Mike Brune in SLO

Sierra Club chief will speak at Cal Poly on November 4

Mark your calendar now to join the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and Cal Poly’s Biomimicry Club and Green Campus Program for a memorable evening.

Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club, is coming to SLO at 5:30 p.m. on November 4 to speak at Cal Poly’s Chumash Auditorium. Under Brune’s leadership, the Club organized our Beyond Coal campaign (part of “a grassroots rebellion that won the nation’s biggest climate victory” - Mother Jones), and Beyond Oil and Gas campaigns. He is the author of Coming Clean — Breaking America’s Addiction to Oil and Coal and blogs for the Huffington Post and Daily Kos.

Tickets are $20 general admission, $10 for students with i.d. You can purchase tickets at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org. Click the “Donate” button and select student or general & number of tickets. Or send an e-mail to sierralucia8@gmail.com to request tickets and pay at the door. All proceeds will go to supporting the work of the Santa Lucia Chapter.

Walking the talk Sierra Club Executive director Michael Brune, handcuffed to the White House fence in opposition to the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, Feb. 13, 2013. Brune is the first Sierra Club leader to be arrested in an act of civil disobedience in the Club’s 120-year history.

Los Osos Habitat Plan Gets Underway

After a long delay, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service has begun the process of creating a Habitat Conservation Plan for Los Osos, with the goal of maximizing the benefits of conservation measures for multiple species. When completed, the HCP will cover approximately 3,560 acres bordered by the Morro Bay Estuary, Morro Bay State Park, Los Osos Creek, and Montana de Oro State Park — some of the most environmentally sensitive habitat in the county.

The plan will set the maximum development-related “take” allowed for federally listed threatened or endangered species. The law defines “take” as any action that would harass or harm listed species. Harm includes sig-nificant habitat modifi-
cations or degradation or impairment of essential behavior patterns. Any permitted take must be minimized and mitigated and must not reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species.

Two public scoping meetings will be held to provide the public with a general understanding of the background of the proposed LOHCP and activities it would cover, and alternatives for the draft Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. Suggestions on the scope of issues and alternatives for the USFWS to consider when drafting the EA or EIS will be solicited. The meetings will be held at the South Bay Community Center, 2180 Palsades Avenue, Los Osos, on Tuesday, October 8, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., and from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, contact Julie Vanderwier at (805) 644-1766.
As we go to press, Morro Bay City Attorney Rob Schultz and City Manager Andrea Leuker have not been dismissed from their positions. The image of a city up in arms against the city council majority complementing this action has been spread across multiple front pages. A notice of intent to circulate a recall petition against Mayor Jamie Irons has been filed by the mayor’s political opponents.

Sudden self-made legal scholars have proclaimed their right to know the details of a confidential personnel matter. The Tribune has threatened to hurl a dreaded brickbat if it doesn’t get some answers soon on exactly why Mayor Irons is seeking the termination of the City’s senior staff.

The cry has resounded throughout the city: Why is this happening? As the Morro Bay City Council doesn’t confide in us any more than it informs anybody else about the details of personnel matters, we can’t definitively answer that question.

We have been paying attention for the last few years. We suspect it is pertinent to note that Mr. Schultz and Ms. Leuker oversaw the total botch of version 1.0 of the attempt to replace the Morro Bay/Cayucos wastewater treatment plant, the most expensive public works project in the history of either community. Throughout that years-long debacle, the City Club, Surfrider, the SLO Coast Journal, Morro Bay Planning Commission, and the staff of the California Coastal Commission, along with hundreds of local residents in dozens of public meetings, told the city council and Cayucos Sanitary District they were going the wrong way. The project’s Environmental Impact Report was defective; the project as designed contained multiple violations of the city’s Local Coastal Plan and the California Coastal Act; failing to include the recycling of treated wastewater was a mistake, etc. Most fundamentally: this is no longer the 1950s and the City would never get a permit to put a new sewer plant on a beach. Two consecutive city councils ignored these warnings because city staff assured them that everything would be okay. Staff continued to make those assurances even after the Coastal Commission found that appeals of the project raised substantial issues of conformity with the Coastal Act and put the City on notice that the project was highly unlikely to receive a Coastal Development Permit.

The voters saw what was coming, and in June 2012 voted out every city council incumbent on the ballot who had gone along with the project.

With every light on the board flashing red, and all the changes in the political situation in Morro Bay, the voters saw what was coming, and in June 2012 voted out every city council incumbent on the ballot who had gone along with the project. Staff continued to make those assurances even after the Coastal Commission found that appeals of the project raised substantial issues of conformity with the Coastal Act and put the City on notice that the project was highly unlikely to receive a Coastal Development Permit. The voters saw what was coming, and in June 2012 voted out every city council incumbent on the ballot who had gone along with the project. Staff continued to make those assurances even after the Coastal Commission found that appeals of the project raised substantial issues of conformity with the Coastal Act and put the City on notice that the project was highly unlikely to receive a Coastal Development Permit. The voters saw what was coming, and in June 2012 voted out every city council incumbent on the ballot who had gone along with the project. Staff continued to make those assurances even after the Coastal Commission found that appeals of the project raised substantial issues of conformity with the Coastal Act and put the City on notice that the project was highly unlikely to receive a Coastal Development Permit. The voters saw what was coming, and in June 2012 voted out every city council incumbent on the ballot who had gone along with the project. Staff continued to make those assurances even after the Coastal Commission found that appeals of the project raised substantial issues of conformity with the Coastal Act and put the City on notice that the project was highly unlikely to receive a Coastal Development Permit.
Our Thanks to the Cal French Donors Circle

Without you, we wouldn’t be here

Named in honor of the Santa Lucia Chapter member who has been a prominent activist and much-honored state and national leader in the Sierra Club for more than 40 years, the Cal French Donors Circle includes Sierra Club members who contribute to the Santa Lucia Chapter in an amount of $20 or more every month or give a donation of $240 or more annually.

