On October 6, Help the County Make the Right Choice

The deadline for SLO County to declare if we want to participate in a feasibility study for a Community Choice Energy program with Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties is October 15.

The County can be a part of the cost-sharing feasibility study, but they have to act fast.

Here’s why they should take Santa Barbara’s offer: Community Choice allows communities to pick their energy providers, increase the amount of renewable energy produced in California and achieve statewide emission reduction goals. California counties that have implemented Community Choice have found that it provides lower electricity costs, rate stability, economic development and clean energy jobs, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions at a faster and steeper rate than anything investor-owned utilities could offer.

Public pressure drove a promise to evaluate Community Choice into the County’s energy plan three years ago, but since then, the County has stalled.

The first step to begin actively exploring Community Choice Energy (also known as Community Choice Aggregation or CCA) is to conduct a feasibility study. Sharing the cost with neighboring counties and cities is the best way to go. The County of Santa Barbara voted to spend $400,000, and
Carve Your NIMBY Name with Pride

by Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

How did it become socially unacceptable to defend your home? On September 6, L.A. Times columnist George Skelton provided a prime example of the problem, urging the need to “reform” the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and save us all from NIMBYism.

The time has come to reclaim the “NIMBY” epithet. Development interests have advanced the narrative that CEQA destroys jobs and stifles economic growth because of NIMBYism. In truth, good projects that avoid or mitigate their environmental impacts and are planned responsibly rarely run afoul of CEQA. Projects that ignore or mischaracterize their impacts, cut corners in the planning process, and rely on political persuasion to get enough votes sometimes wind up in court and fare poorly there. Developers see that as untenable. Thus the annual parade of end-of-session, project-specific CEQA exemptions that has become a sad Sacramento tradition of late.

The first two get-out-of-CEQA projects, sports stadiums in Los Angeles, were completely exempted from the law. The fact that both projects fell apart under their own weight anyway is a poetic irony. This year’s proposed CEQA exemption du jour is a blanket exemption for highway projects. This means if a highway expansion fills wetlands, paves over agricultural soils or Native American sites, contributes to local congestion or degrades air quality, too bad. Since only NIMBYs object to such impacts, not only can we dismiss their objections, we can feel righteous in doing so.

But there is inherent value and dignity in people fighting to defend the places they love, whether it’s the tree-lined block they live on, or the park down the street, or the wilderness that defines their home landscape. What’s wrong with the idea of people fighting to protect their communities from development that degrades and destroys? In any context other than interfering with profits, it would be seen as patriotic and noble.

Would-be CEQA “reformers” presume the Building Industry Association, the business, who would otherwise be seen as the Goliath to neighborhood Davids. The real villains are the “law-and-order-minded elitists who won’t willingly sacrifices for the ‘greater good’—minded elites who won’t willingly sacrifice for the ‘greater good’—defined as high-rise buildings, residential subdivisions, power plants, late night bars and other commercial developments — is a cynical PR tactic of big business, who would otherwise be seen as the Goliath to neighborhood Davids. Following the NIMBY-as-epithet logic, the only acceptable advocacy would be for places we have no personal connection with. How does that make sense?

Following the NIMBY-as-epithet logic, the only acceptable advocacy would be for places we have no personal connection with. How does that make sense?

By Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

December 2015

Santa Lucian

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The Executive Committee meets the second Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m. The Conservation Committee meets the second Friday of each month. The Natural Resource Committee meets the second Monday of each month. The Education Committee meets the second Saturday of each month. The Finance Committee meets the second Wednesday of each month. The Executive Committee is elected by the membership.

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The Long & Winding Road to Community Choice Energy

2006: Smart Energy Solutions

Assembly Bill 117 establishing Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) was passed in 2002, giving California cities and counties the ability to break with the monopoly private utilities and purchase clean power for their citizens. It’s been an uphill battle ever since, but lately, the forces of local clean energy have been winning. As it prepares to deliberate on whether to take up Santa Barbara County’s offer to participate in a joint feasibility study for a Community Choice Energy program, the SLO County Board of Supervisors is in a position to make a down payment on the kind of spectacular results Marin and Sonoma Counties have achieved with Community Choice.

Come with us on a stroll through the past decade of struggle over Community Choice in California, via the archives of the Santa Lucian, for a picture of the state of play on CCA — what has led up to this moment for SLO county.

