Paso’s Last Drop

Big Grape is plunging North County into overdraft as a steering committee dithers and residents and small wineries circle the drain

Paso Robles has gained international fame as a wine region known for its outstanding reds – cabernet, Rhones and zinfandel. The warm days and cool evening breezes yield wine grapes of outstanding quality.

Paso’s success has hidden from view a looming disaster. Dire facts are downplayed. Anyone who discusses the issue in public forums is admonished.

The groundwater basin that sustains the majority of this wine grape growing region is in serious jeopardy. Groundwater levels have been declining in portions of the basin for decades. Over the past fifteen years, while wine grape acreage dramatically increased, the majority of the groundwater basin went into severe decline.

Water if you can afford it

Both rural residents and agriculture depend on wells from the groundwater basin for their livelihood. Last summer, well drilling companies were busy lowering and replacing pumps and drilling new wells. In some areas of the basin, it is a regular occurrence and drilling new wells. In some areas the basin is in the midst of a wine grape planting frenzy. Driven by wine brokers and vineyard consulting and management firms, new plantings this year are approaching 8,000 acres.

Assuming an average of one acre-ft/yr per acre, these new plantings will put another 8,000 acre-ft/yr of demand onto a greatly stressed basin. Looking into the owners of these new plantings – along with the recent purchases of some large existing vineyards – yields some disconcerting information. In an area known for its quality, family-owned wineries, the largest vineyards are now owned by real estate investment firms, multi-national corporations, and out-of-town billionaires.

The region’s top twenty wine grape growers use 40% of the water in the main basin. The largest vineyard owners in the Paso Robles area include:

- Stewart and Lynda Resnick, the new owners of Justin Winery, currently planting 600+ acres of wine grapes. In the process, the new owners of Justin have removed numerous native oak trees and started construction of enormous ponds for frost protection and irrigation management. The Resnicks are best known for Fiji Water, POM Wonderful, Teleflora, Paramount Farming (the world’s largest grower of pistachios and almonds), and the Kern Water Bank, a former state-owned water banking facility that is now owned by Resnick.
- Racing magnate Gerald Forsythe is the new owner of Continental Vineyards (520 acres). Forsythe owned the Champ Car – CART PPG Indy Racing Series, owns Indeck Energy Services (with interests in eleven power plants in U.S. and U.K.) and New Frontiers Capital, LLC (national resort and golf course development). Forsythe lives in Illinois.
- Anderson-Middleton, running timber operations out of Washington,

In January, we laid out the grim financial fate facing the Chapter if we do not start receiving a minimum of $20 from 300 members every month, or the equivalent at press time. 22 of you are now making automatic monthly contributions via PayPal ranging from $10 to $50. Another 36 of you are making monthly bank bill-pay and personal check donations up to $200. Eleven of you have already paid an entire year’s worth of $20-a-month donations in one check. This works out to an average of $27 per month per individual, or the equivalent of 78 people at $20 per month. This means that we are 26% of the way toward the goal of the equivalent of $20 per month from 300 people! That’s pretty encouraging. And it’s even more encouraging to get notes like this along with those donations:

“I’m proud to belong to the Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter and I appreciate all that you do for the environment and for keeping all of us informed.” – Nancy Ruhl

“Here’s our donation for your office fund. Hope you survive! You do wonderful work.” — Gar & Elizabeth Salgeber

“Thank you! Your research and advocacy for ecology and the environment’s well-being bring a smile to my hope for the future.” – Elizabeth Bottenhausen

“We hope our pledge, along with a sustained effort by the membership, will help forestall involuntarily. The Club’s vital contributions to the county cannot be allowed to lapse.” – Ray & Sonya Bracken.

You can help us hit the top of the thermometer by going to www.santalucia.sierraclub.org, clicking on the “Donate” button and selecting the monthly contribution option.
Sierra Club Special Screening

Tuesday, April 30, 7 p.m.

A Fierce Green Fire

A new documentary about the history of the environmental movement opened in select theaters in California on March 15. It has already received accolades at a number of film festivals, and was an official selection at Sundance. It’s called A Fierce Green Fire, and the Sierra Club naturally plays a role.

In partnership with Hopedance, the Santa Lucia Chapter is proud to bring A Fierce Green Fire to SLO this month, for one night only!

$10 admission.

Palm Theater, 817 Palm St., SLO. For information: info@hopedance.org, www.alteregreenfire.com

Change of Address?

Mail changes to:
Sierra Club National Headquarters
85 Second Street, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441

or e-mail: suee@sierraclub.org

Visit us on the Web!

www.santalucia.sierraclub.org

Sierra Club

The Executive Committee meets the second Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m., and the Conservation Committee meets the second Friday at 1 p.m., at the chapter office, located at 974 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

Santa Lucia • April 2013

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Printed by University Graphic Systems
For nearly one hundred years, the public has enjoyed access to thousands of acres of national forest land at the eastern end of the Huasna Valley in San Luis Obispo County. But a neighboring landowner has blocked a public road that serves as the only access route into the area, prompting ForestWatch to launch a massive effort to keep the route open.

