



September 2012
Volume 49 No. 8

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"Bitter Seeds"

Sept. 13, SLO

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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

The Moment of Truth (in labeling) is Near

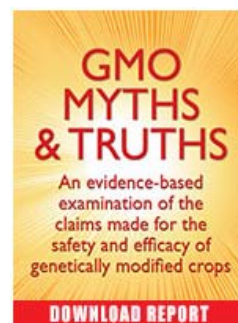
As of August 15, Big Food and the biotech industry had committed more than \$25 million to the effort to defeat Proposition 37, the November ballot initiative that will require genetically modified food to be labeled. Most of the "No on 37" money is coming from Monsanto, DuPont, other pesticide companies, and Pepsi/Frito Lay, Nestle, and Coca-Cola. Supporters of the initiative include the American Public Health Association, Consumer Federation of America, California Certified Organic Farmers and the Organic Consumers Association. Thousands of the one million signatures that put Prop. 37 on the ballot came from SLO County.



GMO Myths and Truths Report

Genetically modified crops are promoted on the basis of a range of far-reaching claims from the GM crop industry and its supporters. They say that GM crops:

- Are an extension of natural breeding and do not pose different risks from naturally bred crops
- Are safe to eat and can be more nutritious than naturally bred crops
- Are strictly regulated for safety
- Increase crop yields
- Reduce pesticide use
- Benefit farmers and make their lives easier
- Bring economic benefits
- Benefit the environment
- Can help solve problems caused by climate change
- Reduce energy use
- Will help feed the world.



However, a large and growing body of scientific and other authoritative evidence shows that these claims are not true. Evidence presented in this report indicates that GM crops:

- Are laboratory-made, using technology that is totally different from natural breeding methods, and pose different risks from non-GM crops
- Can be toxic, allergenic or less nutritious than their natural counterparts
- Are not adequately regulated to ensure safety
- Do not increase yield potential
- Increase pesticide use
- Create serious problems for farmers, including herbicide-tolerant "superweeds," compromised soil quality, and increased disease susceptibility in crops
- Have mixed economic effects
- Harm soil quality, disrupt ecosystems, and reduce biodiversity
- Do not offer effective solutions to climate change
- Are as energy-hungry as any other chemically-farmed crops
- Cannot solve the problem of world hunger but distract from its real causes – poverty, lack of access to food and, increasingly, lack of access to land to grow it on.

Based on the evidence presented in this report, there is no need to take risks with GMOs when effective, readily available and sustainable solutions to the problems that GM technology is claimed to address already exist. Conventional plant breeding, in some cases helped by safe modern technologies like gene mapping and marker assisted selection, continues to outperform GM in producing high-yield, drought-tolerant, and pest- and disease-resistant crops that can meet our present and future food needs.

Lead author Michael Antoniou, PhD, is head of the Gene Expression and Therapy Group, King's College London School of Medicine, an expert in the use of genetic engineering technology who holds inventor status on gene expression biotechnology patents.

Download a PDF of the full *GMO Myths and Truths* report at <http://earthopensource.org/index.php/reports/gmo-myths-and-truths>.

Then go to www.carighttoknow.org to find out what you can do about it.

Food Lobby's "Highest Priority" is Fighting GMO Labeling in California

By Michele Simon,
Nationofchange.org
August 1, 2012

In case you had any doubt that California's Prop 37—which would require labeling of food containing genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)—is a significant threat to industry, a top food lobby has now made it perfectly clear.

In a recent speech to the American Soybean Association (most soy grown in the U.S. is genetically modified), Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) President Pamela Bailey said that defeating the initiative "is the single-highest priority for GMA this year."

You may not know the Grocery Manufacturers Association, but its members represent the nation's largest food makers—those with the most at stake in the battle over GMO

FOOD LOBBY continued on page 9

Democracy School: What You Need to Know Now

by Jeanne Blackwell

Do we or do we not have a right to clean water? And if we do, do we or do we not have a right to ban hydro-fracking in our county, the process used increasingly by oil and gas companies across the nation -- courtesy of a fistful of exemptions from laws protecting our water, air and ecosystems, leaving a trail of polluted aquifers and flaming kitchen taps?

SCHOOL continued on page 7

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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.

Add your voice to protect the planet. Join the Sierra Club today.

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Outings, events, and more!

Sierra Club General Meeting

Thursday, Sept. 13, 7-9 p.m.

Bitter Seeds

Genetically engineered foods (GMOs) are raising safety and ecological concerns for the future, but the effect they are having on farmers in Third World countries is their most devastating immediate consequence. Farmers in India must buy the seeds for every harvest – no seed-saving allowed — from

agribusinesses like Monsanto, who control their use and price, along with the mandatory expensive pesticides and fertilizers that must be used with them. The result has been massive debt and a growing wave of suicides by farmers who have lost everything. Winner, Oxfam Global Justice Award and the 2011 Green Screen competition Award at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam. Come see this gripping new documentary and hear how you can help pass the state ballot initiative to label GMOs. **Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St, SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.**



My Piece of America

Californians, share your favorite wild places

By Amanda Wallner, Organizer, Sierra Club California Coast Resilient Habitats Campaign

The Sierra Club has unveiled a new online hub to recognize, share and help protect America's most treasured outdoor places, including the California Coast, the Sierra Nevada, the San Gabriel Mountains, and the Berryessa Snow Mountain region.

The "My Piece of America" site highlights ongoing work by the Sierra Club to permanently protect public lands in today's technology-driven age – including campaigns in the four highlighted regions.

"The Sierra Club's mission to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet is as vital today as any time in the Sierra Club's 120 year history," said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune. "We want to reconnect people with their sense of joy and wonder, and provide a way to channel their renewed passion into enduring lands protection so this and future generations can enjoy the great outdoors."

The "My Piece of America" website is built to not only allow users to upload and view content of their favorite special places, but also to connect with conservation campaigns on the ground in California. Visitors to the site can learn about, take action on and join the Sierra Club's work to protect the coast, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the San Gabriel Mountains, and the Berryessa Snow Mountain region.

The Sierra Club is working on the ground to protect these special wild places through community-driven efforts for permanent protection combined with statewide campaigns to end forest clear cutting and

counteract the effects of climate change will have on California's wildlife.

With trip giveaways, beautiful photos, personal stories and action opportunities, the site will provide an engaging invitation to be a part of America's lands legacy. America's public lands belong to us all.

For more than a century special places like the Sierra Nevada and the Big Sur coast have been saved so that people from all backgrounds can enjoy all they have to offer. Today, millions of people recreate, retreat, and recharge in America's parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, and other public lands. But we're not done yet; our members continue to work so that places like the San Gabriel Mountains and the Berryessa Snow Mountain region can be enjoyed by future generations for years to come.

California's coast is a string of nature's gems, attracting more the 12 million visitors every year. Our campaign is working with people throughout the state to safeguard natural systems that will protect wildlife and ensure that Californians have clean water, a thriving tourism economy, and an unparalleled wild legacy to pass on to future generations.

Our public lands have also become major economic drivers. They play a vital role in California's \$46 billion outdoor recreation economy, which supports local communities and 408,000 jobs throughout the state.

Visit the website at www.sierraclub.org/MyPieceofAmerica.



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The Executive Committee meets the second Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 974 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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Why Nuclear Power is Not an Energy Solution

by Sarah Hodgdon, Director of Conservation



Americans from coast to coast are pushing to end the nation's addiction to polluting, 19th century fossil fuels —

coal, oil, natural gas — by embracing renewable, job-generating energy sources such as wind and solar.

With clean energy prosperity in sight, there are well-meaning people who suggest that nuclear power could be part of the solution. The Sierra Club respectfully but vehemently disagrees with them, and a growing group of concerned volunteers has, in fact, begun accelerating the Club's efforts to address this dangerous industry.

Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster only made it clearer that the nuclear industry stands in the way of the clean energy future our children expect, says volunteer Leslie March, who is helping to lead the Club's "No Nukes" campaign. "We need to heed the lessons learned from this disaster. Our aging reactors are up for re-licensing. Twenty-three have the exact same model design as Fukushima and another 12 are very similar."

"Just as important," March says, "is where and how we store radioactive waste. Nuclear energy is not clean, nor is it green. The climate-disrupting pollution spewed during the nuclear fuel processing cycle decreases any benefits."

The reality is that nuclear power is prohibitively expensive, it's propped up by subsidies, it endangers workers, it hurts the land, it's unsafe, and it's vulnerable to terrorism. (Check out www.sierraclub.org/nuclear/factsheet.aspx).

The Sierra Club takes a solutions-oriented approach to addressing environmental threats, including climate disruption, and it's imperative that we get the solutions right. This

push to move beyond nuclear power complements the work the Sierra Club's 1.4 million members and supporters are doing on virtually every front.

It complements, for example, our work to protect water resources because water pollution is a frequent result of nuclear power and radioactive waste storage.

It complements our Resilient Habitats Campaign because we're protecting our wildlands and treasured landscapes from uranium mining and milling.