Donors Circle members:

- are recognized annually in the *Santa Lucian*
- receive invitations to special Donors Circle events hosted by the Chapter
- enjoy the satisfaction of being sustaining members of the chapter.

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All current members of the Cal French Donors Circle and new members who join by October 12 will receive a personal invitation to a private reception with Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune following his speech at Cal Poly’s Chumash Auditorium on Monday, November 4.

To join the Cal French Circle

- go to www.santalucia.sierraclub.org, click the “Donate” button, and sign up for an automatic contribution of at least $20 per month or $240 annually.
- set up a monthly donation with your bank using a monthly bank check. This “bill pay” service is free to anyone with a bank account. Tell your bank the date on which you want the check sent every month and our address: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

Sierra Club Hikers Save Sick Sea Lion

*by Bill Waycott*

On Sunday morning, August 25th, eight Sierra Club hikers set out from Guadalupe Dunes County Park on a trek south to Mussel Rock. As we departed, we met and exchanged greetings with the two Santa Barbara County Park (SBP) rangers, not knowing we would see them again in a few hours.

As we headed south, the tide was rising, with a high tide expected by the early afternoon. The beach was wide open and devoid of humans, but throngs of sea birds, (gulls, curlews, whimbrels, godwits, and the occasional snowy plover) blanketed the sand. We also noted seals bobbing in the surf.

On our return after reaching our destination, we walked north. Low clouds and fog had lowered the visibility to around fifty feet. With about two miles to go, we noticed ahead of us some persons trying to move what looked to be a large wooden log onto a small cart. When we reached them, we saw the two SBP rangers, along with a volunteer from the Santa Barbara Marine Mammal Center (SBMMC) were trying to load a netted female sea lion onto a small platform.
It’s All About the Food

A conversation with John DeBruin

By Stacey Hunt, Ecologistics

“It’s all about the food, Stacey,” said Santa Barbara organic rancher John deBruin, who will present a workshop on *The New Model of Getting Back to Farming Basics* at the Central Coast Bioneers Conference October 26.

At the workshop, John will discuss the new breed of farmer coming on the scene in the U.S. who is turning his back on the conventional agriculture practices currently taught in schools. Farming at its best, according to John, provides animals a full life with humane treatment, protects the environment by rebuilding soils and avoiding pollution, and provides nutritious food. John retired from his engineering career in 2003 and settled in Santa Barbara to raise grass-fed beef. I sat down recently to talk to John about his ranching philosophy.

You said that farming is your chosen retirement, but I’ve heard others claim that farming is the hardest work there is. What made you choose something so strenuous for your “golden years?”

I’ve always loved hard work. As a boy I spent a couple of summers on a cattle operation and it always stuck with me as something I wanted to do, because I liked being outdoors. I entertained the idea of living in the country and commuting to the city to work, but that never happened, so instead, I dreamed of having a ranch when I retired. We found this place in Santa Barbara. At first my wife said she would sit on the porch and drink mint juleps while she watched me work, but now she’s become sucked into our business, Best Beef Ever, and is involved in sales and marketing.

You are one of the new farmers who has turned his back on “traditional ranching.” Seems to me what you are doing is traditional and that it is modern ranching that is the anomaly. How did this get the way they are?

Modern ranching practices are commonly attributed to Earl Butz, who was Secretary of Agriculture under Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. His goal was to lower food prices in the U.S. to leave more disposable income for the middle class to increase its standard of living. During the 1970’s, 20-22% of a family’s income was spent on food. By starting government subsidies, Butz and his followers were able to lower that amount to only 9%. Of course, these lower food costs come at a great cost to the environment and to our health, and society has largely been blind to these impacts.

Describe some of those impacts.

First, we are creating food in a non-renewable way. The standard feed lot today has thousands of cattle concentrated on 220-500 acres, eating synthetic – and by synthetic I mean GMO – foods. Huge amounts of waste are concentrated there, which poison the water supply. If these same cattle were spread out over a much wider area, the waste would be spread out and put back into the environment, to feed the growing grass. Petrochemicals are used to grow crops and nutritional values are dropping, not only for us, but for the animals they are feeding to.

Second, we have a health crisis in this country, not a health care crisis. Many of our problems are what I call diseases of affluence – heart disease, diabetes, autoimmune diseases. Traditional societies, who are eating the diets that have been handed down through generations, do not have these types of problems. We have not made the connection to modern agriculture and our health problems.

What interested you in farming in a more traditional way?

When I started, I knew nothing about the cattle industry. This was a great advantage, because I had no biases of doing things a certain way to overcome. I became acquainted with people who were farming in an environmentally friendly way. I read Alan Naton’s books, including *Grass Fed to Finsih* and Stockman’s *Grass Farmer*, and Joel Salatin’s books on raising chickens, and I raise and market my beef and chicken the same way. You know, when I retired, I was actually a vegan and took a lot of ribbing as a cattle rancher. I had turned away from red meat because of its connection to cancer, but what I didn’t get at the time was that it didn’t have anything to do with the meat, per se, but with how the cattle were raised. Traditional grass-fed raised beef is just as healthful for you as fish, and now I am back to eating meat.

Why are your farming methods better for the planet? I have always heard that raising cattle has a high carbon footprint.

