



SIERRA
CLUB

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Inside

Fiscalini: where credit's due	2
Yet another task force	3
In the web	6
Paddler's Corner	6
Classifieds	7
Outings	8

General Meeting

Treasures of Glen Canyon and Alaska Wilderness with Walter Robie

- see page 2



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SANTA LUCIAN



Protecting and Preserving the Central Coast

The official newsletter of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club • San Luis Obispo County, California

What's Next for Santa Margarita?

This is Old California's last stand

The Santa Margarita Ranch Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) hit the ground with a thud on January 11 -- sixteen pounds of hefty evidence that converting the state's largest privately held valley oak savannah into a series of residential subdivisions punctuated by nine wineries, multiple churches, a golf course, dude ranch, convention center and numerous other side shows, is still as bad an idea as it ever was.

Anyone who has ever driven through the rolling, oak-studded hills on the way to Pozo, or admired the sunrise on granite outcroppings south of Santa Margarita Lake, or stopped to drink in the color of the wildflowers along the lower reaches of Highway 58 already knows what the EIR tells us in so many words—that the Santa Margarita is one of those unique, sacrosanct landscapes that should be preserved, in perpetuity, for future generations to experience the true flavor of “Old California” in a way that will soon be all but impossible.

Even the *Tribune*, in reporting the January 11 meeting where the environmental study was unveiled, wrote that the plan consisted of “growth so dramatic that the current Santa Margarita, and the quiet lives [residents] live there, would be little more than a memory.”

This city-sprawl is the product of a recently formed Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) made up of local developers Rob Rossi, Doug Filipponi and Karl Wittstrom. The EIR assessment of impacts from just the proposed “ag cluster development” identified 11 “Class One” impacts — those are environmental impacts that



can neither be avoided nor adequately mitigated. In other words, the public should learn to live with impacts such as the loss of up to 400 mature oak trees, acres of prime agricultural soils, extensive cultural resources -- both Chumash and Spanish Mission era -- ground water aquifer depletion, traffic, degraded air quality and more. County planner James Caruso said at the January 11 meeting that he could not recall an EIR that identified as many Class

One impacts, and has stated that it is one of the most complex EIRs the county has ever considered, right up there with reports that dealt with off-shore oil drilling.

And the EIR only analyzes a tiny portion of the total development; a 112-lot “cluster” subdivision on 1 to 3-acre lots. The other 400+ homes, hotels, wineries, golf course, etc. will be analyzed later. One can, liter-

ally, only guess what the total tally of impacts and their effects will be.

The reader here may be moved to inquire “What about the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)? That law requires EIRs to consider the *whole* project, and prevents looking at segmented development in a piecemeal fashion. How can they get away with this?”

In a twist of land use planning, the portion of the General Plan

continued on page 5

OHV-quake!

580 acres of off-highway land at Oceano Dunes are up in the air

On January 19, the County Planning Commission upheld an appeal of the proposed sale of 584 acres of county land to the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (ODSVRA). The Commission overturned by a vote of 4-0 the Planning Director's previous determination that the proposed sale of the land, currently leased by State Parks for off-highway vehicle use in the ODSVRA, is in conformity with the County's General Plan.

The vote came after Eric Greening, Sierra Club Chapter Director Andrew Christie, environmental attorney Babak Naficy and several ODSVRA neighbors spoke in support of the appeal, filed by Oceano resident Larry Bross. County maps submitted by Christie and Naficy demonstrated to the Commissioners' satisfaction that the County cannot transfer the land to State Parks without triggering conflict with General Plan policies.

continued on page 3

How This Happened

Anyone who has lived in San Luis Obispo County for the last 20 years knows that there has been an ongoing, at times bitter, struggle between those who have owned the historic Santa Margarita cattle ranch and those who would like to see it remain just that -- a cattle ranch.

The players have included the property's owners; Santa Margarita Area Residents Together (SMART), a watchdog organization formed in the late '80s in reaction to the first proposed development scenario for the property; county planners and the Board of Supervisors; local activists; and conservation organizations, in-

continued on page 4

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Santa Lucia Chapter General Meeting Glen Canyon & Grizzlies

On Friday, February 23, Walter Robie will treat us once again to an incomparable display of beauty captured with his camera on his trips into the canyons of Lake Powell and the tundra of Alaska.

The first part of the program is titled Lake Powell's Magic Light. Walter spent a week photographing the morning and evening light reflecting off the burnt-orange Glen Canyon walls into the rippling waters, creating fantastic oscillating patterns. And there are scenes of arches and buttes rising out of the blue waters draped in ribbons of

ochre-colored sandstone. The second part of the program is titled Grizzly Bears and More. On one of many trips to Alaska, Walter had the opportunity to photograph these monarchs of the north up close, and large herds of caribou on the arctic tundra. This part of the program ends with a dazzling display of the aurora borealis moving across the northern sky at a furious, sensuous pace.



Brian L. Miller

**Friday, February 23,
7:00 p.m.
St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1334 Nipomo St., at Pismo
San Luis Obispo**

Enter parking lot off Pismo

Okay, They Helped a Little...

By Pam Heatherington

On January 27, a ceremony took place on the East West Ranch (aka Fiscalini Ranch Preserve) to honor the donors, community groups and public agencies responsible for the preservation of that beloved coastal property.

