The Plan for Clean Power

The EPA’s first-ever national plan to curb carbon pollution from power plants is a major opportunity

As part of the President’s Climate Action Plan, the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed the Clean Power Plan, our nation’s first protections from carbon pollution from power plants.

The Plan puts states in the driver’s seat to hasten their shift to clean energy and reduce carbon pollution. It will also help reduce other forms of dangerous air pollution.

By cleaning up and modernizing power plants, we will begin to clean up our air, reduce pollution-related illness, and curb climate disruption. Reducing carbon pollution from power plants will not only save billions of dollars each year, it will save lives. For every dollar of investment under the Plan, we’ll see roughly seven dollars in health benefits. The plan will spur innovation, accelerate the clean energy economy, and create jobs.

Sierra Club will be working to strengthen the standard, showing we can move from dirty to clean energy much faster than EPA predicts. Solar and wind power become more cost-effective every day and continue to grow exponentially. Clean energy and energy efficiency should be the focus of states’ efforts.

Sierra Club will also help to ensure that affected communities are engaged throughout the process, and that public resources are available to help workers and communities as they make the transition to a clean energy economy.

Our country is already well on its way to meeting and exceeding the Clean Power Plan’s goals, and is poised to show leadership in the transition to a clean, equitable energy future.

Carbon reduction goals

The Clean Power Plan will reduce carbon pollution from power plants 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The EPA has estimated that the plan will make these reductions faster in the early years of the program — 29% by 2025 and 27% by 2020. We can go much further to reduce carbon pollution.

Many states are already on a path to go beyond EPA’s proposal by retiring dirty power plants and scaling up renewables and energy efficiency. To set state-specific goals, EPA analyzed the strategies that states and utilities are already using to lower carbon pollution from the power sector. While the overall carbon reduction goals in the plan set out reductions relative to a 2005 baseline of emissions, the carbon pollution standards started with each state’s 2012 energy mix to set that state’s carbon reduction goal. These include improving energy efficiency, improving power plant operations, and encouraging reliance on low-carbon and zero-emitting electricity generation.

To tell EPA NO to the Plan, go to [tell EPA NO] 20% off Bioneers

Don’t Miss:
Oct. 24-25:
20% off Bioneers admission for Sierra Club members! - see page 8
County Supervisors lay out the welcome mat for frackers

At their September 23 meeting, the County Supervisors heard a report from staff on the current state of play in hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for oil in California.

By the industry’s estimate, more than 600 oil wells have been fracked in the state over the last decade, with virtually no oversight or monitoring by the state agency that provides well permits. Six California counties have already banned the practice or put a ban on the November ballot, for all the well-documented reasons pertaining to water contamination, air pollution, land destruction, and seismic activity. Eleven cities have also taken action in opposition to fracking.

At the very end of its September 23 meeting, awash in a sea of oil industry executives and consultants, the Board undistinguished itself by selecting the “status quo” option in the staff report and doing nothing.

In a discussion punctuated by less than engaged comments from Supervisors Adam Hill (“Can we go home?”) the supervisors, evidently never having heard the fable of the grasshopper and the ant, noted that fracking isn’t yet happening in the county, no one’s submitted a fracking permit application yet, and the geology isn’t perfectly suited to fracking, so there’s no need to take any action now to prepare for any such eventuality in the future.

Giving the lie to that belief was the full-court press at the meeting from representatives from the California Independent Petroleum Association, Western States Petroleum Association, and what appeared to be the entire executive staff from Freeport McMo- ran’s Arroyo Grande oil field operation, all troopng to the microphone to issue polite legal threats and tell the supervisors that banning fracking in SLO County would kill the oil industry. Many harped on the theme of energy independence, despite the fact that fracking is all about energy exports. Fracking is the reason why the U.S. has a swelling surplus of oil and gas, which the oil and gas companies are looking to sell overseas, hastening climate catastrophe.

None of the supervisors thought to ask the oil executives and lobbyists present why they were so intent on urging the County not to ban a practice in which they were not engaged and/or had no intention of engaging in.

The Sierra Club pointed out that the supervisors’ faith in local and pending state regulations — specifically Senate Bill 4 — was misplaced. SB 4 was passed in 2013 after its regula- tory and disclosure requirements were undercut by late amendments, negotiated by the oil industry, that included provisions that will hinder public access to information about fracking fluids and allow fracking to roll merrily along, free of rigorous environmental review and oversight, while the state takes two years or more to figure out a regulatory scheme and complete an Environ- mental Impact Report.

And the supervisors had nothing to say about this sentence in the staff report:

“...hydraulic fracturing is exempt from the federal Safe Drinking Water Act; the Resource Conserva- tion and Recovery Act, and the Emergency Planning and Commu- nity Right to Know Act, which address treating, storage, and disposal of hazardous wastes, protection of groundwater from injection wells, and disclosure of toxic chemicals, respectively.”

