



SIERRA
CLUB

- 40 Years on the SLO Coast -
Santa Lucia Chapter
1968-2008

February 2008
Volume 45 No. 2

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General Meeting

7 p.m., Feb. 22,
St. Stephens Episcopal
Church, SLO:

It Takes a Creek

Hear from the people
working to save our local
streams and watersheds
and find out what you
can do.

- 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

Why We Sue



Hard rain: The Cayucos Viewshed deserves better than what it got from the Board of Supervisors.

For the Cayucos Viewshed

Sierra Club sues to fix flawed Cayucos Viewshed ordinance. Action would force review of environmental impacts of controversial measure.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club filed suit against the County of San Luis Obispo on January 17. We are challenging the Cayucos Viewshed ordinance as approved by Supervisors Ovitt, Achadjian and Lenthall in one of the most controversial actions taken by the County Board of Supervisors last year.

"Projects permitted and built under this ordinance would significantly degrade scenic public views in one of this county's signature landscapes," said Karen Merriam, Chair of the Sierra Club's Santa Lucia Chapter. "The Sierra Club cannot stand by and allow such an act of destruction to take place. On behalf of this irreplaceable landscape and the hundreds of citizens who asked the supervisors to honor a sound planning process and the broad public opposition to narrow private interests, the Sierra Club must take this bold action to fix the problem the board created."

The board majority was widely criticized for passing the ordinance as drafted by a private property rights group and ignoring more protective drafts prepared by county planners and unanimously approved by the supervisors' appointees on the County Planning Commission. Planning staff had found that the "prominent ridgeline" standard developed by Protect our Property Rights (POPR) was flawed and unusable. The board of supervisors ignored this fundamental flaw, agreed to reduce the area recommended by the Planning Commission by more than nine-tenths and add multiple exemptions for land owners and future land speculators wishing to build homes on ridgelines.

The Sierra Club's lawsuit is designed to protect the viewshed from inappropriate development and safeguard environmental resources in the area by keeping current standards in place and preventing any projects from going forward under the new ordinance; stop the precedent-setting nature of the ordinance from weakening other viewshed protection policies elsewhere in the county by requiring a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) with a complete alternatives analysis;

highlight the county's consistent abuse of state law through the inappropriate use of "Negative Declarations" claiming no environmental impacts, and put an end to that abuse. An EIR would require that the county put mitigations in place for any identified impacts to the environment resulting from the broad

loopholes in the ordinance. (Example: Under the ordinance, a home on a 2,600-foot long ridgeline would have to be longer than a football field to trigger minimal screening requirements.)

The board plowed the process under and consigned 47,000 acres of near

continued on page 10

A Watershed Win

by Jeffrey E. Auerbach, Ph.D., MCC

On January 17, South County residents succeeded in turning back Los Robles

del Mar, an unsustainable proposed housing development and annexation

that had been heading for inevitable approval for over ten years. This is the story of their extraordinary grassroots victory.

It was January 19, 2006. My wife Jeanne and I were at the Avila Club and I picked up a copy of the *Tribune*. The top story of the local section said: "Pismo Council OKs Housing Plan."



The record overflow crowd at the Jan. 17 LAFCO meeting.

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General Meeting

Santa Lucian • Feb. 2008



It's time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

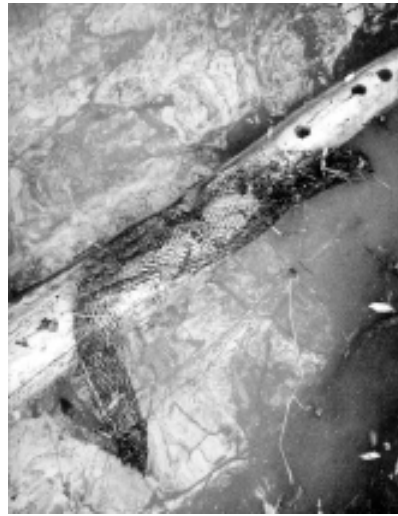
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

What's In Your Creek?

Quite a lot that you may not want! Get the big-picture of watershed management from the experts and hear the first-hand experience of the struggle to clean up Nipomo Creek from some determined local residents. Find out what's getting into your own beloved local waterway.



7 p.m., Friday, February 22
St. Stephens Episcopal Church
1334 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo
- Pismo Street entrance
parking lot off Pismo.

Water that Works

If you hear only one international wastewater treatment visionary this year...

SLO Green Build, the San Luis Bay Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club are working together with government agencies to educate the community on emerging technologies that will aid in sustainable development and green building. The first phase of the campaign will focus on technologies that help conserve water — just in time to help out areas such as the Nipomo mesa, Los Osos and Cambria, which are rated at critical Level III water severity.

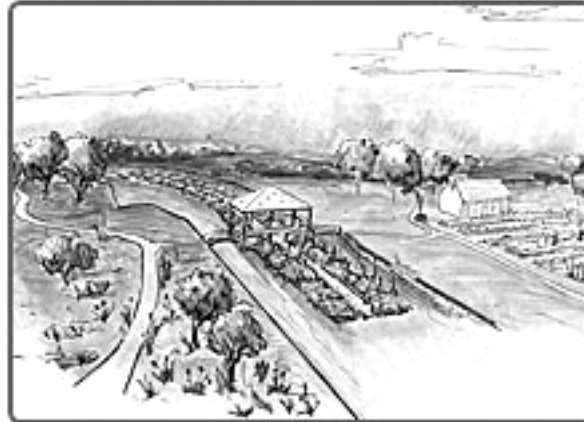
The education campaign will kick off Feb. 6th and 7th with keynote speaker Jonathan Todd of Todd Ecological Design, Inc., an award-winning water and natural resources planning firm. Todd Ecological (www.toddecological.com) has been featured in CNN International and *Audubon* magazine as an ecological visionary of the 21st century, providing comprehensive construction, design, consulting, and facility operations services to public and private clients for cost-effective aesthetic solutions to wastewater, storm water, aquatic environment management, and bio-solids conversion.

At each of two events, Todd will address appropriate technology in San Luis Obispo county, including the Los Osos wastewater treatment project.

The events will feature a display of technologies such as composting toilets, gray water systems, dual flush toilets and much more. There will be refreshments, food and music. We will raffle off several prizes including a dual flush toilet, surfboard, and an overnight stay at TreeBones Resort in Big Sur.

Schedule of Events:

- 2/6/08, Morning site tour of Los Osos to develop a Todd Ecological Project Proposal for submittal to SLO County's Los Osos Waste Water Treatment Project. Tour by Chuck Cesena, director of LOCSD.
- 1 pm: Meeting w/ SLO County Los Osos Project Team @ SLO Gov't Center



- Afternoon Meetings with Regional Water Board and local municipalities.

Public Presentations & Sustainability Socials

February 6th, Wed; 6 - 9 p.m. @ SLO Botanical Garden (\$20 suggested donation) New education & convention facility (www.slobg.org), (El Chorro Regional Park, across Hwy 1 from Cuesta College).

February 7th, Thurs; 6 - 10 p.m.: LOS OSOS @ South Bay Community Center (2180 Palisades Ave., behind the skate park.)

At both events:

- ~ Music by the Cuesta Jazz Ensemble
- ~ American Flatbread Pizza, Cayucos Brewing Company Beer, Wine, Sweet Earth Organic Chocolate, and Raffle by Donation (All funds raised will assist sustainability efforts within SLO County.)

Appropriate technology defined:

"Technology appropriate to sustain a society of finite resources at a human scale," utilizing triple bottom line accounting- economy, ecology and social equity.

- Design For Life, Sim Van der Ryn, (California State Architect 1970 - 1980)

Statement from the State of California Office of Appropriate Technology:

"The use of appropriate technology can help make possible energy optimization, water conservation and affordable housing."

SANTA LUCIAN

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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 11th of the prior month.

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COUNCIL OF CLUB LEADERS

The Executive Committee meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 3:30 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 547-B Marsh St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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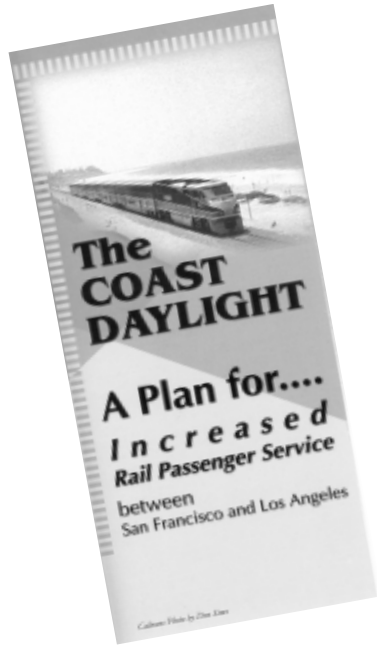
Bring Back the Coast Daylight Train!

Would you take the train from SLO to San Francisco if there was one? And if it was easy, fast, and on time? And if it cost around \$40? Then you need to get behind the Coast Daylight Project, restoring daily train service between L.A. and S.F. for the first time in 35 years.

