Paso in the Crosshairs

The Paso Robles groundwater basin is a prime target in California’s water wars

The only way to protect the Paso Robles groundwater basin from further overdraft is to either adjudicate the basin or create a public management agency with a fully democratic governance structure whose directors are elected at large, based on the principle of one person, one vote. As we go to press, AB 2453, Katcho Achadjian’s bill to create a “hybrid” form of governance for the proposed Paso Robles water district, is sloshing toward a vote in the Assembly. As you read this, it is either dead, amended to correct its catastrophic flaw, or sloshing toward its next vote in the Senate with said flaw intact.

The first two options would be preferable to the latter, as the Sierra Club has pointed out. The Santa Lucia Chapter has been joined in this protest by our state organization, Sierra Club California, as well as North County Watch, the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, California Teamsters, California Water Impact Network, Planning and Conservation League, El Centro Community Water Center, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Clean Water Action, and San Luis Obispo County Cattleman’s Association because of the potential catastrophe for democracy and the environment promised by the passage of AB 2453 if not amended.

The problem is the pesky existence of the 15 to 20,000 people who simply live in houses within the potential jurisdiction of the proposed groundwater management district and don’t irrigate crops there. They have an obvious interest in policies that would sustain the basin; a less obvious interest in being forced to pay for expensive imported water schemes that would allow large vineyards to proceed with their expansion plans. Residents have an obvious interest in enforcing policies that would compel the biggest pumphers to pump less; the big pumphers are on record as having absolutely no interest in any such policies.

The “compromise” measure for the governance of the basin hatched when a local group that was supposed to represent the interests of residents caved in to the group representing large north county vineyards — a compromise blessed by the Board of Supervisors, those large north county vineyards and their captive partner and opposed by virtually everyone else — pretends that there is a meaningful difference in the interests of an owner of 50 acres of land and the owner of 500 acres, and would hand them all a permanent 6 to 3 majority over local homeowners and renters. (This, as bill proponents sweetly put it, “gives everybody a say.”)

The disenfranchisement that results from conflating an acreage-based vote with a general election is a precedent that must not be set. If the north county vineyards get a “special” water district where their votes count for more than the votes of residents, every region in the state with significant agriculture will likely see moves to create districts in which large agriculture operations get their own permanent board majority.

This will throw a large wrench into efforts to responsibly manage groundwater in the state of California.

The paper water trick

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the creation of the Monterey Agreement. As two decades of ongoing legal challenges by public interest groups and water activists attest, it is not a happy anniversary. The agreement negotiated by the Department of Water Resources and six water agencies rewrote the State Water Project and created California’s water transfer market. The Monterey Agreement’s invention of entitlements—aka “paper water”—is the reason why the Paso Robles groundwater basin’s 30 million acre feet of capacity is a fat target for water speculators. Once a water district is formed, the County could sign over its unallocated state water to the new district. Every other
Coffee Time in Morro Bay

After seven years of argument, some very determined Morro Bay water activists were granted the time to make a presentation at the May 22 meeting of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Marla Jo Bratto-Sadowski and Linda Stedeju were given twenty minutes to present concerns about the condition of the city’s Main Street sewer trunk line and contamination of the groundwater and the ocean.

It was a climax of a years-long dispute between the activists and Water Board staff on the source of nitrate contamination of the wells in the Morro Basin. Staff believe the nitrate is coming from fertilizer washing down the hillside and agricultural operations. Local activists believe the source of contamination is the leaky pipes in the city’s 50-year-old waste-water collection system.

The focus of the discussion came down to the nature of the testing that has been done on the wells. After some technical sparring over the isotopic signatures for sewage versus fertilizer, water board staff admitted that the results of those tests were inconclusive. After two hours of questioning, Board members swept aside assurances by their executive officer and the City’s representative that the performance of the water quality tests required by state regulations — which do not require testing for viruses or emerging contaminants — provided sufficient confidence that human waste is not contaminating the city’s well water. Board member Michael Jordan noted that the city’s water quality “could be lacking even though on the surface they appear to be in compliance with the regs.”

The Board continued a commitment from Public Works Director Rob Licklow to conduct a caffeine test of well water — a simple, relatively inexpensive test that can indicate the presence of sewage and can be completed in a matter of weeks. The Board also told City officials they need “to put some urgency” into long-promised, long-delayed repairs to the trunk line and discussed potential funding sources.

Morro Bay Planning Commissioner Richard Sadowski, who has long pushed to fix the sewer lines and test the well water for evidence of sewage, told the Board that the

Busting the Coastal Act in Cayucos

We’re calling this bluff! Call us crazy, but we think that raised area to the left of the beach and the ocean is a coastal bluff, and the owner of this lot is obligated to set back his planned blufftop house from the top of the bluff, per the California Coastal Act.

When is a coastal bluff not a coastal bluff? When is a sea wall not a sea wall?