The supervisors also chose to ignore 4,000 signatures on a petition turned in by SLO Clean Water Action asking for a ban, and what their staff told them is being done in other California jurisdictions that have grasped the magnitude of the threat to their citizens and natural resources:

• The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors has put up a fracking ban initiative (Measure P) on the Novem- ber 4 ballot.
• The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors has voted to prohibit fracking in their County.
• The Butte County Board of Supervisors has directed staff to prepare an ordinance to ban fracking.
• The Marin County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution against fracking in their County.

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Broad Coalition Calls For a New Model of Trade

550+ groups reject fast-track trade promotion authority

On September 10, nearly 600 organizations led by the Sierra Club, AFL-CIO, the Communications Workers of America, the Citizens Trade Campaign, and Public Citizen sent a letter to Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) firmly rejecting fast-track trade promotion authority and calling for a new trade negotiation system. The letter concludes, “is intended to provide the mechanism that would limit Congressional and public oversight over trade negotiations, is simply not appropriate,” given the broad subjects covered by today’s trade pacts, such as the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic and Investment Partnership (TTIP). “Fast-track is the wrong track for Americans who care about the health of our families and access to clean air, clean water, and land,” said Michael Bruno, executive director of the Sierra Club. “We need a new model of trade — one that protects communities and the environment while keeping the public engaged in the policy-making process.”

In January, then-Senator Max Baucus and Congressman Dave Camp introduced a fast-track bill, the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities Act of 2014, which would strip Congress of its ability to amend or sufficiently debate trade pacts. Sen. Wyden, the current Senate Finance Chairman, is now drafting a new trade authority bill. “There is no ‘acceptable’ version of fast track,” said Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen. “Fast-track must be replaced so Congress can steer international trade in a new direction and create agreements that actually work for most Americans.”

Instead of fast track, the letter calls for a new model of trade authority that includes a Congressional role in selecting trade partners, a set of mandatory negotiating objectives, enhanced transparency, Congressional certification that negotiating objectives have been met before trade negotiations can conclude, and more. “We need 21st-century trade authority that allows Congress to do its job and represents the interests of U.S. workers, consumers and communities.”

By any name, the flawed ‘fast track’ approach that would enable negotiators to bypass Congress and put in place new and binding agreements that have real consequences for all of us,” said Larry Cohen, president of the Communication Workers of America. “A new model of trade authority is the only way to ensure that workers and communities have a voice in these trade decisions. We want to determine what kind of economy we have, not simply accept super-power status for multinational corporations and a smash’em for the price for the enforcement issues raised by the rest of us.”

Congress has regularly created new trade authority mechanisms as international trade has evolved. Fast track first went into effect under President Nixon in the 1970s. Fast-track authority was last granted during the George W. Bush administration. The law expired on June 30, 2007.

Why the Climate Movement Can’t Ignore Trade

by Iana Solomon, Director, Sierra Club Responsible Trade Program

On September 21, I joined more than 400,000 community members on the front lines of climate disruption – environmentalists, workers, students, parents, and others – to demand action on climate and to claim our collective rights to clean water, air, and land. As someone who has spent many years in the halls of Congress and United Nations climate conventions calling for strong climate action, this diverse, public, outspoken, and in-the-streets action was a beautiful, incredible feat that signals a tipping point in the climate movement that policymakers will not be able to ignore.

But there is another tipping point that will affect the success of the climate movement: the free trade tipping point. The global climate movement is asking Congress to help us use our ability to make big changes in our economy. These changes include moving beyond fossil fuels and building local green economies. However, our current model of free trade, which is written into agreements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and free trade pacts like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), threatens nearly every...
asserting california's oversight of the costs of nuclear power

505 Van Ness Avenue might not have the recognition or cachet of, say, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, but when it comes to the controversial issues now swirling around the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, it is the address to keep in mind.

505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, is the headquarters of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and that is where most of the action involving the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility (A4NR) is taking place. It is the venue where California can assert its Supreme Court ruling (NRC) to assure that ratepayers receive economical and reliable energy delivery. The CPUC is also the august institution that reaffirms California's jurisdiction.

as thesummer of 2014 came to a close, of both these oversight capabilities were challenged.

in late August, PG&E's omnibus General Rate Case (GRC) was approved by the CPUC in a manner that reaffirms California's jurisdiction. the first issue concerned expedited transfer of highly radioactive spent fuel from liquid pools to dry cask storage—activity relating to Diablo Canyon and to condition approval of PG&E's cost recovery of $26.1 million to construct the remaining five pads at the ISFSI in 2014 upon PG&E's submittal of a plan to expedite the transfer of spent fuel from liquid pools to dry casks on those pads. PG&E opposed this recommendation on the grounds that the CPUC and the CEC have no legal right to regulate nuclear safety issues. However, the CPUC agreed with A4NR.