Glaringly absent from the list of invitees was the California Coastal Commission. I find this omission odd and unfortunate, because if it hadn't been for the Coastal Commission's denial of the county-approved subdivision of the ranch, public acquisition would never have been possible. In fact, if it hadn't been for the Coastal Commission's bold action in 1998, we would now have a private desal plant on East West Ranch, serving dozens of ocean view mansions, and a golf course, dude ranch and luxury hotel on the Hearst Ranch just up the coast.

Similarly, no mention of the Coastal Commission is made on the otherwise informative interpretive signs on the north and south entrances to East West Ranch. Unsuspecting visitors are led to believe that the fate of the ranch jumped directly from the proposed development to local fundraising efforts to buy the property, with no regulatory action whatsoever.

It's time the Cambria Community Services District, American Land Conservancy and Friends of the Ranchland correct this revisionist history and give the Coastal Commission the credit and recognition it deserves. The public needs to be reminded that the Commission doesn't just make developers and the CCSD angry, it makes things happen for the betterment of the coast.

On January 23, Pam Heatherington, our Conservation Committee Chair, was selected by the Atascadero City Council to fill the at-large seat on the City Planning Commission.

"It is a two-year commitment," says Pam. "I will need to step down from the conservation committee due to new time constraints, but there are many issues I intend to stay involved in. Be assured, one of the main reasons I felt qualified to apply to the Planning Commission is because of my involvement in the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club."

And we'll miss you, Pam, but our loss is Atascadero's gain.

continued on page 3

SANTA LUCIAN

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COUNCIL OF CLUB LEADERS

The Executive Committee meets the fourth Friday of every month at 4:00 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 1204 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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Permit

continued from page 2

plant. In addition, 74,000 mature fish (2,522 pounds) and 54,000 macroinvertebrates (794,000 pounds) would be killed annually when pinned against screens covering the intake channels.

The Water Board's staff has proposed approval of the renewed permit, even though the killing of larvae and fish will continue, with the proviso that operation of the plant is restricted to 15% of its capacity, a level which, the permit claims, is permissible under current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations that interpret the requirements of the U.S. Clean Water Act.

Despite the fact that other power plants operating on the California coast, particularly ones being replaced with new plants under current EPA regulations, must avoid or compensate for losses of marine life from use of ocean water, the proposed permit renewal for Morro Bay requires no mitigation.

The draft permit states: "Calculated on a monthly basis, as of December 2006, the Discharger (LS Power Group) is below the 15% average capacity utilization rate for the prior five years, and the pattern at this facility suggests that the capacity utilization rate will continue to decline."

The relatively low capacity is the result of the owner, then Duke Energy, retiring two of the plant's four generating units three years ago. The plant's remaining two units have continued to operate and generate electricity under a contract with PG&E during periods of high energy demand in the state.

The permit states that "the existing power plant discharges up to 668 million gallons per day (mgd) of once-through cooling water and treated process wastewaters." This refers to the amount of Estuary water that the plant's four units were capable of withdrawing. However, the 668 mgd figure apparently is based on the assumption that all four of the plant's generating units are operational, which is not currently the case.

Therefore, the 15% capacity utilization sanctioned by the permit appears to be based on the 668 mgd amount, which may mean that the plant could be permitted to withdraw much more water than allowable if the actual discharge capacity — about half of 668 mgd — were used to calculate the 15%. More water taken from the Estuary kills more fish.

CAPE expects to review the board staff's interpretation of EPA regulations governing power plant operations, factual assertions, and the proposed arrangements for monitoring impacts of the plant on the Estuary under a renewed permit, which allows LS Power to conduct the monitoring on its own.

The draft permit states that the California Department of Fish and Game has determined that several species listed as threatened or endangered pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act may be found in the vicinity of the power plant. In Morro Bay, these include tidewater gobies, steelhead, red-legged frog, California brown pelican, Guadalupe fur seal, southern sea otter, and the peregrine falcon. In Estero Bay, threatened or endangered species may include loggerhead, green, and leatherback turtles; white abalone, steelhead, tidewater gobies, the peregrine falcon; Guadalupe fur seal, southern sea otter and California brown pelican.

No threatened or endangered species have been identified in sampling studies conducted in connection with the proposed replacement of the plant with a new one, but those studies only covered one year and are more than six years old.

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National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. In March, those of you who are eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you

continued on page 3

A Public Purchase

By Adam Hill

San Luis Obispo Developer Rob Rossi has purchased an option on Fossil Point, the old Unocal "tank farm" site, 90 ocean-bluff acres just south of the town of Avila Beach. Mr. Rossi's preliminary plans, presented at the January 8 Avila Advisory Council meeting, are likely to include a subdivision of ocean view mansions and a massive luxury hotel.

Mr. Rossi is receiving early and enthusiastic support from Third District Supervisor Jerry Lenthall, who has generously offered to convene and Chair another "Blue Ribbon Task Force" to determine "public preferences," a la the Dalidio Ranch development. Lenthall has selected the same Berkeley firm to facilitate the meetings.

The growing trend of using hand-picked focus groups to assist developers in the early stages of controversial projects is alarming for a number of reasons. First, they confer the aura of "consensus" and "buy in" from the public without ever actually engaging the public. If any critics or opponents to the project are ever selected to participate, they are always outnumbered to the point of marginalization.

