Plasticized Catastrophizing

Why you need to go to a meeting on January 11

County Supervisor Bruce Gibson, who also sits on the board of the Integrated Waste Management Authority, got off a good one at the November 9 meeting of the IWMA board, the first hearing of the proposed single-use bag ordinance. “Listening to the testimony today reminded me of a certain word,” he said. “This is a real word; I looked it up: ‘catastrophizing.’ I think we’ve heard a lot of catastrophizing here today about this ordinance.”

His choice of words was apt. Members of the ultra-conservative Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB) and Keep Bags Free SLO – a creature of the American Chemistry Council, lobbying arm of the plastics industry – had been railing against the proposed ordinance: the freedoms it would curtail, the lawsuit threats for a fraction of a cent for a single-use bag ban.

Larry Allen was weary. The November 16 board meeting of the Air Pollution Control District was the final hearing and vote on whether to adopt the agency’s proposed dust control rule for the Oceano Dunes. Allen maintained his cool, but it was clear that years of constant attack had taken a toll on the County’s air pollution control officer.

The APCD’s peer-reviewed study identifying the off-road riding area as the main culprit in the high levels of particulate matter pollution (PM10) on the Nipomo Mesa had been under assault for two years, starting before it was released, by a perfect storm of online postings, opponents variously asserted, with sweeping authority, that there is nothing wrong with the hazardous levels of pollution triggered by their favorite hobby.

In public hearings and anonymous letter bomb attacks, they argued that off-road vehicles don’t disturb soil; that dust control rules violate studies; that off-road vehicles have low impact on the environment, which keeps rainwater in the ground instead of forcing it to run off and flood. Dolman wowed the crowd.

A Celebration of Environmental Literature, Music and Art

Don’t Miss

January 28

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

SANTA LUCIAN

January 2012

Volume 49 No. 1

Inside

Annual enviro rendezvous 2
Your 2012 Chapter ballot 3
Letters: Cambria’s desal fail 3
Holding PG&E’s feet to the fire 4
$LO’s Land use plan 5
Classifieds 11
Outings 12

Don’t Miss

January 28

A Celebration of Environmental Literature, Music and Art – see page 7

Please recycle

This newsletter printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with soy-based inks

CATASTROPHIZING continued on page 6

The Year in Review

Your chapter at work in 2011

January

The Sierra Club published a report on solar permit fees charged by incorporated cities and SLO County to commercial businesses who want to install solar panels. We revealed that the fees charged by Grover Beach, Morro Bay and Pismo Beach were up to 15 times higher than the standard cost recovery limit of $2,540. The report provoked an editorial in the Tribune urging the cities to bring their fees down so as not to discourage businesses from switching to solar power. Over the next six months, all three cities agreed to drop their fees into a reasonable range for the recovery of the actual costs of inspection and permitting.

CUT continued on page 7

REVIEW continued on page 8

DUST continued on page 10

With SLO Green Build and the San Luis Obispo chapter of Surfrider – aka the Appropriate Technology Coalition — the Chapter sponsored a presentation by nationally recognized permaculture guru Brock Dolman on the concept and practice of low-impact development, which keeps rainwater in the ground instead of forcing it to run off and flood. Dolman wowed the crowd. With SLO Green Build and the San Luis Obispo chapter of Surfrider – aka the Appropriate Technology Coalition — the Chapter sponsored a presentation by nationally recognized permaculture guru Brock Dolman on the concept and practice of low-impact development, which keeps rainwater in the ground instead of forcing it to run off and flood. Dolman wowed the crowd.

San Luis Obispo

P.O. Box 15755

Central Coast

CA 93401

P. O. Box 15755

Mailing Address: 3301 Templeton Road, Suite 110

San Luis Obispo, CA 93409

E. O. 9/12/09

Nonprofit Org.
General Meeting
Tuesday, January 31, 7 p.m.

3rd Annual Environmentalists Rendezvous

What are the major environmental groups in SLO County up to and what are they planning for the new year? Here’s a unique opportunity to hear from seven key players at one time in one place. This public forum features the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, Audubon Society, Sierra Club, SLO Group Build, Surfrider, and SWAP. Each will describe their premier projects, with time for questions.

And don’t miss the scowl of the great horned owl from Pacific Wildlife Care.

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

Intruder Alert!
If you want fewer plastic bags, less air pollution and more clean energy, prepare for a certain kind of opposition

More than a few of the people who came to the November 22 meeting of the Board of Supervisors to comment on the County’s adoption of a climate action plan stepped up to the podium with a certain item clutched in their hands: a print-out of an “alert” sent out by the APCD board, the off-roaders — at least those savvy enough to realize that their quixotic two-year attack-the-science strategy was a battle they had lost — pushed for the BMP diversion. Several members of the APCD board took up the chorus of “don’t regulate me, bro!” Fortunately, to no avail.

So we had the sham attack on science that characterized the attempt to derail the APDC dust control rule at Oceano Dunes, ill concealing the motive behind the attack, a preference for protection of profit over public health, as made obvious by business leaders and several local governments.

In each instance, the spur that stirs up debate over validity, “don’t regulate me, bro!” Fortunately, it was too late.

We invite the reader to compare this to our two front-page features this issue: patterns of landscape change, and the proposed single-use bag ordinance, which has been mounted as an even more naked “freedom of choice” sham, organized by a D.C. lobby outfit to protect the plastic industry’s profit margin at the expense of the environment.

And we had the hysterical testimony on offer at the Nov.-22 Supervisors’ climate action plan hearing. The video and audio record of opponents going over the cliff and off the deep end, asserting that energy efficiency and renewable power will mean the end of all the things we hold dear, accompanied by bouts of applause from fellow whipped-up true believers, is archived for your viewing pleasure on the Board of Supervisors website.

