On April 15, the Grover Beach City Council voted to send a letter to the County Board of Supervisors supporting the sale of the 584-acre parcel of County-owned land in the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area known as the La Grande Tract, and the allocation of funds in the next state budget to make the purchase. The City agreed to send the letter after Mayor Debbie Peterson was approached by Diana Perez, a member of the state Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission. Perez spent the first two months of this year meeting and calling Peterson and other local elected officials, with an emphasis on those members of the board of the Air Pollution Control District known to be hostile to the APCD’s dust control rule, passed by a majority vote over the vocal objections of State Parks and the off-road recreational community.

At the March 23 meeting of the OHMVR Commission, Perez said she “would like to see the opportunity to purchase the La Grande Tract.” State Parks staff replied that funds which the OHV Division has previously appropriated to purchase the land will expire in June, but they are working to reappropriate funds for that purpose in the next fiscal year.

We have told the Board that the sale of the La Grande Tract is not a course of action the county should contemplate pursuing at any time in the near future. The California Department of Parks and Recreation has permitted ORV use on the La Grande Tract since it entered into a lease and operating agreement with San Luis Obispo County in 1982. Consistent with the Coastal Act, in 1981 the County submitted a draft Local Coastal Program to the California Coastal Commission for review. After a series of negotiations, the Commission certified the County’s Land Use Plan in 1988. South County Coastal Planning Area Standards, which contain portions of the County’s LCP, contain specific standards for the development and operation of the ODSVRA.

The two area standards of particular relevance are:

4. General Development Plan [for ODSVRA] shall be revised in accordance with the Local Coastal Plan (LCP).

9. ORV use shall be permitted only in identified unfenced vehicular use areas. These areas are identified in Figure 4. No ORV use will be allowed in the designated natural areas. These buffer areas reflect areas required for habitat protection. ORV use is prohibited in vegetated areas. ORV use of the county held portion (generally lying between the sandy beach and Dune Lakes) shall be limited to the Sand Highway west to the sandy beach. This will minimize conflict with the Dune Lake Properties to the east and the State Department of Parks and Recreation Dune Preserve to the north. The map of ORV use areas continues on page 10.

In order for the Chapter to meet our basic obligations, (rent, utilities, printing, and paying our sole part-time staffer), we need at least 300 members to go to www.santalucia.sierraclub.org and sign up for an automatic contribution of at least $20 per month.

Alternatively, you can set up a monthly donation with your bank using a monthly bank check. The service, called Bill Pay, is free to anyone with a bank account. All you need to give the bank besides your own account info is the date on which you want the check sent every month, and the name and address of the person or business you want it sent to. (Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406).

Since our “20 from 300” campaign began in January, our generous members have gotten us nearly 42% of the way toward our goal of the equivalent of $20 per month from 300 people.

Onward!
Judgment Day for the Paso Basin

The Supervisors are in a hole. Will they keep digging?

We are about to find out who can actually get serious about the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin and who can’t.

Here’s what “getting serious” would look like: an urgency ordinance requires the expansion of irrigated agriculture (aka big vineyards) and/or the proliferation of the huge ag ponds that vineyards use for frost control, and any other measures that will squarely address the issue of the new pumping of ag water out of a ground-water basin that’s in distress.

Here’s what “getting serious” would not look like: more voluntary “best management practices” suggestions, low-interest loans to drill more and deeper wells, San Luis Obispo County fees for permits to drill more/deeper wells, green-lighting big infrastructure projects that won’t be delivering any water until ten years from now, the expression of the hope that the State Water Project might someday deliver 100 percent of its promised allocations, or hey ask your neighbor to track some of his surplus water over to your place.

And here, based on their contributions to this measure, the Paso Basin Supervisors, Frank Mecham, Paul Texiera, and Debbie Arnold. It has been painful to watch the board majority struggle to come to grips — or avoid coming to grips — with an issue for which any real resolution cannot but help impact the biggest economic power in the county, and thereby cannot help negatively impacting the protection of our shared groundwater resources, a public asset that’s in distress.

The Paso Basin Supervisors, Mecham and Arnold, are the absentee “big pumpers” of the Paso Basin. This is a reality and there’s the acceptance of this reality and we need to do something about it quick.

Suie Harvey of North County Watch pointed out that vineyards use 70 percent of the water consumed annually in the basin — which works out to 2.3 acre feet per year, not the 1 acre foot the vineyards claim — and challenged the Board to take steps to “show in good faith that you’re going to protect the rural residential land owner.” Those steps would include flow meters, an urgency moratorium on the expansion of irrigated agriculture, and a moratorium on wells over five inches in diameter. Harvey pointed out that the right to water of the 18,250 residents of the affected area is superior to the right of ag operations.

“California Water Code Section 106: It is hereby declared to be the established policy of this State that the use of water for domestic purposes is the highest use of water and that the next highest use is for irrigation.”

