



SIERRA
CLUB

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GENERAL MEETING

Awards, pot-luck & pix!
See page 2.

January 18 @ 7:00 p.m.

Ever gone hiking on Hearst Ranch? Then you can help maintain public access to these prime coastal areas. Go to:
www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/hearst/hearst.html
-- now with improved map pages (for those of you who tried 'em before and they didn't work).



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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

PLOVERS WIN

Chapter secures habitat, research and protection



Peter Knapp

On December 10, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the California Department of Parks and Recreation finalized a consent decree for the Protection of the Western snowy plover at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area.

"This is really an issue of whether to treat our beaches like a sandpit or like the natural treasures they are," said Chapter Chair Tarren Collins. "Thanks to this agreement, future generations of beachgoers can experience the beauty and wildlife of

our ocean dunes."

The final agreement came three years and ten days after the Chapter filed the suit, *Sierra Club v. Areias*, charging the Department of Parks for violating the Endangered Species Act and putting the Pacific snowy plover, least tern and steelhead trout at risk in its management of Oceano Dunes. Under the terms of the settlement, an additional half-mile of beach will be closed to off-road vehicles as an enclosure area during the plover's March to October breeding season.

Further, State Parks will:

- step up its protection measures for threatened species
- examine alternatives to vehicle crossings of Arroyo Grande Creek. (Currently, vehicles entering the park must cross the narrow creek near the point where it meets the ocean)
- provide for a number of environmental projects outside the park in support of plover recovery efforts statewide.

In all, the settlement will secure nearly half a million dollars for research, education, public outreach, and volunteer programs. The Morro



They made it: Lisa Schicker (left) and Julie Tacker were sworn in as directors of the Los Osos CSD by general manager Bruce Buel on December 2.

replace a septic system that doesn't quite work, failing to manage its wastewater in such a way as to avoid causing ongoing harm to the Morro Bay Estuary.

And for as long as anyone can remember, the Central Coast has been hurting for water, and the pain has been increasing.

Then, in June 2004, Morro Bay and Cayucos finally agreed to begin the journey toward secondary sewage treatment, and also to look into the highest level of waste water treatment: A tertiary treatment plant, producing waste water clean enough to be re-used, not dumped into the ocean.

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Sanctuary Now!

By Kaitilin Gaffney
California Central Coast Program Manager
The Ocean Conservancy

Seventy-five miles from the Big Sur Coast is an enormous mountain formed by volcanic eruption more than twelve million years ago. Covering the mountain's sides are ancient forests that provide habitat for strange and wonderful creatures that have only recently been discovered by scientists, including some that may be found nowhere else on Earth. First mapped by explorers decades ago, no one has set foot on the mountain's summit. In fact, only a handful of scientists have even visited the mountain and only in the past few years.

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"Every good thing,
great and small,
needs defense."

—John Muir



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Santa Lucia Chapter General Meeting

AWARDS, DINNER & YOUR BEST PICS

Ring in the new year with the Sierra Club!

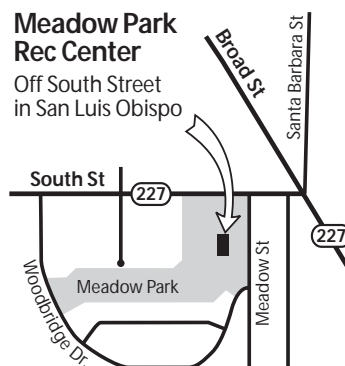
January is the time for new commitments and the time for a gathering of our Sierra Club family. Please join us for a potluck, recognition of volunteers and presentation of awards, and a chance to show your very best pictures from the previous year.

Our very own Pat Vesart, from Sierra Club California in Sacramento office, will present the Kathryn Goddard Jones Award, and provide us with a view of the state political/environmental outlook. Pat is last year's recipient of the Jones Award.

Potluck will start at 7:00, or earlier if the food arrives early. Coffee, tea and juice will be provided. If you have pictures to show, please limit yourself to 5. We will have a stack loader and Kodak projector for slides and a digital projector for CDs. If you have prints, they can be displayed also.

This will be our last meeting in the Meadow Park Rec center. In February, we will move to the Ludwig Recreation Center on Santa Rosa Street.

Meetings are open to all Sierra Club members and the general public.



Tuesday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.

Meadow Park Rec Center
San Luis Obispo

Save the date!!

Morro Bay in 3-D

Discover the Estuary in 3-D, is a new public outreach and education exhibit in the Morro Bay Estuary Nature Center at 601 Embarcadero, 2nd floor, in Morro Bay. You-are-there binocular views of bayside landscapes, plants, animals, and birds are documented with state-of-the-art stereoscopic photography techniques.

Santa Lucia Chapter member Abe Perlestein founded the 2003-2004 Morro Bay National Estuary Stereo Photo Survey, the world's first photographic overview of an ecosystem exclusively documented with stereoscopic photo techniques. A one-of-a-kind specialized camera system was designed and configured especially for the task, and the best images from the project are now on view in the exhibit.

Abe will also be a featured presenter at the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival (www.morro-bay.net/birds) January 15 and 16, with six showings of a new 30-minute projected stereo slide program entitled *Wings Over & On Morro Bay: A 3-D Spectacular*. This will be the premier showing of the best images of birds from the Morro Bay Stereo Photo Survey.



Abe Perlestein at the dedication of "Discover the Estuary in 3-D."

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The Executive Committee meets the fourth Friday of every month at 5:00 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 1204 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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Outings, events, and
more!



A Farewell Address

By Tarren Collins
Chapter Chair, 2000-2005

When I was elected to the Chapter Executive Committee back in the 20th century, many things were different. The week the election closed in November 1999, the anti-globalization movement first found its voice in a major way, shutting down a meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle. The California Coastal Commission had yet to be declared unconstitutional by a judicial relic of the Deukmajian administration. The President of the United States was a rational adult.

Now I'm termed out and it's time to reminisce. As an attorney, I've learned the value of accentuating the positive. So let's look back on the chapter wins of the last five years.

We donated to the successful effort to purchase Cambria's East-West Ranch, pledged \$15,000 to the acquisition of Hollister Peak, and co-founded the SLO Coast Alliance when the Hearst Corporation started co-opting folks who had fought off their previous development plans.

Easing the Throttle, a video I co-produced with Robin Chilton, made its debut at the February 14, 2001, meeting of the Coastal Commission and made clear to all eyes the level of destruction of habitat at Oceano Dunes from the vehicular impacts of off-road enthusiasts. The video, our environmental presentation, and the 300 coastal activists who showed up at the hearing convinced the Coastal Commission to close off a third of the riding area (1 1/2 miles) to protect the Western snowy plover and California least tern. We also convinced the Coastal Commission to create an independent scientific review team to advise State Parks on managing sensitive species habitat at the Dunes. Three months later, the Chapter sued California's Department of Parks for violating the Endangered Species Act due to the continued operation of the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area without a Habitat Management Plan. The results are on this issue's front page.

The launch of the Sierra Club's Great Coastal Places Campaign in

February 2001 was a watershed event, no pun intended, giving the Chapter a connection to a wonderful base of coastal activists statewide who have a special interest in the preservation of San Luis Obispo's coast. The Great Coastal Places Campaign's first effort was to come to San Luis Obispo to help us organize and educate activists about the importance of the Coastal Commission's Periodic Review of our Local Coastal Plan. We managed to inspire another 350 activists to attend the Coastal Commission hearing on February 15, 2001, to support the Commission's efforts to compile many recommendations for updating and strengthening our Local Coastal Plan. That's right, 300 activists showed up at the Coastal Commission hearing in SLO on February 14 to support better protections for species at the Oceano Dunes, then 350 showed up the very next day to support a stronger Local Coastal Plan. Some have likened this effort to putting on two super bowls back-to-back. It was exciting to see so many enthusiastic local Sierra Club members making a difference.

But you win some, you lose some. Four years ago, a lot of us poured our blood, sweat and tears into the campaign for the county-wide SOAR initiative to control urban sprawl, preserve General Plans, and promote "smart growth" by requiring a vote of the people for any extension of services beyond any city's urban/rural boundary and for any zoning changes made to Agriculture, Rural, and Open Space lands. Good idea then; critically urgent idea now — someday before the point is moot.

You lose some, and then you come back and win them. We campaigned hard, but unsuccessfully, to get Mike Ryan out and David Blakely in as 5th-district supervisor in 2000. In 2004, despite assurances from all corners that the developer-backed incumbent couldn't possibly be dislodged, we tried again, backing Jim Patterson as he went on to a primary upset victory that political consultants will still be analyzing when it's time to gear up for

2005 ExCom Elected

The ballots were counted on December 6 (much faster than Ohio managed it, and no re-count required), and the Chapter got itself a new Executive Committee.

