



March 2014
Volume 51 No. 3

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Dying Green:
the ultimate recycling

Friday, March 28

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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

Vote for Arjun Makhijani



Put an energy visionary on the Sierra Club Board of Directors

All eligible Sierra Club members — life members and members who have renewed at least once — will soon receive election materials to vote for members of the Sierra Club Board of Directors. (Those who have signed up for internet notification should receive their notification from the election vendor).

Any organization that's been around for awhile has had its ups and downs in terms of leadership. In the Sierra Club's 122 years, we've lucked out in a big way more than a few times, as when the organization has been steered or advised and counseled by the likes of Martin Litton, Edgar Wayburn, Wallace Stegner and William E. Colby. (Kids: google 'em.)

It is in that context that we wish to bring to your attention the presence of Arjun Makhijani on your 2014 ballot for the Sierra Club's Board of Directors.

Dr. Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, holds a Ph.D. in engineering with a specialization in nuclear fusion from the University of California at Berkeley. He has produced many studies on nuclear fuel cycle issues, including nuclear waste, over the past twenty years. He is the principal author of the first study ever done on energy conservation potential in the U.S.

And more to the point for this discussion, he is the author of *Carbon-Free and Nuclear-Free: A Roadmap for U.S. Energy Policy*, the first analysis of a transition to a U.S. economy based completely on renewable energy, without any use of fossil fuels or nuclear power. (Download it here for free: <http://ieer.org/resource/reports/carbon-free-and-nuclear-free/>.)

Dr. Makhijani sums up the findings of his report thusly: "We can solve the problems of oil imports, nuclear proliferation as it is linked to nuclear power, and carbon dioxide emissions simultaneously if we are bold enough."

We trust you catch our drift. The Santa Lucia Chapter is very pleased to endorse Dr. Makhijani for the Board of Directors. This is the guy who knows how to phase out fossil fuels and nuclear energy and replace them with renewables and efficiency. He is the right Sierra Club board director at the right time, so let's get him on board.

And nothing against any of the other

fine candidates on your ballot, but if you want your vote to carry maximum weight, vote *only* for Arjun Makhijani. Ballots must be received by April 16.

Frack Free in '14

Fracking Moratorium Bill in State Senate

State Senators Holly Mitchell and Mark Leno have introduced a bill to impose a moratorium on fracking and well stimulation in California unless there is certainty that the practices will not harm public health, the environment and the economy.

Fracking and well stimulation are technologies that have in recent years been used in oil and natural gas fields around the country to literally break up and dissolve rock deep in the earth to gain access to previously inaccessible oil and gas reserves. The technologies employ hundreds of harsh and toxic chemicals, including acids, mixed with large quantities of water. Fracking and well stimulation has been linked to high levels of air pollution, surface and

groundwater pollution, high levels of water consumption, and earthquakes.

Senate Bill 1132 would impose a moratorium until completion of an expanded study of fracking's impacts, which must then be followed by a determination that the public health, the environment and the economy will not be harmed if fracking resumes.

"Senators Mitchell and Leno have placed before the legislature the opportunity to take the next logical step to protect Californians from a dangerous practice," said Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California. "Last year the legislature passed a bill, SB 4, that would begin regulation

FRACKING continued on page 3

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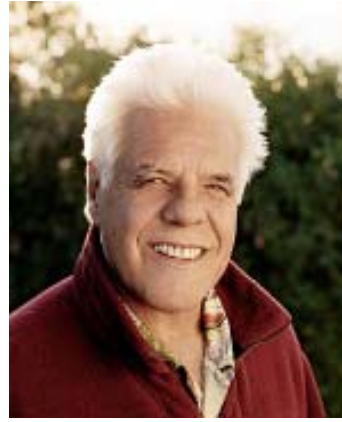
Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Sierra Club General Meeting

7 p.m., Friday, March 28

Green Burial: The Ultimate Recycling

Traveling from the Bay Area to speak to us tonight is a truly dynamic speaker, environmental filmmaker Rob Caughlan, co-founder of Friends of the River and first president of the Surfrider Foundation (www.robcaughlan.com). Rob will discuss the options and rationale for the growing trend of environmentally sustainable burial. The meeting will begin with the short, award-winning documentary, "Dying Green." Q & A will follow.



Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Information: 549-0355

(If you are a member of the Cal French Circle, you're invited to a reception for Rob Caughlan before the event! See Outings & Activities, page 12.)

Reclaiming the Conversation

Our thanks to the Tribune for cleaning up its website. But...

Maybe it's not quite the same thing as restoring a polluted river or leaving your campsite in better shape than you found it, but *The Tribune's* decision last year to link comments on its website through the commenter's Facebook page – and hence, to their names – has had a similar effect on the local exchange of ideas.

Ever since, there have been a lot of wide open spaces below posted letters and viewpoints which, around this time last year, would have been filled with a dozen or more anonymous posts slamming the author, liberals, socialists, intellectuals, out-of-towners, nattering nabobs, presumed confiscators of property and/or guns, family members of public officials and anybody else the poster didn't particularly care for. Charges, counter-charges, rumors, gossip, casual slander and lots of it were the order of the day.

When the day came for the commenters to put their names to their comments, it all blew away overnight.

A 2013 University of Wisconsin study, per *Ars Technica*, "presented participants with a single balanced news item covering nanotechnology, along with one of two sets of comments following the story. Readers' interpretation of the risks associated with nanotechnology differed depending on the tone of the comments; readers exposed to uncivil comments were more likely to attribute potential risks to nanotechnology."

That's right: angry, agenda-laden troll commenters are bad for you and your ability to engage in independent thought.

That study persuaded *Popular Science* to disable the comment function for articles on its website. *The Tribune's* solution to its troll problem was much more elegant than the *Popular Science* shut-down: Invite the anonymous purveyors of poisonous opinion to take ownership of their product, and watch them disappear. See you around, Stoptheinsanity. Vaya con dios, Crapkiller. We hardly knew ye. And now we hardly remember ye. But we retain the mental image of a guy in a ratty bathrobe, hunched over a keyboard in his parents' basement. (And on the chance that you folks are now posting under your real names, may we say how nicely you clean up.)

So let's all thank *The Tribune* for policing their campsite, sprucing up the local marketplace of ideas and reclaiming a toxic dump in the middle of the public square.

There's just one other little problem

that needs attending to.

Some folks hereabouts are still happy to sign on to polluter-developed talking points to the effect that global climate change is not happening and/or is no big deal and/or is not being caused by, and can't be curbed by, human activity – the whole wilted bouquet of climate change denial.

The latest round was kicked off on February 2 when *The Tribune* editorialized on the Atascadero City Council's attempt to delete the impacts of climate change from its Climate Action Plan (see "We Sent a Book to the Atascadero City Council," page 4, and "Taking Issue," page 10). *The Tribune* suggested the city council should have "stuck up for science." This was followed by a rebuttal from aggrieved council members, which was followed by the usual letters from those taking advantage of the opportunity to recirculate one more time all the repeatedly discredited factoids from the climate change denial playbook. It's like watching the parable of the blind men and the elephant, playing in an endless loop.

The Trib handed those folks that opportunity in the name of equal time.

Last October, the *Los Angeles Times* announced it would no longer print climate change denial letters.

As *Times* letters page editor Paul Thornton succinctly put it, in order to keep "errors of fact off the letters page," the paper no longer prints letters denying human-caused climate change because such a letter is "not stating an opinion, it's asserting a factual inaccuracy."

That's right: it's bad for us when *The Tribune* implies there's still any legitimate scientific debate about human-caused climate change by giving deniers ink whenever they want to seize on the latest anecdote-in-a-vacuum to claim that climate change isn't happening, and therefore there's absolutely no problem with extracting, refining and burning more and more fossil fuel.

Dear *Tribune* editorial board: You know the debate is over. We know the debate is over. We know that you know the debate is over. Pretending that it's okay to keep printing those claims is bad for you, and the planet, and your children's future.

We look forward to the day when we can congratulate *The Tribune* on joining the *L.A. Times* in making one more policy change to further clean up the public dialog.

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The **Executive Committee** meets the second Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m. The **Conservation Committee** meets the second Friday at 1 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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Outings, events, and more!

Get On the Bus

On March 15th, Sierra Club will join with Don't Frack California, Californians Against Fracking, 350.org, Food and Water Watch, CREDO Action, SLO Clean Water Action, and 5,000 other folks from all over the state to send a message to Governor Brown, nice and loud: **It's time to stop fracking in California!**

What: Tell Governor Brown, Don't Frack California

When: March 15th, 1 p.m.-5p.m.