Only one tea-partying gentleman turned up to warn everyone about the vast Agenda 21 conspiracy that pops up at every public meeting (this time in the context of “water confisca- tion” as part of a plot to depopulate the half the North American land mass). Others asserted that there must be more water somewhere, we should somehow be able to recharge the basin, streams are not being allowed to flow into the basin.

Public Works Director Paavo Ogren and the Blue Ribbon Groundwater Basin Committee like to talk about a ten-mile underground pipe from Lake San Antonio to Nacimiento, or piping Santa Margarita River water over the backside of the lake, dumping it into the Huer Huer, and then capturing it north of the Estrella and the Huer Huer come into the Salinas. Anything to avoid living within our means.

Gibson, who rightly zeroes in on the real issue — demand manage- ment — tagged this wishful thinking, saying “we’re not going to supply our way out of this problem.”

Mecham reiterated his belief that “there’s no water problem, it’s infrastructure” — i.e. we just need more pipes to bring water in from someplace else, and this is “not like something we haven’t experimented with in the past” — because, you know, droughts.

After mistakenly equating a drought with the permanent depletion and contamination of a ground-water basin, Mecham dog-whistled his base with some of the impres- sionistic free-association scatting that has become his trademark, saying he was concerned about “the land-use-immer that we seem to want to be so progressive trying to put on things.”

Mecham had previously demonstrated Olympian levels of unreasonableness about the Paso basin at the Board’s Sept. 25, 2012, meeting, in a Who’s-on-first? exchange with Gibson that he reproduced for the edification of our readers (See “What Shark?,” Nov./Dec. 2012).
The high seismic jeopardy of fracking our Monterey shale

By Ralph Bishop, Nipomo Creek Dogs

I’ve heard a lot of debate points concerning fracking the Monterey Shale, but the most powerful and foundational one, based on irrefutable fact, has not been offered.

Unlike other areas in the country that have relatively stable geological formations which are traditionally protected by the federal government, our geologic province, from the San Andreas Fault westward, is unique, as is its coastal geography.

Our bedrock foundation exists as an active crushing point where two major teatonic plates collide. Our bedrock foundation is composed of a chaotic wrackage of twisted and shattered geological shards of once-stable formations known as “terranes” or individual rock units that are three dimensional in nature and descend to great depths in this mantle.

Between each terrane are interconnected fissures that can and do act as conduits for fluid (oil, water) transfer as well as gas volatiles, and have a great influence on aquifer development. These fissures not only exist along main trending faults such as the San Andreas or the Nacimiento that has caused the uplift of our Santa Lucia range. Because these faults are active, the angle at which the unrelenting force of the Pacific Plate abuts the North American plate, there are multitudes of transverse faults that run off of and between trending faults at every conceivable angle, multiplying fluid transfer conduits geometrically in numbers beyond comprehension.

Our coast does not move as a single unit. Each of the many terranes can and do move independently of one another. It is when one of these terranes jacks downward into our inexorable seismic creep that pressure builds and snaps, causing an earthquake.

When this quake, this movement maintains fissures as viable conduits for fluid transfer.

A case in point: When the Cayucos earthquake rattled the Nacimiento fault, new sulfur springs erupted in Paso Robles. Springs dried up and some wells once fresh turned sulfurous miles from the epicenter in a lateral or transverse direction. Given this reality, if Huasna were fracked, could fluid transfer through interconnected fissures reach Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo, or active hot springs at Avila Beach?

Will any of the chemical elements involved in fracking combine with sulfur molecules? This would allow those chemicals to be absorbed through your skin while lolling in Avila’s hot tubs.

Can the frackers legitimately deny the geological jeopardy unique to our shattered and active plate boundary?

Given the creep and quake that constantly affect our extant geological wrackage, can the oil companies assure us that their vertical and horizontal hydraulic fracturing will not be prone to a high degree of failure? If so, then what will that tell us about our rapidly over-draining aquifers?

A few years ago, I produced a photo-documented report on the seismic setting of Diablo Canyon that relates directly to this issue. “Diablo Canyon Area: Seismic Hazard of the Geological Bedrock” was a photographic day tour from Avila Beach, over See Canyon and on to Montana de Oro. I urge anyone concerned with the fracking issue to take this tour and see with your own eyes the chaotic nature of our local geological foundation, where the Monterey shale is prominently exposed. You can download the report at santalucia.sierracclub.org/documents/relreport-20canyon20area.pdf, free of charge.

I do not have an ideological aversion to responsible oil production; however, given the unsalvageable reality of our subterranean foundation, common sense demands I question the wisdom of fracking our active plate boundary.

The Western Petroleum Association has said that fracking regulation should take place at State level. Because water has become our most diminished resource, already polluted and in serious overdraft, my suggestion is to take your concerns to the State Water Board using our unique geological as a foundational debate point. On two occasions, Mr. Daniel Diaz and I, average citizens with minimal funds, disposable cameras and advanced computer skills – including the youthfulness of Cal Poly students (what a great educational project) who could reproduce our success.

Our second success came when we confronted Conoco concerning their chemical pollution, our photo-documentation and inappropriate disposal of agricultural drip tubing and attendant chemical pollution, our photo-documentation changed our regional regulations with great success on the ground today.