Answer: When the County is issuing a Coastal Development Permit to an applicant who wants to build a beach house in Cayucos but wants to get around the California Coastal Act’s requirement for establishing development setbacks from coastal bluffs and its proscription against new sea walls.

The County Planning Commission went along with that eyerow-raising charade at its April 10 review of the Loperena project, deciding that the applicant had done enough to modify the project after objections to the original design were raised by the neighbors, Sierra Club, SLO CountyKeeper, Surfrider et al. in our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report.

The County Planning Director, who reads like a very competent lady, said, “We say ‘no cigar.’” The project as designed and modified remains a monument to marine erosion; the consequence of both putting structures on bluffs with no setback from the top of the bluff and erecting a reinforced concrete basement wall three feet from the beach that will deflect wave run-up to neighboring properties and intensify beach erosion — a configuration that will require construction of more shoreline defenses over the decades. The applicant’s consultants and the County have also low-balled probable sea-level rise through the end of the century.

This is not just about making the developer of a house on the beach in Cayucos go back to the drawing board; it’s about avoiding the precedent of building on a coastal bluff with no setbacks and cantilevered over the beach, anywhere on the coast of California. If you allow one, you allow them all.

An appeal of the Planning Commission’s approval of a permit for the Loperena project and certification of the Environmental Impact Report will be heard by the County Board of Supervisors on June 3.
Dirty Fuels, Clean Futures

Sierra Club report includes a focus on a California fracking moratorium

Our world faces an unprecedented environmental, social, and economic challenge. Top scientists agree that climate disruption is primarily due to the release of billions of tons of carbon dioxide and methane from fossil fuels. World leaders in 2008 set a target of no more than a 2-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures as the upper limit to avoid climate catastrophe. Scientific modeling asserts that such an upper limit in global temperatures by 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) will result in catastrophic events, including significant sea level rise, superstorms, droughts, and extinctions. At current annual global emission rates of 31 billion tons of carbon dioxide worldwide, burning oil, gas, and coal that release another 500-600 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the air would push us past this 2-degree Celsius tipping point by 2030.

Last June, President Obama announced a historic national Climate Action Plan that builds on the administration’s successes to date: increase fuel economy of cars and light trucks (Corporate Average Fuel Economy CAFE standards) to conserve 12 billion barrels of oil and keep 6 billion tons of carbon dioxide—more than the total amount of carbon dioxide emitted by the United States in 2010—from being emitted over the next 12 years; double the amount of wind and solar powered electricity generation; and raise energy efficiency standards for appliances. Currently, the administration is leading an effort to set historic carbon pollution standards for dirty power plants and also increase mileage efficiency for heavy trucks. The result is that for the first time in 20 years, domestic carbon dioxide emissions are decreasing, and the United States is no longer the top carbon dioxide emitter in the world. Clearly, President Obama is doing more than any other president in reducing our nation’s carbon emissions. However, even as the administration is reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions, it is also advancing an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy that promotes greater domestic fossil fuel production, exporting these climate disrupting fuels abroad, and opening up millions of acres of our nation’s most treasured lands and waters to dirty fuel extraction. Dirty Fuels, Clean Futures highlights major new climate disrupters that have the potential to release billions of tons of new carbon dioxide into the air, negating the administration’s progress in reducing carbon pollution from vehicles and power plants. President Obama can take pragmatic actions to keep dirty fuels in the ground and put our country on a new path to a clean-energy future. Over the remainder of his time in office, he has an opportunity to require all federal resource management agencies to fully disclose potential carbon pollution; not allow any oil shale and tar sands extraction; reform coal mining on federal lands; put oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean off limits; not issue any new oil and gas leases that require fracking until impacts on water, air and climate are averted; and stop massive plans to export coal and liquefied gas to other countries.

Keeping these dirty fuels in the ground puts our country on a path where our economy is powered by energy that is clean, safe, secure, and sustainable. Read the report at sierraclub.org/ourwildamerica

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Dirty Fuels, Clean Futures

A California National Climate Action Plan that keeps Dirty Fuels in the Ground

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A Bad Day for Fracking

On May 30: Santa Cruz County became the first county in the state to ban fracking... The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors directed public officials to report on what other counties in California are doing about fracking and come back with a report... And the Energy Information Administration reduced by 96 percent its estimate of oil that can potentially be recovered by fracking the Monterey Shale formation underlying California. That last event caused 11 billion barrels of fantasy oil and 3 million fantasy jobs—the engine behind the push to frack California—to vanish. Food & Water Watch, 350.org, Environment California, Center for Biological Diversity, Californians Against Fracking, Sierra Club, Santa Barbara County Water Guardians, SLO Clean Water Action, Students Against Fracking, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom are among the groups that brought about the results in those three counties. Momentum!