Where: The Capitol Lawn, Sacramento, CA

California is experiencing one of the worst droughts in our history. Communities are struggling to figure out where their water will be coming from. Governor Brown's solution is to call for conservation from our citizens, but not from big oil and gas.

On Saturday, March 15th, we'll be making sure Governor Brown and his administration hears us loud and clear: *Climate leaders don't frack.*

Buses will be heading to Sacramento from Chico, Fresno, Merced, Marin, Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito, Bakersfield, Tulare County, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Orange County.

California's future is on the line — let's fight for it.

MARCH 15 • 1 PM

Join thousands of Californians in Sacramento for the largest mobilization against fracking the Golden State has ever seen!

DON'T FRACK CALIFORNIA



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Bus ticket: \$25. Buy your ticket at dontfrackcalifornia.org
Bus departs from in front of Big 5 in Madonna Plaza, 281 Madonna Rd., SLO, at 7:30 a.m. Arrives Sacramento 12:30 p.m. Rally 1-3 p.m. Bus will load 4:30 p.m. Return to SLO @ 10:30 p.m.

Learn more: **DONTFRACKCALIFORNIA.ORG**

Fracking the Coast

In the summer of 2013, the Associated Press discovered that fracking from offshore rigs in the waters off Southern California was a common practice, but the oil companies had neglected to inform California regulators that it has been going on.

On February 12 in Pismo Beach, a state regulatory agency attempted to come to grips with offshore fracking for the first time, as the California Coastal Commission met to hear a staff report on the situation.

The wildlife-rich Santa Barbara Channel, host of the world's largest summertime gathering of blue whales, is of special concern. On the day of the hearing, at virtually the same moment when Coastal Commission deputy director Allison Dettmer was assuring commissioners that no fracking was occurring in the Santa Barbara Channel, the federal government approved three fracking operations in the Channel.

Multiple oil and gas industry representatives at the hearing assured the commissioners that the process was sufficiently regulated and posed no threat to the environment. Santa Lucia Chapter Director Andrew Christie replied: "Fracking's backers like to claim that the process can be done safely and cleanly and without harm to human health and the environment. They say that while clinging to fracking's exemptions from the Clean



Sierra Club California organizer Michael Thornton came to Pismo Beach last month, joining with more than two dozen other speakers from the Center for Biological Diversity, Ocean Foundation, Surfrider, the Environmental Defense Center, the office of Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson and the public to urge the Coastal Commission to take action against the practice of fracking from offshore oil rigs.

Air, Clean Water, and Safe Drinking Water Acts. They say that while making pay-offs to families in legal settlements in exchange for non-disclosure agreements that forbid every member of a family, including seven-year-old children, from ever talking to anyone about fracking for the rest of their lives... The burden is on the oil companies and regulators to prove that what they are doing is not causing harm, and is in fact maintaining and enhancing the marine environment, in accordance with Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. They have not done so."

Oil industry reps also tried to point to existing and proposed EPA regulations on the discharge of pollutants from oil rigs. Coastal Commission staff pointed out that the EPA's regulations are inadequate to meet the requirements for resource protection set by the California Coastal Act.

The Commission agreed that fracking in federal waters – the Outer Continental Shelf – should be reviewed by the Commission for consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Act, and to hold a workshop by the end of the year to report on progress in that effort.

Fracking

continued from page 1

of these health-threatening practices. Since then, several new studies and reports from around the country have underscored just how harmful fracking and well stimulation are to public health, water supplies and the air. This bill builds on last year's actions and will ensure that Californians have complete information about fracking and well stimulation before those techniques are allowed to continue in California.

"More than half of Californians have said in public opinion surveys that they want an end to fracking in this state. It doesn't make sense to them to let big oil pump toxic chemicals into the ground, including near aquifers, and hope for the best. SB 1132 gives legislators a chance to demonstrate that they are listening to their constituents."

The Sierra Club will be reaching out to members throughout California to help make sure this bill gets the support it needs to get it through the Senate by May 30 (after which it goes to the Assembly for consideration).

Step one for SLO folks: On March 15, get on a bus to Sacramento!



We Sent the Atascadero City Council a Book

In the wake of the Atascadero City Council's decision to water down and cast doubt on the description of the impacts of climate change in their Climate Action Plan, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club sent the council a copy of the book *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand* by Haydn Washington and John Cook.

The book provides an overview of climate science, explores the ideological and psychological roots of denial, the confusion over the difference between denial and genuine skepticism, and describes five types of climate change denial, including the type displayed by the city council – i.e. the argument that climate change requires more proof (and always will).

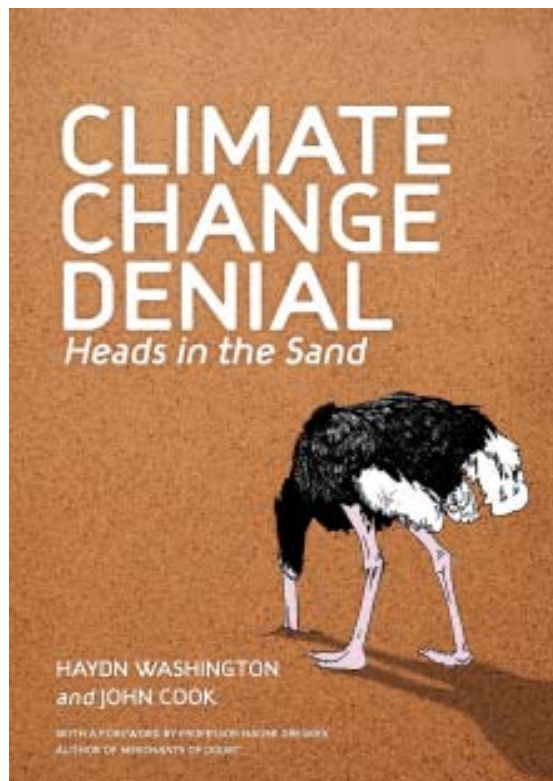
The Club sent the book to the Council to help council members learn the reasons why global climate change is an accepted scientific fact, as demonstrated in over 10,000 peer-reviewed studies and the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the ways in which the scientific evidence of climate change is distorted by deniers.

The book points out that the consen-

sus on climate change is based on a preponderance of evidence, that science proceeds on the preponderance of evidence, not absolute proof, and that if we wait for such proof before we take precautionary action, no action will ever be taken.

We hope the book will be particularly helpful to those city council members who recently proclaimed themselves “well-educated and well-read” (see “Taking Issue,” page 10).

In the foreword to the book, climate change denial is described as being “about a way of life that does not acknowledge the true cost of living, an economics that does not take into account environmental damage and loss.” The Atascadero City Council is not alone in its failure to understand that, so after they’ve read the book,



we encourage their members to pass it along to others who need to get the message.



Pay Your Taxes, Protect Our Coast

The California Coastal Commission is launching a campaign that will raise money for the coast and specifically for Whale Tail Grants – the end result being more funds available to coastal and marine educators throughout California.

Beginning this year, taxpayers will be able to donate via a checkbox on the state tax form to the “Protect our Coast and Ocean Fund.” Funds raised will be awarded to organizations involved in marine and coastal education through the Whale Tail Grants program.

Here’s the website that explains the program: www.checkthecoast.org. A great long-term investment!

Tell Us Again What’s Wrong with “1 Person, 1 Vote”

On February 18, the Board of Supervisors voted 3 to 2 to support special legislation to form a water district to manage the Paso Robles groundwater basin. Assemblymember Katcho Achadjian will introduce the bill in this legislative session.

The draft legislation is a “compromise” between the Paso Robles Agricultural Alliance for Groundwater Solutions (PRAAGS), representing large ag interests over the basin, and ProWater Equity, which was formed to represent the interests of residents with plummeting well levels, but wound up capitulating to PRAAGS on the critical issue of the voting structure for water district directors (see “Paso Robles Basin Sold Out,” January).

Supervisors Bruce Gibson, Frank Mecham and Adam Hill — Debbie Arnold and Caren Ray dissenting — voted for approval despite grave concerns expressed by many residents over two critical issues: the proposed voting structure for the district board, heavily weighted to favor land owners over residents, and the omission of any bar against banking water and exporting it out of the basin.

The board majority was apparently under the impression that compromise is an ultimate value and a universal good — as if any compromise is good because it’s a compromise — even if virtually all the concessions are on one

side. Acquiescing to a voting structure that one side (PRAAGS) originally wanted to be entirely “proportional to land ownership” and which will now will be mostly proportional to land ownership, is not really a compromise.

PRO Water Equity’s representative told the board she couldn’t see any way that any combination of directors in the proposed hybrid board structure — six voted in by landowners, three by residents in a general election — could take over the board. We told the board we have no trouble conceiving of how a permanent majority of six directors with a common interest in making a profit from commercial agriculture will find common ground in routinely outvoting three directors in the permanent minority whose interest is in hanging onto enough water to stay in their homes.