Second, these groups provide excellent political cover for the decision-makers who ultimately must approve or deny the project. It is so much easier for an elected official to suspend independent analysis or critical thinking skills when faced with the beguiling justification that "The task force discussed this project for six months, and after careful consideration, this is their recommendation." How can a County Supervisor or city councilman compete with six months of focused meetings?

Lastly, one should never forget that these facilitated focus groups are paid for by the developer, to achieve a particular outcome—support for their project. One can scarcely imagine Mr. Rossi or any other developer paying upwards of \$30,000 for a process that concluded with a recommendation that the project should not go forward. It is unseemly in the extreme for Supervisor Lenthall to be assisting in such an effort. The Third District needs a Supervisor who will be an ardent and independent protector of the coast, not a sly servant of special interests.

If Jerry Lenthall wants to be truly helpful, he should convene a meeting of County planning staff, Coastal Commission staff and Advisory Council members so that everyone involved can have a clear understanding of the site's resource constraints, its development potential, (if any) and how the Coastal Act affects any future planning efforts there.

Adam Hill teaches at Cal Poly and just completed his second term as president of the Food Bank.

OHV

continued from page 1

Under subsequent questioning, Planning staff admitted that the designation of county land parcels in the ODSVRA as "buffer" — the designation used in the county map submitted with the county's Local Coastal Plan and certified by the Coastal Commission — did not agree with the fact that the land is being used as an off-highway vehicle riding area. In their staff report, Planning staff also failed to analyze the consistency of the proposed sale with the County's Open Space policy on off-highway vehicles.

Saying "We should clean up our own act before we get rid of [the land]," Planning Commissioner Penny Rappa commented that the inconsistencies pointed out by Naficy and the Sierra Club mean "we're speaking out of both sides of our mouth."



Map 2: Off-Highway Vehicle Use Areas

No sale: The story told by this Coastal Policies map was enough for the Planning Commission.



A good day: Eric Greening, Larry Bross, Andrew Christie and Babak Naficy adjourned to the Mission Grill after helping convince the Planning Commission to vote against the sale of county land at the ODSVRA.

trust the Board of Supervisors will concur. "We are very pleased that the Planning Commission agreed with us that this proposed transaction needs more scrutiny than its gotten."

The Board of Supervisors was scheduled to decide whether to

"In 1980, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Oceano Dunes complex as the most fragile habitat in the United States," said Christie. "The County's Open Space policy is absolutely clear that off-highway vehicles are not welcome on County-owned lands. These two facts go together, and we

sell the property at a March 6 hearing. The Coastal Commission should also review its permit allowing vehicles on land designated as buffer area in the county's Local Coastal Plan.

State Parks' lease on the property, which constitutes about 40 percent of the ODSVRA, expires in 2008.

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Slouching

continued from page 1

that deals with Santa Margarita Ranch requires the corporation to prepare a Specific Plan that spells out all of the development plans for the ranch with its first formal subdivision proposal — unless that subdivision happens to be an “Ag cluster subdivision” from this requirement. There is no consensus on whether this General Plan loophole is sufficient to circumvent CEQA.

For a copy of the Draft EIR (CD or Executive Summary), contact Lynn Dotter, Environmental Division, at dotter@co.slo.ca.us, or call (805) 781-5010, or check the web site www.sloplanning.org. Anyone interested in commenting on the DEIR should submit an e-mail or written statement to James Caruso of the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building at the County Government Center, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408-2040. Comments should be submitted by **5:00 p.m., April 12, 2007**. (The original deadline of March 9 was extended due to public demand.) If you need more information about this project, call Caruso at (805) 781-5702, or email jcaruso@co.slo.ca.us.

To get involved in responding to the DEIR and the effort to protect this land, contact:

David Blakely, slodave@gmail.com
438-5956

SMART, John Beccia,
upndair2@hotmail.com

William Miller, wrmiller@mpandc.com
438-5332

NOTE: The owners of the Santa Margarita Ranch make their facilities available for the use of local organizations. The use of Ranch facilities for the Santa Lucia Chapter fundraiser in April does not connote support for the plans or activities of the owners.

How?

continued from page 1

cluding The Nature Conservancy and the California Rangeland Trust.

That legacy of the years of disagreement over the future of this place is a tangled web of issues with convoluted layers of legal implications, including the 1996 mediated agreement between the owners -- a Texas family with business interests in oil, cattle, and development -- and the Santa Margarita Area Advisory Council, which was eventually was codified in the county General Plan and settlement agreements associated with lawsuits filed by SMART. A comprehensive history of the saga could fill a book of similar length to the Draft EIR.

the Texans purchased the then 16,000-acre Santa Margarita Ranch and the 30,000-acre Chimineas Ranch back in the mid 1970s. They subsequently sold the 2,100-acre portion of SM Ranch west of Highway 101 (now known as “Spanish Oaks”), leaving them with approximately 13,900 acres. While the family’s interest in the Chimineas Ranch was apparently confined to expanding the cattle operation and developing oil wells, they had a much grander scheme in mind for “The Margarita.” When that scheme - which was essentially a new town including 2,000 homes, a business park, and various commercial activities - was first presented to the public several years



Santa Margarita Ranch History Camp

What is a Limited Liability Corporation and Why Do Developers Form Them?

A Limited Liability Corporation shields its members and their assets from all liability, financial or otherwise. But an LLC also allows the enterprise to secure rights afforded to mere mortal citizens -- only moreso. A recent case in point: In January, the potential threat of legal action by Wal-Mart to assert its right to build a SuperCenter in Atascadero, no matter what residents may want, caused the City Council to back off a proposed ordinance barring big box stores in their city.