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"The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, www.a4nr.org"

\[Overseas continued on next page\]
Behind the mask. In an internal PG&E memo from October 10, 2010, part of the discovery items in the Alliance’s CPUC case, a PG&E senior expert notes that supplanting the structural integrity comparisons in Diablo Canyon’s operating license with the “Hosgri” study would require an LAR [License Amendment Request]. He goes on to comment “this would require an LAR to bypass review of the IPRP.” This recent decision. The Independent Peer Review Panel was supposed to review the Diablo Canyon seismic fragility during the Napa earthquake, the CPUC is making inroads in restoring ratepayer faith by acknowledging our seismic concerns in a future possibility is the development of a curriculum during the school year. A4NR attorney John Geesman said following orders. A4NR attorney John Geesman said of the same-day release of the seismic study and NRC’s dismissal of Dr. Michael Peck’s dissent on the seismic safety of the plant. “This ‘study’ is a propaganda document, rushed into print without the advance review required by the CPUC decision, which funded the $64 million Studies. The sole purpose for PG&E’s peculiar timing is to counter Dr. Peck’s report and the Friends Of The Earth petition in that matter before the NRC. It should also be noted that the Alliance and its seismologist, Dr. Douglas Hamilton (PG&E’s former seismic consultant at the Diablo site over 40 years ago) will need time to review all 1,400 pages of this study. But before the technical discussions, the procedural gaffe made by PG&E in bypassing review of the IPRP will have to be addressed. The Alliance will be heading to 505 Van Ness Avenue in early October to determine just how the CPUC allowed PG&E to slide this “study” under the radar. Why were the public meetings of the IPRP discontinued after July 2013? Could it be due to the pointed critique the IPRP leveled at PG&E after that last meeting? A4NR will also be in Sacramento to discuss these developments with the California Energy Commission. California’s regulatory agencies need to be vigilant when dealing with PG&E. It is a corporation facing 28 federal indictments including criminal obstruction in the gas pipeline explosion at San Bruno. The nuclear division of the company shares the same top levels of management strategy and executive decision making as the gas division (see “About Those Felony Indictments...”, July). More recently, scandals resulting in firings and reversals have rocked cozy relationship at CPUC and PG&E. Having the hard-fought precedent for state oversight over nuclear issue is a precious and valuable thing; wasting that opportunity is dangerous. A4NR will remain at the forefront to protect ratepayers’ best interests. Stay abreast of results at www.a4nr.org.

Community Electricity Wins Big
Monopoly utility attack on local energy choice defeated

On August 30, David beat Goliath in Sacramento. Senator Darrell Steinberg brought down the gavel at 3 a.m. on that Saturday morning to close the 2013-14 legislative session with no vote on Assembly Bill 2145. That bill, monopoly utility-driven legislation aimed at crushing locally based clean energy efforts known as Community Choice energy programs, immediately died. A new statewide coalition, Californians for Energy Choice, defeated the measure. Organizers then joined with scores of new activists to help pass Proposition 16, which would have ended Community Choice programs. The defeat of AB 2145 protects the ability of local communities to take control of decision-making about their electricity sources. It also empowers them to access lower rates by leveraging the customer buying power and energy market competition that Community Choice programs make possible. Local governments throughout the State now have a green light to create successful clean energy-based Community Choice programs.

CITY FARM continued on page 8

Class is in Session at City Farm

As the school year ramps up, the students at Pacific Beach High School already have lettuce, tomatoes, corn, sunflowers and more growing in their garden plots at City Farm–San Luis Obispo, which they planted this spring in a three-week pilot program for City Farm School.

City Farm School is the combination of enriched curriculum in the classroom, developed by teacher Anne Wilder, and hands-on outdoor learning. Students earn academic credit while studying elements of the food system such as international versus local supply chains, the history of food, the physics, chemistry and biology of agro-ecology, and the principles of sustainable and organic agriculture.

“The City Farm School provides an on-farm experience that we hope will be transformative for these students as they learn science, biology, agriculture and food from a new lens and a unique approach,” said Jenna Smith, Central Coast Grown Executive Director. “It’s extremely exciting to see the youth in our community growing their own food at City Farm.”

The students will spend three days in the garden each week with newly developed curriculum during the school year. A future possibility is the opportunity to expand into a one-acre student-managed production farm supported by Central Coast Grown. This will depend on the level of resources available.
the goal through whatever combination of measures reflects its particular circumstances and policy objectives. A state does not have to put in place the same mix of strategies that EPA used to set the goal; states may work alone or in cooperation with other states to comply with the proposed rule. So let’s make it better. We have the opportunity to push states to choose efficiency and renewable energy over dirty and dangerous power plants. Specifically, the Sierra Club is recommending the following improvements to the standard:

1) Increase Carbon Pollution Reduction Goals. We can transition from dirty to clean energy much faster than EPA predicts. Carbon pollution reductions can be greater and happen faster in both the near-term (2020-2025) and the longterm (2030). With stronger standards, nationwide power plant pollution can be reduced on the order of 25-30% below current levels (2012) by 2020 (equivalent to 35-40% below 2005 levels), with further reductions thereafter.

2) Promote Renewables and Energy Efficiency. Renewable energy, especially wind and solar, and efficiency have been growing at an astonishing rate and costs to deliver renewable power have declined dramatically. EPA’s estimates for growth and affordability of renewable energy and efficiency don’t match this reality and should be adjusted. In states where this is the case, EPA could set even more ambitious goals for carbon pollution reduction.