This was the gist of the Rail Passenger Association of California meeting held at the SLO public library on January 19, led by RailPAC President Paul Dyson.

The Sierra Club is all about mass transit alternatives to car and air travel, easing traffic congestion and putting a significant dent in global warming emissions via increased rail travel...so let's all get on board this train!

For the state to allocate the funds to do it right (planners are keenly aware of the on-time and ease of use require-



ments) and start service by 2011, the legislature needs to start feeling the push now from residents of communities along the route. Contact Assembly-member Sam Blakeslee (549-3381) and Senator Abel Maldonado (549-3784) and tell them you support the allocation of \$25 million in Proposition 1B funds by the California Transportation Commission to establish the Coast Daylight route.

RailPAC welcomes queries and assistance. E-mail pauljdyson@yahoo.com

Sierra Student Coalition Coming to Cal Poly

In the fall of 2007, after attending the Chico State Sustainability Conference, members of the Empower Poly Coalition (EPC) decided to establish a Cal Poly chapter of the Sierra Club's national student coalition.

The Sierra Student Coalition is the nation's largest student-led environmental group, with over 250 affiliated groups at schools around the country.

EPC members Ben Eckold, a sustainable business major, and Jorge Montezuma, an environmental engineering major, decided it was time to integrate more students into the environmental movement by offering an alternative path within the student community to train, empower, and organize youth to run effective environmental campaigns that result in tangible victories and leadership development.

To accomplish this, they have been

working with Empower Poly to help develop the second annual student sustainability leadership conference,



Jorge Montezuma (left) and Ben Eckold (right) confer with Sierra Club California Energy Committee co-chair Ken Smokoska on the establishment of the Cal Poly Sierra Student Coalition chapter.

"Be the Change '08," which will be held at the Cal Poly campus on April 26th.

Once it receives its campus charter, The Cal Poly Sierra Student Coalition hopes to facilitate the connection between Cal Poly students and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

For more information, contact calpolyssc@gmail.com

Watershed Win

continued from page 3

"The City Council approved the proposal Nov. 16, 2004, on the condition that the developers could prove water from two city wells – which haven't been used in 10 years – is treatable. The developers couldn't. Instead, they showed that three wells on the Los Robles property contain enough treatable water to serve the development."

I looked at my wife and said, "Wait a minute, we live right near there, they must be talking about pumping the water from under our neighborhood's homes – that's where we get our water from. They might pump so much that all our wells could go dry."

Jeanne looked worried. I had a hectic work schedule coming up and I said to her, "Maybe you could call the county and find out more about this?"

We were both so busy we never seemed to get around to it. Finally she gave the county a call and found out that the Local Agency Formation Commission knew about the City of Pismo Beach's plans because Pismo Beach was trying to annex the LRDM parcel.

Jeanne ended up talking to David Church at LAFCO, one of the county's most diligent public servants. He provided us with some initial documents on the proposed annexation, especially related to the source of water for the 312-residence development. It turned out there was no environmental

impact report done on the impact of pumping or the developer transferring the title of the three wells to the City of Pismo Beach or the City's plan to pump them for "for unlimited use."

Neighbors got involved big time. We

What was accomplished today is unprecedented in our County, and a landmark decision that will aid our position on future land use matters for many years.

- John Schwind, OPCG Board Member

formed a non-profit organization, The Oak Park Community Group, and asked for donations so we could retain an attorney. The most active of us became our Board of Directors. We created a website and had a fund-raising drive – all done by incredible volunteers who gave countless hours.

I called my friends David Gold and Susan Goodkin in Ventura. Susan wrote the text of the successful SOAR initiative in Ventura County. She recommended that I talk to Rachel Hooper, considered one of the best CEQA attorneys in the state, at Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger LLP in San Francisco. Rachel began helping us and brought in her associate, Attorney Gabriel Ross.

With Rachel and Gabe's legal

assistance we were able to demand a Supplemental EIR to study the impact of the proposed pumping of these big wells by the City of Pismo Beach on the neighbors' water supply and also on the wetlands across the street from the project on Oak Park Boulevard. Our group hired hydrologist Derrick Williams, and his report said the pumping of the wells might dry out the wetlands. I had been a Political Chair for the Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club, so I started calling Andrew Christie at the Santa Lucia Chapter for help and advice. (See "Pismo's

Water Trap," April 2006 *Santa Lucian*.) Then Harry Goodnight from the Oak Park Homeowners Association got involved and joined the Santa Lucia Chapter's Conservation Committee. The Sierra Club joined us in our letter-writing efforts.

We were on the Dave Congalton radio show twice and Jeanne organized a "March for Awareness" – a two-mile walk of 60 people carrying signs that was featured on two TV stations.

We had countless meetings, exchanged thousands of emails, and then on January 17, 2008, we won: a 6-1 vote at LAFCO against the Los Robles del Mar annexation!

What a Meeting That Was

Harry Goodnight on the Jan. 17 LAFCO Los Robles del Mar annexation hearing

Public comments proceeded for over four hours, with most people speaking against LRDM.

Several members of OPCG related anecdotes about how they have had to redrill wells during the past two years, and how the quality of water from those wells had suffered. Several people talked about the use of their land for agriculture, with many acres planted grapes and olive trees. They related how loss of water would cause them severe economic as well as aesthetic losses. The commentary also highlighted that the SEIR had severely underestimated the

expected use of the parcels adjacent to the project in several ways:

- There are 742 parcels in the Oak Park basin, not all of which are developed, but will be developed in the coming years.
- Given the number of parcels and the expected new dwellings that that will be built, the water usage of these parcels was severely underestimated.
- Many of the parcels contain some aspect of agricultural usage, which has water requirements far beyond those of residential uses.
- Should the aquifer be put in overdraft, the only recourse would be to sue SLO County, Pismo Beach, and Arroyo Grande. In the meantime, property values would plummet and people might have to abandon their homes.

Environmental impacts on wetlands and riparian areas in Oak Park Canyon were discounted in the SEIR, when in fact there were documented cases of impacts on wetlands and oaks due to the drought, *without* LRDM pumping.

The denial of annexation was "without prejudice," meaning that Pismo does not need to wait a full 12 months to resubmit the application for annexation, should they be able to identify a source of water for LRDM. It ain't over til the fat lady sings!



Spared: The Oak Park Basin's Meadow Creek wetlands..

Nuclear Task Force Report, Winter 2007

By Rochelle Becker Chair, Nuclear Power Task Force

Nov 29-Dec 3:

It was my honor as the west-of-the-Mississippi member of the Sierra Club's Radiation Committee to join the Committee's (and the Club's) first nationwide forum on the cradle-to-grave pitfalls of nuclear power.

Sitting in rocking chairs atop a beautiful mountain overlooking a Tennessee valley of fall colors, Sierra Club women came together to seek solutions. What is the solution to the mounting stockpiles of high-level radioactive waste near our nation's waterways and oceans? How can we stop the steam-rolling nuclear industry lobbying for our tax dollars to fund their deadly generation

facilities? And how can we prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials which could devastate our communities, our states, the world in which we live?

These were women determined to unite and educate others to speak out and stand up to protect our children and grandchildren. These were women who had given up high-paying jobs, spent days, weeks, months, years and decades determined to find a path that would bring more than a "Sophie's Choice" for our electric generation needs. And these were women both proud and grateful to be working with the Sierra Club to create a legacy of

truly independent, economic, renewable, sustainable and non-nuclear energy future.

Nov. 29:

Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility outreach coordinator David Weisman drove six hours from San Luis Obispo to Lone Pine, California, to attend the one and only hearing on the Yucca Mountain Environmental Impact Statement held in the state of California. Of the 50 or so people in attendance, David was the only Californian *not* a resident of Inyo County to attend, with the exception of a representative of the Attorney General

and a reporter from the *L.A. Times*.

There was an important bit of information awaiting Mr. Weisman: Careful examination of the Dept. of Energy displays of their newest maps for transport routes to Yucca revealed that the radioactive waste casks from Diablo Canyon, rather than being barged down the coast to Pt. Hueneme, would be traveling on oversize and overweight trucks on local SLO roads through Avila to the rail station and then shipped south through our county and Santa Barbara on the coast rail line.

This clearly puts the burden for emergency preparedness, infrastructure improvements and logistics on our county. David asked the DOE officials for answers on the costs of training emergency responders, paying for improvements and other transport-related questions not only on behalf of SLO, but San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial, which will also be seeing the waste from Arizona, Texas and Louisiana passing through.

David also asked the DOE why they didn't hold public hearings in these impacted areas and quizzed them on their lack of communication with California's state legislators. He then brought these issues to SLO County Supervisors at their next meeting, and also to the attention of the *Tribune*, which ran a cover story the following Sunday (www.sanluisobispo.com/news/local/story/215100.html).