Corporations’ accumulation of unbridled power—and the way they often misuse it—has inspired myriad efforts to restrain them: boycotts, protests, lawsuits, legislation, and shareholder actions to change company policies from within. But after witnessing corporations riding roughshod over local communities’ rights to regulate everything from cell phone towers to trash dumping, activists like activist attorney Robert Hinkley are calling for a new approach. He and others realize that

such battles will be endless unless citizens challenge the corporate system itself. “We’ve created this entity; it’s like a monster,” says Jim Price, a member of the Sierra Club’s Corporate Accountability Committee. “We’ve given corporations more power than we reserve for ourselves.”

“The authority to govern in this country is theoretically in the hands of the people,” notes activist and historian Richard Grossman. But if that’s the case, how can a company nullify a state law? Why does a corporation have the power to overturn a local planning decision? To Grossman, it comes down to one basic question—who gets to make the rules?—and one not-so-simple answer: People can only begin to regain control over their communities by confronting corporations’ “illegitimate claims to constitutional rights, powers,

and authorities.”

An activist most of his life, Grossman has helped pass laws, elect people, and stop many instances of corporate abuse. A former Peace Corps volunteer and director of Environmentalists for Full Employment, he has also brought community groups together to fight environmental injustice. But despite the individual victories, he felt his side was losing the war. A successful fight to save one forest, say, was soon followed by a hard slog to protect another. “If you’re upset about toxics in the air and water, for example, eventually you want to write a law,” Grossman says. “But it’s not enough to just write an environmental law, or a labor law, or a consumer law, because the fundamental law—the Constitution—is a stacked deck against us.” His search for a more comprehensive approach led him to help found the Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy, a small group of organizers, activists, and writers from around the country who are educating the public about how corporations have become more powerful



The Best Planning Tool: A Specific Plan



The proposed Santa Margarita Ranch development needs a Specific Plan, and an analysis of that plan needs to be in the final EIR.

A Specific Plan is a comprehensive plan for the future development of a piece of property. For this project, a Specific Plan would locate and describe in detail the location and size of the planned growth for the Santa Margarita Ranch. It would tell the community about all of the development scenarios and impacts that can be expected on the entire 4,000-acre historic ranch, showing where all of the proposed growth would go. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be developed to investigate all the impacts of the requested growth and, if possible, develop mitigations for the impacts the growth would cause. A Specific Plan could also show the phasing plan for the entire project.

What we have now in the Draft EIR is an individual project plan, in which the comprehensive and culminate nature of the project cannot be adequately addressed. With a Specific Plan, the full potential development is known and future impacts can be mitigated, not just the impacts from a specific project. A Specific Plan will tell us how much of the land will remain in agriculture and open space and for how long.

If the Santa Margarita Ranch continues to develop project by project, the

community will not have the leverage to get the open space or the capital improvements it needs to accommodate the entire project.

continued on page 5

More is More



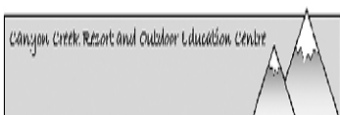
Back in 1999, local developer Rob Rossi purchased the glorious Santa Margarita Ranch from its former owners, the Robertsons, a Houston-based development conglomerate. The initial public response was one of relief, because the assumption was that a local guy like Rossi would be a much more sensitive developer than the Robertsons, who had played hardball with the Board of Supervisors, threatening alternately to sue the County and drown the residents of Santa Margarita in a tsunami of new houses plotted on an ancient railroad map.

The result was a “development agreement” that created the expectation of turning the SM Ranch into a residential development several times the size of the town itself, while shielding the ranch owner from any changes to local ordinances, fee increases or general plan amendments.

When Rossi held a press conference at the historic Asistencia in 1999, he made a show of dropping the Robertson’s development agreement into a terracotta planter and promised all present he would build only 51 houses. He told the crowd that the development agreement was dead. Local media unquestioningly reported that the ranch would be much better served by a developer with local roots.

As it turns out, the Robertsons’ development agreement was modest compared with what Rossi & co. have in mind.

“I expect that whatever the corporation can get away with in this EIR will set the criteria for all the rest of the developments,” said Sue Harvey of North County Watch, “so I think they will be pushing really hard.”



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continued on page 5



Don Wilson

HopeDance

Screenings at SLO Public Library, Osos & Palm.

Fri., Feb. 2, 7pm: "Death of a President." \$7

Sat., Feb. 3, 7pm: "Converging Ecological Crises: Are We Up to the Challenges?" with Professor Gordon Hartman. \$5

Sun., Feb. 4, 3pm: "2012: The Odyssey." \$10

Fri., Feb. 9, 7pm: "Who Killed the Electric Car?" \$5

Fri., Feb. 16, 7pm: "Why We Fight." \$5

Sun., Feb. 18, 3pm: "One: the Movie" (Zaadz). Free

Sat., Feb. 24, 6:30pm: "An Inconvenient Truth," followed by panel discussion with **SLO Mayor Dave Romero, Sierra Club's Karen Merriam, Air Pollution Control District's Larry Allen, Rideshare's Lisa Quinn.** Free.

Sun., Feb. 25, 3pm: Paul Hawken's 2006 Bioneer Plenary speech, continuing the discussion from the film. Free.

