### Ag Pollution: the Time is Now

**March 15 is do or die for water quality on the central coast**

Water is perhaps our most precious commodity. It is far too precious to waste or use only once. Our Regional Water Quality Control Board will hopefully vote on March 15 to regulate polluted discharges from irrigated agriculture. Pollution regulations are our most powerful tools to limit over-use of pesticides and nitrates. But for this to happen, we need your support.

The regulations are called the “Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands” -- the “Ag Order” for short. This is a five-year permit that sets the conditions with which farmers must comply, including monitoring, numeric standards, discharges to surface waters, discharges to groundwater, and protection of wetlands and riparian habitat. This is the primary regulatory tool to protect water quality from agricultural pollution. The permit is for five years, and for the first time, the staff proposal addresses discharges to groundwater and from stormwater. The last five-year permit was to expire in 2009. Due to fierce opposition from agriculture, it was repeatedly extended. But is now poised for a vote. Essential comments the board needs to hear on March 15 include:

- It is time to make a decision. The Board should VOTE to adopt the order.
- It is time to regulate agricultural discharges. Research and monitoring efforts show that water quality conditions in the lower Salinas and lower Santa Maria watershed are terrible and not improving. Agricultural pollution must be brought under control.
- Please support the staff proposal and consider the suggestions offered by the environmental community stakeholders.

This will likely be an all-day meeting. We need a strong showing to encourage a good decision. Please support clean water. This has been a long, long effort (see “This is Huge,” May 2010; “Comments on the Central Coast Water Board’s Regional Draft Order...,” Feb. 2011), and we are finally near a vote. We need your support. The Regional Water Board is where you need to be on March 15.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board offices are located at 895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101, San Luis Obispo.

On Saturday, February 18, the general assembly of Occupy SLO, held on the steps of the county court house, occupied itself with the issue of getting genetically engineered foods - aka genetically modified organisms, aka GMOs - labeled in California. The Sierra Club and local initiative organizer Jeanne Blackwell gave those assembled the low-down on the state ballot initiative, which needs 580,000 valid signatures to get on the ballot in November. Helping SLO County in the quest to contribute a significant portion of those signatures is now a priority for Occupy SLO. If you want be a part of the local signature-gathering push, contact Jeanne at gannnegmoo@gmail.com. For more information on the initiative, go to labelgmos.org.
Sierra Club General Meeting
Wed., March 21, 7 p.m.
Monumental: David Brower’s Fight for Wild America

Bromibly Meeting: A screening of “Monumental: David Brower’s Fight for Wild America.” Come see this stunning and beautiful documentary film about the most dynamic, influential, and controversial Sierra Club president since John Muir and the birth of the modern environmental movement. Includes reemergences by prominent environmentalists like Michael Mccloskey and Stewart Udall. Conservation news will begin the meeting.
Location: Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO.
Info.: Joe Morris, 722-1875.

David Brower: Monumental

by Andrew Christie, Chapter Director
Reprinted from the Santa Lucian, Feb. 2005

Like most people who live in the public eye, David Brower was required to compose a “bio”—an official summary of self, suitable for excerpting by editors or reproduction on the back of book jackets. His went, in part, like this:

Joined the Sierra Club in 1933, was a world-class climber when it took little class (first ascent of Shiprock, New Mexico, his best), and helped add ten units to the National Park System, keep dams out of Dinosaur National Monument, the Grand Canyon, and the Yukon, lobbied to establish the National Wilderness Preservation System, invented the Outdoor Recreation Resources Reviews, published or edited about a hundred environmental books, started the Sierra Club Foundation, Friends of the Earth Interna-
tional (in 58 countries), the League of Conservation Voters, Earth Island Limited (UK), Earth Island Institute (U.S.), Earth Island Action Group, the North Cascades Conservation Council, the Foe of the Earth Conference (in four countries), starting the Global CPR Service (Conservation, Preservation, Restoration), and the Ecological Council of the Americas... once a sophomore dropout from U.C. Berkeley, twice a visiting professor at Stanford, once at Case Western (where he wrote a page in the NYT Sunday Magazine about how to manage the Earth, and Reader’s Digest liked it), ten honorary degrees, on Advisory Board of the Yosemite Concessions Service, on the ‘Dream Team’ of Interface Corpora-
tion, three times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.... Shiftless procurator and master of creative sloth, enjoying the delights of retirement by getting nothing done, talks endlessly, writes the same way.

I first heard David Brower speak at a Patagonia environmental seminar series sometime around 1986. I didn’t really meet him until August 1999. The Maxxam Corporation had taken over Kaiser Aluminum and the Pacific Lumber Company, much to the regret of both of those companies. Over two days that August, at the Oakland Marriott, Brower chaired a meeting of the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, which had come together earlier that year when two groups — Kaiser’s striking steelworkers and environmentalists “sters & turtles” allied against the World Trade Organization, making history in August, at the Oakland Marriott, Brower chaired a meeting of the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, which had come together earlier that year when two groups — Maxxam’s ruthless clear cutting Conviction that a better world is possible.

I was then on those thronged streets, in rain, pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets, that I met David Brower for the last time. The 87-year-old environ-
tal movement whom he irritated and enraged the most, and who

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SANTA LUCIAN

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The Executive Committee meets the third Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 974 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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The “Cook the Planet in Record Time” Act

by Eric Grooming

The headline above should be the “truth in labeling” title of House Resolution 7, the House “American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act,” otherwise known as Transportation Reauthorization. Set to cost $260 billion over five years, HR 7 makes the Senate’s $109 billion, two-year version look en- lightened by comparison, despite the considerable flaws of that bill (such as collapsing the major sources of funding for pedestrian and bikeways into a program largely dependent on local jurisdictions that keep their air clean), and the Senate’s even more galling proposal—De-Funding Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act.” Federal transportation bills are always dirty and messy affairs, with most of their money going toward highway expansion, but the current House version drops any pretense of concern for the environment, the climate, or mobility for the many elders, youth, disabled, poor, and conscientious people who don’t drive.