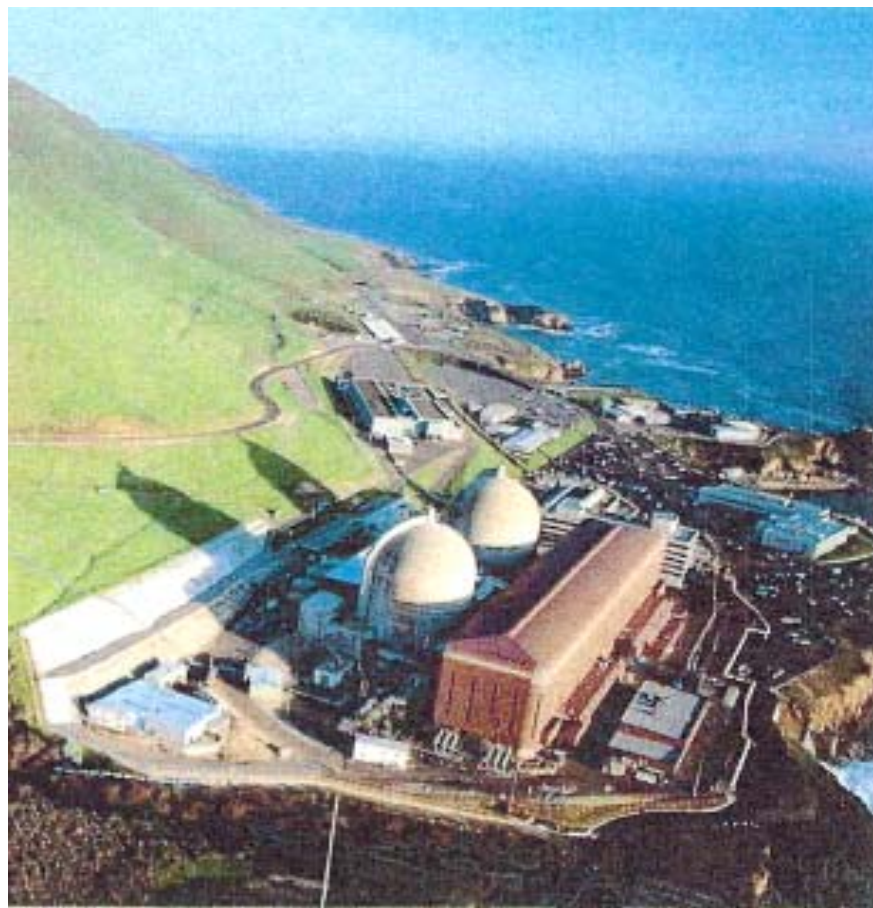
It complements our environmental justice work because the nuclear industry often imposes its dangers disproportionately on poor neighborhoods and on communities of color. In short, there are lots of reasons I'm happy to see our volunteers joining this effort. Susan Corbett, who works on the No Nukes team as chair of our South Carolina chapter, notes that money spent on nuclear plants could be put to much better, much safer use, if spent on true clean energy innovation. "Old nuclear plants," she says, "are ticking time bombs of deterioration — failure in those cases can mean an economic and environmental disaster for the adjoining communities."

And of course, there's the radioactive waste. "National transportation of radioactive waste puts many communities far away from reactors in danger," Corbett says.

With new information leaking daily about the consequences of Fukushima, the time is ripe to spread the truth about this threat to our health and environment. A Sierra Club Activist team with more than 130 members is working on this campaign at the local and national level.

"The fights may be local, but often we have to persuade elected officials and decision-making agencies at the federal level," says Susan.

The U.S. can do better than fossil fuels and nuclear power. Join our Nuclear-Free Campaign today.



On Hold

Nuclear Regulatory Commission halts reactor construction and licensing. Most reactor projects already stymied by bad economics and cheaper alternatives

On August 7, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) put a hold on at least 19 reactor licensing decisions — nine construction & operating licenses — eight license renewals, one operating license, and one early site permit — in response to the landmark Waste Confidence Rule decision handed down two months earlier by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

The NRC action was sought in a June 18, 2012, petition filed by 24 groups urging the NRC to respond to the court ruling by freezing final licensing decisions until it has completed a rulemaking action on the environmental impacts of highly radioactive nuclear waste in the form of spent, or "used", reactor fuel storage and disposal.

In hailing the NRC action, the groups also noted that most of the U.S. reactor projects were already sidelined by the huge problems facing the nuclear industry, including an inability to control runaway costs, and the availability of far less expensive energy alternatives.

Diane Curran, an attorney representing several of the groups in the Court of Appeals case, said "This Commission decision halts all final licensing decisions — but not the licensing proceedings themselves — until NRC completes a thorough study of the environmental impacts of storing and disposing of spent nuclear fuel. That study should have been done years ago, but NRC just kept kicking the can down the road. With today's Commission decision, we are hopeful that the agency will undertake the serious work."

San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace spokesperson Jane Swanson noted that, "Mothers for Peace in 1973, as part of its challenge of the original operating license for the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, argued that the Atomic Energy Commission, predecessor of the NRC, should not allow the generation of radioactive waste without knowing how to isolate those wastes from the environment."

NUKES continued on page 4

Ag Clusters: Getting Closer

Overhaul of County program shows promise

At press time, long-awaited amendments to the county's Ag Cluster Ordinance -- part of the struggle to maintain the county's rural/agricultural character in the face of relentless development pressure -- were heading to the County Planning Commission's August 30 meeting, and from there will go the Board of Supervisors for final approval.

The Board of Supervisors directed staff to draft amendments to the controversial Ag Cluster program in 2009. The proposed new amendments make significant changes that could serve to protect agricultural lands, offer greater protection of limited water resources, lessen impacts to agriculture and the environment from inappropriately sited subdivisions, and reduce rural sprawl.

The amendments include extending the ag cluster program to coastal areas (Title 23). If these coastal zone changes are approved by the Supervisors and the California Coastal Commission, the ag cluster program would allow for the clustering of underlying lots in the coastal zone into 2.5 acre parcels.

For the inland area (Title 22), ag cluster amendments would require new lots to be contiguous, increase minimum cluster lot size to 2.5 acres and require on-site individual well and septic systems, and eliminate a controversial 100% "density bonus."

The cluster subdivision cannot use more than 5% of the total site area and it has been clarified that ag buffers, roads and driveways and other residential infrastructure are to be included in that 5%. The remaining 95% percent of the land will be put under a permanent agricultural easement and shall be a single parcel. Lands under a Williamson Act contract and properties in the Rural Lands category are ineligible for consideration for clustering.

Requirements for demonstrating water availability have been improved, as

CLUSTERS continued on page 8

Hot Ticket at Central Coast Bioneers Conference: Community Choice

Many people believe that Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) is an idea whose time has come for San Luis Obispo County.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club lobbied successfully to get evaluation of the feasibility of a CCA program added to the County's Climate Action Plan in 2011.

The following year, when the City of SLO's Climate Action Plan was being drafted, the Chapter, joined by the Energy Group of Transition Towns of San Luis Obispo County, got a provision included in the City's plan to complement the County's.

Eric Veium, team leader of the Energy Group, says the group has undertaken organizing for development of a community choice energy program for San Luis Obispo County. "We are reaching out to a broad base

of interested people, elected officials and city and county staff to pass a resolution to commit to researching what community choice will make possible here." Eric will report on the Energy Group's progress as part of the "Eaarth — Our Local Conversation" Transition Towns workshop on Friday, October 19, at the Central Coast Bioneers Conference.

What is CCA?

Established by law in six states to date, Community Choice Aggregation is a market-based tool that enables cities and counties to pool the energy demands of the residences and businesses in their jurisdictions to purchase or develop power on their behalf. Communities who want to

CCA continued on page 8

How Mr. Havlik Made Us Happy

By Andrew Christie
Chapter Director

On July 1, *The Tribune's* front page was occupied by a richly deserved tribute to San Luis Obispo Natural Resources Manager Neil Havlik on the occasion of his retirement.

It is appropriate to applaud his legacy: 6,500 acres of natural open space and hiking and biking trails. It also should be mentioned, per Dan Buettner's book "Thrive," that Neil Havlik's legacy is one of the primary reasons for the high levels of personal well-being and maximized quality of life that led to SLO's designation as the happiest city in America. Not a bad retirement gift.

But the article fostered a potential misconception: that the Natural Resources Protection Program created seventeen years ago as the result of a tussle between economic and environmental interests -- a "messy and intense" struggle that gave birth to the co-equal positions of natural resources manager and economic development manager -- was a fight that ended in 1995, and today the forces of development and preservation function in automatic equilibrium. (The "two apparently contradictory positions... now work cooperatively, as protecting and promoting the city's natural resources are an essential part of its economic vision.")