The Paso Robles groundwater basin has 30 million acre feet of potential capacity, making it the biggest target in the state for corporate growers with designs on a future payday that could amount to billions of dollars, and equally tempting for the County should it wish to use it to park future unused allocations from the State Water Project — aka “paper water” — thereby establishing a legal claim that will allow it to sell real water to developers around the county. The

recent history of increasing corporate control over public water infrastructure in California was detailed ten years ago by Public Citizen in its study of the formation of the Kern Water Bank, “Water Heist: How Corporations are Cashing in on California’s Water.” The report concluded:

The corporate interests that pervade the water districts

that call the shots throughout the state are setting up insider water trading systems to facilitate the ease with which water flows to money.

At one point in the hearing, Debbie Michael, chief consultant for the State Assembly’s Local Government Committee, chaired by Assemblymember Achadjian, was asked by Supervisor Caren Ray whether changing the voting structure in the proposed legislation would affect the chances of its passage. The question prompted this exchange:

Michael: These types of issues bring a lot of support and opposition based on resident voting and land owner voting. . . . The general trend over the last hundred years, I would say, in spite of irrigation districts, is to move away from landowner-based districts and voting. So I don’t know —

Water as an asset class will, in my view, become eventually the single most important physical commodity-based asset class, dwarfing oil, copper, agricultural commodities and precious metals.

- Willem Buiter, chief economist, Citigroup

Ray: And toward...?

Michael: And toward resident voting, or one person per parcel, one person per vote. Away from land owner but more a registered voter type designation.

Supervisors Mecham, Gibson and Hill chose to ignore this information and a hundred years of legislative preference and instead insisted on approval of the language in the proposed legislation with no changes.

We reminded the board, as we are wont to do, of our favorite quotation from Supervisor Mecham. When he was discussing the establishment of a water district with a reporter last year, Mecham went to the heart of the matter, saying “I just hope we are not in the situation where the guy with the most money wins.”

Keep hope alive.



How do you not get this? Debbie Michael, consultant to the Assembly Local Government Committee, chaired by Assemblyman Katcho Achadjian, explained -- in vain -- to our Supervisors.

Want to Help Out?

Do you have a knack for organizing? Be a part of the team that puts together the Santa Lucia Chapter’s annual fundraiser! We have openings for folks who want to help with securing food or wine donations, sponsorships or auction items, renting chairs & tables, designing invitations and table centerpieces, working on publicity and promotion... let us know what you’re interested in and we’ll plug you in. Give us a call at 543-8717 or drop us a note at sierraclub8@gmail.com. Let’s chat!



How Cambria Came to This

Drought is an act of God. Bad planning and “bonus water” is not

Where is the horse and the rider?
Where is the horn that was blowing?
They have passed like rain on the mountain, like a wind in the meadow.
The days have gone down in the West, behind the hills into shadow.
How did it come to this?

- King Theoden, Lord of the Rings



Now it's an emergency. By all estimates, Cambria has until the end of June to find a supply of water, or there won't be any more. Cambria, in the words of County Supervisor Bruce Gibson, is the “canary in the coal mine,” for the severe water problems likely to be facing many California communities in the not-too-distant future. In terms of planning, it is also a mirror in microcosm and potential harbinger of things to come for California in its pursuit of the Bay Delta Project – aka the Twin Tunnels – which Governor Brown has pushed as relentlessly as the Cambria Community Services District has pushed desalination, despite all warnings and available options, as the silver bullet that would end all water woes.

In other words, Cambria's situation today is not just a consequence of the local hydrology, but of choices and policies pursued and alternatives dismissed by a hapless Community Services District that was hell-bent on bringing an over-sized desalination project to life with the goal of busting the town's building moratorium -- a scheme it tried to hide in footnotes and euphemisms in its Water Master Plan. The CCSD pursued this single course of action long past the point when it had become obviously untenable.

The consequences of those choices made and roads not taken are most painfully obvious when seen in light of the comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Cambria's Water Master Plan as submitted to the CCSD by the Otter Project, Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club, ECOSLO, Desal Response Group of Environment NOW and Surfrider Foundation in April 2008.

Here is what we told the Cambria CSD back then. (Emphasis added for historic irony):

Nowhere in the project description or any other section of the DEIR were the project goals and objectives clearly stated. Without a clear picture of these goals and objectives, the DEIR cannot sufficiently or objectively analyze the project alternatives' ability to meet the goals and objectives.

The project description does not adequately or accurately document the existing conditions. ...

The project description calculates residential use at 135 gallons per person per day (we assume this includes the 50-percent “quality of life” bonus – see below). Commercial demand for potable water and total demand for non-potable water do not appear to be analyzed. The 135 gallons per person per day for residential use is excessive and the need for this volume is unsubstantiated. Even 90 gallons (back-calculated from 135 gallons - 50 percent “quality of life” bonus) seems excessive for a community supposedly under strict water conservation measures.

According to the most recent US Geological Survey report, Estimated Water Use in the United States in 2000, domestic water use in California is

approximately 95 gallons per person per day. According to the 2003 Pacific Institute Report “Waste Not, Want Not,” (which uses a rounded up figure of 100 gallons) per capita total urban water use in the United States was 100 gallons in 2000. Of those 100 gallons, 60.5 gallons was for indoor use and 39.5 gallons was used outdoors. (Note: the ratio of indoor to outdoor water use varies from study to study, but a total domestic water use of 95-100 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) and 60-70 gallons for indoor use is commonly found). The Institute estimates that, “With current technologies and policies, [indoor and outdoor] residential water use in 2000 could have been as low as 60 to 65 gpcd without any change in the services actually provided by the water.”

Further, the Institute estimates, “Even without improvements in technology, we estimate that indoor residential use could be reduced by approximately 890,000 AF/yr – almost 40 percent,” or to approximately 37 gpcd. Water use in Cambria and the United States should be further compared against water use in other countries such as France, Germany, and the UK, where per capita household water use is half the US. Clearly, reductions below 90 gallons per person per day are possible by curtailing most outdoor residential use. One hundred thirty-five gpcd is excessive.

The Baseline Analysis identifies demands for quality of life increases of 10, 20, 30, and 50 percent higher than existing demands. The DEIR, without any explanation other than “CCSD Board of Directors' earlier July 24, 2003, direction” chose the highest, 50 percent “quality of life” bonus over existing demand. Such an unsubstantiated increase is unwarranted given water use patterns in the rest of the United States and the world.

We see no documentation for the 75% assumed occupancy rate resulting in the 1.66 people per unit assumption. We must ask: what is the basis for a year-round 75-percent occupancy rate? Cambria has many vacation homes and we believe a 75% occupancy rate is overstated. Please provide the basis for this important assumption.

More simply stated: Cambria water use (90 gpcd) is barely under the national average (95 gpcd). To suggest that Cambria should finance and build an industrial desalination facility with such a comparatively large environmental footprint so that residents can use 135 gallons gpcd is not responsible conservation or management. As very clearly shown in Table 3.2, the “quality of life” bonus drives this proposal.

The Project Characteristics

Desalination: The project characteristics prematurely and inappropriately lead the reader to the conclusion that saltwater desalination is the advisable long-term water supply strategy. The characteristics listed for the desalination component only characterize the perceived positives of seawater desalination. Challenges associated

with seawater desalination which may foreseeable impact the environment include its large global-warming footprint (associated with emissions and the energy needed to run the facility), plant siting (including, but not limited to considerations for future sea level rise), possible growth inducement (which has been cited as a mitigated negative impact), brine discharge to the marine environment, and cumulative impacts (including, but not limited to the proliferation of small desal plants in the region, as opposed to regionally-minded water supply planning).

Additionally, the DEIR cites that seawater desalination is a “very reliable [water supply] source,” which operates under the assumption that the desalination facility will run properly. Seawater desalination facilities are known to be plagued with technical and operational problems that prevent them from functioning in their designed capacity, such as the permitted facilities in Tampa Bay, Florida and Marina, California.

The matrix, Table 3-6, includes cost and funding – these sections are totally inappropriate for a DSEIS and CEQA analysis that is used to evaluate the environmental consequences of proposed actions and alternatives. This matrix and discussion should be either shown without factoring in cost and funding, or should be eliminated entirely.

The subjectivity of the matrix is a serious problem. First, each category is given equal weight, as noted above, which is entirely inappropriate in a CEQA document meant to compare environmental costs and benefits. Next, the matrix appears to handicap ideas such as “seasonal storage alternatives” discussed in Task 3 but never carried forward into the DEIR. Local, smaller scale, less expensive, easier-to-permit projects such as using the Perry Creek Dam or Upper Steiner Creek Dam could provide additional water to both residents and groundwater if designed appropriately.