Left to right: Steven Marx (continuing), Karen Merriam (new), Eliane Guillot (continuing), Sarah Christie (continuing), Sue Harvey (new), outgoing Chair Tarren Collins and Jack Morrow (new).

The new ExCom will meet January 27 to elect a Chair and appoint one additional member, committee chairs and members.

The Chapter looks forward to a productive year!

Jim's re-election campaign.

You win some, you don't exactly lose some: That would be Hearst Ranch. We fought for and won an extension of the usual, and inadequate, ten-day public comment period on the proposed conservation easement, the involvement of State biologists in environmental reporting and monitoring on the ranch, and a higher level of public access. What improvements were made in the still deeply flawed deal were won despite heavy pressure to sign off on Hearst's vague, one-page framework two years ago and just do the deal, no questions asked. Had the Sierra Club and the Chapter elected to toe the line of the "just do it" contingent, there can be no doubt that there would have been no improvements made at all.

Then, along with the ones you win, lose or draw, there are the ones that just seem to keep going. Carrizo Plain National Monument was threatened by over-grazing before I came to chair the Chapter, and still is as I leave, though a resource management plan, is, at least, closer to reality (but needs work!) The Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant is still piling up nuclear waste on the Central Coast and still hasn't mitigated the ongoing fish-kills of its thermal outfall, though our efforts to create coastal access in the area met with success at a December 2004 Coastal Commission hearing. The public will soon enjoy access to 1 1/2 miles of coast, with the opening of at least one beach on the property as well. The Duke plant in Morro Bay still teeters on the brink of shut-down, insisting on building a new plant on the basis of a model that would be just as unacceptably destructive to the Estuary and rejecting the model that wouldn't. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary still needs to be extended to the SLO coast. The *Tribune* still doesn't grasp the connection between environmental protection and a healthy economy. (Memo to Bill Morem: The second one depends on the first one.)

I testified at meetings of the Coastal Commission, County Board of Supervisors, State Legislators, Regional Boards and various Planning Commissions and City Councils without number, picked up some awards and got called lots of names (not all of them bad; "Tarren, Warrior Princess" a personal favorite) — the universal signal that you must be doing your job.

I got to work with four great chairpersons of our all-important Conservation Committee: the unsinkable Holly Sletteland, the irreplaceable and much missed Pete Wagner, the inspir-

ing Colby "Concho" Crotzer, and, currently, ECOSLO top-kick Pam Heatherington. I leave knowing the Conservation Committee is in the best possible hands with Pam at the helm.

I got to meet and work with hundreds of dedicated activists, volunteers, administrators, and elected and appointed officials. It has been humbling to witness their commitment, intelligence and skill.

At the beginning of my tenure as Chair, it became my goal to find a way to hire our first staff person for the chapter. Our dedicated ExCom members succeeded in traversing the bureaucratic maze required by the national Club, and managed to hire staff last year. And what a difference! With Chapter Coordinator Andrew Christie at the office, I have great confidence that the level of activism and professionalism we have risen to has an even better chance to continue on. But though we pay Andrew just a pittance for all the hours he serves the chapter, that cost has nearly broken the bank. We have begun a chapter fundraising effort that will need every member's help if we hope to maintain both our budget and our current level of activism.

Since I am continuing on as chair of the Great Coastal Places Campaign and co-chair of the SLO Coast Alliance, I am not exactly returning completely to private life. I will be continuing to meet, plan, and work with you all. Only now, I might have a little more time in which to do so.

In addition to the above-mentioned ongoing environmental challenges, the Chapter faces the Marketplace initiative, a sprawl-friendly local political climate, and the ongoing fight to keep our local agriculture free of genetically engineered crops. I encourage every member to think of ways they might contribute to the work of the chapter. We are forever in need of resources - your time, skills, expertise, talents, and whatever funds you can contribute. When wondering if you know enough to step in and volunteer, I can assure you that few could know as little about the Sierra Club as I did when elected to the ExCom in December 1999. I had joined the Club only the year before. My first ExCom meeting was my first time at any Sierra Club meeting or event. I commend to my successor the words of Sierra Club legend David Brower: "Polite conservationists leave no mark save the scars upon the Earth that could have been prevented had they stood their ground."

My advice to him or her: Strap in. It's bound to be quite a ride!

North Chimeneas Ranch - Escondido

By Letty French

The Carrizo area is not always scorching hot, particularly in November. A cold, foggy overcast covered the area as our group meet with Bob Stoddard, CA Department of Fish and Game biologist, at the fire station on Soda Lake Road. We came to explore the new purchase by the Department of the North Chimeneas Ranch, which, added to the South Chimeneas, widens the biological corridor connecting the Los Padres forest to the Tehachapi and San Bernardino mountains.

Just where were we going? Picture a vast area sort of west and towards the north end of the Caliente range. This 15,000 acres was one ranch containing huge, lonely open grasslands, scattered oak woodlands, intermittent streams with permanent springs, and the headwaters of small rivers that flowed into the Santa Maria River. A maze of dirt roads winds through the area. Many small cattle ponds exist, some dry, some filled with water from the recent rain.

This area is invaluable for wildlife.

As we started south-west from Soda Road, we saw the feral hogs; huge black beasts running easily over the hills. Then scattered individuals or small groups of Tule elk appeared on the hillsides, moving

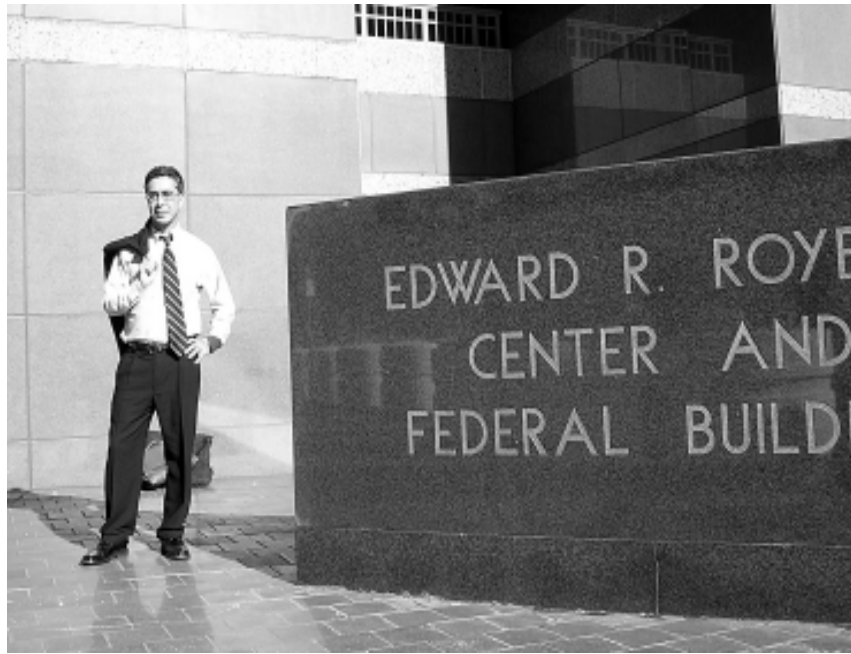
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Plovers

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Coast Audubon Society will receive \$50,000 a year for five years to expand its successful plover volunteer program and information clearing house.

"We were particularly pleased to secure funding for a study that will evaluate existing management measures," said Babak Naficy, the environmental lawyer who represented the Chapter throughout the litigation. "It should help settle public debate and will establish an understanding of the reasons why plovers nest on some beaches and not on others." The ambitious research project will be managed by Dr. Travis Longcore, Science Director of the Urban Wildlands Group.



Man of the plover: Babak Naficy outside Los Angeles district court after negotiating the settlement.

In 2001, the Sierra Club convinced the California Coastal Commission to close a mile and a half of beach to off-road vehicles and campers and require the formation of an independent scientific review team to advise State Parks on management of habitat for the federally listed Western snowy plover and California least tern. For the last three years, the review team has been prodding State Parks to expand the enclosure area and do more to protect the plovers. With the approval of the consent decree, these recommendations will be implemented.

There are only 1,600 breeding pairs of western snowy plover on the Pacific coast. The Pacific population of the plover is threatened throughout its range by loss of habitat and nesting sites, with the California coast as the site of the highest concentration of plovers and the highest level of loss of plover habitat.

Audubon: Working Together

By Henry Pontarelli

President, Morro Coast Audubon Society

(State Parks and the Santa Lucia Chapter selected the Morro Coast Audubon Society to receive settlement funds from Sierra Club v. Areias to expand the MCAS Snowy Plover Watch program to plover nesting sites across three counties.)

Organizations like the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the Native Plant Society and even political parties act as the eyes, ears, hands and mouths of their members. Our organizations roll up their sleeves and fight battles our members believe should be fought, teach lessons our members feel should be taught and form relationships the collective group feels should be formed. The "greater" group gives individual members the opportunity to invest resources of time or money and become part of a larger, stronger force.