Read the report at sierraclub.org/ourwildamerica

Update: 20 from 300

Cal French Circle Widening

We are pleased to report that 115 members have signed up for the equivalent of $20 monthly donations, including those opting for an annual $240 lump sum. We are moving ever closer to our goal of $20 @ month from 300 members, which would provide the equivalent of $72,000 per year, what we need to meet our basic operating costs, keep the office open, and know that we have a secure source of funding that will allow for effective budget planning. You can donate via PayPal using the “Donate” button at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org, or through your bank’s bill-pay service, or with a check for $240 covering a year’s worth of monthly donations. Whichever way you choose, you will automatically become a sustaining member of the Santa Lucia Chapter’s Cal French Circle—a vibrant, empowering group of friends.

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Citizens Congress in SLO

By Citizens Congress 2014

The Citizens Congress, the first national gathering of legislators, scholars, and public advocacy groups combating the corrosive influence of money in our political system, will convene on June 3 and 4 at the Cliffs Resort in Pismo Beach. Since the 1970s, corporate business organizations have focused billions of dollars to organize and lobby for legislation that favors their special interests. This money buys access and influence in Washington; it dominates our policies, and corrupts our politics. Polls indicate that 90% of Americans favor removing the corrosive influence of money in elections.

Lawrence Lessig, a Constitutional scholar, has helped write numerous pieces of legislation, including some of the campaign finance amendments before Congress now. Trevor Potter is a former Chairman of the Federal Election Commission. Hedrick Smith is a Pulitzer Prize-winning former New York Times reporter who wrote the best seller Who Stole The American Dream. Lawrence Lessig is a Pulitzer Prize-winning former New York Times reporter who wrote the best seller Who Stole The American Dream.

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MPA’s Want You

California Ocean Science Trust, in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, invites members of the Central Coast ocean community and interested members of the public to provide input on the Draft Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan. A network of marine protected areas (MPAs) has been implemented in California state waters under the Marine Life Protection Act. Monitoring to evaluate the performance of the MPAs is a key element in implementing and managing the statewide MPA network. The Central Coast MPA Monitoring Plan will guide implementation of a scientifically rigorous, cost-effective approach to monitoring that reflects management needs and local priorities. Input on all aspects of the draft plan is encouraged. Written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. PDT Wednesday, June 4. Input may be submitted via one of the following:

- Online form: bit.ly/monitoringplan
- Email: mpanoceans@calost.org
- Mail: Central Coast Draft Plan Comments California Ocean Science Trust 1330 Broadway, Suite 1530 Oakland, CA 94612

EPA Finalizes Standards to Protect Marine Life from Power Plants

On May 19, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized standards to protect billions of fish and other aquatic life drawn each year into cooling water systems at large power plants and factories. The EPA rule establishes a framework as required by the Clean Water Act to address site-specific challenges. An estimated 2.1 billion fish, crabs, and shrimp are killed annually by being pinned against cooling water intake structures or being drawn into cooling water systems and affected by heat, chemicals, or physical stress. “EPA is making it clear that if you have cooling water intakes you have to look at the impact on aquatic life in local waterways and take steps to minimize that impact,” said Nancy Stoner, acting Assistant Administrator for Water at EPA. The final rule establishes requirements under the Clean Water Act for all existing power generating facilities and existing manufacturing and industrial facilities that withdraw more than 2 million gallons per day of water from waters of the U.S. and use at least 25 percent of the water they withdraw exclusively for cooling purposes. This rule covers roughly 1,065 existing facilities and power plants. The federal government has been working to protect marine life from power plants for several decades, and these standards are a step in that direction.

Pismo Preserve Moves Closer to Reality

Following an April 24 meeting of its Parks Commission and its strong recommendation, the County Board of Supervisors met on May 20 and voted to allocate $1.1 million in County funds to aid in the acquisition of the Pismo Preserve, 900 acres of undeveloped land with ten miles of trails in the unincorporated area east of Pismo Beach. The Pismo Preserve land acquisition project will permanently conserve the natural resources on the property and significantly reduce current and future development, preserving the natural and raul character of the Central Coast. The SLO Land Conservancy’s original request for funds from the County was for $1 million against the purchase price of $12 million. In adding $100,000, the Parks Commission was saying not just yes, but hell yes. The Sierra Club urged the Parks Commission to support the County’s funding piece at their meeting when the Commission made its recommendation to the supervisors, and we are urging the Coastal Conservancy to contribute the state funding component. South county is in dire need of more trails and open space, and we trust the city of Pismo Beach will act accordingly in recognition of this fact when they meet on June 17 to deliberate on their potential piece of the funding. Pismo Beach mayor Shelly Higginbotham told the Tribune on May 21 that the city council is “very excited about the preserve” but has not yet had a formal discussion “about where the money would come from.” Fresh off the historic twin debacles of trying to approve sprawl development in adjacent coastal canyons with the ill-fated Los Robles del Mar and Spanish Springs projects, perhaps the city council would set up a Bad Planning Abatement fund. All funds need to be in hand for the $12 million purchase by August 1. You can mail a donation to LCSLO, P.O. Box 12206, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406, or go to calocean.org/project/pismon Preserve.
Transatlantic Trade Pact Endangers Action on Climate

On May 19, the Huffington Post posted a leaked version of the EU “non-paper” (draft negotiating text) for a chapter on raw materials, energy in the trade pact that the US is negotiating with the European Union, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

Trade negotiators have largely excluded the public from trade negotiations, which makes leaks like this one of the best way to determine the real ramifications of a trade deal. This leak reveals that the deal would endanger action on climate disruption despite calls by both President Obama and EU Commission President Manuel Barroso to address the global crisis.