October 2006: From “We’ve Got the Power”

San Luis Obispo is the site of “Smart Energy Solutions.” It’s “Our Choice,” a regional community summit at the SLO Vets Hall on October 10, a day of panels, booths and presentations covering the range of possibilities for the central coast’s transition to a clean energy economy — 1230 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Lunch Keynote: It’s Our Choice — Paul Fenn, author of California’s 2002 Community Choice law, San Francisco Solar Power Facility proposal, and Energy Independence Ordinance.

November 2006: From “You Have Five Years: Landmark SLO energy summit opens window of opportunity on Community Choice”

Fenn, the author of San Francisco’s Solar Power Facility proposal — the nation’s largest — and of the bill that became California’s Community Choice law in 2002, introduced Summit attendees to the concept of community choice aggregation (CCA), which allows communities to combine their energy-buying power purchase and put out competitive bids to buy up to 100 percent green power while also getting much better rates from providers as a public entity than private entities. CCA, in addition to meaning greener power, offers a set contract with a reliable rate structure with purchasers not at the mercy of steep price jumps. In response to a question from the audience, Fenn allowed that a CCA program of green power and energy efficiency could satisfy the needs currently met by the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, provide more jobs, and cut the hard costs paid by ratepayers but which efficiency programs avoid. As far as the environmental benefits of CCA, it would “probably be the best thing to happen to the environment in this community in 100 years,” he said.

March 2007: From “CCA is On the Way: Community Choice is catching fire in California”

Marin County and its cities are actively studying setting up a joint-powers authority to implement this procedure of “Community Choice Aggregation” (CCA). That way Marin could get more than half its electricity from clean, renewable, environmentally preferred sources while meeting or beating PG&E’s rates. Is there a risk in CCA? Robert Frehling of the Sierra Club California Energy and Climate Change Committee reverses the question: how big a risk is it to stay with PG&E? The energy “crisis” of Etron days, Frehling was caused by over-reliance on one form of energy, natural gas. PG&E still gets 40 to 50% of its electricity from imported natural gas. Frehling says the price of photovoltaic solar energy “has come a long way” in the past few decades, while the price of PG&E’s electricity has gone up about 4% a year since 1980. So “in looking at risk, it’s important to look at the consequences of staying where you are.”

March 2007: From “Our Energy Future is Here”

SEA Change is a remarkable coalition working to bring together local

Call for Candidates

The world’s most democratic environmental organization (us) needs you!

Yes, Santa Lucia Chapter member, you can run for Executive Committee and have a say in decision-making in the Sierra Club as an elected Club leader. The ExCom is an administrative body; we need people who take minutes, organize committees, inspire participation and/or organize members. Conservationists are welcome, but the Chapter also needs volunteers who like to handle the needs common to all organizations. If you have some time and would like to help this great organization, please volunteer to run for a seat on the ExCom. Each winning candidate will be elected to a three-year term. The Executive Committee meets monthly at the Chapter office in SLO. You may nominate yourself or suggest anyone else to any member of the committee. Members may also run by petition, signed by 25 members of the Chapter in good standing. Nominations will be accepted for review and evaluation until 5 p.m. Friday, October 16.

You may submit nominations to sierrachub8@gmail.com or Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93430.
Can This Basin be Saved?

This month, a superior court judge is expected to review and approve the Basin Plan proposed by the parties to the adjudication of the Los Osos Groundwater Basin. The draft plan was prepared by the three water purveyors over the Los Osos basin: Los Osos Community Services District, Golden State Water Company and S&T Mutual Water Company, along with the County of San Luis Obispo, as part of the adjudication of groundwater resources.

The Los Osos Basin Plan is intended to be a comprehensive “physical solution” to the overdraft of this “high priority” endangered groundwater basin. But the evidence, including reports prepared by the County’s own retained experts, demonstrates that the Basin Plan is unlikely to adequately protect the Los Osos Basin from the rapid advancement of seawater.

Some technical problems continue to plague the Basin Plan, including a failure to acknowledge or calculate the uncertainty factor inherent in utilizing computer models to predict seawater intrusion and the effectiveness of the proposed relocation of drinking water wells. (See “Chapter Submit Comments on Los Osos Basin Plan,” July).

Other issues include a failure to maximize the effectiveness of water conservation programs, inadequate monitoring, and a failure to consider the environmental impacts of the Basin Plan.

Before the County and the Los Osos CSD formally adopt the Basin Plan, the County as the lead agency should undertake meaningful review of the potential impacts of the Basin Plan, including a discussion of feasible mitigation measures and alternatives to address any impacts deemed to be potentially significant.

The most important stated goals of the Plan are (1) to halt seawater intrusion into the Basin and (2) to provide sustainable water supplies for existing and future residential, commercial, institutional, recreational and agricultural development within Los Osos.

