



April 2012
Volume 49 No. 4

Inside

Sweet Springs without tears	3
Ignoring Trader Joe's	4
Solar done right & wrong	6
The next oil rush	9
Katcho writes again	10
Classifieds	11
Outings	12

Don't Miss

April 22

Earth Day in the Garden

- 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

Speaking Up for Sanctuary

Local business owners get the vision for a marine sanctuary for SLO



Here's how Left to right: Dan Haifley, Cynthia Mathews, Dr. Chris Harrold and Randy Widera formed our national marine sanctuary panel in Avila Beach. Rep. Lois Capps reminded guests of the economic and environmental reasons to protect the ocean.

As part of the long-term effort to bring the benefits of national marine sanctuary designation to the waters of San Luis Obispo County (see "The Road to Sanctuary," Nov./Dec. 2011), a panel of experts on the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary came to the Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort in Avila Beach on Saturday, February 25, to meet with thirty SLO County business owners for a discussion of the economic benefits of a national marine sanctuary.

The panel discussion "What a National Marine Sanctuary Would Mean for Your Business," was hosted by the San Luis Obispo chapters of the Sierra Club and the Surfrider Foundation, who work together on local sanctuary issues as the Marine Sanctuary Alliance.

It began with an address by Representative Lois Capps (D-Santa Barbara), who noted the \$118 billion and 2.3 million jobs generated annually by the nation's ocean and coastal economy.

"The well-being of this area depends on the health of the oceans," said Capps. "A healthy environment provides a strong economic foundation for the communities where we live."

Dr. Chris Harrold of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Dan Haifley of O'Neill

With the sanctuary leading, we've focused on our product. We have focused on the fact that we have this incredible natural and cultural place, that we want to share it with people. And that's allowed people like me, who have this entrepreneurial spirit, to say "what are the ways that I can create a living here?"... We've used that sense of place, the sanctuary, the natural beauty. And this was able to raise over a quarter million dollars for the organization.

- Randy Widera, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks
"What a National Marine Sanctuary Would Mean for Your Business"
Avila Beach, Feb. 25, 2012

Sea Odyssey, former Santa Cruz City Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews and Randy Widera of Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks spoke on the events that brought about the creation of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in 1992, and how their communities have benefited from the presence and activities of the sanctuary since then.

The basic message from the panelists: the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary has been a boon to the marine resources, schools, scientific research, fisheries and tourism economies of Monterey and Santa Cruz, and it could be the same for San Luis Obispo.

Panelists described the business partnerships, educational curricula, resource protection programs and benefits to tourism the sanctuary has brought to their communities. They recounted their excellent relations with the agricultural community on water quality issues, rebutted criticisms from the fishing industry, and noted the work of the sanctuary in

creating a Community Supported Fishery (CSF) program.

Dr. Harrold said that in terms of research dollars coming into local communities, the sanctuary leverages from and contributes to fifty research organizations with more than 2,000 faculty, staff and graduate students, representing a \$250 million combined annual budget for marine research.

"We have launched a national effort to preserve America's wild legacy and minimize the loss of wild places and biodiversity to climate change," said Amanda Wallner, organizer for the Sierra Club's California Coast Resilient Habitats Campaign. "We have a unique opportunity to leave a vibrant legacy for our children and our grandchildren. Creating a national marine sanctuary in San Luis Obispo reflects a growing national tide. We really do have momentum behind us to get this done."

"A national marine sanctuary is not only necessary, it's also feasible," said Brad Snook, chair of Surfrider Foundation San Luis Obispo.

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Spring into Family Garden Education

April at the SLO Botanical Garden features children's hands-on learning activities

With a goal of "education through exploration," children aged 2 to 102 who come to the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden this month will learn about sustainability, ecology, where food comes from, and the importance of plants in our everyday lives. Two events of many:

April 14, 1-3 pm – Lip Balm and Sunscreen Making! Can't pronounce the ingredients in your lip balm or sunscreen? Learn to create your own yummy smelling natural lip balm and sunscreen using plants from the Garden. Bring your own small container, or buy one here! Activity is \$5 donation per family.

April 22, 10am-5pm – Earth Day at the Garden, in collaboration with Earth Day Alliance. Enjoy a whole day of outdoor activities, hikes, live music, gardening, snacks from the solar oven, and so much more...for free! Take a free family trip on the bus from every corner of the county, to the park and back, all day long.

For more information on these and all the other April programs, call (805) 541-1400 ext. 304 or email lcollinsworth@slobg.org. Check out the Garden at www.slobg.org.



More Petty Irrelevance

Politics is democracy's way of handling public business. We won't get the type of country in the kind of world we want unless people take part in the public's business.

- David Brower

I had trouble in getting to Solla Sollew / where they never have troubles / at least, very few.

- Dr. Seuss

By Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

In our March issue, we featured a critique of HR 7, the House Transportation Bill. Much of that critique appeared under the headline "House Republicans' Desperate Stunt to Pass Worst Transportation Bill Ever."

We knew some people would have a problem with that headline, and with the content of the Sierra Club's critique. Prominent among those people would be, of course, House Republicans. But they wouldn't be the only ones.

I know this because of a minor kerfluffle I had the pleasure of inadvertently starting on the letters page of the *Tribune* last January.

I wrote a letter on behalf of the Club pointing out that much of the editorializing printed in the *Tribune* in the wake of President Obama's rejection of the Keystone XL Canadian tar sands pipeline project (before he got the bad idea of approving the portion from Oklahoma to Texas) was based on the presumption that this had caused a split between labor and environmental advocates. Labor presumably favored the pipeline for the jobs it would bring, while environmentalists opposed it for its likely devastating impacts on Canada's boreal forests, a major U.S. aquifer and the global climate.

In response to the assertion of that split, I cited a joint statement issued by the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council and five national labor unions which praised President Obama for refusing to be pushed into approving the project without adequate environmental review. The joint statement also noted that a "Republican do-nothing Congress" had turned down half a dozen proposals by the White House which would have created millions of jobs but rushed to support Keystone XL on the pretext that its estimated few thousand jobs were worth the risk of environmental catastrophe.

In reply, a gentleman wrote in to decry the "vitriol" and "hate" he detected in my citation of the "Republican do-nothing Congress" quote. He suggested that the presence of this phrase negated my point about the

agreement of labor and environmental activists. Others then wrote in to congratulate that gentleman for identifying the problem of everyone feeling "compelled to verbally annihilate anyone who might express a contrary opinion" rather than "work together for the betterment of the whole nation, instead of verbally praising only those who agree with our own political philosophy and bashing those who don't."

It wasn't my first kerfluffle in which variations on this theme had been played.

In a *New Times* opinion piece last May, I detailed the potential impacts of House Resolution 1581, an anti-wilderness bill introduced by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield) that was artfully written in such a way as to provide a tool to block any future designations of wilderness land. In reply, a reader opined that "the Sierra Club seems to have transformed...into just another political special interest group that will use any tactic to advance their agenda."

In its August 18 issue, *New Times* published our Chapter Executive Committee's analysis of HR 2584, the 2012 funding bill for the Interior Department. We itemized 17 jaw-dropping anti-environmental riders attached to the bill by Congressional Republicans.

A reader promptly wrote to tell us to stop "making it a partisan issue." His point was that in listing amendments that would have eliminated protections for wetlands and migratory birds, nullified Clean Air Act permit requirements, barred the EPA from considering health and environmental impacts when issuing permits for offshore oil drilling, etc., it was "irrelevant" and "petty" to identify the political party represented by the politicians who wrote and attached those amendments.

The media deserves a lot of the blame for cultivating this attitude. Journalism professor Eric Alterman, writing in *The Nation* last

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The Santa Lucian is published 10 times a year. Articles, environmental information and letters to the editor are welcome. The deadline for each issue is the 13th of the prior month.

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Printed by University Graphic Systems

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Outings, events, and more!

Sierra Club Eco-Grants Awarded to Atascadero, Morro Bay Students

The Santa Lucia Chapter has marked the second year of our popular Eco-Grants program with awards to two deserving local high school programs.

Last year, a Sierra Club Eco-Grant allowed the students of Morro Bay High School's Environmental Club to create a vermiculture bin. This year's \$300 award will be used to create composting bins in their school garden. Composting vegetative matter from the garden and collected from the school cafeteria means green waste will stay on site instead of going to a landfill. The green waste will be naturally broken down and reused in the garden. Students will collect green waste from the cafeteria, assemble and manage the composting bins, and educate other students on the benefits of composting.