The subjectivity of the “reliability” score is also a problem. We do not understand how a solution as technical and energy dependent as desalination can be more reliable (scored 5 of a possible 5) than a reservoir solution (scored 2 of 5) or demand management (scored 2 of 5). Few, if any, desalination plants in the United States are able to operate at the capacity they were designed for.

The “permitting” score is simply not realistic. The Coastal Commission has twice rejected a Cambria desalination plant. **Certainly, being rejected by the Coastal Commission once and again on appeal should score as “very difficult to obtain”** (a score of 1 of 5).

It must be noted that the final evaluation matrix shown in Table 3-6 of the DSEIS

perhaps unfairly characterizes the funding availability of the Seawater Desalination alternative against all other alternatives giving it a score of 4 of a possible 5 (75% cost reduction). Public funding of desalination plants is far from a certainty! Examples of 75-percent publicly funded municipal desalination facilities should be provided to substantiate this assertion.

In comparison, **the funding of the recycled water solution is given a score of 3. There are a variety of public sources for sewage treatment upgrade and recycled water projects.** Funding opportunities for sewage treatment plant upgrades (so that water can be better re-used), water recycling projects, and water conservation include:

- **Small Community Wastewater Grant Program.** Provides grant assistance for the construction of publicly owned wastewater treatment facilities for small communities (max. pop. 20,000) with financial hardships (max. annual MHI \$37,994).
- **Water Recycling Construction Program & Water Recycling Facilities Planning Grant Program.** Grants and loans for the design and construction of water recycling facilities, which include wastewater treatment facilities, pump stations, and recycled water distribution systems.
- **Clean Beaches Initiative Grant Program (Prop 84) \$37 million.** Grants and bonds to help local agencies, non-profit organizations, and public agencies implement projects that protect and restore California's coastal water quality.
- **Ocean Protection Council.** Protection of Beaches, Bays, and Coastal Waters (Prop 84) \$90 million – grant funds to meet the goals of Governor Schwarzenegger's Ocean Protection Act, which has a main objective to improve ocean and coastal water quality.
- **State Coastal Conservancy.** Protection of Beaches, Bays, and Coastal Waters (Prop 84): \$135 million.
- **Division of Financial Assistance.** Administers the implementation of the State Water Resources Control Board's financial assistance programs, which includes loan and grant funding for construction of municipal sewage and water recycling facilities, etc.
- **State Revolving Fund.** \$200-\$300 million annually. Implements the Clean Water Act and various State laws by providing financial assistance for the

CAMBRIA continued on page 6

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Cambria

continued from page 5

construction of facilities or implementation of measures necessary to address water quality problems and to prevent water pollution.

● *California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (I-Bank)*. Administers Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (ISRF) Program, which provides low-cost financing to public agencies for a wide variety of infrastructure projects.

Total scores would become very different if scored more quantitatively, evenly, and fairly. As noted above, within the context of CEQA, “cost combination” and “funding availability” should not be considered at all. **“Demand management” scores the highest of all alternatives, yet the CCSD proposes a “quality of life” water bonus of 50 percent above current use.** This appears to be something other than “demand management.” **While national water use is 95 gpcd – and declining – Cambria water use is 90 gpcd and proposed to increase to a guzzling 135 gpcd.** If just reliability and permitting are re-scored more appropriately, the entire ranking would change, with demand management and recycled water maintaining top positions, but seawater desalination falling to near the bottom.

Recycled Water System: The statement: “existing demands converted from potable to non-potable recycled water would have no net increase [decrease?] in the volume of water being diverted from the aquifer system” is confusing. As noted, 450,000 gallons per day is available for storage and recycling. Even if we accept Table 3-7, Potential Recycled Water Users and Demands, which we feel may be an under-estimate of potential recycled water use, 161-184 acre-feet per year is still a **13-15 percent savings and reduction in the amount of water needed to be drawn from the aquifer**, assuming that the recycled water replaces the existing use of potable water for landscaping and irrigating.

Water Demand Management: The water demand management project characteristics lack any detail. The project characteristics list actions taken in 2000, “recent” addition of a front-loading washing machine retrofit program, and signing-on to a 2005 statewide MOU. It is unclear what are being proposed as new measures; there is a single reference without any commitment:

Future demand management measures may include greater

emphasis on landscape irrigation. Such measures may include the addition of rain sensors to ensure irrigation systems shut-off during periods of rain. The installation of evapotranspiration (ET) controllers may also become part of future landscape irrigation efficiency improvement measures.

Further reductions in indoor water use should include a numeric target such as 45 gallons per person per day as is suggested as easily attainable in the Pacific Institute Report “Waste Not, Want Not.” Outdoor water use should be reduced to an absolute minimum or banned. In a setting as beautiful as Cambria, natural landscaping should be required. Advantages of natural landscaping include:

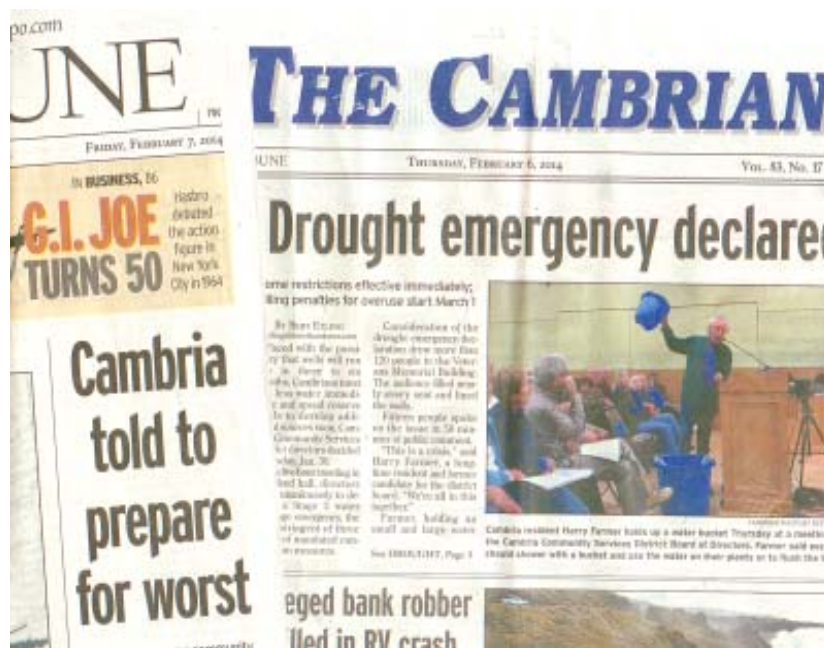
- no fertilization required
- no additional water
- more water available for other uses and other people
- zero to near zero work needed for maintenance
- no lawn mowing
- erosion reduced to a minimum
- natural landscaped plants take full advantage of rainfall
- when water restrictions are implemented, natural landscaped plants will survive, while more traditional plants may not
- increased habitat for native flora and fauna
- where heavily forested, provides shade on homes and businesses
- native plants rarely become invasive

And again, the 50 percent “quality of life” bonus, a 50-percent increase above current use is entirely inconsistent with the concept of “water demand management.” One hundred and thirty-five gallons of water per person per day is wasteful and inappropriate.

Build-out reduction program: While we question the decision-making behind **the 864 residential water connection commitments that have been previously approved by the CCSD with no water available**, we agree with the CCSD’s desire to limit water connections to no more than 4,650 as confirmed by the CCSD’s Board of Directors’ meeting of July 24, 2003. However we see no commitment to hold the line at 4,650 total connections. Instead, we see a proposal for a “modular” desalination facility that could be easily enlarged. Or, if actual use is less than 135 gpcd, the surplus could be used for additional connections. As noted in the DEIR, the CCSD



Single-minded Greg Sanders, the driving force on the Cambria CSD from 1993 to 2010, tried repeatedly to bust the Coastal Act to push the failed desal plan.



will become a ‘major player’ in the local real estate market as it buys lots and sells water connections.

Stated more simply, **the project description overrates desalination and underrates living within local means through local solutions, water recycling, and conservation.** Growth-inducing aspects of the desalination proposal are understated....

As already noted, impacts to land use appear to be narrowly defined in the DEIR as consistency with existing regulatory and planning policies. We believe it is also appropriate to document change to land use patterns and consider the environmental consequence of those changes. Certainly increasing the developed land area by 20 percent would be a very significant change and requires evaluation.

We find it ironic that the nondescript, undefined water management program is deemed to have no impact, but that the consequences of the planned fifty-percent quality of life bonus have not been evaluated or even mentioned. This increase in water use if applied outdoors will change a relatively arid urban landscape into an irrigated one....

