Between Diablo and the Deep Blue Sea

Talk about tough calls. Would you rather have a project that promises to do significant damage to marine wildlife, playing havoc with the coastal environment, or hand a nuclear power plant a license for another twenty years of operation while flying blind as to the full magnitude of the potential seismic danger that lurks beneath it? Sophie’s choice comes to mind when contemplating the options for PG&E’s offshore seismic survey. proposed to determine the magnitude of an earthquake that could be generated by the faults around Diablo Canyon. If the survey’s impacts are deemed too great to permit, then PG&E will simply renew its license on the basis of its existing incomplete seismic data, via the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s ever ready rubber stamp, and down the road an earthquake larger than what the plant was designed to withstand could render a large part of California uninhabitable and turn that marine environment — spared the ordeal of a seismic survey — radioactive for centuries.

In short, this project drips with irony. Let us count the ways:

1. Once-through cooling. Aside from the catastrophe of an earthquake cutting off Diablo’s power or cracking the containment dome — or compromising the cement casks and spent fuel pools that constitute the plant’s on-site nuclear waste dump, with no way of knowing whether the ground below them is likely to remain sufficiently stable for 250 years — there’s the matter of the daily catastrophe that has been ongoing from the day the plant began operation. Its cooling system, per the state and federal EPA, is the cause of a reduction in sea life in the area of up to 90 percent, including the decimation of the black and red abalone. The surrounding waters have lost 97 percent of their kelp due to Diablo’s hot-water discharge into the cove. This triggered a cease & desist order from Fish and Game and cost the utility a $14 million settlement with the state. Asa 1982, PG&E was exposed by the Department of Fish and Game and the Water Quality Control Board twelve years ago. PG&E’s lawyers beat it down with threats to out-spend and tie up state regulators in court indefinitely.

2. PG&E’s history of deception on marine impacts. In 1982, PG&E claimed its cooling system had little or no effect on the marine environment. That lie, and the suppression of data by PG&E that enabled the lie, was exposed by the Department of Fish and Game and cost the utility a $34 million settlement with the state of California.

You Want How Much to Do What?
By the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility

“The Commission will be in order.” With those words uttered by CPUC Administrative Law Judge Barnett on April 18, all began the latest round of action by the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility (A4NR) in the hearing room of the California Public Utilities Commission. The need for updated seismic studies to assess the long-term prospects of relying on Diablo Canyon for the remainder of its current—or possibly extended—license had begun with the passage of then-assemblyman Sam Blakeslee’s AB 1632 back in 2006. In 2010, the CPUC granted PG&E $16.7 million to update the seismology. The utility came back the following year requesting $47 million more for a total of $64 million—nearly quadruple the original request.

No Seismic Testing in the National Marine Sanctuary

PG&E’s original seismic survey plan extended north of Cambria, beyond the southern boundary of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. It has now been revised and reduced, with no testing proposed inside the Sanctuary’s borders. plausible reasons have been advanced for this change (enough is known about the seismic profiles of faults north of Cambria, etc.), but we have to wonder: what would this project look like if we had won Sanctuary designation here years ago?

HOW MUCH? continued on page 8

DIABLO continued on page 4

Peter Douglas remembered > page 4

YOU SHALL NOT PASS

Peter Douglas remembered > page 4
Agenda 21 Meets Godzilla

There’s a new brew in town.
Imported from exotic Glenn Beckstein, filtered through several million copies of Atlas Shrugged, fermented in casks of ancient conspiracy theory, it has recently become available around these parts for the discriminatory political paranoid palate. Decanted at several local venues, it has been attracting notice from connoisseurs of craziness.

It’s the Agenda 21/ICLEI plot for world domination.

The deal: Agenda 21 is an action plan endorsed at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. Primarily a blueprint for curbing ocean pollution and energy inefficiency, it is widely considered inadequate to the challenges it purported to face. It proposed no limits on greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation or the loss of species, and did not achieve sufficient financial commitments from member nations to advance its menu of nice ideas for sustainable development.

Here’s a sampling from its accompanying document, the Rio Declaration:

“States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.”

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is a technical consulting organization for municipalities. ICLEI’s founding premise is “that locally designed and driven initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national, and global sustainability objectives.” And this can be done (smoking gun coming up) by advocating “participatory, long-term, strategic planning processes that address local sustainability while protecting global common goods. This approach links local action and solutions to the global challenges we are facing, and therefore links local action to global goals and targets such as...Agenda 21.”

SLO County contracted with ICLEI to help develop an inventory of local greenhouse gas emissions, the necessary first step in creating a Climate Action Plan.

Last November, as the battle to prevent the Governor from crafting a meaningful Climate Action Plan unfolded at the Board of Supervisors, a number of folks popped up to warn of a dire conspiracy. The San Luis Obispo branch of the Coalition for Labor, Agriculture and Rural Business (COLAB), testifying before the board and writing in their newsletter, maintained that ICLEI is part of a plot to implement one-world government and wreck our economy; and the foundational document of that plot is Agenda 21.