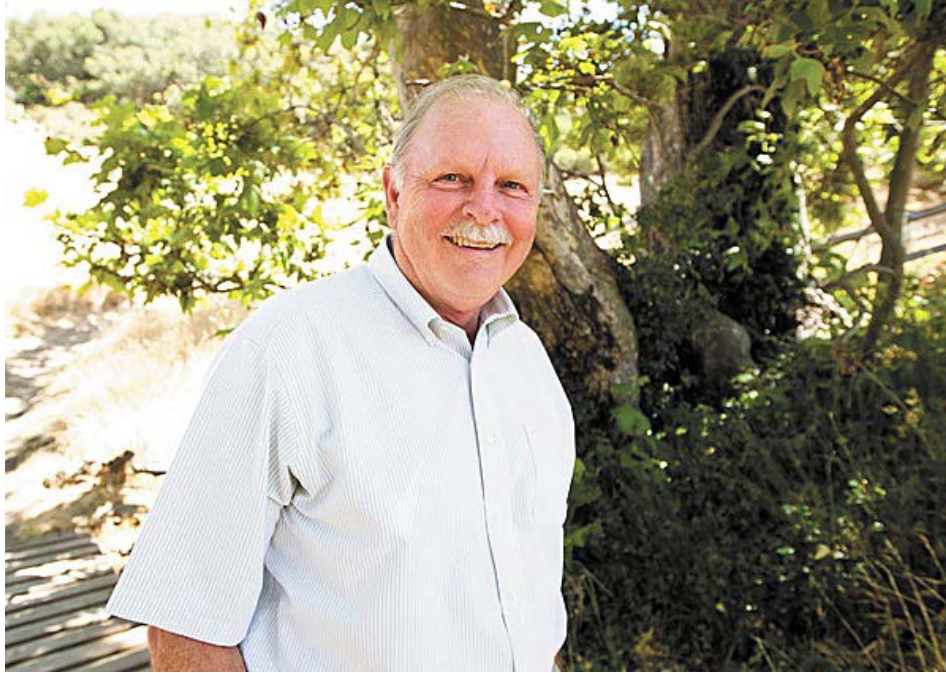
Those who recall more recent city history, such as the fight circa 2004-2006 to maintain the integrity of natural open space and the concept of passive recreation in the Conservation and Open Space Element might beg to differ with that conclusion. Likewise the Johnson Avenue area residents who rose up in 2007 to beat back the proposal to develop the upper reaches of the hillsides that dominate the community.

As recently as 2011 a proposal was floated to move the Natural Resources Program into the Park and Rec

department (a park and natural open space are two very different animals) and demote the position of natural resources manager, terminating that equilibrium of co-equal interests "meant to strike a balance between development and preservation."

In each instance, people had to

rounding neighborhoods which the open space was meant to serve and negating the purpose of preserved open space: the chance to make a quiet connection with nature. (In a 2008 Tourism Analysis, the County identified the "Tourism Backlash" of traffic and crowding.)



stand up and say "No!" In 1993, it was SLO residents saying "no" to the idea of city policy dominated solely by an economic development manager that started the messy two-year fight that created the Natural Resources Program and made it co-equal with Economic Development, creating the space in which it was possible for Neil Havlik to make the visionary deals that preserved 6,500 acres of open space and wildlife habitat.

That fight was based on the awareness that environmental protection is a long-term concern that rarely corresponds with the short-term needs of cash flow, quarterly profit goals, or keeping share prices high and investors happy. Nor are "protecting and promoting" necessarily the same thing, a fact well known to those city residents witnessing Bishop Peak being loved to death thanks to the nationwide promotional efforts of the City and the Chamber of Commerce, generating a level of use for open space far out of line with the sur-

San Luis Obispo's economic special interests did not completely change their outlook on life in 1995. As the current update of the city's Land Use and Circulation Element goes forward, it would be good to remember that the same competing interests are still with us. Keeping that balance depends on the continued willingness of neighborhoods and the environmental community to contend with the interests of private profit. It was the Johnson Avenue uprising of 2007, not "working cooperatively," that saved the hillsides and made it possible, five years later, for the City to purchase the land at a bargain price.

And in 1995, things could have gone this way: no messy fight with business interests = no Natural Resources Program = no 6,500 acres of preserved open space = SLO not the happiest city in America.

It was ever thus. *Thrive* (Chapter 5) makes it clear: eternal environmental vigilance is the price of happiness.



Calochortus Obispoensis Havlikensis

Over years, patching
Together acres of
Greenbelt, nurturing
Land Owner and
Community Trust;
Protecting native
Life forms, rare,
Threatened or endangered;
Thriving in Open Space
With an Affinity
To serpentine hillsides;
Quite rare, uniquely
Local and universally
Treasured, Neil,
You are a San Luis
Mariposa Lilly
Of a man.

- With gratitude,
Jan Marx
June 23, 2012

Nukes

continued from page 3

Now, 39 years later, the NRC has been forced by the federal court to acknowledge this necessity.

Future actions by the agency will determine whether public confidence is enhanced or further weakened."

Lou Zeller, executive director of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, another petitioner to the Court, said: "It appears that the Commissioners have, at least initially, grasped the magnitude of the Court's ruling and we are optimistic that it will set up a fundamentally transparent, fair process under the National Environmental Policy Act to examine the serious environmental impacts of spent nuclear fuel storage and disposal prior to licensing or relicensing nuclear reactors."

Former NRC Commissioner Peter Bradford said "It is important to recognize that the reactors awaiting construction licenses weren't going to be built anytime soon even without the Court decision or today's NRC action. Falling demand, cheaper alternatives and runaway nuclear costs had doomed their near term prospects well before the recent Court decision. Important though the Court decision is in modifying the NRC's historic push-the-power-plants-but-postpone-the-problems approach to generic safety and environmental issues, it cannot be blamed for the ongoing descent into fiasco of the bubble once known as 'the nuclear renaissance'."



slo seed exchange

The sixth annual SLO Seed Exchange is happening Friday, October 5, 6-9 p.m., at the SLO Library Community Room

Open to the public - FREE educational event

Speaker: John DeRosier, CSA biodynamic grain farmer and teacher

Greg Ellis, One Cool Earth & Garden Matchmaking will assist in developing the evening program.

Information: 805-543-5364

www.facebook.com/SloSeedExchange

co-sponsored by the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The SLO Seed Exchange has been asked for the second year to donate seed for the STRIDE/HealSLO/CAFES summit in mid-October. Seed savers among us are contributing their organic style homegrown lettuce, parsley, dill, arugula, cilantro, radish, carrot, and calendula seed—3,000 to 5,000 seeds of each variety—for a Salad Bowl seed packet to be given to each of the 250-300 summit attendees.



Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“How organic food rules benefit big agriculture,” by John Sununu. *The Tribune*, July 15, 2012.

Summary: Corporations seeking maximum profit from the explosive growth in popularity of organic foods are intent on trying to dilute the definition of “organic”... and this somehow proves that Big Government is bad, the federal organic standard should be abolished, and it should be left up to individual producers to define “organic” however they wish.

By John E. Sununu

“Former U.S. Senator John E. Sununu’s dual career as a contributing op-ed writer for *The Boston Globe* and an advisor to a lobbying firm is raising ethical questions. A review of Sununu’s columns reveals that they have not contained disclosures about his ties to lobbying giant Akin Gump, where he serves as a “senior policy advisor.” Indeed, Sununu has written about issues related to Akin Gump’s lobbying without disclosing his role in the firm.... Political ethics watchdogs found the *Globe’s* lack of disclosure troubling. ‘Sununu should have a tag line running at the bottom of all his columns, disclosing his affiliation with Akin Gump,’ Mary Boyle, a vice president of Common Cause, said in an email. ‘Even if he’s not writing specifically about Akin Gump or one of its cases, his affiliation in the industry is relevant.’”
- “John Sununu: Lobby Shop Employee and Boston Globe Columnist,” by Joe Strupp & Oliver Willis, Media Matters for America blog, Jan. 17, 2012.

Inevitably, the biggest fish in the pond are best positioned to influence their regulators. It’s called regulatory capture, and the likelihood of it should always be part of the debate.

And it should never be used as an argument for abandoning the idea of regulation.

“[National Organic] Standards board member John Foster...was a grower, researcher and organic inspector. Foster said unannounced inspections are one method to improve the whole organic industry. The Organic Trade Association is also on record as being in favor of the recommendations. The standards board recommended mandatory unannounced inspections for at least 5% of certified operations each year. ... “The vote of the NOSB demonstrates a strong will to ensure that all producers of organic food are in compliance every day,” Foster said. “In my many years as an organic inspector, I came to see that this kind of protocol improved not just compliance with the standards, but also provided real business value regardless of scale.”
- “National Organic Standards Board suggests unannounced inspections,” *The Packer*, Mar. 23, 2012.

History tells us that, far from restraining the power of big companies, an overbearing regulatory bureaucracy benefits them just about every time. Last month, the White House released e-mails detailing the deal it cut with PhRMA — the drug industry’s lobbying arm — to win support for Obamacare. And the size and market share of America’s biggest banks have only grown since the passage of Dodd-Frank banking regulations.

The first sentence doesn’t belong with the

second and third. The deals satisfying the demands of Big Pharma and Wall Street were about *weakening* the Affordable Care Act and the Dodd-Frank bill, the opposite of “overbearing.” Interestingly, Sununu is probably best known for advocating for a more “overbearing regulatory bureaucracy” that would have applied stronger federal regulations to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, prior to the 2008 financial meltdown.

And it’s still a lot better than the alternative: “In a recent study for the Soil Association, Shane Heaton found that more than 500 food additives are permitted for use in non-organic processed foods, and that organic food products specifically exclude the use of hydrogenated fats (also known as trans-fats), phosphoric acid, aspartame, monosodium glutamate (MSG) and sulphur dioxide. [Food additives] are permitted in organic food processing...only if ‘the product cannot be produced or preserved without them.’” - wholekids.com

Deciding what is allowed in ostensibly organic foods is easily the most important thing the National Organic Standards Board does, yet the list of allowed additives keeps getting longer at big farm companies’ request.

The organic standard is being weakened by corporate capitalism and Soviet-style central planning? And the problem is the rules themselves, not the parties trying to bend the rules in their favor? Is there perhaps a clearer picture available of what’s really going on? Yes, there is:

Today, the National Organic Standards Board keeps a list of 250 nonorganic food additives that can be used under the “certified organic” label. That’s three times the number listed just 10 years ago. As the Soviets proved time and again, a good central committee can kill just about anything.