Like the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) is part of a larger organization. National Audubon has approximately 550,000 members in 500 chapters and manages 160,000 acres of critical habitat. Our local chapter has almost 700 members and manages about 30 acres of open space.

Our mission statement is straightforward: to promote the appreciation, conservation and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on the diversity of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. MCAS looks at itself as a teacher and a guide. We make monthly field trips available to all skill levels. The "Birds at Ebb Tide" program is open to citizens of all ages and experience levels. Times and dates are available on our website, www.morrocoastaudubon.org.

We are in the process of augmenting a CalPoly Pelagic Bird Study in Estero Bay. In upcoming years, we will make space available on boat trips so our community may participate in a scientific study of ocean bird populations right off of our coast.

The MCAS provided funding and field personnel for a bird survey that helped the Carrizo Plains become a National Monument. And we were instrumental in urging State Parks to include the Heron Rookery (Morro Bay State Park) in their system. MCAS is working with The Land Conservancy to help track bird numbers and diversity in restored habitats as a measure of success.

One of the Morro Coast Audubon Society's overriding goals is to become a more effective conservation and "teaching" force. Much of our "new" energy will be gained by joining hands with organizations like the Sierra Club, The Land Conservancy, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, and Friends of the Estuary to make sure our community — human and feathered — has clean air, clean water and access to open space.

To learn more about Morro Coast Audubon, please visit our website, www.morrocoastaudubon.org, or call me, Henry Pontarelli, at (805) 528-4587.

Los Osos

continued from page 1

That got some people thinking: Might there be one solution to three problems here?

The Los Osos Community Services District has approved a treatment plant design and location, and a majority of that body, as well as the state and regional water quality boards, are determined to see this approved plan become a reality ASAP, at pain of threatened \$10,000-a-day fines for delay. A sizeable and vocal contingent of the local citizenry are just as determined to prevent this from coming to pass, as they are opposed to both the location and presumed efficacy of the proposed plant, and are availing themselves of all legal and political means to halt it. And that's pretty much the way it's gone for the last thirty years.

What to do?

Recently elected Sierra Club-endorsed Los Osos CSD members Julie Tacker and Lisa Schicker have embraced the idea of a regional tertiary treatment plant, with the Chapter's support. "We have a great opportunity to look at a regional sewer system for three of our coastal communities," agrees Pam Heatherington of ECO-SLO. "Morro Bay and Cayucos have pledged to look at full secondary treatment and possibly tertiary treatment. Los Osos needs a sewer. A state-of-the-art treatment facility for all three communities is a win-win."

"It's an interesting idea. A regional plant makes sense," says Gordon Hensley, vice chair of the Los Osos CSD. Hensley cautions that state and regional water boards would have to agree to suspend their "delay" penalties before the project could be actively pursued, but "if the stars aligned, we could have a very interesting conversation."

The Sierra Club would love to see a sewer for Los Osos happen tomorrow, and the rehabilitation of the Estuary begin the following day. But of all the elements that have marked this issue over the years — political, economic, environmental — it is clear at this point that one element dominates all: As long as there is significant local opposition to the official course of action, the likely outcome will be more strife, delay and environmental destruction.

The other potential outcome: A higher level of treatment, the bonus of reuseable water, access to state and federal funds available for regional wastewater treatment programs, and possibly, with costs split up and spread out among multiple municipal entities throughout the region, a monthly sewer bill for the residents of Los Osos lower than the one now proposed, which has local residents on the verge of open revolt.

Can it be done? If proposed, will current foes lay down their arms and agencies suspend threatened fines for delay? Would it be a better bet for the restoration of the ailing Estuary to wait five to seven more years for a guaranteed outcome, or wait indefinitely for the outcome of a never-ending sewer war?

There's only one way to find out: Fully study the option, put it on the table and let the people decide.

Sanctuary

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Twenty-six miles long and eight miles wide, the massive peak rises nearly 8,000 feet from base to crest. The secrets of this mountain are protected not by its elevation but its location: the Davidson Seamount is submerged deep beneath the Pacific Ocean in more than 12,000 feet of water; its crest is 4000 feet below the ocean's surface.



King crab on Davidson Seamount

NOAA/MBARI

Discovery of Davidson Seamount

Originally mapped by surveyor George Davidson in 1933, scientific knowledge of the Davidson Seamount was limited until recent advances in technology made expeditions feasible. In 1998, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) performed side scan and multi-beam surveys identifying the shape and structure of the Seamount for the first time. In 2000, President Clinton chose the Davidson Seamount as one of three areas in the United States selected for federally supported undersea exploration, launching an expedition that used Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) to survey the Seamount's geology as well as biological studies of the surface environment above the Seamount. In 2002, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, joined by MBARI, returned to Davidson, exploring the Seamount at all elevations and studying species abundance and distribution from its base to the surface of the ocean. Davidson is now one of the best studied seamounts in the world.

Ecological Importance of Seamounts

Although there are more than 30,000 seamounts in the Pacific Ocean, Davidson is the largest seamount in the western Pacific and one of the largest in the world. Video collected during the 2000 and 2002 expeditions show portions of the Davidson Seamount covered in thick forests of ancient gorgonian corals hundreds-of-years old and dense sponge fields up to three meters high. Scientists on the 2002 Davidson Seamount expedition catalogued fish and invertebrate species that had never been previously identified. The Davidson Seamount is truly like no place else on Earth.

Like rainforests on land, seamounts are known to be hotspots of biological diversity. Like underwater islands, seamounts support a greater number and abundance of species than surrounding areas of ocean floor. Because seamounts rise sharply, they are constantly washed by plankton rich ocean currents

which provide a food source for seamount creatures. The coral reefs themselves provide hard substrate that serve as important habitat for other deep-sea creatures.

Threats to Seamounts

Historically, seamounts have been protected from human impacts by virtue of their depth. As modern technology has increased scientific knowledge and helped bring the wonders of deep sea environments to the public, it has also increased threats to even the most remote

ocean environments. Bottom trawling and long-lining is now taking place at depths of over 3000 feet and mineral exploration is occurring at ever greater depths. There is growing evidence that seamounts may be particularly vulnerable to human impacts. Research suggests that up to a third of the species found at a seamount can be endemic – species that are native to only one seamount. Consequently, human impacts to seamounts present significant risk of extinctions.

In some area of the world, commercially targeted fish species concentrate around seamounts, leading to intensive fishing effort targeting these congregations. Overfishing associated with seamounts has been extensively documented in Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia. Harmful impacts of such fishing on seamount habitats have also been documented. In Tasmania, where seamounts have been heavily trawled, areas that have been fished have lower species abundance and richness than lightly fished areas. In some areas, coral reefs have been damaged or destroyed by fishing gear, leaving only rubble behind. Such damage has led to a growing international focus on seamount conservation. In 2002, the

United Nations General Assembly recognized the threats to the deep-sea calling upon the international community to consider the risks to seamounts and other deepwater habitats. Australia, New Zealand, Norway, and Canada have all banned bottom trawling on certain seamounts within their territorial seas and the European Union is considering similar protections for seamounts within its waters.

Protection for Davidson

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is currently updating its management plan – the document that contains the rules and regulations designed to guide sanctuary managers in their efforts to protect sanctuary resources. The existing Sanctuary boundaries encompass nearly 5000 square miles of ocean stretching from the Marin Headlands to Cambria. It contains examples of most of the coastal and marine habitats characteristic of Central California – sea cliffs, sandy beaches, kelp forests, tide pools, wetlands, submarine canyons and vast ocean plains. Although a chain of seamounts (Gumdrop, Pioneer, Guide and Davidson) lines the border of the Sanctuary, none are currently within its protection. In fact, no true seamount (defined as an underwater mountain that rises at least 1000 meters above the surrounding seafloor) is contained within any of the nation's 13 marine sanctuaries.

During recent public scoping meetings designed to elicit input on future management priorities for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the Sanctuary was encouraged to expand its boundaries to include the Central Coast seamounts, or at least the Davidson Seamount. In response, the Sanctuary convened a working group made up of scientists, conservationists and fishing representatives to consider whether or not the Davidson Seamount warranted

consideration as an addition to the Sanctuary. They determined that the Davidson Seamount met the criteria for sanctuary designation outlined in the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Recognizing that there are currently no fishing or mining activities that directly affect the Davidson Seamount, the working group recommended that the Sanctuary consider bringing Davidson within its boundaries and adopting regulations that would protect the Seamount from potential future impacts, preventing mineral extraction or fishing that might harm bottom habitat, and prohibiting ocean dumping over the seamount.

