



January 2015
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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



Stop That Train

Why we should all say no to extreme oil

The fracking and tar sands extraction operations that have turned vast swaths of the Northeast, Great Plains, and Canada's arboreal forests into industrial wastelands are seeking to extend long, toxic tentacles into California and SLO County.

The Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Santa Maria Refinery rail spur project is the second strike for Phillips 66. In their first attempt to describe the project in a draft EIR, they didn't mention tar sands heavy crude and pretended they were after light crude oil from the Bakken shale formation. Bad timing: that draft EIR was written just as news reports about exploding Bakken shale crude oil trains started to mount.

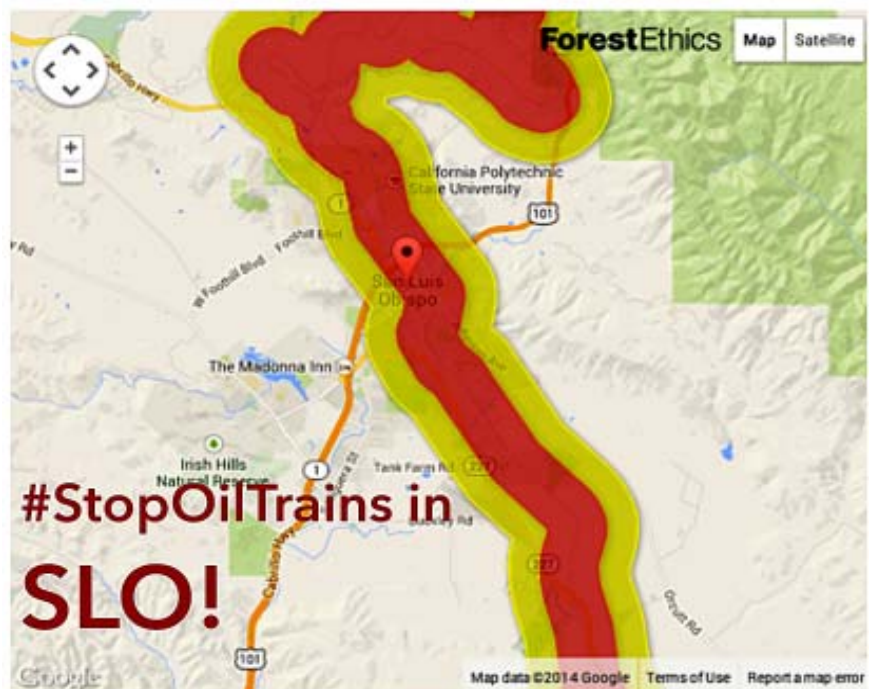
After their first try at an EIR was publicly trashed and withdrawn (see "Oil Train Hits a Bump," April 2014), they dropped the Bakken shale crude pretense, admitting that the focus of the project is Canadian tar sands crude. Phillips also admits the transport of this oil will result in "significant and unavoidable" levels of toxic air pol-

lution, but they are still trying to understate or omit the likely impacts of the project. They are still pretending that it's all about the construction of a rail spur, not the facilitation of a significant increase in rail oil traffic and the impacts of funneling tar sands crude oil to the Santa Maria refinery at the rate of 52,000 barrels per day.

Inundated by 23,000 comments on that Revised EIR overwhelmingly opposing the project, the San Luis Obispo County Planning Department

has become an epicenter of the national resistance movement against the push to load up the U.S. railway system with more and more toxic, volatile crude oil. (The County initially estimated that 11,000 comments were submitted, but many of the electronic submissions were "packet" e-mails, bundling multiple comments. Either way, it's a record.) A local p.r. consultant for Big Oil recently made clear

TRAIN continued on page 10



Not just Nipomo Nationwide, more than 25 million people live in the oil train blast zone as determined by the Department of Transportation. Find out if you live, work or drive in the SLO County Evacuation Zone at www.blast-zone.org.

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photo:Kevin Walsh

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.

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Sierra Club General Meeting

7 p.m., Wednesday, January 28
 Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey Street, SLO

6th Annual Environmentalists Rendezvous: Protectors of Our Sea & Shore

● Cal Poly Center for Coastal Marine Sciences

● CoastKeeper

● Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

● Morro Bay National Estuary Program

● Sierra Club

● Surfrider

At our annual forum of local environmental activists, meet the leaders of six organizations protecting our coast and ocean. In one evening and in one place, you can take advantage of this unique opportunity to hear representatives of all these groups discuss their efforts of the past year and plans for 2015, including the latest on the proposal to create a Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary on the Central Coast. More info: Joe Morris, 549-0355, or dpj1942@earthlink.net.



Bah, Wilderness!

Through each human epoch, a few giants stride, leaving monuments behind. In the 19th century, John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, shaped his time and ours with the concept of wilderness. But in our own time, an academic swarm of lesser figures are seeking to overturn the wilderness ethic.