That is true with modern agricultural practices, however traditional methods don’t have such an impact. The discipline of biomimicry is to copy things as nature does it, and this can be practiced in agriculture. Buffalo in the Midwest roamed the plains in huge herds and would mob graze everything in sight. In the process their waste was left behind. As the herd moved on, the next thing that would happen was that flies would lay their eggs in the manure and larvae would hatch. That attracted birds who would fly in to eat the larvae. As they did this, the birds would scratch around the manure and distribute it so that it could better incorporate into the soil, aiding the return of the natural flora. I mimic this natural process on my ranch by keeping my cattle moving as they feed, and then following them with chickens. Now I don’t need to put the manure in a fertilizer spreader, saving on diesel and heavy equipment. The chickens do it for me naturally.

How can small, local farmers create an economic climate where they can make a living, but still sell affordable products?

There is a small town back East where the local farmers grow 92% of the products eaten locally. Only 8% is imported from the outside area. In comparison, Santa Barbara County exports over 90% of its ag products and then imports the same amount. The current model of modern efficiency results in maximizing the commute of our food. Restaurants buy their food from big suppliers like Cisco or Jordano, who buy it from anywhere. There doesn’t seem to be much concern about where the food comes from. The other day I wanted to buy a large quantity of local tomatoes. It took me two hours on the phone to find someone to buy from. The average person isn’t going to spend that much time. We need to make it more convenient and create a system where local farmers can easily market our products. My big market is Los Angeles, not Santa Barbara, where I live. Most of the farmers in our local farmers markets here aren’t even local! It can get very political, who is allowed to sell, and limitations are placed on farmers selling the same types of produce. I would like to see a rotation program for contracts with farmers for the markets so different farmers can rotate in and out. I don’t want to have to burn the fuel to travel to L.A. to sell my beef. Another help would be to have an organization that promotes local availability, perhaps an online system. Farmers can come together through co-ops to sell their products.

Thank you, John. We look forward to hearing your talk at the conference. Great, Stacey, and don’t forget – it’s all about the food!

John deBruin is part of the Food & Farming program at Central Coast Bioneers this year. Also featured will be a pre-conference screening of “Food Patriots” on October 16 at the Palm Theater; a workshop on October 26 on Access to Capital for Small Farmers; Financing the New Food System Economy with presenters from California FarmLink, Slow Money SLO and Farm Credit West, followed by free one-on-one financing consultations; a workshop on Growing Nutrient Dense Foods, and a Green Chef Cookoff dinner/dance with music by The Mother Cornshuckers. For more information or to tickets go to www.centralcoastbioneers.org or call 548-6597.

Central Coast Bioneers Conference is a local, self-sufficient, regional initiative that brings together community leaders and environmentalists from Santa Barbara County and beyond to explore models for sustainability and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders. More information at www.bioneers.org.
A funny thing happened on the way to the development of Fossil Point. The striking promontory, the contaminated site of the Union Oil tank farm that was responsible for the dismantling of Avila Beach, once cleaned up would become massively lucrative coastal real estate.

In 2007, an advisory group, funded by developers Chevon and Rob Rossi, convened by pro-development county supervisor Jerry Lenthal and facilitated by his hand-picked facilitator, failed to yield the desired result. As Supervisor-to-be Adam Hill wrote in the February 2007 Santa Lucian: “These facilitated focus groups are paid for by the developer, to achieve a particular outcome—support for their project. One can scarcely imagine Mr. Rossi or any other developer paying upwards of $30,000 for a process that concluded with a recommendation that the project should not go forward.”

But instead of what was supposed to happen, the opposite happened. The members of Lenthal’s Fossil Point Advisory Committee, infected by a spirit of democratic empowerment, ranked about a dozen potential options for the future use of the property and voted on them. Natural open space with hiking trails was ranked number one, with hotels and other resort amenities dead last on the list, before the facilitator could shut them down. The committee was immediately disbanded.

Six years later, at the September 2013 County Supervisors meeting, the County obliged Chevon, minus Rossi, by initiating the process of rezoning Fossil Point as recreational, “the first step in a long process that could lead to a hotel resort being built on the coastal bluffs overlooking Avila Beach,” as the Tribune put it, along with a restaurant, spa, shops, and cottages.

Why Are We Talking About a Hotel on Fossil Point?

This, the Tribune concluded, would be “a long, involved process that will require consultation with many state and local agencies as well as the public and the Chumash tribe.” It will also involve many more attempts to spin, massage, lobby, buy off or co-opt those agencies and that public. We trust the former members of the abruptly terminated 2007 Fossil Point Advisory Committee will be enthusiastic participants in that process. They should have much to say about the level of regard in which Chevon holds the wishes of local residents.

Katcho to Coast: Drop Dead

Assembly Bill 976 was the most significant piece of environmental legislation to be considered in Sacramento this year. It would have given the California Coastal Commission authority to levy fines on those who destroy coastal wetlands, block public access in beaches, or otherwise flout the rules designed to protect California’s coastal resources from inappropriate development and preserve them for future generations.

Without that fining authority, the Commission must take violators to court to enforce the Coastal Act, a process that is lengthy, expensive and infrequent, resulting in a backlog of 1,800 enforcement cases and much gaming of the system by violators. AB 976, as written and amended by the Assembly and Senate, would have assured due process for all violation actions under the state’s administrative law procedures. Passing it to assure protections for California’s coast was a “no-brainer,” as the San Jose Mercury News put it.

But it went down to defeat on September 10 thanks to the action of a handful of “abstaining” members of the State Assembly, including Katcho Achadjian, who wanted to keep economic special interests happy but avoid the stigma of a “no” vote. The Sierra Club charged San Luis Obispo County residents to urge their Assemblymember to vote for the bill.

Katcho continued on page 10

Green My Ride

Sierra Club rolls out car donation program

The Sierra Club Foundation’s new national vehicle donation program is an opportunity for Sierra Club supporters and the general public to get rid of old, polluting vehicles they no longer use, helping to clean the air and open up greener transportation alternatives while supporting the mission of the Club through the proceeds from their car donation. All cars (with the exception of collectible cars) that have an MPG of less than 27 miles per gallon will be scrapped and recycled.