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LLC

continued from page 4

than the institutions that created them—and what people can do to right the scales.

These beliefs have taken hold in rural Pennsylvania, where Grossman now works for the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund. In the late 1990s, large corporate hog farms were generating a mountain of manure that threatened to seep into the area's groundwater and wells. Instead of protesting these specific conditions, citizens in some of the area's townships—many conservative, lifelong Republicans—worked with Thomas Linzey, head of the defense fund, to pass local laws that banned corporate farms altogether. In two cases, they declared that corporations don't have the same rights as people.

Agribusiness firms have fought back by pushing for a plan—unveiled last year by Governor Edward Rendell (D)—to set up a board of political appointees

with the power to overturn local ordinances. "The establishment of this board is nothing less than the state being used by agribusiness and sludge corporations to eliminate those 'pesky' Townships and rural communities who continue to believe in local, democratic control over issues affecting their lives," a group of township supervisors wrote. A bill based on Rendell's initiative was signed into law in July.

A similar battle is being waged on the other side of the country, where residents of the Northern California city of Arcata were struggling with the economic impact of fast-food franchises. In 1998, the city passed an ordinance that prohibited any more of these businesses from opening. "Local businesspeople were very much in favor of it," says David Cobb, a Humboldt County activist and the Green Party's 2004 presidential candidate. "So much so that they said, Why only do restaurants?" The city is

considering a prohibition on all chain retailers, while the county weighs a ban on non-local corporate involvement in elections. Last year Arcata voted (in a nonbinding resolution) to oppose corporate personhood altogether, declaring that "only persons who are human beings should be able to participate in the democratic process."

The conviction shared by these disparate communities—that democracy is impossible unless corporations are subordinate to citizens—is nonpartisan and proliferating. And its biggest advertisement is the corporations themselves: Every time big business comes into a community and effectively declares that its citizens don't have the right to govern themselves, Grossman says, more people will understand what is at stake.

— excerpt from "Meet the Corporation," by Chris Warren, *Sierra magazine*, Sept./Oct. 2005

Asking community members with no professional training in land use law to sit down in a room to negotiate with savvy developers and their consultants and attorneys gave the developers an unfair advantage over the process.

How?

continued from page 4

activities – with no language that guaranteed any protection of any portion of the ranch in trade, the community pushed back.

On the eve of the morning in which that section of the SRAP would be before the Board of Supervisors, the Ranch owners' attorney notified county attorneys that they believed Supervisor David Blakely had a personal conflict of interest on any issues involving the Ranch because he resides in Santa Margarita and adjacent to the Ranch. No mention had ever been made of this concern during the previous several years that Blakely was on the Board. Having no time to seek an opinion from the Fair Political Practices Commission, Blakely had no choice but to recuse himself from the discussion – leaving the Board deadlocked 2-2 on the proposed language.

That impasse led to a series of mediated discussions which resulted in an infamous "mediated agreement" immortalized in the General Plan. What is apparent now but wasn't then is that asking community members with no professional training in land use law to sit down in a room to negotiate with savvy developers and their consultants and attorneys gave the developers an unfair advantage over the process.

Even though the Texans eventually sold both ranches several years ago, the foundation they carefully laid for future development of the Santa Margarita Ranch remains in place.

The Chimineas Ranch was purchased in part by the Nature Conservancy in 2001 and in 2004 by the California Department of Fish and Game – which now owns the entire 30,000-acre ranch. Such was not the fate of the Santa Margarita Ranch, which was purchased



Thud: When an Environmental Impact Report requires this many pages of effort to try to find ways that unmitigatable impacts might be mitigated, that's a red flag on the project.

by local developer Rob Rossi and other investors in 1999. Although Rossi spent many months negotiating with The Nature Conservancy, no agreement could be reached. He later worked with the California Rangeland Trust on a proposed conservation easement deal, which ultimately fell apart when CRT was unable to raise the funding to purchase the easement. Since that time, some of his partners have come and gone and the ranch has been subdivided, with different partners owning different portions.

Poly Empowered

A splendid time was had by all at the January 13 mixer for the Empower Poly Coalition of student sustainability clubs, held at the Arroyo Grande home of Chapter Chair Karen Merriam. Sierra Club is working with Cal Poly student and faculty groups on energy element & Community Choice energy aggregation planning for senior projects this year. (See: www.local.org).



Empower Poly's Michael Marcus (left), recipient of the American Planning Association's National Planning Leadership Award, confers with Bill Siembieda, Cal Poly City and Regional Planning Department head, and SLO Green Build's Nick Alter.

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We can't have clean water soon enough.



California sea otters are struggling to survive.

Pollution from land is causing disease and death in the ocean.

Meanwhile, the Morro Bay-Cayucos Sewage Treatment Plant is seeking a rare waiver from our nation's sewage treatment standards.

We need to upgrade the Sewage Plant as fast as possible.

Otters should not have to wait eight years for cleaner water.

People shouldn't have to either.

Tell Morro Bay and Cayucos to complete the upgrade as fast as possible. Call Morro Bay at (805) 772-4656 or Cayucos Sanitary District at (805) 995-3290 to voice your opinion.

For more information, please visit www.nrdc.org



Election

continued from page 3

can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation.

Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by asking questions of experienced members you know. Visit the Club's election website: www.sierraclub.org/bod/2007 election. This site provides links to additional information about candidates and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate.