On March 13, when the Atascadero City Council was deliberating on whether to accept funds from the Air Pollution Control District to assist in the creation of their own Climate Action Plan, the Agenda 21/ICLEI conspiracy folks came forth again, in greater numbers.

And on April 22 at the Earth Day event at Rancho El Chorro, a young man and woman, video camera and microphone in hand, roam the exhibitor tables interviewing the tree-huggers, demanding to know if they knew about Agenda 21 and ICLEI and the imminent collapse of the global economy should a reduction in carbon emissions be attempted by industrial societies. Also, note the similarity of the name “Agenda 21” to “Area 51,” that secret base in Nevada where the government is hiding the UFOs. See how it’s all coming together?

The astute reader should perceive that we are arguing disrespectful treatment to these beliefs. And this is grist to the Agenda 21 conspiracy mill, as mockery and ridiculing come from the precincts of eco-socialist bunny-huggers—who are, of course, part of the conspiracy—constitutes persecution, which binds the true believers more tightly in their resolve to guard the flame of their faith.

But that’s okay. In another time, a collective rolling of the eyes and silent dismissal instead might have been an appropriate response in this situation. But this is not another time. It is a dangerous assumption in increasingly dangerous times to believe that all men and women of good will and a K-12 education will behold the flames from the smoldering fringe and simply turn away. Millions of people in their twenties and younger are looking for a simpler, less scary world than the one in which they find themselves. When offered a world view that provides them with a flaming sword with which to banish environmental and labor laws, the social safety net, income tax, the concept of the common good, the public interest, and the vast, all-consuming, all-explaining conspiracy whence they behold the fumes from the smoldering fringe and simply turn away.

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That’s why we should all take a cue from the remarkable kids of the
The Tramp and the Roughrider Dramatizes Muir/Roosevelt Encounter

Two-man show coming to SLO May 11

In May of 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt, planning a tour of the western forests, invited the naturalist John Muir on a four-day camping trip in the Yosemite wilderness. "The Tramp & the Roughrider" illuminates this extraordinary encounter, with the action unfolding at sunset on Glacier Point, overlooking the magnificent Yosemite Valley.

At the time of this historic meeting, many millions of acres of our western forest, with little or no governmental supervision, were being exploited and abused by hunting, lumber, livestock and mining interests. The federal government had established only five national parks (and had no Park Service). The Yosemite Valley, though surrounded by a national park, was controlled by the state of California, and was in a state of neglect.

Both Muir and Roosevelt were feisty, opinionated characters, with sharp disagreements on issues like hunting, animal rights, and forest management. Muir's poetic and evangelistic temperament, clashing with Roosevelt's political enthusiasm, spawned both tension and humor. Both skillful storytellers, it seems natural that both would seek to top one another by relating some of their many adventures in the wilderness of early America — Roosevelt bringing a ruffian to justice on the frontier; Muir telling of his hair-raising "interview" with a Yosemite bear. But around the campfire, in sifting through their histories and their hopes, each of these very different men surely discovered how the other had been shaped by unusual experiences in the wilderness they loved, opening up some rich possibilities of "doing some forest good."

By the end of Roosevelt's presidency, America could boast an additional 200 million acres of forest wilderness, five more national parks, several new monuments (including the Grand Canyon) and 65 wildlife preserves. Bully! The Sierra Club is sponsoring one performance of "The Tramp & the Roughrider" in San Luis Obispo at the SLO City Library, 955 Palm Street, at 7 p.m. on Friday, May 11. Tickets are $12 in advance, $15 at the door. Seats can be reserved by going to santalucia.sierraclub.org, clicking the "donate" button and selecting the desired number of tickets, or e-mailing sierraclub2@gmail.com; or calling 543-8717.

June 5 is Election Day

The Sierra Club is pleased to endorse:

U.S. Congress, 24th District:
Lois Capps
The Central Coast needs to retain its tireless coastal champion in D.C. She is responsible for land protection initiatives at Morro Bay Dunes and Piedras Blancas, and we need her voice of reason in this wild and woolly Congress, reminding all that we can't drill our way out of shrinking oil reserves, and that National Marine Sanctuaries and sustainable fishing practices are good things. Go to loiscappsforcongress.com/.

State Senate, 17th District:
Bill Monning
If his stint with the state Coastal Conservancy and four years as Executive Director of the Nobel Peace Prize winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War don't tell you enough, Assemblymember Monning authored legislation for sustainable seafood and spearheaded the strategy for development of the Coastal Trail in Big Sur while he was representing the people of Monterey, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara. We need the kind of thing he's been doing up there down here. Go to billmonning.org/.

State Assembly, 35th District
Gerald Manata
Here's your chance to send a genuine citizen politician to the statehouse. Paso Robles resident Gerry Manata looked around, saw "what a mess this state is in," and made his case to Democrats that "we should run somebody this year." He soon found himself in the role of the somebody. As the candidate tells it: "The Republican leadership has become blatant about its party being about money and power and concentrating in it as few hands as possible (the 1%). Mr. Achadjian's voting record on the environment, consumers' rights and labor — like that of his comrades in Congress — is atrocious. He also has signed the Grover Norquist no-tax pledge, a fiscal solution that can only benefit the rich." Manata put his degree in Political Science to good use staffing Tom Hayden's state senate and congressional campaigns in the 70s. He is now semi-retired. Let's un-retire him. Go to manataforassembly.org/.