In each instance, the spurt that goaded opponents to come to the microphone — most such speakers have been told when they were exorted to turn out in opposition to these measures — was the same: a government agency’s action to save you and your kids from choking on someone else’s dust, or reduce the amount of plastic pollution in the environment, or encourage renewable energy use and energy efficiency constitutes an intolerable intrusion on liberty.

Here’s our question for the folks behind that philosophy, namely: COLAB, the Friends of Oceano Dunes, and the American Chemistry Council.
National Club Election This Spring

The annual election for the Club’s Board of Directors is now underway. This year there could be up to nine candidates on the ballot:

Nominating Committee Candidates

Spencer Black (WI)
Lone Baldwyn (KY)
Chuck Frank (IL)
Arian Malekiani (MD)
Elizabeth Walsh (TX)
Chris Warshaw (DE)
Chip Wolfe (TX)

Announced Petition Candidates

Katherine Pendleton
David Scott

Petition candidates have until January 12 to provide the requisite number of signed petitions in order to qualify.

Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive the mail ballot and electronic ballot as soon as they become available. The Sierra Club’s website 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. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets 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. Visit the Club’s election website: www.sierraclub.org/bod.

This site provides links to additional information about candidates, their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment. You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate.

Then make your choice and cast your vote. It is easy to vote electronically. If you use election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. But if you use a paper ballot, you will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

Letters

send letters to The Santa Lucian, P.O. Box 15755, SLO 93406, or sierrahb@ gmail.com. Letters may be edited for length.

Just a note of thanks for highlighting the chain of custody irony regarding the Army Corps of Engineers and the proposed USACE Santa Rosa State Beach desalination test wells project in January 2012. This County needs our help! We have seen firsthand just how severely we humans have impacted our planet as a result of ignoring our interconnectedness with all forms of life. As your advocate on the Executive Committee, I will bring to the table my passion for environmental education, protection and sustainability, my love for this beautiful county and state, my ability to work as a team player with agencies, talk to Supervisors and help create a clean atmosphere of stewardship.

Lindi Doud

A fifth generation Californian, I was born in San Luis Obispo 59 years ago and hold a degree in Biological Sciences from Cal Poly. My first backpacking trip with the Sierra Club in the Los Padres National Forest in 1967 changed my life, which has ever since been spent as a naturalist and environmental educator. As such, I have worked at all the local State Parks, Rancho El Chorro, and Kern Environmental Education Program (KEEP), volunteered as a docent, and fought to protect our precious places from harm. Through extensive travels by land and sea, I have seen firsthand just how severely we humans have impacted our planet as a result of ignoring our interconnectedness with all forms of life. As your advocate on the Executive Committee, I will bring to the table my passion for environmental education, protection and sustainability, my love for this beautiful county and state, my ability to work as a team player with agencies, talk to Supervisors and help create a clean atmosphere of stewardship.

Lindi Doud

Please place your vote in the ballot and sign the front of the envelope, and mail to:

Santa Lucia Chapter Elections Committee
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Your Ballot for the 2012 Chapter Executive Committee

This is the ballot for the Santa Lucia Chapter’s annual Executive Committee election. All current members of the Santa Lucia Chapter are eligible to vote. If there is more than one Sierra Club member in your household, you may photocopy the printed ballot and mail both in the same envelope. The winners of this election will start their terms when the outgoing ExCom adjourns their February meeting. The newly-elected ExCom will then convene a brief meeting to elect board officers and set the date for the remainder of ExCom meetings in 2012.

Important Voting Information:

- Vote for either or both candidates.
- Cumulative voting (more than one ballot for one candidate) is not allowed.
- Ballots must be received by 5 p.m., January 13, 2012, at the Chapter office.
- Address the envelope per instructions on the ballot and sign and date over the flap of the envelope.
- Mail your ballot to our P.O. box with sufficient time to arrive by the deadline, or drop it off via the door mail slot at the Chapter office at 974 Santa Rosa Street, SLO.

Candidate Statements

Patrick McGibney

I am a fourth generation Californian. I was born and raised on the central coast all my life. In 1979 my wife and I built a small lavender farm on the Carrizo Plains where we grow lavender and other organics, as a result of ignoring our interconnectedness with all forms of life. As your advocate on the Executive Committee, I will work with agencies, talk to Supervisors and help create a clean atmosphere of stewardship.

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Santa Lucia Chapter Elections Committee
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
Licensed to Fail
Forcing PG&E down the right road at Diablo Canyon

By the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility

On December 21, nearly two years after the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility (A4NR) filed to oppose PG&E’s premature request for license renewal funding for the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) granted the Alliance’s motion to dismiss PG&E’s application.

The case hinged on the need for PG&E to complete the advanced seismic studies recommended by the California Energy Commission. 

“PG&E has known all along what our state expected them to do, and has done none of those orders, wasting time and money in the process,” said Rochelle Becker, A4NR’s executive director. “It took the unwavering public scrutiny that arose after PG&E’s San Bruno explosion and the Fukushima meltdown to shed light on their inaction.”

It was a long road. On November 23, 2009, PG&E barreled into San Luis Obispo with a media juggernaut trumpeting their application to relicense the Diablo Canyon nuclear reactors for an additional 20 years. Today, two years later, that juggernaut is stuck in ditch by the side of the road, spinning its wheels in the mud and going nowhere fast.

On that November morning, PG&E was counting on the support from a coterie of local politicos and contro- versial figures like the Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore. They hadn’t counted on opposition from the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility and the Santa Lucia Chapter’s Diablo Canyon Task Force. Bad for them; good for you.

As Alliance outreach coordinator David Weisman told the media at the time of the relicensing application announcement far in advance of the actual expiration of the current license, PG&E’s move seems “to be suffering from a case of premature application.