5.9 - Hydrology and Water Quality

As previously stated, the DEIR appears to focus solely on the site specific impacts and ignores the broader impacts of growth, increases to the urban footprint, and increases to the amount of impermeable surfaces contributing to the acknowledged flooding problem.

And again as stated before, the DEIR states for the desalination facility:

“A future project-specific EIR/EIS would need to further determine the potential impacts to storm water and ocean water quality after more details become known regarding the desalination facility. Additionally, the EIR/EIS would analyze alternative desalination facility sites.”

Fragmenting the permitting of a project in order to ‘facilitate’ the permitting process is inappropriate. It is in this document that impacts should be recognized and evaluated. And it is in this document that alternative siting of the desalination facilities should be addressed.

In the subsection entitled “cumulative impacts” it is noted that the project will increase the amount of impervious surface. Yet, with no mention of the proposed 20% growth, it is simply stated that by complying with local ordinances impact will be less than significant. We see no substantiation for the claim that increase in stormwater runoff due to an increase in impermeable surface will be mitigated in any way. Cambria has an acknowledged flooding problem and we see no quantitative descriptive of how growth

will be mitigated....

6.0 - Alternatives

We believe Table 6.1 heavily and inappropriately leans towards the desalination alternative. Further, using cost and funding availability is an inappropriate screen in a CEQA analysis. Please refer to our more detailed comments on table 3.6. A very significant omission of this CEQA analysis is any discussion of alternative siting for the desalination facility. This document is clearly incomplete without these siting alternatives. It is inappropriate to segment the permitting process and defer discussion of alternatives to a later process. As noted, San Simeon Creek has significant biological, cultural, estuary, and marine resources. Impacts to these resources have not been studied or quantified for this report and no alternatives have been offered. This document is clearly deficient.

Another notable omission from alternatives analysis is brackish water desalination. **Brackish water desalination should also be investigated as a viable alternative**, as this source water is less energy intensive to desalinate and the brine produced (and subsequently discharged) is less saline. A possible source for this water could be the contaminated Santa Rosa wells, as this water supply source is not currently considered usable. Implementing a brackish water desalination project here could serve to make use of this otherwise unusable water and reduce the global warming footprint of the desalination project. Other possible sources should be investigated as well.

In summary, as very clearly shown in Table 3.2, the “quality of life” bonus drives this proposal. Without the “quality of life” bonus, Cambria has a net annual surplus of water of 221 acre-feet. These numbers are based on data that dates to before agricultural irrigation rights in both water basins were retired. Reframing the question without the “quality of life” bonus leads to solutions that include conservation, water recycling, and local storage.

It is the “quality of life” bonus that should be more fully discussed in the DEIR, but is instead hidden in footnotes and ancillary documents. When the average Californian uses 95 gallons per capita per day, is it appropriate to sacrifice any public resource or endure any impact so that the people of Cambria can have 135 gpcd? Or is the 135 gpcd simply a way to justify more water production and growth? Either way, we feel **conservation, water recycling, and perhaps some additional local storage capacity – essentially living within the means of the local aquifer – offer the most sustainable and reasonable solutions for Cambria.**



Last month, matters were coming to a head on the question of public access to the Ontario Ridge trail in Avila Beach and the sudden appearance of fences across the trail (“You Did *Not* Just Fence Off My Trail,” February). Just before a dispute resolution hearing on the matter that was scheduled for the February 13 meeting of the California Coastal Commission in Pismo Beach, motivated local hikers discovered a public access easement the County had recorded for the land in 2009 and then forgotten about.

Thus ended the dispute. Kami Griffin, assistant director of the SLO County Planning Department, told *New Times* “This is frankly embarrassing for the county, and I’m glad that this existing easement was found before the

Coastal Commission Saves Trail from County Planning Dept.

County’s ineptitude overcome, fences to come down on Ontario Ridge

planned Coastal Commission hearing. When we found out about the easement, it changed our position.”

Actually, it was even more embarrassing than that.

When Ontario Ridge land owner Rob McCarthy erected a chain link fence topped with barbed wire to block the trail as part of an ongoing dispute with the Coastal Commission over his desire to build a house that would violate multiple land use policies in the County’s Local Coastal Plan (LCP), the County Planning Department consulted the LCP and decided that he did not need a Coastal Development Permit to build the fence due to an exemption granted for improvements to single-family residences. The County took the position that there was nothing they could do about the blatant Coastal Act violation on Ontario Ridge.

The LCP is the means by which local jurisdictions implement the provisions

for public access and coastal protection mandated by the California Coastal Act. In the Coastal Act and the SLO County LCP, development which blocks public coastal views and impairs public access to the coast is prohibited. But the Planning Department reasoned that:

- Mr. McCarthy planned to build a house on the land someday, therefore the undeveloped land was equivalent to a single-family residence, hence his fence was exempt from permit requirements.
- The fence did not block coastal views because you could see the coast through the links in the chain link fence.
- Public access to the coast was not impaired because when members of the public reached the fence and found their access to Pirate’s Cove blocked, they could turn around, hike back to

Shell Beach, get in their cars, and drive in on Cave Landing Road.

This unique reading of coastal policies by the County was the basis of the dispute to be resolved at the scheduled February 13 dispute resolution hearing.

Once again, as has so often been the case, the residents of SLO County have the California Coastal Commission to thank for saving us from our County’s perpetually peculiar interpretations of the California Coastal Act.



Don’t try this at home Right after the Coastal Commission adjourned its Pismo Beach meeting on February 13, this gentleman arrived at the Shell Beach trailhead of the Ontario Ridge Trail with a pair of bolt cutters, removed all the barbed wire, flashed a copy of the California Constitution, and drove away.

Climate Action Across America: April 21-25

By Iowa Climate Advocates

It is time for the United States Congress to take climate action. The fight against climate change cannot be won by a single person or a single policy. It will require comprehensive policies supported by Congress and sustained over many decades that lead our country and the world to the climate action we so urgently need.

Even if a Congressional representative has opposed climate action in the past, recent events and new scientific assessments give every Congressional representative a chance to recognize the need for climate action.

Recent climate disasters like Hurricane Sandy, Typhoon Haiyan, Colorado flooding, flooding in Miami, western wildfires, and widespread ice storms are moments when people can recognize the need for action.

So, too, are new scientific assessments. Last summer, over 200 scientists who identify themselves as evangelical Christians told Congress that action is “urgently needed” to address climate change, and the American Geophysical Union released an updated statement on climate change calling for “urgent action.”

Listening to America’s scientists and responding to climate disasters as they happen, even a skeptical Congress can learn to act on climate change.

If you do not believe that Congress can act, please change the way you think. If you don’t believe that Congress can act, then the forces that oppose Congressional action have won. Congress can act – and it is up to us to lead the way.

“Climate Action Across America,” a national initiative organized by Iowa Climate Advocates, is a dedicated week-long effort over Easter recess, April 21 to April 25, to convince Congressional representatives that it is time for climate action.

It is really quite easy. The idea is that groups, large or small, would arrange meetings with their Congressional representative or just visit their local in-district Congressional office across the country during that week to share letters, postcards, and petitions from local citizens urging Congress to support action to fight climate change (e.g., a carbon tax, greenhouse gas regulations, hazard mitigation, disaster assistance, etc.)

This is how American democracy works. The First Amendment of our Constitution guarantees our right to petition Congress to take action. Together, we can take the climate action we so urgently need for our future.

See planned events at www.iowacclimateadvocates.org.

We can expand our reach by coordinating climate action events across the country. Let’s show the country there is growing grassroots support for climate action.

Great March for Climate Action

The Great March for Climate Action, showing the country growing grassroots support for action on climate, left Los Angeles on March 1. Here are the dates the march will be in selected cities across the country:

- Phoenix – April 8
- Albuquerque – May 12
- Denver – June 17
- Omaha – August 1
- Des Moines – August 11
- Chicago – September 6
- Toledo – September 24
- Cleveland – October 4
- Pittsburgh – October 14
- Washington – November 1



Citizens Climate Lobby National Conference, Washington, DC, June 22-24

Mark your calendars now for the national conference and lobby days of Citizens Climate Lobby, June 22 to June 24, in Washington, DC. Whether you can attend or not, this is another moment when Americans can speak up together for climate action.

To get involved with Citizens Climate Lobby, its monthly conference calls, its advocacy efforts for carbon fee legislation, and its regional meetings, visit www.citizensclimatelobby.org.

Walkers, volunteers, and financial supporters are needed for the whole march, for states, and for individual locations. For more information, including the rest of the scheduled stops in the timeline, please visit www.climateactionmarch.org.