And of course, once

free of a federal standard, so can Monsanto, Archer Daniels Midland (both on Akin Gump’s client list), and every other agribusiness giant engaged in the ceaseless quest for less regulation and more profit -- precisely the reason why a federal organic standard needed to be established.

In the Senate, Sununu twice tried to secure federal regulation of the insurance industry, saying of his National Insurance Act that it emphasized “the importance of a clear, consistent regulatory framework. The fragmented system currently in effect has no place in a modern economy.” The federal charter made possible by his bill, said Senator Sununu, would enable insurance companies “to work under a uniform set of regulations and an effective federal regulator.”

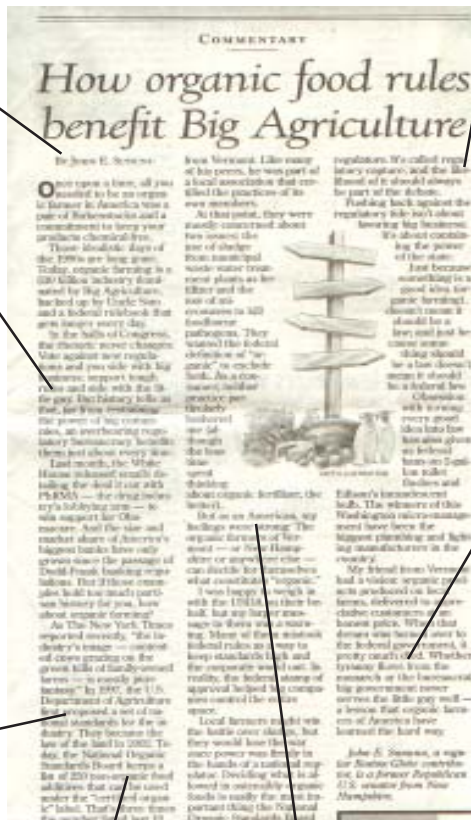
Such are the fickle winds of shifting political fashion and the strange ways they can blow in the interval between one’s service as an elected official and transformation into a lobbyist.

The organic farmers of Vermont – or New Hampshire or anywhere else – can decide for themselves what constitutes “organic.”

Whether tyranny flows from the monarch or the bureaucrat, big government never serves the little guy well – a lesson that organic farmers of America have learned the hard way.

Or not. On June 19, three weeks before this op ed appeared, Congresswoman Lois Capps and Congressman Richard Hanna introduced the Organic Standards Protection Act to ensure that products bearing the USDA organic seal comply with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. The legislation would protect the organic farming industry and its expanding consumer base by granting the USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP) the legislative authority it needs to more effectively protect the integrity of certified organic products.
“The Organic Trade Association supports the passage of the Organic Standards Protection Act, which, if enacted, will give the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Organic Program additional tools to safeguard the integrity of the USDA Organic seal,” said OTA chief Christine Bushway.
“California Certified Organic Farmers support the Organic Standards Protection Act to further ensure consumer confidence in high-quality organic products,” said Cathy Calfo, Executive Director/CEO, CCOF. “Our members include 2,400 organic farmers, ranchers, processors and handlers whose competitiveness relies on a strong regulatory framework that is fairly enforced.”

Upshot: As a lobbyist, former Senator Sununu has learned a new vocabulary with which to befriend big business. The sight of crocodile tears shed for the federal organic standard, flowing from this source, is akin to the calls from Sununu’s former colleagues to reform health care by abolishing health care reform. He is deploying a political strategy that “Taking Issue” fans have seen before, when *Sacramento Bee* columnist Dan Walters called for the “reform” of the California Environmental Quality Act (“Dark side to liberal government,” *Tribune*, Sept. 7, 2011), as dissected in our October 2011 issue. In the Walters/Sununu form of anti-regulatory magical thinking, weaknesses in a regulatory regime always demonstrate the need to dispense with those regulations, not strengthen them or make it harder for big money players to game the system.



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equirement of the law,’ [Cornucopia Institute
says.”
Been Oversized?,” *New York Times*, July 7, 2012.

San Luis Obispo

About that Economic Development Strategic Plan...

What exactly is the problem?

August 6, 2012

TO: SLO City Council

FROM: Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club



Following are our comments on the Draft Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP).

The Plan seems to take it as an article of faith that reducing developer impact fees will create head of household jobs, with no supporting evidence for that claim. The Council should request a range of studies on this subject — if such exist — before accepting this premise.

We would apply the same criticism to the alleged need for “permit streamlining,” which also needs examination along the lines of perception vs. reality. On its first page, the staff report states that said streamlining would “optimize the City’s development review process,” and that “based on community input, this would also include a review of City environmental review procedures.” On Page 43 of the EDSP we learn that “community input” and “the public engagement process” consisted primarily of interviews with 31 individuals, in search of “an insider perspective,” primarily from the business community.

This input presents a notable contrast with the finding that appears at the bottom of page 37 of Appendix A, that in comparison to other regional governments, “the City appears to process permits efficiently with some of the shortest processing times.”

The use in the staff report of the politically loaded term “job creators,” which was devised by one of the political parties seeking advantage in the current presidential election, does not seem appropriate in a staff report. We would hope to see it replaced going forward by the word “companies.”

The idea promoted by the Plan that the City should abandon its nearly decade-long policy of requiring developers to pay their fair share of the costs of development and infrastructure and the City be required to subsidize those costs should be considered in light of how successful the current policy has been.

In its comparison of development fees charged by the City to those charged by the County, Paso Robles, Santa Barbara and Davis in Appendix A, the background report mentions on page 35 that “only the city of San Luis Obispo and the County of San Luis Obispo impose fees related to affordable housing on commercial development,” without elaboration. This statistic is evidently considered to be so important it is re-stated, in a boldface call-out, on page 37. If by its inclusion and emphasis, the authors mean to suggest that affordable housing fees should be eliminated and that instead inclusionary affordable

SLO continued on page 10

Cambria

About desal...

Cost: 300 percent over estimate

In an ongoing effort to provide timely information on local environmental issues, Greenspace – the Cambria Land Trust is reexamining past efforts to meeting Cambria’s long term water needs. It released the report A Review of Water Use & Water Management Alternatives in Cambria, California in July.

The report analyzes information obtained through public records requests, California Urban Water Conservation Council records and Public Water System Statistics Reports to investigate a comprehensive, integrated water strategy for Cambria that includes elements of both supply augmentation and demand reduction.

By analyzing both historic and current water use records, the report identifies patterns, conservation opportunities and likely future water needs. It compares costs to produce equivalent water supplies from desalination at other facilities in assessing realistic costs that would be a fair counter.

The report suggests that water produced by seawater desalination in Cambria would be three times more expensive than the costs estimated by the Cambria Community Services District.

The report offers long-term solutions in light of realistic cost estimates and provides a framework for judging costs for alternatives such as conservation and reuse. Further analysis by agencies of regional solutions, conservation, and reuse alternatives will profit from the information presented in this report.

Dr. Tom Fryer is an environmental scientist and water resources engineer. He headed the Marin Municipal Water District’s water conservation program in the 1990s and developed its Urban Water Management Plan. He established the California Urban Water Conservation Council, and water quality monitoring programs in the Florida Keys, the Tortugas Ecological Reserve, the largest marine protected area in continental waters. He also assisted the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with the development of water conservation programs in Florida.

He is currently continuing past efforts to meeting Cambria’s long term water needs through an ongoing effort to provide timely information on local environmental issues.

His work includes water conservation, public education and advocacy, and water quality monitoring to protect and enhance the ecological systems, cultural

DESAL continued on page 10

Pismo Beach About Spanish Springs...

An abridgement of the remarks of Richard Foster as submitted for the record of the June 5 Pismo Beach City Council meeting on the revised Environmental Impact Report for the Spanish Springs development in Price Canyon.

I confess this is a somewhat lengthy document, but there is much that needs to be said and aired about development in and around Pismo Beach. And I intend to be sharing this document with others – who have my permission to freely pass this document or parts of it to others as they see fit.

On Rumors and Truth

We need to start with the realization that rumors and innuendo once started often become accepted as fact if they go unchallenged. We have at least a couple of these false statements which need to be addressed.

There are those who believe that we need more housing in the South County because we are forcing people to live in Santa Maria (and commute to jobs in San Luis Obispo)... If there were a higher demand for housing in Pismo Beach (and thus the South County), there would not be hundreds of lots unbuilt and hundreds of homes for sale. So why do developers want to build (or have permission to build) in Pismo Beach? Precisely because homes command a higher price in Pismo Beach than they do in Santa Maria; all other factors being the same, developers and contractors can

is grossly lacking. I will not comment on the many problems (or else I would never get this submitted by the deadline, or I would never sleep to meet the deadline), I will only mention a few and my comments will be limited to only a few of the “Significant and Unavoidable Impacts.”

The development of Price Canyon and “Spanish Springs” deserves significant time, attention, creative juices, and other effort. We are talking about hundreds of homes along with other significant development which will change the character of the entire region.

First, as to the impact on view. The EIR states: “Impact VIS-7: The cumulative change in the overall visual character in the Price Canyon corridor resulting from development of Planning Area R would be substantial over the existing rural, open space character, which though mitigated to a large degree by aspects of the Proposed Project, would be a significant and unavoidable cumulative impact.”

It would seem that prior to making such a statement one might want to request that the “Designated Scenic Corridor” status which Price Canyon currently enjoys be rescinded, or at least acknowledge this plan. If there is an intention to change this, then let’s be up-front and honest about this intent.