Unbuilded residential and commercial development in Los Osos has resulted in groundwater extractions that exceed the sustainable yield of the Basin. According to the Plan, this is especially true in the Lower Aquifer in the Western area, where falling groundwater levels induced intrusion of seawater into the Basin. Seawater intrusion can irreparably damage the aquifer and the sustainability of the Basin. According to the Plan, it “analyzes seven potential programs of action, each of which focuses on a different aspect of Basin management.” Some programs are intended to reduce demand, while others are intended to increase sustainable yield. Some programs, such as the “Water Reinvestment Program and Supplemental Water Programs” are described as hybrids, with both demand- and supply-side impacts. The Basin Plan expects that implementation of these programs would achieve a sustainable Basin.

The Water Reinvestment Program calls for “reinvesting all wastewater collected and treated by the LOWWP in the Basin, either through direct percolation to the aquifers or reuse.” This program promotes the reuse of all treated wastewater from the LOWWP for the benefit of the Basin, specifically for discharge at the Broderstown and Burrydale Estates beach fields, urban reuse at various locations, and agricultural reuse in the Eastern Area. However, at full buildout, Los Osos would generate approximately an additional 340 AFY wastewater, all of which has been designated for agricultural use.

Basin Infrastructure Programs are intended to transfer groundwater production from the Lower Aquifer to the Upper Aquifer and shift some production from the Western area landward into the Central and Eastern Areas. This shift is intended to increase the sustainable yield. It is clear that the implementation of these programs is capable of causing significant impacts on the environment. The Water Reinvestment Program would result in additional water removed from the aquifer but reused in agriculture, with unknown return to the aquifer. The net loss of water to the aquifer is capable of causing a significant impact, including increasing the rate of seawater intrusion.

The most critical aspects of the Basin Plan are the Infrastructure Programs, which would relocate the community’s drinking water wells and shift the impact of such extraction from the Lower aquifer to the upper and more inland. The Basin Plan calls for three new water supply wells east of Los Osos Valley Creek. New pipelines will be required to connect the wells to the existing Los Osos Valley Road main, with lengths of approximately 1,500 feet, 2,500 feet and 5,000 feet. The Basin Plan does not discuss the environmental impacts of the construction of new wells, the expansion of existing wells, or the construction of the necessary pipelines. The new proposed wells can have adverse impacts on sensitive habitat and related species, including the riparian habitat on Willow and Los Osos Creeks.

The Basin Plan itself estimates that the relocation of wells would stop the flow of 220 AFY of groundwater to Willow Creek, which supplies Los Osos Creek.

Uncertainty and future mitigation

The Basin Plan vaguely admits that the models on which it relies are inherently uncertain, but does not adequately quantify the uncertainty or discuss the potential environmental impacts of the inherent uncertainty. Likewise, the Basin Plan fails to define the type of mitigation measures needed to address the potential uncertainty.

The Basin Plan states:

The type of rigorous analysis required under the California Environmental Quality Act would ensure that the impacts of the uncertainty are better understood and well-defined and predictable mitigation measures are in place to ensure that circumstances such as a prolonged drought, climate change and sea level rise are adequately addressed in order to avoid or at least minimize impacts to biological resources or to the Basin itself because of accelerated levels of sea water intrusion.

Because approval of the Basin Plan is patently capable of resulting in significant environmental impacts, it should have been thoroughly vetted and rigorously analyzed before the court approves it, along with an analysis of all potentially feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that could achieve most of the Project’s basic objective, which ought to be the elimination of the threat of salt water intrusion and nitrate pollution, not enabling “future residential, commercial, institutional, recreational and agricultural development.” The failure of the County to conduct a thorough environmental analysis of the Basin Plan does not bode well for the Basin.
Aquierr

Against Fracking, SLO Clean Water Action, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, and SLO 350 to call on Governor Brown and his regulators to protect our water and deny the application. Then we went inside to testify against the plan.

To get their exemption, Freeport McMoRan must prove that the aquifer exemption and wastewater injection will not harm other water that is used for drinking, agriculture, and other domestic and beneficial uses. Local residents and representatives from the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Clean Water Action and the Natural Resources Defense Council pointed out that Freeport McMoRan’s application does not, among other failings: • evaluate the impacts of earthquakes (including those that could be caused by wastewater injection) and their potential to alter groundwater flow, causing water from the contaminated aquifer to flow into groundwater sources currently tapped by more than 100 private wells in the vicinity • provide an analysis of the chemical composition of the wastewater injected back into the aquifer • mention those plans to dramatically expand operations in this oil field with up to a ten-fold increase in daily oil production that would likely also result in a major increase in wastewater production, and no analysis of what will happen to the aquifer if that expansion proceeds — including possible changes in pressure, the potential for inducing fractures, chemicals that will be used, etc. Center for Biological Diversity attorney Maya Golden-Krasner summed up the basic problem, saying “making legal what is currently illegal is not the way to proceed.”