Then make your choices and cast your votes. You will find the ballot is quite straightforward and easy to mark. A growing number of members find the user-friendly Internet voting option to be very convenient as well as a savings in postage.

Starting this year, only Regular and Life members are eligible to vote in the national Club election and will receive a ballot. Introductory members (i.e. members who have not renewed their Club membership prior to January 31, 2007) are not eligible to vote in the national Club election. This change does not apply to chapter elections, in which all classes of membership remain eligible to vote.

The 2007 candidates for Board of Directors are:

Clark A. Buchner - N
 Alan Kuper - P
 Sanjay Ranchod - N
 Jerry Sutherland - P
 Robert Brashear-Kaulfers - N
 Robert Cox - N
 Ayelet Hines - P
 David Karpf - N
 Allison Chin - N
 Lisa Renstrom - N
 Kenneth P. Langton - N

N = Nominating Committee candidate
 P = Petition candidate

Regional Conservation Committee Meets in First Webcast

Following a trial run three days prior to work the bugs out, the Sierra Club's California-Nevada Regional Conservation Committee held its first meeting via the World Wide Web on January 20.

Members went to Sierra Club offices equipped with the necessary hardware and software in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Luis Obispo. (Traditionally, committee members from one part of the region have had to drive to a meeting location in southern or northern California, with a second meeting held the following day in the other part of the state for mem-

bers nearer that location.)

A highlight of the day-long meeting was the energy presentation, covering Cool Cities, Community Choice energy aggregation, Fresno's nuclear rush and moves to relicense Diablo Canyon and San Onofre nuclear power plants, and Liquefied Natural Gas facility plans in Southern California.

"Obviously we saved a lot of energy just by staying where we are," said webcast organizer Ken Smokoska. "We proved this can be done for the Club's far-flung committees, so we hope it will catch on."



Kick it: Diablo Canyon Task Force Chair Rochelle Becker, Sierra Club California Energy/Climate Change Committee Chair Ken Smokoska, and Regional Conservation Committee delegate John Burdette plugged in to the regional conference from our San Luis Obispo office.

We Get There Eventually

By Joe Dickerson

With two big football games to compete with, we weren't very hopeful that our January paddle was going to be very well attended. Were we ever surprised. It proved to be one of our biggest outings in a while and we didn't even make it easy for anyone to find us. Let me explain.

We schedule our trips long before the outing date so that everyone has ample time to plan for them. The date, launch site, and time are all dutifully published in the Santa Lucian and e-mailed to everyone on our mailing list. Great plan, and one that usually works. But this time, our fearless leader, that would be me, blew it. I forgot to look at the scheduled trip and had a senior moment. We were supposed to launch at the State Park Marina in Morro Bay but I had in my mind Coleman beach by the power plant. Oops.

After Ann and I downloaded our boats, she took the truck up to the Marina in case anyone showed up at the wrong site. Guess what? They all did. Or I guess more accurately, I did. But it all got sorted out eventually and we were only a little late getting into the water. If you showed up later at the marina, we promise we won't do it again. Through all that, the dozen or so intrepid paddlers who showed up kept their senses of humor, barely grumbled at all, and everyone pitched in to get all ten boats in the water. We paddled south along the sand spit, observing a multitude of birds and debating just which little brown birds we were



watching. Gulls and shore birds really drive me nuts. After several minutes studying a large group of mostly sleeping shore birds whose bills we couldn't see because they were tucked under their wings, we finally took a poll and decided they were marbled godwits.

We paddled almost to Midden Point and hauled out for lunch, a walk to the ocean side of the sand spit and the requisite swapping of paddling stories. Almost at the very moment of our launch to return to the cars, the slight breeze freshened, turned nearly 180 degrees and blew us back to Coleman Beach.

In spite of the silly beginning, the day turned out to be another great paddle for the SLO Paddlers. But then, aren't they all?



Classifieds

March issue ad deadline is **February 16**. To acquire a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:

Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter
 p.o. Box 15755
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
 sierra8@charter.net

Local Government Meetings

- City of SLO--1st & 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 781-7103
- Arroyo Grande--2nd and 4th Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 473-5404
- Atascadero--2nd & 4th Tues.; 466-8099
- Cambria CSD -- 4th Thurs.; 927-6223
- Grover Beach--1st & 3rd Mon., 6:30 p.m.; 473-4567
 Grover Beach Planning Commission-- 2nd Tues.
- Morro Bay--2nd & 4th Mon.
- Paso Robles--1st & 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 237-3888
- Pismo Beach--1st Tues., 5:30 p.m.; 773-4657
- Los Osos CSD board-- 1st Tues. & 2nd Mon., varies
- California Coastal Commission-- 3rd Tues., varies
- SLO County Board of Supervisors-- every Tues.; 781-5450
- SLO Council of Governments; 781-4219
 SLOCOG Citizens Advisory Committee--1st Wed. every other month, 6:00 p.m.
 SLOCOG Board--1st Wed. every other month, 8:30 a.m.

HELP WANTED

VOLUNTEER AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
 20 hours per week - work from home, or at the Chapter Office
 Reports to Chapter Director. No financial compensation available - yet. This experienced individual will be a self-starter, committed to creating a sustainable environment, willing to work as part of a dynamic team, and possessing positive people skills. Help the Chapter Director and Board to build the capacity of the Chapter in our community's efforts to achieve a sustainable, efficient, fossil-free energy future. Grant search and writing abilities a plus. Ability to organize events, and to care for and nurture volunteer efforts, is essential. For questions or application, please call Karen Merriam, Chapter Chair, 544-6628.