“This trade proposal spells out more of the same,” said Ilana Solomon, director of the Sierra Club’s Responsible Trade Program. “More dirty fossil fuels when we should be transitioning to clean energy, more climate-disrupting carbon pollution, and more risk for communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Dirty fossil fuels must stay buried in the ground if we’re going to avoid climate catastrophe. This proposal should be buried with it.”

The analysis by the Sierra Club and PowerShift reveals the true intent of the EU proposal. If enacted, the proposal would:

- expand fossil fuel exports from the U.S. to the EU,
- increase the EU’s reliance on fossil fuel imports,
- limit the ability of governments to set the terms of their energy policy, and
- restrict the development of local renewable energy programs.

Sip & Solar

By Stacey Hunt

“Sip and Solar” was the theme of a get-together at Burbank Ranch in Paso Robles May 8 hosted by GRID Alternatives.

Guests enjoyed wine and appetizers while Regional Director Anna Lisa Lukes recapped the organization’s achievements since the网格 Central Coast office in 2010. “We will be putting in our 500th installation project this year,” she said, estimating the efforts have reduced greenhouse gasses in the region by 30,000 tons and served low-income families $9 million in electrical bills.

GRID Alternatives is executing a simple but effective concept: obtain donations and grant funding to install solar electric systems on the homes of low-income families. And while they’re at it they provide free green jobs training to hundreds of people volunteering for the installations. In fact, three GRID Alternatives volunteers went on to be hired as solar installers at the Topaz Solar Farm on the Carrizo Plain.

Lakes spoke out the qualifications for assistance from GRID Alternatives. “You must make no more than 80% of the area median income and own your own home,” she says. “The house itself must be in good shape.” GRID’s primary source of funding, the California Single-Family Affordable Solar Homes Program (SASH), requires a PowerShift. “Europe should phase out the use of its own fossil fuels and it should not be importing fracked gas or any raw materials and this proposal is more evidence why trade negotiators are holding the details about this deal so close to the vest.”

Surging Seas

Under any circumstances, coastal populations and economies will reshape themselves over time. But the new research on West Antarctic Ice Sheet decay — and the amount of humanity in the restless world’s way — point to unrelenting centuries of defense, retreat, and reimagining of life along our coasts.

Climate Central has developed an online tool that allows you to search or navigate an interactive map to see areas below different amounts of sea level rise and flooding, down to neighborhood scale, matched with area timelines of risk. The tool also provides statistics of population, homes and land affected by city, county and state, plus links to factsheets, data downloads, action plans, embeddable widgets, and more. Across the country, nearly 5 million people live less than 4 feet above high tide — a level lower than the century flood line for most locations analyzed.

The Public Lands

By Dave Foreman

One-third of the nation’s Land was the title of the report of the congressionally set-up Public Land Law Review Commission in 1970, and one-third of the nation’s land is yours and mine.

Not the timber companies’. Not the land and cattle companies’. Not the mining companies’. Not the rich folks’. Not the land speculators’. Ours. One-third of the acreage of the United States of America is yet owned by her citizens and overseen by the federal government—740 million acres in all. These are the National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and Bureau of Land Management lands. Moreover, the sundry states own on behalf of their citizens another 197 million acres, such as grazing and oil leasing lands in the West, timber lands in the East, and state parks, state forests, and state hunting areas in all of them. All of this came out of a long history of public domain allocations and decisions like Yellowstone National Park, Adirondack Forest Preserve, and President Harrison’s forest reserves.

These lands are why the United States has a conservation legacy unmatched elsewhere in the world. Underline that last sentence. As I have learned more about international conservation, I’ve wondered why the whole game of protecting land seems...
“Rebels” Rocked

The environmentally inclined who turned out for the Sunday matinee SLO premiere of Rebels with a Cause at the Palm Theater on May 18, a benefit screening for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary campaign, saw a vividly, and often movingly, told tale of what it takes to save the places you love. More than any other movie you are ever likely to see, “Rebels” makes clear the connection between the long, highly uneven, often frustrating battles small groups of people wage to protect irrereplaceable unspoiled wildlands, and the incredible outcomes those battles can achieve. It details how the people of Marin County, throughout the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s, went about creating Point Reyes National seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and got all the surplus military bases in the bay area turned into parks. They saved San Francisco from itself, avoiding the 16-lane highway bottleneck to the Golden Gate Bridge that would have been necessary to accommodate the development that would have happened on all that land if not for the determined efforts of local citizens – including a few congressmen, county supervisors, and Sierra Club legend Edgar Wayburn — to preserve it in its natural state. As one of the activists reflects at the end of the film, “Nobody remembers you, they don’t remember the struggle; they just know it’s there…. We gained a lot of experience, those of us who were in the land-saving business, that we can pass on to younger generations.”