Although funding for more and bigger highways is enhanced, there is no thought of increasing gas taxes as the appropriate user fee. Rather, leasing for vast amounts of new oil drilling in the Atlantic and Pacific (perhaps as close as Point Sal), and opening to the oil industry of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, are expected to become the cash cows for this orgy of austerity, federal funding for pedestrian and bikeways would go away entirely. All support for traffic calming would be removed from the Highway Safety Improvement Program, while the requirement that bridges built with federal money be made accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians would be dropped. The “TIGER” program for funding public transit would go away entirely, while Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funding would no longer support projects that reduce pollution, but only those which reduce congestion, which could include road enlargement at the expense of transit and non-motorized funding. Decision-making would shift from local jurisdictions that keep their air clean, and the Senate’s even more galling proposal—De-Funding Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act.”

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While bicycle commuting nationwide has increased by 57% in the years 2000 to 2009, the message of HR 7 is simple: get a car or drop dead.

Presto! County Planning Commission makes permits disappear and turns a public process private

Big Sue Harweg, North County Watch

Coming soon to agricultural land near you, a mountain bike trail on San Luis Obispo County property, will make the planning commission a place that is not even accessible to the public. The County Planning Commission demonstrated that they can make permits disappear overnight and make decisions in private after an amazing bit of “nothing up my sleeve” land use legaleseman, county staff recommended, and 4 of the 5 commissioners agreed, that zip lines are a suitable accessory use to existing primary agriculture (Commissioner O’Grady voting “no”). Essentially the Commission’s interpretation would allow, without permit, almost any activity that can be described as an accessory to an existing primary use. Following the Commission’s logic, any special event could be an accessory use and no use permit would be required. Throughout the past year, the owners of Santa Margarita Ranch have been installing a 3,000-foot-long zip line. Absent any reference to zip lines in the county’s land use Ordinance, the ranch proceeded with the installation without any permits. The ranch describes the zip line “canopy tour” as one “component” of their Agricultural and Ecological tour of the Ranch. The zip line is described as an educational tour and so, of course, according to staff, it is accessory to the agricultural, and, as accessory, needs no use permit.

Henceforth, decisions on what accessory uses might be allowed on ag land, without a use permit, will be at the discretion of the planning staff. The Planning Commissioners who agreed with this interpretation were explicit that the “applicant” would be able to appeal any staff decision on accessory uses. Missing from their radar was any way in which the public could appeal a staff decision. If no use permit is required, there is no environmental review, no conditions on operations and no public notification of any new planned accessory use.

The four Commissioners and staff were notably unconcerned by issues of General Plan consistency, violations of the Williamson Act, violations of the conditions attached to the open space parcel created by the approval of the Santa Margarita Cluster subdivision, and violations of state law raised by North County watch and concerned speakers at the meeting. In perverse disregard for the rule of law, the assenting commissioners demonstrated that they fully under- stood that the whole point of the interpretation was to legitimize after the fact the already installed ranch zip line. The zip line, they said, was “all about having fun.” It’s also all about who you know.

The Planning Commission’s interpretation will go to the Board of Supervisors.

The Grand Jury Wants You

by David Georgi

If you would like to participate in a pure model of democracy and learn about local government, you should consider applying for the SLO County Grand Jury.

The grand jury has a tradition that dates back to the time of the Norman Conquest of England. During the Reign of Henry II (1154-1189), a “jury of presentment” was established consisting of twelve “good and lawful men” to investigate suspected crimes. Grand juries existed in colonial New England and were included in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. In early California, grand juries investigated local prisons and audited county books.

San Luis Obispo County, like all other California counties, has a grand jury that investigates civil issues with the objective of “sheding a light on all aspects of local government to candidates must face questions about transportation priorities, and hear that our own priorities are care for the planet, maintenance rather than expansion of the roads, and safety for all, whether encased in metal or not.

House Republicans’ Desperate Stunt to Pass Worst Transportation Bill Ever

On February 15, unable to find enough votes to pass a comprehensive transportation bill, U.S. House Speaker John Boehner and House Leadership split their appalling transportation proposal into three separate bills, in hopes of passing each of them and packaging them into a final bill, without a final vote on the recombined bill. This bill would then be sent to the Senate, which is working on its own bipartisan bill. The combined House bill, which is a checkoff of giveaways to Big Oil and terrible transportation policies, would be dead on arrival in the Senate and the President has signaled that he would veto the bill.

In response, Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune issued the following statement:

“Speaker Boehner’s actions today demonstrate just how desperate the Grand Oil Party of the House is to please their Big Oil friends.

“In a display of unapologetic political gimmickry, the House will vote on their damaging transportation bill in three separate parts. One bill would open up our shores and the protected Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to destructive oil drilling and permit the dirty Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. The second bill would attack Americans’ transportation choices, jeopardizing public transit, eliminating funds to make communities more bikeable and walkable, and gutting our nation’s bedrock environmental review laws. The last piece of this monstrosity would raid pensions for government employees—a cynical attempt to pay for this terrible legislation on the backs of government workers.

“Whether it’s in the form of one bill or three, this transportation bill is not aligned with the American public’s interest in an accessible, affordable and safe transportation system.

“Senators need to stand up and vote no on this transportation bill, which will thwart our ability to move our country forward. This bill is dead on arrival in the Senate and the President has said he will veto it. It’s time for the House to get to work on the business of the people and stop playing political football to score points with the Big Oil lobby.”
Making the Coast Available to All

From Coast 4 U Quarterly, No. 7, Winter 2012

One of the California Coastal Commission’s main focuses is making sure all Californians and visitors can access our beautiful shoreline. To that end, the Commission recently released a new report that describes and illustrates over 111 access points in the southern portion of our state (San Luis Obispo County and south) it has worked to make public since 1973.