How You Can Help

You can help ensure future protection of the Davidson Seamount by writing to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Director, Vice-Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, Congresswoman Lois Capps and Congressman Sam Farr to voice support for adding the Davidson Seamount to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Administrator
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14th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Congresswoman Lois Capps
1707 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515.

Congressman Sam Farr
1221 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

For more information on the Davidson Seamount, go to:

<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/02davidson/davidson.html>

<http://www.mbnms-simon.org/>

Here's the Plan...

Sanctuary protection for the Davidson Seamount is just one of many issues being addressed in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's update management plan.

Over the past three years, the Sanctuary has engaged in an unprecedented public process – soliciting input from thousands of citizens throughout California and beyond. With the assistance of stakeholders, community members, and partner agencies, the Sanctuary has developed "action plans" on 21 different conservation topics. Issues of potential interest to San Luis Obispo residents include: the Big Sur Coastal Ecosystem Plan, Water Quality Protection, Marine Protected Areas, and Desalination.

In 2005, the Sanctuary is expected to release its draft Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public review and comment.

For more information on this important process or for copies of the draft action plans, go to:

<http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/jointplan/>

Cold Water Corals

Although less well known than their tropical counterparts, cold water corals are found in temperate waters around the globe, including the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the North Sea, even the Antarctic. Unlike tropical corals, which rely on symbiotic

algae in their tissues to convert sunlight

into energy, cold water corals don't need sunlight to survive and are thus able to survive in the darkness of the deep sea. Cold water corals feed by capturing plankton from surrounding waters and are therefore most plentiful in areas where a steady current flow washes them with plankton, such as seamounts, ridges, pinnacles, and the continental slope.

Though slow growing, over time, cold water corals can form intricate and complex reefs. Norwegian scientists recently discovered a coral reef 35 kilometers long and more than 30 meters high that was estimated to be several hundred years old. Living corals have been carbon dated to over 5,000 years old. Cold water coral reefs also provide important habitat for many other deep sea creatures. Because food is scarce in the deep ocean, the fish and invertebrate species associated with cold water coral reefs are typically slow growing and late to mature, making them particularly vulnerable to human disturbance.



soft mushroom coral

NOAA/MBARI

Thanks to Donors!

Thanks to all who gave to the 20/2000 fund drive in 2004! (As not everyone provided first names, return addresses, included the coupon with donation, etc., this is not a complete list... but if your name's not here, please know we are equally grateful to all!)

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Sierra Club Connects Forced Migration and "Free Trade"

For the first time, the Sierra Club has explicitly made the connection between U.S. "free trade" policies and the pressure to migrate, in the November/December issue of *Sierra*. Heretofore, the long raging population/immigration debate in the Club has centered on immigration quotas and restrictions, relative fertility rates and family planning. Until now, it has never been mentioned in the context of trade or as a concern of the Club's Responsible Trade & Human Rights program.

Technically, the first time that connection was made was when the Orange County Group and the Santa Lucia Chapter passed a resolution on trade & immigration in February 2004. The Chapter submitted the text to the Club's RT&HR program, followed by a lengthy e-mail correspondence between the Chapter Coordinator and International Programs director Steve Mills — the author of the November *Sierra* article. The RT&HR Committee endorsed the resolution in May.

The immigration issue in the Club will be heating up again this spring, when another immigration control resolution is brought back to the Sierra Club ballot. This time, the national debate has a chance to break out of the destructive ping-pong match of yore, thanks to a new element that can lift the argument beyond "how much environmental damage does immigration cause?" and ask "what causes immigration?"

The Sierra Club's Stance On Immigration

Migration happens when freedom, disaster, economic opportunity, environmental degradation, and desperation are distributed so unevenly across the globe that people are forced to make difficult choices: stay and barely survive, or move and possibly thrive.

Sierra Club founder John Muir, an immigrant himself, once noted that "when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Today, the Club's efforts mirror that sentiment with multifaceted programs encompassing not only population issues but also human rights, fair trade, and environmentally sustainable development.

GLOBAL POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

A growing world population has far-reaching environmental and social consequences, including migration. A decade ago at the United Nations Conference on Pop-

Decommission Diablo

In December 2003, the Mothers for Peace, Sierra Club, and Peg Pinard sued the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for ignoring the threat of terrorism at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant and refusing to hold public hearings. The NRC's policy has made Diablo Canyon an unacceptable risk and its license must not be renewed. SLO County agrees. For a copy of the license renewal resolution passed by the County for consideration by your city council or CSD, call Mothers for Peace at (805) 773-3881.



David Brancaccio, host of the PBS public affairs series *NOW*, at the SLO Library after taping a Mothers for Peace meeting on safety and security issues at Diablo Canyon. The program on local communities' battles with nuclear plants nationwide will air January 14.

Volunteer's Corner

By Eliane Guillot

This issue marks the first *Santa Lucian* in two years without Mariko Fujinaka as our layout artist. Mariko must devote more of her time to the task of a freelance writer and editor (i.e. making a living), and deserves a big "hurray" of appreciation from all members of the Santa Lucia Chapter. Working from her home computer, Mariko gathered the articles and ads together, formatted them in PageMaker, and handled coordination between many individuals, with a lot of patience and flexibility in meeting deadlines.

Mariko grew up in Portland, Oregon, and has lived in Paso Robles since 1999. She chose to volunteer to make a difference rather than complain about the "sorry state of the world." She was a National Public Radio intern in Oregon, and after moving down here answered the call for a newsletter editor/layout person when she saw it posted on the Santa Lucia Chapter website. She learned PageMaker with great help from chapter stalwarts like Gary Felsman and Cleve Nash, spending one or two weekends a month "on the job."

"I have quite a few hobbies—running, knitting, sewing, baking—that keep me from doing my work," says Mariko. This year, like every year, she hopes "to work on my time management skills!"

Mariko thanks everyone in the chapter who worked with her over the past two years!

A Foggy Day at Morro Bay

by Jack Beigle

Every outings leader is concerned about the safety of the people on the outing. There are risks on every outing whether it is in the mountains or on the water and it is the leader's responsibility to reduce these risks. I do not like to cancel a canoe/kayak outing but I have cancelled several due to rain and high winds.

In over fifteen years of leading canoe/kayak outings for the Sierra Club, I had never cancelled an outing because of fog. This fall, as we approached the weekend of our outing, it was cold and rainy. The weatherman was forecasting cold, clear skies for the weekend with 30 to 45 mile winds.

This is not a good forecast for a canoe/kayak outing. The weatherman has been wrong in the past, so I checked the weather at dawn on the day of our outing. In Pismo, the sky was clear, the sun was warm and there was absolutely no wind. I loaded my canoe on our van and drove with my paddling partner toward Morro Bay. As we approached Los Osos, we encountered a small patch of fog. When we pulled into the Morro Bay State Park Marina, the fog was getting more dense by the minute. At ten o'clock, our scheduled launch time, I couldn't see the sand spit, I couldn't see a single boat in the estuary and I couldn't even see the first set of channel marking buoys outside of the marina. At that point I cancelled the outing.

Only one other paddler showed up. All of the others believed the weatherman and stayed home. When paddling on a clear day, we subconsciously make constant adjustments to our course based on visual reference points. Without these reference points, our boat will not be heading where we think it is heading. Paddling in the fog can be fun but you must have a compass. It is impossible to paddle a straight course in a dense fog without a compass. This is why it is recommended that you keep a small compass in the pocket of your PFD.

Check the outing schedule and join us on the water. We should have better weather for our next outing.



Classifieds

Classified ads are \$10 and are limited to 20 words. They are due by the first week of the month of publication (**next deadline is Feb. 1, 2005**). Please submit your ad and payment to:
 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.

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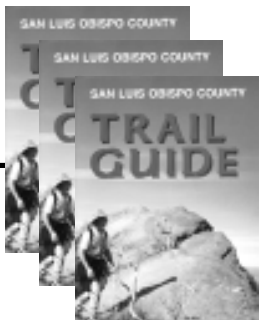
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Here's an easy way to report on environmental concerns or to get information on issues affecting our ecology: Call 911! That's just a catchy title, though. The real number is... (drum roll):

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Peter Douglas Keynotes Annual EcoSummit

By Jack McCurdy

A cancer-free and re-dedicated Peter Douglas, executive director of the California Coastal Commission, recently cautioned a gathering of the county's environmental leaders that it is easy to feel burned out in these times.

But, he said, "our work is ennobling. It is lonely at times, difficult at times and we take the slings and arrows. But we need to remind ourselves why we are doing this. Just go out and look at the Carrizo Plain, for example, and it will remind you why we can't give up."

The buoyed Douglas spoke at the the fourth annual Ecosummit of San Luis Obispo County at Camp Ocean Pines in Cambria on Dec. 4, hosted by the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo County (ECOSLO) and co-sponsored by 18 area individuals and groups, including the Sierra Club.