Our thanks to Kelly + Yamamoto Productions and the Cal Humanities foundation for agreeing to let us use the film for a fundraiser for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary campaign, to Sierra Club California organizer Mike Thornton for setting it up, and of course to Jim Dee and his policy of making the Palm available for a good cause.

The Fifth Annual Hands Across the Sand on May 17 was a huge success all over the U.S., around the world, and in our corner of the world in Avila Beach, where Surfrider and Sierra Club hosted. Thousands turned out globally to join hands and say no to filthy fuels.

We called on President Obama to reject the Keystone XL pipeline and other tar sands pipelines and called on local and state leaders to protect our communities by rejecting projects that expand the extraction and use of fossil fuels — including expanding offshore drilling, seismic blasting and hydraulic fracturing — and instead accelerate the shift to clean, renewable energy.

In addition, these global events call attention to the impact of climate disruption, such as rising sea levels, super storms, drought, forest fires, flooding and ocean acidification. Hands Across the Sand, founded in 2010, grew into an international movement after the BP oil disaster that year when people came together to join hands, forming symbolic barriers against spilled oil. Four years later, as millions begin to understand that President Obama’s energy and climate policies fall short if they fail to keep dirty fuels in the ground, a rising tide of grassroots activism is demanding that we choose a clean energy future over the dangerous and dirty fuels of the 20th century.

Post-show Santa Lucia Chapter Director Andrew Christie, environmental writer John Hart and producer-director Nancy Kelly listen to Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chair Fred Collins respond to a question from the audience after the movie.

Forward! Assembly candidate Heidi Harmon roused the crowd with her message on curbing climate change.

This far and no farther Local citizens took a stand against the Keystone Pipeline and sent the President a message.
Santa Lucia Chapter’s Annual Fundraiser
Celebrating Our Commitment to Protecting & Preserving Nature
Sunday, August 3rd, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Tolosa Winery, 4910 Edna Road, San Luis Obispo

Tickets will go on sale June 16th at 8:00 a.m. for “The Face of the Wild,” the Chapter’s 2014 fundraiser at the Tolosa Winery.

Tickets will be available online from Brown Paper Tickets, at this link: http://thefaceofthewild.brownpapertickets.com

Tickes are limited to the first 100 guests.

2014 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, and we are pleased to have Matt Sayles of Los Padres ForestWatch join us to give guests the low-down on what the momentous new Coastal Wilderness Bill would mean for the cause of preserving natural land in San Luis Obispo County.

Bid to win:
- Wind Wolves Preserve tour
- Animal masks by contest winners
- Wild edible plant pike & forest feast for 4
- A Night of Luxury Camping
- Monterey Street Experience!
  Chocolate and wine gift basket from Mama Ganache Artisan Chocolaters, gift card from Splash Cafe and one night at Petit Soleil
- Original art by top local artists.

African Photo Safari Up for Bid at Silent Auction
$6,000 package/no minimum bid

Two South Africa photo safari packages will go to the highest bidders in the “Face of the Wild” silent auction.

The “I Dreamed of Africa” package includes six days and six nights luxury accommodations for two provided in Hemingway-style tents, the Heritage Safari Lodge or Zulu Nyala Game Lodge, all meals, and two daily open land cruiser game tours.

The tour package is valued at $5,950. There will be no minimum bid. The winning bidder may book a tour any time within two years of purchase.

“We have provided this fundraising opportunity to Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Hospice, Boys & Girls Club, private schools and hospitals,” said Jean Huisman, U.S. representative for the Zulu Nyala Group. “The winning bidders have the chance to take extraordinary photographs, enjoy panoramic views while sipping a cool beverage, or experience the thrill of up close viewing of some of the most spectacular wildlife on the continent.”
Update: A Stream of Success in Nipomo

By Ralph Bishop

As mentioned here last month, there has been a historically documented problem in Nipomo’s Old Town community concerning upstream activities in the watershed – streambed alteration, discarded ag irrigation tubing, construction waste dumping, etc. – that have had disastrous effects downstream.

A recent development has provided hope that common sense and respect will prevail. With the assistance of Supervisor Caren Ray and Dave Flynn of County Public Works, and the cooperation of a new upstream organic farm operation in resolving issues around a stream blockage, a culvert of insufficient size to handle storm flow at Delesaguas Creek and Thompson Road has been removed.

Duncan Farms probably didn’t realize when they installed it that the volume of storm water was far greater than their small culvert could handle and were not familiar with the history of widespread damage done in the community due to stream channel blockage during storm events.