Our program partner CARs will accept cars, trucks, motorcycles, RVs, ATVs, trailers, boats, planes, or farm equipment from any location in the continental U.S. To make a donation go to www.scaилосьdonations.org or call 855-33-SIERRA.

Katcho continued on page 10
How Compromise Works at the Board of Supervisors
The County has managed to look like it’s doing something to save the Paso Robles groundwater basin

On August 27, the County Supervisors deliberated on an emergency ordinance to try to save the Paso Robles groundwater basin from total depletion. At the outset of the meeting, representatives of the big north county vineyards made their position clear: they did not want any ordinance passed, and did not want their rate of pumping or new planting restricted in any way. But if an ordinance did pass, they wanted exemptions for the creation of huge agricultural ponds and no requirement for a two-to-one offset of water use for new plantings or development, meaning the land owner would have to show that he has eliminated two gallons of water from current use for every gallon of proposed future use, thereby actually taking some of the current pressure off the basin and beginning to allow it to replenish. The vineyards preferred a one-to-one offset — i.e. status quo.

Within minutes of the conclusion of that marathon meeting the consensus had formed: a successful compromise had been forged; everybody had given a little to get a little, hard-won unanimity had produced an emergency ordinance that will “stop the bleeding” of the stricken Paso basin until the ordinance and/or establishing a groundwater management district. Except that’s not really what happened. One of the most crucial measures that marathon meeting the consensus had formed: a successful compromise had been forged; everybody had given a little to get a little, hard-won unanimity had produced an emergency ordinance that will “stop the bleeding” of the stricken Paso basin until the Board will meet to consider extending the ordinance and/or establishing a groundwater management district.

Except that’s not really what happened. One of the most crucial measures proposed in the draft ordinance was the two-to-one offset of water use. Supervisors Bruce Gibson and Adam Hill argued for it; Frank Mecham and Debbie Arnold held out for a “water neutral” one-to-one offset that would simply ensure the basin continues to bleed out at the current rate and would entail the least amount of potential inconvenience for any irrigated agriculture.

Here’s the gist of how that conversation went:

GIBSON: A two-to-one offset…provides the necessary buffer to ensure one can and that’s what we’re really after.

MECHAM: You just mentioned that if you did the offset on ag there’s a lot of work that has to be done to try to figure that all out, and why would we make it even more difficult?

HILL: Anything that we’re going to do with an interim ordinance is going to be an exercise in caution, obviously. We’re putting up guard rails right now is essentially what we’re doing, and we are doing that, we should make sure that the offset does not worsen the problem, and the only way we can ensure that is to have it beyond the one-to-one. If the two-to-one is not acceptable to you, I could see one & a half. There’s just a couple of things to me that are critical. One is that. The other is projects in the pipeline. I think if we don’t cut the pipeline, if stuff’s not in the ground we need to say this is a true time-out. Those are the things that I think are most important.

MECHAM: I’m willing to move ahead with this….If we’re gonna try to bring compromise to this whole situation, then we need to be able to give a little on one side, give a little to the other side. I’ll go with, I just, I can’t move off, I can’t even do one and an eighth. I just think: one-to-one offset, and leave it at that, and I’m good.

GIBSON: You talk about the spirit of compromise. I think what Adam was speaking to just then is the essence of compromise because, to can, on a reasonable series of assumptions, say that you’re offsetting at one-and-a-half to one, that simplifies this for everybody. That speeds it up. Again, we’re trying to work together on a point of compromise. I think that’s a more than adequate point of compromise.

MECHAM: I think that other things to, you know… I just forgot what I was gonna tell you. Go to the next one.

GIBSON: The goal has been to offset water use. And the simple, here, it’s so simple and we’re making it too complicated.

GIBSON: The nature of that evidence —

HILL: I think that we should move on. I think that if we have verifiable evidence —

GIBSON: Of actual savings —

HILL: Of actual neutrality at this point, is what they’re saying. I would prefer savings; I think if we

The Big Bad Picture

A June 15 article posted to my desert.com noted the publication of a research paper in that week’s issue of the journal Science that tracked changes in water supplies across the U.S. The researchers found that “groundwater reserves, the traditional backup for water supplies during extended periods of drought, are in decline globally.” This map from the report shows 2003-2012 satellite data on “water losses in regions such as California’s Central Valley and the Southern High Plains Aquifer, caused by overuse of groundwater for irrigation.” The image data is from GRACE — the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment mission — two satellites that are able to detect total amounts of water, above and below ground, and measure changes on a monthly basis. Co-author James Famiglietti said “This is really a regional problem. It’s really happening all over the southwestern U.S., and it’s happening all over Southern California, and we can quantify it.”

Santa Lucian • October 2013
Sign Up Your Business

Now’s the time for a central coast National Marine Sanctuary

In February 2012, more than two dozen local small business owners came to the Sycamore Springs Resort in Avala Beach to hear our invited panel of staff from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the former Mayor of Santa Cruz, and Monterey County business owners describe how the national marine sanctuary to our north came to be, and how their businesses and communities have benefited from its presence and operations.

The Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1980. In 1992, Congress pondered the creation of both a Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and a Central Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Congress opted to draw an arbitrary line in the ocean just south of San Simeon, decreeing 5,100 square miles of the waters to the north of that line to be a national marine sanctuary.

That left the coast of San Luis Obispo and part of Santa Barbara, from Point Conception to Cambria, as the hole in the doughnut: the area that will be in the cross-hairs the next time the cry “drill, baby, drill!” is heard… followed by spill, baby, spill. As oil supplies get tighter and fracking spreads offshore, national marine sanctuary designation is the only way to permanently protect our waters and their priceless cultural and biological treasures.