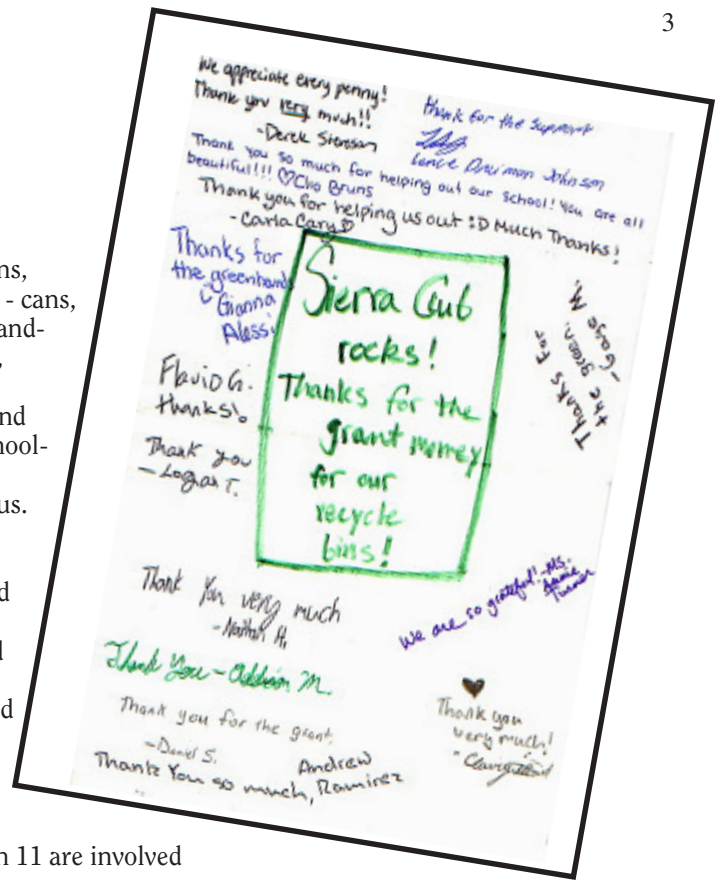
The Environmental Club is made up

of approximately 15 students who are dedicated to raising awareness about lessening the human impact on the environment and coming up with ways to help preserve nature. The club's eco-friendly activities include making crafts out of recycled materials and hosting clothes exchanges to encourage the community to get involved in recycling.

The Green Leadership elective class from Atascadero High School's Greenhound Academy will use their \$350 Eco-Grant to construct and place compost, recycling and landfill (trash) bins on their campus. Instead of just throwing everything away, students on campus will recycle and partake in the cycle of compost, which goes to the school's organic garden. Each section of the bins will be labeled with what exactly can go in each bin ("Composted" - veggies,

fruit, milk cartons, paper; "Recycle" - cans, bottles, bags; "Landfill" - Styrofoam, meat, etc.)

The Greenhound Academy is a school-within-a-school with a green focus. Students take courses with a "green" twist and environmental electives focused on ecology, sustainability and renewable resources. A total of 113 students from grades 9 through 11 are involved



ECO-GRANTS continued on page 10

You're welcome! The Greenhounds express their appreciation.

About Sweet Springs...

We've recently received visits and e-mails from Los Osos residents who are upset with the plans of Morro Coast Audubon to restore native habitat on the eight-acre eastern portion of Audubon's Sweet Springs Nature Preserve.

Those residents are also upset with the Sierra Club for supporting the project, which will involve the removal of non-native species, including up to 120 eucalyptus trees over a period of ten years, replacing them with coast live oaks, sycamores, myrtle and willows, and planting coastal sage scrub in order to render the site more habitable for a variety of native wildlife that are threatened, endangered or of special conservation concern.

Our correspondents have urged us to change our position and support a "compromise" that would leave all the eucalyptus standing, thereby continuing to degrade the habitat for the species they've displaced. We are not likely to do so, as our position is that removing non-native invasive species in order to replace them with native flora, thereby enhancing the chances of survival for the threatened and endangered species that have been displaced by those invasives, is a good thing.

Project opponents have engaged in vigorous volleys in the local media. They often cite a "70 percent" figure as Audubon's estimate of the chance of its restoration effort succeeding. But this figure does not represent a calculation of the odds of the project's success, with a corollary 30 percent chance of failure; rather, it's the goal for the growth rate of the native plantings, seventy percent of which are expected to take hold and flourish -- also a good thing.

Opponents have said that Audubon, in proposing to restore native habitat, is "interfering with nature," but that eucalyptus shipped here from Australia, planted in a commercial tree farm and then choking out native habitat does *not* constitute interfering with nature. Opponents say that birds that like to perch in East Sweet Springs eucalyptus will be displaced when some of the trees in that area are removed. The spectre of homeless herons and egrets

should be considered in the context of the ongoing existence of 350+ eucalyptus and cypress trees in the immediately adjacent main preserve, and Audubon's commitment to leave standing on the eastern preserve those eucalyptus housing raptors, bats and monarch butterflies.

And surely that concern for displacement should extend to the rare, threatened and endangered species who are not only having trouble finding a home — their home at Sweet Springs having been overrun by veldt grass and eucalyptus — but are in danger of ceasing to exist as species.

We are concerned by the implication that avoiding potential inconvenience to individual animals should be a priority over working to avoid the extinction of species. When it passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, Congress noted that "the United States has pledged itself as a sovereign state in the international community to conserve to the extent practicable the various species of fish or wildlife and plants facing extinction." Congress determined that "encouraging the States and other interested parties...to develop and maintain conservation programs which meet national and international standards is a key to meeting the Nation's international commitments and to better safeguarding, for the benefit of all citizens, the Nation's heritage in fish, wildlife, and plants." For East Sweet Springs, the Recovery Action Plan approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mandates the thinning of eucalyptus trees.

We are concerned by the tendency of project opponents to disparage or downplay the importance of coastal sage scrub habitat. This usually takes the form of an assertion that there's plenty of coastal scrub, and restoration projects are happening elsewhere, so we don't need any more here. Since California has lost 85 percent of its coastal sage scrub, we are un-persuaded by this argument. The assumption seems to be that Audubon is going to remove all the trees and wipe out all the species on site — a belief that somehow exists alongside the acknowledgment that the trees serving as habitat will remain — and replace them with something like a lawn.

As per the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, "coastal sage scrub supports over 100 species of plants and animals of rare, threatened, or endangered status. Dozens of bird species depend on scrub." Those include the sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, and California gnatcatcher.

We commend Audubon for its responsiveness to community concerns about the project, including ours. There's no question that the concerns conveyed by an intensively protective community have altered the project. Audubon is going the extra mile on protections and mitigations, including their agreement to leave raptor colony nesting eucalyptus trees standing and considering tarping the stumps of cut trees rather than applying herbicide.

For Los Osos residents who fear the loss of one of the most beautiful places in their town, we recommend this passage from the habitat enhancement project proposal that Morro Coast Audubon submitted to secure state grant funding. It describes the vision for the project:

Planting of relatively fast growing sub-shrubs and wildflowers will provide immediate habitat improvements for native pollinators, birds and small mammals. These plants should also provide immediate benefits for the human community. Visitors [will] delight in an abundance of wildflower bloom in the spring, as well as the foliage of fast growing coastal shrubs, such as bush and dune lupines. These benefits will only increase over time as the project areas mature, becoming denser and multistoried as the years pass.... The sea of veldt grass will have been replaced by a diverse array of coastal dune shrubs such as lupines, sages, buckwheat and mock heather. Sub-shrubs and forbs such as deer weed, wallflower, aster, croton, and yarrow will fill the spaces between them. Coveys of quail will feast on their favorite seeds. Coast live oaks will be reaching skyward and eventually will block [out] the street and neighboring houses. As you walk toward the bay, views of the salt marsh will have been opened up by the removal of eucalyptus trees. The ground below will no longer be littered with leaves, twigs and bark but will support a thick blanket of sedges and rushes, interrupted by an occasional bloom of coast goldenrod or marsh baccharis.

We can find nothing wrong with that picture.



Plant Propaganda

The bad and the beautiful Aesthetics should not trump ecology at Sweet Springs.

Getting at the Roots

by Megan Montgomery

Very little can compare to the joy gleaned from spending time outdoors. But with the many technologies that exist today, too few youth enjoy the wonders that our earth has to offer.