Daniele Diaz and the Mullach Street neighborhood (see “Water (Barely) Under the Bridge, May”) are very grateful to their upstream ag neighbor who produces food that improves our lives in a natural way. Continued comprehensive cooperation has the potential to alleviate the contention between neighbors and regulatory intervention that has caused everyone so much grief for over a decade. All Mr. Diaz and Old Town Nipomo neighbors have asked from their ag neighbors is the understanding and ongoing concern that what happens upstream has a direct effect on the health and well-being of their downstream neighbors.

Thank you, Duncan Farms. May your future be clear and unobstructed.

Back in the day In May 2009, the SLO RESCO team and advisors met at the Sierra Club to plot the future course of local clean energy. Left to right: Marc Shifrin, Santa Lucia Chapter Chair Karen Merriam, Elana Shefrin, Ken Smokoska, Eric Veium, Jim Cole.
Solar
continued from page 5

Alternatives is currently looking for installation volunteers. “We like to get students out on break, teams from local businesses, or people who are just interested in solar,” Lukes says. “They will receive a two-hour orientation and the rest is on-the-job training.”

The Sip and Solar events are designed to raise awareness of the program and create a source of private funding to ensure sustainability for the program long after the SASH Program sunsets.

For more information go to www.GRIDalternatives.org or call Anna Lisa Lukes at (805) 769-9120.

Coffee
continued from page 2

manner in which the caffeine test is conducted is critical to obtaining a meaningful result. Sewer flows and the timing and duration of pumping activity at the well(s) to be sampled must be carefully coordinated to ensure that the test is valid. Linda Stedjee agreed, writing in a follow-up note to the Board and Morro Bay City Council that the people “primarily responsible for the nitrate study that says well nitrates come from fertilizer, not sewage, is the same group that in 2009 gave the City the infamous attempt to conduct a stream flow interference study [that] was abruptly halted after residents asked the Council how one could measure stream flow interference in a dry stream.” A second attempt the following year was also halted after “a DFG official on patrol found that they had not bothered to obtain any permits and had damaged the banks of a steelhead trout stream. Bottom line: If they could make mistakes like that in dealing with Chorro Valley well issues, one might assume they could make mistakes with a Morro Basin well nitrate study.”

“Hopefully,” Stedjee concluded, “by working together, City government and residents can start making a meaningful change in the state of health of our groundwater and ocean.” The Water Board said it expects to receive and report the results of the caffeine test at its September meeting.

Losing Sleep and Waking Up Worried?
For confidential professional help, call
Jill Benton, LMFT
Experienced Trauma & Anxiety Therapist
805-594-1101
www.livesovercoming.com
Serving our community since 1979

July 11 is World Population Day

Join the Sierra Club’s Global Population and Environment Program and our partners for a World Population Day chat to learn more about the connections between family planning, reproductive health, climate and the environment.

Find out how meeting women’s basic needs helps improve the lives of families, communities, local environments, and the planet, and hear how the Sierra Club and others are working to foster a balance between the Earth and its inhabitants in a world of seven billion people and growing.

Want to be a part of the solution? The conversation will conclude with ways to take action and get involved. RSVP at www.sierraclub.org/

Public
continued from page 3

easier in the United States (not that it’s easy here, but alongside other countries we are better off). Our public lands are the property of all, owned by no country other than the country’s land acreage. Two federal laws above all give citizens and their clubs sturdy handles to help guide stewardship of the public lands: the Wilderness Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In no other nation do citizens have as many handles on the gears of public conservation as do those of the United States and none have anything like our federal public lands. The United States is a stand-alone nation for conservation most of all because of the public lands and a steadily more open door for citizen input on their stewardship. Our matchless system of US public lands is the key for our gains in conservation, notwithstanding the economic, political, and philosophical might of those fighting protection of public lands in the United States: resource agencies, corporations, politicians, landscapers, and conspiracy nuts… We conservationists should never brook mistaken catcalls from “new conservationists” that our hoary conservation path has failed owing to the weight we give to set-aside public lands.

Mind you, I am not saying that America’s public lands are flawless or the best they can be. They are far from that. But we have them! And that is wonderful and worth more than we often think.

--- Around the Campfire with Uncle Dave Foreman, “The Rewilding Institute, March 27, 2014.

This land is our land: Additions to the Santa Lucia Wilderness, as proposed in the Central Coast Wilderness Bill (Capps).

Coffee
continued from page 2

manner in which the caffeine test is conducted is critical to obtaining a meaningful result. Sewer flows and the timing and duration of pumping activity at the well(s) to be sampled must be carefully coordinated to ensure that the test is valid. Linda Stedjee agreed, writing in a follow-up note to the Board and Morro Bay City Council that the people “primarily responsible for the nitrate study that says well nitrates come from fertilizer, not sewage, is the same group that in 2009 gave the City the infamous attempt to conduct a stream flow interference study [that] was abruptly halted after residents asked the Council how one could measure stream flow interference in a dry stream.” A second attempt the following year was also halted after “a DFG official on patrol found that they had not bothered to obtain any permits and had damaged the banks of a steelhead trout stream. Bottom line: If they could make mistakes like that in dealing with Chorro Valley well issues, one might assume they could make mistakes with a Morro Basin well nitrate study.”