But it wasn’t just A4NR that had been warning them. In 2006, the legislature passed AB 1632 (Blakeslee), reining the California Energy Commission (CEC) to study whether the nuclear plants could provide cheap and reliable power for 20 additional years. The CEC recom- mended that new seismic studies be undertaken, especially after the new Shoreline fault—1800 feet from the reactors—was made public by the U.S. Geological Survey in 2008. Even the California Public Utilities Commission had told PG&E in a 2007 function that those expected to see the results of the seismic studies before they could approve funding for license renewal. (Did PG&E listen to the state oversight agencies, with whose A4NR had been working since 2005? They did not.)

A4NR flew to Washington to meet with Chairman Jaczko of the NRC. A4NR’s executive director Rochelle Becker reminded him of the NRC’s tarnished record in California regarding the historical seismic blunders his agency had permitted during the original and extremely costly licensing of Diablo Canyon—over $4 billion in ratepayer surcharges. She asked the NRC, in the spirit of cooperation with the state, to place a “stay” on the relicensing process until all new seismic studies were completed and to work with state on evaluating seismic issues. (Does the NRC comply with this request? They did not.)

Then PG&E made the first of many mistakes: they thought to the CPUC for $85 million in ratepayer funding for the relicensing process. A4NR, joined by Sierra Club, immediately filed to intervene in the funding case. Poring over hundreds of pages of briefing documents, writing testimony, filing rebuttals, we made the case that all state agencies clearly wanted to see the results of new seismic studies before investing ratepayer money in relicensing.

The intervention in the CPUC case delayed PG&E’s actions through most of 2010. When a “settlement” in the case was proposed in late 2010, A4NR protested again, pushing the process into 2011.

And: Fukushima. After that, it was hard for even PG&E to deny the need for new seismic information—whether the NRC is going to require it or not. PG&E “voluntarily” asked the NRC to hold their applica- tion process in an attempt to look as though they were responding to Fukushima. A4NR saw through the clever wording and revealed the hold-that’s-not-really-a-hold charade for the smoke screen it was.

The NRC finally acquiesced and ordered a 32-month delay in the NRC relicensing process, assisting the results of the state studies that are required before the California Coastal Commission can sign off on a coastal development permit. As the road grew rocky for PG&E, we never abandoned our goal at the CPUC: PG&E’s application for funding must be dismissed. The judge ruled that all such cases must be concluded within 18 months, not 52, and dismissed the application. PG&E can come back four years from now and try again if they’d like, but only after the seismic studies are complete.

A4NR’s mission now is to make sure there is proper independent oversight of the studies, and to make sure the study plan doesn’t let PG&E avoid looking for faults in the places where they are likely to be found. That’s been happening for the past four years, and we can’t afford to let it happen again.

This is the first case west of the Mississippi to test state’s rights versus nuclear relicensing, and all eyes will be on California as we work to set an important prece- dent.

A4NR’s re-licensing of Diablo can be stopped. Please donate time or money to help us achieve this victory, and visit the website www.a4nr.org to keep up with the latest news and events.

Occupy the Atmosphere

A starting point

By Eric Greening

The recent global news is horrifying: carbon dioxide was added to the atmo-osphere faster than in any year in history, despite all the energy devoted to lip service, posturing, and preening on the subject of climate change.

The local picture is somewhat more encouraging. Although the vote at the November 22 Board of Supervisors meeting was 2-2, and undertaken in the face of warnings that action was tantamount to falling prey to a United Nations conspiracy and giving up national sovereignty, our County Supervisors did adopt a Climate Action (or “EnergyWise”) Plan, now in effect.

There are significant flaws, but on balance it moves us forward. Since we were told it could be amended at any time, and since an understanding of the flaws can help produce stron- ger documents for cities working on their own Climate Action Plans, it is not untimely to go into some of them.

Chapter 5, measures #1 through #4. These support emissions reductions from the buildings we henceforth create. They emphasize efficiency and weatherization, and neglect the potential for actual solar energy production through passive solar design: orientation, massing, etc.

San Luis Obispo’s own Ken Hagdahl, in his latest book Passive Solar Architecture, shows what is possible, and even points to possibilities for retrofitting buildings that already exist, since we won’t achieve an emissions reduction through growth, however smart.

Chapter 5, measure #10: This measure encourages more of the sort of ecological devastation currently occurring in the Carrars, in the name of offsetting emissions through renewable energy projects. The assumption was made that these pro- jects were somehow going to cause emissions reductions. The trouble is, no emissions are being offset. For all the square miles of endangered species habitat being sacrificed, not one fossil-fueled plant is being taken offline. California’s Renewable Energy Portfolio does not mandate replace- ment of one source by another; it is simply a ratio, with twice the advan- tage for fossil and nuclear compared to renewable. In other words, our appetites are welcome to increase; the more square miles of habitat we sacrifice to large-scale renewable energy projects, the more fossil or nuclear energy we can produce, at a 2-to-1 ratio.

Chapter 5, measure #18: In a time when transit operating funding is being cut nationwide, and existing service in the County is constantly threatened with cuts, there is nothing here to direct the County to stop diverting its Local Transportation Fund (1/4 cent of local sales tax inten- ded for public transit operations) to road work. Year after year, it diverts close to half of this fund, even in the face of such service cuts as the aban- donment of all service to downtown Templeton shortly after they approved a “transit-oriented” development in that area. The cities of San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay, and Paso Robles use 100 percent of their LTF for transit; there is no excuse for the County not to do likewise.

Despite these flaws, there are considerable virtues in our new plan, and much of our energy needs to be directed toward moving it beyond lip service to actual implementation. For example, it is now County policy that parking costs be “unbundled” from building costs: that we stop pretend- ing that parking is free and building it into the cost of having a roof over our heads—that we stop forcing non- drivers to subsidize drivers. It will take citizen reminders to get staff and decision-makers to routinely comply with policies such as this.

Thus, it behooves all of us to familiarize ourselves with the County EnergyWise Plan, to advocate for its strengthening, to implement its policies, and to inform efforts to create more effective plans in other jurisdictions.

