We Need You Now

Sierra Club must scale back in SLO County this year if we don’t get support from all our members

Don’t Miss
Bioneers
October 19-21

Save the Date: Saturday, October 13

The Santa Lucia Chapter is at a crossroads. The state of the economy and the condition of our finances mean that we must make major decisions and major changes soon. We need the input of our members. Come help us plan the future of the chapter.

If you can attend a meeting in Edna Valley on October 13, please let us know at sierraclubli@gmail.com, or call 805-238-4820.

We urged the Morro Bay City Council not to approve an environmentally deficient plan for a waste water treatment plant and try to slip it past the California Coastal Commission, a mistake that has cost — so far — hundreds of thousands of dollars to try to fix. (The council members who didn’t listen have been resoundingly voted out of office.)

When two solar power companies were seeking permits to build huge solar plants on endangered species habitat in the Carrizo Plain, we took our parent organization to task over the decision not to press harder for more protections for those endangered species and their habitat. The candid internal discussion that resulted helped national HQ. to see the need for a greater emphasis on “rooftop solar,” which the Sierra Club is now promoting in a big way.

We refused to endorse two “moderate” candidates in the June election for the County Board of Supervisors – candidates who had become so moderate and malleable over the last four years, they racked up voting records that no longer met the criteria for a Sierra Club endorsement.

Some of our members choose to make an automatic contribution to the chapter of anywhere from $20 to $500 per month. Many more need to select that option, toward the higher end, if the Santa Lucia Chapter as we know it is to continue beyond 2012. We know you care. That’s why you’re a Sierra Club member. Please consider a monthly contribution of the most you can afford. Visit our website at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org and click the “donate” button, then “monthly contribution,” using Paypal.

Election 2012

Sierra Club endorsements for November 6

For President: Barack Obama

Environmentally speaking, Obama’s first term has had a distinctly “hand-that-giveth-taketh-away” feeling. In January, he rightly refused to approve the Keystone Pipeline that would have paved a transnational highway for the environmental disaster that is Canadian tar sands oil. Then he approved the Oklahoma-Texas leg of the pipeline. Last September, he bowed to corporate polluters and their political apologists when he agreed to delay by two years the implementation of an EPA rule that would have reduced smog-causing ozone emissions and protected public health. But three months later he ended twenty years of deadly delays and enacted

ENDORSEMENTS continued on page 3
**Diablo’s Ground Truth**

**Making stuff up about the Diablo Canyon seismic survey project is not helpful**

PG&E’s proposed 3D seismic survey around the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant would deploy airguns in coastal waters that emit loud sound pulses in an effort to side a detailed map of earthquake faults. The survey is likely to cause serious problems for marine wildlife. After extensive consultation and study, the major environmental groups tracking this issue have come to the conclusion that the information the proposed tests is likely to produce will not be sufficient to provide a full assessment of the seismic hazard, and therefore cannot justify the environmental impacts of the tests.

No one can really say how serious those impacts would be within a known range of probability. And that’s why another problem is the egerness with which some folks hereabouts have been painting a doomsday scenario; one in which those potential problems have been inflated orders of magnitude beyond the harms the test possibly could inflict within the realm of physical reality, and further asserting that there is no need to study the faults around Diablo Canyon. This has required a lot of misstating the seismic realities of Diablo Canyon and PG&E’s conduct of seismic tests, Diablo Canyon should “just be shut down.”

The only answers that should be necessary for this standard-issue internet rumor-mongering are “no,” or “wrong,” or “you are making an assertion not based on evidence.” But some elaboration is in order.

The widely expressed fear that the survey will wipe out all sea life off the coast appears to spring from unfamiliarity with the nature of a permit to “take” wildlife as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act, resulting in a fundamental misreading of the Environmental Impact Report prepared by the State Lands Commission and the EIR’s conclusion that the survey would result in “significant and unavoidable” impacts on marine mammals. The EIR goes on to note that this “does not imply that mass mortality or severe injury of marine mammals would result from the Project, but only that the impact would exceed the EIR’s identified significance threshold for these resources.”

There is also much confusion around the airguns used in seismic surveys and military sonar. They are two different technologies. Navy sonar has been conclusively linked to strandings of whales and dolphins, with clear evidence of acoustic trauma; airguns have not.

We have multiple points of disagreement with the environmental review of this project by the National Science Foundation and the State Lands Commission, but here’s something the EIR got absolutely right:

"The value of an accurate seismic hazard estimate for the DCPP area is not dependent on whether DCP continues to operate, particularly because nuclear waste would remain on site even after decommissioning."

The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant cannot be wished away. It will not be closed down by dint of people voicing the opinion that putting a nuclear power plant in a seismically active zone was a bad idea. Essentially, the plant is considered to be safe; that is, it is operating within its “design basis,” its ability to withstand the largest earthquake that could be generated by known faults as understood by geologists at the time of last major study, which was conducted in 1988.

Key phrase: “known faults.” Today’s reality: there is an earthquake fault a few hundred yards away from the power plant that was not known to be there until 2008. There is another one directly under the plant that PG&E has studiously ignored for thirty years (see “Safety is Their Worst Priority,” June). No structure ever built can withstand an earthquake in which the ground splits directly beneath that structure.

Another fundamental misunderstanding: there are two errors contained in the notion that the tests are going to kill everything in the ocean just to secure the renewal of Diablo Canyon’s license. Yes, PG&E needs to submit updated seismic data as part of the relicensing process, but nowhere is it written that doing so would show the relicensing and continued operation are permissible. The outcome no one should want is PG&E submitting its application for funds to the Public Utilities Commission accompanied by outdated seismic data; the data on which rests the current official position that the utility may safely operate a nuclear power plant may safely operate a nuclear power plant that was not known to be there until 2008. There is another one directly under the plant that PG&E has studiously ignored for thirty years (see “Safety is Their Worst Priority,” June). No structure ever built can withstand an earthquake in which the ground splits directly beneath that structure.