Douglas got a clean bill of health following two months of radiation and chemotherapy treatments last summer for a form of tongue cancer. Now, he said, "I am going to continue the fight for the coast and the environment."

In his address, Douglas surveyed the major events of the year for our local coast. He acknowledged the deeply-shared disappointment in the Hearst Ranch Conservation Plan, passed largely as proposed by the Hearst Corporation with its critical deficiencies in achieving conservation, limiting development, ensuring enforcement of its terms, and preserving public access to coastal attractions like San Simeon Point, which would be restricted under the Plan.

He noted that the Coastal Commission staff, the Legislative Analyst's Office and many others had opposed the Hearst Plan on grounds the public was being shortchanged and enforcement provisions are weak.

"After you fight the great fight like on Hearst, it is easy to get burned out, but try not to get emotionally involved in any issue. Remember the larger and overarching cause of environmental activism. Don't get burned out, so you can come back for the next fight. This will sustain you in your activism."

Douglas has the experience to give such advice. As a legislative staff member, he co-authored the 1972 statewide citizens initiative that established the Coastal Commission, was a principal author of the Coastal Act that made permanent California's coastal management program in 1976, has headed the Coastal Commission staff since 1985 and received

the first "Champion of the Coast" award at an international symposium on coastal zone management in 1995 as well as numerous other environmental awards.

Douglas acknowledged the recent "turnover" in Commission membership and praised outgoing member Pedro Nava of Santa Barbara, who was elected to the Assembly in November. "Nava provided great stewardship," Douglas said. "He said the Coastal Commission and the Coastal Act provide the last line of defense for the coast between the demands of the few and the dreams of the many. That's really true."



Peter Douglas receives the Bill Denneen Environment Award at the 2004 EcoSummit

Douglas said he "sees no significant change" in the character of the Commission.

Douglas described concern by the Commission staff about plans of the Cambria Community Services District to use the power of imminent domain to seize private land for building water tanks when room is available on the District's own land. He said the staff was troubled by plans to cut trees in Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area and use imminent domain to "trump" a conservation easement. He said he had immediate plans to meet with District members pushing the plans to discuss the issues.

Douglas took the occasion to announce that Pat Veesart, state chapter liaison of Sierra Club California, has been named the Coastal Commission's chief enforcement officer in Southern California. Veesart is a former executive director of ECOSLO and county planning commissioner.

He also lauded Sarah Christie, the Commission's legislative director in Sacramento and member of the Chapter's Executive Committee, for the "incredible job" she has done in helping to protect the coast.

"Cuts to the Commission's budget over the past 4 years have drastically compromised its ability to carry out Coastal Act protections," he said after the meeting. "Violations are piling up, local coastal plans aren't being updated, permit applications are delayed, energy projects aren't getting the attention they require, and so on. It is frustrating not to get the support needed to do the public's business - business the public expects



SLO City Councilwoman Christine Mulholland holds forth at EcoSummit

us to do."

Douglas said another effort will be made in 2005 to achieve a permanent

source of funding for the Coastal which has suffered a reduction of \$3 million to \$6 million over the past three years, resulting in the loss of 30 staff positions.

Some legislators are willing to push for permanent funding, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has said "no new taxes," which could make such an initiative difficult.

Tarren Collins, outgoing Chair of the Santa Lucia Chapter, said the Great Coastal Places

Campaign she chairs plans to organize support for the Commission's funding.

Socially Responsible Investing: A How-To

By Jack A. Brill

Last year's elections seem to be another setback for the environment. While this was discouraging, we must continue our fight to improve the environment. Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) is an important way to do this.

It can and must be argued that minimizing consumption and making communities more self-sustaining is an important goal. However, the global nature of bringing goods and services from producer to consumer is an economic fact of life.

This brings us to the need to invest. As we earn our money, we need to set aside some of today's income to cover future expenses. Very few people plan on full-time work and income until their very last day on earth. The best way is to invest a part of your money each payday so that at some time in the future one can retire. Saving and investing regularly for a child's college education and for future large purchases is also a necessity. When you follow this process using SRI, your investment dollars are added to the current dollars invested in SRI. This adds momentum to bring about needed social change and strengthen the battle to protect the environment.

There are many forms of investment. CD's in banks, bonds issued by governments and corporations and ownership in corporations in the form of stock each have a degree of risk in terms of financial return and rewards. One must be careful when becoming part of the world of investment.

With SRI, beyond the risk and reward considerations there is a crucial social dimension involved. One must be a careful to make certain that the personal investment made is in keeping with one's personal life issues. Stock ownership is an attempt to profit from ownership of companies' stock. If you are working for a more environmentally sustainable world, you should not and need not invest in the stock of a company that is creating global warming. You should be looking to invest in renewable energy. Opponents of nuclear power should not be investors in PG&E.

SRI is the process of integrating ones personal values and society's need into investment decision making. There are four elements:

Avoidance Screening- not investing in a company or industry that is in conflict with your personal values

Affirmative Screening- seeking investments that compliment your values

Community Investing- using your investment dollars to support and strengthen local and worthwhile community activities

Shareholder Activism- taking action to change and reform corporate practices

All of the above elements are part of the SRI industry. This industry has grown from obscurity to a dominant force worldwide. In 2003, the Social Investment Forum, the SRI industry's trade association, found \$2.2 trillion of



continued on page 11

Making SLO GE-Free: Take Two

By Andrew Christie

Despite the failure of Measure Q to pass in the November 2 election, many more people have expressed the desire to work on the issue of keeping San Luis Obispo County free of genetic engineering in agriculture.

On November 15th, about fifty of those people met at the office of Infopress in San Luis Obispo to weigh in on what the next steps for our county should be. Topics included the real status of corn and other crops in our county for next spring and how to monitor them, options for local labeling, and how to continue educating a public that is now aware of this issue, as was made plain by Measure Q's 48,000 "yes" votes. Those votes were won despite the editorial hostility of the local paper and a singularly dirty campaign waged by opponents, which included a fake website of "former supporters," deceptive slate mailers and a blizzard of ads the week of the election that made outrageously false claims in support of GE food studies and safety, and warning about the supposed dire consequences of a ban.

"San Luis Obispo's campaign for Measure Q was an amazing success," said Doug Mosel, organizer of the successful Mendocino County GE crop ban, "considering you were up against the biotech industry, which feigned a local face under the mask of the Farm Bureau, which is heavily invested in Monsanto stock."

Mosel came to the meeting from a Genetic Engineering Action Network (GEAN) conference in Boulder, Colorado, and talked about recent successful campaigns, moving toward a coordinated national campaign, collaborative state legislative efforts, and how San Luis Obispo fits into the bigger picture for coordinated grassroots GE-free efforts.

"We don't underestimate the power of the industry to undermine this effort," said Luke Anderson, author of *Genetic Engineering, Food, and Our Environment -- the Silent Spring of GE --* "but we have the facts on our side."

Mendocino, Trinity, and Marin counties and the city of Arcata have now banned GE crops, and the state of Vermont is enforcing a "genetically engineered" labeling law for seed sales.

For more information, go to www.slogefree.org and sierraclub.org/biotech/statement.asp.



No retreat, no surrender: Theresa Campbell of SLO GE Free (left) and Miranda Leonard of ECOSLO at the Nov. 15 organizing meeting

Will Duke Fade Away?

By Jack McCurdy

For the first time, Duke Energy has said it may no longer seek regulatory approval to build a new power plant in Morro Bay.

The revelation came on December 2 at a meeting in San Luis Obispo of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the day a final hearing on the new plant had been scheduled by the board but had been postponed unexpectedly.

Lorie Okun, the board's attorney, said during a discussion of the status of the project that "what Duke told us is that they're not sure if they're even going to continue the plan to modernize [build a new plant]."

"It's partly dependent on the lease negotiations, but it's also dependent on some financing issues they have. So they

don't even know if they want the permit at this point."

Previously, Duke officials have said that they do not know when they would begin construction of a new plant, if and when all regulatory approvals were obtained. In addition to the availability of financing, Duke has said it needs to know what the power generation regulatory policy will be in the state, which remains unclear.

Duke has been seeking a water discharge permit from the board to allow withdrawal of water from the Morro Bay National Estuary for cooling at the plant and then releasing the heated water in an outfall channel on state tidelands adjacent to Morro Rock, flowing into Estero Bay. But Duke no longer has a lease from the city of Morro Bay, which administers the tidelands, to use the outfall. It expired on

November 15.

First, Board staff said that the hearing was being postponed indefinitely because its biological consultant would not be available. Then a staff member was quoted in a local news-

paper as saying the postponement was requested by Duke. On December 2, another staff member said Duke and the city had requested the cancellation.