Our second success came when we confronted Conoco concerning their large oil spill under Nipomo Creek. Using the same photo-documentation procedure (spending only $300), we forced them to live up to their legal liability and clean up the creek.

Certainly there are more than two old average citizens here who are concerned about fracking, with better cameras and advanced computer skills – including the youthfulness of Cal Poly students (what a great educational project) who could reproduce our success.

One final suggestion: Never fudge the truth. The truth has no agenda. The flame of truth will consume all but itself! And pray to the Spirit of Waters Past.
Mercury Rising

It’s now known that there’s something nasty in Santa Rosa Creek. It would be good to know how much, and how bad.

April 13, 2013
Hand-delivered

Dear Congresswoman Capps,

Thank you for your work and for being a U.S. Representative for whom I feel genuine admiration.

Today I am seeking you out to implore you to direct the capacities of your office to help stop the further entry of mercury and to clean up its legacy deposits in the beautiful, but imperiled, Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria. As you know, inorganic mercury (Hg) can become a potent bioaccumulative neurotoxin which can have lethal consequences when transformed into organic methylmercury. I was stunned to learn of its so far unremediated presence in the SR Creek watershed. This leaves an opening for the Hg to be converted by sediment bacteria into the toxic bioavailable methylmercury form.

Some background:

The Oceanic mercury mine and mill operated intermittently into the 1940’s. They are above Curti Creek just a short distance from where Curti converges with Santa Rosa Creek -- a mere 7 miles up creek from Cambria’s glorious coast and near shore waters...the southern end of The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

The mine/mill produced about 2.8 million pounds of liquid mercury -- quicksilver -- in eras when environmental safeguards were unknown.

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB) did some study of the area in the early 90s. An order for clean-up was issued by the RWQCB in the late 90s. It has not been acted on or enforced to date.

Astonished and frustrated by this state of affairs, I did some testing of sediment in the SR creek myself--some of it with support from the Santa Lucia chapter of the Sierra Club. The levels of mercury I found ranged from 120 parts per billion at the Main St. Bridge up to 554 ppb at the mouth of the creek. (170 ppb is designated as level for threshold effects for aquatic life, per the Santa Rosa Creek Watershed Management Plan.)

Right now, the largely federally funded bridge replacement over SR Creek at that same Main St. has the potential to aggravate the mercury situation by disturbing legacy Hg deposits in creek sediments, possibly degrading both surface and groundwater quality. The Regional Board required mercury testing for the project, just done in January and March of 2013. They found -- at deeper levels than I tested -- anywhere from 2x to more than 25x more Hg than I did back in 2009.

The NEPA Environmental Assessment process which should have assessed the Hg potential for testing for the project, just done in January and March of 2013. They found -- at deeper levels than I tested -- anywhere from 2x to more than 25x more Hg than I did back in 2009.

The NEPA Environmental Assessment process which should have assessed the Hg potential for adverse effects was put aside by Caltrans, which gave the project a Categorical Exclusion (CE) -- which I believe is not permissible because SR Creek is federally designated “Critical Habitat” for steelhead, let alone the possible public health implications. Caltrans maintains that their CE is sufficient.

There’s much more that’s gone on and I have more detail and documentation for everything if your office contacts me.

So one issue is the urgent need for mine and mill remediation, and the time seems right given that EPA is working on the other side of the coast range to deal with the Klau and Buena Vista mine problems near Templeton/ Paso Robles. The other is fully assessing/delivering on the bridge project that could aggravate the situation. The Main St. bridge is structurally quite adequate -- it is safe for use now and into the future until remedies for the SR Creek dilemma are found, funded and implemented.

I invite you to do the right thing here and to attend to something that you likely have not been told of, but as a health-oriented person, you will appreciate the need for addressing this matter. I would gladly volunteer to help your office in any way possible to get the aid to Santa Rosa Creek/watershed that it needs to heal!

Thank you for your time and kind attention.

Sincerely,

Lynne Harkins
Cambria

--

Hand-delivered April 13, 2013

“Owning property in Paso Robles is like being on the Titanic, except we’re not heading for an iceberg, we’re headed for a dust bowl. It’s time to choose human life over 30,000 acres of grapes.”

Arnold and Texiera could not actually bring themselves to say so.

Hill said “I’m not sure that we’re sending them away utterly convinced that we’ve done everything in our power.”

Gibson replied “I think the question might be rephrased ‘Are we sending them away asking have we done anything?’ Have we made use of all the land use authority that this board has at our disposal?”

All this set the stage for the date (tentatively June 18, but more likely sometime in August) when Public Works staff will come back to the board with a full suite of options and recommendations, and the board majority will have to decide, right there in public, what they’re going to do. And if they don’t want to pass an urgency land use ordinance, they are going to have to phrase their failure to do so in such a way that they don’t look like they’re in the pocket of Big Grape and are not telling the owners of 6,000 rapidly depleting residential wells to drop dead because the big money wants to keep the party going and the tap open until there’s nothing left.