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Endorsements continued from page 1

tough limits on emissions of mercury from power plants. He gave Shell Off the green light for deepwater oil-drilling in the Arctic, but he secured a landmark $4 mg fuel tax standard, doubling today’s standard for cars and light trucks within 12 years. That’s the biggest thing the government has ever done to cut oil consumption and carbon pollution – it will drive innovation, save 3 million barrels of oil per day and keep 570 million metric tons of greenhouse gases out of our atmosphere.

And this is the president that enacted the largest expansion of land and water conservation and protection in a generation, safeguarding millions of acres of new wilderness, protecting hundred of miles of coastline and keeping important habitat safe from oil and gas leasing.

And then there’s the matter of his opponent’s deep allegiance to fossil fuel interests (see chart at right), and his use of global warming as a joke at his nominating convention. And while Mitt Romney could not add an actual oil or coal industry executive to the Republican ticket, by picking Paul Ryan for his VP, he did the closest thing to it.

For Americans who want clean air and water for their children, an economy that creates new clean energy jobs, and a healthy planet, it’s clear that there is only one choice in this election, and it’s the guy who said: “My plan will continue to reduce the carbon pollution that is heating our planet, because climate change is not a hoax. More droughts and floods and wildfires are not a joke. They’re a threat to our children’s future. And in this election, you can do something about it.”

Much of the good Obama has done has been due to pressure by Sierra Club activists and our allies. Let’s keep him where he is and keep the pressure on. We’ve made too much progress over the last four years to give it all back to big polluters. Help out at www.barackobama.com.

For U.S. Representative, 24th District: Lois Capps

Here are a few bills Capps is currently sponsoring: The California Ocean and Coastal Protection Act would prohibit oil and gas preleasing, leasing, and related activities in areas of the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of California. The Organic Standards Protection Act would put more teeth and enforcement into the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. The Coastal Families Act directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish a coastal community climate planning and response program to provide assistance to coastal states in developing climate change adaptation plans that will prepare for and reduce the negative consequences of climate change in the coastal zone.

In defending such laws as the Clean Water Act and Coastal Zone Management Act, Capps notes “the majority party has been relentless with their attacks on these laws, as well as the areas those laws help to defend. The issues facing our oceans and coasts are more pressing than ever, that’s why we should be strengthening protections, not turning our backs on them.”

We need to return Capps to Congress so she can continue to champion California’s environment. And we need to work on getting her more help. Help out at www.cappsforcongress.com.

For State Senate, District 17: Bill Monning

For Mayor of San Luis Obispo: Jan Marx

A veteran of Tom Hayden’s ‘70s state senate and congressional campaigns, Manata has since championed progressive causes in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, and served on the executive committee of the Sierra Club’s Los Padres chapter in Santa Barbara County. He has conducted voter registration drives and lived in the Oak Creek Commons co-housing complex in Paso Robles since 2004 and served as the housing association’s board president for two years. He wants to establish a state oil extraction tax, ban plastic bags at checkout from all retail stores statewide, label products that contain genetically modified organisms, provide alternative energy for every state-owned building, convert state government car and small truck fleets to all-electric or hybrid vehicles, require that food sold in state-run cafeterias use as much local organic food as possible, and so on. In short: he’s the anti-Katcho – as far as you can get from the you-scratch-my-back political machine politician currently representing our fair county in the State Assembly. Works for us. Help out at Manataforassembly.org.
of the community garden on Brighton and will push for more community gardens to replant the loss.

Peterson pushed for green building measures on the planning commission, and on the council has been an advocate for rainwater catchment, conservation and solar power, as well as live-work units and compact development geared to accessible public transportation. Both are Sierra Club members. Help out at eholis.org and be a part of the movement.

For Grover Beach City Council: Karen Bright

Bright can take credit for the rescue of an oak tree on one of the oldest city parcels in Grover Beach near 80-year-old cypress in Rowena Park. Both slated for removal to make way for development. She initiated the ordinance to ban smoking in city parks. She was the only member of the council to advocate for the APCD’s Fugitive Dust Rule at Oceano Dunes. And two years ago, she forced the council to discuss the potential for Prop 16’s de facto effort to kill off competition from local clean energy programs. Gutsy.

For Cuesta College Board: David Baldwin, Barbara George

Attractive environmental credentials resulted in another dual endorsement. Baldwin is an advocate for LEED certification on all campus buildings. He wants to provide local and/or organic food sources for the campus via a review of current practices at other colleges who have adopted local foods programs. George wants to enhance the steelhead trout run in Pennington Creek. George wants lighting retrofits for efficiency and energy savings for interior spaces in the aging buildings on the SLO campus. Weeds, for outside lighting, improvements to eco-positive landscaping, recycling programs, and measures to reduce the energy consumption in new construction, renovation, job training and the curriculum.

A Handy Guide to Arguments Against Proposition 37

Clip & save!

On November 6, Californians will have the chance to vote on Proposition 37, an initiative that would require labeling of genetically engineered foods. You will likely see defenses of the alleged safety of genetically engineered foods, including all of Europe, Japan, Russia and China. People in 49 countries already have the right to know what’s in their food, specifically whether it has been genetically engineered.

Genetically engineered foods have had their DNA artificially altered by genes from other plants, animals, viruses or bacteria. The engineering of food to create genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is still a new technology, and it is being used to create new foods that consumers know nothing about.