Huasna Road begins Arroyo Grande and passes through 25 miles of private farmland, ranches, and a historic townsite before reaching the oak-studded hills of the Los Padres National Forest. For decades, visitors have flocked to the area’s two campgrounds at Stony Creek and Agua Escondido to enjoy springtime wildflower displays, unique rock outcrops, and other forms of natural beauty. For those who enjoy hiking trails leading in all directions across thousands of acres of national forest land.

The area is featured in California Coastal Byways: 50 of California’s Best Backcountry Drives, and has also been described in several hiking and mountain biking guidebooks and official Forest Service and USGS maps. The area’s trails once provided the only publicly accessible route into the southern Garcia Valley in San Luis Obispo and have now planned out seven different ones, covering different historic periods and city locations. For example, I added a Halloween cemetery walk and a nighttime Victorian Christmas stroll. I’ve been happy at their growing popularity, averaging 20 people, even exceeding 60 at times. SLO is an ideal town for guided walks, with many attractive and well-preserved buildings concentrated in a small area. But also the walks remind people that cities—are we sometimes forget—are part of the environment. For instance, San Luis Creek, threading its way through the city, is arguably its most important landmark, more so than the Mission. Its waters over the centuries have been a fishing spot for the Chumash, irrigation for the Mission fields, a sewer for Gold Rush pioneers, and even aocache for bootleggers in the twenties. It has left its mark on every era in SLO history.

One reason why we have become more so our children—are losing the chances to get out into beautiful nature when, where, and how they want to go. To fight back for healthy communities, to fight back for healthy environment that share your interests. Most of my own best friends in adulthood I encouraged anyone who’d like to discuss being a leader to contact me.

How and why did you become an outings chair of the chapter? In 1983, thirty years ago now, I started as an outings leader for the Angeles chapter in Los Angeles and loved the experience. During that time, I organized well over 200 events of all kinds, not only hikes, but backpacks, bus trips, sing-alongs, and car camps all over the state. I loved it as a great contrast to my university teaching job at Cal State, Northridge. On retiring a few years ago, I moved up here to an area where nature, not freeways, is dominant. Four years ago, I showed up at a “volunteer day” sponsored by the Chapter and soon was urged to head up outings by the departing chair, Karen Merriam. It continues to be a lot of fun.

What is your outlook philosophy and how does it relate to the chapter’s mission? I’ve read that the average person is inside over 90% of the time these days, and when he/she does go out, it’s usually to step into a car. We—and even more so our children—are losing touch with the outdoors and the way it is unique. The key reason why we have become interested about preserving and protecting this land. Sierra Club offers people a chance to get out into beautiful nature on a regular basis to places often they never knew about. I want our outings to have something for everyone, not only the strenuous 10-mile hikes for the tigers, but also city walks, birding trips, and evening programs.

Defending Public Access to Los Padres Forest
by Los Padres ForestWatch

For nearly one hundred years, the public has enjoyed access to thousands of acres of national forest land at the eastern end of the Huasna Valley in San Luis Obispo County. But a neighboring landowner has blocked a public road that serves as the only access route into the area, prompting ForestWatch to launch a massive effort to keep the route open.

Huasna Road begins Arroyo Grande and passes through 25 miles of private farmland, ranches, and a historic townsite before reaching the oak-studded valleys and chaparral-covered hills in the Los Padres National Forest. For decades, visitors have flocked to the area’s two campgrounds at Stony Creek and Agua Escondido to enjoy springtime wildflower displays, unique rock outcrops, and other forms of natural beauty. For those who enjoy hiking trails leading in all directions across thousands of acres of national forest land.

The area is featured in California Coastal Byways: 50 of California’s Best Backcountry Drives, and has also been described in several hiking and mountain biking guidebooks and official Forest Service and USGS maps. The area’s trails once provided the only publicly accessible route into the southern Garcia Valley in San Luis Obispo and have now planned out seven different ones, covering different historic periods and city locations. For example, I added a Halloween cemetery walk and a nighttime Victorian Christmas stroll. I’ve been happy at their growing popularity, averaging 20 people, even exceeding 60 at times. SLO is an ideal town for guided walks, with many attractive and well-preserved buildings concentrated in a small area. But also the walks remind people that cities—are we sometimes forget—are part of the environment. For instance, San Luis Creek, threading its way through the city, is arguably its most important landmark, more so than the Mission. Its waters over the centuries have been a fishing spot for the Chumash, irrigation for the Mission fields, a sewer for Gold Rush pioneers, and even aocache for bootleggers in the twenties. It has left its mark on every era in SLO history.

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Cochabamba to Stockton

When globalization’s privatizers came up empty

by Andrea Christie, Chapter Director

On July 17, 2007, Carlos Gutierrez, President George Bush’s Secretary of Commerce, stepped up to the microphone before an audience of business leaders and rolled out the Bush administration’s new push for its corporate free trade agenda.

“While others seek to suppress people, ideas and debate,” he said, “we seek the empowerment of the individual. While some seek state control and the nationalization of economic sectors, we seek free markets.”

Of free trade agreements, he said, “a vote against these is a vote to slow vital reforms, helping those who wish to hamper the spread of free enterprise and democracy.”