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"Searching for Connection offers hope, inspiration, and meaning to those who have been traumatized, to family and friends of those touched by trauma, and to those who have dedicated their lives to helping the victimized and traumatized. Most importantly, it illustrates that one can endure with dignity and survive with meaning, even in the face of terrible experiences."

—Beverly Engel, M.F.T., psychotherapist
 and author of *Breaking the Cycle of Abuse*

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Karen Merriam's *Searching for Connection: An Exploration of Trauma, Culture, and Hope* delves into the heart of traumatic experience, where important connections to safety, hope, and strength are severed. Even in the darkness of traumatic events, however, personal and collective resources can be discovered and brought to bear to help oneself and others endure. Through a series of personal stories and case studies, Merriam develops a paradigm of traumatic experience that reveals the common factors that allow individuals to survive and to overcome nightmare experiences. Amazingly, survivors often discover within themselves untapped resources they have never known before.

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Outings and Activities Calendar

All of our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. 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 Leader Gary Felsman (473-3694). For information on a specific outing, please contact the outing leader. Outings Leaders please get your outings or events in by the 1st for the next month's outings.

Hiking Classifications:

Distance: 1 = 0-2 mi., 2 = 3-5 mi., 3 = 6-9 mi., 4 = 10-12 mi., 5 = 12 mi. or more.

Elevation Gain: A = 500', B = 1000', C = 1500', D = 2000', E = 2500', F = 3000' or more.

Sat.-Sun., Feb 3-4, Service and Hiking in the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness Area:

We will have two outstanding projects in this Imperial County wilderness area. On Saturday we will assist Erin Dreyfuss, natural resources specialist in the El Centro BLM office, perhaps doing a census of the (famous, or infamous) Pierson's Milkvetch, or else sifting seeds of native plants for future restoration efforts. Sunday will be a longer hike to find and inventory five small game guzzlers for the BLM office, data they need for wilderness management and cooperation with the California Dept of Fish and Game. Saturday evening will be a potluck, a campfire, and stories about our desert. Contact leader: Craig Deutsche, deutsche@earthlink.net, (310-477-6670). CNRCC Desert Com

Feb. 4th, Sun., 0930, tour de woodlands: Meet at junction of Willow and Albert Way with bicycle & helmet, see the explosion of an "instant city". Very easy ride with many stops. Call 929-3647 or bdenneen@kcbx.net a few days before to confirm and for details.

Feb. 4th, 3 p.m. Superbowl alternative hike and potluck: If bears, dolphins, and eagles sound like animals, not teams, join us as we hike Point Sal Road to our potluck dinner destination (5 mrt, 1300 ft. elev. gain). Bring a daypack with food to share, as well as a plate, utensils, and water for yourself. Meet at the Orcutt Long's Drugs parking lot at 3pm. Always contact the leader. Jim 937-6766 (AR)

February 8-11 Cross country skiing and snowshoeing: For beginner to expert, both skis and snowshoes will be used, no experience necessary. Have fun in the snow at beautiful Mammoth Lakes and enjoy the company of your fellow Sierra Clubbers. For more details contact leader. Limited number of accommodations available at Tamarack Lodge so make plans now! JOHN HOLROYD 495-6391 (CJ)

Sat., Feb. 10, 8:30 a.m., Hike to Big Falls via the Rinconada Trail and High Mountain Road: This is a good time of year to check out Big Falls. There should be water (no promises). The hike is approximately 9 miles in length with about 1800 ft. of elevation gain. There are great views of Pozo Valley and Lopez Canyon from the top of the saddle on the Rinconada Trail. There is a possibility of poison oak. Bring water, lunch, and dress for the weather. Meet at the Santa Margarita Beverage Company at the east end of Santa Margarita. There is an optional stop at the Pozo Saloon after the hike if they are open. Rain cancels. For info, call Chuck at 441-7597 (3C)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10 Birding at Oso Flaco: Oso Flaco is a small freshwater lake nestled in the Guadalupe Dunes. We expect to find many birds at this stopover on the birding flyway. Bring your boat and equipment, PFDs, picnic lunch and binoculars. LAUNCH AT OSO FLACO CAUSEWAY PUT IN 10:00 AM Joe Dickerson 693-9534

lunch & see ocean & decide. Dogs OK. Call 929-3647 or bdenneen@kcbx.net a few days before to confirm and for details.

Sun.-Mon., Feb. 18-19, Amargosa Wild and Scenic River exploration: We'll set up camp Saturday night near Tecopa and spend two days hiking along the stretches of the Amargosa River proposed for wild and scenic status under Congressman Buck McKeon's "Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and Economic Enhancement Act". One day will be an easy one-way hike (with shuttle) along the "scenic" part, the other part a more strenuous out-and-back hike on the "wild" part. For more information, or to reserve a spot, contact John Wilkinson, johnfw1@mac.com, (408) 947-0858.

Sat. Feb. 24th, 9am., Blinn Ranch Trail to Camp Sapwi: This moderate hike is primarily on a dirt road with about three miles on a trail. It is at the East end of Santa Margarita Lake. It covers a bit over 9 miles with no more than 600 ft. of elev. gain. We will meet at Pacific Beverage Co. in Santa Margarita to carpool. There is a \$5 parking fee at the trailhead. For more info contact Carlos at 546-0317.