You Did It!

The initiative to label genetically engineered food will be on the state ballot in November. A small army of SLO County volunteers were an integral part of the push to gather more that 800,000 signatures statewide, ensuring ballot qualification. The Santa Lucia Chapter was pleased to coordinate distribution and submission of petitions in the county. Now let's get this passed and let Monsanto know we are not guinea pigs for their science experiment. Go to labelgmos.org/.
Peter Douglas 1942-2012

Peter Douglas, long-time Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission, passed away on April 1, at his sister’s home in La Quinta. He was surrounded by his family and friends and at peace after a seven-year battle with cancer. Peter’s name will forever be synonymous with coastal protection in California. The arc of his commitment is long and like no other. Although he could be a master of principled compromise when necessary, for more than forty years, he was Tolkien’s Gandalf to the Balrog of rapacious developers, standing resolute on tenuous footing while declaring You shall not pass! (Peter dearly loved Lord of the Rings and made it a point to watch all the movies once a year.)

Peter dedicated his life to coastal protection through activism, education, litigation, political advocacy and public service. He advanced the idea of a citizen initiative to create a coastal protection law after several unsuccessful attempts to pass a bill through the Legislature in the early 1970s. He co-wrote the Coastal Initiative (Prop. 20) that created the Coastal Commission in 1972, helped organize the winning campaign for its overwhelming passage, then wrote and staffed the Coastal Act which Governor Brown signed into law in 1976. He was the Commission’s Executive Director for 26 years. The Coastal Commission’s accomplishments under Peter’s leadership are too numerous to count. They range from high-profile battles, like the epic struggles to save the Hearst Trestles Beach, to obscure legal victories over Coastal Act policies that have saved countless thousands of acres. He advanced the cause of public access by taking on the likes of Southern Pacific Railroad and the Disney Company, and fought to end private beach clubs’ racial and gender discrimination policies all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2003, the Santa Lucia Chapter nominated Peter for the Sierra Club’s Distinguished Service Award, which he received at the Sierra Club’s EcoSummit, saying “There is no apologetic excuse not to. Activism is simply what needed to be done to save it; and he not only understood it, he fought for it. Every citizen of California should be grateful for that love, that knowledge, and that passion for the fight, with each of those qualities always at flood tide, all existing in the same person.”

The next time you drive up highway 1 or pull off at a scenic overlook to get a better look at the things that take your breath away, lighten your spirit and make you happy to be alive, you should give a thought to the fact that what you are seeing is there, to a large and literal degree, due to the efforts of Peter Douglas. He made sure that it would still be there for you to see.

In keeping with his wishes, a fellowship fund to help train the next generation of coastal defenders has been established in Peter’s honor. Contributions to the Peter Douglas Coastal Intern Fellowship can be made to: Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation 299 Foam Street, Suite D Monterey, CA 93940-1499 Online at: www.mbsonf.org or call: 831-647-4299.

The Wildlands Conservancy has created the Peter Douglas Coastal Project Fund, to honor Peter’s commitment to protecting coastal landscapes and enhancing public access. These funds will be used toward the purchase of a critical coastal property and/or a public access improvement that will be dedicated in his memory and open to all. Contributions to the Wildlands Coastal Project can be sent to: The Wildlands Conservancy Coastal Project Fund 39611 Oak Glen Rd. #12 Oak Glen, CA 92399 or call: 909-797-8507.

I will soon once again be at one with green growing things, with coyote, raven, snake, spider, ocean, stream, mountain, desert, rock, clouds, stars in the night sky. Look for me there. I will be gone but not gone, as is the way of the Wheel. One thing for sure, when I return to sing on moonlit nights as coyote, I will never know it. I am comforted knowing I lived a purposeful, meaningful, empathic life with compassion, kindness and love in my heart. I lived my bliss realizing many dreams, guided by a moral/ethical compass I tried always to keep well calibrated. I have been a resolute, even orrery survivor and Earth warrior. In recognition of gifts given, I happily dedicated my life to public service. I labored in love to make a difference and am humbled knowing I did some good for Mother Earth and the life she supports.

- Peter Douglas
August 2011
After more than three decades of engagement in environmental activism and advocacy, I have discovered a priceless treasure: perspective—a perspective tempered by the experience of hearing and giving voice to the diverse voices in the silence of the land and the cry of life everywhere; a perspective inspired by the drawings of life and enduring sense of optimism and hope, and the conviction that each of us can make a difference.

Looking at the dynamics of environmental politics today, the forces shaping the landscape have evolved dramatically since 1971 and not, unfortunately, for the better. On the contrary.