As Congress Daily reported the next day, Gutierrez’s remarks were “an echo of rhetoric rarely heard since the end of the Cold War,” and a sign that “the administration plans to increasingly point to trade as a weapon to block the influence of regimes that seek to promote socialist ideas in Latin America.”

He was echoing a talking point previously laid down by U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab in an op-ed two months earlier, wherein she plugged the administration’s line free-trade agreements as a “clear alternative to the ruinous policies advocated by self-styled anti-American populists in our own hemisphere.”

On the same day that Secretary Gutierrez delivered his comments to business officials, the city council of Stockton threw in the towel and allowed its citizens to turn into a bunch of anti-American socialists who decided the free market, as foisted by the corporate imperative, was not all it’s cracked up to be.

Since 2001, the people of Stockton had been fighting to regain control of their water system from transnational corporations OMRI and Thames, who had taken over the city’s water and sewer services in a $600 million, twenty-year contract, the largest of its kind west of the Mississippi. Privatizing the water system had intensified harmful environmental impacts on the already beleaguered Sacramento Delta system, relieved the public of their right to determine how their water services were managed, handing that right to corporate shareholders, and exchanged public service for the profit motive. On July 17, 2007, the city council dropped the court ruling that gave control of their municipal water systems back to the people of Stockton.

Six years earlier, as Stockton was just beginning its corporate water war, the people of Cochabamba, Bolivia, had just won theirs, having determined that privatization of their water supply by a subsidiary of Bechtel was a bad idea, primarily due to the fact that the corporation promptly hiked the price of their water by 200 percent. In a series of uprisings that became one of the key battles against economic globalization, Cochabamba eventually regained public control over its water — sooner than Stockton did but at greater cost in injury and death, and meted out to those protesting against their government’s sell-off of a basic human right to a multinational corporation.

The road to Cochabamba’s revolt had been paved by Bolivian president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, who, in 1993-97, presided over the imposition of privatization and public service measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund which made his country into the poster child and basket case of free-market globalization – policies now repudiated throughout Latin America.

After Sanchez first made known his social goals. The procurements must vote to certify that a proposed agreement is in the public interest and that Congress’ negotiating objectives have been met which a majority of the Congress must vote to certify that a proposed agreement.

The “investor-state” tribunal process that allows panels of three private sector lawyers to order unlimited taxpayer compensation for foreign firms who claim that a country’s laws undermine their expected future profits must be eliminated. International investment rules must also be revised to allow the three private sector lawyers to order unlimited taxpayer compensation for companies that claim their profits are undermined by government goals, such as ensuring that workers are paid prevailing wage.

Safeguards against currency manipulation. Trade agreements should include measures that allow the United States and other governments to take measures to counteract currency-distorting manipulation. Agreements should include strong rule of origin provisions to ensure that the benefits of the agreements go to those countries that agree to meet its rules.

Space for robust financial regulations and public services. Trade pacts should set floors, not ceilings, when it comes to the regulation of banks, insurance companies, hedge funds and other financial service providers. Trade agreements’ services provisions should contain clear and specific language stating that nothing in the agreement should be interpreted as requiring deregulation or privatization of any private or public service.

Improved consumer and environmental standards. Likewise, trade agreements should set floors, rather than ceilings, when it comes to environmental, food and product safety and consumer right-to-know measures.

We believe a much greater degree of public and congressional oversight is needed if the TPP and other pacts are to achieve these high standards.

Before granting the Obama administration any special trade policy-making authority, please request that it make the draft TPP texts public.

Instead of delegating Congress’ exclusive constitutional authority to “regulate commerce with foreign nations” to the executive branch through the reinstate-

ment of outdated and extreme procedures like Fast Track: “Trade Promotion Authority” and “Trade Adjustment Assistance,” we urge you to support a new American trade agreement negotiation and approval process that:

• Requires that the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative consult with all interested stakeholders, participate in hearings with all committees of jurisdiction over matters affected by trade agreements and provide a public assessment of what specific job creation and export expansion opportunities each prospective trade partner would provide and how a proposed agreement would impact human and labor rights, the environment, food sovereignty, access to medicine, currency manipulation and balance of trade among the countries involved.

• Sets up an objective process to verify that negotiating objectives set by Congress are actually achieved in the final agreement, and includes a process by which stakeholders may challenge the expanded enforcement process with the TPP as soon as possible;

• Only through this type of robust oversight and public participation can we forge a new national and global consensus on trade policy that works for all.

More than 400 national, regional, state and local organizations representing labor, environmental, family farm, consumer, faith, public health, Native American and human rights constituencies. Go to Citizentrade.org.
Saving Seeds
SLO Seed Exchange & CalPoly SUSTAIN Team partner to create a community Seed Library

By Elizabeth Johnson

Momentum has been building to formalize local seed libraries across the country to protect, and encourage growing of, open-pollinated heirloom crops. Now that a few local corporatations own almost all seed production, it has become crucial for gardeners and farmers to start saving their own seeds, just as we have for 10,000 years. In the past one hundred years, while we ordered seeds from commercial catalogs, 75% of edible plant varieties adapted to their local soil and climate conditions have been lost, along with our human knowledge about them. Seeds are not created in a laboratory. Organizations like Seed Savers Exchange have contributed enormously to keep varieties from extinction for the last forty years. As the world of organic seed preservation teeters on a precipice of monopoly control, a cavalry of thousands is finally showing up to support and expand the work of generations of farmers to create and maintain resilient local seed and food systems. In San Luis Obispo, the SLO Seed Exchange has promoted seed saving and community exchanges since 2007. Due to timing and complexity, a permanent seed library was not created. We chose instead to become individual “seed libraries,” each of us growing, harvest- ing, storing, then offering our seeds in an annual community exchange. This is the most frequently followed model around the world.