It should be an interesting meeting.

Matthew Geyer
It should be an interesting meeting.
The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, sponsored by the Santa Lucia Chapter, has received a Sierra Club Activist Network grant of $2,000 to recruit new leaders on California's nuclear power issues. The Alliance has been testifying at the Public Utilities Commission hearings on the proposed restart of the beleaguered San Onofre reactors, and is sponsoring a Sierra Club-supported bill in the state legislature addressing relicensing costs. "Addressing the economics of nuclear power is not preempted by federal authority, and we hope this legislation will provide a template and precedent for other states with aging reactors," said A4NR Executive Director Rochelle Becker. The Alliance plans to recruit and train ten new leaders from key Orange County, San Diego and San Luis Obispo reactor communities, and focus on the economic impacts of nuclear power. Working to develop informed activists as well as training others to enhance their lobbying skills will provide a challenge, as the base of support for opposition to nuclear power has not traditionally focused on economic issues. Recruits will learn how to craft arguments to address and engage potentially nontraditional allies such as chambers of commerce, Rotary groups and unions.

The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility knows the nuclear industry's weakest point.
Don’t Move the Trees, Bury the Wires

PG&E is running Cambria’s forest out of town

“Fear not, till Birnam wood
do come to Dunstable.”
— Wm. Shakespeare, Macbeth

By REAP (Ratepayers for Ecologically-Aligned Power)

PG&E engaged in the heedless, unprompted destruction of scores of mature, healthy and genetically important Monterey pine trees in Cambria’s Lodge Hill area in 2009. Now PG&E is looking for an after-the-fact permit and approval for having planted 300 Monterey pine seedlings well north of the rest of the forest. This is purported mitigation for its act of destruction of this rare forest ecosystem. Moving the forest outside of the watershed — “1.5 miles northeast of the community of Cambria” — as a convenience for PG&E ignores the need for a full environmental review of the cumulative impacts of PG&E’s routine maintenance.

You might wonder: “Why did PG&E kill the pines?” PG&E claimed those trees might be a future hazard to their wires; a “reliability” issue — no discussion, no proof of that claim, no public input; they just sent in the chainsaws and chipped them away to create quick work of bringing down those pines in the interests of PG&E’s future bottom-line. This is the corporate m.o. that would later press for an equally heedless destruction of marine life habitat through PG&E’s ill-conceived high-energy seismic survey. Fortunately, the Coastal Commission got there first, and disaster was averted.

But before the Coastal Commission intervened on Cambria Monterey Pine Forest back in the summer of 2009 — after the SLO County Sheriff and PG&E officer told all callers that he knew about the action and stated (falsely) that it was a permitted activity — the forest was suffused with the smell of the sap that oozed from shattered pines. The mahoganny was strewn all along Ardath Road and the side streets on the way to the ocean. Exposed grains and rich hues of bark bore mute witness to false profits — the dispatch of chainsaws to visit early death on these cone-bearing sky dancers. How can a national treasure, one of only five remaining sky dancers. How can a national

Don’t miss out on the rooftop revolution!

We continue to be amazed by the number of people interested in going solar with Sierra Club. So far this year, 288 of your neighbors have requested a solar quote from our solar partner, Sungevity. If you haven’t had a chance to request a solar quote yet, get started today. It takes less than 3 minutes to request your quote! Someone from Sungevity will follow-up with you to discuss if solar is right for your home.

Getting solar panels installed on your house is a great way to save money and support your local Sierra Club chapter. With new solar leasing options, there is little or no upfront cost. Many customers save right from day one and savings grow as energy rates rise.

In addition to shrinking your carbon footprint, going solar with Sungevity helps support Sierra Club’s work to protect California’s environment. If you get solar installed on your home, Sungevity will give you a $750 cash gift card and $750 to your Chapter of the Sierra Club.

See if solar is right for you today. It’s quick and easy to get started! Get your free evaluation now at sierracub.org/solarhomes
What a Party That Was

On May 11, the Santa Lucia Chapter’s 45th Birthday Bash fundraiser rocked the Edna Valley

Many thanks:

...to Outings Chair Joe Morris for his multimedia presentation on John Muir’s Yosemite, an all our volunteers on set-up, serving and clean-up,

...to Castoro Cellars, SIP Certified Wines, and Firestone Brewery for their donated libations, to Trader Joe’s for donating a bag of goodies,

...to all who donated items for the silent auction: Woody Combrink, Bayside Café, Clays Body Pottery, Jayne Cairn Designs, Niels and Bimmer Udsen, Aranza Marie Jewelry, Bart Alford, The Frame Shop in Los Osos, Flying M Enterprise, Thai Bounty, Captain Stew, Sub Sea Whale Watching, Humankind, Big Sky,

Apropos, Sally Loo’s, Julie Dunn, JCD Jewelry, Marcie Harvey, Kayak Shack, Elly Johnson, Lani Briceland and the Zulu Nyala Lodge,

...and, of course, to former Chapter Chair Karen Merriam for the use of the hall.