On air quality

Consider “Impact AQ-3: Future development under the Specific Plan after mitigation, would result in



What’s ahead? Local Agency Formation Commission field trip, Price Canyon, July 21, 2011.

Marcia Carter

return in Pismo

ed that there is only to the massive d annexations no Beach (“Spanish”, etc.) Yet there the LAFCO meet- posed annexations Pismo’s Sphere of their opposition to sive development. he people of Pismo is type of develop- sibly settled if the City ke a non-binding dents – yet they have y not to do so. he erroneous e the facts. Many of motive the City ave that they consi- re to know or expose

Spanish Springs EIR concerns

certain some well-uals have put in their o prepare this EIR, it

exceeding of the APCD emission thresholds for ROG, NOx, PM10 and CO, a significant and unavoidable impact,” “Impact AQ-6: The SSSP would result in greenhouse gas emissions related to combined operational, area source, indirect and construction phase energy consumption, and impact which, lacking an adopted threshold, is assumed to be significant and unavoidable,” and “Impact AQ-7: Future development under the Specific Plan, in combination with other development in the region, will result in traffic increases that will cumulatively contribute emissions causing an unavoidable significant impact.”

I thought the County recently prepared an Air Pollution Control document that commits SLO County to reducing air pollution. Will the development of “Spanish Springs” ignore this recently prepared document? Are our elected officials (at all levels) working together to actually improve our air quality, or are they

SPANISH SPRINGS continued on page 7

Spanish Springs

continued from page 6

not? How much degradation of air quality should we expect? Will the future air on the Central Coast be comparable to the air quality of Los Angeles or the Bay Area (which is a significant reason why many of us left those areas)? Just how many tons of emissions of various types should be expected? And will it accumulate in the narrow Price Canyon? Will this be a good location for Senior Housing (as proposed)? I find the EIR grossly lacking in specifics on this issue. This is *not* a “NIMBY” issue; if we lose our air quality, then we have nothing of our quality of life to share.

On building codes

“Roofs are to be oriented so that installation of solar panels will be facilitated.” Why not just require the installation of solar panels in this neighborhood? Would the City of Pismo Beach be willing to waive the exorbitant fees which currently discourage the use of active solar installations? Is the developer resistant to doing this because there is no resale value? Why not require the use of what we already know are effective active and passive solar building codes? And certainly passive solar is cost-effective! Perhaps all buildings (including homes) should be required to have adequate roof overhang to provide the appropriate shade. Will the buildings and windows be oriented so that during the summer solar heating will be minimized and during the winter solar heating will be maximized?

On the 101: I had heard at the Planning Commission that the new development “would pay an appropriate share” toward widening 101. What does that mean? The only reason to widen 101 is because of this new development. To my way of thinking, the share ought to be 100% for the residents of “Spanish Springs,” but I am led to believe the developers and the City of Pismo Beach are thinking of something like a “Regional Transportation Tax” -- a tax which everyone in the South County will pay in addition to all the other taxes they are already paying). But once again, this

information is not forthcoming and direct. And I am not enticed by an offer to add tertiary sewage treatment to the existing sewage facility (a pittance!)

Furthermore, the “Regional Transportation Tax” does not make this development “revenue-neutral.” Is there some reason this information is being withheld from both the public and from decision-makers? I could easily lose trust in any information I am given when I am selectively given only the information that someone else wants me to have. The developer clearly does not care about trust, but I thought the EIR was prepared by the staff, who work for Pismo Beach (paid for by the developer). Do not underestimate the importance of gaining public trust.

The statements that 72% of the land is designated “Open Space” and 33% protected by a conservation easement are also misleading and deceptive. Most of us already know that the 33% proposed for conservation easement is land whose slope makes it unbuildable; under these circumstances, the easement is meaningless. A conservation easement only has value where it is possible to build -- not where building it impossible or prohibitively expensive. And we also know the track record of Pismo Beach: Open Space means “land which is reserved for future development” -- so the proposal is to ultimately develop every area possible. This part of the “marketing pitch” needs to be more truthful.

It is only appropriate that we recognize that Pismo Beach’s desire for massive development in Price Canyon is not solely a Pismo Beach concern. There are ramifications from this action throughout the area and at least the entire South County. Any development proposal should be treated as such.

The message is that more work on the EIR is needed before it becomes a meaningful document for decision-making. An EIR is not merely a bureaucratic requirement; it is meant to be a revealing and meaningful document where creative energies are used to mitigate impacts from a project or to alter the project so that the impacts become less.

Trade Treaties and Democracy: It’s Time to Be Afraid

In my judgment, GATT [The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] is an end run around the environmental gains of the last century. And if there were any investigative reporting worth a cent, they would be telling you that in the papers. They don’t tell you that.

- David Brower, first Sierra Club Executive Director
University of Colorado at Boulder, 1993

by Jim Diamond, San Francisco Bay Chapter

The Trans-Pacific Partnership trade treaty negotiations have been widely and correctly criticized for lack of transparency (see “One World Global Governance for Real,” June, and www.sierraclub.org/trade).

Corporate insiders have not only been privy to the negotiating texts but have helped to write them. In aiming to create a “NAFTA on steroids” involving many Pacific Rim nations, it is Congress and the American people who’ve been left in the dark about details, though some are now beginning to leak out.

If that isn’t scary enough, consider two other facts: first, that multinational corporations are now empowered to spend almost unlimited amounts of money on “free speech” including that which may support (or tarnish) specific candidates in elections, and second, that treaty law takes precedence over national law. The combination amounts to a corporate curtailment of national democracy.

In negotiations for previous “Free Trade” treaties such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), we thought of our government as bargaining for the collective best interests of our nation, and the rhetoric was that jobs which might be lost would be offset by an increase in trade and overseas markets. We might have disagreed but there was at least the pretense that the government’s aim was the greater good, a good result for the U.S. and a win-win overall. I think politicians actually believed this, and perhaps some still do, but it’s much harder to believe now, and I think this is the reason for trying to bypass Congress and the American people with the TPP.

Multinationals have realized that by putting together their own enormous rule book on how the international economy works, one which will be the product of years of negotiations and many governments, they can present a treaty which is extremely resistant to major overhaul and which they can push into effect. In the U.S., the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision has given them a license to use all their financial muscle in the political arena. Thus the present equation is not of nation bargaining with nation, but multinational interests out-muscling national democracies.

This is a march toward global economic integration while leaving democracy behind. We need to hold very tightly to democracy, as if it were a child in danger of being swept away by a powerful river. To fight that current, I think we’re going to need all the democratic power we can muster.

I’m not authorized to speak for Sierra Club on this matter. The opinion expressed here is my own. I think that we -- the broadest possible “we” -- should work not only for increased transparency but also for a full stop to these negotiations. There is a lot more at stake here than just imports and exports.



School

continued from page 1

Asserting our right to clean water by placing a statutory ban on fracking in place will, by stipulation, confer the right to impose the penalties for violations. We can make a violation of our Right to Clean Water ordinance by a hydro-fracking company a capital offense, which means violators go to jail.

Outrageous, you say? Consider the option: without this ordinance, a company can legally poison every drop of our water and our local ecosystem without so much as a mother-may-I.

How do we do it? Thought you’d never ask.

Democracy School teaches citizens and activists how to reframe exhausting and often discouraging single issue work (such as opposing toxic dumps, factory farms, and fracking) in a way that makes it possible to confront corporate control on a powerful single front: people’s constitutional rights.

Global Exchange and the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund are coming to SLO on October 12 and 13 to hold a Democracy School session. Go here: www.celdf.org/democracy-school or

read “Rights vs. Wrongs” in the June *Santa Lucian* to get a preview.

You can sign up yourself or find someone you know who can use this tool and put it to good use. We need people from every community. It will cost \$120. This covers the cost of materials, speaking fee and out-of-pocket expenses for the instructors. Also, this assures us that if there is a legal challenge to the resulting ordinance, we have legal backup from CELDF’s legal team, also at no cost except travel expenses. This is an extraordinary deal. And you can bet your bottom dollar there will be challenges to this.

Many volunteers are overworked and

underpaid and the energy to do this kind of work is generated out of pure love for nature and community. I would encourage you to pass the love around. Reach out and bring in somebody new. We need people from every community in SLO county. To cover the cost, you can have fund raisers, find sponsors...who doesn’t need clean water? Contact your church group, restaurants, dog groomers, hair dressers, car wash, laundromats, landscape business, nurseries, grocery stores that use little sprayers on the veggies once every hour to keep them fresh. They are all potential sponsors and donors. We will have little placards made up

that these businesses can stick in their windows to show the Right to Clean Water is Everybody’s Business.

CELDf and Global Exchange are looking for a show of commitment from this community before they invest their time and energy in this. I’ve told them that we can do whatever it takes to get this done and in record time. Now is the time to show them what we are made of.

Maximum permitted attendance for a Democracy School session is thirty people. So far fifteen have signed up. Just email me if you want to get on the sign-up list or find out if there are any remaining spaces: jeannewater@gmail.com.



CCA

continued from page 3

increase the amount of non-polluting, renewable energy they use are looking at CCA as a mechanism for doing so.

In 2002, with the passage of AB 117, the ability of communities to implement Community Choice Aggregation programs was signed into law in California. Thanks to lobbying efforts by PG&E, Southern California Edison and other utility giants to block implementation of the law, the state's first CCA did not launch until May 2010, when Marin Clean Energy went online, committed to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and increased use of renewables.