But City attorney Rob Schultz said later that the city had not requested the postponement but had not opposed it. The issue is whether Duke could continue operating the existing plant or start up a new plant using estuary water without the lease. Duke actually ran the plant in

late November without approval to do so in the absence of a new lease. The city so far has taken no action to prevent further unauthorized uses of the outfall.

A newly-elected City Council has yet to consider what action to take.

HopeDance

All films at the SLO Library, 7 p.m. Cosponsored by the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

January

Jan 14:

HEARTS AND MINDS (award-winning documentary about Vietnam)
ARLINGTON WEST (moving documentary about the Arlington West crosses project in Southern California)

Jan 21 & 22:

MEDIA FILM FESTIVAL AND DISCUSSION: *HOW TO STRENGTHEN INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN SLO COUNTY* with panelists Jack McCurdy (former L.A. Times reporter), Bob Banner (publisher of HopeDance), Kristan Mulgrew (Public Access), Greg Junnell (from the now defunct LP-FM in SLO, Moon Radio) and others TBA....

Films:

TELL THE TRUTH AND RUN (George Seldes)
ORWELL ROLLING IN HIS GRAVE
WM DECEPTION (Danny Schecter)
POWER OF CHOICE: LPFM (low powered FM / community radio)
KPFA ON THE AIR (history of KPFA, Berkeley)
ELECTILE DYSFUNCTION (voter fraud, from Take Back the Media, Santa Barbara)

Jan 28:

BONHOEFER (a theologian who stood up to Hitler)
BRINGING DOWN A DICTATOR (ousting of Milosevic)

February

Feb 4:

CODENAME ARTICHOKE (the killing of CIA operative Frank Olsen)
THE MAN WHO KNEW (the FBI agent who warned that Osama Bin Laden was going to strike)

Feb 10:

MONUMENTAL
(SLO premiere: The life of Sierra Club legend David Brower)



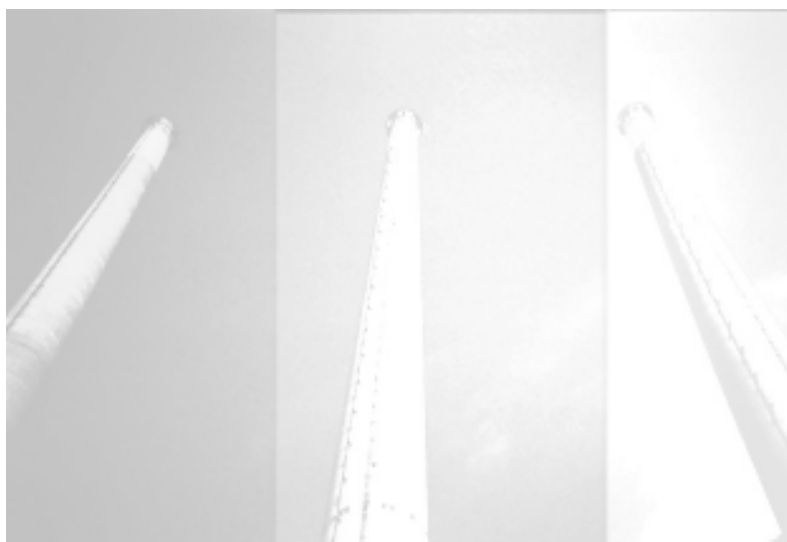
Feb 11:

SEX AND THE HOLY CITY (The Vatican and the Third World)
INSIDE MECCA (3 journeys to the Hadj)

Feb 18

BILL HICKS (late stand up comedian/"preacher" - funnier than ever!)

For details and updates, go to the www.hopedance.org website or call 544-9663.





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Stop the Marketplace

by Save San Luis Obispo

As you may have heard, the grassroots citizen's group Save San Luis Obispo succeeded in its initial goal of gathering over 14,000 signatures on three petitions to require the City of San Luis Obispo to hold a referendum on Bill Bird's San Luis Marketplace mall, located on the Dalidio property on Madonna Road.

The special election to reverse the City's approval of the project will be held April 26, 2005. Save San Luis Obispo is gearing up to launch a vigorous campaign. There is mounting public opposition to the project from neighborhood advocates, students, business and property owners, fans of our award-winning Downtown, community leaders, and last, but not least, environmentalists. The Santa Lucia chapter of the Sierra Club and the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (ECOSLO) have both taken positions against it.

It will be a hard-fought battle. The L.A. developers and their Texas financiers have a lot more money than we do, don't care about our community and have hired a PR firm that represented Wal-Mart in other campaigns. They also have sued the City and Save San Luis Obispo in an attempt to derail the election. To defend us, we have hired Jonathan Wittwer from Santa Cruz, an attorney who is a specialist in election law. We are confident we will prevail. Obviously, the lawsuit puts us under additional financial pressure (as it was intended to do). Now, we must not only raise money to run the campaign, but also to defend against the lawsuit. To win, we will need your help.

What is wrong with the Marketplace? For starters, it is way too big and ugly. This 615,000-square-foot "Power Center" is so large that it will add more retail space than currently exists in all of Downtown. It will generate more than 20,000 additional daily trips by car, creating gridlock and smog. It is so large

continued on page 11

a landfill grows in Templeton?

About 250 residents of Templeton and Atascadero live within a mile of the Chicago Grade Landfill. Until a few months ago, many of them did not know this. Now, they all do.

Some very thorough employee at the County Planning Department included them on a list of agencies to receive a "Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report" for the expansion of the landfill.

Normally, a NOP goes to agencies and consultants who then suggest categories of impacts and areas of study to the County as they get ready to prepare a draft EIR. After the DEIR is completed, the public is notified and has, on average, 30 or 60 days to comment before the Final EIR is prepared and the project commences.

This time, 250 households got an early heads-up and an eyeful of what's planned: The landfill to double in size and longevity; stats on truck traffic; major potential impacts to air and water quality. One of them called the Sierra Club and asked, essentially, "what can we do about this?"

After some consultation at the Chapter office, a couple of residents decided to form a core group and gave themselves a name: Neighbors Against Landfill Expansion (NALE). They got the names of all 250 of their fellow citizens who had received the notice from the Planning Dept. They put together a letter stating their concerns, with a form on the back inviting the recipients to state theirs and include information on the last time their well was checked.

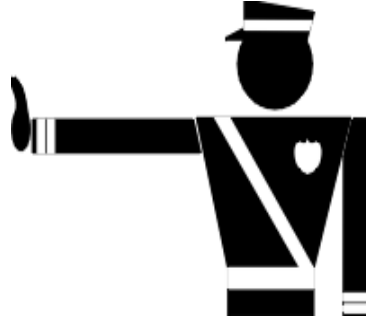
The Chapter made 250 copies of the letter for them, and provided the envelopes, stamps and the Chapter's return address. As we collect the reply forms, we'll keep the names and addresses on file, provide tips on public testimony, coordinate responses, and otherwise help walk NALE through the process. In addition to the end goal of getting the project scaled back, modified, mitigated or eliminated, it should prove to be an educational experience, especially for our elected officials and their appointees, who will get to hear from many of their constituents just how much they look forward to finding themselves perched next to a very big dump.



Moonscape: A visting life-form checks out the remainiing wildlife habitat after developers "scrubbed" 1,000 acres near Creston without a permit, the largest and most egregious single environmental violation in County history.

Support the SMART Suit Chapter opens litigation fund

By Eric Greening



On September 14, 2004, The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, by a blatantly illegal action, pulled the trigger on sprawl, opening up to development any agriculturally zoned land within 5 miles of a village or urban reserve line outside the Coastal Zone – the land that is under the greatest development pressure.

From the beginning of the process of updating the county's Ag & Open Space Element, there has been controversy over whether minimum parcel sizes in the intensively farmed portions of the Agricultural Zone should be 40 acres or 20. Environmentalists favor 40, development interests favor 20, and agriculturalists are split.

Here's what the Board did on September 14th: Against the advice of their own staff and the County Counsel's office, the Board "implemented" the Ag & Open Space Element by *discarding* a criterion for breaking down parcels to 20 acres for the purpose of calculating the number of smaller lots in an Ag cluster. (Ag clusters are purportedly a mechanism for protecting agricultural land by providing a "tool in the toolbox" to keep large agricultural holdings from fragmenting via standard subdivisions. The same building entitlement could be achieved by clustering the buildable lots on a small portion of the ranch or farm, while preserving the rest in agricultural production.)

This is the language the Board discarded: "The proposed parcels must be Class I and II soils, irrigated." The impact of this change could be huge. It discards soil classification as a criterion for reaching 20-acre base densities. Instead of restricting these densities to deep-soiled irrigated bottomlands, it allows breakdown in vast areas where the former calculations had to be based on one house per 160 acres. This is an enormous boon to the real estate industry, and a precursor to the most pernicious type of sprawl.