A goal of The Roots program is to expose kids to these wonders. The Roots pairs students from the Cal Poly chapter of the Sierra Student Coalition with fifth graders from the

organization Youth In Action. Youth In Action works with children and teens that are considered at risk of becoming involved in gang activity in the future. Through The Roots, we hope to give these kids a mentor, show them the benefits of hiking and being outside, and instill in them an appreciation for the beauty that exists in the nature we have so close to home.

We had our first outings with the

Youth In Action kids a couple of weeks ago. We're still not sure if we or the fifth graders had more fun.

Our plans for the first get-together with the kids consisted of a few ice-breaker games and a hike to the "P" above Cal Poly. Though rain prevented one of our two groups from hiking the "P," both had a fantastic time spending the afternoon with these energetic kids, who were in constant motion.

Before the outings, we had been concerned about what speed we should hike considering most of the kids we were working with had little hiking experience. Little did we know we would be the ones having to catch

up with them! It was inspiring to see how much fun our fifth-grade friends were having outdoors. The group of kids that hiked the "P" even insisted on continuing up the rest of the hill.

The success of our first outings has surpassed all of our greatest expectations. Our next outings will include a hike into Poly Canyon.

I speak for my fellow Roots members when I say that we cannot wait for our next outings. We set out with the goal of teaching these kids the rewards of spending time in nature, but after witnessing the excitement and energy they exhibit at every event, I realize we have just as much to learn from them.



Ignore This Sign

Those gathering signatures for the petition to get the Label GMOs initiative on the November ballot (www.labelgmos.org) have been welcomed almost everywhere in the county. New Frontiers gets it. The Tank Farm Road farmers market gets it. But Trader Joe's doesn't get it. The store has rolled out a special super-size "ignore them" sign for the occasion.

You have until April 20 to ignore Trader Joe's and sign on.



Cambria on the Desal Divide



by Mary Webb, VP Greenspace - the Cambria Land Trust
www.greenspacecambria.org

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hosted a scoping meeting to present to the citizens of Cambria "the desalination project concept and its

alternatives" on March 15 at the Cambria Vet's Hall.

Upon arrival we were met by facilitators from Katherine Padilla Associates (KPA) and advised that a formal presentation by the Army Corps would be made and the public

would go into "breakout sessions" to discuss the seven or eight different "concepts" that were displayed on easels in the dining room of the Hall.

The charts depicted locations of new intake and outfall pipes in highly prized San Simeon Cove north of Cambria and within the National Marine Sanctuary, in public park areas

DESAL continued next page

Zipped Again

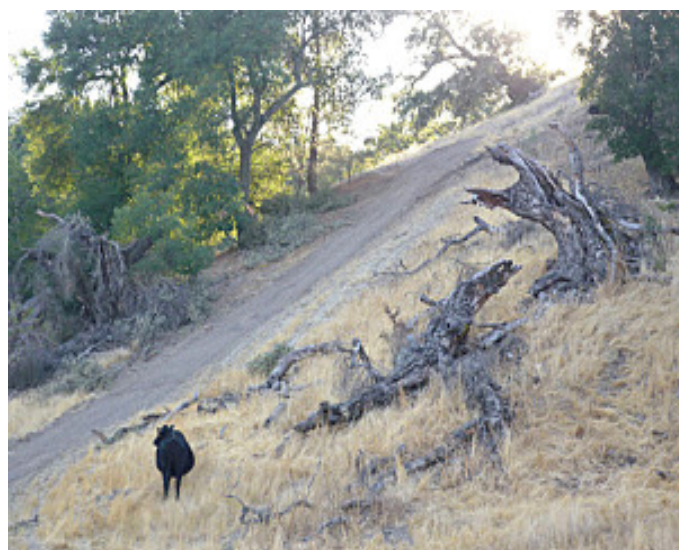
By Sue Harvey

On March 13, the Board of Supervisors gave a whole-hearted 5-0 post-construction go-ahead for the commercial zip line on Santa Margarita Ranch. (See "Getting Zipped," March.)

The zip line is part of a two-hour agri-tour of the ranch. The supervisors came down strongly in support of the zip line and other activities like bungee jumping and mountain bike courses, and ignored issues of consistency with the General Plan and Local Coastal Plan, and environmental review of the projects.

The installation of the zip line involved extensive road grading, oak tree removal and a permanent building silhouetting on the hillside at the start of the ride. The supervisors skirted any environmental review of the impacts of this and other projects such as bungee jumping, cable ski lakes, and mountain bike courses by stating that a secondary use of a property could be approved with an over-the-counter zoning clearance – no Conditional Use Permit, Minor Use Permit, or environmental review required.

The action the Board took is what's known as an interpretation of Land Use Ordinance Table 2-2, which lists



"I checked with all the ordinances and [ziplines] didn't qualify as a structure, so there were no structure or grading permits required."

-- Karl Wittstrom
Santa Margarita
Ranch LLC

approved land in Title 22. Zip Lines, bungee jumping, cable ski lakes and mountain bike courses are not on the list. To get on the list, a General Plan amendment usually would have to be processed, which would involve full environmental review of the activities and public hearings.

The Board directed that these activities shall be approved ministerially, based on a judgment call on size and scale, and that the processing of amendments to the General Plan be added to the Planning Department's to-do list at some time in the future. This interpretation applies to both Inland and Coastal Zones.

Ranch agent Jamie Kirk and a half dozen self-described ranch employees or recent grads of Cal Poly extolled the virtues of bringing the public onto the farm to build product loyalty for Ancient Peaks wine.

This was in stark contrast to the strongly expressed position of the ag community during the update of the Park and Rec Element a few years ago: consistent opposition to any public trails or access even in the road right-of-way past ag zoned land. It was also an about-face of the position taken by Santa Margarita Ranch itself during the approval process of its ag cluster subdivision, when the ranch adamantly refused to provide for public trails in their project.

It appears, at least in this case, that the price of admission makes the difference.

Politics

continued from page 2

December, noted “the tendency of even the most sophisticated political reporters to treat the entire process as a contest between rival teams and ignore the substance of their arguments and policies, as if politics were simply a spectator sport with fewer (and perhaps crazier) fans than the Mets or the Red Sox.”

The don't-be-so-partisan/let's-all-get-along sentiment is understandable, as it has arisen in response to the rise in American political acrimony. The modern history of vitriol can be traced back to the Vietnam War (with major surges since which could be labeled “Watergate,” “R. Limbaugh debuts,” “M. Lewinsky gets internship,” and “the dawn of blogging”), but the bright line marking the division between vitriol then and vitriol now is surely “Bush v. Gore,” the start of our present unbroken twelve-year climb in the political vitriol market.

But if the Sierra Club, NRDC, Service Employees International Union, United Autoworkers, United Steelworkers, Transport Workers Union and the Communication Workers of America pointing at a “do-nothing Republican Congress” – a phrase coined by Harry Truman in 1948 – qualifies as “vitriol,” where does one rank the “Nazis” and “he's with the terrorists” references that have been lobbed over the net of political discourse for the last decade? Are we at the point where any political speech, any critical description of the actions or inaction of the leaders of a political party, is to be deemed beyond the pale? Was Harry Truman a hate-monger?

Such a position pretty quickly becomes an offense against objective reality. For instance, it is simply a fact that, in terms of legislation passed, this is a do-nothing Republican Congress -- one in which the Republican leadership has resolved to see to it that as little as possible gets done. Their clearly articulated reason for this strategy is the denial of a second term to President Obama. Congressional Republicans have reversed themselves on positions they previously supported and bills they themselves authored or sponsored the moment the president has said that he, too, supports that position or bill.

Republican representatives are becoming aware that this was perhaps not the best strategy, as they can read poll results that show a lot of Americans of all political stripes have come to that conclusion. In January, Politico reported that House Republicans “worry they're going to go home to campaign with a light legislative résumé,” and are not happy when contemplating House leader John Boehner's very light agenda for the rest of the year. (“Staring nervously at a high unemployment rate, with the November elections around the corner, GOP lawmakers are concerned that what their leadership is revealing for this year's work is simply not enough.”)

Folks who would rather overlook such facts in the name of let's-all-get-

along need merely stake out a position against divisiveness. By uttering the words, the history of a given issue and the records and motives of the individuals who are in support or opposition become irrelevant. So do specific facts and the consequences of action or inaction. It's not an argument for civility so much as an argument against the idea of argument. (And minus sincere belief, the same applies when this sentiment is deployed by political operatives who are seeking to shut down one side of an argument.)

When Congressional Republicans attach riders to spending bills that seek to lift the moratorium on uranium mining on the rim of the Grand Canyon or defund the Environmental Protection Agency, it matters that they are doing so to advance their party's long-term agenda of dismantling the regulatory framework for the benefit of corporations. The political affiliation of the people who

do things like that is therefore a relevant issue.