There was no word on when state regulators might render their decision.

Morro Bay Takes a Step Toward Sanctuary

National marine sanctuary opponents lose local stronghold

Once, the City of Morro Bay could be counted on to chum out resolutions of opposition to the formation of a national marine sanctuary like the Keebler elves make cookies. For years, the perpetually regulation-averse Morro Bay Commercial Fishing Organization had only to flex its pinky finger whenever it wanted a city council majority to fall in line and draft another wildly inaccurate testament to fear-mongering as an official resolution against the imagined horrors of national marine sanctuaries. Until the night of September 22.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is due to decide to accept or reject the nomination of the Chumash Heritage Center for Biological Diversity to establish the perpetually regulation-averse Morro Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Until the night of September 22.

The harbor board, completely in the control of commercial fishing interests, was a slam dunk, predictably passing along a unanimous recommendation

Four years ago, the City Council, at the behest of the City Manager, a former member of the local Chamber of Commerce, decided to address the proposed sanctuary. Summoned by the City Manager to deliberate on the sanctuary at their October meeting, sanctuary foes hastily arranged for the City Council meeting the following week. For years, the City Manager had been prepared to call the meeting the following week.

The harbor board, completely in the control of commercial fishing interests, was a slam dunk, predictably passing along a unanimous recommendation
South County Grapples with Oil-by-Rail

Phillip 66 rail spur project gets no love in Pismo, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande

Three South County communities that had previously taken no position on the Phillip 66 refinery rail spur project finally broke their silence last month. (See Santa Lucia Chapter blog posts at www.siercach.org/santa-lucia/santa-lucia-blog, “When Does Silence Become Scandal?” and “Cracks in the Cone of Silence.”) The councils were joined by Arroyo Beach and Arroyo Grande Sierra Club members who responded to our e-mail alerts and urged your city councilmembers to take action, and all those who trooped up to the microphone for the public comment period at multiple council meetings over several months, finally forcing the three councils to agendize the Phillip 66 project.

And, of course, the work of citizens didn’t stop there, because what actually got placed on the agendas of all three councils was very weak beer. All made an attempt to shift the focus from the impacts of the Phillips 66 oil-by-rail project to a vague, pointless discussion of national rail safety rules. We pointed out two problems with that strategy: 1) urging the feds to strengthen the rules for the transport of high-hazard crude oil is only an issue of local concern if such a hazardous oil train project has been permitted and those trains are already here, and 2) the opportunity to send letters urging the feds to strengthen those safety measures ended last May when the Department of Transportation issued its new rule, hence a proposal to send such a letter now is more than four months too late.

The councils also proposed to send letters to the County Planning Commission citing concerns about the Phillip 66 project but did not include anything resembling a request for a specific action. The public wasn’t having it, and neither were we and the groups we work with in the protectoslo.org movement. The Sierra Club pointed out to the Pismo Beach City Council that their September 15 letter addressing that the ostensible subject of a letter addressed to the County Planning Commission is “heighten[ed] concerns about rail safety and adverse environmental impacts among many of our citizens,” such a letter should logically conclude with a discernible request for action instead of the inscrutable text that constituted the City’s draft letter: “We would appreciate the Planning Commissions [sic] consideration in reviewing the rail safety issues.”

What kind of consideration? And did the Pismo Beach City Council seriously think the County Planning Commission is likely to overlook the project’s safety issues in the course of reviewing the project unless the City sent them a reminder to “look?” At the insistence of Councilwoman Sheila Blake, Pismo’s letter grew teeth. The council agreed to strike the meaningless concluding sentence and take an approach suggested by the Sierra Club. The letter they sent said: “We therefore need to add an additional note to the proposed project along with the large number of cities citing the 11 Class 1 environmental impacts unless those impacts can be mitigated.”

Grover Beach and Arroyo Grande were up next, with back-to-back city council meetings on September 21 and 22. Again, the “federal rail safety” diversion attempt failed at both councils. Phillips 66 brought out more than forty employees in green shirts to the Grover Beach City Council, representing Phillips’ new “Protect SLO Jobs” p.r. campaign (an attempt at a riff on “Protect SLO”). They all repeated the line that Phillips 66 has a great safety record, jobs allegedly at risk, etc. The city council saw through it, went beyond their staff’s recommendations to send a weak rail safety letter to the feds, and voted to formally oppose the project.