Ideas about seed libraries are as varied as the communities that serve. Seeds represent and reflect culture; promoting cultural diversity translates to lots of plant varieties, ways of growing and saving them, stories about them, and methods of distribution. Our goal is to create a living seed library of edible plant seeds adapted to our bioregion; these seeds may be better equipped genetically to adapt to extremes of local climate change. As our group has expanded in numbers and skill, the subject of community-accessible seed libraries is on the table again. Enter the Cal Poly SUSTAIN team, a group of non-ag major fresh- men who have partnered with SLO Seed Exchange for a January to June project to establish a local seed library. The SUSTAIN program provides an educational partnership with community organizations in order to create a different kind of learning experience, while the on-campus academic segment focuses on rigorous project management methodology. The SUSTAIN team jumped into this project with enthusiasm and intelligence. Their prototype will be a mobile Seed Library that will carry seeds, packages to envelope them, and information on each variety. They will also help design a website and logo. In addition, the team will be looking for possible locations where a stationary lending seed library can be set up, and will create one if time permits. If you borrow seeds to grow, you can replenish the library supply from your own harvest in a year or two.

Seeds are the foundation of a resilient local food system. Our SLO Seed Exchange recently helped coordinate seed donations to a brand new farm that plans to grow organic vegetables for the SLO Food Bank. First Fruits Farm was created by a collaboration of LSLC churches—Grace and Trinity, already serving as satellites of the Food Bank—intending to bring higher quality produce to the program. They asked for donations of all kinds—land, equipment, tools, volunteers, and organic open-pollinated seeds. SLO Seed Exchange then contacted individuals and groups who usually have an abundance and came up with seeds for a number of crop varieties desired by First Fruits Farm. A vibrant seed saving community with a healthy seed library will eventually serve future projects like the two acre First Fruits Farm along with backyard gardens and all sizes in between. With the Cal Poly SUSTAIN community partner, the SLO Seed Exchange will soon have a mobile Seed Library, and eventually a stationary library, each providing educational tools for skillful seed saving.

Growing seeds to exchange and plant is not only an act of hope; it is the act of weaving our human seed back into the great cycle of life on our planet; we reconnect to plant life that also relies on earth, water, air, and weather for health and survival, and we reconnect with each other.

Seeds offer access to seed, education, and community. They’re designed to play a long-term role in the community—safeguarding and stewarding our collective seed legacy season-to-season, generation-to-generation.

Sierra Club California is a member of CEQA Works and Common Ground advocating for sensible CEQA updates. CEQA Works is a broad coalition of civic, conservation, environmental justice, historic preservation, labor, and public health groups, native tribes, business leaders, and legal experts, working together to prevent the California legislature from weakening our state’s landmark environmental protection laws. We aim to:

• Protect the right of the public to weigh in on community land-use decisions.

• Keep California’s environmental laws strong to prevent air and water pollution and the public health risks they pose.

• Advocate for sensible updates to CEQA that reduce bureaucracy without weakening key environmental safeguards.

CEQA Works and Common Ground held a CEQA Advocacy Day on March 12 at the Capitol, including a training for environmental and environmental justice, labor, tribal, health, and historic preservation community activists who came to Sacramento from all over the state to voice support for CEQA. The training was followed by a press conference with key legislators and legislative office visits to make the case for CEQA.

Here’s one such case, which our readers may recall:

For three years in a row (2008-2011), the California Department of Fish and Game proposed to increase the quota for the hunting of black bears and the initiation of a bear hunt in San Luis Obispo County. Relying on CEQA provisions that require government agencies to adopt, analyze and disclose the effects on the environment associated with policy changes, the Humane Society of the United States and others provided substantive comments detailing the inadequacies of the Department’s analysis, including a failure to evaluate impacts of the proposal on local bear populations or to assess threats to the species from rampant poaching. Biologists demonstrated that the Department was relying on outdated and incomplete methodologies for estimating the state’s bear population. Thanks to the thorough analysis and public engagement required by the California Environmental Quality Act, the Commission chose not to pursue that policy change.
Stop the Dept. of Conservation’s Redefinition of Protected and Beneficial Waters

By the Sierra Club Fracking Team

The Federal Clean Water Act says that discharging pollution into protected waters (e.g., dumping sewage, contaminants, or industrial pollution) or filling protected waters and wetlands (e.g., building a housing development or a parking lot) require permits.