For example: Republican candidates receive, by far, more money from oil companies than Democrats, and one can't help but notice that this aligns perfectly with their fervent support for the

Keystone XL pipeline project. Citing as the basis for their support the claims that the project would create 13,000 or 20,000 or 250,000 jobs, depending on which press release you read, was absurd. (For the record, here's the independent conclusion of Cornell University's Global Labor Institute: “Almost all of the jobs -- direct, indirect and induced -- associated with Keystone XL will, of course, also be temporary. Based on the figures provided by TransCanada for the Canadian section of the pipeline, the new permanent U.S. pipeline jobs in the U.S. number as few as 50.”)

If, when confronted by facts like this, one's response is a horrified cry of *partisan vitriol*, one need not participate in the discussion at all. You have played the get-out-of-argument-free card. You don't have to know anything about the subject under discussion, and, in fact, it helps if you don't. Offering yourself as a model to be emulated by those engaged in the vulgar habits of debate, you merely pronounce yourself above the fray and your done.

The corollary belief for sincere believers in let's-all-get-along is the idea that the arguments on both sides of an issue always have equal merit and equal flaws, and that both sides are always equally at fault for the problem they are arguing about. This belief is on a par with the notion that any two rocks dislodged from the peaks of two different mountains, upon reaching the bottom will always be found to weigh exactly the same and share an identical chemical composition.

In 2008, the most visible and vocal proponent of let's-all-get-along was presidential candidate Barack Obama. He offered himself up as not only the

Desal

continued from previous page

such as Lampton Park south of Cambria with discharge going into a Marine Conservation Area, and another concept that would use a 3,200-foot-long existing outfall at the Chevron Estero Bay Marine terminal in Morro Bay. In other words, more variations on desalination with no lessons learned. Where were the alternatives to desalination?

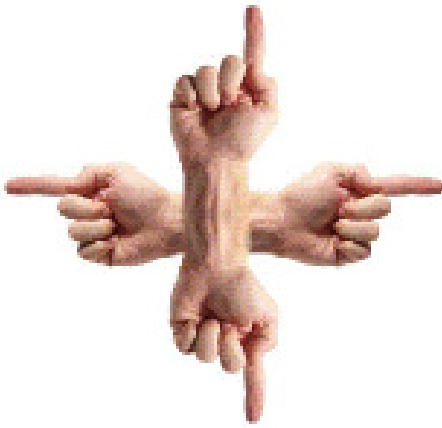
The Army Corps' Josephine Axt gave a primer in CEQA/NEPA process. It was difficult to listen to her presentation after experiencing 19 years of failure in pursuing desalination and the accompanying hearings/meetings, two failed attempts at siting intake locations, various appeals/lawsuits, and thousands of pages of letters and findings. (See “Thud and Blunder,” February.) Oddly, the desalination concepts were not referred to again in detail, and breakout sessions never occurred. Maybe that's because two-thirds of the audience, when asked, raised their hands opposing desalination.

Most attendees spoke opposing desalination offering great detail. When the facilitator summarized, he commented “you guys have so much


technical stuff up here!” Responding to assertions that Cambria has no ability to conserve more, Amanda Rice remarked “Just because you repeat something over and over again doesn't make it true.”

Opponents to desalination agree that customer billing records by customer class per month should be provided at the Community Services District website, and independent and thorough analysis of alternatives is needed before the community can make critical decisions going forward. Lou Blanck, geologist, geophysicist, hydrologist and former CCSD board member (1997-2000) commented that “Continuing to repeat the same mistakes and expecting different results is the definition of insanity.” He recommended the board revisit past recommendations for conservation, purification of wastewater and side stream storage.

Changing the 2006 Project Cooperation Agreement between the District and the Corps from a Desalination Project to a Water Project would require an amendment, a change in the law which is a lengthy process but not an impossible one.



At the turning of the tide Cambria residents gave the word on desal to the Army Corps of Engineers on March 15.



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post-racial candidate, but the post-politics candidate. In nearly every speech he gave, he painted a picture of a magical realm in which everyone would simply set aside their history, interests and differences and work harmoniously toward shared goals.

It was very attractive to a nation weary from eight years of geysering hyper-politics. Candidate Obama offered a political vision of a mythical center that was not a condition to be created so much as an actual place. It was simply there, like Shangri-La, waiting to bring peace to the politically weary traveler.

But “Let's all get along” does not transcend politics or cancel the obligations of an informed citizenry. President Obama, after three painful, bruising years when his national unity fantasy repeatedly ran into reality, has

now learned (we hope) that interests matter -- that all of politics and society consists of them, not everyone has the same ones, and candidates are elected on the basis of their perceived willingness and ability to fight for and defend a given set of interests.

In this political season, you will hear the Sierra Club argue on behalf of our interests -- clean air, clean water, clean energy, biodiversity, environmental justice, a liveable planet -- and against those whose interests and economic imperatives are a threat to these things.

And since the people who act as shields for polluters in promoting interests contrary to environmental and public health have names and often organize themselves into groups, and those groups also have names, we will name them.

Why Does Dan Richards Still Have a Job?

Just imagine:

- The head of the Drug Enforcement Agency takes a European vacation and sends around a photo of himself lighting up at a cannabis coffee shop in Amsterdam.

- The attorney general of Utah takes a trip to Nevada and has his picture taken partying with his favorite girls at the Mustang Ranch.

- The chairman of the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission goes to Taiji, Japan, where he's filmed enthusiastically joining in with the local residents in their annual custom of driving dolphins into nets and stabbing them to death.

Now imagine that upon their return, these gentlemen are told by lawmakers that they need to resign from their respective agencies, since their exploits have demonstrated that they should not be involved in setting policy or making decisions on the issues under their purview. They each reply that what they did was perfectly legal in the place where they did it and is therefore nobody else's business and they will stay right where they are, thank you.

That last sentence requires no imagination, as it is, in fact, the response of Dan Richards, the President of the California Fish and Game Commission, when he was asked to resign by 40 members of the State Assembly after his return from a February trip to Idaho, where, unbound by California's law against shooting mountain lions, he shot a mountain lion.

Mr. Richards' departure has also been urged by the Lieutenant Governor, The Humane Society of the United States, Sierra Club California, Audubon California, Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife, the Asian Pacific American Ocean Harmony Alliance, and 30,000 Californians.

State Senator Fran Pavley has noted that "since his appointment, Richards has consistently voted against some important policies and regulations, including opposing the regional plans for the implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act, and his opposition to broadening the ban on the use of nontoxic ammunition – designed to protect the endangered California condor."

Mr. Richards is almost right: The legal activities he engages in outside of California will indeed be nobody else's business...just as soon as he steps down from his public trust position, which is the very next trip he should take.

TAKE ACTION

Contact the Fish and Game Commission and urge Commissioners to act at their May meeting to repeal the "seniority rule" which allowed Dan Richards to assume the presidency of the Commission, and then remove him from that position.

CA Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Phone: (916) 653-4899
Fax: (916) 653-5040



No confidence The constituency (left) of California Fish & Game Commission President Dan Richards (right) would like to see him removed from the presidency of the Fish & Game Commission.

Transforming the Politics of Big Solar

Renewable Power to the People

by Janine Blaeloch

Reprinted from the March 2011 issue of *Desert Report*, the newsletter of the Sierra Club California/Nevada Desert Committee

By now, some readers of the *Desert Report* are familiar with Solar Done Right, an ad hoc coalition working against the massive industrialization of our deserts by Big Solar, and working for greater knowledge and support of the alternative—distributed generation (DG) in the built environment and on already-degraded lands. After 18 months of work, we at Solar Done Right have a pretty good grasp of what drives U.S. renewable-energy policy, what keeps it entrenched, and —we hope—what we can do to change it.

We started at the bottom -- the U.S. Congress -- and are now working our way to the top, issuing a Call to Action to our fellow citizens for a better approach to renewable energy (see facing page).

We began our outreach efforts in September 2010 with a trip to Washington, D.C. to talk with Members of Congress and staff about the impact of Big Solar on public lands and the saner alternative of distributed generation. Four days of meetings confirmed the hunch that had led us there in the first place: (1) staffers working on energy issues had no inkling of the severe damage these projects would bring to public lands, and (2) staffers working on public land issues had no clue that there are alternatives that can spare desert ecosystems.