Dec 10:

David Weisman and I attended state Senator Kehoe's hearing on the status of nuclear power in California. Economist Jim Harding gave testimony on the overly optimistic predictions of the nuclear industry in its pursuit of new reactors. But it was Carl Zichella, Sierra Club's regional director for Hawaii, Nevada and California, who brought down the ire of Assemblyman Chuck DeVore. Carl quoted from former Vice-President Al Gore ("I doubt if [nuclear plants] will play a significant role in most countries as a new source of electricity...") and stressed increasing economic risks, the long time lag in getting nuclear reactors on line, and issues of waste and proliferation. Assemblyman DeVore, whose bill to overturn California's nuclear safety laws died in committee last Spring and who recently withdrew his ballot initiative to do the same, was so incensed and aggressive in his challenges to Carl's points that Senator Kehoe had to cut the Assemblyman off at the microphone.

The next day, Mr. DeVore blogged: "Wholly unconvincing in his testimony was Carl Zichella, the Regional Field Director of the Sierra Club. Perhaps it was my 13 years in the aerospace industry or my 24 years as a military intelligence officer, but using a large number of scary sounding adjectives does not make up for an utter lack of data." Mr. DeVore appears to persist in his belief that personally attacking those he disagrees with will be productive.

Dec 12:

The California Energy Commission held its first workshop on the scope of its cradle-to-grave cost benefit and risk analysis of the state's dependence on nuclear power. I presented the contractors with a list of additions to the scope, as did the Santa Lucia Chapter. The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility will file comments, posted at www.a4nr.org, along with comments to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on impacts of air attacks.

Gaming the System

There are some towering questions on Highway 41

By Sue Harvey

Should someone who gets caught violating our county codes by undertaking commercial development without a permit, falsely claiming the work is for agricultural activities and therefore exempt from permit requirements, get off without a fine?

What if the project he is pursuing not only lacked proper permits, but was clearly not allowable under the policies of our county's General Plan? Should the violator be exonerated and allowed to profit from those activities?

Does it make sense for the County to issue an "after the fact" permit to legalize something that would not be approvable on an undisturbed site?

These are the questions that County Planning Commissioners considered last July when they grappled with and tentatively approved, on a 3-2 vote, several new cell phone antennas on a gruesomely decapitated mountaintop on Highway 41 West.

The property owner told neighbors he was grading a road to a hilltop home-site, and bulldozing a large berm as part of his building pad. The highly visible site, now a bald plateau, is geologically unstable. The road is steep, narrow, and not built to CDF standards. When dubious neighbors contacted County Code

enforcement, the owner told the county that the development was for an agricultural barn, and was therefore exempt from permit requirements.

There was just one problem. The property owner is not a farmer. He is a consultant for the cell phone industry who lives in Southern California, and who knew that Nextel was seeking additional service opportunities along that stretch of Highway 41 when he bought the property. When county staff visited the site, instead of a barn they found a series of dummy cell antennas on the "building pad" and an oversized electrical panel. Claiming that his grading activities were undertaken in the name of agriculture is an insult to this county's farmers and ranchers who utilize this exemption for legitimate ag purposes.

The gentleman has a contract with Sprint/Nextel to provide cell phone service on the site. Not surprisingly, he does not have a contract for any agricultural products. While the value of the cell Service contract was not disclosed, a similar arrangement with Nextel in

Panza Ranch, the hilltop homesites, wells and roads in the Pierson/Kelegian Ranch on Highway 58, wholesale clearcutting of oak woodlands on the Bonheim Ranch, and the infamous "Cayucos Castle," aka Lavender farm, to name a few), it is time for the County to rein in the bad actors.

One obvious solution is to require a "rancher" to come in to the County Planning Department and actually apply for the exemption. They could be required to show that they have a legitimate agricultural-based need for the development, and that it fits within the parameters of the exemptions.

It is unfortunate that real ranchers and farmers should have to suffer for the unscrupulous activities of developers. But allowing such abuse to continue is even worse.

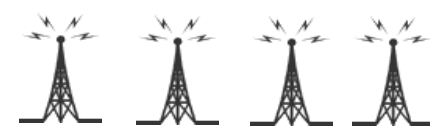


Abuse of Agricultural Exemptions Will Hurt Farmers

There is another problem with the Highway 41 Nextel cell towers boondoggle: When developers are allowed to exploit exemptions that were designed to give farmers and ranchers relief from county regulations, they risk ruining the system for genuine agriculturalists. Grading roads, drilling wells, cutting down trees and clearing building pads are all activities that typically require permits, public notice and environmental review. But if these are being done to support agricultural activities, no review is needed.

The problem is, all a developer has to do is put on a cowboy hat, look a county code enforcement officer in the eye and say "It's for my ag operation" and all possibility of fines and restoration orders magically evaporates.

Given the scale and frequency of abuse (wells and roads on Santa Margarita Ranch, the airstrip on the La



TAKE ACTION

This will come back to the Planning Commission in February. Watch for the agenda — www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/meetingcalendar.htm — and come out to that meeting at the SLO County Government Center to remind the Commission of all of the above!

Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

"If it's fresh and local, is it always greener?" by Andrew Martin, *New York Times*, printed in *The Tribune*, Dec. 9, 2007.

Summary: Buying local may not be a sound policy, global-warming wise, as UC Davis researchers have found that small quantities of food transported a short distance may result in more per capita carbon emissions than large quantities of food shipped over long distances.

What the researchers actually found, per a literature review, was that "local food systems in Iowa based on small trucks carrying food to farmers markets and local institutions feasibly consume two to four times as much fuel as a regional food system using larger semitrailers and mid-sized trucks," but that both those scales of transport "are estimated to use from only one-tenth to a quarter of the fuel consumed by the conventional, long-distance distribution system to distribute the same quantity of food."

If mass producers of strawberries ship their product to Chicago by truck, the fuel cost of transporting each carton of strawberries is relatively small...but if a farmer sells his strawberries at local farmers' markets in California, he ferries a much smaller amount by pickup truck to each individual market. Which one is better for the environment?

An Iowa State University study found that most produce travels about 1,500 miles before it arrives in Iowa homes. But as the strawberry story suggests, some of it creates higher amounts of greenhouse gasses than others.

Tweezing out the energy efficiency of semi vs. pickup truck per unit shipped and ignoring every other factor involved (which the researchers in question, in fact, did not)

is a way to thread the needle to produce the desired conclusion. Food being transported 1,500-plus miles is likely coming from 10,000-acre monocrop corporate farms that produce less agricultural output per unit and are less efficient than small farms, consume massive amounts of fossil fuel, destroy biodiversity, and dump millions of tons of fertilizer and pesticides into rivers and streams. If either of those strawberry shipments were organic, they didn't involve the use of synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, which release nitrous oxides, a greenhouse gas far more potent than CO₂, or require the 2,200 pounds of coal that must be burned to produce 5.5 pounds of synthetic fertilizer. The researchers' best conclusion at the moment: "Different types of crops, grown in different locations, with different production methods, and displacing different land uses, will inevitably lead to different rates of green house gas emissions as well as carbon sequestration."

Upshot:

"Taking Issue" fans will recall our dissections of "Antibiotic-free foods are not necessarily safer, study says" (September 2006) and "Organic food may not be the best," (March 2007). Behold the trifecta and the dropping of the other shoe: Not only do "studies" say industrially grown, antibiotic-laden foods are a-okay, but now it's possible to conclude -- if you really want to -- that if you eat locally grown food you may be contributing to global warming! But not really.



Letters

send to: sierra8@charter.net, or
P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

Your article on desal projects on the Central Coast, "Where's the Water?" (Nov./Dec. *Santa Lucian*) didn't address the effects of global warming on the water supply (and therefore the viability of desal). Since your recommendation was to conserve the available water, there must be enough water to conserve. I was hoping for a discussion of rainfall predictions based on global warming that -- from what I read -- is making the West drier and hotter. What concerns me is that this combination could rule out conservation. Gambling that there will be sufficient rainfall without the science to back it up could be catastrophic for Cambria. If the wells dry up, Cambrians would end up relying on water tankers or other emergency means. That would wipe out tourism and property values and probably the community. Then there's the fire hazard. Without full water storage tanks, anything but a small and easily contained fire would be disastrous. (According to Cambria fire chief, Bob Putney, fires must be knocked down in the first hour, so out of town help and borate bombers are not an alternative.)

I assume you have discussed these scenarios and measured the global warming impact on the use of desalination, but that analysis did not show up in the article. (I also assume you didn't start with a default position that desal is bad and only used data that supported your case) desal certainly has drawbacks, but we need to reevaluate our beliefs as the world changes.

The elephant in the room in any desal discussion is global warming. Not talking about it makes any analysis or conclusions about desal suspect.

Bill Lakin
20+ year Sierra Club Member
Cambria

As "Where's the Water?" concluded:
"With global climate change affecting weather patterns [and] sea level rise

posing risks to coastal infrastructure facilities...the time is now to start planning much more intelligently for our future water security." That means getting away from the notion that we need to keep doing exactly what we're doing, the way we're doing it, so we need x more [oil, gas, electricity, water] to keep doing it. As mentioned in both the article and the much longer public meeting it summarized -- viewable at www.slo-span.org -- such planning would include potentially reclaiming 30% of wastewater through graywater systems and community treatment facilities that can also recharge the groundwater basin, improving irrigation efficiency, and a reevaluation of land use planning.