However, the Department of Conservation (DoC) through the Division of Oil and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) has proposed new regulations for oil and gas “stimulation” (“fracking”) that would relax current restrictions. If enacted, these draft regulations would define “protected waters” for the State of California and Department of Conservation as only those waters which currently have direct, beneficial uses for potable and agricultural purposes and without treatment and would remove all other waters and their reservoirs, streams, groundwater tables, and aquifers from any protection against contamination by oil and gas related activities.

Earlier local efforts by oil and gas companies to downgrade existing beneficial use designations were blocked, and water agencies have maintained a greater level of protection for current and further important beneficial surface and groundwater resources within the State.

Federal hydrogeologists have reported deep groundwater contamination in the Los Angeles region associated with existing oil fields. No apparent contamination of the higher levels used for public drinking groundwater supplies has been reported. Both may be correct, as they are measuring or monitoring two very different -- shallow and deep -- but related groundwater conditions. If fracking and other oil exploration and production are “properly” conducted, there may not be either deep or shallow groundwater contamination, but the needed studies have not been done to demonstrate such protection. It seems that no one wants to know, because then they would have to take responsibility for doing something.

Recent statewide discussions regarding global warming’s expected changes to California’s water resources focused on increasing alternative beneficial water resource storage capacities, in light of declining snowpack and climate changes across western U.S. watersheds. Groundwater storage has been and will become an even more important and cost effective alternative in the face of dwindling winter surface storage (snowpack) and summer production throughout the state and especially near urban and agricultural centers of use: San Diego, Los Angeles, southern San Joaquin basin, Coast Range valleys and southern Sacramento Valley areas. Protecting groundwater basins from potential and known contamination sources and restoration programs for those already compromised are becoming increasingly important.

The Sierra Club Fracking Team has reviewed available information and recommends that the Sierra Club:

1. Oppose any relaxation by DoC’s regulations with regard to “beneficial” groundwater basins within the state;
2. Support further monitoring and protections through DOGGR’s regulations for beneficial waters within 1 mile of any oil fields or exploratory wells;
3. Identify and ensure control of existing known or probable sources of groundwater contamination from any exploration and production activities;
4. Support expanded assessing and monitoring of surface and deep subsurface sources of contamination;
5. Support identification and mitigation of low-level contamination from producing groundwater sources.

Communities throughout the state need to support and maintain the most comprehensive definition of “beneficial water sources” and oppose the attempted redefinition of “protected waters.”

The Sierra Club believes no community should be forced to accept the risks of fracking. ... The proposed Illinois rules tighten some of the loopholes found in other states. But here’s the thing: Even these improvements do not fully protect the health and safety of the good people of Illinois. Likewise, no proposed legislation in any state currently does.

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Sierra Club Slams Flawed Study of Natural Gas Exports

On February 23, the Sierra Club submitted technical comments to the Department of Energy (DOE) responding to a flawed economic study of exporting natural gas conducted by NERA Consulting.

The DOE is using the NERA study to inform its decision on whether to approve 16 applications for developing export liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals. Together, the pending applications would add export capacity for immense volumes of gas equivalent to about 45 percent of current domestic production. The increased demand for natural gas in both the domestic and global markets would mean more fracking by oil and gas companies, which already exploit exemptions from major federal environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The DOE has a responsibility to protect the public interest,” said Deb Nardone, our Beyond Natural Gas campaign director. “We need DOE to redo this flawed study to ensure serious considerations are made to protect our environment, public health, and the economy before acting on LNG export proposals.”

The comments include recommendations for the DOE to:
1. Reject NERA Consulting’s flawed economic report on LNG exports, which shows that the primary benefit of exporting LNG would be a transfer of wealth from the majority of Americans to a small minority of oil and gas corporations and their shareholders.
2. NERA’s study states that many wage earners would be affected by rising energy costs and loss of jobs in a variety of sectors, yet concludes that exports are in the public interest.
3. Redo the economic study, taking into account the real costs of exporting.

Santa Lucian • April 2013

What Can We Do About Fracking?

An overview of the problems with hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas, with emphasis on implementing a solution. Featured speaker: Doug Shields, former city councilman for Pittsburgh, the city that enacted the first “rights-based” ban on fracking in the nation. Ask Doug and the panel anything about the impact of fracking on a community. They have first hand info. There are 1,000 court cases of commu-
nities who are in the process of trying to recover damages caused by fracking. In nearly every case, water contamination was a key issue. Keeping our water safe, clean, healthy and protected from a process that uses unregulated, secret ingredients will be discussed. Ben Price, project director for the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, will explain the rights-based ordinance process, its success rate and how it compares to other kinds of lawmaking. Contact Jeanne Blackwell, SLOcean wateraction.org, at jeannewater@gmail.com, or Shannon Biggs, www.globalexchange.org, 415-575-5540.
Happy Birthday to Us
Spend May 11 with the Sierra Club in Edna Valley

Come to a party and fundraiser marking the last 45 years of the Santa Lucia Chapter’s work to conserve the natural treasures that make life here something special. (And since we also need to prepare for the next 45 years, that works out to a ticket price of $90 at the bargain rate of a dollar a year.) From 3 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 11, we’ll be celebrating with food, drink, music and more at a beautiful home and garden in the Edna Valley.

Music provided by Ranchers for Peace, food by the Sierra Club, beers and wines by local brewers and vintners.