The Food and Drug Administration does not require health and safety studies for genetically modified food. That laissez-faire policy should have been on everyone’s minds on September 19, when the results of the first long-term safety study ever conducted on genetically engineered foods were published in the peer-reviewed journal Food and Chemical Toxicology (and immediately attacked by the ag biotech industry). For two years, researchers fed rats Monsanto’s “Roundup Ready” corn. Massive tumors, kidney and liver damage and premature death resulted.

People should at least be able to decide whether they want to play guinea pig for the genetech industry. Scientists worldwide agree that by labeling genetically engineered food, we can help identify potential adverse health reactions.

You might wonder how opponents of this initiative can make an argument against informed choice — a fundamental right and the way the marketplace is supposed to work. You won’t have to wonder for long. By mid-August, the biotech industry, pesticide companies and Big Food had dedicated over $25 million to the effort to defeat Prop 37.

The opposition claims that a requirement to label genetically engineered food will mean a burdensome cost to producers and consumers, and invite a storm of lawsuits against companies by opportunistic lawyers.

But food labels already list calories, sodium, fat content and allergens. Companies will have 18 months to add a line to labels reading “partially produced with genetic engineering” or “may be partially produced with genetic engineering.” The law also prohibits labeling genetically engineered foods as “natural.” This will not raise the cost of your groceries. Per David Byrne, former European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, when Europe introduced GMO labeling in 1997, “it did not result in increased costs, despite the horrifying double-digit prediction of some interests.” Bag that scare tactic.

There are no incentives for lawyers to sue, as there is no reason to believe companies would decide to violate the labeling law or otherwise fail to comply. States have the right to require labeling. The Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act allows states to add language to labels so long as the feds don’t require language on the same subject. Alaska already has laws on the books requiring labeling for genetically engineered fish.

You will likely see defenses of the alleged safety of genetically engineered food from folks who make their living in that field, begging the question recently posed by Michele Simon at NationofChange.org as to why the industry “would object so strongly to labeling for something they claim is not harmful.”

The other thing opponents will never mention: companies like Coke, Pepsi, Nestle and Kellogg are already required to label genetically engineered food elsewhere. Labeling genetically engineered foods is standard procedure in most of the rest of the industrialized world, including all of Europe, Japan, Russia and China. People in 49 countries already have the right to know what they’re eating. We don’t.

In polls, more than 90 percent of Californians want genetically engineered foods labeled. Those opposed to letting you to know what you’re eating, who include all of Europe, Japan, Russia and China. People in 49 countries already have the right to know what they’re eating, who oppose labeling for something they claim is not harmful. We don’t.

Monsanto should not have to vociferously argue the safety of biotech food. Our interest is in ensuring that it is safe. This is not possible. Assuring its safety is the FDA’s job.”

“Ultimately, it is the food producer who is responsible for assuring safety.”


Thanks for clearing that up. Need anything more be said?
Sierra Club California on the Ballot Propositions

Vote NO on Proposition 31
Constitutional Amendment to allow local override of state laws.

Vote NO on Proposition 32
Prohibits political contributions by payroll deduction.

Vote YES on Proposition 37
Mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods.

Vote YES on Proposition 39
Tax treatment for multistate businesses. Provides clean energy and energy efficiency funding.

For more information, go to: http://sierrachcalifornia.org/cao-

elections

To GE or Not GE

By Jesse Arnold

The latest development from the genetic engineers is an apple, called the Arctic Apple, that doesn’t turn brown when sliced or bruised. The U.S. Apple Association says a genetically engineered apple could undermine the apple’s image as a healthy, natural food and does not support the Arctic Apple. The association, however, is not opposed to genetic engineering in general.

The Arctic Apple’s non-browning trait is purely cosmetic. The apple doesn’t have increased nutritional value, nor will it “feed the world.” So it does not rate as a major breakthrough for ag biotech.

In another recent development, the Seminis Seed Company has announced a new broccoli called Beneforte broccoli. This new broccoli was developed with traditional plant breeding methods, but is patented. Beneforte broccoli is claimed to be higher in antioxidants than regular broccoli.

When you consider that regular broccoli is already high in anti-oxidants, the idea that we need more is open to question.

Local, organically grown broccoli would be my preference. If the Beneforte broccoli is grown with chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides, I would not be interested, no matter how high the antioxidant level might be.

The Seminis Seed Company is owned by Monsanto Corporation, the leading developer of genetically engineered crops. So with Monsanto’s use its biotech capability to produce Beneforte broccoli?

There are several possible reasons, and all three could be true:

1. It is easier to develop a broccoli with more antioxidants using traditional plant breeding than by genetic engineering.
2. It is cheaper to develop a high antioxidant broccoli with traditional plant breeding than with genetic engineering.
3. The biotech industry has consistently opposed labeling of its genetically engineered crops based on the claim that its genetically engineered crops are “substantially equivalent” to the regular varieties. If they use genetic engineering to develop a broccoli that is higher in antioxidants, it would be difficult to claim that it is “substantially equivalent” to regular broccoli. It wouldn’t make sense to develop a nutritionally improved broccoli unless it would be labeled and advertised as such.

Monsanto knows that if it labels a crop as genetically engineered there won’t be consumer backlash.

In the 17 years that genetically engineered crops have been produced commercially, there has not yet been a problem created by the ag biotech industry that has been higher in any nutrient. And for the reasons cited above, there probably won’t be any in the future.

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Two Clean Energy Bills Killed
By Jim Metropolus, Senior Advocate, Sierra Club California

Powerful utility and business interests made a late-session, end-of-August press and killed two bills that would have increased Californians’ access to clean, renewable energy.

The bills, AB 1990 by Assemblymember Paul Fong and SB 843 by Senator Lois Wolk, were strongly supported by Sierra Club California. Both would have brought California utilities closer to meet Governor Brown’s goal of producing 12,000 megawatts of local clean energy by 2020, while creating jobs and energy cost savings.