The effects of global warming -- which will actually result in more rain in some locations -- are indeed a concern in any estimation of future water availability and needs. But desalination plants are not exempt from that concern. The rising sea levels and projected increase in frequency and intensity of extreme storms that are part of the picture of global climate change are bad news for coastal desal facilities and their vulnerable intake and outfall structures. No California desal plant in operation or on the drawing boards includes any adaptive measures to incorporate the effects of climate change into its design. Additionally, because desalination is the most energy-intensive water source, operation of desal plants represents a significant increase in fossil-fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. It's clear that just throwing desal plants at the problem is not the answer. Cambria's residents would do well to bring pressure to bear on their Community Services District, which, having tried and failed with a botched desal project, should now turn to the kind of comprehensive reclamation measures and intelligent planning outlined in "Where's the Water?"

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A Very Big Deal

In the first week of 2008, the game changed for local energy issues

by Karen Merriam
Chapter Chair

It may have seemed that not much of importance happened in San Luis Obispo County the week of January 7 — the Atascadero P.D. refused to give a fired officer his job back, Lucia Mar Unified sought to add a culinary academy, Ventura bested the Cuesta Cougars 86-69 — but two momentous, little-noticed events that transpired in local government meetings, will, I predict, be recalled years from now as flashpoints for historic changes that made all the difference between a good quality of life and an unlivable one for every resident of the central coast.

The first occurred on January 8 at the meeting of the San Luis Obispo City Council. The Council moved to adopt item C-4 on their consent agenda, the place where one puts agenda items so non-controversial they don't even require discussion or a separate vote: "C4. DATA NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR A GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS INVENTORY FOR THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO." It was on February 8, 2006, that the Sierra Club first brought this policy suggestion to the city planning commission, which promptly agreed to add it to the update of San Luis Obispo's Conservation and Open Space Element, where it became Energy Policy 4.30.18.

In the two years between then and now, we worked with our friends on the city council to turn that policy into reality. Now that it is, SLO can figure out how much carbon it's putting into the atmosphere and how much it needs to cut, implement programs, policies and technologies to hit those targets,



January 9: Tam Hunt of Santa Barbara's Community Environmental Council (left) testifies on behalf of a regional Community Choice Aggregation plan before the SLO Council of Governments.

and monitor progress. The inevitable result will be the encouragement of energy efficiency, conservation, and local industry based on green power. The fight to curb climate change in our neck of the woods truly starts here.

The second historic event of the week occurred the next day and three blocks east of SLO City Hall, at the County Government Center, when the opportunity to create a feasibility study for

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) appeared before the SLO Council of Governments (SLOCOG). CCA is a state law that gives communities the ability to buy clean, alternative energy from multiple providers and realize, on average, savings of 25 percent over what they pay to investor-owned utilities. Community Choice is the road map and bullet train to a cleaner, healthier, wealthier future for this county.

It wasn't the first time the assembled mayors and county supervisors had heard about this. In workshop and roundtable discussions at the Regional Energy Planning Conference at Cal Poly last August, they indicated a strong interest in pursuing CCA as a tool for energy planning. Some had heard about it at the October 2006 Smart Energy Solutions Summit, where Sierra Club

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Another Wetlands Loss

Mark Massara, Director, Sierra Club Coastal Programs

Despite compelling evidence, the California Coastal Commission has taken no action to improve or downsize a proposed project to dramatically expand the Long Marine Lab campus on fragile Terrace Point, which is owned by the University of California, Santa Cruz. UCSC seeks to expand the campus with 600,000 square feet of new development, an expansion that threatens to destroy some of the last of California's precious coastal wetlands. Instead, the Commission embraced UCSC's claim that the environmental destruction was "worth it" since UCSC intends to educate future "ocean scientists" who will, hopefully, help to save degraded coasts and oceans somewhere else.

Thus, the Coastal Commission not only allowed acres of new buildings on top of known wetlands, but allowed patently non-coastal development such as large meeting halls, dining facilities, sports courts and housing by their decision. The vote appears to establish new precedent undermining California wetlands law, allowing special accommodations for state university developments that would not ordinarily be extended to private developers.

In the end, Commissioners Dave Potter, Steve Blank, Ben Hueso, Bonnie

Neely, Patrick Kruer, William Burke and Khatchik Achadjian all supported wetlands destruction and large scale urban development on Terrace Point. Only Commissioners Sara Wan, Mary Shallenger, Mike Reilly and Suja Lowenthal tried to improve the project or protect the resources it would affect, and their efforts were rejected by the

majority of the Commission.

While this news is not encouraging, now is not the time for us to give up or back away from what is a very pro-development-minded Coastal Commission. I am convinced that the only way to save our coast in 2008 is to intensify our efforts, and to redouble our commitment to shine a bright light of public

scrutiny on developer-cozy relations on the Commission. We must convince the Commission and their appointing authorities in Sacramento that the public demands they protect our last fragile coastal resources, and will hold them accountable for their decisions. I'm confident that we'll succeed, but only if we continue to work together.

Why Wetlands?

By Bill Denneen

Wetlands include estuaries, swamps, bogs, vernal pools, riparian corridors, marshland, creeks and sloughs. California has the dubious honor of having lost more than 90% of its historic wetlands, the largest percentage of any state in our nation. Prior to the arrival of our civilization, the U.S. had 5 million acres of wetlands. Only a half million remain. This is horrendous.

Local example of wetlands are west & south of Guadalupe, Cienega Valley, Oso Flaco Valley, and Black Lake Canyon. The situation gets even worse as we become "Losangelified" and former

wetlands start growing houses such as at "Point Sal Dunes." Just the name is an insult to sacred Point Sal and the unique Nipomo Dunes.

The Cienega Valley is the peneplain (floodplain) of Arroyo Grande Creek. The Chumash utilized this swamp as a very productive food source for 10,000 years while they lived on adjacent highlands. Our aggressive civilization comes in, drains the swamp, dikes the river and puts in intensive agriculture. Cienega Valley has been very productive ag land for the past few decades but is heading toward inevitable disaster.

Wetlands are sacred to biologists because they provide critical feeding, breeding and spawning grounds for one-third of our endangered plants and animals, and myriad waterfowl, migratory songbirds, and other wildlife. Wetlands recharge ground water supplies, control floods, purify water that flows through them and are the nurseries for the fish of the seas (e.g. steelhead trout). Wetlands are vital to the economic and environmental health of our nation, yet they are being lost at the alarming rate of 300,000 acres per year.

Our culture has not been kind to

Bulbs Across America

one year later...

By Teddy Llovet

Since January 2007, I have held 23 demonstration-talks in SLO county on the benefits of energy-saving compact fluorescent light bulbs -- CFLs. I christened the program "Bulbs Across America," inspired by the words that flicker across the screen at the end of *An Inconvenient Truth*: "If you pray, move your feet." Those words have become my mantra. I've given out free CFLs, compliments of PG&E and Miner Ace Hardware, and demonstrated a variety of CFLs at senior communities, clubs, schools, Congregation Beth David, Retired Teachers Assn., Earth Day and the Step-It-Up Rally in SLO. Last May, we did a "Kids Teaching Kids" program for after-school kids K-3 and 4-6 on energy and the environment, teaming a high school student with a Cal Poly research graduate as presenters. In August, I hosted a two-day ongoing CFL demonstration and gave free CFLs to every attendee. If every house in America replaced one standard light bulb with an energy-saving one, we could save enough energy to close down two power plants or light more than 2.5 million homes for one year, or prevent pollution equal to one million cars on the road.



Bulbs Across America is about saving energy, saving money, offering global warming solutions and hope. It's about energy-saving light bulbs and supporting our planet one bulb at a time. Training guides for hosting a demo-talk have been circulating and are available to those who want to be Light Leaders for their school, club or group. When we bring awareness and information to others, we are becoming part of the solution in addressing climate change. Contact bulbatatime@yahoo.com for easy-to-follow support materials.

I've learned a lot this year. Buildings are responsible for almost half (48%) of all carbon emissions annually. Architecture 2030 (architecture2030.org) is asking the global building community to adopt targets for greenhouse gas reduction of 50% by 2012 and to be carbon-neutral by 2030. In 2007, Santa Barbara became the first city in the nation to adopt the 2030 Challenge. Take a look at the lighting in the buildings you enter and tell people there about energy-saving light bulbs.

Someone asked me, "I've already changed to compact fluorescents. What's the next step?" My answer is: increased personal action. If you've made the change, talk about it to others. Host a demo for a group or school project. Write an article for a paper. Help others make the change and change the future of our planet.

Bulbs Across America will offer a demo-class April 9, 2008 through Cal Poly's Osher Lifelong Learning Program. Expect a variety light show with information fliers and free CFLs. A special feature will be a meter lamp for wattage comparison between a standard light bulb and an energy-saving compact fluorescent. Contact bulbatatime@yahoo.com to schedule a future event.