Mar. 3, Wonderland of Rocks - Joshua Tree National Park: Should be beautiful this time of year. The Wonderland of Rocks is exactly what its boastful name indicates. We're going to enter them from the south and head north past



Photo by Joaquin Palting

Mar. 3, 4:30 p.m. Sunset/moonrise hike and potluck at Harris grade: Walk along the ridge at Harris grade with a short strenuous climb at the end (4 mrt, 900 ft. elev. gain). Watch as the sun goes down and the full moon comes up a few minutes later. Bring a daypack with flashlight, food to share, a plate, utensils, and water for yourself. Meet at Lompoc Pizza Hut parking lot or Orcutt Long's Drugs parking lot at 4:30pm. Hikes subject to change, always contact leader. Jim 937-6766 (AR)

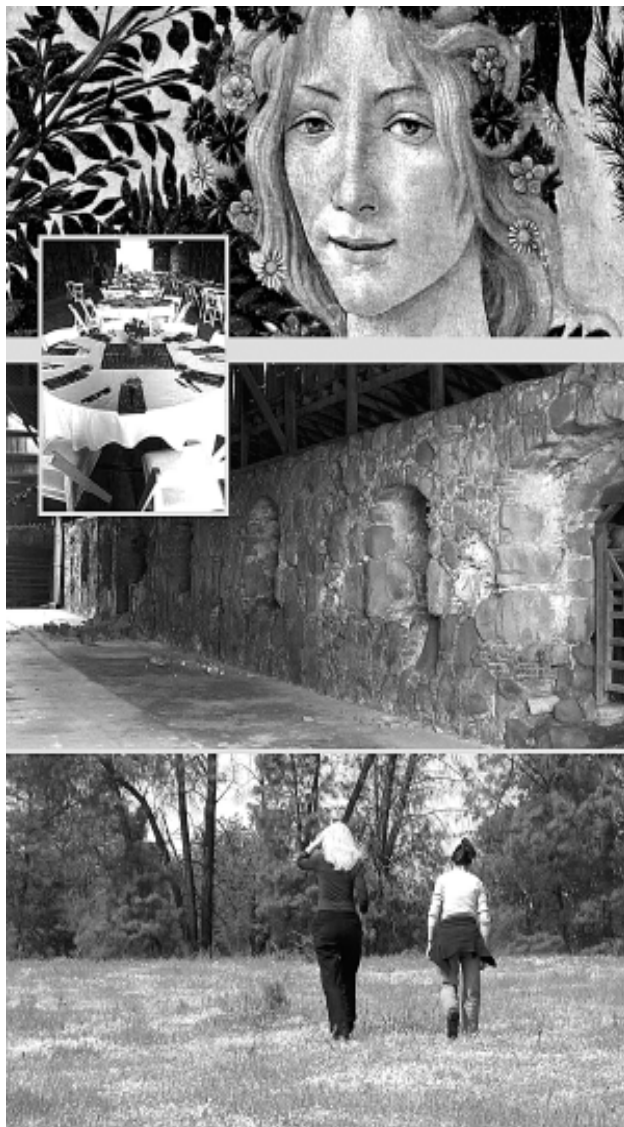
Mar. 4th, Sun., 0930, TOUR de WOODLANDS: Meet at junction of Willow and Albert Way with bicycle & helmet, see the explosion of an "instant city". Very easy ride with many stops. Call 929-3647 or bdenneen@kcbx.net a few days before to confirm and for details.

Sat., Mar. 10, Canoe/kayak north end Morro Bay: We will launch from the north end of Morro Bay and float south on a rising tide. Bring your boat and equipment, PFDs, picnic lunch and binoculars. LOW TIDE 10:19 AM LAUNCH AT COLEMAN BEACH HIGH TIDE 4:22 PM PUT IN 10:00 AM Joe Dickerson 693-9534.

Sat.-Sun., Mar 10-11, Service in the Santa Rosa Wilderness - San Jacinto National Monument: We will assist BLM in removing tamarisk from a canyon in the Santa Rosa Wilderness Area in the recently created San Jacinto National Monument, near Palm Springs. Arrive Saturday morning or campout Friday night. Work Saturday with Justin Seastrand, Wilderness Coordinator for BLM. Potluck and happy hour Saturday evening, then hike Sunday. Leader: Kate Allen (661-944-4056), kjallen@qnet.com.

CNRCC Desert Com/Antelope Valley Group.

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



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Feb. 11, 0930, Sun., Nipomo creekside preserve. Meet behind Adobe Plaza in Old Town Nipomo. See new trail, riparian habitat, native plantings. My easiest hike. Dogs OK. If we have the time & interest might go to DANA Adobe. Call 929-3647 or bdenneen@kcbx.net a few days before to confirm and for details.

Feb. 18, 0930, Sun. POINT SAL: Meet at the west end of Brown Rd (1.5 miles south of Guad). Hike to ridge,

a couple of good pictograph sites, then we'll begin picking our way along the eastern edge. At a high point, we'll start heading west towards Willow Hole, probably have lunch amid the tall rock formations there and do a leisurely stroll out. All very pretty. Bring two quarts of liquid, sturdy boots, food. E-mail Ann and Al Murdy aemurdy@eee.org or call directly (no messages please) at 760-366-2932. San Gorgonio Chapter/CNRCC Desert Com.