Discouraged but not defeated, supporters have vowed to push for the environmentally positive programs covered by the bills in the next session. Sierra Club California will work on resurrecting both ideas with the authors and supporters.

AB 1990, the “Solar for All” legislation, would have required electric utilities such as San Diego Gas & Electric, Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison to buy renewable energy from clean energy projects, such as solar rooftop installations built in low-income urban and rural communities. These disadvantaged communities have been the most vulnerable to the pollution from energy generated from dirty fossil fuels, yet are not yet seeing the full benefits of transitioning to a clean energy economy. If it passed, this bill would have been a first step towards addressing the lack of geographic diversity in solar distribution by establishing a 190-megawatt cash back or “Feed in Tariff” program for disadvantaged communities in California.

The bill would have addressed a tiny portion of the thousands of megawatts of clean energy that utilities must purchase by 2020 to meet the state’s Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) law. Despite that, California’s three investor-owned utilities —PG&E, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas & Electric— opposed AB 1990. The utilities claimed that they had already signed enough clean energy contracts to meet the RPS goal of 33% renewable energy by 2020, and that it would be more expensive to site small clean energy projects in low-income communities. AB 1990 failed on the Senate Floor, gathering only 14 votes. It needed 21 votes to pass.

SB 843, the “Community Solar” bill, would have created a new 2,000-megawatt program allowing the customers of the three investor-owned utilities to voluntarily buy up to 100% renewable energy from an off-site renewable energy system. The utilities would have been required to give customers a credit on their bill for every kilowatt purchased. While rooftop solar is a strong and growing business in California, this program would have helped households that can’t participate in current renewable energy programs because (1) they are renters and don’t own their roofs, (2) they are unable to finance the cost of installing a solar system, or (3) their roof is too small or does not receive enough sunlight. It would also have helped most businesses because they rent or lease their facilities and do not own their own roofs. Many local governments, schools, colleges, and the U.S. Department of Defense had planned to take advantage of this program by purchasing energy generated from wind, solar, and geothermal through off-site facilities and supported SB 843. Even one utility, San Diego Gas & Electric, supported the bill.

However, PG&E and Southern California Edison opposed SB 843. They claimed that by allowing customers in the proposed program to reduce or zero out their electricity bills while not reducing the costs of the utility’s network maintenance proportionally, non-participating customers would be burdened with more costs. However, the SB 843 program would have extended access to renewable energy to a wider variety of energy users, providing cost-saving benefits to all energy customers, whether participating in the program or not.

Senator Wolk lamented the utilities’ successful efforts to kill the bill. “Unfortunately, the coalition of support behind this measure was simply no match for the high-paid lobbyists and the campaign contributions of these monopoly corporations,” she said.

Pine Needle Basketry Workshop at the SLO Botanical Garden
On Saturday, October 20 from 9:30-2:30, join artist Elizabeth Bear at the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden as she guides budding basket weavers through the art of pine needle basket weaving. Attendees will be lead through the process of creating beautiful, functional and sustainable pieces of artwork at this interactive workshop. Each piece is as unique as the person who creates it, and they make wonderful gifts. If your inner artist is calling, this is the perfect time to answer! Just bring sharp scissors, imagination and a bagged lunch, as Ms. Bear provides all materials and her helpful insight. Each participant will make their own basket and start a second basket to work on at home. Workshop also includes a lecture on sustainable harvesting and tree kindness.

Ms. Bear has been teaching pine needle basket weaving since 1997 in New Mexico and California. Her artwork was on display at the 8th Annual Art Eco show at the Botanical Garden.

Workshop cost is $95 for Garden members and $120 for non-members. Limited class size. To register call 805.541.1400x304, or visit slobg.org.

Affordable, Easy Solar Power for Santa Lucia Chapter Supporters

As efforts to fight climate change accelerate; the Sierra Club is helping members and supporters drop dirty fuels. Our Solar Homes program is aimed at catalyzing widespread deployment of clean energy.

Through an innovative partnership with Sungevity, a leading national solar service provider, the Club is able to offer its members and supporters an affordable way to get solar on their rooftops.

And for every home in the county that goes solar through this program in October, Sungevity will give $1,000 to the homeowner, and $1,000 to the chapter to fund our work to protect the environment.

Previously, in order to get solar panels on your home you would have to conduct extensive research, hunt for rebates, obtain a permit, and be prepared to fork over $20,000.

Residential solar companies like Sungevity are now offering a “solar service” for people who don’t want to pay the up-front costs to put panels on their roofs. Sungevity will install the panels for no up-front cost and handle all maintenance and service. The homeowner pays for clean energy with a small monthly bill, which may be less than the household’s current energy bill.

“In order to end our dependence on dirty energy, we need as many Americans as possible to switch to clean energy like rooftop solar,” said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune. “This is a high priority for the Sierra Club. We are urging all of our members and supporters in California to work with Sungevity to find out if solar is right for them. Every home that goes solar gets us one step closer to our goal of a clean energy economy.”

The average Sungevity customer saves 15% on their electricity costs by 2020. The average Sungevity customer pays the up-front costs to put panels on their roof, but receives a small monthly bill, which may be 15% less than the household’s current energy bill.

Sungevity will give you a good idea about how much solar might save you. Give them a call, answer a few questions of the expert, and get a free solar quote. Sungevity will contact you to discuss whether solar is right for you. In five minutes, they can give you a good idea about how much solar might save you.