The take-home message from that panel discussion: The 14 national marine sanctuaries in the United States celebrate and safeguard the nation’s richest underwater treasures. The National Marine Sanctuary Program is essentially the offshore version of our National Park System. Everywhere that national marine sanctuaries are designated, local businesses that depend on coastal tourism benefit from the sanctuary’s promotion of kayaking, diving, camping, wildlife watching and other coastal recreational activities.

After that galvanizing discussion, we promised excited attendees that we would follow up to let them know what they could do to help make the same thing happen here.

Here it is: Support the proposed Chumash Cultural Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. The Chumash people are the first inhabitants of the central and southern coastal regions of California, and one of the few ocean-going bands among the First Peoples of the New World. Their ancient submerged sacred sites out to the north of Point Conception to Cambria, as the hole in the doughnut; the area that will be in the dust rule put in place to control hazardous emissions from the off-road play-

Parks Forward

On September 11, the SLO County Library was the site of one of ten statewide workshops to solicit new ideas from the public on the future of the State Park system. The Parks Forward Commission was created by the Natural Resources Agency to conduct an independent assessment of the current State Parks system. Many speakers at the Sept. 11 meeting brought forth good ideas and pointed critiques. But, as might have been expected, a small fringe contingent of off-road enthusiasts and Tea Partiers – inevitably led by Grover Beach Mayor Debbie Peterson (see “The Dusty Trail,” September) – also turned out, with bad ideas and silly critiques. No longer content with just urging the sale of county land in the Oceano Dunes to State Parks’ Off-Highway Vehicle Division and demanding the repeal of the dust rule put in place to control hazardous emissions from the off-road play-

We are pleased to support the Northern Chumash Tribal Council and Bakersfield Tribal Council in this initiative and are assisting in gathering the names of individuals and businesses who support this designation. Please send an email with the subject line “Chumash Sanctuary support,” and your name & city and the name of your business in the message section, to sierracclub88@gmail.com

TAKE ACTION

TAKE ACTION

Here’s your vision

Former Morro Bay City Councilwoman Betty Winholtz told Parks Forward Commissioners “I don’t look at programs, I look at whether you’re protecting our resources, the original intent of state parks. This should not be seen as an industry, but a service.”
Every time the nuclear power industry starts handing out cigars to celebrate the birth of the “nuclear renaissance,” the cigars explode. As we’ve noted previously (“Diablo: You’re Done,” April 2011), the March 14, 2011, issue of Newsweek – which hit the stands a week prior to its cover date and a few days after the Fukushima disaster on March 11 – printed a rapturous profile of “Atomic” Anne Lauvergeon, CEO of French nuclear energy giant Areva, entitled “Nuclear Powerhouse: France’s most powerful businesswoman in the quest for the next atomic boom.” The boom that destroyed the building housing the reactor at Fukushima Dai-ichi Unit 1 a few days later was not what Newsweek and Atomic Anne had in mind. New comes the pseudo-documentary Pandora’s Promise. An admiring full-page review in the July 8, 2013, issue of Time magazine (“Glowing Green: A documentary makes the case for nuclear power”) includes the confidante announcement that “there will likely be no detectable health impacts from the radiation released by the Fukushima meltdow.”

The magazine hit subscribers’ mailboxes just before the news broke that, contrary to longstanding official denials, highly radioactive water is leaking from Fukisumai at the rate of 300 tons per day. A month later, the world learned that 400 tons of fuel rods must be removed from the top of the damaged Unit 4 reactor building – a delicate, unprecedented-year-long operation in which one mistake could result in the release of 14,000 tons of mass radiation as the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Meanwhile statewide, the nuclear renaissance has been implopping. The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility recently noted in the Santa Maria Times:

Since 2013 began, five nuclear reactors nationwide, including two in Southern California, have been withdrawn from service by their owners for various, but ultimately economic reasons. The industry that has wreaked havoc with counties in Vermont, Wisconsin and Florida. None had anticipated that their giant goose would ever stop laying golden eggs, all of which would always be stored or disposed safely, and thus economic benefits. The industry has yet to find a solution for the nuclear waste that it produces. To hear sup-

In November, CNN is set to air Pandora’s Promise, with its gross factual errors, straw man arguments and blatant shills for the nuclear industry unchallenged. The network needs to balance the film’s pro-nuclear propaganda by broadcasting a discussion after the film with independent scientists, medical professionals and nuclear power experts who can present an accurate and honest assessment of the nuclear industry. CNN is a news network with a responsibility to present factual content. To air what is essentially an advertisement for the nuclear industry without a balancing discussion that features independent experts would be profoundly dishonest and tarnish CNN’s reputation.

Go to www.beyondnuclear.org, click on “Pandora’s false promises,” and sign the petition to ask CNN to feature a panel discussion after the film that will fact-check the picture it presents.

Tell NRC: We Have No Confidence in Your Radioactive Waste Policy

Make the reactor licensing moratorium permanent

by Michael Maritote, Nuclear Information Resource Service

Since the summer of 2012, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been unable to issue licenses for new reactors, or renewals for existing licenses. A federal court threw out the underpinning of the agency’s radioactive waste policy—its “waste confidence” rule. That rule had stated that the NRC was confident that high-level radioactive waste always would be stored or disposed safely, and thus could continue to be generated.

But the court found that with the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site effectively cancelled and no alternative in place, the NRC could not be “confident” of permanent disposal. After the court ruled that the NRC had no technical basis for asserting that current on-site storage practices in fuel pools and dry casks would be safe for the indefinite future. This ruling forced the current moratorium on licensing.