These access points include walkways or stairways from the nearest public road to the shoreline or coastal viewpoint. While many access points have been established, some have yet to be opened to the public. For example, San Luis Obispo County has only opened 13 of the 34 acquired sites.

“We know our work is cut out for us because over half the sites in the most populous county are not open,” Coastal Access Program Manager Linda Locklin told the LA Times. “That’s not good enough.”


To learn more about the Coastal Access Program and to purchase a Coastal Access Guide, please visit our website: www.coastal.ca.gov/access/accede.html.

Sierra Club Comments Compel Review of Oil Pipeline Regulation

As the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board continues moving to clean up an eight-year oil leak from an abandoned 100-year-old Conoco/Phillips oil pipeline adjacent to Nipomo Creek, the Santa Lucia Chapter wrote a letter to the Water Board expressing concern over the potential environmental impacts that may be occurring elsewhere along the pipeline’s path across the Nipomo Creek watershed, and other transfer lines of similar vintage.

After getting no reply, we followed up with comments at the Water Board’s September 1 meeting (see “They Spill Your Milkshake,” Oct. 2011). The board immediately directed staff to take action on the issue.

On February 17, Water Board staff wrote to the Sierra Club saying that they had evaluated our comments “with respect to active and inactive hydrocarbon pipelines throughout the Central Coast Region.” Their concern was that the board had “conducted an extensive information gathering effort to better understand the overlapping authority in active and inactive pipeline regulation. Central Coast Water Board staff also contacted two major oil companies to determine what ongoing and planned characterization and risk evaluation,” Staff summarized planned additional evaluations and actions regarding potential impacts from active and abandoned pipelines.

The letter concluded, “Central Coast Water Board staff plans to issue requests for information from all major pipeline operators/owners (both active and inactive/abandoned) in the Central Coast Region to gather information on any pipeline assessment work completed to date to help us determine if previously unknown potential threats to human health and water quality exist from inactive and abandoned pipelines.”

LAFCO Traffic Jam

Scathing Caltrans letter on Los Robles Del Mar project not released to public prior to Pismo annexation hearing

The saga of the struggle of Pismo Beach to get permission from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to proceed with the 182-acre Los Robles Del Mar annexation and development has hit a bump, and may be skidding toward a ditch.

The problematic project has become notorious for the City’s dubious claims of a reliable water supply. But claims that it will fully mitigate its traffic impacts now appear to be less credible.

A January 17 letter sent to LAFCO by the California Department of Transportation lays out a history of the failure of Pismo Beach to comply with necessary fines in the proposed development plan repeatedly pointed out by Caltrans from 1995 to the present. The Caltrans letter lays out the history of the City’s botched studies of the project’s traffic impacts, which “have been seriously understated.” Further, the agency “strongly disagree(s) with the methodology used to determine the LOS” [Level of Severity]; traffic counts are “unacceptable;” the proposed traffic mitigation measures are “inadequate” and have no identified funding mechanism; and so on.

Above all, for the last 17 years, Pismo Beach has ignored Caltrans as the agency has repeatedly pointed out a glaring problem: the project’s environmental studies have completely ignored its traffic impacts on the 101.

One additional problem: No member of the public was aware of the contents of that letter prior to the January 19 public hearing on the proposed development.

LAFCO executive David Church mentioned the Caltrans letter at the January hearing. But copies were not available to the public and the letter wasn’t uploaded to the LAFCO website until more than ten days later, after Pismo activists inquired about it.

The annexation is scheduled for a vote at LAFCO’s March 15 meeting. As this is an extension of the January 19 hearing, technical public comment has been closed and can only be reopened at the discretion of the chair. Local activist Eric Greening noted that in light of the tardily disclosed contents of the Caltrans letter, this project presents a problem: “The whole Caltrans letter, which no one in the public had seen prior to the hearing, and whatever other new material may be brought forward before March 15, create what would seem to be an obligation to allow continued comments, both written and at the meeting, at least on the new material and its implications for their decision,” he wrote.

At the March 15 hearing, LAFCO staff will attempt to provide additional information on water supply for the city, the project’s water demand, General Plan review of land use/stormwater and drainage/park and recreation issues, the potential for re-design of the project, and traffic issues arising from the project’s projected 4,000 car trips per day.

On this last item, it seems unlikely that LAFCO can make an acceptable traffic analysis appear out of thin air by March 15.

In a January 27 Tribune Viewpoint, Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District board member Neil Havlik called Los Robles del Mar “a dinosaur.” He concluded:

“The city of Pismo Beach has doggedly moved forward over the years with this project despite its many drawbacks, design flaws and citizen opposition.... As a result of all of this, the people of the South County are being presented with an out-dated project more akin to L.A.-type developments of the 1960s than anything that is considered acceptable today. Planning standards have changed, community standards have changed and what our citizens expect of the building community has changed. This project is a throwback to earlier times that have no place in San Luis Obispo County today.

On March 15, the Local Agency Formation Commission should make a point of agreeing with those sentiments.
Protect California Has Successful Launch

by Kathryn Phillips, Sierra Club California

On February 1, environmental activists, the general public, legislators, legislative staff, and even a few industry lobbyists packed a Sacramento hearing room to witness the launch event of the Protect California Campaign.

The event was a five-panel hearing about key environmental issues and the need to protect California. Panelists ranged from a Stanford scientist who testified about disturbing new research on children’s immune systems to a labor leader who made an impassioned plea for protecting forests from clear cutting and sustaining jobs through better logging practices.