Some realities that have not changed in California, and elsewhere in the country I suspect, include the following:

- Species, habitat and natural landscapes are still being lost at an appalling rate;
- Pollution of water, land and air continues to attack life around the globe;
- Population growth and economic development pressures continue to escalate inexorably;
- Developers and other anti-regulation forces; and developers and other anti-regulation forces;
- The absence of meaningful campaign finance controls;
- The absence of vision in the public policy and governance arena;
- The dearth of progressive, inspira-tional leadership; and
- Governance by reaction to crises.

Of particular interest and concern to me are the changes I have seen affect the practice of politics by non-governmental environmental organizations. These include:

- The graying of the movement;
- The cost and source of funding needed to sustain environmental organizations;
- The corporate and business character of many mainstream environmental NGOs;
- Preoccupation with deal-making and “the deal” (some see this as the institutionalization of compromise—see Mark Dowie, Losing Ground);
- The fear of losing, of being left out or of being “marginalized.”

Unholy alliances with national antagonists;
- Conflict of issues and positions taken by mainstream NGOs and newer, lean and hungry activist groups;
- The gap between mainstream and community based groups;
- The role of land trusts in regulatory policy-making; and
- The damping of passion and idealism.

Before I focus on environmental advocacy in Sacramento, I want to offer a context for my observations. The meaning of life to me is quite simple; I don’t ask what life brings to me, but what I bring to life. Meaning is found in how we as individuals treat each other and the Earth. It is derived from our love for family and friends, our reverence for all life, our life’s work, and our understanding and appreciation of joy, suffering and sorrow. It resides in the good will and passion we carry into the sunlight every day.

The meaning of life, in my mind, is inextricably linked to good works in defense of Gaia and the life she supports. In our work of environmental stewardship, it is vital every now and again to step back and take stock of our roots, where we stand today and where we are going—to remind ourselves why and how we do what we do. To make sure our moral and ethical compass is intact and in good working order. We do the work we do not because it is a source of livelihood but because we believe in it. We are not hired guns ready to sell out to the highest bidder. We do not serve our mission well by buying into the cult of making-nice or being seduced by “feel-good” politics.

Achievement of our vision requires a clear, strong and abiding sense of mission and purpose joined with an unsinkable resolve to maintain the course. And we should remember to respect the environmental vision of others though different from our own.

I have the distinct impression that environmental advocacy in Sacramento is losing ground, individual and collective fire-in-the-belly, and important perspective. Indeed, I see this advocacy as often not even an observer of a continuing trend I strongly believe must be reversed. I see an increasing guilt in terms of perspective and resolve between capital advocates representing mainstream NGOs and grassroots activists embattled on the ground in local communities. I see an increasing propensity to compromise by organizations that have forfeited private sector alliances so that depend on funding from business and large donors. It is a

For Peter: A bouquet and a bumper sticker from the 1972 ballot proposition Peter Douglas wrote that created the California Coastal Commission appeared in the Santa Cruz offices of the Coastal Commission on April 2, 2012.
Calle Joaquin Agricultural Reserve

by Elizabeth Johnson

“This approximately 180-acre area of prime farmland bounded by Madonna Road, Highway 101, Central Coast Plaza, and Prefumo Creek is in three ownerships. The City intends to preserve at least one-half of this signature working agricultural landscape at the southern gateway to San Luis Obispo as it existed in 1994.

City of San Luis Obispo General Plan, Land Use Element, Policy 8.8

The Calle Joaquin Agricultural Reserve, nestled in the southwest corner of the City of San Luis Obispo, continues to move forward as a city-owned organic farm. This is an appropriate moment to pause and revisit how it came to be while all the parties involved finalize details prior to signing on some-time in this budget cycle.

Creating public policy is usually a long process involving many people. When visionary policy succeeds, it is due to a partnership between all stakeholders – public citizens, politicians, and planning staff – who build a structure into the General Plan that allows for an idea like a City Farm to form and materialize.

Vision is usually the first player at the political table to be ejected from the game, but vision showed up during discussions in the early 1990s and focused on preservation of prime farmland and open space. Economic and environmental task forces both contributed to the resulting Land Use Element report. The City Council passed the 1994 General Plan that mentioned the southern gateway to San Luis Obispo, visible from Highway 101, as an ideal site for something uniquely local. Slightly further off 101 and still visible from the highway, we now have a string of car lots, salesrooms and big box stores, all of which typically dominate every urban landscape in America and beyond.

Most of the potential open space at the edge of the city had already been developed by 1994, so the city was looking at the last three agricultural parcels totaling about 180 acres. Instead of continuing to pave over our treasure of prime agricultural land, the city chose to preserve about 90 acres of prime ag land with a riparian corridor as a symbol of its identity.

In 2006, San Luis Obispo annexed the 26-acre McBride property. In accordance with the General Plan, 13 of those acres (50%) were designated for agriculture and the Calle Joaquin Agricultural Reserve was born.

In 2008, with organic certification in sight, the city began crop rotations to bring the soil quality up to the organic standard, a level it reached this year for an organic farm on this site has been strong the city began crop rotations to bring the soil quality up to the organic standard, a level it reached this year for an organic farm on this site has been strong throughout the planning process. In 2009, once again the City Council called together a group that included citizens to develop an Agricultural Master Plan consistent with the city’s General Plan policy. Specific plans for the agricultural reserve were listed and concept designs were drawn to include possible buildings intended for light foot processing, public education and parking.