We have no doubt that the Phillips 66 machine went into high gear after their unexpected trouncing in Grover Beach and poured it on behind the scenes to try to pull out a win in Arroyo Grande. It availed them not. The council did not only refused to support the project, they nearly sent the County a letter of opposition, a motion that lost on 3-2 vote. The A.G. Council could have gone along with the Arroyo Grandes-Grover Beach Chamber of Commerce, the only notable entity in the County that has gone on record in support of the project. But the Council broke with the Chamber, a testament to the power of the protectoslo.org movement and the degree to which the word has penetrated on the extreme undebatability of this project.

Coastal Commission May Decide the Fate of Seaworld’s Orcas

On October 8, the California Coastal Commission will hear a request by SeaWorld for a permit to expand their facilities for captive orcas. Sept. 22, 2015

Dear Chairman Kinsey and Coastal Commissioners,

The signatures to this letter represent non-profit NGOs, foundations, and advocacy organizations dedicated to protecting coastal resources and restoration, animal welfare, social justice and coastal protection. We are profoundly concerned about the plight of captive orcas around the world, including those at SeaWorld’s San Diego facility. We are writing to express our support for the Commission to condition any permit that it approves for SeaWorld’s Blue World project to prohibit the breeding of orcas in captivity, to transfer of any whales anywhere but a sea pen sanctuary. In order to ensure that the orcas actually benefit from the expansion of the tanks, it is critical that the expansion is only allowed for the orcas who are currently housed at SeaWorld rather than a blanket permit that would allow SeaWorld to breed and warehouse even more orcas, thereby defeating any benefit of the new tank. The capture, keeping and breeding of orcas in captivity for the purpose of providing entertainment is totally inconsistent with the Commission’s mandate under the Coastal Act to maintain, enhance and restore marine resources and to provide special protection to species of special biological significance, which orcas most certainly are.

This Commission has a long history of concern for and protection of whales and other marine mammals. On the other hand, SeaWorld has a long history of confining these highly intelligent, social animals in concrete enclosures, utterly devoid of natural features, and handling them in ways that are detrimental to their health, all the while justifying their exploitation under the guise of public education. However, because these orcas are forced to live in such unnatural conditions and are deprived of the ability to engage in normal, species-specific behaviors, the audiences for whom they perform walk away with no real education about true orca behavior. We believe the Commission must take a hard look at SeaWorld’s proposal and understand it for what it really is. If the Commission does this it can come to only one conclusion, that in the 21st century this practice must stop. This proposal does not genuinely improve or enlarge the “habitat” for SeaWorld’s orcas because a concrete tank, no matter what the size, cannot be considered to be “habitat.” The new tank is a viewing tank, connected to the existing Shamu Stadium complex through a short, narrow channel that is gated at either end. SeaWorld will retain most of the existing tanks and train the whales to transit through this channel, into the larger tank for viewing by the public. This means that the new tank will be accessible to the whales only at management’s discretion; in short, it will be available to some of the whales only some of the time. Regardless of how large the tanks are, the proposed tanks will still be orders of magnitude smaller than an orca’s natural home range. Moreover, if the purpose of the SeaWorld expansion is to breed or acquire additional orcas, it will negate any minimal benefit that might be served by providing a larger viewing tank. A growing number of marine mammal experts recognize that orcas suffer unconscionably in captivity, and the growth in support for human entertainment should be phased out. That currently most of SeaWorld’s orcas were bred in captivity does not...
Los Angeles City Council

RESOLVE that the City of Los Angeles include in its 2015-16 Legislative Advocacy Program SUPPORT for administrative action URGING the San Luis Obispo Planning Commission to DENY APPROVAL of the Phillips 66 facility expansion project, inasmuch as it is far too dangerous for public safety and presents far too many environmental risks.

Final vote: 15-0
Choice continued on page 3

One year ago, Marin County flipped the switch on cleaner, greener, non-polluting solar power with the passage of Community Choice. Already, Marin Clean Energy customers are reducing annual carbon emissions by approximately 70,000 tons, the equivalent of removing nearly 12,000 cars from the road each year. And anyone living in the County Clean Energy service area can sign up for “Deep Green”: 100% renewable energy for far under $10 a month.

In March, Marin exceeded the state law to procure 20% renewable energy resources for their customers, racking up 27% of all energy deliveries coming from renewable resources.