The Powers That Be

Democrats were generally sympathetic to concerns about the environmental impacts of Big Solar, but were either resigned to the supposed necessity of Big Solar in the desert or indignant that we would dare oppose any kind of renewable energy development. (To paraphrase, "Just what do you people want from us!?") Republicans essentially wanted more oil and gas development and viewed distributed generation with suspicion. ("You can't coerce people into putting panels on their roofs!").

That November, the Republicans won back the House and the entire the U.S. Congress settled into profound gridlock. It was clear that the divided and deeply dysfunctional state of Congress had made any kind of grassroots advocacy at that level unproductive. In the ensuing year, it has become downright futile.

To make matters worse, the Administration is incorrigibly committed to

Big Solar and Big Wind on public land. President Obama, who seemingly has no feeling for public land, has essentially handed over our country's renewable energy policy to the Interior Department—a real-estate manager not known for its environmental sensitivity, and led by the department's worst Secretary since James Watt.

In the meantime, while Interior hands out 30-year public land leases to Big Solar and Wind, the Environmental Protection Agency has identified 15 million acres of previously developed, degraded, and contaminated lands potentially suitable for solar energy development across the country. Yet this much-maligned agency cannot get the support it needs to advance a better strategy on those lands.

Behind the scenes, but in full control, are the same entities that have controlled the "Fossil Fuel Era"—BP, Chevron, Morgan Stanley, Goldman-Sachs. With entrenched corporate influences steering our national policy toward industrial-scale renewables, as opposed to small-scale, local, distributed renewable energy, it is virtually impossible to counter them at the policy level.

Finally, bringing up the rear are the national environmental organizations such as The Wilderness Society and Natural Resources Defense Council, who have bought into the model of desert renewables industrialization and ask only for a little tweaking here and some trimming there. Funded by the very foundations and corporations that thrive on the status quo, their job is to create the illusion of change for the better, while ensuring that things stay essentially the same.

The Power That Must Be

Daunting as this all sounds, there is one sure way to work around the entrenched political and corporate power arrayed on the side of Big Solar: go to the people. Citizens don't serve the monopolistic utilities or make decisions based on what's best for big investment firms—and by and large, they instantly understand how small, local renewables better serve their interests and the environment. Tell them about the havoc now being wrought upon desert ecosystems and they know it is wrong. Tell them they can have panels on their roofs and feed power into a community grid,



and they're all for it. The distributed generation (DG) approach is an angst-free answer that makes sense to virtually everyone. It serves taxpayers, ratepayers, job-seekers, and desert tortoises.

In that light, Solar Done Right is now focusing on public education and engagement as the most effective way to end desert destruction and bring DG to the forefront. We must generate a grassroots upwelling of demand for localized, democratic, distributed generation in the built environment as the far superior alternative to massive solar and wind facilities on public lands and in fragile environments.

The vehicle is our Call to Action for Energy Democracy, which outlines the negative consequences of the current industrial-scale, public land-focused approach to renewable energy development and demands a swift change over to the better alternative of DG in the built environment and on degraded land. We are now spreading the Call to Action far and wide to citizen and community groups of all types throughout the country to bring them on as signatories. So far, we have dozens of groups signed on, from Public Citizen in Washington, D.C. to the Utility Consumers Action Network in San Diego. As we build our list, word will spread. With the strength of civic passion behind it, the Call to Action will be delivered to multiple levels of government, where better decisions can and must be made.

Janine Blaeloch is Director of the Western Lands Project, which monitors federal land sales and exchanges across the West and beyond, and which works to protect public land from privatization. She is also a co-founder of Solar Done Right.

Solar Done Wrong

It's time for some serious policy rethinking, including our own



Last January, after the Sierra Club's Board of Directors adopted new policy language on internal decision-making regarding the Club's position on the siting of large scale renewable energy projects, the policy was submitted to Club leaders for comment. The following are comments adopted by the Santa Lucia Chapter on the Sierra Club's new Large Scale Renewable Project Siting policy.

From the summer of 2010 through March 2011, National Sierra Club, via the Beyond Coal Campaign, intervened in the public comment and permit appeal process for the Draft Environmental Impact Reports (DEIRs) on two solar power plants

proposed for California's Carrizo Plain, the site of one of the highest concentrations of threatened and endangered species in the United States. Both projects were designed to sit athwart wildlife corridors; both were acknowledged to impact thousands of acres of habitat for multiple endangered species. Due to the size and location of the projects, their potential environmental impacts were unprecedented, and the efficacy of the proposed mitigations for those impacts are likewise unknown.

The Beyond Coal campaign representative first contacted the Santa Lucia Chapter to offer to "take a look" at our draft comments on the first DEIR. This collegial offer quickly morphed

into a line-by-line edit of the Chapter's comments, representing a deletion of nearly half the original text, accompanied by the pronouncement that National was "the tie breaker" in the event of any disagreement between the Chapter and National.

The primary concern of National's representative was to ensure that no potential project alternative, especially the distributed generation of solar power, would be identified or referred to in our comments as a feasible environmentally superior alternative to the proposed project. All such references were ordered deleted, despite the fact that virtually every other major environmental

group submitting comments on these projects noted this basic fact (as did the Draft EIR itself, in order to offer arguments as to why these environmentally superior alternatives would be allegedly infeasible). Nor was the chapter allowed to submit comments rebutting the DEIR's infeasibility arguments against the environmentally superior alternatives.

National appeared to have the clear goal of preempting any legal challenge the Chapter might consider and allowing both projects to go forward unimpeded, no matter what their impacts to endangered species or their habitat.

So intense was National's micro-management of the process that after several months of discussion with National's rep, we were only able to submit the Sierra Club's comments on the first project DEIR to the County Planning Department fifteen minutes before the deadline for submission. A few months later, after more of the same regimen of exhaustive back-and-forth with National's rep challenging virtually every line, we were able to submit comments on the second project DEIR less than one hour before the deadline.

Prior to its being codified in the proposed policy language, our chapter has already seen the results of the decision to remove renewable energy projects from chapter jurisdiction, with chapters now having "input" into the siting of projects in their jurisdiction but no functional role in decision making, replacing long established precedent and Club procedure. National staff commandeered the local environmental review process for the Carrizo solar projects, weakened the Chapter's EIR comments so as to ease the passage and approval of two projects that National wished to see permitted, and preemptively stated that no legal action was likely to be allowed. It now seeks to place an extra layer of procedure into the litigation approval process with the evident intent of making litigation, and the protection of wildlife and habitat from the impacts of utility-scale energy projects, even more unlikely.

The abandonment of place-based decision making and transfer of that authority essentially to the purview of Sierra Club senior staff is resulting in long-distance decision-making, a defective process, and unworkable policy that is antithetical to the grass-roots democratic structure of the Club.



CALL TO ACTION FOR ENERGY DEMOCRACY

Whereas,

We must take rapid, effective, innovative action to change the ways we generate and use energy;

Renewable energy is ubiquitous, offering a new model of energy generation that is local, democratic, and free from the abuses of a centralized monopoly;

The US government's current renewable-energy policy and the policies of most US states push industrial solar and wind development onto public lands;

This industrial development is proposed for hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of acres of our public lands—much of that acreage consisting of intact ecosystems which provide habitat for rare and endangered plants and animals, sequester carbon, and offer the chance for ecosystem adaptation to climate change;

The utility-scale solar and wind generating plants now proposed, most with footprints of several thousand acres, would transform these ecologically-rich, multiple-use lands to single use industrial facilities, in effect privatizing vast areas of public lands;

Once developed, those lands cannot be returned to their previous state after the life of a project—conversion is total and permanent, even though most such projects will generate power for only 15 to 30 years;

The thousands of miles of new transmission infrastructure necessary to carry power from remote solar and wind electric generating plants to urban demand centers drastically inflates the cost of renewable energy, while imposing its own serious environmental impacts;

The federal government has provided tens of billions of taxpayer dollars in cash grants, loans and loan guarantees for remote industrial-scale solar and wind development to many of the same corporations that have dominated the Fossil Fuel Era, created the problems renewable energy is designed to rectify, and helped hasten the recession, while states and local governments have incurred substantial costs to expedite these for-profit projects;

Efficiency upgrades and "distributed generation"—point-of-use energy generation on rooftops, in parking lots and highway medians, brownfields, and throughout the built environment—are cost-effective, efficient, clean, and democratic strategies that are quick to implement, and would serve communities, ratepayers, and taxpayers by improving local economies and adding to home values, and creating millions of local jobs;

Efficiency and distributed generation further have far less environmental impact than industrial-scale solar or wind power on intact ecosystems, while making our electrical power grid far less prone to catastrophic failure;

Feed-In Tariffs (FITs) and true net metering programs, in which utilities purchase democratically produced, decentralized renewable energy at a fair price, have been proven a cost-effective way of stimulating rapid deployment of local solar and other distributed generation, while providing economic stimulus to communities rather than multinational corporations, even in cloudy countries like Germany;

The Environmental Protection Agency's "Re-Powering America's Lands" program has identified 15 million acres of degraded or contaminated land potentially suitable for renewable energy development, and is committed to working with renewable energy developers to remediate these lands for use as utility-scale renewable energy generation sites where large projects may be desirable.