The Agricultural Master Plan for the city stipulates that the agricultural areas of the Reserve shall be managed by a “qualified non-profit entity contracted by the city.” Negotiations with possible managers are underway.

The city farm is in line with a May 2011 survey analysis by Karen Kronsby of the UC Davis Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, clearly showing that California leads all other states in several categories of organic farming with 19% of farms and 36% of the sales. The same survey revealed that California produces more than 90% of all U.S. organic sales for 14 different commodities, including 99% of the organic walnuts, lemons, figs, and avocados, and 100% of organic almonds and dates. California is also the top producer of organic livestock and products, with broiler chickens and milk from cows the most important livestock commodities. All this revenue is being rehoused in many locations beyond the confines of Atascadero City Hall and SLO County Government Center. We can hope that it is everywhere met with the mockery it merits, which brings the cold air of reality into the hot house and keeps what’s growing there from putting down deeper roots and spreading.

Otherwise, the fringe will succeed in gradually infiltrating mainstream public discourse in ways both blatant and subtle. One recent likely example: a confused Tribune editorial (see “Taking Issue,” page 19) on a new greenhouse gas emissions rule. The editorial appeared three days after a sky-is-falling COLAB rant on the same subject appeared in The Tribune.

An organic City Farm like the Calle Joaquin Agricultural Reserve addresses the age-old friction between urban and rural interests. It will literally — bring everyone to the table. Accessible to the public, it will show how farms run without chemical pesticides. It will show residents and visitors the pride that San Luis Obispo takes in its agricultural past, present, and future.

In the words of former SLO Ag Commissioner Richard Greek:

“A productive discussion about land use issues between the urban and farming community cannot even begin to take place until we can see the need to look beyond our differences and acknowledge that we do have many shared values — values that will ultimately bring us together to develop workable solutions to land use challenges facing both the farming and urban communities.”

SLO Department of Agriculture 1997 Report

Godzilla

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Assuming readers that Armageddon is actually there will be none to speak of.

It is a search for a muddled middle, while COLAB extremists pulled on the far end like Silly Putty. It’s not hard to foresee the outcome of that process, repeated ad infinitum.

So give thanks for those smiling, hip kids in D.C. sporting their “I Love Heart Famine” and “Systenits R Dum” signs and sending thank-you cards to corporate polluters (“Your commitment to profits and political power over our future warms our hearts”), but also take note of the hot-eyed, unsnfitting twenty-something skinhead stalking Rancho El Chorro on Earth Day – an Andrew Breitbart wannabe, reporting on California Conservation Corps members as “brownshirts” engaged in “environmental spying,” seeking validation for his ideology, and signing on to the effort to save corporations from people who know man-made climate change is real.

Twenty years from now, all those kids will be CEOs, middle managers, editors, reporters, movement leaders, elected officials, precinct captains, etc. How many would you like to see from each of these two contingents? That’s why, when the public discourse is poisoned, the antidote is 2 parts reality and 1 part mockery. If we don’t keep the roots trimmed back in that hot-house version, we can expect to see increasingly befuddled editorials in The Tribune as the “moderate” center stretches ever rightward, and, twenty years hence, a Congress that will make the current crop of big- nighted Tea Partiers look like the offspring of Oliver Wendell Holmes and Rachel Carson.

It is important to know that Agenda 21 really is, and what ICLEI really does, and part of the reason why it’s important is the stark contrast between the simple reality and the baroque, levered conspiracy that the facts don’t support. When that cold front meets that hot air, let the mocking and ridicule rain down, with thunder and lightning and scorching irony.
Kids v. Global Warming

Corporate lobbyists fighting for more profit intervene against teens fighting for a livable planet for their generation

By Victoria, Alec, Valerie, Lucy, Russell, Akilah and the iMatter team
http://imatter-movement.org

Last May, iMatter youth filed lawsuits against the U.S. government to compel them to protect the atmosphere for future generations. The Federal case hearing is coming up soon. But first! On April 4, the National Association of Manufacturers, a true Climate Changer Champion, intervened in the case to fight for their right to pollute.

Hmm. Let’s see… The most powerful lobbying group in the country, with a board filled with heavy hitter corporations like Exxon and Koch Brothers, joining up with the U.S. Government against a few teenagers fighting for their generation’s future. We’re either going to be obliterated in seconds…or we rally together to be so loud we will be impossible to ignore.

"Industry has a legally protected cognizable interest to freely emit CO2."

- Fossil Fuel Industry Intervenors in the Kids vs Global Warming lawsuit against the U.S. Government to protect the atmosphere as a public trust
April 2, 2012

This is what one of the attorneys for the National Association for Manufacturer- ers said when they were allowed to join the U.S. Government in District Court in Washington, D.C., to defend their so-called right to continue emitting as much CO2 as they please. Based on that “right,” they have filed a motion to dismiss the suit. The motion will be heard on May 11. Alec Loorz and the other youth plaintiffs (http://www.imattermarch.org/#lawsuit), are challenging that right with their own right, one they share with their entire generation, to survive on this planet.