Those are the results of this policy in less than a year. Need we say more? Apparently not, as the San Luis Obispo County completed the comment period for the Public Review Draft of its Climate Action Plan, the county-wide blueprint for significantly reducing local greenhouse gas emissions, on June 3. In our comments, the Chapter pointed out that the CCA Plan does not include consideration of Community Choice, and it should…. In 2008, the San Luis Obispo County of Government directed staff to gather information on a feasibility study for a CCA program.

In June 2009, county supervisors, planners and city managers attended the Sierra Club’s Energy Town Hall in Grover Beach, where they met with Sonoma County Climate Action Plan director Dave Erikson and learned about Sonoma’s blueprint for initiating a Community Choice program to exercise local control in choosing their own energy provider and service rates while increasing their portion of non-polluting renewable energy and achieving the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction in the nation.

At the Climate Change Adaptation Workshop held in SLO last July by the Local Government Commission, Community Choice was one of the top five recommended priority measures for the County, and was included in the LGC’s November 2010 report…. Also last year, the update of the County Climate Action and Open Space Element (COSE) included Policy E 1.2: “Assert more local control of energy decisions and sources of energy, as achieved via the implementation of “Strategy E 1.2.1 Evaluate Community Choice Aggregations to determine whether Sonoma County can help many of its community Choice: people throughout California can now help many of their neighbors by getting involved with the Community Choice movement.”

On July 2010: From “The Useful Death of Prop. 16” Proposition 16 went down to defeat at the polls on June 8, despite PG&E’s spending some $46 million to pass it, and ousting the opposition by more than 5 to 1. Californians sent a resounding message that their Constitution is not for sale to corporations. The defeat of PG&E’s naked power grab is a victory, for democracy and clean energy. Despite the utility’s ubiquitous deceptive advertising, voters saw through the lies and rejected the brazen effort by PG&E to eliminate competition.

PG&E’s customers in Northern California, and the Central Valley, who know the utility best, rejected the power grab resoundingly, with San Luis Obispo County also registering strongly in the “no” column. Paradoxically, PG&E’s strategy has now backfired — the Prop 16 battle has worked in favor of Commu- nity Choice: people throughout California are now aware as never before of CCA’s potential benefits. The Sierra Club can now help many of them to consider moving to operation-alize CCAs locally and regionally.

Choice continued on next page

 santa lucian • october 2015

October 2011: From “You’ve Come a Long Way, CCA” In the first meeting of the SEA Change coalition after [the SLO Energy Coalition in October 2010], the PG&E representative, who had been rather disgruntled up to that point, became vocally disruptive, vehemently complaining that she had never been kept informed or allowed to fully participate in the planning of the conference, and to see the agenda fully aware of the conference agenda. She insisted that CCA never again be a topic at any future public meeting sponsored by...
Choice  
continued from previous page

SEA Change, and that the formation of a CCA be eliminated as a policy goal of the coalition…. From that day forward, CCA was never again discussed at any coalition meeting, and was never allowed to be a topic as a sponsored event, let alone advocated as a means by which our community can choose our own electric provider and sources of electricity.

Let’s underscore this point: the existence of a state law, passed with the intention of allowing communities like ours to increase the amount of renewable energy produced in California and achieve statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, could not be mentioned. Uttering the words “CCA,” “Community Choice,” or “AB 117” was forbidden by PG&E.

November 2012: From “CCA Makes Hay”

This year’s Central Coast Bioneers Conference, convened at SLO’s Monday Club over the weekend of October 19, was host to a powerhouse panel on Community Choice Aggregation (CCA)…. Andrew Christie, director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, was joined on the panel by Paul Fen, the father of Community Choice and author of California’s CCA legislation and similar bills across the country over the last twenty years; Sean Marshall of LIAN (Local Energy Aggregation Network) and a board member of the Marin Energy Authority, the first operational CCA program in California; and Lane Sharram, co-founder of the San Diego Energy District Foundation, which has the goal of forming local energy cooperatives in San Diego.

Christie concluded with a whirlwind tour through the last six years of the Santa Lucia Chapter’s CCA activism, a campaign that introduced local residents to the concept and succeeded in getting the evaluation of CCA programs written into the County’s General Plan update and the Climate Action Plans for both the City and County of San Luis Obispo.

June 2013: From “Taking Issue: PG&E Files to Lobby Against Start-ups”

[PG&E states that it “expects that at any coalition meeting, and was never allowed to be a topic as a sponsored event, let alone advocated as a means by which our community can choose our own electric provider and sources of electricity.”]