We will depend on the Earth’s atmosphere for the rest of our lives; it is time to act like committed occu- pants thereof!
The City of SLO is rewriting its “land use constitution.” That can be a good thing or a bad thing.

The history of the Measure Y sales tax increase is fairly simple. In 2006, San Luis Obispo City staff and consultants sent multiple surveys to city residents asking them what they would be willing to tax themselves for. Residents responded that they were willing to raise a ½ cent sales tax on themselves for the following priorities, in rank order: (1) Fixing potholes and repairing and maintaining city streets; (2) Reducing traffic congestion; (3) Protecting open space; (4) Protecting our 100-year-old storm drains; (5) Hiring, training and retaining additional firefighters and paramedics; (6) Park maintenance; (7) Protecting senior programs and services; and (8) Hiring more police officers.

The Measure Y ballot then specifically listed the above funding priorities, and it passed.

During the campaign to pass Measure Y, the City approached the Sierra Club to ask for their support. Because the measure would ensure that the funding for the City’s natural open space program would be restored, we agreed, and campaigned for passage of the measure.

But even since Measure Y passed, City staff has developed the quirk of conflating the ballot funding specifics of Measure Y with other goals of staff and the City Council.

Don’t Ask Why
Catastrophizing
continued from page 1
paper bag if you don’t bring a reusable one to the store); asserting that encouraging recycling would be better except it doesn’t work and telling (false) tales of disaster from cities that have enacted bag bans, and so on. It was part of a reactionary backlash threatening to sink the years-long effort to weaken SLO County from environmentally destructive plastic and paper plastic and encourage the use of reusable bags at local retail establishments.
Grover Norquist weighed in from his D.C. perch at Americans for Tax Reform, really, having compelled 238 House representatives, 41 Senators, 13 governors, and all GOP presidential candidates, except Huntsman to bow down and sign his anti-tax pledge — swearing they will never, ever vote to raise revenues for any reason — the lobbyist whom 60 Minutes described as “the most powerful man in Washington” with no doubt feeling his oats these days. In a September 13 letter addressed to “Jim Patterson, President, San Luis Obispo County,” Norquist announced “I write today in strong opposition to the proposed regional [sic] ordinance that would ban plastic bags and impose a tax [sic] on paper bags.” His letter went on to point to an early, poorly implemented ordinance (since corrected) adopted by San Francisco, and a study (since debunked) purportedly showing dangerous bacterial contamination of reusable bags — all wrapped up in a sermon on “regulatory burdens.”
It was a continuation and intensification of the last round of “There’s No Such Thing as a Free Bag,” Oct., which is certain to continue and get more intense in the final round, the January 11 meeting of the IWMA board, when the ordinance will get an up or down vote.
Thirteen representatives from the county board of supervisors and all the city councils make up the IWMA board of directors. At the first reading of the draft ordinance, The American Chemistry Council’s lobbying dollars were sufficient to acquire “no” votes from five of the IWMA board’s most reliable reactionary members—the representatives from the Morro Bay, Atascadero and Paso Robles City Councils, and County Supervisors Frank Mecham and Paul Teixeira.

Who’s who
Here’s who opposes San Luis Obispo’s single-use bag ban. Our last chance to stop it will be the January 11 board meeting of the Integrated Waste Management Authority.

Don’t Ask Y
continued from page 3
Accompanying this quirk is a tendency to take Measure Y funds created to serve the former and divert them to the latter. Last November, the City Council voted to spend two blocks of downtown SLO with the ordinance was repeatedly requested by the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Association, and given special support by staff, but it was not a Measure Y ballot priority. Councilman Ashbaugh, in a November 30 Tribune opinion piece defending the Council’s decision, carried forward staff’s quirk of conflation of two different things into the same thing, writing “…we’re doing our best to fulfill our Measure Y priorities and achieve our major city goals. These goals, which include the downtown facelift, are established in each two-year financial plan after an open and transparent process of public engagement.”

But throughout 2008, in the course of setting those budget goals for that two-year financial plan, in surveys and handouts at public forums, City staff repeatedly ensured that the Chamber of Commerce’s “Downtown improvements’ goal receive special attention. Just before the Planning Commission and Architectural Review Commission cast their votes to recommend one city goal over another, their agendas were arranged so that both of these commissions’ critical votes were immediately preceded by the promotion of just one city goal: “Downtown Improvements,” courtesy of the Chamber of Commerce, in a special presentation complete with slide show. And staff repeatedly and falsely asserted “Downtown Improvements” into public documents alleging this had been a Measure Y priority. Thus was the phantom appearance of public support cobbled up for the goal before the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Association, and thus did the “open and transparent process of public engagement” come to resemble an exercise in bait and switch. And thus were Measure Y funds spent on two blocks of downtown beautification.

One wonders if SLO has funded the real Measure Y ballot priorities that residents voted for to the extent that all of the City’s pot holes are now filled; its streets are all repaired and maintained; its traffic is no longer congested; its 100-year-old storm drains fully upgraded; its natural open space permanently protected from the push to commercialize and develop it with structures and “active” recreation that belongs in urban parks; all its parks maintained; all needed additional fire-fighters, police and paramedics hired and trained; its senior programs and services protected.

Those were the spending priorities voters identified for Measure Y—not hundreds of thousands of dollars for new trash cans, Accent lighting and Mission-style sidewalks for two blocks of downtown. As former San Luis Obispo Mayor Peg Pinard dryly inquired in a letter to the City Council on the occasion of its downtown beautification vote, “Had the Measure Y ballot question been phrased, ‘would you vote to raise your taxes for new trash cans, Accent lighting and Mission-style sidewalks for two blocks of downtown?’ does anyone think that Measure Y would still have passed?”