A good time was had by all... and a really good time will be had by the two lucky couples who put in the winning bids at the silent auction on two South African photo safari packages from Zulu Nyala Lodge.
Taking Issue
Reviewing problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media


Summary: PG&E’s century-old energy monopoly is feeling the heat of competition, and the utility wants to be able to nip clean, renewable local power in the bud. That means aggressive lobbying to kill off Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), the tool that allows California cities and counties to buy and incentivize renewable energy at competitive rates and keep ratepayer funds in the community instead of pouring them into the coffers of an investor-owned utility.

The PG&E filing is a bold declaration that they intend to become a “marketing utility.” What this means is that they are holding out the possibility of mega-bucks public marketing campaigns designed to kill CCA programs in local communities. The law requires utilities to “fully cooperate” with a community’s desire to implement CCA. But PG&E’s anti-CCA marketing campaigns have been anything but cooperative — they are damaging and pervasive. If PG&E prevails, other investor-owned utilities could follow suit. LEAN Energy US, on behalf of California consumers, communities and organizations who want to protect their right to pursue CCA, has filed a protest response to the PG&E Advisory Letter.

PG&E states that it “expects that at some time it will wish to express to customers or governments its views on (Community Choice Aggregation or CCA) programs that can only be expressed through an independent marketing division...”

The company “has no plans at this time” to advertise or lobby, “but we do realize that the evolution of the CCA is in its early stages and it’s reasonable to have options in the future.”

Just as PG&E was pledging cooperation, it aggressively set out to undermine the city’s plans with competing bids and continued its fiercely adversarial posture in another half-dozen realms in which it must work with the city, battles that have cost San Franciscans millions of dollars.

— “PG&E’s extreme makeover: Utility promises cooperation and green power while delivering the same old deception and big money attacks,” by Steven T. Jones, www.sfbg.com

Last year, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to switch from PG&E to CleanPowerSF, another clean energy provider, attack by a group intertwined with California’s largest utility company. An online petition posted to Change.org targets San Francisco’s CleanPowerSF initiative and urges petitioners to call for it to be halted. The group behind the Change.org petition and a second one posted on Facebook is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) 1245, a union representing Pacific Gas & Electric Co. employees. PG&E annually pumps more than 2 million metric tons of CO2 into the atmosphere. The majority of its electricity is derived from nuclear and natural gas power plants. If Clean-PowerSF manages to attract San Francisco customers who would prefer to power their homes with green energy, PG&E stands to lose.

— “PG&E union turns to Change.org to attack renewable energy program,” by Rebecca Bowe, SFBG Politics Blog, Jan. 30, 2013

Marin Clean Energy has picked up 90,000 residential, commercial and municipal buildings. Information on energy programs, rebates, financing options, and training opportunities. The information covers new and existing residential, multi-family, and commercial properties, and programs and resources available for residential, commercial, and municipal buildings. Information on energy programs is also available online at www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/Energy

Upshot: As CCA works its way to SLO, guess who is going to be “expressing its views” to its customers? Knowledge is the best defense against the onslaught of misleading political mailers and “Be afraid!” saturation bombing tactics on every local TV channel that is in our future. Go to slocleanenergy.org and get hip to CCA before PG&E tries to scare you away from it.

Avila Bird Sanctuary: Flight to the Finish

The Port San Luis Harbor District and Avila Beach Community Services District have joined the Avila Valley Advisory Council in endorsing the idea of declaring Avila Beach a bird sanctuary, a la Morro Bay (see “Bird Sanctuary Taking Off,” April). The Avila Beach Tourism Alliance and Avila Foundation are interested in supplying funds. Now all that’s needed is a resolution from the Board of Supervisors.

The County Planning Department has opened an Energy Rebate and Information Center in the Old Courthouse in downtown SLO, at the 976 Osos Street entrance. The center is located in the lobby, just outside the permit center, and contains important information about energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, rebates, financing options, and training opportunities. The information covers new and existing residential, multi-family, and commercial properties, and programs and resources available for residential, commercial, and municipal buildings. Information on energy programs is also available online at www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/Energy.
“EPA methane report further splits opinions on fracking,” by Kevin Begos, AP, The Tribune April 29, 2013. **Summary:** The EPA has lowered its estimate of how much methane — a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide — natural gas production is responsible for releasing into the atmosphere. According to “an environmental group,” the EPA’s disputed report is “great news,” and means full speed ahead for fracking.

The EPA report amounts to an estimated 20 percent reduction in the amount of methane believed to leak from natural gas operations, meaning that instead of leaking the equivalent of over a billion metric tons of CO2 over the last 20 years, the industry has only emitted 850 million tons. Break out the party hats! (The methodology of the EPA study has been sharply criticized by Cornell University researchers who found the industry’s methane emissions to be much higher.)