Plus:

“John Muir’s Yosemite”
Outings Chair Joe Morris, who leads our popular SLO city walks, will take you back to Yosemite as John Muir knew it 140+ years ago. With vintage slides and music, you will take a tour of its long-lost sights and pioneers, and hear the stories of Muir’s transformation into America’s wilderness visionary.

A $90 ticket gets you all of above plus appetizers & main course. Reserve your place(s) by April 10 and get event address & map. Send an e-mail to sierraclub8@gmail.com, or call (805) 543-8717.

With thanks to these providers of fine libations:

SIP Certified sustainably farmed vineyards and wines speak to the farmer’s commitment to protecting both natural and human resources.

A regional craft brewery with a singular purpose – to craft the world’s best beers. Passionately in pursuit of the perfect beer...and never satisfied. We are living beer.

Over 300 acres of Certified Organic vineyards by the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) in compliance with USDA standards.
the seismic survey permit process with a simple statement to the effect that the proposed activity is not allowable within Sanctuary waters. Instead, local citizens and environmental groups, fighting a losing battle all the way through the regulatory process, had to attempt a Hail Mary pass and file a lawsuit backing against the momentum of multiple prior permit approvals. In short, we got lucky.

A February 22 meeting convened by Morro Bay Mayor Jamie Irons and City Councilman Noah Smailen brought Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent Maria Brown and her predecessor Ed Ubler to the Morro Bay Community Center, along with Zeke Grader, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations. They spoke about their first-hand experience in managing, working and living with a marine sanctuary that was established in 1981 and protects 1,250 square miles of marine habitat off San Francisco.

Grader said of his experience as the lead industrial personnel involved with the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries: “I don’t think there’s a government entity that we’ve had a better relationship with.” The Gulf of the Farallones is still the only sanctuary like all such sanctuaries, supports the economic growth of local coastal communities, scientific research, and the preservation of underwater treasures— and the health of the local fishing industry— for future generations.

Some other interesting facts related by the distinguished panelists:

- The Sanctuary Advisory Council can be defined however a community chooses in its sanctuary charter. Historically, they have been eminently democratic: one large group controlling by a simple majority vote.
- The Sanctuary Advisory Council is central to the hiring decision for sanctuary superintendent
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) delegates authority for managing the sanctuary to the local superintendent.
- 99 percent of the recommendations made by the Gulf of the Farallones SAC are implemented.
- Every marine sanctuary is different! Each has its own founding document, which outlines which activities the sanctuary will manage. San Luis Obispo could have a sanctuary that only regulates offshore oil and gas drilling.

In other words, the establishment and management of a national marine sanctuary is based on local control and input from the community.

It is up to everyone with a stake in the environmental health of the Central Coast to grasp the reality of both recent history and the future threats coming our way (see sidebar at right) and support by real action line: we need a permanent solution for protection along our coast.

That’s why Sierra Club is advocating for the creation of a Central Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

### Fracking in Coastal Watersheds

By the Environmental Defense Center

In August 2011, EDC research uncovered that Occidental Petroleum Company disclosed that on May 27, 2011, it had fracked an oil well in the Rincon field, located between the cities of Ventura and Carpinteria, and situated within steep coastal hills that drain straight into the ocean.

The fracking operation was conducted at an altitude of 8,034 feet and required more than 360,000 gallons of water. In March, an oil spill from the Rincon field ruptured a pipeline, releasing approximately 210 gallons of oil on the beach between Hobson and Faria County Parks. EDC is working to determine whether more fracking operations are planned within Ventura County, and to advocate for full environmental analysis and disclosure before any future projects are approved.

### Bird Sanctuary Taking Off

After many months of determined effort by a local resident (see “Sanctuary for the Swallows,” Oct. 2012), the Avila Valley Advisory Council on March 11 formally voted to recommend to the County Board of Supervisors that Avila Beach be declared a bird sanctuary.

That outcome — brought about by lobbying, networking, research, a petition drive, videos, preparation of advisory council packets and enlistment of testimony from local business owners and Dept. of Fish and Wildlife personnel over those many months — was the work of local bird lover Shirley Goetz. Shirley first came to the Sierra Club nine years ago to ask for our help in preserving the local cliff swallow population and educating residents on the legal protections for the species under federal law (see “Swallows Saved, Same,” Sept. 2004).

We’ve been working with her ever since, as she broadened her vision and sharpened her determination to have Avila declared a sanctuary and declare itself a bird sanctuary.

All bird lovers should stay alert for the formal agendizing of the bird sanctuary declaration by the Board of Supervisors and make sure to show up at that meeting to say a few good words for the birds.
**Fight the Power**

Utilities are trying to take away your right to go solar.

The big utilities are launching a massive disinformation campaign to mislead the public, private and decision-makers, in the hopes of halting the trend towards rooftop solar installations.

First in their sights: programs that allow Californians to offset their energy bills with rooftop solar, and innovative proposals to bring those programs to telephone companies.

California has a long way to go before everyone can use clean energy, but if utilities succeed in ending new rooftop solar programs, we’re never going to get there.