January 8: Santa Lucia Chapter Chair Karen Merriam (right) thanks the San Luis Obispo City Council for implementing the greenhouse gas emissions monitoring program that was placed into the city's Energy Element at our urging.

Very Big Deal

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California Energy Committee member Paul Fenn, author of California's CCA law, explained the concept of CCA to SLO. Both events were created by the local Strategic Energy Alliance for Change (SEA Change), which Sierra Club co-founded two years ago.

SLOCOG clearly got the picture and directed staff to get more information on the cost of the study and staff time requirements and report back at a future meeting. That meeting is tenta-

tively scheduled for April, when SLOCOG will vote on whether or not to move ahead with regional Community Choice Aggregation.

So the official history-making meeting is yet to come. But the January 9 meeting of SLOCOG was the first time CCA came before a local governing body for official action, and the results were encouraging.

Neither of the historic events of January 8 and 9 "just happened." Encourage-

ment is often needed to make history happen. But for our community, the future began that week.

TAKE ACTION

attending the SLOCOG meeting when Community Choice again comes before that body. Let them know that this must be done and we can't wait any longer. It's our future, and the future is now.

Why Wetlands?

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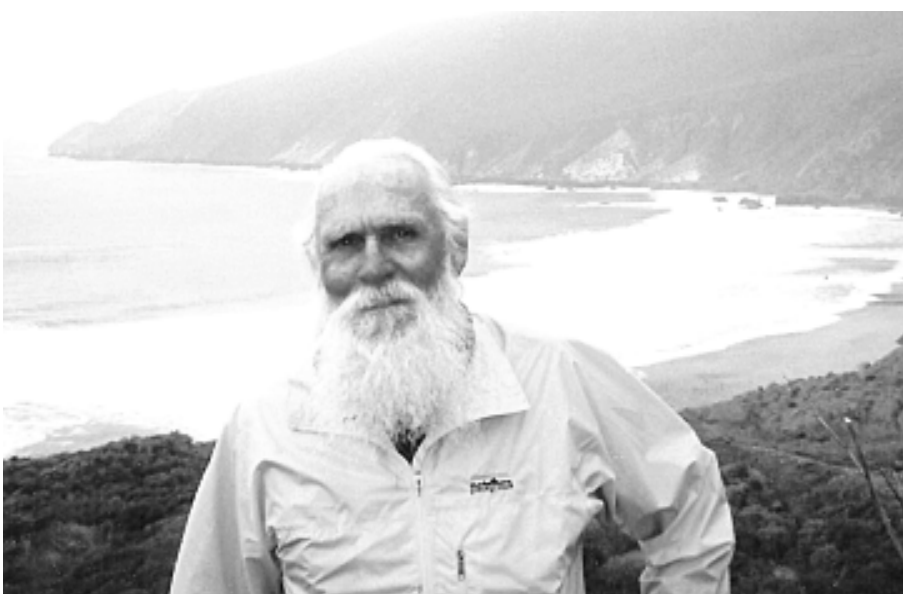
this resource. We have dredged, diked, bulldozed, channelized, diverted, silted in and contaminated this pristine resource in the name of "progress." A few years ago there was a big tractor parade in Santa Maria. The parade ended at the County Government Center. Over 200 tractors and farmers gathered to protest regulations designed to protect wetlands; there was one lone demonstrator for wetlands protection (me). When I

carried my sign: "Save Our Creeks" one farmer yelled out: "save our geeks" which got a big laugh (even from me). The farmers invited me to their excellent SM-style BBQ which I appreciated.

I have watched with great pain the slow inexorable destruction of Oso Flaco Creek. State Parks have been doing a fine job taking care of Oso Flaco Lake itself while at the same time ignoring the drainage into the lake. I

first saw this riparian corridor in the 1960's. I wish I had taken pictures. It had high bio-diversity, giant willows and cottonwoods, songbirds, watercress, Yerba Manza, duckweed, Azolla, rushes, bulrushes, muskrats, black shouldered kites, raptors, cattails, all kinds of insects, amphibians, garter snakes, pond turtles and horsetails. Clear water flowed in the creek. I always stopped here with my biology classes on our way to the Dunes. Now it is a channelized, sterile, very silted ditch. It is rapidly filling in Oso Flaco Lake. Agriculture has expanded so that all that is left of this once rich riparian corridor is an ugly ditch. This pains a biologist.

Riparian areas provide wildlife habitat, protect adjacent areas from flooding, filter our drinking water, and clean polluted water. Wetland soils and plants absorb heavy metals, pesticides, and other toxins, preventing them from washing downstream or migrating to groundwater. Through various processes not yet fully understood, they can immobilize or transform many toxic substances, removing them from the food chain. The importance of wetlands may not be readily apparent until *after* they are destroyed.



Forty Years After

In 1968, San Luis Obispo was ground zero for the most contentious conservation battle and internal struggle in the Sierra Club's history and the Santa Lucia Chapter was born in nuclear fire. What did we learn, and what lessons have we yet to grasp?

from Chapter reports

"The cooperation demonstrated between the Club and PG&E was a milestone in the progress of conservation."

- Ansel Adams

"My thesis is that compromise is often necessary, but that it ought not originate with the Sierra Club."

- David Brower

In the late 1950s, Americans were largely naive about the risks of nuclear power; "conservation" and "energy efficiency" were words from an alien vocabulary, federal subsidies were pouring into commercial nuclear power, and the solar and wind power industries did not exist. The Pacific Gas and Electric Company, giddy with visions of Our Friend the Atom and all the power that would be needed in near limitless quantities to serve the rampant growth of the Golden State, all "too cheap to meter," envisioned a future in which a chain of atomic reactors marched up and down the coast of California.

Their first try – Bodega Head – immediately ran into opposition that triumphed quickly when a branch of the San Andreas fault was discovered to run underneath the proposed plant site. Their second attempt was the Nipomo-Oceano Dunes complex, some of the rarest and most fragile wildlife habitat in North America. Local opposition was led by the Sierra Club — then represented locally by the Los Padres Chapter, covering SLO, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

PG&E had smartened up since Bodega. They came into the community with a menu of site locations instead of a single site, immediately shifting the question from "Shall we put a nuclear power plant in your community?" to "Where in your community should we put our nuclear power plant?" And they started assiduously courting their likely foes.

Local Sierra Club leader Kathleen Goddard Jones and national club directors Dick Leonard and William Siri met with PG&E executives. Siri, formerly of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and a booster of nuclear power, was particularly involved in the deal that was cut: Move the plant's location from the dunes to out-of-the-way, hard-to-get-to Diablo Cove, a place with no public constituency, and transfer the Dunes property to State Parks.

In May 1966, the Club affirmed as policy that Diablo Canyon was "a satisfactory alternate site...provided that marine resources will not be adversely affected...."

There was one problem: The Club's board of directors voted sight unseen to sacrifice Diablo Canyon, on the false representation that it was a "treeless slot" of no environmental significance, and without any vote from the local Sierra Club chapter, which would be directly affected by the decision.

The Good Fight

By June 1966, Jones had learned more about the Diablo Canyon area and "developed misgivings about Diablo Canyon as a location for an industrial installation." She wrote to Siri, "I have erred

in judgment" on the deal to trade Diablo Canyon for the Nipomo Dunes.

The Board of Directors broke into two factions. Club directors Frederick Eissler and Martin Litton, with executive director David Brower, challenged the board vote. Dr. Robert Hoover, a San Luis Obispo biologist and local Sierra Club leader in SLO, pointed out to Club president George Marshall that the board's choice to make such a decision without formal input from the local chapter was unacceptable. Dr. Hoover told Marshall that "the Directors have the duty to consider the interests of the members who elected them before making any public pronouncements." Marshall told Hoover he was being "emotional."

The Los Padres Chapter passed a resolution pointedly noting the need for the national organization to consult with chapters affected by the Club's decisions and condemning the sacrifice of Diablo Canyon. Then, under pressure from Marshall, the Los Padres Chapter rescinded its resolution and urged instead "that the Club membership sustain the previous decision of the Board of Directors with respect to the Diablo Canyon issue."

The board ignored a report from its own subcommittee on the biological values of Diablo Canyon, which found it "remarkably worthy of preservation." The 1959 Pacific Coast Recreation Survey of the National Park Service had concluded "This large, unspoiled area possesses excellent seashore values and should be acquired for public recreation and conservation of its natural resources." The board closed ranks and affirmed its previous action, scorning the science rather than changing the policy.

In 1967, Eissler, Litton and Brower succeeded in petitioning to get a referendum on the board's Diablo decision placed before the entire membership of the Sierra Club for a vote.

Siri was joined by legendary board member Ansel Adams in outraged opposition to the Diablo dissidents. They warned members that the Nipomo Dunes would be forfeit if the board's decision were repudiated, and that such a vote would "reflect on the credibility of the Sierra Club as a responsible organization." Siri and Adams, in their ballot argument, assured members that "the State...has approved construction of the plant at this site with guarantees of marine life protection." They fretted that "during the past year the Club has been compelled to devote a wholly disproportionate part of its time and energy to this issue," and urged "your vote supporting the Club's decision will help preserve the Nipomo-Santa Maria Dunes. It will also preserve the respect and integrity of the Club and permit us to turn our full attention to the main stream of conservation problems."