**GET A FREE SOLAR EVALUATION WITH SIERRA CLUB**

**TAKE ACTION**

Visit sierraclub.org/solarhomes for a free solar quote. Sungevity will contact you to discuss whether solar is right for you. In five minutes, they can give you a good idea about how much solar might save you.
The State Has No Plan for the Carrizo Reserve
Fish & Game still trying to pretend commercial cattle grazing = conservation

The Carrizo Ecological reserve is 30,000 acres of sensitive habitat between the Carrizo Plain National Monument and Los Padres National Forest – a vital link for the region’s diverse and threatened wildlife. In 2009, extensive damage was done to the Reserve due to overgrazing and trespass by cattle under a grazing permit issued by the California Department of Fish and Game (see “Reserve or Feed Lot?” Nov. 2009). We brought this to the attention of the Department of Fish and Game, which is charged with the reserve for wildlife conservation, allowing cattle grazing only if deemed necessary for vegetation management.

In 2010, Los Padres ForestWatch and the Sierra Club filed suit against the DFG over its failure to conduct environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act in issuing Dr. Neal Dow a livestock grazing lease on the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve.

One of our key concerns was DFG’s continued permitted grazing in the absence of a long-promised Land Management Plan for the Reserve.

In December 2010, we entered into a settlement agreement that provided, among other things, an agreement by Fish and Game to “use its good faith efforts to issue a final Land Management Plan for the Carrizo Plains Ecological Reserve by March 2012.”

To date, DFG has failed to move forward with the Land Management Plan. In October 2011, DFG advised Jeff Kuyper of Los Padres ForestWatch that the consultant was “in the process of revising the LMP based upon [Kuyper’s] comments and then the plan will go to region and HQ for final review before release. CEQA document will be determined after the internal review.”

In May 2012, Kuyper was told that DFG would be announcing a scoping meeting sometime in June.

At the end of June, Kuyper was told that the scoping meeting would not occur until September. As we go to press, there has been no notice of a scoping meeting.

Meanwhile, and without the Land Management Plan in place, in November 2011 DFG issued yet another lease to Dr. Neal Dow for livestock grazing on the Carrizo Ecological Reserve. This decision evidenced yet another step to permit grazing without consideration of overall management that is necessary to protect the values for which the Reserve was created and exists. However, this lease did contain a monitoring protocol, which provided that:

“[t]he biological goals are tied to specific grass height or biomass/RDM [residual dry matter] objectives for each management unit. The goal of...”

Santa Lucian • October 2012
Our November Convention

By Kathryn Phillips, Director
Sierra Club California

The Democrats had theirs in September.
The Republicans had theirs in August.
And after those two parties face off in November, Sierra Club California will have ours.
If you’re a political junkie, you’ve probably guessed that I’m talking about conventions.
This year, Sierra Club California will hold its annual convention right after the November election. We’ve timed it that way so we can get a jump start on planning our environmental agenda and strategy for the coming year, keeping in mind who has won which elections.
The convention is actually a joint meeting of the policy arm of Sierra Club California, known as the California-Nevada Regional Conservation Committee or CNRCC, and Sierra Club California.
If you’ve never attended a Sierra Club California convention, you should consider coming to this one.
The event will be held Saturday, November 10, through Sunday, November 11, at Rancho El Chorro park and public meeting facility, across from Cuesta College. The venue is a great place for nature lovers to gather.
And registration is easy: You can do it online at sierraclubcalifornia.org/cnrcc/cnrcc-registration/

The agenda is still being planned, but typically Saturday is packed with informative activities and education, from early morning through the evening. Sunday is usually reserved for elections until adjournment at noon.
Past conventions have included workshops and presentations about timely environmental issues in addition to decision-making about policies and planning for the coming year. We always have an interesting keynote speaker.
Every Sierra Club member is welcome to attend, and admission is low: attending the entire weekend, including campsite lodging in a bunkhouse-style cabin, costs just $45.
Meals are included. Even then, nobody is turned away from the meetings due to lack of funds and some scholarships are available.

Some members attend as voting delegates. But you don’t have to be a delegate to attend. If you’ve been looking for a way to get more involved in Sierra Club California and the work we do to advance environmental protection around the state, the convention should be in your sights.

No Access

Building a barn on the Harmony Coast requires a dedication of public access to the coast. The horror! The California Coastal Act requires an offer to dedicate land for public access as a condition of new development.
In 2006, this condition was applied to a permit issued to the SDS Family Trust, landowners on the Harmony Coast seeking to build a barn. The required easement would allow the public access to the coast as a segment of the California Coastal Trail.
The owners appealed to the SLO County Board of Supervisors to keep their permit but have the easement removed, whereupon the old reliable troika of Achadjian/Lenthall/Ovitt tossed coastal law out the window and deleted the permit requirement for a public easement.
The Sierra Club appealed that decision to the Coastal Commission, which heard our appeal in August 2010. The Commission voted 10-1 (Commissioner Achadjian opposed) to uphold our appeal and restore the requirement for an easement on the Harmony Coast that the owners had originally agreed to dedicate for public access (see “Chapter Wins Coastal Commission Appeal,” Sept. 2010).

The owners retained the services of the Pacific Legal Foundation, which referred to the easement – the aforementioned standard requirement of the Coastal Act for all new coastal development – as “the strange requirement” and sued the Coastal Commission on the grounds that the requirement was unconstitutional, a claim the PLF has attempted to make about multiple provisions of the Coastal Act since its inception. Founded by right-wing billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife in 1973 to attack environmental and public health laws, the PLF makes a specialty of suing the Commission and challenging the Endangered Species Act. Its greatest claim to local infamy came ten years ago, when the City of Morro Bay retained the PLF in an unsuccessful bid to remove the snowy plover from the endangered species list.
On June 8, a judge of the SLO Superior Court told the SDS Trust they had waited too long to complain about the requirement to provide an easement and dismissed the case.
The applicants claim they were taken by surprise and had no idea they would be required to dedicate a public easement as a condition of their permit for new coastal development – a story that has played well on FOX News. In court, not so much.
The PLF has filed an appeal.