Sanctuary  
continued from page 3

that the City of Morro Bay inform NOAA that it is opposed to the designation of a Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.

It was the mixture as before, a formula that had worked for years… but not this time. Sanctuary supporters showed up, shouting down the perpetual gripes, misinformation and flat-out lies of opponents like a game of whack-a-mole. After three hours of public comment, the city council, noting the haste with which the item had been brought before them and the short time frame, decided it did not have enough information to take a position pro or con, and adjourned the harbor board’s recommendation. Instead, they resolved to ask NOAA to come to the city and give a public presentation so the council — and the public — can understand what national marine sanctuaries are and what they do.

The decision to get their information on sanctuaries straight from the horse’s mouth instead of via the distortions on tap from sanctuary’s bitter opponents, thereby breaking with a long-standing Morro Bay tradition, marks a sea change for the city by the bay.

We wish them a safe voyage going forward.

May 2014: From “We Oppose AB 2145, the Energy Monopoly Protection Bill”

The most serious threat to the future of clean, renewable energy in California is in jeopardy to its first hearing in the Assembly…. Assembly Bill 2145 (Bradford) will essentially kill existing and new Community Choice Aggregation programs. In the name of eliminating competition for PG&E…. AB 2145 will undo progress in increasing renewable energy and energy efficiency, and curtail California’s progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

September 2014: From “Community + Choice = Clean Energy + Local Control”

On July 24, with an assist from the Santa Lucia Chapter, SLO Clean Energy held a key forum in the long-term effort to bring Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) to the Central Coast.

Cordell Stillman, chief engineer for the Sonoma Water Agency, came to the SLO City Council to tell attendees about the benefits of CCA…. Sonoma Clean Power has already cut the county’s greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent (saving 33 percent renewable energy, 1.5 times more clean power than PG&E, at 5 percent lower rates (a percentage that’s bound to grow as PG&E’s rates are set to head skyward over the next three years).
Solar is a Great California Success Story and We Want to Keep It That Way

by Susannah Churchill, West Coast Regional Director, Vote Solar

This year, regulators at the California Public Utilities Commission will decide whether or not to change our net metering program, one of the most important state policies empowering Californians to go solar and save. This clean local power reduces the need for expensive, polluting utility infrastructure, which delivers health, environmental and economic benefits throughout California’s communities.

But big utilities are lobbying to rewrite the net metering rules to protect their profits by adding unfair fees and making rooftop solar a bad deal for their customers. We can’t let corporate greed keep our families, schools, and businesses from going solar. Join us for the lunchtime rally nearest you, and urge the utilities to stop blocking solar progress and start acting in the interest of the Californians they are supposed to serve. California solar supporters will be holding raucous rallies in October at the headquarters of California’s three biggest utilities to demand rooftop solar progress. Help us tell PG&E, SCE and SDG&E: “Don’t block the sun!”


Sign the petition to urge Governor Brown and the Commission to stand strong for rooftop solar by protecting our successful net metering program. Go to http://action.solar right.org/pags/ica-nem-2-or

Visit OurSolarRights.org to learn more about the fight to keep solar shining in California.

Orcas

mean they suffer any less by being deprived of a natural habitat and the complex social structure to which they are physiologically and psychologically adapted. Orcas are large, highly intelligent mammals with a complex and very strong family structure in the wild. That social bond, so important to the lives of this species, is damaged and often destroyed in captivity.

Furthermore, orcas live shortened lives in captivity and suffer stress and physiological damage. Male dorsal fins collapse (which occurs only rarely in the wild), but captive orcas also break and wear their teeth by chewing on concrete tank walls and metal gates, requiring drilling and intensive dental care that may result in infection, are highly medicated and fed gallons of gelatin daily to keep them hydrated (since frozen fish lose water when thawed), may be administered antidepressants to help deal with multiple aggressive behaviors associated with depression, anxiety and possibly psychosis, just to name some of the concerns. Addition-

ally, they exhibit abnormal levels of aggression in captivity not observed in the wild. As an indication of the stress they are under and their underlying resistance to mitigating treatment, orcas in captivity have killed four people. There are no historical records of orcas killing human beings in the wild.

Perpetuating the captive display of orcas for profit drives the continued need to capture more whales from the wild, as new genetic stock is required regularly to prevent inbreeding. Indeed, Russia has taken the practice of capturing wild orcas for display in that country and China, capturing at least 10 since 2012. Under the circumstances it is difficult for the United States to denounce this practice.