Awaiting the Moment of Truth



On February 3, outside the County Courthouse in downtown SLO, more than sixty people showed up for a candlelight vigil and to send the President a message about the Keystone XL pipeline. The protest came three days after the State Department released its final environmental review, attempting to downplay the massive climate change impacts that approval of the pipeline would trigger. In response, hundreds of vigils like this one took place in cities across the country that evening. As we go to press, Secretary of State Kerry and President Obama have not yet made a decision on Keystone.

Reactor Licencing Should be Suspended Until NRC Addresses New Findings on Accident Risks, Costs

NRC Study: Even a small fuel pool fire could displace 4.1 million people, make more than 9,000 square miles uninhabitable

New information from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) showing that even a small fire in a nuclear reactor pool could render 9,400 square miles uninhabitable and displace four million Americans were among the factors causing 34 environmental organizations to file a petition with the NRC on February 18 to suspend the licensing of reactors.

In addition to the NRC's new data on risks, the groups pointed out that the Commission has concluded spent reactor fuel could be transferred out of high-density storage fuels (where the fire risk is the greatest) in a cost-effective manner.

The groups pointed to the findings of an unpublicized NRC study of spent fuel storage at the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania. The investigation found that if even a small fraction of the inventory of one of the plant's reactor pools were released to the environment in a severe spent fuel pool accident, an average area of 9,400 square miles would be

rendered uninhabitable for decades, displacing as many as 4.1 million people.

As the groups point out in their petition, the NRC has never before acknowledged such dire pool fire risks in its reactor licensing decisions. The information undermines the NRC's conclusion in prior environmental studies for reactor licensing and re-licensing that the impacts of spent fuel storage during reactor operation are insignificant.

In the Peach Bottom study, the NRC also revealed for the first time that the costs of transferring spent fuel out of risky high-density storage pools are economically feasible, given the enormous damage that a pool fire could cause. Additionally, the NRC concluded that the likelihood of spent fuel pool fires could be affected by reactor accidents, and committed to study the problem.

The groups are requesting that the NRC conduct a new environmental impact study that incorporates the

new and significant information generated as part of the post-Fukushima investigation into the risks of severe accidents in the reactor pools where spent fuel is stored. They contend that, in the meantime, the NRC should suspend all reactor licensing and re-licensing decisions.

Diane Curran, an attorney with Harmon, Curran, Spielberg & Eisenberg, L.L.P., and Mindy Goldstein, director of the Turner Environmental Law Clinic at Emory University, filed the petition on behalf of the groups.

Curran said "If a pool fire accident occurs such as was studied in the Peach Bottom case study, the resulting widespread contamination and displacement of people could have enormous socioeconomic impacts, matching or exceeding the devastating effects of the Fukushima accident on Japanese society."

The NRC has concluded that the "safety" benefit of reducing the density of spent fuel in storage pools would not be great enough to justify an order requiring all operating reactor licensees to thin out their pools. But the NRC focused on the risk of cancer, which is only one effect of a pool fire.

The groups contend that NRC must protect not only public health and safety but the environment as well. The environment includes broader values, such as ecological health and

socioeconomic well-being. The Fukushima accident illustrates the fact that land contamination and displacement of people can have enormous effects on society and the environment, regardless of the number of deaths or cancers.

The 34 groups filing the petition are Alliance to Halt Fermi 3, Beyond Nuclear, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Center for a Sustainable Coast, Citizens Allied for Safe Energy, Citizens' Environmental Coalition, Don't Waste Michigan, Ecology Party of Florida, Friends of the Coast, Friends of the Earth, Georgia Women's Action for New Directions, Green State Solutions, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, NC WARN, National Parks Conservation Association, Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force, New England Coalition, No Nukes Pennsylvania, Northwest Environmental Advocates, Nuclear Energy Information Service, Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Nuclear Watch South, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Public Citizen, Promoting Health and Sustainable Energy, Radiation and Public Health Project, Riverkeeper, SEED Coalition, San Clemente Green, San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, Snake River Alliance, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, and Vista 360.

San Luis Obispo Hosts 20th International Film Festival

Environmental offerings on the schedule

Now in its 20th year, the San Luis Obispo Film Festival will feature five days of film screenings, panels, and celebrity-packed special events, March 5-9. Individual screening tickets are not pre-sold, so the best way to guarantee your seat is to buy a Festival Pass. For all regular screenings, all passes allow priority admission for up to 15 minutes before screen time. After that, seats are on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Programs of note for the environmentally inclined:

American Mustang. The wild horses of the American West in stereoscopic 3-D. Thursday, March 6th, 7 p.m., Park Cinema, Paso Robles. Saturday, March 8th, 10 a.m., Downtown Theater, SLO.

Wild Horses. Two generations of women bear witness to the brutality common to wild horse roundups in the American West. Thursday, March 6th, 7 pm, Park Theater, Paso Robles. Friday, 7 p.m., La Perla del Mar, 205 Windward, Shell Beach.



Antarctica: A Year on Ice. What it's like to live and work at the bottom of the world for a full year. Filmed over 15 years by *Frozen Planet* photographer Anthony Powell. Thursday, March 6th, 1 p.m., Avila Beach Community Center, 911 San Miguel Street. Friday, March 7th, 10 a.m., Palm Theater, SLO.

A Birder's Guide to Everything. David Portnoy, a 15-year-old birding fanatic, thinks that he's made the discovery of a lifetime, and embarks on an epic road trip with his pals to solidify their place in birding history. Things don't go as planned. Saturday, March 8th, 1 p.m., Downtown Theater, SLO. Sunday, March 9th, 4 p.m., Palm Theater, SLO.

Icebound. The heroic 1925 Serum Run, in which more than thirty men, and at least 150 dogs, battled storms and life threatening cold weather, in a relay of antitoxin across the frozen wilderness to save the children of Nome, Alaska, from a deadly outbreak of diphtheria. Narrated by Sir Patrick Stewart. Saturday, March 8th, 4 p.m., Palm Theater, SLO. Sunday, March 9th, 4p.m., Downtown Theater, SLO.

Wind is an animated short from Germany about the daily life of people who seem helplessly exposed to the weather. However, the inhabitants have learned to deal with their difficult living conditions. The wind creates a natural system for living. Friday, March 7th, 4 p.m., Avila Beach Community Center.

For full schedule, go to slofilmfest.org

Uncle Sam's Nuke Loan: \$6.5 Billion

On February 19, Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz announced a \$6.5 billion loan guarantee for new nuclear reactors.

In response, Sierra Club Washington representative Radha Adhar, said "It's no secret why there hasn't been new nuclear reactor construction in America in three decades. Nukes are simply too expensive and risky. And with the availability of alternatives like wind and solar, propping up nukes with taxpayer money makes little sense. There are cleaner, cheaper, and faster ways to generate electricity that won't saddle our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and generations to come with toxic, highly volatile nuclear waste."

Renewable energy technologies like wind and solar have already begun to replace nukes, coal, and natural gas, saving American families money without the threat of toxic pollution. The wind and solar energy sectors both had record-breaking growth in 2012, and support tens of thousands of jobs.

"In the wake of superstorms, record drought, and wildfires, it's clearer now than ever that we must act swiftly and decisively to fight the climate crisis," said Adhar. "It's time to build a 100% clean energy economy and get off toxic nukes and dirty fossil fuels once and for all."

Letters

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

On the beach

The month of January brought whale bones from the 19th-century whaling station in San Simeon Bay washing to the beach. Then a female elephant seal established a rookery south of the pier. King tides and high surf loosened old trash piles in the ocean. Ships' pieces, old shoes and bottles mixed with whale vertebrae and beta males of the wandering elephant seals on sand full of pottery fragments and magnetite. The decades of the whaling station, the slaughtering of the elephant seals, and the manipulation of the land solely for human interests come to contemporary eyes and ears as a silent cacophony. What does it mean now?



Elizabeth B.

Reading the February issue of the *Santa Lucian* this morning, I realized again how crucial your work is for the well-being of all living creatures. Please accept my donation for \$500 for 2014, enclosed.

With immense gratitude,

Elizabeth Bettenhausen
Cambria

Billboards: Signs of Technology Past

By Rosemary Wilvert and Sherri Danoff

Something we take for granted: There are almost no billboards along Highway 101 in the City of San Luis Obispo. Yet immediately beyond city limits, both north and south, a barrage of advertisements impose themselves upon the view.

New billboards are prohibited by both SLO County and City, and their General Plans encourage removal of existing billboards. Unlike the City, the County has not developed a program for retiring the existing billboards. These “grandfathered” billboards are the focus of a group of citizens, Protect Scenic 101 (PS101).