That’s the other problem presented by the City Council confusing the desires of the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Association with the will of the citizenry. As early as November 2012, and possibly again in 2014, the City will ask the voters for an extension of Measure Y in order to keep the enhanced revenues flowing. A recent survey found support for the extension of Measure Y has declined from 64 percent in 2010 to 59 percent. That survey was taken prior to the downtown beautification vote. The City will be asking residents to vote for an extension of Measure Y. They may ask the Sierra Club to endorse it. What do they think the answers will be?

TAKE ACTION
IWMA board meeting, 1:30 p.m., Jan, 11, 2012, Cold Canyon Landfill School Education Center, 2268 Carpenter Canyon Road, San Luis Obispo. Go to the website of the award-winning documentary Bag It, www.bagthemovie.com, and click on “The Issues.” Once you’ve familiarized yourself, send the IWMA board of directors a message at Directors@IWMA.com to let them know you support the single-use bag ordinance and the reasons why.

Most importantly, come to the IWMA board meeting at 1:30 on January 11 and give the city council members and county supervisors who voted “no” last time careful

Intending to vote the way
Grover Norquist told them to:

Tom O’Malley, Atascadero Carla Borchard, Morro Bay John Hamon, Paso Robles Frank Mecham, SLO County Paul Teixeira, SLO County

If one of these IWMA board members is your elected representative, he or she needs to hear from you now.

Intruder Alert!
continued from page 2

dbh KeepBagsFreeSLO: Seriously?
And by that we mean how much longer do you think you can beguile your followers with endless fantasies of the doom about to befall them should modest regulatory measures and advisory policies be approved? How long before they notice that the doom you promised does not exist? What do you do if and when it becomes apparent that those modest measures actually result in modest increases in their quality of life? What happens when they realize that you are using them for the simple generation of controversy, that all your premises are false and none of your dire predictions have come true?

When people realize they are being lied to, they tend to leave the fold. That won’t necessarily be a bad thing for COLAB et al. The solace will give them time to collect their thoughts. Responder their priorities. Ponder the path they’ve chosen. Some quiet reflection would do them a world of good. They can start with a meditation on the nature of truth.

High Energy

Two weeks after Bill McKibben spoke to an SRO crowd at the Fremont Theater in downtown SLO on October 30, about a hundred of the attendees reconvened at the Louden Cinema and walked up the street, courtesy of Transition Towns, and formed into groups to carry on a dialogue based on McKibben’s recent message on climate change and figure out what we can do locally.

The result? Having on January 18, to be a part of the Energy group, send an e-mail to singlepeople@gmail.com and ask to be included on the Google Groups mailing list.
Give the Gift of Peace and Support the Sierra Club

From War To Peace is the attempt of founders Paul and Sandra Ogren to make their dream of a world without war into reality. This local company creates art, jewelry and accessories using Peace Bronze™, which they produce using reclaimed copper from disarmed nuclear missile systems.

Twenty percent of all purchases made at From War to Peace using the coupon code SIERRACLUB10 are donated directly to the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, and you will receive a savings of 10% off your order.

From War To Peace is proud to be a green company, utilizing recycled materials not only in their products, made exclusively in the USA, but also with their packaging and materials. Even their website is powered by a green ISP, creating a negative carbon footprint.

Twenty percent of all profits are donated to peace and social justice organizations. The SIERRACLUB10 coupon code ensures that the Sierra Club will receive your contribution. Why not give the gift of peace this holiday season?

When making your purchase online at www.fromwartopeace.com, enter the coupon code SIERRACLUB10 at the final stage of your order and 20% of your purchase will go directly to the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The hardcover first edition of Vicki León’s newly updated, expanded and impudent history of female derring-do is available only through Barnes & Noble and the author. Up through our January 28 benefit, for each $10 direct purchase from the author, Vicki will donate $2 to the Santa Lucia Chapter.

Choosing from the best and boldest female achievers in her four-book Uppity Women series (335,000 copies sold), time-traveling historian Vicki León takes you from ancient Egypt, Greece, the Roman Empire, Asia, and Europe through medieval and Renaissance times, then surveys the Old and New Worlds from colonial times through the 1800s. Newly updated, expanded, and illustrated, 4000 Years of Uppity Women is a witty and well-researched history.
Even though the staff of the California Coastal Commission had warned of the deficiencies in the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Morro Bay/Cayucos wastewater treatment project, and the Morro Bay Planning Commission had voted to recommend rejection and revision of the EIR, and certifying the EIR. We filed an appeal of the city’s permit with the Coastal Commission and pointed out that the project failed to make water reclamation a priority, failed to adequately evaluate impacts on water quality and coastal access, failed to adequately analyze alternative sites and technologies, and thereby lacked the information the Coastal Commission needed to evaluate the project and issue a permit. The Commission agreed and told the Morro Bay City Council and the Cayucos Sanitarians to do it over.

SLO Superior Court ordered the California Department of Parks and Recreation to reimburse the Sierra Club for legal fees we had incurred in intervening against State Parks and the Friends of Oceano Dunes when they filed suit to nullify coastal land use provisions governing off-highway vehicle use at Oceano Dunes. PDI and DPR dropped the suit, and the judge found that “Sierra Club succeeded in obtaining essentially equivalent dismissal,” writing that “the practical result of the case... is that a State agency, entrusted with regulating off-road vehicles on an environmentally sensitive tract of State Park land, will need to comply with the dictates of the County General Plan and LCP [Local Coastal Plan] going forward.” Thus ended the judge concluded, “enforces an important public right and confers a significant benefit upon the general public.”

**March**

We helped foil a stealthy attempt by County Supervisor Paul Teixeira to eliminate two South County Advisory Councils and replace them with hand-picked members. It proved to be his first attempt in a series.

On March 20, Paso Robles resident and long-time Sierra Club activist Cal French began a 500-mile trek across California to highlight the need to protect our remaining wild places on public and private land and calling attention to the critical role of healthy natural ecosystems. He started out at the Colorado River in Nevada, and finished six weeks later in Morro Bay.

The Chapter was awarded a $5,000 grant for general support by the SLO County Community Foundation.