More than 15 legislators attended the hearing. I say “more than 15” because one legislator took time to poke his head into the room and survey the crowd, but decided not to stay.

The legislators who did stay, and deserve kudos for their efforts to protect California’s environment, are Senators Ellen Corbett, Mark Leno, Christine Kehoe, Alan Lowenthal, Fran Pavely and Loni Wolk, and assembly members Bob Blumenfield, Mike Feuer, Paul Fong, Warren Furutani, Rich Gordon, Jared Huffman, Jose Solorio. Assemblymember Huffman and his staff helped in many ways to launch the campaign, including ensuring we had a place to meet within the Capitol.

The Protect California Campaign is an educational campaign developed by Sierra Club California and allies at environmental and environmental justice organizations. Its purpose is to push back on attacks on environmental protection by helping government officials and others understand the work that remains to be done to eliminate pollution and protect our natural legacy.

Over the next several months, we’ll be continuing the educational effort at the Capitol through a series of legislative and other staff briefings. We’ll also be working with Sierra Club members around the state to make sure opinion leaders and legislators hear about their concerns about the environment and the need to protect California.

Save the Date!

On March 15 and 16, the western edition of the 2012 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference will be held at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles.

For the last five years, the Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conferences have brought together a diverse group of attendees from labor, environmental, and industry to discuss solutions for a green economy that will create good green jobs. It’s important that the environmental community be well-represented to give environmental perspectives on global problems.

The Good Jobs, Green Jobs conferences, usually held in Washington, DC, are sponsored by the BlueGreen Alliance Foundation. This year, to attract wider audiences, the conferences will be offered in four separate locations: Atlanta, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Detroit.

The BlueGreen Alliance was launched in 2006 by United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club. The Alliance has increased its membership since, uniting nearly 15 million people from organized labor, environmental, faith and human rights groups—all who understand the necessity for good jobs, a clean environment and a green economy.

The BlueGreen Alliance is focusing on the passage of comprehensive clean energy and climate change legislation, restoring the rights of workers in the United States to organize and bargain collectively, and establishing new trade policies that promote growth and prosperity across all sectors of global societies while protecting public health and workers’ rights.

Those wanting to attend the Los Angeles conference are encouraged to apply for scholarships to cover transportation, hotel, and registration fees (Sierra Club members, see below). Volunteers from the Sierra Club’s Angeles Chapter will offer historic walking tours of downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood for out-of-town participants. For more information, contact Joan Jones Holtz at 626-443-0706; holtzbin@ad.com, or visit www.greenjobsconference.org.

March 20: For the Parks

By Elizabeth Goldstein
President, California State Parks Foundation

Join the California State Parks Foundation in Sacramento on Tuesday, March 20, for our Tenth Annual Park Advocacy Day and help us send a powerful message of support for California’s 278 state parks!

Park Advocacy Day is a unique opportunity for state park supporters to take action by meeting with policymakers and urging them to keep California’s state parks open, protected, accessible and well-funded. This year will be especially important as the countdown to park closures continues and as lawmakers grapple with important funding and policy questions that will have significant impacts on our state parks system.

Park advocates will speak with lawmakers about a variety of issues impacting state parks, including park closures and the governor’s proposed elimination of lifeguards on state beaches and a 20% reduction in state park rangers.

We need your help to make sure the voices of park supporters from throughout California are heard!

10th Annual Park Advocacy Day
Tuesday, March 20th, 2012
8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Sacramento, CA

You can register here: http://mys.calparks.org.

To learn more and register for Park Advocacy Day, please visit our website or call our office at 916-442-2119.

Let’s mingle!

Attendees at a Good Jobs, Green Jobs conference take a break between panel sessions as Jim Hightower greets them on the big screen.

...and We’ll Pay Your Way

Exciting news for Sierra Club members, volunteers, staff, and allies. We are sponsoring a delegation — including paid registration fee, hotel, and travel — to the Good Job, Green Jobs regional conference in L.A.

The conference will feature over 40 workshops on green technology, green jobs, responsible investments, and environmental justice in a green economy. Additionally there will be a panel of environmentalist, labor union leaders, and energy specialists.

The event is an excellent opportunity to build coalitions around good jobs that are also good for the environment. The conference details can be viewed at www.greenjobsconference.org.

We hope to bring a diverse group of Sierra Club volunteers, members, and other important allies to this event. Please contact Michael Sarmiento at MichaelSarmiento@sierracclub.org if you would like to be part of the delegation.

We would like to bring as many as possible from each region but cannot bring everyone so please reply promptly if you are interested!
Look Closely, Supervisors

These pictures are worth a thousand Climate Action Plans

Last summer, we pointed out in the Santa Lucian – as well as the pages of The Tribune and a letter to the County Planning Department – that the County’s draft Climate Action Plan, the policy document that, it is hoped, will reduce San Luis Obispo’s carbon emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020, lacked any mention of one of the biggest tools in the global warming clean energy toolbox: Community Choice Aggregation (CCA).

California’s Community Choice law gives local governments new and important rights to take a major role in achieving the state’s clean energy and climate protection mandates. It empowers local governments and citizens to address many destructive impacts of the way we generate and use electricity.

Because we pointed out its absence, the evaluation of CCA was included in the final draft of the County’s Climate Action Plan. On February 14, County planners presented to the Supervisors the implementation measures they had selected for the first phase, almost all of which are voluntary measures. Community Choice was designated for Phase Two, which is scheduled to commence in about three years.

While we’re waiting, we urge the board of supervisors to cast its eyes northward, and also on the two charts at the right. Marin County used CCA to flip the switch on cleaner, greener, non-polluting energy. Today, because it has put a CCA program in place, Marin Clean Energy customers are procuring 20% renewable energy, with the decision to permit the use of the CCA-free energy provides an alternative for helping to achieve these goals should the investor-owned utilities continue to fall short of the mark.