“Hopefully,” Stedjee concluded, “by working together, City government and residents can start making a meaningful change in the state of health of our groundwater and ocean.” The Water Board said it expects to receive and report the results of the caffeine test at its September meeting.

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This land is our land: Additions to the Santa Lucia Wilderness, as proposed in the Central Coast Wilderness Bill (Capps).
Peter Steynberg: An Interview

Owner of the Steynberg Gallery in San Luis Obispo, Peter J. Steynberg has navigated a long career as an art connoisseur in South Africa to becoming a community cultural leader and patron of local artists, musicians, poets, and writers of all varieties. Here, Mr. Steynberg reflects on his present role, environmental concerns and his love for the land (and the eland).

Tell me how you came to what you are doing now.

We took a big chance on buying this building and a big risk, and it has all worked out. It started out as a fine art gallery, and I made no money. So I had to re-conceptualize to try to get the idea of putting in a coffee shop. The coffee shop has just changed the way you run a gallery. I call it a soft opening because we get Cal Poly students, and even the high school kids coming in here, and we are exposing them to art. Here, people can linger and have a cup of coffee, or have breakfast while sitting next to a painting. So it’s been a long struggle. We’ve been here for fifteen years and the beginning was pretty tough to survive. Now we’ve established what people expect us to be.

What is your philosophy toward the environment?

I’m a Sierra Club member. I think the environment in America has been destroyed. Los Osos is the Valley of the Beach and you don’t see a bear there anymore. The ice plants growing all over, which come from my country, South Africa, are destroying all the local vegetation. It’s sad. We really have to work hard to take the environment seriously. And climate change, of course.

How does your background or previous experiences inform your views?

I come from South Africa, and we grew up closer to nature. People here have lost a connection with nature. And every country in this world is being aided by America. But when you come back here, Americans don’t look after other Americans. We should never have so many poor people in this country. It’s shocking.

How do you see your world of art intersecting with environmental concerns?

My job is to keep the standard as high as I can, and we’ve become a cultural center. It’s important to bring people through the front door. People need to have a place where they can get together and talk. I have the Sierra Club here once a month. We do poetry and art shows and lectures and soirees and different speakers coming in, and it’s everything from the conserva-
tions to you-name-it. We talk about all kinds of arts.

Do you think the world of business can cooperate with or support a green philosophy?

The single biggest thing is greed. That gets in the way of everything, really.

People get greedy, that’s where the environment just takes a back seat. I’m very aware of the environment, and I care about the environment. I don’t like it about our survival. I wasn’t born with the green gene.

What causes would you like the Sierra Club to champion? Is there anything you’d like to tell the Sierra Club members?

One thing that does worry me is the nuclear power plant. It should disappear. I think the writing is on the wall. The power plant in Morro Bay is an eyesore. It’s an incredible bit of land for tourist attraction and it’s a real ugly thing — right on the beach. Everyone in California should have solar panels on their roof. That’s probably one of the biggest things — they should make it easy for everybody to have solar panels. They have not really made it easy enough. That’s number one;

What are your great hopes for the planet?

I just hope that human beings will come to their senses.

And fears?

That people don’t take climate change seriously. There is a huge group of people that don’t feel that anything is happening. But there are no argu-
ments. The scientists know what they are talking about.

Let’s try a little Proust questionnaire, with a few Sierra Club flavored questions. What is your current state of mind?

I feel really happy to be where I am. Life has been really, really good to me. So I’m pleased to be where I am at this age. I appreciate every minute.

Do you have any environmental heroes?

Oh, John Muir. How can you not name him?

What is your idea of happiness?

The pursuit of happiness is freedom. I’m just happy. Swimming makes me happy. People make me happy.

What to see in nature do you find inspiring?

Rock art paintings. I actually wrote a thesis on rock art. In South Africa, I used to visit a lot of sites there. I’ve been to a couple of the Chumash sites too.

What would you change in the world today?

Greed. It’s the single most destructive thing on this planet. Human greed. We need to learn to share.

Your favorite animal, plant and body of water?

Eland. It’s a sacred animal of the Bushmen, a large antelope, the size of an ox. I love trees. I love the ocean and I love Lake Tahoe, it’s incredible.

What do you most value in friends?

Loyalty. I have some very true and loyal friends. Honesty, too.

How would you like to die?

In my natural habitat — disease of the body as cheaply as possible. I’ll definitely have a green burial. And nothing from the County or the State would be fine. Just put me in the ground, I don’t need anything. I don’t fear it. Maybe I can be made into fertilizer for some plants. I don’t have any fancy religious beliefs about the after life, and I’m happy with that.

What is your personal motto?

Oh, that’s hard. Give me a week and I’ll tell you. No, here’s my motto, which I heard from a 109 year old woman who was interviewed locally. She said, “Be kind to everyone and mind your own business.” That’s what I live by now.