The Marin Energy Authority is a non-profit public agency which includes the County of Marin and all of its cities and towns, who together oversee the county's clean energy program. Its board is made up of representatives of the Cities of Belvedere, Larkspur, Mill Valley, Novato, San Rafael and Sausalito, the Towns of Corte Madera, Fairfax, Ross, San Anselmo and Tiburon, and the County of Marin.

How does it work?

Unlike a municipal utility, a CCA does not own the transmission and delivery systems. Instead, the CCA is responsible for providing energy to its citizens and choosing the source and price of that energy. For example, Marin Clean Energy partners with PG&E to deliver electricity and maintain the power lines. PG&E reads the electricity meters, issues monthly bills, and provides maintenance and repair services as they always have. Marin Clean Energy offers two programs to its customers. "Light Green" electricity is 50% renewable, more than twice what had otherwise been available to PG&E customers. "Deep Green" electricity is 100% renewable energy and costs one penny more per kilowatt-hour.

Inclusion in the CCA is not required, and households and businesses can opt out and have the utility company continue providing their power. As of July 16, 2012, *Pacific Sun News* reports that 80% of Marin County had switched from PG&E to Marin Clean Energy.

Even more exciting is the potential for CCAs to develop their own generation projects that not only increase local employment but increase the resiliency of the community to outside power disruptions and economic turmoil. Marin Clean Energy has signed contracts for more than 45 megawatts of new solar to be built in California in 2012, including a solar project at the San Rafael Airport. The airport project is being built by Synapse Electricity, a Muir Beach-based company, and will create 25 jobs during the construction phase. The project will provide enough energy to power 280 homes per year. Marin Clean Energy has also contracted for new biogas projects in Yuba and Solano Counties.

Based on the success in Marin, many more California communities

are exploring the formation of a CCA, including Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Chula Vista, Emeryville, Oakland, Pleasanton, Richmond, San Francisco, San Marcos, Vallejo, the Kings River Conservation District, West Hollywood and Los Angeles and Sonoma Counties. Monterey and Santa Cruz have formed a CCA task force. Community leaders in South-

drome," – that a small mom & pop energy provider will never be able to beat the rates that can be offered by a large utility company. In this economy, residents and businesses can ill afford to pay more for their energy needs. However, these claims are largely unsupported. Marin Clean Energy reports that as of July 1, 2012, most residential customers pay only

provide jobs and create income to offset municipal expenditures. Even more importantly, feasibility studies indicate that, over time, CCAs should reduce electricity rates compared with investor-owned utilities (such as PG&E) because of the higher costs of private financing. In a pilot project funded by the California Energy Commission, CCA capital costs were about 5.5% compared to 12.9% for investor-owned utilities. California Energy Commissioner John Geesman reflects California's enthusiasm about the possibilities of CCA when he says "The California Energy Commission is excited about the potential for Community Choice Aggregators to increase the amount of renewable energy that is produced and consumed in the state."

The LGC recommends creating a rate stabilization fund which will allow the CCA to hold prices steady, even if fuel prices rise.

Veium believes that a serious investigation must be performed and analysis made of the risks and benefits to the community. "I think what we will find," he says, "is that community choice energy will provide opportunities for significant local renewable energy, local economic development and a vehicle for innovation."

CCA in SLO County?

As we all know, PG&E is the electric elephant in the County's living room when it comes to energy decisions by our local elected officials. LEAN Energy U.S. reports that PG&E spent \$44 million on Proposition 16, a ballot initiative in California to block CCAs from being formed.

CCAs are currently active in six states. Illinois this year grew from 20 aggregated communities to over 250, according to Shawn Marshall, Executive Director of LEAN Energy, and Utah, New York, Connecticut and Colorado are contemplating CCA legislation.

Marshall says that LEAN Energy will provide advisory support to community leaders, local governments and consumers working toward establishment of CCA in their communities. "We will provide workshops and resources such as sample formation documents and access to a network of CCA experts and practitioners."

Does the political will exist in San Luis Obispo County to accomplish the goal of community choice? "I think we can generate it," says Eric. "There may be some resistance from PG&E; however PG&E is an important partner in our energy system. A collaborative relationship would be much more beneficial than an antagonistic one."

CENTRAL COAST BIONEERS
Conference - October 19-21, 2012
 Historic Monday Club, San Luis Obispo
 a program of Ecologistics, Inc.

If you're tired of talking about the world's issues and ready to start doing something about them, Bioneers is the place to be.

www.centralcoastbioneers.org

Renewing Civilization in the Age of Nature

We're talking CCA To encourage the conversation, on Saturday, October 20, at 2:00 p.m., Ecologistics will host a presentation on Community Choice Aggregation as part of the Central Coast Bioneers Conference. The panel will include Shawn Marshall, the founder and Executive Director of LEAN Energy U.S., Paul Fenn, the author of AB 117, California's CCA law, Lane Sharman, co-founder of the San Diego Energy District Foundation, and Andrew Christie, Director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. Letters of invitation to attend the workshop have been mailed to 175 leaders from San Luis Obispo, Monterey and Santa Barbara Counties and 23 cities within those counties.

ern California have formed the San Diego Energy District Foundation to establish a CCA.

Are We Really Getting Clean Energy?

Critics of the concept of CCA argue that it is impossible to tell, when you plug your coffeemaker into the socket in your home, where exactly that energy is coming from. The energy grid is not an isolated "container" and electricity enters it from everywhere – solar plants, nuclear reactors and dirty coal plants. How can you be sure that the green energy you are buying is actually what is being delivered to you?

The *Pacific Sun News* provides an excellent analogy by the late Marin County Supervisor Charles McGlashan, who championed CCA and was a key player in the creation of Marin Clean Energy. He said "the electrical grid is like a pond...[and] electricity is like water in the pond. Putting dirty water (fossil-fuel generated electricity) into the pond dirties the entire pond; putting clean water into the pond cleans its entire contents, displacing dirty water with clean – or dirty electricity with clean."

The most important thing is what goes into the pond, as McGlashan would say. If producing a cleaner energy grid is the goal, supporting companies that produce clean electricity and supply it to the grid is the means to that end.

The nature of air quality is another good analogy. We reduce vehicle emissions to improve air quality, even though the air we breathe doesn't necessarily come from the vicinity of our vehicle. It's a common goal toward a common benefit. (*Pacific Sun News*, "A Clean Break," July 16, 2012)

How Much?

Critics are also concerned about the "Wal-Mart syn-

\$3.85 more per month for the Light Green package. Commercial customers pay an average of \$3.31 per month less in the summer and \$4.12 more in the winter. These are small prices to pay for a much lower carbon footprint.

According to the *Pacific Sun*, the average MCE commercial customer using 1,312 kilowatt-hours of energy during a summer month will pay 91 cents less than a PG&E customer for Light Green (50% renewable) energy and \$12.21 more than a PG&E customer for Deep Green (100% renewable) energy.

Risk-Benefit

The Local Government Commission sets forth the issues a community will need to consider before making the move to a CCA. Besides the obvious benefit realized by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the LGC also points out that the development of local generation projects would

Clusters

continued from page 3

have requirements for a qualifying history of agriculture on the parcel.

Staff is recommending the alternative that restricts agricultural cluster subdivisions to properties located within two road miles of the urban reserve lines (URLs) of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, San Luis Obispo, San Miguel, Nipomo, Templeton, and Paso Robles, although the EIR analyzed the option of site locations up to five road

miles from these URLs, which were created with the idea of containing development within the area they proscribe.

The Sierra Club commends Planning staff for revising their original recommendation from a five-mile limit to two miles. Encouraging development five miles beyond the boundary of an Urban Reserve Line would seriously beg the question of what Urban Reserve Lines are for.

Paso Basin Overdraft Vote Sept. 25.

A crucial vote on the declining Paso Robles Groundwater Basin is scheduled for September 25 at the Board of Supervisors. The Board will consider amendments to the General Plan that designate the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin at a Level of Severity III (LOS III). The amendments will prohibit further subdivision of lands in the Paso Basin until the basin is no longer in overdraft. The amendments will apply only to lands within the county.

Losing Sleep and Waking Up Worried?

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Jill Denton, LMFT

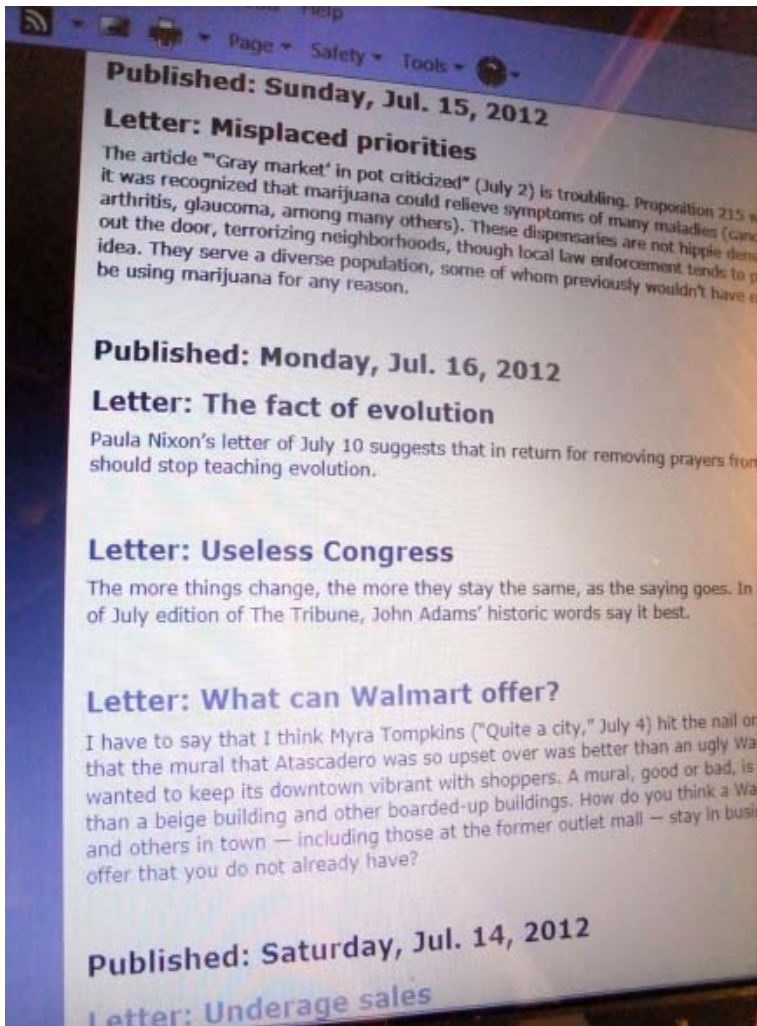
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In Case You Missed It....