**April**

In the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the Santa Lucia reminded readers that an earthquake fault was discovered 500 feet from the future site of the Diablo Canyon plant in 1967, but went deliberately unstudied for 14 years so as not to “possibly delay the project,” as PG&E executives complained at the time to the Atomic Energy Commission.

The Chapter’s first Eco-Grants, awards of up to $350, went to environmental projects proposed by student environmental clubs or advanced study programs at Atascadero, Templeton, and Morro Bay high schools, and the Outside Now Nature Academy in SLO.

After hosting Brock Dolman in January, on April 6 the Appropriate Technology Coalition brought Portland community activist Mark Lakeman, founder of Portland’s legendary City Repair project, to the South Bay Community Center in Los Osos to talk about implementing water conservation and increasing the standard of living without increasing the cost.

Lifetime Sierra Club member Judith Bernstein of Atascadero was named one of the winners of a national Sierra Club contest to attend the 2011 Blue Vision Summit in Washington DC in May to help work toward the enactment and enforcement of national ocean policy.

The Santa Lucia Chapter won in the category of “Best Friend to the Environment” in New Times’ 25th annual Best of SLO County readers poll.

**May**

The Chapter joined with Think Outside the Bag, a local coalition of high school and college students, in enthusiastically backing the Integrated Waste Management Authority’s proposed single-use bag ban, which would eliminate the major environmental impacts and resource depletion involved in the production and disposal of plastic and paper bags.

Chapter Director Andrew Christie’s opinion piece “Representative McCarthy, have you no shame?” appeared in the May 5 edition of New Times, detailing the sneak attack on wilderness lands represented by the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act, sponsored by Congressman Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield).

The Chapter and Morro Coast Audubon joined with Avila Beach bird lover Shirley Goetz to tell the Avila Beach Civic Association the facts of life about the laws protecting cliff swallows. After the Association had told Goetz she could not post a flyer on the protections afforded swallows and their eggs by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, somebody pulled swallows’ nests off the walls of the Association’s community center using the building’s garden hose. All’s well that ended well: the Association agreed to install swallow netting, the Sierra Club got them clearance from the Department of Fish and Game to do so during nesting season, and Audubon hooed up the Association with a local pest control firm who quickly installed the netting on the community center at cost.

**June**

We pointed out to the County Planning Department, and to the readers of The Tribune (“A tool for local energy choice,” June 3), that the omission of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) from the public draft review of the County’s Climate Action Plan was more than a minor oversight. (See “Our Biggest Wins,” page 9.)

The first meeting of the SLO Sustainable Food System Coalition took place on June 8 thanks to a $100,000 USDA Hunger Free Communities grant, convened by the Food Bank Coalition, HEAL-SLO, the Central Coast Agricultural Network, Cal Poly’s STRIDE Center and the County Health Department, with the Sierra Club as an environmental stakeholder, the project will serve as an incubator for policy initiatives to ensure sustainable food systems in the county.

The Santa Lucia’s action alert urged readers to send letters to the Coastal Commission to preserve the...
Tomales Bay dunes preceded the issuance of the Coastal Development Permit that will result in maximum preservation of this key coastal wetland, coastal Prairie, salt marsh and tidal flats.

Representatives of the Sierra Club, Surfrider, Coastkeeper and the Central Coast Fundamentalist Congressman Lois Capps and her district reps for coffee at the Black Horse Café in downtown San luis Obispo on June 17, where we discussed health, climate, coastal, energy and agricultural issues.

With the Sierra Student Coalition, we hosted Sharon Smith, author of The Young Activists Guide to Building a Green Movement and Changing the World. The location was at Cal Poly, where she gave attendees a quick history of the surge in student activism over the last decade and practical advice on how to become part of it.

August
The Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife and the Center for Biological Diversity entered a settlement agreement with SunPower Corp. and Topaz Solar Farms requiring additional environmental protections for the Carrizo Plain and having 9,000 additional acres of land put into permanent protection, the removal of 30 miles of fencing, and the acquisition of an undeveloped California Valley 200 acres to be reserved for wildlife conservation as partial mitigation of the impacts of the company building large solar power plants in endangered species habitat.

We helped bring to wide attention the decision of Morro Bay Mayor Bill Yates to abolish Sea Otter Awareness Week – a proclamation made by Morro Bay every year for at least the last six years, as has been done in dozens of other California coastal communities to promote education, research, and conservation programs. Yates’ unilateral decision not to bring the proclamation to the city council for a vote prompted immediate howls from the tourist industry to pop up around the city informing tourists home-made tourist advisories to stop for a vote prompted impromptu Yates’ unilateral decision not to bring dozens of other California coastal companies building large solar power plants in endangered species habitat.

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Chapter Director Andrew Christie’s “Regulatory relief is a false issue,” refuting the myth that environmental regulations are job-killers and further spreading the word on HR 2584, the so-called “Vote of the People” in the August 19 issue of The Tribune. (The bill has been tabled in Congress and is not likely to return with its roster of anti-environmental amendments.

September
We co-sponsored a “Move to Amend” event in SLO on September 14, featuring David Cobb of Democracy Unlim- ited, who enlisted local residents in the national effort to end the erosion of democracy by amending the Constitution to strike down “corporate personhood.”

Along with the Empower Poly Coalition, the San Luis Obispo Bicycle Coalition and Arizona’s Lava Lytta for Justice, the Santa Lucia Chapter wrote a letter and co-sponsored a “Moving Planet” event in SLO on Sept. 24, a part of a worldwide day of action in hundreds of cities organized around the theme of the global community coming together and moving the planet beyond fossil fuels and in a new, environmentally positive direction.

The September Santa Lucia laid out the issues surrounding the proposed annexation of the Price Canyon development site into Pismo Beach and the potential to facilitate massive sprawl development.