Dunes

Diversity and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, joined by other groups, filed a lawsuit against the California Coastal Conservancy for its continued attempts to strip the funding for purchasing the La Grande Tract. The respective conservationists want to purchase the La Grande from the State Parks and use the parcel for recreation and other public use. The lawsuit was filed May 22, 2013, upon being told by Mayor Peterson that she had been “advised” to hold off. Local Coastal Plan issues that had an ox. I love trees. I love the ocean

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Dunes SRVA, is currently used by State Parks under the terms of an operating agreement with the County. State Parks 2007 attempt to purchase the parcel made headlines when the Sierra Club pointed out that a map in the County’s certified Local Coastal Plan (LCP), certified in 1984, showed that the land in question was design-

A Planning Scandal

On May 22, another Assembly subcommittee voted for denial of the funds to State Parks the letter did not mention the land parcel’s contentious history or address the Local Coastal Plan issues that had persuaded the County not to sell. The Assembly budget subcommit-

The saga of the La Grande Tract

February 2007: “OHV-quake!: 580 acres of off-highway land are up in the air.”

March 2007: “Coastal Commission Turns Up the Heat on Dunes.”

May 2007: “Sandstorm: At Oceano Dunes, the answer is blowin’ in the wind.”

March 2008: “For the Dunes: Why We Sue.”

May 2008: “A Planning Scandal.”


Jul. 2009: “County Slams County Planners in Attempted Dunes Sale.”


Apr. 2010: “Case Dismissed: Off-roaders’ Oceano Dunes lawsuit buried.”


Nov. 2010: “ODSVRA Lawsuit: Rolling the rock up the sand dune.”

Mar. 2011: “Judge Awards Sierra Club Legal Fees in Oceano Dunes Case.”


Sept. 2013: “The Dusty Trail.”

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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 sierrachib@gmail.com

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

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park. 3-Days, 3-Islands: June 8-10, 2014. Cheryl Marchenko, vmarchenko57@gmail.com or 528-5567.

Thursday, west end of Escalante, for permit. Leader: David Hardy at landhikers@umbaramail.com (preferred) or 707-677-4852. Central Coast Mountain Bikers. Group/CNRC Desert Committee.

Sat., June 21st, 8:30 a.m. Twitchell, Stone Ridge, & Kirk Creek (aka Vincente) Loop Hike. Hike on longest day of year, 11 miles, 5000 ft. elevation gain, in S Big Sur. with a 2.5-mile car shuttle, starting at north end near Limekiln and proceeding south. Initial part of trail is a strenuous 2000-ft gain taking 1.5 to 2 hrs (no switchbacks), then trails are less steep. Duration about 6-7 hrs. Poison oak along trail. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes. Meet at Washburna Day Use area in San Simeon State Park, one mile north of Cambria, off Hwy 1. Extreme heat will postpone. Need confirmation with Leader Carlos Diaz-Saavedra beforehand if planning to attend, 546-0317.

Sun., June 22nd, 2 p.m. City Walk: Victorian-Age SLO. Guided stroll past 21st century, old homes and churches in the Old Town Historic District, SLO’s former “New Hill.” See residences of past mayors, newspaper editor, and founder of Cal Poly. Eavesdrop on the lives of the newly rich who transformed the city at the turn of the twentieth century. Duration about 1/2 hr. Meet in front of Jack House, 536 Marsh St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Sat., June 28th, 9 a.m. Islay Rd- Barranca/E. Boundary/Ridge Trails. Moderate 8-9 mile loop hike in Montana de Oro State Park, 1600 ft. elevation gain—a wonderful chance to explore MD0 backpacking. From Hazard Pk, great views of north and south coastlines. Bring water, lunch or snacks, and dress for the weather. Slight possibility of ticks and poison oak. Meet in parking area across from Ridge Trailhead (Hazard Peak), before you reach the visitor center. Option of going out for eats after hike. Leader: Chuck Tibbey, 441-5797.

Activities sponsored by other organizations

Central Coast Mountain Bikers.

Sat., June 7, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Montana de Oro trail work. Meet at Park HQ above Spooners Cove. Wear work clothes, hats and gloves. Bring water. Tools and snacks provided. Parent needs to sign waiver for volunteers under 18. Contact: Gregbettencourt 440@gmail.com. Citizens’ Climate Lobby.

Sat., June 7, 9-45 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2201 Lawton Avenue, San Luis Obispo. Get ready to get involved and make a difference! For more information, go to www.citizensclimatelobby.org. Contact: citizensclimate@slo.org.

SLO Botanical Garden.

Sat., June 21, 1 p.m. Hummingbirds & Nesting Boxes. Helpful tips and hints for creating a backyard bird sanctuary. Discover the factors that create unsafe and safe housing for your feathered friends. We learn the do’s and don’ts of keeping your yard a healthy environment for birds. Grower's Park Visitor Center.

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