In the Sept. 2011 issue of Orion, Shellenberger co-authored “Evolve: a case for modernization as the road to salvation,” which downplayed global warming as no big deal. After four pages of “modernization theology,” Shellenberger & co. finally got around to stating what they were specifically promoting under that title: nuclear power and genetically engineered food. George Will, the American Enterprise Institute and the Republican National Committee are all fans of the Breakthrough Institute, for obvious reasons.

The co-founders of The Breakthrough Institute are past masters of wrapping the corporate imperative in philosophical green speak — up to a point. Joe Romm, founder of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory’s Energy Forecasting group and proprietor of the Climate Progress blog, noted in 2009: “Breakthrough has tried to create the impression they are a progressive, environmental organization dedicated to promoting clean energy — so that when they launch their umpteenth attack on progressives and environmentalists and climate scientists and clean energy they can be seen as ‘contrarians.’ Stop the pretense!”

**Upshot:** On July 28, 2012, thousands of people rallied in Washington, D.C., to move our country toward a more sustainable future where drilling for natural gas does not threaten our air and water. “Stop the Frack Attack” was organized and supported by more than a hundred environmental groups, watershed associations, clean water and clean air advocates. But one corporate think tank posing as an environmental group gives fracking a big thumbs up, and to behold: environmentalists are “split.” And behold another lazy reporter with a contrarian on speed-dial in order to create a debate.

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**“It’s time for the government to accept spent nuclear fuel,”** by Ed Halpin, The Tribune, April 24, 2013. **Summary:** According to a PG&E senior vp, the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant can generate cheap power for as long as the federal government agrees to take care of the waste. The author scolds the government for failing to fully deliver on the terms of this enormous — and thus far impossible — government subsidy that allows the nuclear industry to generate profit and not have to worry about its waste. Thanks to the Renewables100 Policy Institute’s “Pathways to 100 Percent Renewable Energy” International Conference, held in San Francisco, April 16, 2013, and the conference notes of Edward M. Markey, D-Mass., and David McCoard, Energy Climate Committee, CNRCC, Sierra Club California, for many of the responses below.

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**Says who?** Steve Berberich, CEO of California Independent System Operators, sees “tectonic changes” coming to the energy industry, driven by the economics of labor and procurement costs, upgrades of distribution, and falling costs of distributed generation (DG) — widespread small-scale local power — enabling technologies like energy storage, whose cost is decreasing. His view of the future has three phases: 1) DG grows, storage improves, biofuels expand; 2) electrification of transportation; 3) local generation predominates, with 100 percent renewables.

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**It takes a special kind of chutzpah to cite the “24/7” baseload stat while the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station is entering its 15th month of delivering zero power to customers but charging them anyway. That and Diablo Canyon’s long history of scheduled and unscheduled outages, re-fuelings, etc. aside, do we actually need 24/7 baseload power constantly feeding into and “stabilizing” the grid, as opposed to the variability of wind and solar power? Above, Mr. Berberich and the ISO Transmission Plan say no. And Dr. Eric Martinot of REN21 Global Futures Report urges going beyond this kind of outdated 20-year-old thinking about energy, saying the integration and balancing of grid renewables is technologically possible with options available now, grid stability is not longer a challenge, nuclear is not necessary, and 100 percent renewable power appears quite achievable in the electricity sector.

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**“This is great news for anybody concerned about the climate and strong proof that existing technology can be deployed to reduce methane leaks” — said Shellenberger.**

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**Without the plant, California would be much harder pressed to meet its ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals cost-effectively.**

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**Nuclear power remains essential to meeting the energy demands of the future.**

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**The plant also helps PG&E deliver some of the cleaned energy in the nation to our customers, with nearly 60 percent of our portfolio coming from renewable or carbon-free sources.**

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**Less than 20% of the power in PG&E’s energy portfolio is renewable energy. The other 40% in the oft-touted “nearly 60%” figure is nuclear and large hydroelectric, neither of which are allowable in a Renewable Energy Portfolio. Germany has set a goal of 80% renewable energy by 2050; Denmark and multiple European countries and cities are on track to meet a goal of 100 percent renewable power. PG&E is a long way from meeting “the energy demands of the future.”**

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**Upshot:** “The overarching finding of this study is that zero-CO2 U.S. economy can be achieved within the next thirty to fifty years without the use of nuclear power... A zero-CO2, nuclear-free economy is not only achievable, it is necessary for environmental protection and security.”

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Dirty Fuel Opponents Join Hands Across the Sand

Thousands of participants turned out to draw a line in the sand at approximately 100 events in 18 states and 9 countries today for the fourth annual “Hands Across the Sand” event, to demonstrate opposition to expanding offshore drilling and the use of dirty fuels as well as support for cleaner energy choices. A complete list of events can be found at www.handsacrossthesand.org.

Dirty fuels industries are pushing for an expansion of offshore drilling in U.S. waters and seismic testing for offshore oil and gas is proposed along the East Coast. Meanwhile, the same industries are seeking to advance the Keystone XL Pipeline and are destroying whole landscapes through mountain top removal coal mining. To counter these threats, Hands Across the Sand/Land participants showed leaders like President Obama the breadth of opposition to new fossil fuel exploitation and support for a clean energy economy rooted in energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy solutions such as wind, solar and geothermal.