The judge and all attorneys agree on one thing: this is a case of national significance. We are facing a historic moment. This lawsuit is a critical and unprecedented opportunity to break the impasse in Congress and force federal emission reduction plans.

A courageous and just decision to stand with the youth plaintiffs would mean that the EPA must create a comprehensive climate recovery plan reducing carbon emissions by 6% per year. This would begin the transition to a sustainable economy that climate activists and climate conscious representatives have been trying valiantly to change for decades. It would also mean the end of the corporate fossil fuel industry dictating our future.

Together we could help to create the Future We Want.

What future do you choose?

This is more than a David vs. Goliath moment. This is an opportunity for us to unite around the single most important decision of our time.

The youngest generation holds the moral authority on the climate crisis issue. Their lives are at stake. But we have the science and the law on our side as well. The public trust doctrine states that certain natural resources, like the atmosphere, must be preserved for reasonable use by all citizens. Even future citizens. When those uses collide—one for profit and one for sustainable life—it is up to a judge to decide which “interest” is allowable under the public trust.

Your voice, your support, your investment is urgently needed.

TAKIE ACTION

MAY 11: FLOOD THE COURTROOM.
(http://www.imattermarch.org/#lawsuit) The Motion to Dismiss will be heard and we need to fill the courtroom with support from all generations. Judges make decisions based on the law. But the support we offer will demonstrate that this is not simply an inconsequential case brought by a few teenagers… it is, rather, a case of national significance that has mass support.

CONTRIBUTE RESOURCES.
(http://kids-vs-global-warming.com/donate.html) We need to mobilize a thousand people in DC and connect with other organizations and media. Can you please help us raise $10,000 over the next couple days to help us battle for our future.

Help us awaken our nation to the reality that Our Future Matters…more than their profits.

Thank you for standing with us!
P.S. Learn more from two of the youth plaintiffs, Garrett and Grant Serrels, who were in the courtroom to represent not just Kids vs Global Warming, but every member of our generation. Watch this six minutes of inspiration: Here is a rough video of a short speech (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PffK5m5K&feature=related) they gave at an OccupyEPA event in DC.

Here is a great seven-minute video from a Navajo youth and more info about the lawsuit: http://ourchildrenstrust.org/
P.S.S. Check out Ben Jervey's April 4 article about the lawsuit on desmogblog: http://www.desmogblog.com/
as though a corporate mentality has taken over and ground down the idealistic edge in my positions taken by mainstream organizations that have forgotten their roots.

I am not suggesting any NGO has sold out. I think it is a matter of a subtle shift in perspective relating to perceptions of success for the organization. This is what I mean by the graying of the environmental movement. Success today seems to be measured more by status and credibility with power brokers, being invited to the table or on the inside, being drivers of the deal and fundraising ability. Success appears no longer to be so much about having a clear, progressive environmental vision and sense of mission and purpose. It is less about staking out the high ethical ground on policy issues, drawing a clear line in the sand and standing firm. Caution and pragmatism appear to have displaced ideology and passion, to some extent in my view, principle.

I spent 32 years living and working inside Capitol Hall. I have seen the effects of insular thinking and narrowing perspective that comes with walling oneself off in the capitol. Much like the “beltway” mentality in Washington, there is a tendency to think of “reality” as exclusively what happens in the halls and chambers of the capitol. In fact, the real politics of our issues play out in both Sacramento and on the front lines of environmental defense and justice dynamics across local communities and neighborhoods across the land. Capitol hall advocates would be well served to remember that who and what is not there and find ways to reconnect with the missing grassroots activism and idealism.

Another recent dynamic of concern to me is the confusion of roles among environmental organizations in the business of buying, managing and restoring land and whose purpose is advocacy for strong regulation and enforcement to protect habitat and species. Land trust advocates have lost the confidence of landowners with whom they work on a cooperative basis. Regulatory advocacy groups push for controls over how land is used in opposition to developers, extractive industries, and private property rights and landowner groups. While both share general conservation goals and both want standing in the landowner community, the manner in which each seeks to achieve their respective goals differ markedly.

The long term land trusts is the funding derived from land purchase transactions and management agreements. The work of land trusts is commendable and has become increasingly important in environmental stewardship. However, their role is not and should be seen as being in the vanguard of environmental protection. That responsibility remains with NGOs advocating tougher habitat, species, air and water quality protections, stronger land use planning laws and controls, better enforcement of existing rules, and opposition to the weakening of laws currently on the books.

Land acquisition and regulation are both important for environmental protection. However, NGOs promoting one or the other agenda necessarily rely on different approaches, power brokers and the techniques to achieve their respective objectives. Conflicts occur when land trusts become involved in regulatory policy making in the Legislature and bring their particular influence, special interests and perspectives to the table and are assumed to speak for the enviros. They in fact cannot because the two groups often operate on different premises and mutually exclusive interests.