3) Avoid Use of Natural Gas and Nuclear. States should not use dirty and dangerous energy sources like nuclear or natural gas to meet their goals. Sierra Club will urge states to look first to cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy as well as other cost effective carbon-reducing strategies that eliminate the need to subsidize aging nuclear plants that are no longer competitive. EPA should consider the full impact of the use of natural gas (from cradle to grave) in this and other standards when evaluating its effect on climate disruption and human health.

4) Incorporate Coal Plant Retirement. EPA did not include the latest coal plant retirements when it set the state standards. If included, states could set even more ambitious goals for carbon pollution reduction.

5) Empower Affected Workers & Communities. EPA must give affected communities the opportunity to be engaged throughout the process. Sierra Club will work to ensure that the plan protects the most vulnerable communities, and that they have meaningful input in the standard setting process. In addition, Sierra Club will advocate for public resources to help workers and affected communities as they make the transition to the clean-energy economy. EPA should ensure that this standard and the Clean Power Plan is a step in the fight to get our energy from clean, renewable sources, but it needs to be stronger and you can help! Go to sierraclub.org and click the Take Action button under “Speak out for a strong Clean Power Plan” to get a message to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and President Obama that we can make bigger carbon reductions faster than what’s in the EPA plan, and get to a clean energy future with no nukes or new natural gas power plants!

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Attention Bill Denneen Award Winners

The Bill Denneen Environmental Award winners are looking to beef up their records. If, as a reputable local eco-hooligan, you have received the Bill Denneen Environmental Award, or know an award recipient, please let that recipient know that the trustees would like to know:

- the year the award was given
- reasons why the award was given
- enviro organization(s) the awardee was affiliated with
- recipient’s email

Send the info to David Georgi at dgeorge@outlook.com

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Not So, Ms. Bianchi

Cambia residents may have noticed the editorial by Shirley Bianchi in the September 18 edition of The Cambrian accusing us of getting our facts wrong in “Cambria CSD Still Crazy After All These Years” (Sept. Santa Lucia) and dragging a “red herring” into Cambria’s water woes. Ms. Bianchi likes to mix it up, but, as often happens when she was County Supervisor, she got mixed up. Our Chapter Director corrected her mistakes in an editorial reply which, as we go to press, has not yet seen print in The Cambrian. In case it never does, here it is: sancambria.sierraclub.org/news/news.html.

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...or closer to home:

Welcome to Nuclear Free California

Multiple organizations and activists will meet at the SLO Grange Hall on Saturday, January 24, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to forge a statewide strategy for the shut-down of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. Meals provided.

To get on the information list, send an e-mail to lindaseeley@gmail.com.
Thanks, Lou!

Longtime member Lou Pitelka gave us a call in September just as he moved and asked us if we’d like to have his copies of the Sierra Club Bulletin, foreunner of Sierra Club magazine, from the 1960s. Our archive of Bulletins is pretty comprehensive for that period and ‘60s thanks to other generous longtime members, but issues from the ‘80s – rife with articles from prominent legacies like Martin Litton, Morris Udall, and David and Ken Brower – have been scarce. We said yes. Much obliged, Mr. Pitelka!

FEDERAL

Lois Capps for Congress, D-24. Wisconsin and wrote a character piece for the member of Congress who established the National Marine Sanctuaries Conservation and Heritage Protection Act, take it. Capps has been an environmentally reassuring presence for so long, it’s easy to think she’ll always be there. It was the wrong year to think that. The Tea Party has a real shot and they’re going for it. We need to do the same. Help out at capps4congress.com.

LOCAL

Jan Marx for Mayor of San Luis Obispo. Marx has fought to ensure that city water cannot be sold outside the city limits, curbing sprawl development, and is starting to make the acquisition and preservation of natural open space visible again at a city priority. We expect her to continue to champion climate protection, habitat preservation, alternate transportation and rigorous CEQA standards, and defend the General Plan in latest development push for the Dalidio property. Go to www.janmarx.com.

Carlyn Christianson for San Luis Obispo City Council. A scrapper who has no problem pushing back when the council’s anti-environmental continuum is pressing harder for more pavement & profit at any cost, Christianson is a veteran of the 2005 – 06 war over the Conservation and Open Space Element, in which she learned the most valuable lesson any local elected official can learn: the city council, not city staff, are supposed to be in charge. She’s on Facebook at Carlyn Christianson for Council.

Tommy Gong for County Clerk-Recorder. The departing Julie Rodewald’s top lieutenant is the only candidate with the skill and experience to replace her. Help make sure that Gong is the person who makes sure every vote counts. Go to www.tommygong.com.

Rick Hawley for Cambria CSD Board of Directors. Cambria, you have a problem. Here’s where you start fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it. Hawley is well versed in the community’s sad water saga and advocates a watershed approach to fixing it.