That’s why it was not encouraging to hear County Planning staff at the February 14 Board of Supervisors meeting repeatedly emphasize the need for a continuing close partnership with PG&E, or to hear the PG&E rep cooing approval of the CCA-free energy efficiency, co-generation, and other clean energy programs. CCA provides an alternative for helping to achieve these goals should the investor-owned utilities continue to fall short of the mark.

GHG Reduction Programs for Marin County

GHG Reduction Goal: 797,130 tons CO2e

Here’s what we’re not doing. The only CCA program that has beaten the odds (and PG&E) is now up and running in California is the Marin Energy Authority. Its current and projected greenhouse gas reduction targets (top, the bar on the right) and the amount of renewable energy it has generated in one year (bottom, the bar on the left) beat that state’s renewables goals, the efforts of all the utilities, and every other climate action “tool in the toolbox.” SLO County has decided it will start thinking about the possibility of CCA in about three years.
Sue Harvey Wins Kathleen Goddard Jones Award

In the spring of 2011, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, the Center for Biological Diversity and local environmental watchdog North County Watch joined in a lawsuit against First Solar Inc. and the SanPua Power Corporation, in the hope of somehow mitigating the extensive impacts the companies’ solar plant projects would inflict on the many threatened and endangered species that inhabit the Carrizo Plain.

Such negotiations proceed from the premise: “We promise not to sue you provided you agree to do the following.” As spring turned into summer and frustration mounted, Sue Harvey, president of North County Watch, pulled her organization out of the protracted negotiations and, along with Carrizo Commons, sued the solar companies.

In 2007, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife and the Center for Biological Diversity signed an agreement not to file suit against the companies in exchange for additional acreage to be preserved, thirty miles of existing fencing to be expanded, and the implementation of emergency enhancements to the emergency evacuation zones surrounding the solar arrays, and solar company-funded efforts to eliminate rodenticides on the Carrizo and other San Joaquin kit fox conservation areas. The Santa Lucia Chapter did not endorse the agreement.

Two months later, in settlement of the lawsuit filed by North County Watch and Carrizo Commons, SanPua and First Solar agreed to establish a biological working group to monitor the lands during the life of their facilities, demarcate the facilities at the end of their 35-year permits rather than apply for permit renewal, place the land in a conservation easement, and land an enhancement for management of the land in perpetuity.

The Kathleen Goddard Jones Award, named for the founder of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, has been awarded nine times since it was established in 2002.

Remarks by Andrew Christie, Director, Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, at the North County Watch tenth anniversary gala, Santa Margarita Community Center, February 4, 2012:

A few weeks ago, I found myself in a living room in SLO with about twenty other people – concerned citizens and earnest young folks. Cal Poly students and recent graduates. We had all attended the talk on global warming that Bill McKibben gave in SLO last October and decided afterward to get together as a group to see what we could do about global warming on a local level. The idea was to first identify what resources we have and what obstacles are in our path – pluses and minuses – in the effort to shift from a fossil fuel economy to green, renewable power and curb the emissions causing global climate change.

There was a guy in the front of the room with the usual giant pad of butcher paper and a grease marker, and everybody was brainstorming on the subject of green energy resources and obstacles, and inevitably somebody called out: “Two solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain.”

The guy with the grease pen wrote that down. Then he said “Okay, is that a plus or a minus?”

There was a brief silence, and then someone said — and it wasn’t me, and I’m not making this up — “It’s a plus, because the solar companies are going to dismantle the plants in 35 years and restore the sites as wildlife habitat.”

The guy with the grease pen wrote “a win-win.”

“My family and I used to go to the Carrizo Plain on a family vacation. But, in fact, corporations do not dismantle their power plants and restore the sites for the convenience of endangered species out of the goodness of their hearts. They have to be forced to do that. Someone has to sue them to make them do that. Quantities of blood, sweat and tears had to be shed in the course of achieving that outcome.

That’s why it gives me great personal pleasure to be able to award the highest honor it is within the capacity of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club to bestow, our founder’s award, upon the Chair of our Conservation Committee, and the President of North County Watch. And everything I just said was, of course, just one example of her unwavering dedication to environmental preservation, her grace under pressure, her courage under fire.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I am pleased to present the 2011 Kathleen Goddard Jones award to Sue Harvey.

Nuclear Needs New Rules

Legal challenge by Nuclear Information and Resource Service, San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace

On February 15, 37 clean energy groups submitted a formal petition for rulemaking to the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeking adoption of new regulations to expand emergency evacuation zones and improve emergency response planning around U.S. nuclear reactors.

Calling on the NRC to incorporate the real-world lessons of the Fukushima disaster and the proposed rules would expand existing emergency evacuation zones from 10 to 25 miles around nuclear reactors and establish a new zone from 25-50 miles around reactors for which utilities would be required to conduct computerized accident simulations to support its emergency planning rules. But first at Chernobyl in 1986, and now at Fukushima, the real world has trumped any possible simulation. The fact is that far too many Americans live near nuclear reactors, but outside existing emergency evacuation zones.

Two months later, in settlement of the lawsuit filed by North County Watch and Carrizo Commons, SanPua and First Solar agreed to establish a biological working group to monitor the lands during the life of their facilities, demarcate the facilities at the end of their 35-year permits rather than apply for permit renewal, place the land in a conservation easement, and land an enhancement for management of the land in perpetuity.

The Kathleen Goddard Jones Award, named for the founder of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, has been awarded nine times since it was established in 2002.