Food Day is October 24
Support sustainable and organic farms

Food Day is a nationwide celebration and a movement toward more healthy, affordable, and sustainable food. Powered by a diverse coalition of food movement leaders, organizations, and individuals, Food Day takes place annually on October 24 to address the issues of health and nutrition, hunger, agricultural policy, animal welfare, and farm worker justice.
The ultimate goal of Food Day is to strengthen and unify the food movement in order to improve our nation’s food policies.
One of best ways everyone can help do that is by advocating for sustainably and organically grown foods, which build healthy soil and minimize harm to farmers, the environment, and consumers from dangerous pesticides, excess fertilizer, antibiotics in animal feed, and synthetic food additives.
The Facts
● The federal budget provides $16 billion annually in farm subsidies.
74% of those subsidies go to only 10% of the largest industrial farms.
● The USDA estimates “local” food sales total just 1.6% of the entire U.S. market for agricultural products. This includes farmers’ markets,
Opponents of climate action plans have a plan: no action on climate

Climate Action Plans are being developed statewide to reduce greenhouse gas emissions sufficiently to hit the target mandated by AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: rolling back greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. For municipalities, this effort involves proposing emission reduction measures – usually centering on domestic, commercial and industrial energy use and energy efficiency, transportation and land use planning, and encouragement of the development of renewable energy. The public is asked to review potential measures and share their ideas in public workshops, interactive surveys and other forums, which inform the measures ultimately selected for the climate action plans.

The idea is to cost-effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining or improving the quality of life for residents and reducing costs for individuals and businesses.

In SLO County, the Air Pollution Control District is overseeing the creation of Climate Action Plans for the cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles and Pismo Beach (the City and County of San Luis Obispo have completed their plans). The District’s goal is to develop plans in a transparent manner with extensive public participation and input from elected officials and stakeholders to ensure that each plan is crafted to meet the particular needs of each city.

The process is scheduled to extend over four public workshops conducted at locations around the county through January, followed by compiling preliminary GHG reduction measures, public review drafts, and submission of the draft plans to city councils next summer.

That’s the plan. So let’s hope that the first workshop, held on the evening of August 23 at Cuesta College, was not a harbinger of things to come. It quickly came to resemble a somewhat more genteel, less organized version of the “death panel” town hall meetings held across the country by members of congress when they returned to their districts to discuss health care reform over the course of the long, hot summer of 2009. Those who showed up to hijack those meetings and shout down their congressional representatives were louder than their ideological brethren at the Cuesta meeting, but equal in the level of determination to obstruct and harass, throw a wrench into the works and derail the train.

The small but vocal contingent wanted everyone in the room to know that they didn’t care that the state of California has mandated this action, that every city must comply, that AB 32 has survived every political and legal attempt at repeal and is the law of the land, or that the purpose of the workshop was to gather ideas for what measures residents think should go into the climate action plans to reduce carbon emissions, not an opportunity to debate whether climate action plans should be drafted.

The plans will be drafted. The opponents were there to re-fight a fight they had lost.

Heard in the room:
I don’t believe in greenhouse gas!
You’re going to put a tax on carbon and make us do cap and trade!
You’re going to jam us into high-rises!
Let’s do more with more! (rather than conserve or practice efficiencies).
This is part of a conspiracy to reduce the world’s population to 5 million people!
What about oil seeps in the Santa Barbara Channel?!

As opponents’ every argument was patiently refuted and mistaken assumptions corrected by APCD staff, they ignored it and popped back up with two or three more.

Next workshop: November. Check the website over the next month for time and place. Go to www.centralcoastplanning.com and click “Get Involved” to sign up for e-news.

You need to show up and speak up. The clean energy future you save will be your own.

And if you want to know the best single thing you could recommend to be incorporated in each plan, go to www.local.org/commchoi.html

EXTREME GREEN CAR SHOW AT 2012 CENTRAL COAST BIONEERS

This year’s Central Coast Bioneers conference will feature its first green car show, October 20-21.

“We call it Extreme Green,” says conference organizer Michael Jencks, “because only electric and alternative fuel vehicles that already meet the 2025 EPA fuel efficiency standards are being allowed into the show.”

The car show, which will also include Segways and electric bikes and scooters from Todd’s Green Machines of Morro Bay, will take place in the parking lot of the Holiday Inn Express, across the street from the Monday Club conference site on Monterey and Grand in San Luis Obispo.

Saturday will also feature a Green Chef Cook-off presented by Cal Poly’s Real Food Collaborative, dancing with music by The Mother Cornshuckers, and truly “green” beer – brought in by bicycle – from Central Coast Brewing.

Plenary lectures, beamed live from the Bioneers main stage in Marin, are always a favorite part of the conference. This year’s featured speakers include Bill McKibben of 350.org, Michael Brune of the Sierra Club, Nikki Henderson of the People’s Grocery in Oakland, Paul Hawken, and many more.

Weekend, single day, and special event passes are available online or in person at AMODeSphere, 1119 Chorro, San Luis Obispo. RTA and SLO Transit are offering free transportation to the event if you show your pass to the driver.

The Bioneers Conference is one part global salon for an ongoing conversation between like-minded but otherwise isolated visionaries and practitioners at the forefront of civilizational change, and one part catalytic organization that takes the many conversations up to a higher level and down to Main Street.

- David W. Orr

TAKE ACTION

Rational people wanted!

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You need to show up and speak up. The clean energy future you save will be your own.