October
We persuaded the Regional Water Quality Control Board to take a closer look at oil leaks from disused (decommissioned) oil lines and get an explanation from Conoco/Philips of their decommissioning procedure and admitted lack of monitoring after several significant oil spills in Pismo.

At the October 20 meeting of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council in Cambria, the chapter and half a dozen local residents urged the council to take up the issue of Sanctuary bound- ary expansion, which includes the waters of SLO County. Surprised by the meeting members, whose meetings generally can’t get that much turnout on a single issue even in large cities, directed staff to investigate their options and report back.

We urged resistance to the Keystone XL pipeline in conjunction with the Nov. 6 Tar Sands Action protest at the White House. The Santa Lucia was distributed at Bill McKibben’s Oct. 30 speaking engagement in SLO, providing information specific to the Keystone XL issue, a significant focus of McKibben’s talk.

November
We turned up the heat on the long-sought expansion of the National Marine Sanctuaries to the north and south of SLO, which would protect our waters from oil drilling and toxic dumping, now part of a statewide Sierra Club campaign. Via Sierra Club California’s Resilient Habitats campaign website, we dispatched e-alerts to Club coastal activists, with links to more information and addressed federal, state and local officials to contact urgent sanctuary boundary expansion and revival of the Site Evaluation List for National Marine Sanctuaries.

December
On December 13, the chapter joined with concerned residents of Morro Bay, California Coastal Commission staff, and the Chumash Tribal Council in protesting the City issuing a Coastal Development Permit for Cerrito Peak, a Native American burial site, despite the numerous violations of the city’s Local Coastal Plan that the develop- ment would entail. At the end of the 4½-hour meeting, the city council ignored the overwhelming public protest and the evidence in the record and approved the permit on a 4-1 vote.

On December 14, the Second District Court of Appeal heard oral arguments in our appeal of the Superior Court’s dismissal of Sierra Club v. California Dept. of Parks and Recreation that the department has allowed oil-road vehicles on County-owned land in the dunes that has been designated as a “buffer” from the riding area since 1982. The Sierra Club contends that State Parks has failed to manage its manage- ment plan for the coastal area under the protection of the State Vehi- cular Riding Area to include the “buffer” designation in the County’s Local Coastal Plan and must be compelled to do so, our appeal of the trial court’s ruling is pending.

Our Biggest Wins
The most important victory for the Chapter in 2011 will probably prove to be the evaluation of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) and a Feed-In Tariff (FIT) in the SLO County Climate Action Plan. Energy activists have long acknowledged that these two measures – a feed-in tariff; [With a feed-in tariff, people are actually going to be making money feeding energy back into the grid from their unused solar power. … The reason we added this is [after I had argued] there’s no way you can establish a local feed-in tariff; I’ve never heard of such a thing, actually someone handed me a copy of the report saying that] in Los Angeles they’re considering just that – a local feed-in tariff that will be part of the financing scheme to allow more people to install renewable energy projects on their roofs.

Senior County Planner James Caruso: [With a feed-in tariff, people are actually going to be making money feeding energy back into the grid from their unused solar power. … The reason we added this is [after I had argued] there’s no way you can establish a local feed-in tariff; I’ve never heard of such a thing, actually someone handed me a copy of the report saying that] in Los Angeles they’re considering just that – a local feed-in tariff that will be part of the financing scheme to allow more people to install renewable energy projects on their roofs.

Planning Commissioner Jim Irving: This could be a big deal, couldn’t it?

Caruso: This could be very big.

Irving: It’s the biggest thing here.

Caruso: This could be the largest GHG reduction and energy efficiency measure.

Exchange at Oct. 13, 2011, County Planning Commission meeting added a measure to a proposal to evaluate a feed-in tariff to the SLO County Climate Action Plan at the urging of the Sierra Club.

Political Committee Members Wanted

The 2012 elections should be exciting and could be pivotal. If you would like to have a hand in the outcomes by participating as a member of the Santa Lucia Chapter’s politi- cal committee, please send your contact information to Chuck Tribby at cttiguet@gmail.com or call 441-7597.

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there’s no proof that breathing fine dust particles into your lungs is hazardous to your health, etc.

The Calif Coast News website, always happy to trump up heinous local government conspiracies on any viable foundations, attempted to manufacture a series of “exposés” of the APCD that were characterized by the inability of the writers to get the name of the agency right.

Opponents attacked the science: The data was bad, the methodology was flawed, the conclusions were wrong.

They attacked the scientists: The APCD was full of corrupt men and shameless hussies.

They attacked the scientists who reviewed and confirmed the data and findings of the researchers contracted by the APCD – an attack that displayed a perfect ignorance of the meaning, practice, and purpose of peer review.

The APCD response appeared to be shared by APCD board member Ed Waage – a member of the Pismo Beach City Council, a commissioner for County Supervisor, and a vocal climate change denier. Waage, despite his status as an actual retired scientist in an unrelated field, seemed as unacquainted with and heedless of the notion of “reverence” as the average anonymous internet troll, happily putting forward his personal calculations as a legitimate challenge to peer-reviewed studies undertaken over a period of years by the APCD and research teams comprised of the preeminent authorities in the field. At one point during the November 16 meeting, Waage tried to cut off Larry Allen, commenting that staff was unacquainted with and heedless of the intractable facts that Waage et al were trying to dodge.

Waage’s fellow APCD board member, Grover Beach City Councilwoman Karen Bright, revealed that Waage had told her councilmembers that the proposed dust rule would “become a federal rule and would be very difficult to amend.”

“That’s incorrect,” replied Allen. “This is just a local regulation. We can revise it at any point in time.”

Waage’s previous memorable moment at the APCD came at the kick-off of two years of attacks at the December 2009 APCD board meeting, where he asserted that Google Earth photos of the dunes showed that vegetation has been expanding over the last decade at the same time that vehicle use on the dunes has been intensifying, leading him to conclude that off-road vehicles have been a boon to revegetation of the dunes, contrary to the study’s conclusion that vehicle traffic has denuded the dunes and thereby increased wind-borne particulate pollution. In response, APCD staff pointed out to the embarrassment Mr. Waage that the areas of vegetation he indicated in the photos were in fact fenced-off “vegetation islands,” off-limits to riding and painstakingly revegetated over the years by State Parks biologists.