Remarks by Andrew Christie, Director, Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, at the North County Watch tenth anniversary gala, Santa Margarita Community Center, February 4, 2012:

A few weeks ago, I found myself in a living room in SLO with about twenty other people – concerned citizens and earnest young folks. Cal Poly students and recent graduates. We had all attended the talk on global warming that Bill McKibben gave in SLO last October and decided afterward to get together as a group to see what we could do about global warming on a local level. The idea was to first identify what resources we have and what obstacles are in our path – pluses and minuses – in the effort to shift from a fossil fuel economy to green, renewable power and curb the emissions causing global climate change.

There was a guy in the front of the room with the usual giant pad of butcher paper and a grease marker, and everybody was brainstorming on the subject of green energy resources and obstacles, and inevitably somebody called out: “Two solar power plants on the Carrizo Plain.”

The guy with the grease pen wrote that down. Then he said “Okay, is that a plus or a minus?”

There was a brief silence, and then someone said — and it wasn’t me, and I’m not making this up — “It’s a plus, because the solar companies are going to dismantle the plants in 35 years and restore the sites as wildlife habitat.”

The guy with the grease pen wrote “a win-win.”

“My family and I used to go to the Carrizo Plain on a family vacation. But, in fact, corporations do not dismantle their power plants and restore the sites for the convenience of endangered species out of the goodness of their hearts. They have to be forced to do that. Someone has to sue them to make them do that. Quantities of blood, sweat and tears had to be shed in the course of achieving that outcome.

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30th Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference
by Heather Reese, Project Coordinator Salmonid Restoration Federation

Salmonid Restoration Federation is excited to produce the 30th Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference in Davis, California, April 4-7, 2012. This year’s conference is entitled Salmonid Restoration and UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences’ 30th Annual Salmonid Fish Habitat Restoration Conference to match our fish-advancement goals. We are at a turning point with how we are investing in our own natural systems — essentially freezing the San Diego solar market and setting a dangerous precedent for other utilities. Sierra Club California, the Utility Customer’s Action Network, Walmart, the City of San Diego, dozens of solar installers and others protested SDG&E’s proposed new fee. Sierra Club intervened in SDG&E’s rate case and argued that the proposal was illegal and contrary to California’s goal of subsidizing and promoting renewable energy. The CPUC agreed. “Development of such a rate element could affect not only SDG&E and solar customers, but also PG&E, SCE and other distributed generation and self-generation customers,” wrote CPUC Commissioner Mark Ferron in the ruling. “Furthermore... I am concerned that this particular...[charge] may be inconsistent with current law.” In its ruling, the CPUC cited California law that prohibits utilities from creating a “new charge” that would increase costs for customers that generate their own energy. SDG&E was directed to drop its charge and resubmit its proposal for restructuring utility bills.

On February 10, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) struck down a proposal by San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) to charge their customers who own solar PV systems an extra fee for use of the distribution grid. This charge would have added up to $30 a month to the bills of customers who generate solar power for their own use. The effect of this charge would have chipped away at the financial payback and energy savings equation for business and homeowners. The charge would have had the effect of subsidizing and promoting renewable energy.

The Sierra Club intervened in SDG&E’s rate case and argued that the proposal was illegal and contrary to California’s goal of subsidizing and promoting renewable energy. SDG&E was directed to drop its charge and resubmit its proposal for restructuring utility bills.

While this is a big victory for solar in California, the battle is not over. Sierra Club California will be on the watch for attempts at the Legislature by the utilities to undermine laws that promote customer-generated renewable energy. We will also continue to follow the SDG&E rate case at the PUC.

Letters

Not fooled

Just wanted to show you how helpful your publication is in heading off the bastards who try to trick us with dirty tricks. Thank you so much; I’m getting a flood of replies thanking me for sending this warning to my friends.

Vance Hyde
Cambria

The CPUC rejected utility’s proposed charge for rooftop solar
by Jim Metropulos, Sierra Club California

On February 10, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) struck down a proposal by San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) to charge their customers who own solar PV systems an extra fee for use of the distribution grid. This charge would have added up to $30 a month to the bills of customers who generate solar power for their own use. The effect of this charge would have chipped away at the financial payback and energy savings equation for business and homeowners.

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chosen to fill in as jurors drop out. The grand jury conducts regular business two mornings per week and then pursues individual investigations as necessary.

Grand juries have several specific responsibilities. Jurors tour all holding cells and evidence rooms in the county. They are shown complete tours of the police and disaster center. Each week, the foreperson reads any new citizen complaints and the jury decides whether to investigate it. Each complaint is given a number, and it is surprising how fast they grow. Grand juries are also empowered to identify cases, that is, issues generated by jurors. Cases are identified by letters. The SLOJC usually accumulates several dozen cases and complaint investigations in a year.

Grand juries possess several powers. Witnesses can be asked to testify, and the proceedings are recorded for later reference. Witnesses are admonished that, known or asked and answered during the interview, including who said what, is confidential. Jurors are under the same admissibility. Witnesses can be sworn, as in a court case. And, if necessary, witnesses can be subpoenaed. Government agencies are required to provide any documentation needed by the GJ.

The GJ is organized into committees and subcommittees for specific investigations. When an investigation ends, the pertinent committee appoints a juror to write a draft report following a prescribed template. The report is then revised and reviewed by legal staff, with further review by the full grand jury and the county counsel.

The grand jury has invested time in the project and has the breadth of experience to refer to. It, however, can go only as far as the information it is given. The SLOJC makes the following recommendations:

- The city council will not again allow city staff, after the fact, to use the goal-setting process to conflate priority spending issues — as identified by citizens in multiple surveys and cited in the language of the ballot measure — with projects not thus cited but desired by staff and business interests and falsely depicted in public meetings and city documents as part of the "Measure Y spending priorities" established by the citizens who voted in the ballot measure.
- The City will not attempt after the fact to redefine an actual voter-designated priority for a sales tax increase (such as "repairing and maintaining city streets") under a broad category "essential infrastructure."  
- Then there's the city's Capital Improvement Plan and its projected reduction of annual payments from the General Fund into the Open Space Protection Fund from $133,200 to $75,000 starting in 2013, despite the promise to voters that Measure Y would be used in part to provide more -- not less -- general fund revenues for open space protection.