And if you want to know the best single thing you could recommend to be incorporated in each plan, go to www.local.org/commchoi.html
The SLO County Public Works Dept. wants to replace the bridge over Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria. The project will involve diverting the creek, and has entailed a passel of environmental mitigations. But the County hasn’t been paying much attention to one particular problem: decades of mercury deposits in sediment, courtesy of the Oceanic Mine.

Mercury is highly toxic in minute amounts. Once released into the environment, sediment is probably the best place for it to go, along with uptake into tree roots, so long as those roots and that sediment remain undisturbed. But if that sediment is disturbed, the sequestered mercury goes back into the water column, gets ingested by fish, which get eaten by other fish, which get eaten by humans, with the toxic load bioaccumulating all the way.

The County has contemplated installing a well to pump out the creekbed, even after the creek is diverted, because of the presence of groundwater. (It is expected that simply diverting the flow of Santa Rosa Creek through the project site may not adequately dewater the project site. In this event, the contractor may excavate and insert a well point into the stream-bed. The groundwater would be pumped to adequately dewater the project site.)

The California Toxics Rule, in its guidance for freshwater mercury, sets the safe limit for mercury at 12 parts per billion. In 2009, with Sierra Club funding, Cambria resident Lynne Harkins had a sample of wet sediment from Santa Rosa Creek at the Main Street project site tested. It was found to contain total mercury of 120 parts per billion. Testing for total mercury at other downstream sites found mercury in even higher concentrations. Harkins found mercury in its methylated form — the most toxic — at the mouth of the creek, about 2.5 miles downstream of the project site.

The Harkins/Sierra Club testing activities infuriated the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and helped sink its plan to drill decantation test wells at the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek. Her sample testing prompted a letter to the Corps from the California Coastal Commission noting that Harkins’ “documentation submitted to the CCSD shows mercury contamination in and near Santa Rosa Creek and its associated wetlands. Because the project site includes areas that were likely within the creek’s historic channel areas, it may also contain some level of mercury contamination.”

Public Works estimates that 1500 cubic yards of soil will be excavated at the site. Research has shown that willow roots take up and sequester both organic and inorganic forms of mercury. The project site is densely vegetated with willows along creek banks. The removal of these willows to allow for bridge construction in a different alignment will create the potential for mobilizing mercury from sediment disturbance and willow destruction, increasing the potential for ground and surface water contamination. The substan-
tial root systems from cut willows (and cottonwoods) that line the banks will divide and disrupt the type of environment in which the toxin converts to its most hazardous form, methyl mercury.

The groundwater level is very close to the creek at the proposed project site. In research published in 2009, inorganic and organic mercury were shown to be transported to the nearshore marine environment by means of groundwater, contributing significantly to marine mercury pollution in a way that had not been previously verified. A 2012 study (above) found high levels of methyl-mercury in sportfish caught off Cayucos and Cambria. The Sierra Club mercury test sampling results are cited in the recently released Santa Rosa Creek Watershed Management Plan. The County Public Works Department and the Water Board should pay heed to what they show.

### Carizzo

monitoring is to detect if the utilization of each management unit is consistent with biomass/RDM objectives. Each management unit within the lease area will be measured to determine if it meets specific RDM objectives.”

The lease identifies management objectives for units; for example: “No more than 25% of the management unit shall fall below 300 lbs/acre RDM and no more than 25% of the management unit is consistent with overall RDM objectives.”

Food Day

farm-to-school programs and community and school gardens.

- **Nitrogen and phosphorus run-off from synthetic fertilizers used in the upper watershed lead to a “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2011, the dead zone was as large as Rhode Island and Delaware combined. That has serious long-term consequences for the unique aquacultures and the local seafood economy.

- Sustainable and organic farming practices contribute to reduced water and air pollution, richer soil, and healthier farm animals and communities.

- A 2-year study comparing the nutritional quality, taste, and environmental effects of organic versus conventionally grown strawberries concluded that organically grown berries had a longer shelf life, greater nutritional value, better sensory appeal, and resulted in significantly higher quality soil.

### What You Can Do

- **Hold Food Day events that highlight issues of conventional versus sustainable and organic farming, including a taste test between organic and conventional produce, debates by academic experts about the dangers of antibiotics and pesticides used on farms, cooking demonstrations and talks at farmers markets, and film screenings.**

- **Write or call your Congressional Representatives and ask them to increase federal support for small and mid-size organic farmers and sustainable farmers.**

- **Visit the websites of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, National Farm to School Network, and American Farmland Trust and learn more about what you can do now.**

And check out www.foodday.org.

### Reports trying to create doubts about organic agriculture are suddenly flood-
ing the media. There are two reasons for this. First, the public is increasingly concerned with the corporate assault of toxics and GMOs. People are turning to organic agriculture and organic food as a way to end the toxic war against the earth and our bodies. Second, the public is finding that will grow, no matter how many pseudo-scientific stories are planted in the media by the industry.

- Dr. Vandana Shiva, founder/director Navdanya Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Ecology
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is October 12. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact: Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter P.O. Box 15755 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 sierracubli@gmail.com

Les Kangas Solar Energy Consultant REC Solar, Inc. 775 Fiero Lane, Suite 200 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Office: (805) 528-9705 Cell: (805) 305-7164 Toll Free: (888) OK-SOLAR (657-6527) Fax: (805) 528-9701

CYNTHIA HAWLEY ATTORNEY ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAND USE CIVIL LITIGATION P.O. Box 29 Cambria California 93428 Phone 805-927-5102 Fax 805-927-5220

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

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

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 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, 549-0355. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.

**Fall at Clair Tappan Lodge**

**October 5 - 7.** Opera in the Mountains. Wake up to the smell of brewing coffee and the sound of great music. We will have music sessions after each meal.