Therefore, we demand:

That the Federal and state governments abandon their current path of industrialization and destruction of our public lands;

That any large-scale solar or wind installations be restricted to degraded, contaminated, or already-developed lands, including those identified by the EPA;

That Federal, state, and local governments facilitate a massive deployment of efficiency upgrades and point-of-use solar power;

That no new large, long-distance electrical transmission projects be approved to serve remote solar or wind projects until distributed power generation and energy efficiency are maximized;

That the Federal Housing Finance Agency immediately lift its *de facto* freeze on property assessed clean energy (PACE) loans, which provide critical low-risk financing for efficiency upgrades and home energy retrofits;

That Federal and state funding and other incentives be made available to help states establish and expand generous Feed in Tariffs (FITs) modeled after successful programs like Germany's, and improve net metering policies, and that Congress work to establish the proven solutions of German-style FITs and less-restrictive net metering at a national scale.

Not Trade Away

Back in July 2007, the latest round of talks at the World Trade Organization, which were intended to further expand the global domination of corporate-style free trade, were instead collapsing in disarray. U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said she blamed “the proliferation of television channels, cable channels, the internet, blogs” and “unchecked communication.” It was all drowning out the message that corporations and their political friends wished to send, that the corporate free trade model — a disaster for democracy, the environment and human rights — was really a boon to humanity.

On March 14, the Sierra Club freely engaged in unchecked communication on the first day of the Good Jobs, Green Jobs regional conference in Los Angeles. Suzanne York and Andrew Christie, members of the Club’s Trade, Human Rights and Environment Team, were joined by former Club President Larry Fahn; Martin Schlageter, Executive Director of the Coalition for Clean Air; and Tim Robertson, Director of the California Fair Trade Coalition for a workshop entitled “People and Environment Over Profits” — i.e. the opposite of the free trade model.

Christie gave a Powerpoint presentation that laid out the history and impacts of corporate globalization and free trade agreements, with particular emphasis on the “investor-state” provisions of FTAs, a radical expansion of corporate power. This rule allows any foreign corporation barred from selling a toxic product or engaging in an environmentally destructive practice to sue a signatory nation to extract millions of dollars in compensation or overturn any regulation, from local zoning ordinances to federal environmental laws, on the grounds that such laws are an unfair hindrance to profit.

Schlageter warned against the upcoming Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) — the NAFTA of the Pacific Rim — the biggest multilateral trade agreement the U.S. has ever contemplated. Fahn encouraged shareholder activism as a curb to corporate power, noting that activists managed to get a 41% vote in favor of an anti-fracking resolution at a recent Chevron shareholders meeting.

Attendees got the message that we will not get to a green economy, and no green jobs will really be green, if the transition to clean power and zero waste leaves intact the corporate free-trade model and related structures

that have served to channel the lion’s share of economic benefit of the top one-third of society and leave the other two-thirds of the world to struggle for scraps.

The L.A. event was the second regional Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference held this year, with two more scheduled in Philadelphia April 3-4 and Detroit May 10-11. (Go to www.greenjobsconference.org). Now in its fifth year, the conference is a unique opportunity to meet like-minded people and build coalitions that share the goal of moving us forward to a cleaner, greener and more prosperous economy.

The L.A. conference kicked off with a speech by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Saying “as cities go, so go their nations,” he touted the accomplishments of his city in exceeding the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets of the Kyoto Accord, becoming a national leader in energy efficiency, and successfully diverting



Trade up Left to right: Larry Fahn, Tim Robertson, Martin Schlageter, Andrew Christie and Suzanne York.

from landfills and recycling 71 percent of its trash.

Teamster National President James Hoffa, BlueGreen Apollo Alliance Chair Phil Angelides, and Tarryl Clark, National Co-Chair of the BlueGreen Alliance’s Jobs21 initiative, weighed in. Hoffa spoke on clean ports in Los Angeles and emphasized the importance of improving working conditions for California’s recycling workers. The state is a leader in increasing recycling, which creates jobs and improves the environment, but we have a ways to go to ensure that the jobs created are good jobs with fair wages and good working conditions.

On day two of the conference, California Congressman Xavier Becerra pumped up the crowd and a plenary panel focused on building blue-green relationships, featuring speakers from the labor and environmental communities who shared how they overcame challenges and helped build better alliances through mutual respect and cooperation.



Civic pride Mayor Villaraigosa keynotes.

DON'T FORGET!

In March we sent out an appeal to each of our members, asking for contributions directly to our Chapter. These contributions really do make a difference to us, and are an important part of our Chapter’s budget. When you make a donation to the Chapter, you support the Sierra Club’s work in our own backyard. You allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness and wildlife, to improve the quality of life in our cities, and to promote the enjoyment of nature.

Please be as generous as you are able - and remember, these funds directly affect your way of life in your neighborhood.

Mail your contribution to
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406



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send to: sierraclub8@gmail.com, or Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

Judith Bernstein’s poem “Who Has Time?” (March) is so appropriate to today’s society. A large thank you for printing it in the *Santa Lucian* and a thank you to Judith for her words.

Dorothy Yelda
via e-mail

Keeping the Nose Out of the Tent



By Eric Greening

The recent defeat of Excelaron's Huasna Valley oil project at the County Planning Commission was an important line in the sand: an assertion that the new energy policies in SLO County's Conservation and Open Space Element (specifically Policy 7.1 -- "the design, siting, and operation of non-renewable energy facilities will be environmentally appropriate" -- and its implementation measures 1 through 25, and policies 7.2 and 7.3) mean what they say.

This project has been appealed to the Supervisors, who will probably make their decision within a month. The importance of encouraging the Supervisors to uphold the Planning Commission and planning staff goes beyond the protection of the character of the Huasna Valley to setting a precedent that, if weakened, would leave large areas of the County vulnerable to huge impacts. Excelaron is a relatively small player in the oil business; far bigger threats are looming behind them.

The vigilance needed to anticipate and prepare for what is coming can lead one into unlikely neighborhoods on the web. Every so often I Google word combinations like "Monterey shale investment" and a recent search led me to a site that showed the true scope of what may be facing us in the near future.

The February 28 "issue" of *Money Morning* (slogan: "Only the news you can profit from") contained a lead article by Jason Simpkins entitled: "Occidental Petroleum Corp. (NYSE: OXY) the Best Way to Profit from the Monterey Shale." It enthusiastically urges attention to an opportunity the author claims is larger than the Gold Rush of 1848; indeed, the claim is made that "...the profit potential is limitless."

Occidental is only one of the players

(and, yes, in the investment community, oil sources are called "plays") interested in this formation that extends through our county from the counties adjacent, but it is probably the largest. The claim is made that Occidental plans to invest \$6.3 billion in developing this resource just in the next four years.

I have not found any information source that breaks that investment down by county, but it is clear that the impact here could be enormous.

While those who give the economy more weight than the environment on which it depends might welcome voluminous "investment" in our county, it should be remembered that the two largest sources of present economic activity in our county, agriculture and tourism, fare very poorly in the presence of major oil extraction.

Those whose primary concern is the ability of our county's environment to continue to support us and other species already have every reason to be alarmed.

If Excelaron is allowed to override our COSE, the big players can demand "fair" treatment. Thus, the exemplary turnout of Huasna Valley folks defending their backyard needs to be enhanced by the voices of people from throughout our county defending the much bigger backyard that is at imminent risk.

The oil locked in the depths of the Monterey shale is very patient. If not pulled out now, it won't go away. What would be a greater favor to coming generations: pulling it out and burning it now, depleting their resources and adding to climate mayhem, or leaving it in the ground for them to use if they need it? The more oil we can keep in the ground, the more chance those now young will have for a decent life.



Who's Got the Survey?

Questions arise in county's quest for complete communities

By Dorothy Jennings

County Planning wants Templeton residents to respond to a survey that includes questions about parks and recreation. At the same time, the Templeton Community Services District is releasing a detailed survey on the subject.