For their part, Brower, Eissler, Litton et al pointed out that the board had considered no alternatives nor heard independent testimony as to the potential environmental damage done by the construction and operation of a nuclear power plant in Diablo Canyon.

They also disputed "the contention that an either-or situation exists in

which either the dunes or Diablo Canyon can be saved, but in which neither can be saved without the sacrifice of the other" and noted, prophetically, "that PG&E is not the only threat to the dunes [and] that even PG&E's fullest cooperation would not ensure the safety of the dunes;" that "abundant marine life in the Diablo Canyon area will be adversely affected...by the intake of cooling water from the sea and its discharge at a high temperature;" and that "the club attained national prominence and gained at least half its current members because it projected an image of resolute adherence to principle; if we now adopt the posture of an opportunistic trader, we must expect not only to lose support, but to lose respect also."

The April 1967 referendum failed by a margin of 2 to 1. PG&E broke ground in Diablo Canyon in June 1968. Led by Dr. Hoover, two years after his clash with club president Marshall, the Santa Lucia Group of the Los Padres Chapter broke with the Chapter over its cave-in to pressure from the national board and its endorsement of the Diablo Canyon deal. We secured a charter from the national organization and founded our own Chapter to oversee environmental issues in San Luis Obispo County.

In the 1969 board elections, one more petition to reopen the Diablo Canyon issue was brought to the ballot by dissident board members. It lost by a margin of 3 to 1. David Brower resigned as executive director on May 3, 1969.

Local Sierra Club members, most notably Frederick Eissler and Harold Miozzi, along with UCSB environmental historian Roderick Nash, teamed up in the Scenic Shoreline Preservation Conference, fighting the Diablo plant at hearings of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission. In 1973, Eissler spoke to the Mothers for Peace about intervening in the plant's operating license proceedings and gave them information on how to do so. The Mothers contacted John Forster, a student at Cal Poly at the time and head of Ecology Action, and encouraged him to do likewise.

It could be said that Diablo Canyon was the way the 60s happened in the Sierra Club. It was the issue that ripped the social fabric of the organization, sharply defined internal fissures and opposing values, and pitted a conservative majority, furious at being challenged and intent on maintaining order, against a cadre of uncompromising idealists who refused to be silent in the face of environmental injustice.

Aftermath

In the years since, the arguments that were mounted in favor of construction of Diablo have fallen like autumn leaves, and the warnings of opponents have crystallized into hard reality:

- Per-capita energy use in California has been flat for thirty years. The percentage of the state's energy produced by the Diablo Canyon plant could have been supplanted by conservation alone (and, during the energy crisis, actually was) and more than replaced by conservation, efficiency and renewables. The

billions of dollars that have been poured into the Diablo Canyon plant in cost overruns, emergency retrofits, replacement of major components due to unexpected premature failure, etc., could have gone into energy efficiency and alternative energy research.

- Five years after the final 1969 attempt to get the Club to reverse course, the board of directors approved a new Sierra Club policy on nuclear power: We "oppose the licensing, construction and operation of new nuclear reactors" due to issues of safety, waste disposal and proliferation, and "pending development of adequate national and global policies to curb energy over-use and unnecessary economic growth." In 1966-69, these issues had barely come up on either side of the Diablo Canyon debate. By 1974, things had changed.

- Three years after the Sierra Club's last Diablo referendum, the people of California voted the Coastal Commission into existence. Under the terms of protection it afforded the coast and its requirements for public access under the Coastal Act, Diablo Canyon could never have been permitted and built. But because it was built, and because the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission assumed virtually all regulatory authority over it, the County, the Coastal Commission and activist lawsuits have been able to extract only small, grudging concessions from PG&E when it has undertaken a life-extending modification of the plant or expansion of its footprint to accommodate the plant's unexpected role as a long-term storage site for nuclear waste. The Pecho Coast will remain largely off-limits during the lifetimes of most of the people reading this, who will be long gone by the time the plant shuts down and public access to our coast is (partially) restored.

- The Club's approval of Diablo Canyon as a site for the nuclear plant "provided that marine resources will not be adversely affected" proved the folly of reliance on the future conditional, an approval that could not be revoked if the condition failed to fulfill its conditional promise — as was pointed out at the time by Brower, Eissler et al. The board of directors hadn't thought through how the condition on which everything depended would work, and it didn't. The spectacular devastation wrought on the marine environment by the Diablo Canyon plant is now a matter of historical record. In 2006, the California Coastal Commission noted that Diablo's cooling system decimates up to 160 acres of kelp habitat, causes "continuous major reductions in species and populations within the Cove...an almost complete loss of some fish and algae species" and "a substantial decline in black abalone." The estimated number of organisms killed by the cooling system is equivalent to that which would be produced in 210 to 500 acres of reef and "represents a substantial loss to the local and regional offshore environment."

- Fans of terrible ironies will note the fate the Oceano Dunes met after we

David Brower Family Estate



David Brower

Cedric Wright, Sierra Club Archives



Ansel Adams

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saved them from the power plant and enabled their transfer to State Parks: The state promptly declared the dunes a Vehicle Recreation Park, the only place in California where you can legally drive on the beach, and the coastal dune equivalent of Yosemite quickly came to resemble downtown L.A. at rush hour, minus the blacktop. As with PG&E on the Pecho Coast, the Sierra Club has had to fight the state Off Highway Vehicles division and the off-road lobby ever since for every inch of dunes that we've managed to reclaim as habitat for endangered and threatened species.

●In addition to consigning local residents to a long future of stockpiled iodine pills, siren tests and that special moment of held breath and spiking adrenalin every time the ground shakes, perhaps the most serious long-term consequence of our Diablo compromise was its deliverance of San Luis Obispo into the iron grip of the state's largest privately owned utility. As the home of its most expensive asset, SLO county is now of special interest to PG&E. As the largest private employer in the county, a generous donor to charities and a dispenser of public largesse, the utility is able to summon at will labor unions, the Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association and sundry chambers of commerce to any public meeting anywhere in the state where it requires a show of support for a development permit, a rate hike, or an extension of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant's lease on life.

And the utility will use every ounce of the political capital it has purchased in San Luis Obispo when the time comes for PG&E to fight implementation of the Community Choice Act – the state law that allows counties and regions to pool their energy purchasing power, break with the utility, buy green energy and support local power start-ups (see "A Very Big Deal," page 6, and "Whose Choice is It Anyway?," September 2007 *Santa Lucian*). PG&E is fighting tooth and nail against such plans in Fresno and San Francisco; when that fight comes here, it promises to be an uphill battle due to PG&E's beach head in local politics, established four decades ago at Diablo Cove.

Hard Lessons

Forty years ago, the Sierra Club learned some large lessons the hard way. Generational turnover being what it is, and big, hard lessons being what they are, it would be more accurate to say that we remain in the process of learning them.

Lesson One: "Compromise is often necessary, but it ought not originate with the Sierra Club." Giving up Diablo Cove to save the Nipomo-Oceano Dunes was a matter of sacrificing Peter to save Paul. We accepted PG&E's premise of "we must have more power" instead of standing for the simple truth that putting another power plant anywhere on the California coast was environmentally unacceptable.

Lesson Two: "Fix the mistake," not "stay the course." Throughout 1966-69, the whole focus for the defenders of the Diablo deal was the credibility of the Sierra Club: Repudiating the deal with PG&E would cause the Club to lose face, we would not be taken seriously, etc. Whether the deal was a good or workable deal and what we would be



sacrificing by allowing the plant's construction were clearly secondary considerations – if that – for the Siri/Adams contingent. In the years since, this philosophy has been the hallmark of what became known as the "old guard" in the Sierra Club. Diablo Canyon revealed the first seismic division and culture clash between the old guard and proponents of a new environmental ethic that was first coming into bloom forty years ago. This was the historical



moment when the utilitarian conservation ethic of Teddy Roosevelt and Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot – that we should conserve such land and animals as we deem useful to us and exploitable for our prosperity – came up against the organic/holistic view of nature championed by David Brower, first formed by John Muir and given modern voice by forest manager Aldo Leopold in 1949 when he wrote the manifesto of the environmental movement, *A Sand County Almanac*, and exhorted his students to "think like a mountain."

Lesson Three: Democracy is our strength. Any other national environmental organization would have handed down its decision on Diablo Canyon in 1966 and that would have been that. Later, via a direct mail piece or their magazine, the membership would have been told in glowing terms how the organization had saved the Nipomo-Oceano Dunes complex. Some angry letters and resignations might have ensued. In our case, the three-year fight to reverse the decision of the board of directors was possible only because the Sierra Club is set up as a democratic institution, wherein the board is elected by the membership; resolutions can be drafted and submitted by chapters; regional and national conservation committees communicate the will of the membership to the board; and policies are created on that basis. The ability to dissent was unable to turn the tide on Diablo, but in later years it has made the difference, as when grassroots Club activists repeatedly drove forward a policy of "zero cut" on public lands – not a policy endorsing a reduction or a smaller percentage of logging on publicly owned land, but a halt to the practice – ultimately succeeding over the fierce objections and politicking of the old guard, whose arguments against the policy had a familiar ring: It would cause the Club to lose face, we would not be taken seriously, etc.