PS101 recognizes that the County’s asset most treasured by residents, its scenery, is also its best tourist draw. Attractive scenery along Highway 101, SLO County’s main travel corridor, is blighted by billboards, whereas Santa Barbara County, our strongest tourism competitor to the south, has largely retired its billboards.

Vested interests might say that tourists need the information on the signs for eating and lodging venues. Maybe in the past, but today travelers rely on publications or online sources with reviews. Billboards, an outdated



With and without The 101 north of SLO (above) and south (right). Sign content is basically off-limits to local control.



technology, annoy more than help.

PS101 is sensitive, however, to the financial concerns of landowners, sign companies, and advertising businesses. That’s why it uses the word “retire” in its mission statement: “to retire the billboards within unincorporated SLO County’s Hwy 101 view corridor.”

PS101 hopes to engage these vested interests in billboard removal. They, in turn, could benefit from compensations such as public recognition, advertising space in parking structures, or buy-out

of the land lease. Donation of grandfathered billboard rights can entitle an income tax deduction.

PS101 is first focusing on billboards from the top of the Grade to the Avila Beach exit at San Luis Bay Drive. If you’re among those who’d like not to have advertisements forced upon you as you drive, there are ways you can

help: Participate in PS101 meetings and/or endorse its mission as an individual or an organization.

For more information, email sherri39@charter.net or rwilvert@sbcglobal.net, or call (805) 595-2208 or (805) 544-8365.

Together, we can create an even happier San Luis Obispo County.

Avila Bird Sanctuary is Nigh



Getting ready Public Works staffer Glenn Marshall and Shirley Goetz prepare for the big day.

Any day now, the official signs will go up proclaiming Avila Beach a bird sanctuary, the culmination of two and half years of relentless effort by Avila resident Shirley Goetz, and testimony to her powers of public persuasion. (See “Bird Sanctuary Taking Off,” April 2013.)

On December 3, the County passed a resolution authorizing the sanctuary. Shirley picked up the signs from The Sign Place in SLO on Valentine’s Day and delivered them to the County Public Works Department.

“This was a valentine to Avila Beach from Mother Nature,” said Shirley, “and the best valentine I ever got.”

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Then and now In 2011, Shirley Goetz began her determined journey to have Avila Beach declared a bird sanctuary when she discovered someone had illegally knocked swallows nests off the Avila Beach Community Center and broken the eggs (left). By December 2013, she had an official County proclamation in hand declaring the town a sanctuary (right).

Taking Issue

Reviewing problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Climate change not settled science,” by Roberta Fonzi and Heather Moreno, *The Tribune*, February 6, 2014.

Summary: Two Atascadero City Councilmembers who insisted on deleting or watering down all references to the impacts of climate change in their city’s Climate Action Plan respond to the *Tribune* editorial “Atascadero leaders should have stuck up for science.”

Study, debate and vigorous peer review has determined that global climate change has greatly accelerated since the industrial revolution as a result of human-generated carbon emissions, and we are risking planetary disaster the longer the climate change denial industry succeeds in blocking significant action to cut those emissions.

Science is never “settled.” True science is continuously subjected to study, debate and vigorous peer review, but when it comes to “climate science” that process is distorted by the insistence that there is only one point of view. When scientific debate by public policy-makers is curtailed by ridicule or intimidation, both science and freedom are put at risk.

Ultimately Atascadero’s CAP exceeded greenhouse gas reductions mandated by the state without breaking the community bank or destroying its character.

More than 75 percent of the projected emission reductions in Atascadero’s Climate Action Plan

are based on the idea that large amounts of commercial development will halt “retail leakage.” Basically, the city plans to continue permitting more and more development, based on a study that concluded that this will induce more residents to shop, dine and recreate in Atascadero rather than driving out of town to do so, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions. It would be interesting to know if the study factored in the well-known principle that the conversion of land for development constitutes one of the most significant sources of GHG emissions, and the average daily generation of 10,000 car trips and consumption of up to 28,000 kW hours of energy by a WalMart SuperCenter, and VMT resulting from more people driving into Atascadero to partake of all those enhanced shopping, dining, recreating and Super WalMart-ing opportunities that will be keeping residents from driving out of Atascadero. If the City’s theory turns out to be wrong, Atascadero will fall short of its emission targets by a wide margin.



Richard Lindzen has endeared himself to deniers by theorizing that global climate change is no big deal. Here’s what fellow MIT professor Kerry Emanuel has to say about his colleague’s widely discredited claims: “It just seems deeply unprofessional and irresponsible to look at this and say, ‘We’re sure it’s not a problem.’ It’s a special kind of risk, because it’s a risk to the collective civilization.” In a room filled with 100 scientists, Lindzen would be one of three claiming the science of climate change and its impacts is in doubt. In addition to the book we sent to the Atascadero City Council after they stripped out the reality of climate change from their Climate Action Plan (*Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand*), we commend to Fonzi and Moreno’s attention *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco to Global Warming* for insight on this phenomenon.

Dr. Richard Lindzen of MIT... acknowledges warming of the earth, but stipulates the warming is minimal as will be its effects on the earth, with natural and cyclical explanations better describing what is being observed in our climate.

...We call upon precedent. In the 19th century, Louis Pasteur, a French chemist, advocated the theory that germs cause disease. He was ridiculed, persecuted, even prosecuted by the state and forced to flee France for a number of years. Pasteur was right, the vast majority of medical doctors were wrong as we now know, resulting in millions of lives being saved.*

Louis Pasteur was not right because he was, as the city councilmembers fancy themselves, a contrarian voice of dissent attacked by establishment critics, but because his theory was supported by data and scientific observation. (Fonzi and Moreno and their fellow deniers more closely resemble the French medical establishment of the 1880s, fiercely defending their beliefs against unwelcome information.) Pasteur’s predictive models for microbes and immunity conferred by vaccination proved to be correct. The predictions of climate scientists in the 1980s concerning increased atmospheric carbon pacing increased global temperatures, increasing glacial melt, sea level rise, the rate of species extinction, size and intensity of wildfires and extreme weather events, etc., have also proven to be correct -- and if anything, overly conservative.

Debating tip: When you find it necessary to inform your audience that you are educated, you are losing the argument.

Both of us are well-educated and well-read...

* It is perhaps fitting that a historical anecdote chosen to support climate change denial happens to be false. The belief that Louis Pasteur was prosecuted and driven into exile comes from the 1936 Warner Bros movie *The Story of Louis Pasteur*. It was an invention of the film makers, as noted by the *New York Times*, which liked the movie even though its dramatic incidents, which obviously made an impression on councilmembers Fonzi and Moreno, do not correspond with “such biographical evidence as one might encounter in staid Britannica,” and in fact “nothing of the sort happened.” The blog of oncologist Elizabeth Kingsley, “And you call yourself a scientist!,” dedicated to critiquing Hollywood’s treatment of scientific subjects, points out that “most of Pasteur’s scientific career was spent in government-funded laboratories with plenty of resources.... Evidently this wasn’t ‘heroic’ enough for the screenwriters, who spend the rest of the film inventing conflicts and dramas for him to overcome.” In the course of attempting to deny science, Fonzi and Moreno mistake Hollywood for history.

Upshot: The difference between the relatively quick acceptance of the facts of disease transmission via microbes in the 1880s and the interminable dispute over the facts of climate disruption via the combustion of fossil fuels a hundred years later is explained by the existence, in the latter instance, of a larger lobby with a heavier investment in the status quo. That lobby and its line of defense & denial stretches from the executive suites of Exxon Mobil (and, until March 2012, General Motors) to the disciples of Ayn Rand, the majority party in the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Atascadero City Council – all pledging fervent allegiance to the status quo. The logical incoherence of their position is most visible when they style themselves as free-thinking rebels against the establishment. As *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand* points out, denial is a common human delusion, one that “can become a pathology when it endangers the ecosystems humans [and all other living things] rely on.”

Postscript: On February 14, the National Science Foundation released the results of a poll that found one in four Americans are unaware that the Earth revolves around the Sun. Looking at the bright side, Daily KOS observed “this does not mean, as several outlets are reporting, that...26% think the Sun revolves around the Earth. We don’t yet know exactly how they phrased the question. Maybe most of that 26% gave ‘I don’t know’ as an answer. Maybe. All we can definitively say from the report is that only 74% of Americans know the fact that the Earth revolves around the Sun.” Hey, science is never settled.



I can haz denial? A free-thinking contrarian, risking ridicule.

Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **March 14**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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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.