As an indicator of the degree to which County Planning and the Templeton Community Services District seem to be communicating with each other, that's not a good sign.

The County has embarked on a project based on a key policy added to the General Plan in 2009 -- that the County should "create complete communities with appropriate areas for housing, commerce, civic uses, schools, recreation and open space."

County Planning received a \$399,000 grant from the California Strategic Growth Council to perform "Community Sustainable" studies for four unincorporated urban areas -- San Miguel, Templeton, Oceano and Nipomo.

The project consists of four major tasks: 1) Communities Research Summary, 2) Facilities Inventory, 3) Funding and Financing Plan, and 4) Community Profiles. The county has hired three consultant firms to produce these four products. The project is scheduled for completion by September.

County Planning deems Phase 1 to be complete and recently made a presentation to the Templeton Area Advisory Group (TAAG). The presentation focused on a 26-page document entitled "Complete Communities Research Summary" dated March 7, 2012.

Table 1 on page 2 "lists the community (public investment) features that are necessary to facilitate new growth and to help make existing towns more pleasant places to live, work and play."

Planning also asked TAAG to distribute a "Complete Community Features Survey" to Templeton residents so they could rank desired public investment features in high-medium-low categories. This is the survey that overlaps with the service district's parks and recreation survey.

At the TAAG meeting, many questioned the cited (public investment) features described

in the Research Summary, such as references to subways and passenger rail. One member of the public commented that the word "rural" is never used in the Research Summary. "Agriculture" is not mentioned either.

All four communities will be examined using the same public investment features list. Templeton is different than San Miguel for example. The uniqueness of each community needs to be recognized and identified prior to a public investment study. Templeton, not the County, should dictate its desires.

Others noted that a "complete community" requires a government structure. Templeton is not a city. At least at this meeting, no other unincorporated urban area in California could be cited as places where "sustainable communities" studies have been performed. Studies such as these are performed only within cities.

Templeton Parks & Recreation Facilities Survey

A parks and recreation survey has commenced in Templeton.

In the fall of 2011, the Templeton Community Service District established a Parks and Recreation Blue Ribbon Committee. TCSO director Greg O'Sullivan chairs the Committee.

The task given the committee is to revisit a draft 2004 Master Plan that was never adopted, and to survey the community. An earlier questionnaire has been revised to collect a broader range of information about Templeton area needs.

The Committee of sixteen individuals represents many recreational interests and age groups, from youth to seniors.

The District has parks powers and collects Parks Public Facilities Fees. These fees are collected at the time a building permit is issued in order to provide additional park facilities for its growing population. The District is well known for its mid-week Summer Concert series and youth team sport programs.

Since assuming parks powers, the District has been functioning without a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The one-page, two-sided questionnaire is available at the Templeton Community Services District (TCSO) office, schools, several downtown businesses and online to reach residents living or working within the greater Templeton area. Residents receiving TCSO services will find the survey included with their utility bills.

Topaz Solar Farm construction is underway and will continue for the next three years.

For Project Information:

www.topazsolar.com

Questions?

Construction Liaison, Dawn Legg:

(480) 390-6256

To register anonymous comments:

Toll-free Hotline: **(877) 228-3331**

Bringing jobs,
clean energy and
opportunities to
San Luis Obispo
County



Eco-grants

continued from page 3

this year; next year the program will expand to all grade levels and contain approximately 150 students.
 The Greenhounds maintain an organic garden and a water filtration station that cuts down on plastics and encourages reusable water bottles, both funded by previous grants.
 "We hope these two high schools, in fairly close proximity to each other, will share information and/or student contact," said Eco-Grant program coordinator Joe Morris. "That would probably be motivating and instructive for both schools."

Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

"Call for balance," letter to the editor from Katcho Achadjian, *The Tribune*, March 4, 2012.

Summary: Assemblyman Achadjian was pleased that *The Tribune* printed his press release on his 2012 legislative platform, but extremely annoyed that the reporter also reported his anti-consumer 23% voting score as rated by a state consumer watchdog group.

Some of the highlights along the road to Katcho's failing grade from the Consumer Federation of California were his vote against a bill prohibiting the manufacture, sale or distribution of bottles, cups or food containers for babies and infants that contain detectable levels of toxic Bisphenol A (BPA); his vote against a bill that will ensure that our state's oil spill prevention programs have sufficient funds to remain solvent and protect our beaches and coastal waters; his vote against a bill that would have improved access to public transit and reduced air pollution and global warming; and his vote against a bill that would require those who operate oil and natural gas wells to provide information on "fracking" for publication on the website of the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources.

I find it regrettable that [the reporter] used the article as an opportunity to attack the records of state Sen. Sam Blakeslee and mine [sic] based on a report issued by one of the state's most liberal interest groups.

Missing in the article is an explanation of the consequences of the bills in which we were in the "wrong."

The consequences of Katcho's votes against


good legislation that passed despite his objection have been avoided. The consequences of his successful anti-consumer and anti-environment votes -- such as his vote to curtail the ability of local communities to exercise their right to challenge large development projects under the California Environmental Quality Act -- are consequences we'll all be paying for in years to come in costs to consumers, the environment and public health.

...the article could have provided balance by noting my 100 percent rating from the CalChamber, National Federation of Independent Businesses and CalTax.

Or it could have added that Katcho

scored 36% on Sierra Club's 2011 California Legislative Report Card, and that during his brief stint as a California Coastal Commissioner, he racked up some of the lowest pro-coastal voting scores in the modern history of the Commission.

Upshot: No doubt Katcho will continue to dismiss his legislative failing grades as attacks by "liberal interest groups," maintain that his anti-consumer and anti-environment votes mean he is "pro-business," and proudly cite the affection shown to him by the corporate polluters and developers he serves.



The SLO County Food System Coalition

Invites you to join us in creating a SLO County Hunger-Free Community Plan.

What is it?

- An action plan with concrete, achievable steps to reduce hunger in our county.

How is it being developed?


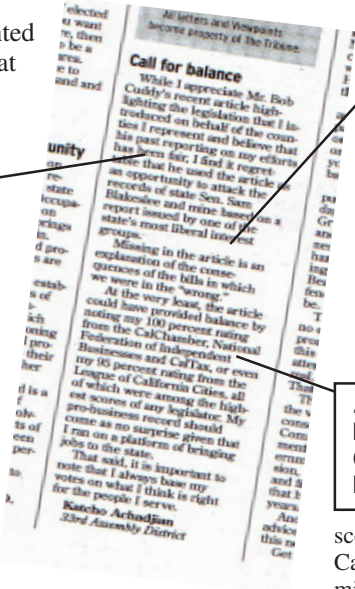
- We need everyone's help to set goals and action steps and to work to achieve our goals.

When is the planning session?

- Wednesday, April 18, 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the UC Cooperative Extension Ag Auditorium, 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo.
- RSVP to Becca Carsel at becca@beccacarsel.com.

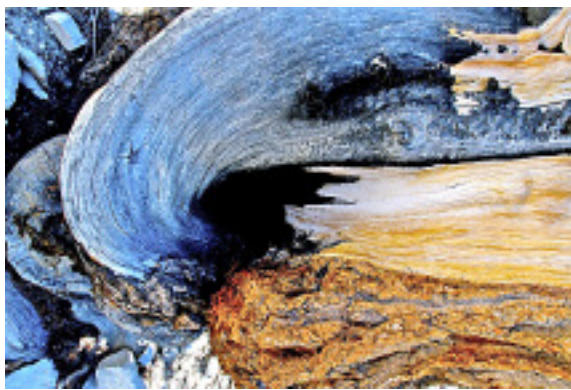
For questions, email Carl Hansen, Food Bank Executive Director, chansen@slofoodbank.org.

Led by the Hunger-Free Communities Project, a project of the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County that is funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture planning grant.

Art After Dark

Nature lovers who appreciate both landscapes and close-ups in nature are invited to the opening of an exhibit of work by Paul J. McCloskey and Dennis Eamon Young on Friday, April 6, from 6-9 p.m. at The Salon on Monterey, 1435 Monterey in San Luis Obispo.



"Ancient Wood" by Dennis Eamon Young

Both artists will be present at the opening, part of ArtsObispo's first Friday "Art After Dark" program.

Paul J. McCloskey is a local graphic artist, photographer and printmaker. He describes his art/work as "photo-painting," a convergence of current digital photography/imaging technology with traditional printmaking. Paul's work has appeared in numerous local & national publications, including on the cover of *SkyWest* magazine and *Santa Ynez Valley Journal*, and will be on display at the SLO City Library through April 15. He is working on a book with a local publisher entitled *Painting with Light - A New Vision of the Central Coast*.