The action the Board of Supervisors purported to be "implementation" of Ag & Open Space policies on ag clusters and minimum parcel sizes. The portion of their action that is the subject of this suit is, in fact, an amendment which was not heard or processed as such.

The advice of the Planning and Ag Departments was based on the likely outcome of the County's discarding of the criterion, while the advice of the County Counsel's office was based on the illegal process. Because these cautions are in the record of the hearing, plaintiffs are optimistic that this will be an easy and likely win, even in a county notorious for running roughshod over planning and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The suit was filed by SMART (Santa Margarita Area Residents Together) with LOPE (Life on Planet Earth) in support. The suit has two prongs: that this action was not anticipated when the Negative Declaration was certified (yes, the whole Ag & Open Space Element got through on a declaration of no environmental impact!), nor when LOPE lost a prior court case challenging that Declaration, and the impacts of the change are demonstrably significant. This is an amendment to the General Plan, not an implementation, and County Counsel is on record cautioning the Board that if they wish to make this change they must go through the General Plan Amendment process, which includes publication, public notification, and Environmental Review.

The Board's defiant action was a blatant "let's see what we can get away with" taunt, and the message has to be that they can't get away with it.

SMART has reason to hope that they (and contributors) have a good chance of getting their money back, as the county is so clearly at fault that any fair-minded judge would likely force the county to refund SMART's costs.

This is about beating back a scheme to open up prime California agricultural land and open space to sprawling development. To help with legal costs, make out a check to the Sierra Club Foundation, write "Santa Lucia Chapter" in the Memo section, "Attn: SMART suit" on the envelope, and mail to the Chapter address. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

a fine grows in Creston

If you missed the December 16 "Viewpoint" in the Tribune, "The Voice of the People *Can* Make a Difference," it's worth looking up. Determined Chapter activists and outraged neighbors slapped down the Regional Water Quality Control Board's wrist-slap fine as it was about to be levied against the developers who illegally graded the Pierson and Kalegian Ranch properties near Creston.

Be sure to attend the spring Water Board hearing and stand up for the assessment of a real fine for the damage shown at left.

Investing

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investment capital in the United States using one or more of the above listed strategies. This is 11.3% of investment assets under professional management and is up from \$639 billion in 1995. In 1990, there were only 12 socially screened mutual funds offered to the public, in 2004 there were more than 150. One of the oldest funds, Pax World Balanced fund, which was first offered in 1971, has continued to prosper with excellent returns and has never invested in war.

Studies have shown that SRI has provided returns that are typically equal to or greater than traditional non-screened portfolios. The Domini Social 400 Index, an index of 400 socially screened companies, has grown by 426% from May 1990 to September 2004. This is better than the S&P 500, the Industry "Gold Standard" of performance that grew 360% for the same period.

The environment is one of the most important issues to socially responsible investors. Most of the SRI mutual funds and fund families, including Calvert, Citizens and Pax World, screen on this issue. There are some that put special emphasis on this issue. These include the new Sierra Club funds, Portfolio 21 and Winslow Green Growth fund. The most common Avoidance screens are tobacco, firearms, war and nuclear power. Corporate governance, labor issues and the environment are applied as both Avoidance and Affirmative screens. Socially Responsible investors can also screen on human rights and animal rights as well as a myriad of religious and ethical issues. The SRI industry has developed extensive resources to help investment advisers and individual investors choose a portfolio that reflects their personal values.

Warning: Investing in stocks and bonds involves risk. All mutual funds are subject to market risks and economic uncertainty. Some SRI mutual funds and investment portfolios, like all investment

portfolios, under-perform the market and show losses. Investigate carefully before making any investment. Never invest in anything that will cause you to lose a good night's sleep.

As consumers and investors, one of the most powerful tools we have is the power of money. One example is the growth of the health and organic food industry. As consumers continue to demand and spend their money on organically grown food, the industry is responding by offering more products, even at mainstream super markets. Vons and other supers commonly stock Horizon Brand Organic Milk. The expansion of food stores such as Whole Foods and Trader Joes could not happen without consumer support and profits made by the market owners.

Continuing SR investing has brought about important corporate changes. Dupont was a company that fought environmental clean up for years. They are now one of the world's leaders in producing products with no toxic wastes and have developed a division that is in the business of cleaning up the environment, a \$200 million-a-year enterprise. Home Depot has adopted a policy to not sell any lumber from old growth forests.

We may have had a temporary setback for the environment politically, but the battle to save the planet continues. SRI is a crucial part of this battle.

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The fine print: The above has been written for information and educational purposes only. It is not intended to contain recommendations or solicit sales on any specific investment. Take care to thoroughly read prospectuses before making any investment.

Chimeneas

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away from our vehicles.

In the grasslands, large flocks of horned larks swarmed. Hawks perched upon snags. A couple of road-runners entertained us. We admired pond turtles at one of the small seeps.

At Gillam springs, the water flowed out from a small cave, then down about 100 yards to a large dirt dam. Here was the spectacular sight of the trip. A flock of mountain bluebirds, flashing shimmering blue, swirled, settled, swirled and flew, and repeatedly returned to pondlet. The sight remains a wonderful memory.

While the DF&G has closed escrow on this property, much remains to be done. Biological resources need to be inventoried, and citizen-scientists can help. The purchase includes an extensive ranch house complex, which would make an excellent education center. That requires funding, and the state has no money for such things. Even the purchase may be threatened under the initiative mandating the sale of surplus state property. What if this was declared surplus?

We ended up on a high hill where the herd of about 20 male Tule elk was visible. The view of this harsh land stretched all around us. It is difficult land in which for humans to survive. It is wonderful land for the plants and animals adapted to living there; a land rich in biological resources. It is invaluable land as a connection for biological diversity.

Marketplace

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that it will require an otherwise unnecessary new freeway interchange at Prado Road to handle just a small portion of the additional traffic it will generate. Instead of a lovely view of prime agricultural land and the Morros at the entrance of the City, visitors will be "welcomed" by the sight of generic sprawl-mart at its worst.

It also is a bad financial deal for the City. Amazingly, the City has agreed to pay for most of the costs associated with the interchange and related improvements, either directly or by giving away an estimated \$750,000 in sales taxes years to the developer every year for 30. Between the unprecedented sales-tax subsidy to the developer and the City's share of the Prado Interchange and related expenses, this project will drain almost \$46 million from City coffers. As a result, SLO will be left with significant long term financial commitments that will limit its ability to eliminate existing traffic bottlenecks or unsafe intersections, provide adequate services for our seniors and maintain high quality police and fire protection.

The Marketplace will have at least seven significant, unavoidable environmental impacts, including severe traffic congestion and degradation of air quality, especially in surrounding neighborhoods. The EIR is so flawed that its sufficiency has been challenged in court by another citizen's group, Citizens for Planning Responsibly, and Cal Trans may make them do a whole new EIR before approving the interchange. Among other problems, it simply does not address the many impacts of the interchange, such as increased flooding over the freeway and the possible need to mitigate by widening or channelizing San Luis Creek on the east side of 101.

The developers are throwing up all the legal flack they can think of to keep this from coming to a vote. To win this fight, Save San Luis Obispo needs your financial help right now. Please go to our website, www.savesanluisobispo.org and click on "click here" for a printable contribution form. Print it out, fill it out and send it with your (hopefully generous) check to Save San Luis Obispo, P.O. Box 4312, San Luis Obispo CA 93403-4312. You do not need to live in the City of San Luis Obispo to contribute, and there are no campaign expenditure limits on ballot measures. No contribution is too large or too small.

Tanks!

First, outgoing Chapter Chair Tarren Collins alerted the California Coastal Commission to the issuance of a peculiar "emergency permit" to the Cambria Community Services District. Then, thanks to determined Commission staff and the state Attorney General's office, the California coast dodged a bullet and a dire precedent on December 17 when a San Luis Obispo Superior Court judge upheld the Coastal Commission's cease & desist order and issued a preliminary injunction against the District. The CCSD wants to build new water storage tanks in an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area.

The District had invoked eminent domain to seize private property in an ESHA protected by a conservation easement managed by the Nature Conservancy, and claimed it had obtained an emergency permit to cut down 60+ endangered Monterey pines in the ESHA. If this were allowed, all future developers could potentially claim an "emergency" to trump conservation easements and/or develop on the coast.

Counsel for the Attorney General, Coastal Commission, San Luis Obispo County, and the Cambria CSD spent the day in court arguing over the legality of the Coastal Commission's cease & desist order, the propriety of San Luis Obispo rescinding its original emergency permit at the Commission's behest, and the nature of Cambria's "emergency" (potential future earthquakes and fires).