The city council acknowledges that the argument that sales tax revenues are part of the general fund and therefore can legally be spent on anything the city wishes to is not a good way to persuade a member of the coalition that got Measure Y passed to join in an effort to renew it, or to garner votes for that renewal.

Improvement Project now underway ("Don't Ask Y"). The article argued that Measure Y had made no provision for downtown improvements, and implied that the city's Open Space Program was being short-changed by diverting this money toward the downtown.

This implication is simply inaccurate — and it is unwise. In 2006, a community built a solid coalition of environmentalists, business groups, property owners, and neighborhood activists to pass Measure Y, which provides over $5.6 million annually to the county. They pay you mileage for grand jury business and you receive a tax-free sum of $15 per day for jury duty. Along with the 19 selected jurors, 11 alternates are soon conversant with the terms like "LAFCO," "joint powers agreement," "passing of the pie chart" and the names that frequently adorn local newspapers. Local news stories now have an operatic drama because I have developed familiarity with the complex political maneuvering and riveting personal motivations that underlie them.

There are many cool features for being on the grand jury. In the first few weeks, you get taken to the Sheriff's Department to be photographed and issued an badge. You get official grand jury business cards and key to a cute little house downtown, known as the Grand Jury House. The county pays you mileage for grand jury business and you receive the tax-free sum of $15 per day for jury duty. Along with the 19 selected jurors, 11 alternates are soon conversant with the terms like "LAFCO," "joint powers agreement," "passing of the pie chart" and the names that frequently adorn local newspapers. Local news stories now have an operatic drama because I have developed familiarity with the complex political maneuvering and riveting personal motivations that underlie them.

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Muir’s March 2012

For one week this summer, northwest Yosemite will be home to the hikers of the fourth annual Muir’s March to restore the valley John Muir so loved.

From July 29 – August 4, multiple groups following various routes will march across Yosemite and converge atop the O’Shaughnessy Dam to rally for restoration. Some will march for seven days, some will trek for four, while others will join in on the last day for a one-day hike.

Restore Hetch Hetchy is signing up all levels of backpackers for seven-and four-day trips that start in various locations in the national park and end together on the dam that inundates the breathtaking valley. A day hike starts and ends at the dam on August 4th and coincides with the end of the overnight trips.

Prior to participating, Marchers must raise a minimum of $1,900 for the 7-day trip and $1,100 for the 4-day trip. In exchange, each group will be led by expert guides as they traverse some of the wildest, most remote portions of Yosemite: Tillit Valley, Smith Meadow, Jack Main Valley and the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne. There’s a trip for every age and ability level.

Last year the shortest overnight trip included children ages 7, 8 and 12. Those youngsters and their parents got to view spectacular wildflower meadows and experience some incredible bear-sightings. Laurel Lake was a particularly memorable destination: after spending the first night on the trail there, campers could choose to lounge by the water or walk around the lake for more views.

The 7-day hike through the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne challenged and inspired all involved: “Our trek began in Tuolumne Meadows, a paradise of emerald green meadows and snow-capped mountain vistas along the Tuolumne River..... Our last day on the trail, we hiked around the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir to O’Shaunnessy Dam, built to flood the Hetch Hetchy Valley under 300 feet of water back in the 1920s. The sudden transformation of the wild and vital Tuolumne River into a flat, lifeless lake was a shock. It made the purpose of the trip -- to promote the restoration of the Hetch Hetchy Valley back to its former pristine state, as, in John Muir’s words, ‘one of nature’s rarest and most precious mountain temples’ -- resonate even more fully with each of us.”

On the last day of the hike, all the Marchers came together with the one-day marchers that included Muir’s great-great-grandson, Robert Hanna. This year promises to be even more spectacular with an even wider variety of trips to choose from. For more information or to register for one of the trips visit www.muirsmarch.org or call (415) 956-0401. Join us as we march in the footsteps of John Muir. Join us on Muir’s March!

Buried Treasure Revealed

Dreamy morning so many of you today blessed creatures passing by my little window on the world your watery world your sea cradle moving you south

I see you for an instant mammoth, majestic, magnificent speckled back, smoky spray a waving fluke or two your beautiful breaching bodies leaving me on the brink of weeping my heart soaring with every glimpse buried treasure revealed

The spectacle of whales humbles me to earth’s plenty, connecting me to its precious bounty and the wondrous spectrum of its gifts falling more out of protection as we grow more out of balance

- Kalila Volkov

Jury

continued from page 9

report is reviewed by the committee and then passed to an editorial committee. The revised report is sent to County Counsel for fact checking, and returned to the whole grand jury, which votes whether to make it public. It takes 12 of the 19 jurors to approve including the investigation report in its final report. The final report is released at the end of the grand jury year and is made available to local news organizations and governmental agencies and published on the grand jury web site. Government agencies that are the subject of investigations must respond to the report.

Each year, the grand jury reviews the previous year’s report and investigates any developments. The composition of my grand jury is mostly retired people who have an active interest in local government. Even though we represent many different political views, we have bonded with a mutual respect borne of intense investigation into often thorny issues.

My experience on the grand jury has benefited me in several ways. I achieved my objective of learning the process and players in local government. I gained enormous respect for the various governmental officials, staff and citizens who interact in this grassroots dance of democracy. And perhaps most fulfilling has been a sense of achievement at putting in many hours of hard work and study to understand contentious issues and make coherent recommendations that may have positive effect in our local community.
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.
Outings and Activities Calendar

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Studly footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. Pets are generally not allowed. A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 18. 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 listed outing leader.