At the Hands Across the Sand event at the Avila Pier, sponsored by the local chapters of Surfrider, Sierra Club and StopOffshoreBlasting.org, the high-energy seismic testing recently proposed for the Central Coast was also in the mix, along with the benefits that long-delayed National Marine Sanctuary status would bring in the form of permanent protection from such surveys and offshore drilling, rather than having to rely on local ballot initiatives and the good graces of state regulatory agencies.

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Dunes
continued from page 1

indicates a buffer area along these critical interface areas.

In the LCP's map of ORV use areas (“Figure 4”), the La Grande tract is marked as a buffer area. DPR has yet to revise its General Development Plan in accordance with the LCP to reflect this designation, which prohibits ORV use on the La Grande Tract. On December 4, 2006, in anticipa-
tion of the sale of the La Grande Tract to DPR, the County’s Planning Director made a determination that the sale of the La Grande Tract to DPR would be consistent with the County General Plan. His determination was appealed to the Planning Commission, which, after receiving public testimony, reversed his decision and determined that the sale would violate the General Plan and the LCP.

Specifically, the Planning Commission determined that the sale would be inconsistent with the Coastal Area Planning Standards which designate the La Grande Tract as a natural buffer area. (The Planning Commission came to this conclusion despite obvious attempts to excise all policies pertaining to the land’s long-standing “buffer” designation and omit any reference to those policies in the staff report that was supposed to serve as the basis for the Commission’s decision.)

DPR and off-road groups appealed the Planning Commission’s determination to the County Board of Supervi-
sors. In relevant part, the Board denied the appeal and upheld the determina-
tion of the Planning Commission, concluding that sale of the La Grande Tract to DPR would not be in confor-
mity with the County’s LCP and Ag/Open Space Policies. This determina-
tion was challenged in court by off-
roaders, who also argued that DPR’s General Development Plan “pre-
empted” the Local Coastal Program. This case was dismissed in 2010 at the request of the petitioners, the equiva-
 lent of a court judgment. As a result, both the authority of the LCP and the County’s determination of nonconfor-
mity are now beyond legal challenge. The California Coastal Commission has said of the proposed sale of the La Grande Tract purchase that “the sale would result in the continuation of a use that is inconsistent with the land use design-
nations established by the certified LCP” and that conflicting interpreta-
tions of allowed activities on the La Grande tract should be resolved by the emendment of an amendment to the LCP.

When the Sierra Club sued to enforce the terms of the LCP, the court ruled that it could not require that the General Development Plan of the Oceano Dunes SVRA be revised to conform to the LCP by a certain date, but essentially agreed with the Coastal Commission, observing that Standard 4 of the South County Area Plan does say that the General Development Plan of the Oceano Dunes SVRA shall be revised in accor-
dance with the Local Coastal Plan. “But does not say when.”

On March 24, 2010, the board of the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District accepted a scientific study concluding that ORV activity on the Oceano Dunes, having denuded the dunes of vegetation and destabilized sand surfaces subject to high winds, is a significant cause of particulate matter pollution in the county that exceeds threshold levels set by the EPA as hazardous to human health. The County Health Commission has urged all actions necessary to revegetate and stabilize the dunes. The health of our residents would be better served by the County using its land parcel in the ODSVRA for revegetation and dune stabilization efforts.

But the bottom line is that the County should not sell this land to DPR. The land State Parks wants to lock up for off-maders in perpetuity is land they are not supposed to be riding on. State Parks because the LCP as certified does not permit off-road recreation on the La Grande Tract. Because State Parks recently lost its bid to overturn the APCD’s dust control rule (see “OOS Readers Hit the Wall,” May) – and because the County’s ability to cancel its La Grande Tract Operating Agreement with State Parks is an effective tool to have at hand assuring compliance – the interest of State Parks’ Off-
Highway Vehicle Division in acquir-
ing the County land in the Oceano Dunes remains urgent. By the same token, so do the reasons why the County should not sell.

We urge the Board of Supervisors to retain control of its 584 acres; the state’s $4.8 million offer isn’t nearly enough to com-
penstate future generations of San Luis Obispo County residents for loss of local control.

“...we must keep the Dunes under the county’s control,” editorial opinion of The Tribune, Sept. 7, 2008
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is June 13. 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 sierrachbl@gmail.com

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Director of Gift Planning
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email: jcan@sierraclub.org

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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.

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555 Main Street
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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 wear 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.

Sat., June 8, 8:30 a.m. Rinconada/ Little Falls/Big Falls Loop. All-day, strenuous 14-mile hike on scenic roads and trails, 2000-ft. gain. It is possible to do a shorter in-and-out hike, if desired. 2 miles of hike is on Lopez Canyon Rd, which has several stream crossings, so bring sandals or other footwear to use for these crossings. Bring lunch and water. Leader will have water and first-aid kit. Poison oak present along trail. Extreme heat will postpone this hike to June 22. Meet in front of Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita.