Land trusts should not, in my view, be involved in advocacy affecting regulatory policy-making in the guise of an environmental NGO. They are landowners, managers and developers of restoration projects. Certainly they can and should inform the process and be involved in issues affecting their stewardship of the land. But that is a fundamentally different role than that of enviros seeking tougher regulatory controls.

Finally on this point and relative to the land acquisition agenda, the fact is, there will never be enough money available to buy and manage all habitat and lands in a need protection.

More troubling, however, is the subtle and insidious message associated with the acquisition agenda that suggests environmental protection must be bought and paid for with public money. This is the mantra of the “wise use” movement and private property rights advocates. In their view, government action that results in diminution or value or restrictions on private property rights, including interests in the use of public lands, must be compensated. Strong government regulation, in perpetuity, is absolutely essential to safeguard quality of life on the planet. Pushing a public acquisition agenda at the expense of social, effective regulation does the environment, the public and future generations a disservice.

Environmental advocacy is tough duty. To do it well requires realism, passion, integrity, dedication, sacrifice, smarts and staying power. It requires a willingness to face conflict and to stand strong against forces of exploitation and greed. It means striving to ensure that environmental well-being is not sacrificed on the altar of expediency and pragmatism.

Effective environmental advocacy requires vision and a clear sense of purpose. It means listening to and staying in touch with frontline community activists. It requires earning and maintaining public support and respect. It means working more effectively with the media and forming strategic alliances with each other. And it requires resisting the siren's of power.

When seemingly irresistible and inexorable forces of environmental destruction push us to the edge of despair, we must think of the life that follows in our wake and reach for another measure of strength within us as we never gave up. Notwithstanding many defeats and few victories, in the end we will have prevailed because we tried.

Thank you for hearing me.

Controversy and conflict come with the territory. If we cannot embrace and engage them effectively in pursuit of our mission, it is time to get out and move on. We betray our trust if the avoidance of conflict, whether done consciously or not, becomes a goal in our work. Coniliation has value, but not if achieved at the expense of ethical and environmental integrity.
Can Morro Bay Get Out of the Way?

On April 19 in Salinas, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council voted to support the revival of the federal site evaluation list for marine sanctuaries.

We had written to the Sanctuary Advisory Council: “At every evaluation would involve public discussion and stakeholder input, this would be the process by which local stakeholders may air their concerns and ideas. For that reason, we would urge those who wish to make arguments against sanctuary evaluation or expansion to advocate for the initiation of this process, rather than attempting to shut down that discussion before it can begin.”

The week before, in anticipation of that vote — and seeking to shut down that discussion — the Morro Bay City Council took a trip down memory lane to shake the dust off a 2003 resolution opposing national marine sanctuary status for the Central Coast, either as an extension of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary or as a separate entity. The council voted and reaffirmed the old resolution so as to publicly re-state their opposition to sanctuary status for the waters of the Central Coast.

Specifically, in the mistaken belief that national marine sanctuaries regulate fishing, they rejected the conservation of biodiversity, integrity and cultural legacy, resource protection and research funding that national marine sanctuary status brings. Had they moseyed a little farther down memory lane, the council members might have stumbled across a 1990 city council resolution endorsing national marine sanctuary status for the Central Coast. That resolution was vastly superior in judgment and vision to the 2003 resolution, which, by contrast, is heavy on misstatements of fact. Thanks to councillor Noah Smukler, prior to the re-vote the council removed one of the clauses from the resolution that asserted with delusional confidence that opposition by the city, county and state would be sufficient to hold back any federal pressure for offshore oil exploration should Washington someday decree that our portion of the coast is to be sacrificed to Big Oil. That deletion was a quiet admission of reality: only national marine sanctuary status can permanently hold off the oil rigs. But that deletion left plenty of other things for the city council to get wrong.

The newly re-affirmed resolution demanded “local control,” the city council’s long-time mantra for sanctuary opposition. Every time they say it, they put Morro Bay in a position equivalent to a city deman-ding control over a national park. It makes the city look silly. So does double-talk regarding the regulation of fishing, when the resolution attempts to equate with any regulation regulating anything else, concluding that national sanctuaries therefore might regulate fishing (which we have mentioned? — they don’t!).

The resolution implied that the role of a local Sanctuary Advisory Council is essentially irrelevant, when, in fact, the Monterey Bay SAC is the means by which the sanctuary’s policies are set. On average, 90 percent of the Advisory Council’s recommendations are adopted as sanctuary management policy. We urge Morro Bay residents to visit the website of the MBNMS (montereybay.noaa.gov) and search the term “Socioeconomics Factsheet” so they can see just how much commercial and recreational fisheries (the local) suffering as a result of allegedly draconian marine sanctuary regulations. It’s an eye-opening look at what sanctuary status means. They have done for other communities, and what it could be doing for Morro Bay and for the central coast’s economy at this moment, but for the fearful, fact-free opposition by the City of Morro Bay, allegedly acting in the name of its citizens. (This is the same city council that famously cancelled “Sea Otter Awareness Week” last year.)

