be achieved through Community Choice. No other measure would come closer to the goal of the Conservation and Open Space Element to “assert more local control of energy nearness”.

“Of course, nothing else will fulfill the directive of the COSE to evaluate Community Choice Aggregation.” Community Choice is a state law and the full evaluation of its potential is San Luis Obispo County’s policy. It could serve as virtually the entire tool box from which the County draws all the tools needed for planning a renewable energy future.

The County Board of Supervisors will review and approve the Climate Action Plan this summer. Before they do, tell your County Supervisor — with reminders as necessary — that you want to see Community Choice in the final draft of San Luis Obispo County’s Climate Action Plan.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is June 14. 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 sierracoclub8@gmail.com

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ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter’s outing policies, or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Chair Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the outings leader.


Sat., June 11, 9 a.m. Irish Hills Natural Reserve Hike. The Irish Hills stretch along the southern side of Los Osos Valley from Hwy 101 to the coast, and the Reserve encompasses over 700 acres of oak groves, grasslands, and superb views. Total distance with this hike is 5 miles, 700 ft gain, taking about 3 hours. Trailhead at southern end of Madonna Road in San Luis Obispo. Bring water, snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat and sturdy shoes are advised. The plants, animals, and geology of the area will be discussed. Information: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Sat-Sun, June 18-19, Telescope Peak. Sat., June 25. 9:00 a.m. Hike in Montana de Oro State Park,. California. Cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ National Park CA’s Channel Islands are Galapagos USA! For its 70th anniversary celebration events this summer, an Alumni Campout is scheduled for July 30-31 and a Spaghetti Dinner in Arroyo Grande on September 24. For more information about Camp Natoma, visit www.campnatoma.org or call the local Camp Fire office at 805-773-5126, or e-mail info@campnatoma.org.

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**Outings and Activities Calendar**

**Soldier Meadows Hot Springs**

San Luis Obispo. Bring water, lunch or snacks, and dress for the weather. Meet at the Washburn Day Use Area, San Simeon State Park, about two miles north of Cambria. Sno Resi-

**Coastal Hike in the Silverpeak Wilderness**

Discover remnants of “sleeping under the stars.” Stay in a unique theme: July 3-9 “Slide into Be Future” July 10-16 “Spy Week” July 17-23 “Camper vs Wild” July 24-30 “70 Years of Natoma”

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Walk with the Mayor

**Saturday, June 11th, 10:30 a.m.** Walk with the Mayor of San Luis Obispo. Join us on an informal stroll with Mayor Jan Marx to share your vision about development and land use in the city’s future. We will take an easy walk through Poly Canyon, stopping for lunch. Bring water, a hat, and a bag lunch. Meet at trailhead on Poly Canyon Rd. Information: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

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Camp Natoma Celebrates 70 Years

Sleeping Under the Stars.

Join the leader on this moderately strenuous 10 mile loop hike in Montana de Oro. There is about 2700 ft of elevation gain. We will see many different areas of the park. From Valencia and Oats Peaks, we will get excellent views of the coastline and the backcountry of the park. We will drop down to walk a pleasant section along Coon Creek and we will finish by walking the bluffs above the shore. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. Bring lunch, water, lunch or snacks, and dress for the weather. Meet at the Valencia Peak trailhead which is about 100 yards past the visitor center. There is a possibility of a30

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**Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park**

Reserve early!

- 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. 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. Cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ Truth. The fee ($590 for May and Sept & Oct.; $785 for July & August) includes 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, 11826 The Wye St, El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leaders for more information (626-443-0706; mschtahi@msn.com).

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