Sat., Mar. 1st, 9 a.m. Lopez Lake Nature Exploratory. Four-mile hike, 200 ft. gain, to identify local plants and birds, co-led by Audubon and Calif. Native Plant Society experts. We will be looking especially for waterfowl with possibility of seeing early spring wildflowers, if blessed with decent rain. Bring water, snacks, hat, sunscreen, sturdy shoes, and dress in layers for changing weather. No day use fees charged. Meet at Mabel French Boy Scout Camp. From Arroyo Grande, follow signs toward Lopez Lake. After crossing dam but before Lopez Lake County Park, turn right on Hi Mountain Rd, proceeding .8 mile to junction of Upper Lopez Canyon Rd. Bear left on Canyon Rd and continue 3.6 miles to entrance of Boy Scout Camp, on left side of road. Park in the parking lot; restrooms available there. Leader: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com. Rain or threat of rain cancels.

Thu.-Sun, Mar. 6th-9th Joshua Tree National Park Spring Weekend. Visit park when temperatures are cooler and wildflowers may be blooming. We may explore palm oases, boulder areas, desert canyons, or climb peaks. Camp in Indian Cove campground with picnic tables, fire grates, and pit toilets. Bring your own supplies and drinking water or fill up at the Indian Cove Ranger Station. Hikes may be off trail. Some

vehicle travel on dirt roads may be required. Cost \$30 per person, which includes 3 nights camping. \$20 deposit to hold reservation. Group size limited to 16. Leader: Rich Juricich at 916-492-2181 or rich.sierraclub@pacbell.net Delta Sierra Club Group/CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Mar. 8th, 8:30 a.m. Hike in La Panza Range East of Pozo. An 8-12 mile hike, with 1500-2000 ft. gain, exploring hills east of Pozo. Exact destination determined by weather and condition of dirt roads to trailhead. Bring lunch, water, snacks, and dress for the weather. Meet at Pacific Beverage Co., Santa Margarita. Leader: Gary Felsman, 473-3694.

Sat., Mar. 8th, 10 a.m. Dune and Beach Hike at Montana de Oro. Two-mile loop hike, 300 ft. gain, moderate pace and nice sandy trails. Meet at Hazard Canyon parking day use area, about 1.6 miles from park entrance. Leader: Vicki Marchenko, vmarchenko57@gmail.com or 528-5567.

Sat., Mar. 15th, 7:30 a.m. McPherson Peak Hike. Moderately strenuous hike, 11 miles and 2800 ft. gain, to 5,749 ft. peak, one of the higher ones in the Sierra Madre range. Views of San Rafael Wilderness, Cuyama Valley, and Caliente Range on a clear day. Need to start early since trailhead is 85 miles

from SLO. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Santa Rosa Park with possible stop at Halcyon exit commuter parking lot in Arroyo Grande and dirt pullout at east side of highway, beginning of Rt. 166 east. Adventure Pass required at Aliso Campground trailhead. This is an all-day excursion; poison oak possible on the road. Call Leader: Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317, for other information or to arrange to meet at one of the stops enroute.

Sat.-Sun., Mar. 15th-16th, Early Spring/Carrizo Plain. Day of service plus day of sightseeing, car camping at this national monument. Weather can be very variable. Work modifying fences to give pronghorn antelope more mobility. Sightseeing determined by group desires. For further information, contact Leader: Craig Deutsche, craig.deutsche@gmail.com or 310-477-6670. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat.-Sun., Mar. 15th-17th, Turtle Mts. Wilderness Restoration. Annual wilderness trip with BLM and CA/NV Wilderness Committee, celebrating 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and more. Tall tales, nostalgia, and celebratory goodies. Contact Vicky Hoover, 415-977-5527 or vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org. CNRCC Wilderness Committee.

Sun., Mar. 16th, 10 a.m. Sycamore Springs Trekking Pole Hike. "Polecats" dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling the benefits of trekking-pole use. This outing is 2 miles, 600 ft. elevation change. Meet near the entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Drive. Confirm beforehand with Leader: David Georgi, 458-5575 or hikingpoles@gmail.com.

Sat., Mar. 22nd, 9 a.m. Adobe Trail Hike. Eight-mile, mildly strenuous hike through range grass and up oak-covered hill, north of the Sierra Madre range, continuing to hilltop for views of Mt. Abel and Mt. Pinos. Bring sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen, water, and dress in layers. To meet at carpool pt., take Hwy. 101, then west on Hwy. 166, going under the underpass and turning left on Hutton Rd. Park along roadside at intersection of Hutton Rd. and Cuyama Lane. Option to meet at trailhead at 9:30 a.m.: from Hwy. 101, drive east on Hwy 166 for 22 miles—trailhead on left side of the road. Pass through unlocked gate for parking. Trail is directly behind green gate. If you reach Rock Front Ranch, you have gone too far. Leader: Andrea Ortiz, 264-4527 or kenya683@msn.com.

Sat., Mar. 22nd, 10 a.m. City Walk of San Luis Obispo: Jazz Age to World War II. Where is the hotel where Hearst entertained his guests, the speakeasies of the twenties, and the original French Hospital? Find out and much more on a guided downtown stroll past historic stores, theaters, and hotels. Learn about SLO city life from the years of the Model T to Prohibition and Pearl Harbor. Meet at corner of Santa Rosa and Marsh Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.



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.

Fri., Mar. 28th, 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly Meeting: Green Burial: The Ultimate Recycling. Traveling from the Bay Area to speak to us tonight is a truly dynamic speaker, environmental filmmaker Rob Caughlan, co-founder of Friends of the River and first president of the Surfrider Foundation (www.robcaughlan.com). Rob will discuss the options and rationale for the growing trend of environmentally sustainable burial. The meeting will begin with the award-winning short film, "Dying Green." Ample time will be left for your questions. Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Fri-Sun., Mar. 28th-30th, Mojave National Preserve Car camp. Meet 11 a.m. Friday at Sunrise Campground for 4-mile hike to Teutonia Pk. in afternoon and evening potluck. Six-mile Saturday hike around Barber Pk. from Hole-in-the-Wall. Sunday hike to Kelso Dunes. Optional camping Sunday at Granite Pass. Primitive camping, so bring plenty of water. Leader: Carol Wiley, desertlily1@verizon.net or 760-245-8734. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Mar. 29th, 8:15 a.m. Cruikshank Trail to Lion Den. Spring hike in southern Big Sur, strenuous 12 miles and 3000 ft. elevation gain. Beginning at Hwy. 1, hike passes through Villa Creek Canyon and Lower and Upper Cruikshank Camps, near old homestead. On then to Silver Camp and Lion's Den with great views of the southeast wilderness. Ticks and poison oak possible on trail. Bring lunch, snacks, plenty of water, and dress in layers for the weather. Meet at Washburn day use area of San Simeon State Park, about 2 miles north of Cambria for carpool. Those interested in carpooling from SLO to Washburn, meet at Santa Rosa Park at 7:30 a.m. Rain cancels. Leader: Chuck Tribbey, 441-7597.

Sat., Apr. 5th, 8 a.m. Machesna Wilderness Hike. Strenuous 12-15 mile hike, 3000 ft. gain, to explore hills east of Pozo. Destinations may include American Canyon, Coyote Hole, and views of the Carrizo Plain. Bring lunch, water, snacks, and dress for the weather. Hope for rain to turn grasses and hills green. Meet at the Pacific Beverage Co., Santa Margarita. Advance registration required—this is not a beginner's hike. Plan to be out all day. Leader: Gary Felsman, 473-3694.



A Special Event for Members of the Cal French Circle

As a benefit of membership in the Cal French Circle of donors to the Santa Lucia Chapter, our most generous supporters will get personal time with distinguished visiting environmental leader Rob Caughlan at a 6 p.m. wine & cheese reception prior our March 28 program at the Steynberg Gallery, "Green Burial: The Ultimate Recycling" (see listing). Attendance at this reception is for **CFC members only** and attendance is limited to 30! **You must RSVP by March 20** to attend. Send an email to sierraclub8@gmail.com to reserve your place or call 543-8717. First come, first served!

Activities sponsored by other organizations

Sat.-Sun., Apr. 12th-13th Wind Wolves Preserve Nature Festival.

Wind Wolves is a 95,000-acre nature preserve owned by The Wildlands Conservancy in the San Emigdio Mountains. It boasts a great diversity of habitats, including grassland, saltbush scrub, riparian woodland and oak woodland. Wind Wolves invites you to come explore during their Spring Nature Festival. There will be hikes, presentations and family activities led by numerous experts and nature enthusiasts. All events are free. TWC wants to get people in the region out to Wind Wolves to inspire the next generations of land stewards. Reservations for events required, check out the Wind Wolves Facebook page, website, or call for more information: 661-858-1115. www.wildlandsconservancy.org/preserve_windwolves.html.