Thanks in large part to the standard U.S. electrical distribution system, utilities have been able to lock consumers into expensive ratepayer-funded energy monopolies for 100 years. It’s a scary prospect for boardrooms that have relied on monopoly status for 100 years. Per the *Mercury News*:

> "Utilities make money by getting a guaranteed rate of return on the infrastructure they build, such as transmission lines or power plants, using ratepayers' money. Building more infrastructure is better for their bottom line. Rooftop solar reduces the need to add power plants. It's good for our electricity grid, but it upsets the status quo that has boosted utilities' revenues for so long."

That’s why the utilities are distorting the truth about solar programs that benefit regular working Californians, and are working overtime to stop threats to their guaranteed profits. They don’t let the utilities prevent Californians from benefits from solar, just so they can continue their guaranteed profits and monopoly over our energy.

Tell your representatives in Sacramento: Don’t buy the utility lies! We need more, not less rooftop solar in California! We are setting up a My Generation Campaign Rapid Responder listserv, in the hopes that many of you will enlist in the effort to help bring local clean energy to California. The purpose of this listserv is to keep you apprised of the campaign’s work but primarily, alert you to urgent intimidations to promote it — and solicit support. It seems on a nearly daily basis some opportunity arises, from the very quick and easy (letters to the editor, calls to legislators) to bigger actions like a drop by with a legislator, writing an op-ed, gathering petitions, or hosting a house party. The bottom line is this: utilities have made to halt the gains that the standard U.S. electrical distribution system has brought to the public.

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**LNG**

LNG from the U.S., including environmental and health impacts, as well as loss of jobs across many affected industries.

- Complete a full environmental impact analysis for exporting natural gas, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. As the Environmental Protection Agency has repeatedly advised, a comprehensive environmental impact statement is essential to understanding the public health and environmental implications of increased domestic gas drilling.

The comments were submitted by the Sierra Club—along with Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wyoming Chapters—To the public notice by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Federal Register:

> "The decision truly is a victory for regular working Californians, and are working overtime to stop threats to their guaranteed profits. They don’t let the utilities prevent Californians from benefits from solar, just so they can continue their guaranteed profits and monopoly over our energy.

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Woodsman, Where’s Your Permit?

By Lynne Harkins

PG&E foresters say that tree cutting trucks and teams recently converging on Cambria were just for regular, routine maintenance. This is the classification that distinguishes minor tree trimming and the removal of shrubs and saplings from the removal of major vegetation, which is considered development in the Coastal Zone and requires a Coastal Development Permit.

In addition to the “regular” work, a PG&E forester who was involved in the 2009 decimation/removals of mature and healthy Monterey Pines in Cambria came to my door to inform me about what he described as a “special” upcoming tree removal project. He was looking for my approval to take out two big eucalyptus trees in front of my house. He also referred to nearby mature pines, and I later saw some marked with the blue paint that means PG&E removal is in the works.

Below is a photo of the five vehicles deploying into the forest every day as I write. How can this “regular” work not entail major vegetation removal, in addition to the “special” work? It does not seem credible that PG&E’s activities aren’t having a significant impact on the forest.

I informed the Cambria Forest Committee at its March 13th meeting of the possibility of another forest-unfriendly initiative coming to Cambria from PG&E. The CPC was unaware. Forest Committee members say that PG&E’s mitigation planting of 300 trees—a result of the Coastal Commission’s enforcement action due to the lack of permitting in 2009—has only just now been accomplished.

While that was good news, the fact that the trees ended up on ranch property up San Simeon Creek Road, not in the watershed where the tree removals occurred, is less than optimal. This work is scheduled for the Cambria CSD-designated “Special Projects Area #2.” No further building will be permitted in this area, an acknowledgement of its value as a Monterey Pine forest and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area.

The 2009 PG&E forest offensive occurred in “Special Project Area #1” despite its habitat status and value. Our best hope is that the Coastal Commission will weigh in in a timely fashion to review this project and protect the forest.

Messer Land & Development Company has installed across several segments of Huasna Road. The road passes through the company’s vast property holdings before entering the national forest. Messer is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Queen City Investments in Long Beach, a corporation with assets exceeding $4 billion.

Since the 1940s, Messer and prior landowners have installed a series of gates across the road to restrict public access.

Various forest user groups - hunters, hikers, campers, and equestrians — along with the Forest Service, the County of San Luis Obispo, and members of Congress, have tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a long-term solution with the landowner.

To permanently restore public access to the area, Los Padres ForestWatch is building a legal case in the event that a mutually-agreeable resolution cannot be reached with the landowner.

Under long-standing California law dating back to the 1850s and affirmed several times by the California Supreme Court, a public right-of-way can be established by showing five years of continuous public use prior to 1972.

No admittance. A young Huasuan Valley Resident and his family were recently turned away from a camping trip after finding this makeshift barricade across the road, blocking public access to campgrounds and hiking trails.

Hope to see you soon! ForestWatch is working to ensure that the public can once again enjoy this beautiful view of Pine Ridge and the Stony Creek watershed in the Los Padres National Forest.