Now you see it... Our letter to the editor setting the record straight on the labeling of genetically engineered food appeared in the July 14 print edition of *The Tribune* (right) but never showed up in the oddly jumbled letters section of the web edition (above).

Food lobby

continued from page 1

labeling. For example, soft drink and snack giant PepsiCo, cereal makers Kellogg and General Mills, and of course, biotech behemoth Monsanto.

According to state filing reports, so far GMA has spent \$375,000 on its efforts to oppose the labeling measure, with its members adding additional out-of-state lobbying power in the tens of thousands of dollars. Never mind polling demonstrating that a whopping 90 percent of Californians think they deserve the right to know what they are eating. GMA also won't bother to mention the more than 40 other nations (including the European Union, Brazil and China) that already require food makers to disclose GMOs.

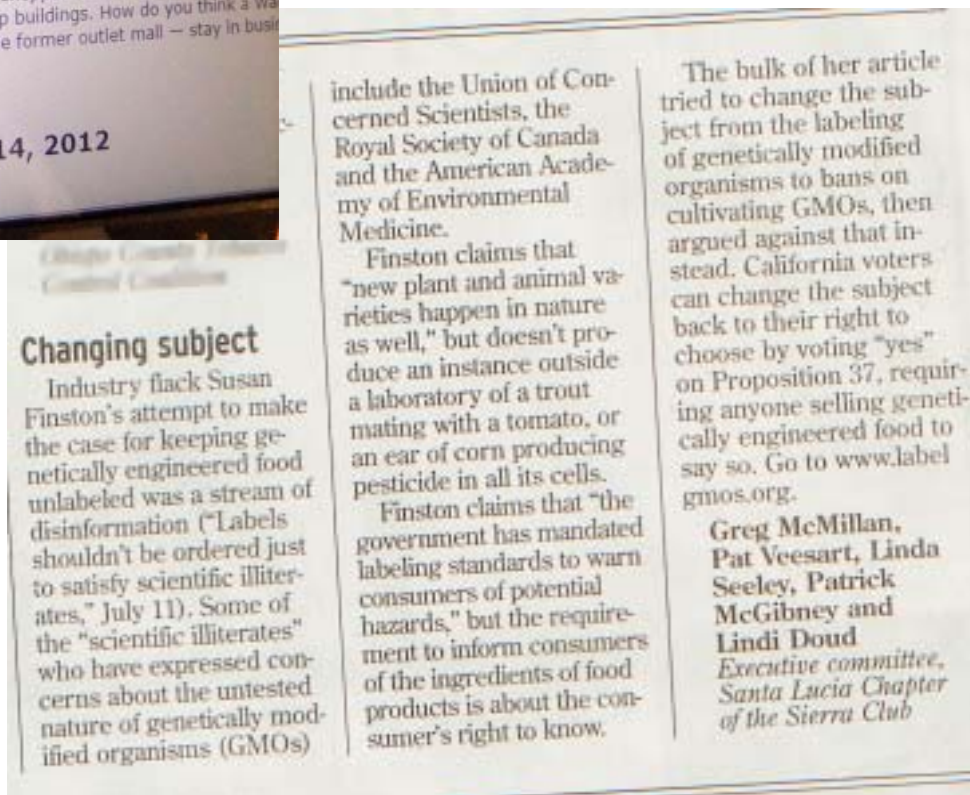
Lobbying to undermine health

This is hardly the first time the nation's most powerful trade association of food manufacturers has marshaled its resources to oppose common-sense food and nutrition policy—at both the national and state levels.

As I documented in my book, *Appetite for Profit*, for years GMA flexed its lobbying muscle in state legislatures all over the country fighting bills that were simply trying to remove junk food and soda from school vending machines.

Big Food lobbyists have also banded together to vociferously fight any attempt to restrict out of control junk food marketing to children on TV and other media.

For example, in 2005, GMA was a founding member of the Alliance for American Advertising, whose stated purpose was to defend the food industry's alleged First Amendment right to advertise to children and to promote voluntary self-regulation as



The letter below from the Santa Lucia Chapter's Executive Committee appeared in the *The Tribune* on Saturday, July 14. It debunked arguments made by a biotech industry rep against the labeling of genetically engineered food and provided a website for those interested in helping out with Proposition 37, the campaign to pass the ballot initiative for labeling GMOs.

The *Tribune* printed a total of twelve letters over the period July 14-16. On the 16th, eleven of them were reproduced on the *Tribune's* website.

The twelfth, the sole omission, is the one reproduced below.

It would be difficult for the *Tribune* to claim an oversight in the transfer of the letters from their July 14 edition to their website, as there were only two letters printed that day — the second, ours,

immediately following the first. Both appeared on the same page.

But they didn't try to make that claim. When we called the *Tribune* to inquire as to how this omission came about, both their Web Editor and the Opinion Page Editor declined to return our calls.

In the absence of an explanation from the editors, one is left to speculate as to what might have transpired during the lag time between the appearance of our letter in print on Saturday and the reproduction in cyberspace of all letters from that weekend, except ours, on Monday. Somewhere in that 48 hours, perhaps someone had a chat with someone else. Perhaps a decision was made not to give further exposure to a

letter refuting the dubious arguments of the ag biotech industry and spreading the word on the Right to Know ballot initiative to label GMOs.

The month before peculiar doings transpired on the *Tribune's* website, the campaign for the California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act estimated that Big Food would spend between 50 and 100 million dollars statewide on the effort to defeat Proposition 37.

As no innocent explanation has been forthcoming for the omission that occurred on the *Tribune's* website over the weekend of July 14, the reader is left to surmise that, as far as one Central Coast media outlet is concerned, some of that cash need not even be spent.

an alternative to government action. More recently, the Grocery Manufacturers Association was among leading trade groups and corporations opposing the federal government's attempt to improve industry's own voluntary guidelines for food marketing to children.

As a Reuters special report from April explains, GMA's chief lobbyist visited the White House last July along with several top food industry representatives (including from Nestle, Kellogg and General Mills) to scuttle an effort by four federal agencies that would have protected children from predatory junk food marketing.

But food makers love labels, don't they?

It seems rather ironic that the same food makers taking advantage of every inch of food packaging space to convince shoppers to purchase its products would object so strongly to labeling for something they claim is not harmful.

Indeed, in recent years, the federal government, recognizing that food

The GMA has earned an anti-consumer reputation in Washington and state legislatures for opposing just about every food safety, fair trade, animal welfare, and consumer right-to-know legislation put forward by public interest groups.

companies' so-called "front of package" labeling is out of control, commissioned not one but two Institute of Medicine reports to make recommendations to fix the problem and un-confuse consumers.

Unwilling to tolerate government intervention designed to help Americans, the Grocery Manufacturers Association has been aggressively promoting its own new nutrition labeling scheme it calls "Facts Up Front." But as Food Politics author Marion Nestle has explained, this is an obvious end-run around the feds.

Here is how the food industry describes its own voluntary program: Facts Up Front is a nutrient-based labeling system that summarizes important information from the

Nutrition Facts Panel in a simple and easy-to-use format on the front of food and beverage packages.

Translation: We are repeating information already required on the back of the package, now placing it in a format we like better on the front.

See how that works? The food industry is always in charge. That's why the nation's largest packaged food lobby and its members are shaking in their boots over 90 percent of Californians wanting to see GMO labeling on food.

And no wonder, because as GMA President Bailey correctly warned her audience: "If California wins, you need to be worried the campaign will come to your state."

Very worried.

TAKE ACTION

Endorsers and volunteers wanted! Go to www.carighttoknow.org



A Proposal to Deny Communities the Ability to Protect Public Health and the Environment

It is becoming a late-summer Sacramento perennial: as the end of the legislative session nears, certain legislators push to weaken the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the state law that helps make sure more pollution isn't added with every sizeable construction project. As we went to press, multiple large-scale attacks were being mounted and draft bill language for a "California Priority Project Plan Implementation Act" was circulating among legislators, with the clear intent of weakening CEQA's environmental review. In response, environmentalists and labor leaders joined forces and signed on and distributed to the legislature this analysis warning about the bill:


A draft CEQA exemption circulated in the Capitol Building would exempt projects that are consistent with the density, use type and intensity shown in a general plan, specific plan, community area plan, sustainable communities plan or other land use plan for which an EIR has been prepared.