Electation 2014: Sierra Club Endorsements

Note: Candidates that do not request to participate in the Sierra Club endorsement process cannot be endorsed by the Sierra Club

STATE

Heidi Harmon for State Assembly, D-35. She’s the Outreach Ambassador for the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby and Program Director for the SLO Chapter of 350.org.coordinates local educational meetings on climate change, and organized the September 21 Climate March in SLO. You get the picture. To help send Harmon to the State Assembly, go to: heidiharmon.org.

Kamala Harris for Attorney General. As the state’s top cop, Harris has aggressively defended and implemented AB 32, California’s landmark climate change legislation, and ensured that local decision-makers fully consider alternatives to, and mitigation for, new projects that will impose significant environmental impacts on communities already overburdened by pollution. In January, Harris filed a U.S. Supreme Court amicus brief in support of the EPA’s authority to apply the requirements of the Clean Air Act to greenhouse gas emissions from stationary and industrial sources.

Alex Padilla for Secretary of State. By making voting more accessible, convenient, and easy to understand, Padilla plans to increase voter registration and voter participation in elections. In the Senate, Padilla supports the California Clean Money campaign and has advanced legislation to ban the single-use plastic bag and promote renewable energy projects.

John Chiang for Treasurer. As Controller, Chiang racked up a sterling record on environmental issues. As Treasurer, he will promote investment in distributed generation and support other environmentally beneficial activities while sitting on state boards and commissions including the California Pollution Control Financing Authority and the California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority.

Betty Yee for Controller. There are several reasons to be excited by the opportunity to elect an environmental champion to this position. Betty Yee, a member of the State Board of Equalization, knows Climate Change is the overarching environmental problem to tackle, and is also going to cost taxpayers a lot of money. She will promote renewable energy standards for public works benefits throughout California and use her seat on the State Lands Commission to address uncontrolled fracking, water conservation, landfill waste and recycling, and income inequality. She is the only candidate who has promised not to accept campaign contributions from oil companies.

Dave Jones for Insurance Commis- sioner. Jones has written an assessment of the impacts of climate change on insurance risks, and encouraged insurance companies to provide lower automobile insurance rates to people who drive less. As a member of the Assembly, he wrote the Green Insur- ance Act of 2010.


Pismo Beach election

They Can Run But They Can’t Hide

Higginbotham, Vardas and Reiss are trying to escape from Spanish Springs

As Pismo Beach voters ponder Measure H and the prospect of relieving the city council of its ability to develop Price Canyon, we can confidently say that voters should also consider retiring the sprawl-happy city council majority — Mayor Shelly Higginbotham and council members Mary Ann Reiss and Kris Vardas — that made Measure H necessary.

If not for an aroused citizenry, this city council would have approved not one but two of the biggest and most unsustainable sprawl development proposals in the city’s history. On both Los Robles del Mar and Spanish Springs, the incuments fumbled and stumbled — trying as hard as they could to do the bidding of private developers and fling sprawl into the canyons surrounding the city, but with an ineptitude that was startling to behold.

The citizens rose up, LAFCO rebuffed the council on their annexation bid for Los Robles del Mar, and the Sierra Club sued the city over Spanish Springs and won. The reality — it was the Sierra Club, mobilized citizens who turned themselves into activists and the (un)shy ruling by the council that spared the city from Los Robles del Mar and Spanish Springs.

How much simpler things would be if Pismo Beach had a city council that doesn’t do things like that.

Mistake number one

On Los Robles del Mar, determined residents, with help from the Sierra Club, halted the ten-year march of the proposed development in 2008 when the project’s severe underestimation of water usage was exposed. Residents showed that many more parcels over the basin would be developed over the coming years than were contemplated in the Environmental Impact Report, that their water use was grossly underestimated, that future agricultural uses had not been considered, and local Meadow Creek wetlands were already being impacted by pumping for existing needs, with the addition of the proposed 312-unit development. LAFCO concluded that HIDE continued on page 10

Santa Lucian • Oct. 2014
1868 – Muir in Yosemite

July 15: Followed the Mono Trail up the eastern rim of the basin nearly to its summit, then turned off southward to a small shallow valley that extends to the edge of the Yosemite, which we reached about noon, and encamped. After luncheon I made haste to high ground, and from the top of the ridge on the west side of Indian Canyon gained the noblest view of the summit peaks I have ever yet enjoyed. Nearly all the upper basin of the Merced was displayed, with its sublime domes and canons, dark upswEEPing forests, and glorious array of white peaks deep in the sky, every feature glowing, radiating beauty that pours into your flesh and bones like heat rays from fire. Sunshine over all; no breath of wind to stir the brooding calm.

Never before had I seen so glorious a landscape, so boundless an affluence of sublime mountain beauty. The most extravagant description I might give of this view to anyone who has not seen similar landscapes with his own eyes would not so much as hint its grandeur – more than three thousand feet. Still my limbs did not tremble, nor did I feel the least uncertainty as to the reliance to be placed on them. …After withdrawing from such places, excited with the view I had got, I would say to myself “Now don’t go out on the verge again.” But in the face of Yosemite scenery, cautious remembrance was in vain; under its spell one’s body seems to go where it likes with a will over which we seem to have scarce any control.