The NRC has now prepared a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) as part of the process of replacing its “waste confidence” rule and it hopes to finalize this document and resume licensing during 2014. During October and November, the agency will hold 12 public meetings around the country to explain and receive public input.

A claim contradicted by a Japanese government study released in February which found that more than 25 times as many people in the Fukushima region have developed thyroid cancer compared with data from before the disaster. For the July 15, 2013, issue of Stars and Stripes, fifty U.S. sailors and Marines who were involved in humanitarian operations after the disaster are now suffering from leukemia, testicular cancer and thyroid problems or mental and neurological bleeding and are suing Tokyo Electric Power Co. for lying to the U.S. military about the level of danger involved in exposure to radiation from the plant.
We Miss Shane Krogen

By Tom Hopkins

In 1995, Fresno outdoorsman Shane Krogen adopted a 12-mile segment of the California Riding and Hiking Trail in the vicinity of Huntington Lake via the U.S. Forest Service “Adopt-a-Trail” program, which enables individuals, businesses and groups to maintain trails within the National Forest. In the summer of 1997, the Forest Service approached Krogen with a challenge: they needed additional volunteer help maintaining over 400 miles of trail between Yosemite and Sequoia - Kings Canyon. This included 27 miles of the Pacific Crest / John Muir Trail, in some of the most scenic portions of the John Muir Wilderness. His response was the formation of the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew in the spring of 1998, which he served as executive director. Shane Krogen died in a helicopter accident in Tulare County on September 12 while working with crews on cleaning up and restoring toxic abandoned marijuana grow sites in suitable forest and wilderness areas. Our local outings leaders and Cal Poly Sierra Student Coalition members who have worked with the Ventana Wilderness Alliance mourn his death.

Shane Krogen’s tragic death is a big loss to the conservation of our public lands. He was an untrining and totally committed leader bringing grassroots volunteers to restore public lands and public trails.

I met Shane in late 2006 when I volunteered for a weekend grow site cleanup with the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew (HSVTC) in the North Fork of the Kings River near the Dinkey Creek confluence. I wanted to see how Shane and his folks who truly pioneered public lands grow site restoration work, were organized and got the job done. I had been picking Shane’s brain via email and phone to learn how to get Forest Service approval to clean up grow sites here in the Monterey Ranger District. Shane was a big help and made use of all of his credibility with the Forest Service to help us get our first clearance to clean up a site in the Ventana.

The actual HSVTC clean up was quite different than the ones the Ventana Wilderness Alliance ultimately did in the district. In that region of the Sierra, the grow sites are mostly at 4-6,000 feet elevation and usually not in wilderness. So the volunteers would go into the site, package all of the tubing, trash, etc. into chopper sling loads, and local CHP choppers would pull them out. The HSVTC had a number of volunteers trained to work the sling load under the chopper.

They had a deal with the local CHP chopper base and crew to pull the trash out of the sites to provide external lift practice and obtaining certification for the CHP chopper pilots.

Turns out, even though Shane was successful in persuading the Paso Robles CHP chopper crew to work with Ventana Wilderness Alliance, our grow sites were all in wilderness and not suitable for chopper support. So with the help of many of you, we ended up pulling everything out the old fashioned way — backpacks and mules.

The HSVTC is also a major player in maintaining the Pacific Crest Trail in the central Sierra, which was the original reason Shane organized the crew and then jumped from owning an outdoor gear store in Fresno to being the full-time Executive Director and driving force behind the HSVTC.

Let’s see the orange spot left behind can continue the passion and commitment for preserving and restoring public wild lands and trails that Shane so ably embodied.

Compromise continued from page 6

can’t get to agreement on savings, then verifiable evidence of water neutrality, meaning that there’s no more water use than currently being used. Let’s move to the next thing.

After vanquishing 2-to-1 offsets, it was a simple matter to fudge the definition of “projects in the pipeline” to go past vines in the ground and include anyone who thinks they’re “vested,” with no definition of what “vested” means (a landowner who has ripped the soil?), Ordered vines? Installed trellises? Vesting exemption claims are now being filed.

Mecham also demanded that big ponds be exempted from the ordinance. They were.

All in all, it was a unique interpretation of the concept of “give a little on one side, give a little to the other side.” At the end, a satisfied Supervisor Mecham announced: “I got everything I wanted” – an echo of John Boehner’s proclamation of victory when he rolled President Obama in the 2011 debt ceiling fight. In Mecham’s case, the announcement was a signal to the big vineyards that he had delivered the goods for them. All of which bodes ill for the potential creation of a permanent ordinance that would contain any provisions that will do anything to actually restore the Paso Robles groundwater basin, or the establishment of a water management district created by and for the big wineries, in which voting rights for water allocation would be based on the amount of acreage owned.

At this point, the politics of our north county supervisors are dimming any hope of saving the basin or the rural residents and ecosystems that depend on it.

Through a Poet’s Eyes

Poet up SLO Poet Laureate Jerry Smith was chosen from former poets laureate Bonnie Young (2012) and Rosemary Wilvert (2007), along with Evy Cole, Laura Poindexter and Ivan Brown/Offer, for an evening of nature, celebrating at the Santa Lucía chapter’s Sept. 18 meeting at the Storyteller Gallery.

public comment on this document. The NRC is accepting written comments through November 27.

These meetings are our opportunity to point out the many technical and logical shortcomings in this new document, and to call for making the licensing moratorium permanent. The only radioactive waste option we have confidence in is to stop making it! There will be protests outside and public involvement inside each one of these meetings. We hope you will join us and help pack every meeting!

At www.nrc.gov/radiwaste/waste/sierraneighbors you will find draft press releases, alerts and other information for each meeting, a link to download the entire DGEIS if you’d like, and more.

It’s time to join together and make the strongest public statement possible at every one of these meetings.