More information from the fact-based community can be viewed at www.santalucia.sierachub.org. Click on “SLO Coast National Marine Sanctuary panel. This will serve to counter the misstatements of fact contained in a nine-year-old resolution resurrected by a grievously misinformed city council at an election-year ploy. The residents of Morro Bay deserve the real picture of just what their representatives are determined to withhold from them, and from everyone else on the Central Coast.

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Taking Issue
problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media


**Summary:** Local regulatory agencies like the Air Pollution Control District are finding simple ways to implement California’s greenhouse gas emission reduction requirements that will affect only a handful of the largest projects, and maybe not even then...unless you’re the person who writes the headlines for The Tribune.

Neither of these statements is true, as the editorial goes on to illustrate in detail.

These two sentences constitute an argument and its opposite, cancelling each other out. If the regulations are superfluous and require standards that will be met regardless, via the requirements of the state code for energy efficiency – i.e. the emissions rule will have no effect — how can those regulations possibly “wind up dearly costing developers and builders,” who are going to be meeting the requirements anyway?

Greenhouse-gas rules put chokehold on building – State’s anti-pollution mandate has agencies in a painful bind

They’ve also noted that the state requirements are superfluous, given that local cities are in the process of developing state-mandated climate action plans that will set policies for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. (San Luis Obispo County already has completed its plan.)

If agencies want to get serious about reducing greenhouse gases, they should do more to promote retrofits of older homes.

And how about encouraging more residential units in existing downtowns, so that more people can walk to shops or to work? That’s far more likely to reduce car trips than adding one or two more bike lanes in suburban subdivisions, in the hope that it might lure residents into leaving their cars at home.

The state is requiring that the environmental review for all proposed developments — no matter how small — include an analysis of greenhouse-gas emissions and, if necessary, measures to reduce them. At its most extreme, that means a simple addition to a single-family home could necessitate a complicated review. That’s ridiculous.

So agencies are in a “painful bind... with an alternative? And the painful bind would be where, exactly?

Opponents...say this is another unnecessary regulation that will wind of dearly costing developers and builders who already are struggling in the down economy. And, they point out that new construction is already following stringent state code for energy efficiency – and that code is going to get even stricter in the near future.

Does it need to be said? More downtown mixed use development and more bike lanes in existing suburban subdivisions are both good and useful things, and both should be and are being encouraged in planning at the state and local level, and are not competing with each other in an either/or scenario.

The Tribune’s editorial board see the headlines that get placed over their editorials before they go to press?

May 12 is National Train Day
Head down to the Amtrak station in San Luis Obispo (Santa Rosa and Railroad Avenue) on Saturday, May 12, for National Train Day. The event is from 1-4 PM; admission is free and so is the parking.
With gas prices on the rise and the summer travel season ahead, now is a great time to find out about rail travel in California and across the country. Lighten your carbon footprint with “greener” travel and climb aboard a modern train (wi-fi!) for a pleasant journey.

At National Train Day there will be model railroad displays for kids of all ages, a photo exhibit and light refreshments. Souvenirs and travel information for all! REAL trains will be in the station from 1:30-2 pm, and again from about 3:30 that afternoon. All aboard!!

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“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.

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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. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within the State of California.

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, 772-1857. For information on the specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.

Guided City Walks: San Luis Obispo

Each walk lasts about 90 minutes; is easy-paced, and free to the public. Families welcome. No reservations. Check the space or our website for information about future scheduled city walks.

Walk I: Mission-Era San Luis Obispo. See the home of the city’s first doctor, the location of the “hanging tree,” where the stagecoach stopped, and other sights on a stroll past the Mission, adobes, and old Chinatown. Meet at NE corner of Monterey and Higuera St. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-1701 or msims@slonet.org

Walk II: Victorian-Age San Luis Obispo. Easy stroll past 18 lovely century-old homes and churches in the Old Town Historic District. See the homes of majoro, the newspaper editor, and Cal Poly’s founder. Meet in front of Jack House, 536 Marsh St. Info.: Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information, 626-443-0706; dpj1942@earthlink.net

Walk III: Mill Street Historic District. A walk through a neighborhood of splendid century-old homes to discover the era of Hearst, coming of the railroad, WW I, and the twenties. Learn the stories of the rich or not-so-famous who shaped the city of today. Meet at corner of Monterey and Johnson Streets. Info.: Bill Waycott, 459-7202 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Walk IV: Jazz-Age to Fifties SLO. See the downtown hotel where Hearst entertained guests, former location of speakeasies, the original French hospital, and more. Learn of city life in the years of the Model T to Prohibition and WW II. Meet at building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. NE corner of Santa Rosa and Pacific Streets. Info.: Mike Sappingfield.

Walk V: Musical Walk: Historic San Luis Obispo. A guided, tuneful stroll past ten historic landmarks in downtown San Luis Obispo. Info.: Graham Graham, 775-686-8478, graham@grahamstafford.com or Pat Bruce, 775-815-5596

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

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 sea and land birds. Hike trails bordered by blankets of wildflowers and plants found in no other place on earth. Kayakers can snorek the pristine waters—or just relax at sea. All tours depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ twin diesel Truth. $599 fee includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, and the services of a ranger/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, 626-443-6706; jholtbhz@jul.com.