The Court ruled that the Cambria Community Services District is not exempt from the requirements of the Local Coastal Plan and the Coastal Development Permit process; the County's original emergency permit had been properly rescinded; the Cambria CSD was not entitled to a second emergency permit because its requirement for new tanks may be urgent but is not an emergency as defined by statute; and the Coastal Commission was entitled to a preliminary injunction to halt the project. The court ordered the injunction and instructed all parties to work together to come up with an acceptable plan.

The Cambria CSD backed down from previous threats to haul out the chainsaws and proceed with construction regardless of what the Court ruled, and agreed to abide by the injunction. (But it is appealing the Court's decision regardless, evidently determined to spend even more of Cambria's money on legal maneuvers instead of reinforcement of the existing water tanks.)

Thank you, Coastal Commission!

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., Jan. 1, 9:30 a.m. NEW YEARS

MUSSEL ROCK HIKE: Come take this 26th annual hike with Bill Denneen to the top of the highest dunes. Meet at end of West Main on the beach. Bring lunch, water, binoculars, inspirational reading. Dogs on a leash permitted at this time of year. It is out and back so you can turn around anytime. Confirm: 929-3647 or <bdenneen@slonet.org>

Sun., Jan 2nd 9:30 a.m., DANA ADOBE: Meet at site on Oak Glen in Nipomo. Easy hike. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat., Jan. 8, 9:00 a.m. 45th Annual Sierra Club Anniversary Dunes Hike at Oso Flaco Lake.

Come and take an easy, moderate or long walk on this 45th annual celebration of our Sierra Club chapter's first official hike in the dunes. There will be hikes for all ages and fitness levels. Meet in the Oso Flaco Lake parking lot and hear stories of the early days of our chapter. Carpooling is advised, as there is a \$4.00/car parking fee. For details call Jack Beigle (773-2147)

Saturday January 8th, 9 a.m.,-San Simeon State Park.-Meet at 9 a.m. at the Spencer's parking lot in Morro Bay (off Route 1-next to Taco Temple)-Bring steady shoes, warm clothing, water and a snack to share-Moderate hike with diverse natural, setting-If you come from Paso or Cambria, call Eliane at 473-0288 a few days before the hike for an alternate meeting place-Heavy rain cancels-Optional lunch afterward in Cambria

Sat-Sun., Jan. 8-9, Antelope Protection Carcamp. With little rainfall and few water sources, the species that live in the Carrizo Plain are both hardy and endangered. Particularly beautiful are the pronghorn antelope,

which evolved in these wild, open spaces. Join us for a weekend in this remote area removing fencing for their benefit. Camp at KCL campground, bring food, water, and camping gear for the weekend. Potluck Sat. night. For fence removal, bring heavy leather gloves, old long-sleeved shirts and sweatshirts, long pants, boots. Rain cancels. Alternate



A Carrizo pronghorn Bob Stafford

date: Jan 22-23. Resource specialist: Alice Koch. For more information, contact Leaders: Cal and Letty French, cc french@tcsn.net, (805-239-7338), 14140 Chimney Rock Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. **Santa Lucia Chap/CNRCC Desert Com Sun., Jan. 9, 8:30 a.m. Cabrillo Peak and Beyond.** Join us for this 2.5 hr. 6 mile loop hike with 900' elevation gain. Everyone welcome but beginners will fall way behind due to the non-stop pace and elevation gain. Meet at the quarry trailhead at the large dirt parking lot in Morro Bay State Park. It is located on South Bay Boulevard, 1.3 miles from Hwy 1 or 2.6 miles from Los Osos Valley Road. Rain cancels. Leader: Al (534-0462) (3B)

Sun., Jan. 9, 9:30 a.m. Pismo Dunes Preserve. Meet at Melodrama in Oceano. Out and back so turn around anytime. See a LOT of sand. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat., Jan. 15, 8:45 a.m. ADOBE TRAIL: Moderate to strenuous hike on a trail through chaparral and oak-studded grassland (7 mrt, 1300 ft elev. gain). Bring lunch, water, jacket and sturdy shoes. Meet 8:45am in Santa Maria at the North SB County Government Center's easternmost parking lot. Rain cancels. JERRY 928-3598 (AR)(3C)

Sun., Jan. 16th, 9:30 a.m., POINT SAL: Meet at end of Brown Rd at locked gate at 0930 climb 2.5 miles to 'pass' and then decide what next. Water, windbreaker, lunch. Dogs on leash OK. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat., Jan. 22, 8:00 a.m. Silver Peak Wilderness Coastal Traverse. Come explore the Silver Peak Wilderness as we head up the Cruickshank Trail to the Buckeye Trail then head south towards Salmon Creek. I can promise great views if the weather is clear. This is a moderately strenuous 8.5 mile hike with a 2000-foot elevation gain. Poison Oak will be present. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes, and dress for the weather. Meet at Spencer's Market in Morro Bay.

Rain Cancels. Details, call Gary at (473-3694) (3D)

Sunday January 23rd, 8:30 a.m., - Grover Beach to Pismo Beach- meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Grover Beach main parking lot (exit Route 1 at the railroad crossing--lot is adjacent to the restaurant). Bring a wind breaker, shoes that can be wet, gloves and a hat. Very easy hike. Optional breakfast in Pismo and return via the board walk with stop at the Monarch butterfly reserve.

Sun., Jan. 23rd, 9:30 a.m. MUSSEL ROCK: Meet on Guad. Beach at 0930, Hike south to top of MR, we hope. Dogs on leash OK at this time of year. See site of proposed parking lot. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat. Jan. 29, 9:00 am. False Alan Peak. Enjoy a wide variety of terrain and habitat and bag the highest peak in Montana de Oro SP on this 10 mi., 1400-ft. loop hike. Meet at visitor center. We will return via Coon Creek and the bluffs. Rain cancels. Bob Schwartz (441-9508) <rws_usa@yahoo.com> (4C)

Sun., Jan. 30, 9:30 a.m. COAST HIKE— Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sun., Jan. 30, LAKE SAN ANTONIO EAGLE WATCH Lake San Antonio is a great winter outing if we can schedule it between the rains. All we need is a little sunshine and we should have another super outing. We have always seen bald and golden eagles, ospreys, pelicans and many other birds on our outings at Lake San Antonio. Dress warmly in layers. Bring your boat and equipment, PFDs, windbreaker, warm clothes, lunch and binoculars. Phone Jack Beigle, 773-2147 for reservation, park fees and details.

Sat., Feb. 5, 8:45 a.m., OATS PEAK-COON CREEK LOOP: Hike from Spooner's Cove Ranger Station along gradually ascending open ridge to lunch at Oats Peak. After lunch, we'll descend along a spur ridge through a canopy of oak woods through Coon Creek valley to the ocean. Loop may be finished by Bluff trail or roadway back to the Ranger Station (9 mrt, 1500 ft. elev. gain). Meet 8:45a.m. in Santa Maria at the North SB County Government Center's easternmost parking lot. Rain cancels. SLO residents call for meeting time and place. Hikes are subject to change so always contact the leader. JERRY 928-3598 (AR)

Sun. Feb. 6, 11 a.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 lunch 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 11am. Hikes are subject to change, always contact the leader. JIM 937-6766 (AR)



Photo by Joaquin Palting

Sun. Feb 6, 9:30 a.m. PISMO DUNES PRESERVE: Meet at Melodrama in Oceano at 0930. Secret passageway to spectacular dunes. Dogs on leash OK. Water and windbreaker. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat., Feb. 12, 10 a.m., BIRDING IN MORRO BAY: We will tour the back bay to see how many shore birds we can find. Bring your boat and equipment, PFD, windbreaker, bird book, binoculars and a picnic lunch. HIGH TIDE 12:19 PM 4.7' Launch at MB Park State Marina, low tide, 6:36 PM 0.4' Put in at 10:00 am Jack Beigle 773-2147

Sun., Feb. 13, 9:30 a.m. POINT SAL: Meet at end of Brown Rd at locked gate at 0930 climb 2.5 miles to 'pass' and then decide. Dogs OK if they do not chase cattle. Water, lunch, windbreaker, nos, and a friend. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat-Mon., Feb. 19-21, Southern Nevada Hot Spots: President's Day field trip to visit two key threatened public land areas. Join a day hike Saturday to the new Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, just south of Las Vegas, where helicopter overflights are a serious concern, if a proposed new heliport is built. Sunday and Monday join overnight car campout to the Gold Butte area at the eastern edge of the state where cultural artifacts and unique geologic formations are in danger of being overrun by increases in recreation use by off-road vehicles. We'll see these troubled treasures for ourselves and learn how we can help. The overnight features central commissary. Leader Vicky Hoover is assisted by several local experts. vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org, (415-977-5527). *SF Bay/CNRCC Desert Com*

Sun., Feb. 20, 9:30 a.m., MUSSEL ROCK: Meet on Guad. Beach at 0930, Hike south. Dog on leash OK at this time of year. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org.

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.