Mystery continued from page 2

cooperation of City staff... we will no longer continue our efforts on the wastewater project.” The previous April, the hapless Mayor Janice Peters defended the city council’s decision to go along with staff’s preferred project: “We can’t make decisions as informed and wise as the people we pay to give us advice.”

The current city council – having been given a very expensive gift of hindsight and hard experience – does not seem inclined to agree with that philosophy. Good for them. As we noted in our March 2013 issue, after the Coastal Commission’s inevitable denial of the Morro Bay/Cayucos sewer project permit: “It is now the job of the current city council to clean up the mess left by the previous two.” Morro Bay is now attempting to do a wastewater treatment project the right way. The people the City depends on to get it done probably should not include those who for years were hell- bent on doing it the wrong way.

NRC

Mystery from previous page

Come to the Courtyard Marriott in San Luis Obispo at 6 p.m. on October 7. Open to public with meeting starting at 7 p.m. Let the NRC know how “confident” you feel about siting highly radioactive waste on our semisubmerged active coastline for the next 300 years. Keeping Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant running is causing harm to marine life every day it operates. All the other issues we care about pale in comparison to an earthquake at Diablo Canyon.
Taking Issue
Reviewing problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media


Summary: A new study by David T. Allen et al, funded by nine oil & gas companies and the Environmental Defense Fund, finds that fracking for shale gas emits less methane, the most damaging greenhouse gas, than other studies have found. All responses below are from the analysis of the study done by Physicians Scientists & Engineers for Healthy Energy (PSE).

This is a finding at odds with other researchers’ work that shows much higher rates. The fugitive losses reported by Allen and colleagues are 10 to 20 times lower than those calculated from more complete (field-level) measurements. Allen and colleagues do not address this large discrepancy or even reference these other studies.

Drilling for shale oil...appears to cause smaller leaks of the greenhouse gas methane than the federal government had estimated, and considerably smaller than some critics of shale gas had feared.

...a number of companies already capture escaped gases at wells being prepared for production.

In particular, it indicated that containment measures captured 99 percent of methane that escaped from new wells.

The study...bolsters the contention by advocates of fracking that shale gas is cleaner and better than coal, at least until more renewable-energy sources are developed. More than 500 wells were analyzed.

Drilling for shale oil...appears to cause smaller leaks of the greenhouse gas methane than the federal government had estimated, and considerably smaller than some critics of shale gas had feared.

This is a very small sample size. The study measured emissions from just 489 gas wells and only 27 hydraulic fracturing events. These measurements represent 0.11% of the total conventional and unconventional gas wells in the United States. Emissions reported in this paper reflect a very small subset of operations as a single stage of a multistage industrial process. It is not a complete life-cycle emissions study. Methane is also emitted as gas travels to consumers through compression, processing, storage, transmission, and distribution sectors (i.e. full lifecycle). Independent scientific research has indicated that these additional emissions are larger than previously thought.


Upshot: Policy-makers and society in general are in great need of robust scientific measurements of methane emissions from modern gas development. It is disappointing that Allen and colleagues seem to have failed to employ basic scientific rules, including transparent criteria for the selection of study sites to measure, sufficient sample sizes, and the attempt to place their results in the context of other scientific studies to date. This study falls short in its attempt to help answer questions about methane emissions from modern gas development beyond the small number of gas industry-selected wells where measures were taken.” – Seth B. Shonkoff, PhD, MPH, executive director, Physicians, Scientists, & Engineers for Healthy Energy (PSE), University of California, Berkeley.

Katcho continued from page 5

Those of you who did so received a letter from Katcho informing them that their elected representative believes “state agencies must be held accountable for their actions” and it is not “appropriate to allow an agency to be the prosecutor, judge, and jury in cases where it is alleged that a violation of agency regulations or state law has occurred.”

But Katcho wanted you to know that he had a lot of respect for the bill’s author, Toni Atkins, and he really wants “to ensure that those who are guilty of violating the Coastal Act are held accountable. Therefore, to demonstrate my commitment to working with her to find an appropriate way to clear the back log of pending enforcement actions, I abstained rather than voting in opposition to her measure.”

There are four problems with this statesmanlike explanation.

First, more than 20 regulatory agencies in California have the authority to fine those who violate the regulations they enforce are violated. Due process is followed; no abuse occurs. No word from Assemblymember Achadjian on how he intends to make all those agencies “accountable for their actions” and stop them from acting as “prosecutor, judge, and jury.”

Second, Katcho’s abstention was the equivalent of a “no” vote. It didn’t demonstrate any kind of commitment; it ensured that the bill did not receive the number of votes it needed to pass. Third, there isn’t “another appropriate way to clear the back log of pending enforcement actions. The way to do that is to make it more expensive to resist compliance than it is to comply, which can only be done by giving the Coastal Commission authority to fine violators until they comply.

Fourth, Katcho has long treasured his self-image as a reasonable moderate-conservative, an image his actions continually betray. AB 976 is now a two-year bill, which means it can come back for a vote in 2014. If it does, all SLO County residents should remind Katcho that he still needs to vote for it, and the fig leaf of his transparent excuses for not doing so will never suffice to cover his cave-in to business interests at the expense of the people of California and our natural heritage.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is October 14. 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 sierrahlb8@gmail.com

Santa Lucian • October 2013
Outings and Activities Calendar

Seller of travel registration information: CST 2089766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. Pets are generally not allowed. A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 18. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter’s outing policies, or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Chair Joe Morris, 549-0355. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outings leader.

Sat.-Sun., Oct 5th-6th. Hot Springs Tour in Black Rock Desert. Camp in remote country at a spring close to Geiger Peak. (002) 3 miles north of Reno Friday night, then re-locate to a prettier spring on Emigrant Trail Saturday. High-clearance vehicle required. 2-WD okay. Primitive camping, no RVs or trailers. For more information, call Leader: David Book, 775-843-6443. Great Basin Group.