Why did the dissenters fail to move the Club's membership on Diablo Canyon? It is probably not a coincidence that Sierra Club leadership won every ballot initiative on Diablo by appealing to reputation, stability, and tradition while a bad war in Southeast Asia was

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40 Years

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getting worse, protests were shutting down American universities and political assassinations wracked the nation. Not questioning the decision of the board was the paramount consideration they put forward, and the point on which they prevailed. This remained the case despite the fact that, a few months after their original Diablo Canyon decision, the board ratified a Club resolution calling for a moratorium on the construction of power plants sited on scenic coasts. Rather than admit they had made a mistake in the Diablo decision, the board grandfathered the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant into the moratorium resolution, citing it as the one exception to our coastal power plant policy.

The Past is Present

Ultimately, the lesson for the Sierra Club from Diablo Canyon 1966-69 may have been the perils of acceptance of the status quo. We lost the battle the moment we accepted PG&E's framing of the issue: *Where on the coast should we put the nuclear power plant?*

In the present day, the fight over energy corridors — the insistence that large swaths must be cut out of national parks and other public lands to accommodate the transmission lines needed to carry clean (or dirty) power across long distances from central power plants — features much the same premise that PG&E set up for Diablo Canyon in 1966: *We have an ever-expanding thirst for electricity that can only be met by this large, environmentally ruinous energy project, and not by conservation, energy efficiency, and decentralized power.*

"It would appear," writes Ed Mainland, co-chair of Sierra Club California's Energy-Climate Committee, "that the challenge of our age is no longer to awaken acceptance of renewable power in the breasts of the masses, but to keep deep-pocketed energy interests and their regulatory allies from exploiting that awakening and gulling officialdom into ill-conceived but lucrative green-scramming sidetracks that will slow down progress toward authentic sustainability, local self-reliance, economic localization, energy redundancy and real resource efficiency." Mainland notes that Amory Lovins' classic *Brittle Power* made the case for localized and distributed power in 1982 and asks why some in the Sierra Club seem to be lining up behind the opposite philosophy. "Have we really given up on smaller, more agile, more 'intelligent', more local and more redundant and more efficient networks and grids and on eventually dispensing with current old-fashioned grid arrangements entirely? Is all the thinking and research of Lovins and others in the last 40 years going to be junked in a clumsy stampede to stuff the deserts, parks and wild

Why We Sue

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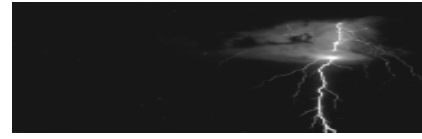
pristine land to future development free of any planning standards worth the paper they're written on. The County's claim that this ordinance will have no environmental impacts has no basis in fact. A court-mandated full Environmental Impact Report will make it clear that the "standards" in this privately drafted ordinance are weaker than the minimal regulations that were in place before, and additional measures will be required to protect the Cayucos Viewshed from the Cayucos Viewshed ordinance.

areas with new transmission corridors and new mega-projects and expansive, land-intensive 'energy farms' when, if we merely meet the already accepted efficiency and conservation targets of California, many or most of them won't be needed? Whatever happened to the California Energy Commission's 'loading order?' Whatever happened to CEC's finding that there are 5 billion square feet of existing commercial-building rooftops in California suitable for PV power cells?"

Philosophically, the Sierra Club of T. Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot may have largely evolved into the Sierra Club of Aldo Leopold and David Brower, but the dynamic revealed and shaped by the Diablo Canyon fight has remained essentially the same: A senior leadership of traditional conservationists who, in the main, believe in pragmatic trade-offs and are disinclined to rock the boat, forced to deal with a broad swath of grassroots activists who are often more inclined to change the system than accommodate it. The resulting dynamic is not possible in any other large environmental organization in the United States, all of which proceed by fiat of their CEO's and executive boards. Only the Sierra Club proceeds by referendum and a vote of the membership, and — post Diablo — acknowledges that policy on local issues should be set by the local Sierra Club chapters, whose members stand in the place where they live.

The inheritors of the philosophies of David Brower and Ansel Adams dwell in

their fathers' house. That house was built on the rim of Diablo Canyon, and contains within its walls the struggle, the soul and the fate of the environmental movement.



The SLO Mothers for Peace and John Ashbaugh of the Santa Lucia Chapter Executive Committee assisted in the writing of this story. Many of the details of the Sierra Club's struggle over Diablo Canyon in the period 1966-69 are drawn from the account in Conservation Fallout: Nuclear Protest at Diablo Canyon, by John Wills (University of Nevada, 2006).

Election for Sierra Club Board of Directors Now Underway

Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. Visit the Club's election website: www.sierraclub.org/bod/2008election for links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club recommends a vote for:

- Lane Boldman**
- Jeremy Doochin**
- Jim Dougherty**
- Larry Fahn**
- Jerry Sutherland**

A Note from the Editor

In the four years that I have had the privilege of putting together the *Santa Lucian* for our members every month, I think the story I have been proudest to print is "Why We Sue."

As a member, this is the kind of thing I can point to and say "This is why I joined the Sierra Club. This is why the Sierra Club is needed."

As the Cayucos Viewshed fight dragged on, the Santa Lucia Chapter, like many other members of the public, wrote and testified in an effort to persuade a majority of County Supervisors to do the right thing.

Our efforts were in vain. The public process was a travesty, but it was an illuminating travesty: Supervisors Ovitt, Achadjian and Lenthall showed how far they are willing to go in order to sacrifice environmental protections in the name of free-lance privatized land use planning. In their haste to run an errand for the real estate lobby, they ran over the California Environmental Quality Act.

When something like that happens, someone needs to step up and say "Hold it." So we did.

The Sierra Club can't fight everything. We can't save everything. Our ability to challenge bad planning and

bad projects depends entirely on the involvement and support of our members. As a democratically run organization, we proceed on the votes of elected Chapter leaders — those members who step up and give of their time in deliberating on the environmental issues that come before the Chapter. We depend on all of our members, and the general public, to step up and support the cost of our actions taken in the public interest.

The Chapter has limited resources, and lawsuits and conservation campaigns are not cheap. The national organization does not fund litigation by local Sierra Club chapters. When I say the Chapter stepped up on this issue, I mean they took a very big and very brave step, fully aware of the condition of the economy, with faith that the necessary support for this action would be there.

So please direct your attention to the most important item you'll see in the *Santa Lucian* this year: The coupon directly below. Several hundred people

The Cayucos Viewshed does not have time to wait for a hoped-for environmentally enlightened majority on the County Board of Supervisors. Because the need is urgent, the Sierra Club has taken action. Now we must rely on your support.

publicly testified on behalf of meaningful protection for the Cayucos viewshed over the last several years. Many more concurred; many felt helpless in the face of an obviously stacked deck. If you're one of those folks, you should write a check to the utmost of your tax-deductible ability and mail it in. If you know some of those folks who are not Sierra Club members, you need to show this to them and let them know just how important this is. Only this litigation can save the Cayucos Viewshed. If the viewshed is to be saved, this litigation must be able to go forward. Thank you for your support.

Andrew Christie
Editor, *Santa Lucian*

Thank you, Sierra Club! I like clean energy, clean water, clean air and the Cayucos Viewshed! Please put 100% of my tax-deductible donation to work making sure we secure these for the future in San Luis Obispo!

- \$50
- \$100
- \$200
- \$500
- \$1000
- \$_____

Make your check out *exactly* to: Sierra Club Foundation SLO Land Preservation Fund

and mail to:
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

name _____

address _____

city, state, zip _____



Because funds from the SLO Land Preservation Fund go directly to the Santa Lucia Chapter's public interest litigation and conservation campaigns, your donation to the Fund is tax-deductible.

Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **February 12**.
To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter
P.O. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
sierraclub8@gmail.com



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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.

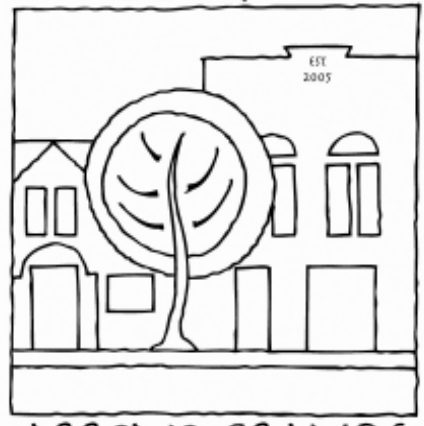
Solar Cooking Workshop

Saturday, February 16, 2008, 11:00 to 1:00, Los Verdes Community Room, SLO.