Sat.-Sun., March 3-4 Death Valley Area Tour. Meet in Shoshone, south of Death Valley 8 a.m. Saturday morning or camp overnight nearby. Tour Badwater, Natural Bridge, Golden Canyon, and Artists Palette with short hikes and lunch stop. Saturday night camp at Texas Springs (fee). Sunday morning, visit Zabriskie Point, then drive through 20 Mule Team Canyon, Death Valley Junction to Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. Primitive camping for those to Ash Meadows National Wildlife of Death Valley 8 a.m. Saturday morning or camp overnight nearby. Team Canyon, Death Valley Junction Saturday night camp at Texas Springs with short hikes and lunch stop.

Sun., Mar 4th, 9 a.m. Rinconada to Big Falls. Moderate, invigorating hike. 10 miles roundtrip and elevation gain of 2000 ft. in Los Padres National Forest. Hike begins on Rinconada trail on to ridge top with panoramic coastal and interior views, then continues west to Big Falls trail, descending to one of county's tallest waterfalls. In area are perennial ponds with salamanders and pond turtles. Bring adequate food, water, hat, sturdy shoes, and dress in layers for changing weather. Meet at Rinconada trailhead about 10 miles east of Hwy 101 on Popo Rd. and 3 miles past turnoff for Santa Margarita Lake. Plants, animals, and area geology will be discussed. Rain cancels. Info.: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com. Car-poolers meet in front of Pacific Beverages Co., 22255 El Camino Real Dr., Santa Margarita, at 8:30.

Sat., March 10, 9 a.m. Over the Top at Cerro San Luis. Meet at parking-lot rest area (no dog parks) four walk around and over Cerro San Luis via the Rock Garden trail. Five miles round trip, lasting about 3 hrs. Moderate pace with a few steep uphill and rocky sections on the trail; great panoramic views of SLO. Boots recommended. Rain cancels. Info.: Mike Sims, 459-1701 or msiims@stanet.org.

Sun., March 11, 10 a.m. Sycamore Springs. PoleCats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles — 2 miles/200 feet elevation change. Meet near the entrance of Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Dr. Confirm with David Georgei at 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com. Bipeds welcome.


Sat., Mar. 17, 9:30 a.m. St. Patrick’s Day Pt. Sal Hike. Moderate 5-mile hike to top of hill with beautiful views at Pt. Sal State Beach. Bring water, snacks, hat, sunscreen, and sweater for cooling weather. Wear green if you’re Irish or wish you were today! Directions: Hwy 101 south. West Main exit west to Rt. 1, then left 1.8 miles, right on Brown Rd. 4 miles to gate, where we will meet. Rain cancels. Info.: Andrea Ortiz. 934-2792. Asst.: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sun., Mar. 18, 1 p.m. Musical Walk: Historic San Luis Obispo. Come on a guided, tuneful stroll past seven historic landmarks in downtown San Luis Obispo. Each stop is punctuated by recordings of thematic songs from the Mission days through World War II—minstrels to crooners. Duration about 1.5 hrs. Meet at corner of Nipomo and Dana Sts., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Wed., Mar. 21, 7 p.m. Biweekly Meeting: Monumental: David Brower’s Fight for Wild America. Come see this stirring and beautiful documentary film about the most dynamic, influential, and controversial Sierra Club president since John Muir and the birth of the modern environmental movement. Includes reminiscences by prominent environmentalists like Michael McCloskey and Stewart Udall. Location: Steyning Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 772-1875.

Sun., March 25, 10 a.m. Johnson Ranch. PoleCats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of using trekking poles — 2.2 miles/150 feet elevation change. The trailhead is located just after Lower Higuera goes under Highway 101 and becomes Ontario Road. Confirm with David Georgei at 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com. Bipeds welcome.

Outings Sponsored by other organizations

Sat., March 17, Star Party. Is your telescope gathering dust? The Central Coast Astronomical Society is hosting a star-gazing event for those who are passionately interested in astronomy at the Santa Margarita KOA. Take an intergalactic tour of the universe by peaking through telescopes and chatting with real astronomers! Discover planetary nebulae, galaxy clusters, blue giants, and more. This is a great time to visit, as the nights get dark early and the star gazing lasts longer (weather permitting, of course... if it’s cloudy or remotely wet, stay home and warm yourself by the fire). All you need to do is walk up the hill if the sky is clear and enjoy the celestial skies. For information, please visit: www.coastronomy.org.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park -- 3-Day, Live-Abord, Multi-Island Cruises

May 6-8, July 8-10, September 9-11. Explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. Enjoy the frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on rare birds and sea lions. Train your binoculars on rare birds and sea lions. Hike trails bordered by blankets of wildflowers and plants found in no other place on earth. Kayak or snorkel the pristine waters— or just relax at sea. All tours depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ twin diesel Truth. $500 fee includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, and the services of a naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes, call attention to items of interest and present evening programs. Proceeds will go to benefit Sierra Club-California’s political programs. To make a reservation, mail a $100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information, 626-443-0706; jholtzhln@aol.com.

Outings Sponsored by other organizations

Sweet Springs Nature Preserve. The Audubon Society, which manages Sweet Springs Nature Preserve in Los Osos, needs volunteers on the second Saturday of the month from 9-12 a.m. to help with watering, weeding, planting, etc. Info at www.morrocoastaudubon.org.

Ventana Wilderness Alliance Trail Crew Opportunities

Volunteers are needed for work in the Ventana and Silverpeak Wilderness Wilderness Areas. Trail crew leader daveknapp@ventanawild.org.