**October 13,** 1-4 p.m. Wine Tasting Spend a Saturday afternoon exploring new wines and making new friends with local wine expert Dave Luce. Wines will be available for purchase and a percentage will go to Clair Tappan Lodge. Appetizers will be served. $20.

**October 12 - 14.** A Weekend of Yoga and Hiking.

Located in the Sierra Nevadas, Tahoe National Forest. Spaces limited. Call (800) 679-6775. Cost for weekend activities include 6 meals, 2 nights lodging and all of the activities, unless otherwise stated. See Activities web page at gothepedestrian.org/sierranevada/activities.htm for fees and details on activities.

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

**Sat., Oct. 13, 8:30 a.m.** Beginner’s Bird Walk at Morro Bay. Come experience the fun of birding, co-led by Audubon expert Jessica Griffiths. The Clusters area, adjacent to the beach, north of downtown Morro Bay. 1.2 miles of walking along paths and beach walk past dunes. Binoculars and field guides provided. Suitable for all ages, first part of Clusters paved path is appropriate for mobility-impared. Meet near restroom at the Clusters, across Hwy 1 from Spencer’s Market. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

**Sat., Oct. 13, 9:30 a.m. Guadalupe/Paradise Beach Hike.** Moderately strenuous 6-mile hike along pristine Guadalupe Beach to Music Lagoon, then along bluffs to secluded Paradise Beach. About 5-6 hrs. Bring water, lunch, windbreaker, hat and dress in layers. Meet near interpretive signs and picnic tables. Lunch at Guadalupe restaurant afterwards. Rain cancels. From Hwy 101 in Santa Maria, take Main St./Hwy 166 to end at Guadalupe Beach. Leader: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792 or keny@83@msn.com.

**Sat-Sun., Oct. 13-14 Explore and Serve in Carrizo Plains.** Remove or modify old fencing to facilitate passage of Pronghorn antelopes. Saturday is a workday, followed by camping and potluck. Sunday hike in the Caliente Range or tour of views in the Plains. Leader: Craig Deutsche, 310-470-6470 or craig.deutsche@earthlink.net. CNRCC Desert Committee.

**Sun., Oct. 14, 10 a.m. Family-Friendly Hike at Pt. Sal.** Easy walk along Brown Rd, 1.5 mile round-trip, for panoramic ocean, coast, and Santa Maria Valley views. Many geologic, plant, and animal discoveries. Bring water, hats, sunscreen, snack, dress in layers. From Hwy 1, take Brown Rd. west 3.9 miles to end at Pt. Sal Gate. Leader: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792 or keny@83@msn.com.


**Sat., Oct. 20, 9 a.m. Poly/Stenner Creek Canyons Hike.** Moderate, 6-mile, 1000 ft. gain hike through grassland and oak groves from Stenner Creek Rd through Poly Canyon to Yucca Ridge. Learn about local plants, animals, and geology, maybe even spot a wandering tarantula. Bring water, hat, sturdy shoes, lunch. Dress in layers. Meet at end of Stenner Creek Rd off Hwy 1 at north end of Cal Poly campus. Leader: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

**Sun., Oct. 21, 10 a.m. Trekking-Pole Hike at Sycamore Springs.** “Pole-cats” is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club hikes and modeling the benefits of trekking poles. 2-mile hike, 700 ft. gain. Meet near entrance of Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Drive. Confirm with Leader, David Georgi, 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com. Bikes welcome.

**Sat., Oct. 27, 8:30 a.m. Southern Big Sur/Silver Peak Wilderness Coastal Hike.** Moderately strenuous hike, 9 miles, 2,400 ft. gain/loss. Depending on weather, hike up Salmon Creek, Bald Top or other route. Bring lunch, water, non-slip hiking shoes. Dress for varying weather. Meet at Washburn Day Use Area, San Simeon State Park, 1.5 mile north of Cambria. SLO carpoolers leave from Santa Rosa Washburn Day Use Area at 7:14 a.m. Leader: Gary Felsman, 473-3994. Rain or possibility of it cancels.

**Sat.-Sun., Oct. 27-28.** Ghost Town Extravaganza. Spend Halloween weekend with ghosts of California’s colorful past near Death Valley Camp at historic ghost town of Ballarat, (flush toilets). Saturday, 7-mile, 1500 ft. gain hike to Lookout City ghost town with historian Hal Fowler, regaling us with Wild West tales. Happy Hour at campground and potluck, midnight visit to Ballarat’s graveyard. Sunday visit to infamous Riley townsite. Group size limited. Send $8 per person, 2 large SAW, k phone, email, rideshare info to leader: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 721039, Pinon Hills, CA 92372. Info.: 760-868-2179 CNRCC Desert Committee.

**Sun., Oct. 28, 2 p.m.** Historic Cemetery Walk. Guided stroll through the Old Mission and San Luis cemeteries in San Luis Obispo. As you pass by the passed-on, you’ll hear compelling stories of city residents from the 19th century – a Confederate veteran, a schoolteacher, downtown business tycoon, cattle rancher, newspaper editor, Chinese railroad worker, and a young mother who died in childbirth. About 1 1/2 hrs. Wear sturdy shoes and bring water. Meet at entrance to the Old Mission Cemetery, 101 Bridge St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

**The Sierra Club Needs You!**

- Lead hikes and camping trips
- Introduce others to nature
- Explore the outdoors
- Make new friends
- Protect the environment
- Get healthy exercise

For further information contact:

Joe Morris, Outings Chair
Sierra Club, Santa Lucia Chapter
(805) 549-0355
dpj1942@earthlink.net

John Mark Daniels of the Sierra Club, socalchapter@sierraclub.org

**October 2012**