The Commission has the ability to set an example for the rest of the world. It can state clearly that it is time to stop the unethical practice of using the ocean’s greatest predator for entertainment purposes. While not prohibiting Sea World from continuing to display the orcas currently in their possession, prohibiting the breeding and transfer of these whales will mean that eventually the exhibition of captive orcas will be phased out. If you decide to approve and not deny, we urge you to condition your approval to prohibit the captive breeding or artificial insemination of orcas in captivity, prohibit the sale or offer for sale, trade or transfer for any reason other than transport to a sea pen any orca intended for use in performance or entertainment purposes. This will continue the Commission’s proud tradition of showing concern for the treatment and conservation of marine mammals.
Classifieds

Next issue deadline is October 15. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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Santa Lucian • October 2015
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, 549-0355. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.

Fri., Oct. 2nd, 10:15-11:30 a.m. Historic Walk of SLO Railroad Historic District. Easy, guided stroll past fifteen sites in the old commercial district, depot area, and century-old boardinghouses. Hear stories about the heyday of the Southern Pacific during the steam age, the 1890s to 1950s, when the SP dominated public life in SLO, transforming it from a cow town to a boomtown. Duration about 90”. Meet at Gus’s Grocery, corner of Osos and Leff Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Sat., Oct. 3rd, 8:30 a.m. Blinn Ranch Rd. to Sapwi Camp Hike. Although Santa Margarita Lake is dry at the east end where we begin, it still yields a scenic walk. This hike of 9 1/2 miles, 700 ft. elevation gain, is a moderate one, most of it on a dirt road. Poison oak will be present, but probably avoidable. Meet in Santa Margarita in front of the Pacific Beverage Co. A hot day will postpone this hike to a later weekend. Leader: Carlos Diaz-Suavedra, 546-0317.

Sat., Oct. 17th, 8:30 a.m. Quarry Trail Maintenance. Join us in trimming back shrubs and some poison oak along a forty-foot section of Quarry Trail in Morro Bay State Park. Strenuous, but rewarding work. Call ahead or email if you can help and for more instructions to Leader: Vicki Marchenko, 528-5567 or vmarchenko57@gmail.com.

Sat., Oct. 24th, 8 a.m. Tanbark Trail Coastal Traverse. Moderately strenuous 8-10 mile hike, 2000 ft. elevation gain and loss, to explore Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park and Big Sur coastline. Trip starts on Tanbark trail past giant redwoods and creek, then a steep ascent up canyon to the Tin House for lunch. Then we traverse ridge to Ewoldsen Overlook and descend into Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, with a possible exploration of McWay Falls. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes and dress for varying weather. Meet at Washburn Day Use Area in San Simeon State Park, on Hwy 1 about one mile north of Cambria. Trailhead is about an hour drive north of meeting location. Eats after for those interested. For details, call Leader: Gary Felsman at 473-3694. Rain cancels.

Sun., Oct. 25th, 10 a.m. Eagle Rock Trekking-Pole Hike. Two-mile, 400’ elevation change, hike with Polecats, a group dedicated to demonstrating the advantages and effective use of trekking poles. For Eagle Rock trailhead, go to locked gate past Botanical Gardens, across Hwy 1 from Cuesta College, in the parking lot to the left. Parking fee may be required. Leader: David Georgi, 458-5575 or hikingspoles@gmail.com.

Sun., Oct. 31st, 8:30 a.m. Salmon and Spruce Creek Trails to Dutra Flat. Moderate, 8.4 mile, 2500 ft. elevation gain, hike in SierraDesc. Wilderness. Enjoy both Halloween and the last day of Daylight Savings Time. We will be hiking above Salmon Creek and through Spruce Creek Canyon, beholding good views of Silver Peak. Trail opens up to Brush land before getting to Dutra Flat camp for lunch. Possibility of ticks and probability of poison oak on trail, so wear long pants. Meet at Washburn day use parking area of San Simeon State Park, on right side of Hwy 1, about 3 miles past fourth Cambria stoplight (Main & Moonstone Beach). There will probably be a refueling stop for eats afterward. For info, call Leader: Chuck Tribby, 441-5797.

Activities sponsored by other organizations

Sat., Oct. 24, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Fall Plant Sale Fundraiser at SLO Botanical Garden. The rainy season is on its way and there is no better time to start thinking about gardening here on the Central Coast than right now. Set your new plants into the ground, then stand back and let “El Niño” get your plants off to a good start. Mother Nature will do her part and the Garden can help set you up with great new drought-tolerant plants. Everything will be tax-free. Sales benefit the non-profit Botanical Garden. More info at slobg.org/sale.

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