Los Padres continued from page 3

1. Pre-1972 Evidence of Access. If you visited this area prior to 1972, or know of people who did, please contact us to tell us your stories and help us restore public access to this area. Maps and photographs of the area older than 1972 will also help us. Email us at info@lpfw.org, call us at (805) 617-4610 ext. 1, or write to us at ForestWatch, Attn: Huasna Access, PO Box 831, Santa Barbara, CA 93102.

2. Donate to Our Huasna Access Fund. This is a long-term effort that will require a significant investment of time to research, negotiate an easement with the landowner, and potentially file a lawsuit if we’re unable to reach agreement. Donations to the Huasna Access Fund will ensure that we have the resources necessary to pursue this case.

3. Forward this to your friends. Help us get the word out to your friends who might have used the area before 1972, or who might otherwise want to help. Read more on our website at lpfw.org

Thank you for your support as we work to restore public access to this beautiful corner of the great outdoors in the Los Padres National Forest.

TAKE ACTION
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is April 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
sierralu88@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

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.

Santa Lucian • April 2013
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Outings and Activities Calendar

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. Paws 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.

Fri-Sun, Apr. 5th-7th. Carrizo Plains Outing. Two nights camping at Selby Rocks car camping. Fire and no reserved sites, for hikes through areas of often stunning wildflowers. Gather at camp on Saturday 9 a.m., campout to day hike to be determined. Bring your own food, water, sturdy shoes, camping material. Info.: Carlos Duzan, Saavedra, 546-0317.

Sat., April 13th, 8 a.m. Hike to Machesnas Mountain. 12-15 mile hike, 3000 ft. elevation gain, through the Machesnas Wilderness. Starting from American Canyon Campground, we will climb 1500 ft. to an open meadow and pond below Machesnas Mt. After lunch we will climb several hundred feet to ridge overlooking the Carrizo Plain, then descend to a lush green valley, before ascending to our final rest stop. Plenty of wildflowers and pleasant weather likely. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes, and plan to be out all day. Some of us may go to the Pozo Saloon after, if open. Meet at Pacific Beverage Company in Santa Margarita. This is not a beginner’s hike! Hikers must RSVP by 1 May I may limit the number of people on the hike. Contact Joe Morris (473-3694). Rain or threat of rain cancels. Bring Plenty of Water!


Sun., April 21st, 10 a.m. Sycamore Springs Trekking-Pole Hike. 2-mile hike to model the benefits of using trekking poles, 700 feet elevation change. Meet near the entrance of Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Resort. Confirm with leader, David Georgi. 458-5575 or polecatleader@gmail.com.

Explore our newest national park (est. 2015) and close to SLO. It’s less than 3 hrs. drive to the east entrance and location of the main visitors’ center and most scenic trails. Enjoy two nights camping plus socially-paced hikes past spectacular rock spires and gorges, profuse spring wildflowers, talus caves, and critical habitat for California condors. There will be a leisure time and a spirited campfire sing-along. You can arrive any time after 3 p.m. on Friday; departure by noon Sunday. Tents only; no RVs. Bring all needed camp gear and food plus entree for potluck salad on Saturday night. Fee covers group campground fees, parking, and snacks on Saturday evening, children ages 12 welcome with parents. Entrance fee of $5 per car. Carpooling is essential due to limited parking—a participant list will be sent to campers beforehand. To reserve, send 2 self-addressed, stamped envelopes, H and C phones, and check for $40 (per person) made out to “Sierra Club” to Joe Morris, 533 Pismo St., #4, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Info.: 549-0355. Limit of 18. No refunds can be given for cancellations after April 19th if replacement not found.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

April 7-9: May 5-7; June 2-4; July 21-23; Aug. 25-27; Sept. 15-17

Join us for a 3-day, 3-island, live-aboard cruise to Channel Islands National Park. Hike wild, windswept trails bordered by blazing wildflowers, kayak rugged coastlines. Marvel at pristine waters teeming with frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on unusual sea and land birds. Watch for the endangered island fox. Look for reminders of the Chumash people who were here for thousands of years. Or just relax at sea. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara.

Sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden

Sat., May 4, 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. The Art of Nature – Pine Needle Basketry Workshop

The soft crunch of pine needles under your feet releases a cool, reminiscent smell. There they are, right at your feet, the main material for your unique creation, a pine needle basket. You don’t need a loom or mountains of materials for these special creations. Join artist Elizabeth Bear at the Botanical Garden as she guides budding basket weavers through the art of pine needle basket weaving. Attendees will be led through the process of creating fragrant and sustainable pieces of artwork at this intimate workshop. Each piece is as unique as the person who creates it. This is a wonderful Mother’s Day activity and the baskets 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 insight. Each participant will make their own basket and start a second basket to work on at home. Ms. Bear’s artwork will be displayed at the 9th Annual Art Eco show at the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden. Workshop cost is $95 for Garden members, $120 for non-members. Limited class size. To register call 541-1400 x304, or go to slobg.org. For more information call 805-543-0706 or holtzjhln@aol.com.

The Sierra Club Needs You!

Become an Outings Leader

• 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
djl9432@earthlink.net

2013 Sierra Club Calendar

Last chance sale

wall or desk calendar: $7.00

To order, call: 805-543-7051

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

To order, call: 805-543-7051

www.santaluca.sierrclub.org

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