All of the above was an effort to stomp down twenty years of air quality measurements, two peer-reviewed studies, and the Nipomo Mesa’s record of sixty days per year in excess of federal air quality standards for particulate matter pollution, a level of violation seen nowhere else in the county.

After two years of tossing everything and the kitchen sink, the APCD study’s critics had come out to this final meeting on the fuggitive dust control rule for one last try at killing the dust. And though audibly worn down, Allen was equal to the occasion. He distilled and explained to the board the make-believe controversy in a few sentences:

“People are trying to attack the science behind the study, looking at very specific points in the study, and are actually going at it with a conclusion that they want to find, and looking through the data to try to find data that will show that conclusion. That’s pretty evident in everything that we have seen. That is not what APCD did in conducting this study.”

“Does our study have limitations? Yes. It’s a scientific study, and all scientific studies have limitations.”

Allen pointed out that the primary grievance of the study’s most vocal critics – that monitoring stations were in the wrong places and/or not measuring wind speed accurately and/or attributing to the riding area elevated pollution level readings that weren’t really coming from the riding area (all charges his agency and the study’s authors had previously refuted on multiple occasions) – would actually be resolved by the implementation of the dust control rule they were opposing. The rule requires that the County, the APCD, and State Parks all approve the location of the monitoring stations that will measure particulate matter once State Parks puts mitigation measures in place at the dunes. These will determine whether Parks has succeeded in reducing dust to background levels. State Parks will have a full say in where the monitors go that will determine the effectiveness of its dust control measures. Thus, the main complaint of the study’s critics was moot.

As opponents called for delay and a regulatory posture that was related to the point of comatose, Dr. Borenstein testified to the respiratory and cardiac health consequences of particulate matter pollution, particularly for children, the elderly and people with preexisting conditions. These consequences include heart attacks and premature death. Dr. Borenstein also noted emerging information that newborns may have problems with lung development due to PM10 exposure. “It doesn’t matter where you live,” she said, “there is a cause and effect known – and replete in the literature – that these conditions exist as a direct consequence of exposure to particulate matter.”

When it came time for board members to vote, County Supervisor Adam Hill noted the “tremendous misinformation” coming from opponents. Supervisor Jim Patterson said “We need to take definitive action,” and a dust rule was necessary to “establish definite criteria, standards and timeline.”

SLO Mayor Jan Marx noted that the reluctance by State Parks to be held to a standard of accountability reminded her of her late uncle who never went to the doctor because he “might find something” which is why he never got the treatment.

Supervisor Bruce Gibson said the proposed rule “zeroes in directly on human caused pollution and does not regulate below the natural background level…” We have to have consequence so that we can get down to getting the job done, getting the air cleaned up over the Nipomo Mesa.

And though Paso Robles City Councilman John Hamon and Ascadero’s Fonzi, along with Waage and Mechan, hardcore to the end, voted not to do that, they were outrun-nered by the majority of their colleagues, who voted in favor of passing Coastal Dunes Dust Control Draft Rule 1001 and getting the job done.
Hold Your Water

“Slow it, sink it, spread it” is the mantra of enlightened water managers who know that water works best when it stays on the land where it falls.

Now that mantra can be yours, too – along with healthier soils, happier wildlife, and reductions in your water bill – thanks to the tips and techniques in Rainwater Management for Low Impact Development, a publication of the Appropriate Technology Coalition – SLO Green Build, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Surfrider Foundation, available for $10 postage paid, while supplies last. Mail your check to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, SLO 93406.
Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park -- 3-Day, Live-Aboard, Multi-Island Cruises

Sat., Jan. 7, 9 a.m. Salmon Creek and Spruce Creek Trails to Dutra Flat. Moderate 8.4 mile hike in southern Big Sur, 2000 ft. gain, to fine views of ocean and Silver Peak. Spruce Creek winds up Spruce Canyon past cascades and open brush land before dropping down to Dutra Flat, an old homestead. There is a possibility of poison oak and ticks. Bring lunch, snacks, water, and dress for the weather. For info: Mike Sims, 459-1701 or email mims@slonet.org.

Sat., Jan. 7, 10 a.m. Bluff Trail, Montana de Oro. Moderate easy hike with magnificent ocean views along bluffs of Montana de Oro State Park. Length is 3.4 miles, views along bluffs of Montana de Oro. Sat., Jan. 7, 10 a.m., Bluff Trail, Leave no later than 8:10 a.m. Info: Chuck, 441-7507.

Sat., Jan. 15, 10 a.m. Johnson Ranch. PoleCats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles — 2 miles/150 feet elevation change. Trailhead is located just after Lower Higuera goes under Highway 101 and becomes Ontaro Road. Confirm with David Georgi at 458-5575 or polecat leader @gmail.com for upcoming activities. Bipeeds welcome.

Fri-Sun, Jan 22-22 - Death Valley National Park Wilderness Restoration. Help restore wilderness values in this beautiful and remote desert area. We will work with Death Valley Wilderness Coordinator Charlie Callaghan on a project in one of the park’s many wilderness areas. Past project have included re-landscaping former OHV routes that are now in wilderness, trail repair and cleaning up around historic cabins. Work will start on Friday afternoon. Happy hour potluck Saturday night. Leader: Dave Georgi, davidgeorgi@mosaic.net for info.

Sun. Jan 29, 10 a.m. Quarry Trail. PoleCats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles — 2 miles/50 feet elevation change. Meet at the Quarry/Cabrillo Peak trailhead. Confirm with David Georgi at polecat leader @gmail.com or 458-5575. Bipeeds welcome.

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