After a mile or so of this memorable cliff work I approached Yosemite Creek, admiring its easy, graceful, confident gestures as it comes bravely forward in its narrow channel, singing the last of its mountain songs on its way to its fate – a few rods more over the shining granite, then down half a mile in snowy foam to another world, to be lost in the sea, where, while entombed, vegetation, inhabitants, all are different.

Emerging from its last gorge, it glides in wide lace-like rapids down a smooth incline into a pool where it seem so rest and compose its gray, agitated water before taking the grand plunge, then slowly slipping over the lip of the pool basin, it descends the mother glassy slope with rapidly accelerated speed to the brink of the tremendous cliff, and with sublime, fatalistic confidence springs out free in the air.

I took off my shoes and stockings and worked my way cautiously down alongside the rushing flood, keeping my feet and hands pressed firmly on the polished rock. The booming, roaring water, rushing past close to my head, was very exciting. I had expected that the sloping apron would terminate with the perpendicular wall of the valley, and that from the foot of it, where it is less steeply inclined, I should be able to lean far enough out to see the forms and behavior of the fall all the way down to the bottom.

But I found that there was yet another small brow over which I could not see, and which appeared to be too steep for mortal feet. Scanning it keenly, I discovered a narrow shelf about three inches wide on the very brink, just wide enough for a rest for one’s heels. But there seemed to be no way of reaching it over so steep a brow. At length, after careful scrutiny of the surface, I found an irregular edge of the rock some distance back from the margin of the torrent. If I was to get down to the brink, that rough edge, which I could offer slight finger holds, was the only way.

(Continued next issue ….)

Pharming in SLO
by Andrew Christie

Corn genetically engineered to produce experimental drugs is being grown at an undisclosed location in SLO county.

You’d have known that a month ago if you read the San Francisco Chronicle. A month later, as we go to press, if you read The Tribune or New Times, you still don’t know.

The fairly interesting local news story that residents of San Francisco got to read about us in the September 8 Chronicle began thus:

At a secret location among the vineyards of California’s Central Coast, a plot of genetically engineered corn is producing proteins for industrial and pharmaceutical uses, including an experimental vaccine for hepatitis B.

The altered corn is growing with federal approval 100 feet from a steelhead stream in San Luis Obispo County, in designated critical habitat for the threatened California red-legged frog.

The story by investigative reporter Bill Lambechelt got more alarming as it went along. The corn is being grown in a pharmaceutical drug trial to produce a hepatitis vaccine. It is in a category of genetically engineered crops that is supposed to be strictly regulated by the federal Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which requires that the seeds show documented chain-of-custody and the corn not be grown within a mile of commercial corn.

But as it turns out, APHIS regulates pharmaceutical GMOS in much the same way the NRC regulates nuclear power plants. Lambrecht’s investigation found that the SLO corn pharm is part of “a picture of vast, swiftly expanding outdoor experimentation and industry-friendly oversight of those experiments.”

The local news + 200 miles The San Francisco Chronicle broke the news of SLO’s GMO drug experiment on its front page. The Tribune and New Times, so far, aren’t interested.

400,000 People in the Street

An estimated 400,000 citizen activists, including more than 25,000 Sierra Club members, but the street in New York City on September 21 for the People’s Climate March, two days before the UN Climate Summit, in what is being called the largest climate protest in history.

It was also the largest-ever gathering of Sierra Club members and supporters in our history. The Club organized and funded more than 100 buses from 35 states, and Climate Caravan trains from Washington D.C., the Midwest and as far away as California.

It has been an interesting summer at the SLO Thursday night farmers market. I’ve been walking around the market, calling on the assembled world leaders to act, saying, “Our citizens keep marching; we cannot pretend we cannot hear them. We have to answer the call.”

Years from now, if world leaders listen to the alarm being sounded by citizens to take meaningful action to curb climate disruption, future generations may look back at the People’s Climate March as the watershed moment when the tide turned in the fight against climate disruption.

SLO Nature Through Artists’ Eyes

SLO’s Rosanne Selz told the Steynberg Gallery audience how she works.

Five members of San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment (SLOPE) spoke at our general meeting on September 18 and gave the audience insight into what it means to be a plein air painter. “I just love being there with my subject,” said Laurel Sherrie. “There’s nothing like it. When you stand in a place for three hours looking at something, you get so much more than you would see just walking by.”

In addition to the potential threat such crops pose to the environment, they can cause economic devastation if seed or pollen escape their field trials and contaminate a commercial crop.

SLO’s pharmed corn experiment is being conducted by John Howard, founder of The AgBioResearch Technology Institute, which is located in the Cal Poly Technology Park. Howard, the Chronicle story relates, previously founded another company that was permanently banned from GMO trials after creating such contaminated messes in the Midwest that a half-million bushels of soybeans and more than 150 acres of corn had to be destroyed.

All of which is the kind of thing you might thing our local media might think local growers and consumers of food might want to know about.

Update: GE Corn at SLO Farmers Market

By Jesse Arnold

It has been an interesting summer at the SLO Thursday night farmers market. I’ve been walking around holding a sign reading “Let’s Get the GMO Corn Out of Farmers Market.”