Fri., Oct. 11th, 10 a.m. Guided Walk: The SLO Railroad District Historic. To whet your appetite for the fun of the Railroad Festival this weekend, join us on this morning stroll past 15 sites in the old commercial district, the depot area, and century-old boardhouses. Hear the stories about the heyday of the Southern Pacific during the steam age, 1890s to 1950s, when the “SP” dominated public life in San Luis Obispo and transformed it from a cow town to a boomtown. Duration about 90.” Meet at Gus’s Grocery, corner of Osos and Leff St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Sat., Oct. 12th, 8 a.m. Vicente Flats Trail: A long coastal drive to the trailhead, but worth it. A moderately strenuous hike, 10 miles rt, 1800 ft. gain, through very scenic area in southern Big Sur. In and out on the same trail, so you may sign out early. An all-day excursion, so bring lunch, water, and good hiking shoes. Poison oak by trail. Meet at Washburn Day Use Area, north of Cambria. Leader: Carlos Dhabi, 546-0317.

Sat-Sun., Oct. 19th-20th. Sat.-Sun., Oct. 26th-27th. Ghost Town Extravaganza Halloween weekend with ghosts of California’s colorful past. Primitive camp near ghost town of Ballarat near Death Valley. Saturday, challenging hike to Lookout City ghost town with historian Hal Fowler, then return to camp for Happy Hour, potluck feast, and a midnight visit to Ballarat’s graveyard. Sunday, quick visit to infamous Riley town site, then home. Group size strictly limited. Send $8 per person (check payable to Lygeia Gerard), 2 large SARSE, H & W phones, email and rideshare info to Leader: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 721039, Pinon Hills, CA 93273. Phone: 760-868-2179 CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Oct. 19th, 9-30 a.m. Oakes Peak/Coon Creek/Bluffs Trails in Montana de Oro. Moderately strenuous 10-mile hike to top of Oakes Peak, then easy after that, for a beautiful walk along the coastline past meandering streams. Bring hat, sunscreen, plenty of water, and dress in layers for varying weather. Meet at Visitor’s Center at Spooner’s Cove in Montana de Oro State Park. Leader: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792. kyena683@msn.com for further information or to arrange carpools.

Sun., Oct. 20th, 5 p.m. Elfin Forest Evening Walk. Enjoy an easy, one-mile walk in this nature preserve overlooking the ocean in Los Osos with over 200 plant species. Directions: from South Bay Blvd., turn west on San Ysidro going forward to the ocean, then right on 16th St and at the end. Leader: Vicki Marchenko, vickiwmarchenko7@gmail.com or 529-5567.

Sat., Oct. 20th, 2-6 p.m. Sycamore Springs Trekking-Pole Hike. 2-mile hike to model the benefits of using trekking poles, 700 feet elevation change. Meet at entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Dr. Confirm beforehand with David Georgi, hikingpolicies@gmail.com or 458-5575.

Thurs.-Sun., Oct. 24th-26th. Death Valley Wilderness Restoration. Restore wilderness work on Darwin Falls trail, in this beautiful and remote national park. Meet early Thursday afternoon to begin work, then drive to primitive camping area and set up camp. Friday work to clean up debris from plane crash. If needed, we will continue work on Sunday; otherwise participants are free to explore the Park. Leader: Kate Allen, kj.allen96@gmail.com or 661-944-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee.

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Sat.-Sun., Nov. 2nd-3rd. Carrizo Plains Explore/Serve Weekend. Saturday, car camp in Monument, modify fencing to increase mobility of pronghorn antelope. Sunday either Caliente Ridge hike or tour of popular areas in the plains. Leader: Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com or 310-477-6670 CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Oct., 19-20, a.m. Birding at the Garden with the Morro Coast Audubon Society. San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden is pleased to welcome Kaaren Perry of the Morro Coast Audubon Society for a family-friendly birding walk. This engaging walk through the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden and the surrounding environs will get you acquainted with the wide variety of feathered friends found in SLO County. We will look for returning wintering birds and fall migrants including sparrows, warblers, raptors, and others. October is prime time for rare migrants when nearly anything can show up. Walk will begin at the Garden’s second parking lot. For more information contact education@slobg.org or 805-541-1400 x304.

Sun., Oct. 20, 9 a.m. Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers - Oats Peak Trail work, MDO. Over 5 miles of new trail at Montana de Oro will be open to cyclists and equestrians in March after winter rains. In order to open it, we have to finish a 200-yard section of the Beebe Trail which still needs considerable dirt work. We can knock that work out in one day with 40-50 volunteers, so please plan on attending. We are proud to report that cyclists (and equestrians) have stayed off the new trails. That responsible behavior has been a big topic of discussion at the State Parks Trails Committee meeting and has really helped to make the case that mountain bikers can be responsible trail users. Looking forward to seeing you on Oats & Beebe in October for trail work and in March for a ride! Meet at Park Headquarters above Spooner’s Cove. For more info, contact tim@cccmb.org.

Activities sponsored by other groups

Sat., Oct. 19, 10 a.m. Birding at the Garden with the Morro Coast Audubon Society. San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden is pleased to welcome Kaaren Perry of the Morro Coast Audubon Society for a family-friendly birding walk. This engaging walk through the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden and the surrounding environs will get you acquainted with the wide variety of feathered friends found in SLO County. We will look for returning wintering birds and fall migrants including sparrows, warblers, raptors, and others. October is prime time for rare migrants when nearly anything can show up. Walk will begin at the Garden’s second parking lot. For more information contact education@slobg.org or 805-541-1400 x304.

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