Want to learn how easy it is to cook by the sun? And experience how it feels to use clean, free energy? Phyllis Davies and Rosemary Wilvert will demonstrate the versatility, economy, and taste appeal of solar cooking, followed by samples from among the vegetables, meats, breads, cakes, cookies and other foods they have solar-cooked for their families for many years.

\$10 donation, to benefit the Sierra Club and cover costs. For reservations and directions to the Community Room at Los Verdes Estates Park II, please phone 544-8365. Carpooling is appreciated!

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email: thetreeguild@gmail.com

The California Climate Champions Program

Deadline to apply: February 11, 2008

Could you be one of California's first-ever young Climate Champions? Could you help spread the word about climate change in your school or community, or even across the State and beyond?

Enter a competition where you will have a chance to become one of 20 Climate Champions for California. As a champion, you'll get to participate in a range of activities, including a "climate camp," where you will learn more about the issue and plan activities for your time "in office." You might also get to take part in meetings in U.K. and Japan with other champions from around the world!

The California Climate Champions program, sponsored by the California Air Resources Board (www.arb.ca.gov) and the British Council (www.britishcouncil.org/usa), is one of a number of similar initiatives established in many countries around the world.

For further information on the California Climate Champions contact Annalisa Schilla at aschilla@arb.ca.gov or (916) 322-8514.

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Outings and Activities Calendar

All of our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter's outing policies or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Leader Gary Felsman (473-3694). For information on a specific outing, please contact the outing leader. Outings Leaders please get your outings or events in by the 1st for the next month's outings.

Hiking Classifications:

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

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

Sat.-Sun., Feb 2-3, Mecca Hills Carcamp: Join us as we explore the Mecca Hills Wilderness Area east of Indio, CA. While ATVs roar through the Algodones dunes to the south, we will walk quietly through the gravel washes and rocky hills to several well-known and spectacular sites. Saturday we visit Hidden Springs and the Grottos, and Sunday we will explore Painted Canyon. Carcamping will include the civilized amenities, potluck supper and campfire Saturday night. Limit 12 participants. Ldr: Craig Deutsche, deutsche@earthlink.net, (310-477-6670). CNRCC Desert Committee

Sunday, February 3rd, 8:00 am. Montana de Oro Work Party. Come help California State Parks and the CCCMB. Maintain trails in Montana de Oro State Park. Meet at the Spooners Cover Visitor Center, MDO SP

FEB., 3, 0930, SUN., SUSTAINABLE LIVING. Tour my farm to see photovoltaic's, windmill, clothesline, solar panels, compost, orchard, garden, goats, pig, heat source, & waterless toilet. Meet at 1040 Cielo Ln (off Primavera, off Orahard) in Nipomo., friendly dogs welcome. Confirm or questions at bdenneen@kcbx.net

Sat., Feb. 9. 8:00 a.m. Cruikshank Trail to Buckeye Trail to Alder Creek Camp. Join the leader on this mid-winter hike to Alder Camp. This is an 11 mile hike with about 2700 ft. of elevation gain. We hike

from Highway 1 to Upper Cruikshank Camp. From there we will walk down to Villa Camp after crossing Villa Creek. We will then ascend a ridge and follow the trail into Alder Creek Canyon. There are great views of the coastline from the ridge. There is a possibility of poison oak and ticks. Bring lunch or snacks, water, and dress for the weather. Meet at the Washburn day use area just north of Cambria. There will be a refueling stop at the Main St Grill in Cambria following the hike. For info call Chuck @ 441-7597.

FEB. 10, 0930, SUN., BIKE NIPOMO. Meet at Nipomo Library to tour Native Garden, new bike-trail, Creekside, Dana Adobe etc. Kids welcome (no dogs) Confirm or information a few days before at bdenneen@kcbx.net or 929-3547.

Sat.-Mon., February 16-18, Southern Nevada Wilderness Service: Join Vicky Hoover on what's become an annual event, helping the BLM's Ely office take care of beautiful new desert wilderness areas in Lincoln County, northeast of Las Vegas. This scenic jaunt is to be in the Delamar, Meadow Valley or Mormon Mts. working on off-road vehicle damage restoration, wilderness cleanup or hand seeding for vegetation. Central commissary. Contact Vicky at Vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org or (415)977-5527 CNRCC Wilderness Committee.

FEB. 17, 0930, SUN., BIKE WOODLANDS A bicycle tour of the "instant city" with many stops. Meet at junction of Willow Rd. & Albert Way. Must wear helmet. With bikes we can go on golf cart trails. Confirm or information a few days before at bdenneen@kcbx.net or 929-3547.

Sat.-Sun., March 1-2, Grass Valley Wilderness Backpack: This will be an easy to moderate journey to explore a little known area with Marty Dickes, wilderness resource specialist with the Ridgecrest office of the BLM. We will monitor ORV impacts, but our reward will be the washes, low hills, and open grassland views in early spring. At these low elevations in the Mojave, wildflowers are possible, and rain is unlikely. Carry all water. Limit 12. Leader: Craig Deutsche, (310-477-6670), deutsche@earthlink.net. CNRCC Desert Committee

Sat.-Sun., March 15-16, Ghost Town Extravaganza: Come with us to this spectacular desert landscape near Death Valley to explore the ruins of California's colorful past. Camp at the historic ghost town of Ballarat (flush toilets & hot showers). On Sat., do a very challenging hike to ghost town

Lookout City with expert Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this wild west town. Later we'll return to camp for Happy Hour, a potluck feast and campfire. On Sun, a quick visit to the infamous Riley town site before heading home. Group size strictly limited. Send \$8 per person (Sierra Club), 2 sase, H&W phones, email, rideshare info to Ldr: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 294726, Phelan, CA 92329, (760) 868-2179. Co-ldr: Don Peterson (760) 375-8599 CNRCC/Desert Committee

Wed., March 19th, 26th 5:30 p.m. Informal Hikes Return. See website, or e-mail Gary Felsman for details. E-mail is located on the Website.

WMI WILDERNESS FIRST AID AND WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER RECERTIFICATION COURSE

Sponsored by the Wilderness Medicine Institute of NOLS and ASI *Poly Escapes*

DATES: February 23-24
COST: Students: \$125 Tuition Only
 Non-Students: \$185 Tuition Only
LOCATION: Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo University Union, #220
PHONE: Poly Escapes, 756-1287
EMAIL: polyescapesmgr@asi.calpoly.edu
WEB: www.asi.calpoly.edu/poly_escapes_trips/get_active

Fast paced and hands-on, this two- or three-day course covers a wide range of wilderness medicine topics for people who travel in the outdoors. WMI's curriculum is unique and includes many advanced topics that other programs leave out such as dislocation reduction, focused spinal assessment and epinephrine administration. In just two days, you'll gain the knowledge, skills and ability to make

sound decisions in emergency situations. This course is ideal for trip leaders, camp staff, outdoor enthusiasts and individuals in remote locations. WMI's course is pre-approved by the American Camping Association, the United States Forest Service, and other governmental agencies. This course does not include CPR. Call for WFR recertification requirements.

Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

Six Sierra Club California Fundraising Cruises Scheduled for 2008

February 9-11, 3 islands (\$475)
 April 4-7; May 2-5; July 18-21;
 4 islands (\$775)
 August 23-27; September 13-17;
 5 islands (\$925)

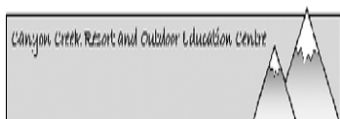
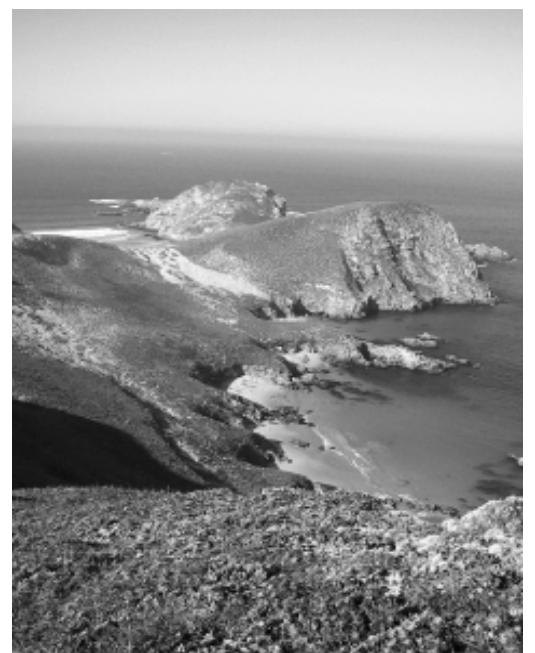
Explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. In spring the islands are ablaze with wildflowers. In summer, the pristine waters of the Marine Sanctuary entice swimmers, snorkelers and kayakers. All year long, enjoy unusual plants and flowers, seals and frolicking sea lions, sea and land birds. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel *Turth*. Fee includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes on each island and point out interesting features.

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; jholtzhl@aol.com)



Photo by Joaquin Palting



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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.