I’ve encountered two mutually incompatible misconceptions: that all corn is GMO, and there is no GMO corn sold at the market.

Certainly most field corn is GMO, but field corn in San Luis Obispo County is less likely to be GMO.

Hayashi & Sons sells GMO sweet corn at local farmers markets.

A singular misconception I encountered came from a local PhD in the employ of Dow AgroSciences. He assured me that the FDA had never approved a GMO sweet corn, hence there could be none for sale here.

When the Sierra Club provided proof that FDA had approved GMO sweet corn for sale twelve years ago, he admitted that he was mistaken.

One consumer at the market got my information after she had purchased some of Hayashi’s GMO corn. I told her she could return it for a refund. I know Hayashi has given refunds in such cases at the Templeton market. But she said she would just throw it out.

Meanwhile, the Sierra Club’s July letter to North County Farmers Market Association asks that other farmers markets around the country encourage farmers to grow non-GMO sweet corn.

580-564-6699

The market is run by a board of directors. They have the power to bar GMO corn from sale by vendors. Other farmers markets around the country have adopted this policy.

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the developer and the city could not show that the water supply that was adequate, reliable and sustainable.

Three years later, the City tried again. As local resident Jerry A. Step observed in these pages (“The ‘Tales of del Mar: Who’s Got the Water?’” Sept. 24, 2012), the city attorney “green lighted” oversimplified the critically important water element of the development agreement. As a result, City Manager Deanna L. Zobin, mandated that an ignorant City Council blindly assume that substituting unneeded water for the inadequate state water allocation would not create any problems.” Of the city’s assumptions, members Reiss and Vardas acknowledged, “we are not convinced that the manner in which the lesser amount of water was calculated did not use the wrong methods, as opposed to assumptions and conjecture.”

Spreague reported that the entire council voted to approve an amended Environmental Impact Report for the project, despite their obvious “gapping lack of knowledge about what they were voting on.”

One more time

On Spanish Springs, the General Plan amendment has been supported by Higginbotham, Vardas and Reiss eliminated the requirement that there be no new residential development in the Planning Area without an inland arterial street to alleviate traffic. The council members, without so much as an objection by SROCG and Caltrans by eliminating this requirement in order to get more residential development, without considering what this would do to traffic on the 101. Also eliminated was the General Plan requirement that any proposed developments demonstrate a new source of water sufficient to meet future long-term demand prior to approval for annexation. Other flaws in the project included the lack of detailed mitigation measures or steel- head relocation protocols in the open space management plan, as pointed out by the San Luis Coastal Resource Conservation District and the National Marine Fisheries Service, and insufficient mitigation measures for green- house gas emissions and other air- quality impacts, as pointed out by the Air Pollution Control District. The directive of the developer’s water recycling plan did not meet the informational requirements of state environmental law.

Just as the city council was approaching the crucial vote on the Spanish Springs project, Babak Naficy, our attorney, Babak Naficy, marveled at the target-rich legal environment provided by the City of Pismo Beach. Naficy has repeatedly warned them about the deficiencies in the EIR, but they certified it anyway. The city stayed its hand as for the developer because the city council approved the EIR and the General Plan Amendments without approving the project itself, as is normal practice. The developer himself asked the City Council to approve the General Plan Amendments because the wording wouldn’t pass legal muster. It’s as though the council was trying to do everything wrong.”

Mayor Higginbotham and council members Reiss and Vardas are running the basis of their experience—a combined 36 years on the City Council—since 2007. They have observed, before the length of one’s experience doesn’t matter as much as what kind of experience one has. Pismo Beach has now avoided two close calls at the experienced hands of Higginbotham, Vardas and Reiss, but that should not be all the experience voters need.

The people of Pismo Beach have the opportunity to write a new chapter in the city’s political history. The candidates are attempting to flee the real issues to the voters. They have the chance to say “good night” to the incumbents as the sun sets on November 4, and then greet the new day.

Climate & Trade

Climate change and clean energy policies: In order to combat the climate crisis, we must move beyond fossil fuels and embrace clean energy. However, investment rules in free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties threaten our ability to do so. The rules actually empower corporations to sue governments to block the energy transition and only then was the possibility of approving the EIR and the General Plan Amendments needed to pass the council, which then approved the Final Environmental Impact Report.

The candidates are attempting to flee from their records: Certification of the Environmental Impact Report is the whole ball game. Once that’s done, all subsequent actions to “fully approve the project” — i.e. approval of the specific plan and the development agreement are a formality, the crossing of T’s and dotting of I’s. A candidate claiming otherwise is just trying to keep the voters from seeing that’s why the Sierra Club sued to overturn the approval of the EIR. And that’s why, when we won and the City Council agreed to rescind that approval, then and only then was the possibility of moving forward with Spanish Springs well and truly foreclosed.