Sun., June 9, 8 a.m. Hike in Montaña de Oro State Park. Moderately strenuous 8-9 mile loop hike, 1800 ft. gain, on Islay Rd and Barranca and Ridge Trails. Explore the backcountry of the park and enjoy great coastline views from Hazard Peak. Possibility of poison oak and ticks along route. Bring plenty of water, lunch, and/or snacks and dress for the weather. Meet at the Ridge Trailhead about 1/4 mile before the visitor center. If you reach the visitor center, you have gone too far. Leader: Chuck Tribby, 441-7547.

Sun., June 9, 9 a.m. Johnson Ranch Open Space and Irish Hills Natural Reserve Hike. Explore the new trail connecting Johnson Ranch and the Irish Hills Reserves. Total distance of the hike is 6 miles, with a 700 ft. gain, taking about 3 hours. This trail offers new perspective on the SLO area as seen from the southern hills, winding through different habitats displaying a diverse ecosystem. Meet at the Johnson Ranch Open Space trail head, located at the turn out to the intersection of South Higuera Street and Ontario Road, adjacent to Hwy 101, south of San Luis Obispo. From there we will shuttle in a few cars to the Irish Hills Reserve trail head located at the southern end of Madonna Road in San Luis Obispo (ten minutes by car). At the end of the hike, we will shuttle the drivers back to their cars at the Irish Hills. Bring water, snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat and sturdy shoes are advised. The plants, animals, and geology of the area will be discussed. Bill Waycott, (805) 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Sun., June 16, 10 a.m. Sycamore Springs Trekking-Pole Hike. 2-mile hike to model the techniques and benefits of using trekking poles, 700 ft. elevation gain. Meet near the entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Resort. Confirm beforehand with leader if coming. Leader: David Grier, 458-5575 or polec高档leader@gmail.com.

Fri-Sun., June 21-23 Southern Sierra Sojourn. Leisurely hikes to three peaks on the Kern Plateau. Camp Friday and Saturday nights + happy hours at USFS Troy Meadow campground (7800”). Saturday, climb Sherman Pk. (9000”), 5 miles rt and 11/70’ gain, followed by climb up Bald Mtn. (9182”), 6 mile rt and 155’ gain. Spectacular panoramas from both peaks. Sunday, climb Blackrock Mtn. (9057”), 1.5 mile rt, 700’ gain, on forested slope bordering the Golden Trout Wilderness. Suitable for vintage or newer climbers. Email home and work phones to reservationist, Jerry Keating, jkeatinghiker@att.net, 714-524-3862. Angeles Chapter, Sierra Club.

Sun., June 23, 9 a.m. City Walk of San Luis Obispo: Jazz Age to the Fifities. Where is the hotel where Hearst entertained his guests, the speakeasies in the twenties, and the original French Hospital? Find out and much more on a guided downtown stroll past historic stores, theaters, and hotels. Learn about SLO city life from the years of the Model T to Prohibition and World War II. Meet at building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, corner of Santa Rosa and Pacific Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Fri-Sun., June 28-July 21 200-mile walk on the Via Podiensis. This is an ancient pilgrimage route in France, averaging 12 miles/day, past architectural, historic, and culinary treasures, ending in foothills of the Pyrenees. Stay at small hotels, inns, bed & breakfasts, and even a former convent. $3,158 per person for Sierra Club members. Info.: Ed Maurer, 949-768-0417, balo@cox.net. Angeles chapter, Sierra Club.

Thurs-Sun., July 4-7, Independence Day Weekend in the Black Rock. Car-camp weekend in the Black Rock Desert, no RVs or trailers, with full list of activities. For further information, call David Book (805) 549-0355 or dpj1942@sierralink.net.

Sat., June 22, Botanical Garden: The Art of Nature – Pine Needle Basketry Workshop. You’ll find the main material for your unique creation right under your feet. You don’t need a loom or mountains of materials for these special creations. From 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 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 led through the process of creating beautiful, fragrant and sustainable pieces of artwork at this intimate workshop. Each piece is as unique as the person who creates it. If your inner artist is calling, this is the perfect time to answer! Just bring sharp scissors, imagination and a bag of lunch. Each participant will make their own basket and start a second basket to work on at home. Workshop includes a lecture on sustainable harvesting and tree kind- ness. Ms. Bear has been teaching pine needle basket weaving since 1997 in New Mexico and California. $95 for Garden members, $120 for non members. Limited size. To register call 541-1400 x304, or visit slobg.org. A $3 fee is charged for parking by County Parks in El Chorro Regional Park.


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
Sierra Club
(760) 549-0355
jmorris@sierralink.net

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

Activities sponsored by other groups

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

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 coastal lines. 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 aboard the 68’ twin diesel Truth. The cost, $590, includes bunk, all meals, snacks and beverages plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to help lead hikes, point out items of interest, and present evening programs.

To make a reservation send a $100 check, written to Sierra Club, to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. For more information call or e-mail 626-443-0706 or jholztzhln@aol.com.