Dennis Eamon Young describes himself as a "classically trained photographer who specializes in travel and adventure photojournalism, product and portrait photography." His photographs have appeared in such publications as *GQ* and *Cosmopolitan*, and he serves as photographer for the Cal Coast News and the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce.



"Spring Refelections" Paul McCloskey

To see more of these artists' work, go to: www.paintingwithlightgallery.com and www.denniseamonyoungphoto.com or visit their Facebook pages.

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USE IN AND FOR GOOD HEALTH

Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **April 13**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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Rainwater Management



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Now that mantra can be yours, too, along with healthier soils, happier wildlife, and reductions in your water bill, thanks to the tips and techniques in **Rainwater Management for Low Impact Development**, a publication of the Appropriate Technology Coalition -- SLO Green Build, the Santa Lucia

Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Surfrider Foundation, available for \$10 postage paid, while supplies last. Mail your check to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, SLO 93406.

LAW OFFICES OF BABAK NAFICY
 Babak Naficy - Attorney at Law



1504 Marsh Street
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
 ph: 805.593.0926 - fax: 805.593.0946
babaknaficy@sbcglobal.net

Outings and Activities Calendar

Seller of travel registration information: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. Pets are generally not allowed. A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 18. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter's outing policies, or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Chair Joe Morris, 772-1875. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.

Sun., April 1, 9 a.m. Arroyo Hondo Preserve. Moderate, docent-led hike along creek through scenic canyon to ridge, 6 miles rt. Preserve is 30" drive N. of Santa Barbara. Bring lunch and water. Carpool from behind B of A, State St and Hope Ave in SB or call leader: Christine, 963-2347, for directions.

Fri.-Sun., April 6-8, Carrizo Plains Campout. Easter weekend campout at Selby Camp—primitive camping (no water), with exploratory hiking in Caliente Ridge area, leaving 9 a.m. on Saturday. Bring your own food, water, sturdy shoes, warm clothes for possibly freezing temperatures; some dirt road driving involved. Reservations, detailed driving directions, and info: contact Carlos Diaz-Saavedra at least 2 days in advance, 546-0317.

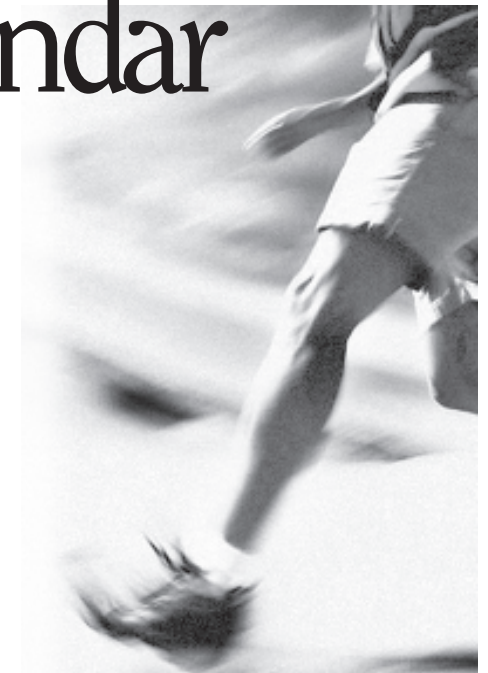
Sat.-Sun., April 7-8, Mojave National Preserve Tour. Meet Saturday morning at Teutonia Peak trailhead on Cima Rd. for hike to Teutonia Peak, onto Cima Dome, with primitive camping at Sunrise Rocks. Sunday includes 8-mile downhill hike from Midhills to Hole-in-the-Wall, with possibility of good windflowers. For those wishing to arrive on Friday, option of doing the Rock Springs Loop Trail. Primitive camping near Kelso Dunes for those wishing stayover on Sunday, including hiking dunes on Monday morning. Reservations: Carol Wiley at desertlily1@verizon.net or 760-245-8734. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat.-Sun., April 14-15, Birds, Flowers, and Fences in the Carrizo. Opportunity to visit and assist at Carrizo Plain Nat. Monument in-

cludes Saturday: assist staff in removing fences to allow pronghorn antelope access to the range. Sunday reserved for sightseeing or hiking, as group decides. Views from Caliente Mts. are spectacular and spring wildflowers may be blooming. For info and signup, contact Craig Deutsche, 310-477-6670 or craig.deutsche@gmail.com CNRCC Desert Committee

Sun., April 22, 8:30 a.m. Reservoir Canyon and Bowden Ranch. Moderate hike through wooded Reservoir Canyon near San Luis Obispo and then over the backbone ridge (Bowden Ranch), ending at San Luis Obispo High School. Spring wildflowers will be well represented. Meet at the eastern corner of SLO High School parking lot near corner of Johnson Ave. and San Luis Drive. A few cars will caravan hikers to trailhead in Reservoir Canyon (first right turn off north Hwy 101 after leaving SLO). Hike is 5 miles, elevation gain 1000 feet, total time of 3 hours. Owners of cars parked at the trailhead will be driven back to retrieve their cars. Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress for the weather; a hat and sturdy shoes is advised. Info: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 bill.waycott@gmail.com. Rain cancels.

Sat., April 28, 10 a.m., Musical Walk: Historic San Luis Obispo. Come on a guided, tuneful stroll past ten historic landmarks in the oldest area of SLO, accompanied by recordings of thematic songs from



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.

Guided City Walks: San Luis Obispo

Each walk lasts about 90 minutes, is easy-paced, and free to the public. Families welcome. No reservations. Check this space or our website for information about future scheduled city walks.

Walk I: Mission-Era San Luis Obispo. See the home of the city's first doctor, the location of the "hanging tree," where the stagecoach stopped, and other sights on a stroll past the Mission, adobes, and old Chinatown. Meet at NE corner of Monterey and Osos Sts.

Walk II: Victorian-Age San Luis Obispo. Easy stroll past 18 lovely century-old homes and churches in the Old Town Historic District. See the homes of mayors, the newspaper editor, and Cal Poly's founder, and learn about the lives of the newly wealthy who transformed the city in the late 19th and early 20th century. Meet in front of Jack House, 536 Marsh St.

Walk III: Mill Street Historic District. A walk through a neighborhood of splendid century-old homes to discover SLO in the era of Hearst, coming of the railroad, WW I, and the twenties. Learn the stories of the rich or not-so-famous who shaped the city of today. Meet at corner of Monterey and Johnson Sts.

Walk IV: Jazz-Age to Fifties SLO. See the downtown hotel where Hearst entertained guests, former location of speakeasies, the original French hospital, and more. Learn of city life in the years of the Model T to Prohibition and WW II. Meet at building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, NE corner of Santa Rosa and Pacific Sts.

Walk V: Musical Walk: Historic San Luis Obispo. A guided, tuneful stroll past ten historic landmarks in downtown San Luis Obispo, accompanied by recordings of thematic songs from Mission days to World War II. Meet at NW corner of Nipomo and Dana Sts.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park -- 3-Day, Live-Aboard, Multi-Island Cruises




May 6-8, July 8-10, September 9-11.

Explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. Enjoy the frolicking seals and sea lions. Train your binoculars on rare sea and land birds. Hike trails bordered by blankets of wildflowers and plants found in no other place on earth. Kayak or snorkel the pristine waters—or just relax at sea. All tours depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel Truth. \$590 fee includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, and the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes, call attention to items of interest and present evening programs. Proceeds will go to benefit Sierra Club California's political programs. To make a reservation, mail a \$100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information, 626-443-0706;


Sponsored by other organizations

Mar. 2 - May 31: Theodore Payne Wildflower Hotline. 24 hours a day, anyone can call the Theodore Payne Wildflower Hotline to find the best places to view wildflowers in Southern and Central California. The hotline message is narrated by Emmy Award-winning actor Joe Spano (Hill Street Blues, NYPD Blue) and is updated every Thursday evening with new information on more than 90 wildflower sites. A public service of the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants. (818) 768-3533 or www.wildflowerhotline.org.

- CREEC Region 8 News, www.creec.org.




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- Lead hikes and camping trips
- Introduce others to nature
- Explore the outdoors
- Make new friends
- Protect the environment
- Get healthy exercise



John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, in Yosemite

For further information contact:
Joe Morris, Outings Chair
Sierra Club, Santa Lucia Chapter
(805) 772-1875
dpj1942@earthlink.net