When we sued, our attorney, Babak Naficy, marveled at the target-rich legal environment provided by the City of Pismo Beach. Naficy has, in turn, threatened a number of cases at the WTO over failed renewable energy programs. Japan and Canada have been a string of cases at the WTO over failed renewable energy programs. But a long-standing investor in the fossil fuel industry has set a fire under the climate movement. New, dangerous trade deals like the TPP and TTIP, which threaten health, environmental, and worker protections, have set ablaze another chapter in the story of global corporate advocates. If we can combine the force of these movements and continue to strengthen our work, the power of our movements will tip our governments to act on behalf of the people instead of on behalf of the polluters.

The climate movement must stand up to the free trade rules and ideology that failed get us into this climate mess and that will thwart our ability to solve it and say, “enough is enough.”

TAKE ACTION

The only way the TPP and TTIP can get approved is if the executive branch secures the votes of the Senate. “Our broader goal is to get the Senate to say no. As for how you can help make sure that doesn’t happen, go to sierraclub.org/trade and drop us a note at responsibletrade@sierraclub.org

The candidates are attempting to flee from their records: Certification of the Environmental Impact Report is the whole ball game. We have to move beyond fossil fuels here and now. Let’s take a deeper look at just how severely restricted the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the European Union. According to Oil Change International, lifting the crude oil export ban would lead to 9.9 billion barrels of additional crude between 2015 and 2050, which would release as much carbon dioxide as 42 coal-fired power plants. China is threatening local content rules in EU renewable energy programs. Unfortunately, the trade rules described above are just a small part of the myriad rules that make it difficult to bring about what the 400,000-plus people who marched on September 21 want—climate justice.

But all of this is not reason to despair; it’s reason to organize. Bigger and badder threats from the fossil fuel industry have set a fire under the climate movement. New, dangerous trade deals like the TPP and TTIP, which threaten health, environmental, and worker protections, have set ablaze another chapter in the story of global corporate advocates. If we can combine the force of these movements and continue to strengthen our work, the power of our movements will tip our governments to act on behalf of the people instead of on behalf of the polluters.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is October 14. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
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A Will is a Way
Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering the Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature.

Cynthia Hawley
ATTORNEY

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Use IN and FOR GOOD HEALTH
Outings and Activities Calendar

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. 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, 549-0555. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.

A Clarification on “Field Tipping”

By Joe Morris, Outings Chair

An article in last month’s newsletter by Greg McMillan described a proposal to lead national and international trips sponsored by our chapter. For clarification, Mr. McMillan is not a certified Sierra Club leader and has not led outings for our chapter. For all hikes and trips sponsored by chapters, National Sierra Club standards require leaders to have such official certification, which includes specific instruction and personal supervision. Additionally, conducting national and international trips requires further intensive training and experience. We don’t plan to sponsor such trips until leaders who demonstrate these qualifications are available.

Sat., Oct. 4th, 10 a.m. Beach and Dune Walk. Co-led by Calif. Native Plant Society and Audubon leaders, this 3-mile walk will view and identify prominent shorebirds and coastal dune plants in Montana de Oro State Park. Bring water, snacks or lunch, binoculars, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hat, and jacket. Meet in parking lot at end of Sand Spit Rd., a right turn from main road, 0.8 mile from park entrance. For more information, contact Leader: Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycottj@gmail.com.

Sun., Oct. 19th, 2 p.m. SLO City Walk: Railroad Historic District. Easy guided stroll past 15 sites in the old commercial district, 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 SLO, transforming it from a cow town to a boomtown. Duration about 90 minutes. Meet at Gus’s Grocery, 1020 S. Higuera St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0555.

Sat., Sep. 20th, 9:30 a.m. Morro Bay Walk. 2 1/2-mile round trip, 300 ft. gain, to lovely views of San Simeon and surrounding forest. Meet at parking lot adjacent to the pyramid, 2890 S. Higuera St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0555.

Sat., Oct. 4th, 10 a.m. Bird Walking. Meet near entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Drive. Need to confirm beforehand with Leader: David Gogos, 438-5575 or hikingp0les@gmail.com.

Thu-Sat., Oct. 30th-Nov 1st Death Valley Wilderness Restoration Trip. Help restore wilderness values in this remote and beautiful National Park by cleaning up debris from a marijuana grow operation. Meet Friday evening, leave Saturday morning. More info at www.caldesert20.org or contact vicky.hoover, 415-977-5277 vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

Sat., Oct. 4th, 9:45 a.m., Citizens’ Climate Lobby meeting. SLO Grange, 2880 Broad Street. Learn what you can do to slow climate change and make a difference in our community. Become a climate activist and part of the solution to the most pressing issue of our time. For more info, email: citizensclimate lobbyist@gmail.com.

Sat., Nov. 1st, 10 a.m. SLO City Walk: San Luis Cemetery. Guided stroll past gravestones of famous pioneers like Angel, Murray, Sinsheimer and Civil-War vets, plus the old “porter’s field” for indigents and the landmark pyramid. Learn the compelling stories of the 19th-century founders of San Luis Obispo. Duration about 1 1/2 hours. Meet in south parking lot adjacent to the pyramid, 2890 S. Higuera St. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0555.

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