1. Proposal Exempts Large-High-Polluting Projects from Environmental Review. The exemption would apply to virtually all types of projects: residential, commercial, industrial, public works. This would include oil refineries, power plants, hazardous waste dumps, incinerators, freeways, sewage treatment plants, port and airport expansions and many others. Real world examples are outlined below.

2. Exemption Guts SB 375, Landmark, Bipartisan Greenhouse Gas Law and other CEQA Infill Reforms. The exemption would treat residential sprawl the same as transit-oriented development, undermining the policies of The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act and related legislation. Residential sprawl that destroyed prime farmland, increased traffic and vehicle miles travelled, increased energy consumption, increased air pollution, and increased greenhouse gas emissions would get as much CEQA relief as transit oriented development. Although the exemption has introductory findings about the benefits of SB 375 and its planning process, it would allow projects to be exempt even if the sustainable communities strategy did not comply with GHG targets set by the Air Resources Board.

3. Exemption Will Lead to New Lawsuits over General Plans and Zoning, Slowing Down Development and Jobs. The exemption shifts attention from CEQA to outdated planning and zoning decisions, thereby creating new avenues of litigation against those decisions. At the same time, the exemption provides no limitations on standing, timelines for lawsuits to be disposed, mandatory mediation, or other streamlining currently available under the CEQA process.

4. Proposal Turns Back Clock to Promote Urban Sprawl over "Smart Growth." The exemption treats 1970's-era urban sprawl the same as infill development, eliminating 30 years of progressive CA land use policies that promote higher density, affordable urban development over sprawl that destroys parklands and prime agricultural lands.



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USE IN AND FOR GOOD HEALTH

5. Proposal Exempts Projects based on Outdated Plans and Information. The exemption would rely on outdated land use plans as old as 20 or 30 years. An EIR on these plans prepared so long ago could not possibly have considered current circumstances or required mitigation measures for impacts on them. These outdated plans will not have considered environmental impacts such as global warming or toxic chemical contamination whose toxicity was recently understood.

6. Exemption Would Apply Even Where Plans Conflicted with One Another. This exemption would apply to a land use if it is authorized by one plan even if it conflicted with another plan such as the sustainable communities strategy under SB 375. The exemption would allow uses to proceed without environmental review even if there were fundamental conflicts in planning documents.

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housing shall be made a mandatory requirement as a percentage of all future development, with no option for in lieu fees, we would consider that a worthwhile exchange. We urge the Council to give staff direction to that effect.

We commend to the Council's attention the caveat concluding the comparison in this section: "The level of services and quality of life desired by the City also should be factored in — not only because they are highly valued by the community, but also because they help to fuel job growth."

We would extend this caveat to cover the Plan's function as an argument for the reduction of impact fees and forcing the city and taxpayers to make up the difference, the "streamlining" of the environmental review process, the lowering of standards for construction of infrastructure, and the incentivizing of development. The national landscape is littered with hollowed-out municipalities that sought to compete with each other by incentivizing development with "streamlined" checkbox permitting, tax holidays, slashed development fees, and an increase in the burden of the cost of development infrastructure placed on their general funds and their residents. We do not recommend that San Luis Obispo set off down that road.

Instead of taking to heart the draft Plan's evident proposition that the City needs to become more like Santa Barbara, Paso Robles, or Davis, we suggest that consideration be given to the possibility that the City's current impact fees and environmental review process may have more than a little to do with its aforementioned level of services and the maintenance of a quality of life currently ranked the

highest in the nation.

Thank you for


the opportunity to comment,



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Desal

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resources and marine habitats of the North Coast area of San Luis Obispo County as a national treasure.

In keeping with that mission, the Greenspace Directors support policies and promote programs that provide Cambria residents and businesses a reasonable amount of water without doing further harm to the watersheds, forest, fisheries, and other water dependent resources we treasure. They support an environmentally sound, comprehensive and integrated water strategy that includes elements of both supply augmentation and demand reduction.

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

For Project Information:

www.topazsolar.com

Questions?

Construction Liaison, Dawn Legg:

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

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Outings and Activities Calendar

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

All our hikes and activities are open to all Club members and the general public. Please bring drinking water to all outings and optionally a lunch. Sturdy footwear is recommended. All phone numbers listed are within area code 805 unless otherwise noted. Pets are generally not allowed. A parent or responsible adult must accompany children under the age of 18. If you have any suggestions for hikes or outdoor activities, questions about the Chapter's outing policies, or would like to be an outings leader, call Outings Chair Joe Morris, 549-0355. For information on a specific outing, please call the listed outing leader.



Got to <http://motherlode.sierraclub.org/sierranevada/activities.htm> for fees and details.

Fall at Clair Tappaan Lodge

September 16-22: 50+ Outing - Ridge-top Rambles.

September 27 - 30. Plein Air Retreat for Artists.

September 28 - 30: Fly Fishing.

October 5 - 7: Opera in the Mountains.

October 12-14: Yoga and Wine Tasting.

Located in Tahoe National Forest in the Sierra Nevada. Spaces limited. Call (800) 679-6775. Cost for weekend activities include 6 meals, 2 nights lodging and all of the activities, unless otherwise stated.



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.

Sat., Sept. 8, 9 a.m. Over the Top Hike, Cerro San Luis. Moderately-paced, 5-mile hike over Cerro San Luis via Rock Garden Trail, about 2.5-3 hrs. duration, led by geologist. Some steep hills and a rocky section. Bring boots and water. Meet at parking lot/restroom area at Laguna Lake. Info.: Mike Sims, 459-1701 or msims@slonet.org. Rain cancels.

Sat., Sep. 15, 9 a.m. Four-Trail Hike in Montana de Oro. Moderately strenuous, 10-mile loop hike, 2700 ft. gain, into many different areas of the park. From Valencia and Oats Peaks, get excellent views of coastline and backcountry, then descend along Coon Creek and walk ocean bluffs. Bring adequate water, snacks, hat, sturdy shoes, and dress in layers for variable weather. Ticks and poison oak possible. Plants, animals, and area geology will be discussed. Meet at Valencia Peak trailhead, 100 yards past visitor center. Info.: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Sat., Sep. 15, 9:30 a.m. Pt. Sal Road Hike. Your choice of a 5 or 10-mile hike, both moderately strenuous. 5-mile hike, 2-hrs., ascends hill to long views of coast, cliffs, and pristine beach. 10-mile, 5-hrs., hike continues down to beach. Bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen, hat, and sweater in case of cool weather. Meet at main gate to Pt. Sal Park—end of Brown Rd, 3.9 miles from Rt. 1. Info.: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792.

Sat-Sun, Sept. 15-16. Bright Star Service Trip. Assist BLM specialist Marty Dickes in Wilderness Area north of Ridgecrest, putting up barriers, concealing illegal routes, placing signs. Sunday, long hike through wilderness area to Cortez Creek and monitor a cherry-stem vehicle corridor. Early fall Ponderosa forest and chaparral! Contact leader: Craig Deutsche, 310-477-6670 or craig.deutsche@gmail.com. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun., Sept. 16, 9:30 a.m., Oso Flaco Beach Family Hike. Easy 2-mile hike along boardwalk to beach, learning about local plants and animals and playing on the beach. Bring a picnic "brunch." to eat at the beach. Meet at Oso Flaco Beach parking lot (\$4 parking fee). From Hwy 1, go west on Oso Flaco Rd. to the end. Info.: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792.

Fri-Sun, Sept. 21-23. National Public Lands Day in Black Rock. Service work in Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Immigrant Trails NCA. All meals but lunch provided. Close to the date, for details, contact Graham Stafford, 775-686-8478 or graham@grahamstafford.com. Great Basin Group-Toiyabe Chapter.


Sat., Sept. 22, 10 a.m. Guided Walk of Mission-Era San Luis Obispo. Do you know where SLO's first physician lived, locations of the "hanging tree" and stagecoach stop? Find out and

more on an easy stroll past the Mission, several adobes, and old Chinatown. Hear stories of the early days of SLO, the Chumash, and Gold Rush pioneers. Families welcome. Meet at NW corner of Monterey and Osos Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Sat., Sept 29, 9 a.m. Islay Road, Barranca and Ridge Trails Hike. Moderate 9-mile, 1800 ft. gain, hike in Montana de Oro State Park. From Islay Rd., we will ascend Barranca Trail to great views of back country, then onto Ridge Trail to Hazard Peak, with great coastline views. Bring lunch, water, and dress for weather. Ticks and poison oak possible. Meet at parking lot across from Ridge Trail trailhead, about 3 miles from park entrance. If you get to the visitor center, you have gone too far. Possibility of eats after hike. Leader: Chuck, 441-7597.

Fri-Sun, Sept 29-30. National Public Lands Day in the Carrizo Plain. Visit this scenic and

lesser-known national monument with optional hike to Caliente Mountains on Friday. On Saturday, we will fence a backcountry road to protect resources. Sunday, tour historic, prehistoric, and geologic sites. Contact leader: Craig Deutsche, 310-477-6670 or craigdeutsche@gmail.com. CNRCC Desert Committee.




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- Explore the outdoors
- Make new friends
- Protect the environment
- Get healthy exercise

For further information contact:

Joe Morris, Outings Chair
Sierra Club, Santa Lucia Chapter
(805) 549-0355
dpj1942@earthlink.net



John Muir, founder of the
Sierra Club, in Yosemite



Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park

September 9-11

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