Behold Professor John Christensen, quoted in the November 13 *L.A. Times* on the eve of the academic conclave, A Century Beyond Muir:

“‘Muir’s legacy has to go,’ said Jon Christensen, a historian with UCLA’s Institute of Environment and Sustainability. ‘It’s just not useful anymore.’”

Christensen was speaking 100 years after the death of Muir, 90 years after Aldo Leopold successfully campaigned to create the world’s first designated wilderness area (Gila Wilderness, New Mexico), 50 years after the passage of the Wilderness Act, and 20 years after the essay “The Trouble with Wilderness” by environmental historian William Cronon pooh-poohed the whole idea and kicked off the anti-wilderness vogue among a group of university intellectuals. (*Thank you!* said developers, open pit mine operators and oil companies.)

“To Christensen and others,” noted the *Times*, “Muir’s notion that immersing people in ‘universities of the wilderness’ — such as Yosemite — sends the message that only awe-inspiring parks are worth saving, at the expense of smaller urban spaces. Critics also say Muir’s vision of wilderness is rooted in economic privilege and the abundant leisure time of the upper class.

“Rather than accessing Muir’s beloved Sierra Mountains as backpackers, skiers or rock climbers, they argue, Californians would benefit more from the creation of urban parks.

“Critics also see a correlation between the emotional, biblical language of Muir’s writings and the demographic makeup of national park visitors and the ranks of the largest environmental organizations — mainly aging, white Americans.”

Anti-wilderness theorists often seem to believe that the idea of wilderness is the same thing as actual wilderness; that wilderness is so completely a construct of 19th-century, elite,

emotional Anglo-Saxons, they are oblivious to its practical reality. If you don’t like John Muir’s reasons for preserving wilderness, try this one: wilderness areas are invariably watersheds, the primary water supply for our cities and agriculture.

Anti-wilderness theory is logically incoherent. American wilderness areas are specifically public lands, set aside for and owned by all Americans. And why, exactly, should the need to champion local parks require the abandonment of wilderness? Wherever it is that Prof. Christensen sees evidence of environmentalists forsaking the former in order to uphold the latter, it’s certainly not this chapter of the Sierra Club, which just persuaded the SLO City Council to shelve a planned national tourism marketing program that would have used the city’s local hillsides and open spaces — preserved from development in hard-fought battles over the last twenty years — as bait to lure ever more tourists to the increasingly clogged streets of SLO so they can through those “smaller urban spaces,” which were set aside for the respite and renewal of local residents.

That would be the same Sierra Club that is also championing a bill in Congress dedicated to protecting more than 300,000 acres of wilderness and 250 miles of rivers in the mountains and grasslands between Los Angeles and Monterey — not, happily enough, at the expense of smaller urban spaces.

Nor did it occur to Wendell Berry when he joined his voice with the voices of all those who succeeded in saving Kentucky’s Red River Gorge from damming and destruction that they were wealthy elitists with abundant leisure time when they worked to save a place they loved:

As my knowledge of the place grew I began to have a sense of the meaning -- or the anti-meaning -- of its planned destruction, which carried me far beyond the mere principles of conservation and preservation. I began to feel in the presences and substance of its life the complexity and the magnitude of its death....

WILDERNESS continued on page 8

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Santa Lucian

Andrew Christie
 EDITOR sierraclub8@gmail.com

Greg McMillan
 Lindi Doud
 Linda Seeley
 Sandy Simon
 EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Denny Mynatt
 PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

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send to:

Editor, Santa Lucian
 c/o Santa Lucia Chapter, Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 15755
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
 sierraclub8@gmail.com

Santa Lucia Chapter

2015 Executive Committee

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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 1p.m. at the chapter office, located at 974 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

Committee Chairs

Political
 Michael Jencks
Conservation
 Sue Harvey
Development
 Greg McMillan
Nuclear Power Task Force
 Rochelle Becker beckers@thegrid.net
 Linda Seeley lindaseeley@gmail.com

Climate Change Task Force
 Heidi Harmon
 sacredheart9395@yahoo.com

Intergenerational Task Force
 Victoria Carranza vcarranza@gmail.com

Other Leaders

CNRCC Delegates
 Linda Seeley, alt: Greg McMillan
 John Burdett

Calendar Sales
 Bonnie Walters 805-543-7051

Outings
 Joe Morris dpj1942@earthlink.net

Canoe/Kayak
 open

Webmaster
 Monica Tarzier monica@tarzier.org

Trail Guide
 Gary Felsman

Chapter Director
 Andrew Christie
 805-543-8717
 sierraclub8@gmail.com

Coordinator
 Kim Ramos, Admin and Development
 kimramos@yahoo.com

Santa Lucia Chapter
 P.O. Box 15755
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

**Office hours Monday-Friday,
 1 p.m. - 7 p.m., 974 Santa Rosa
 Street, San Luis Obispo**

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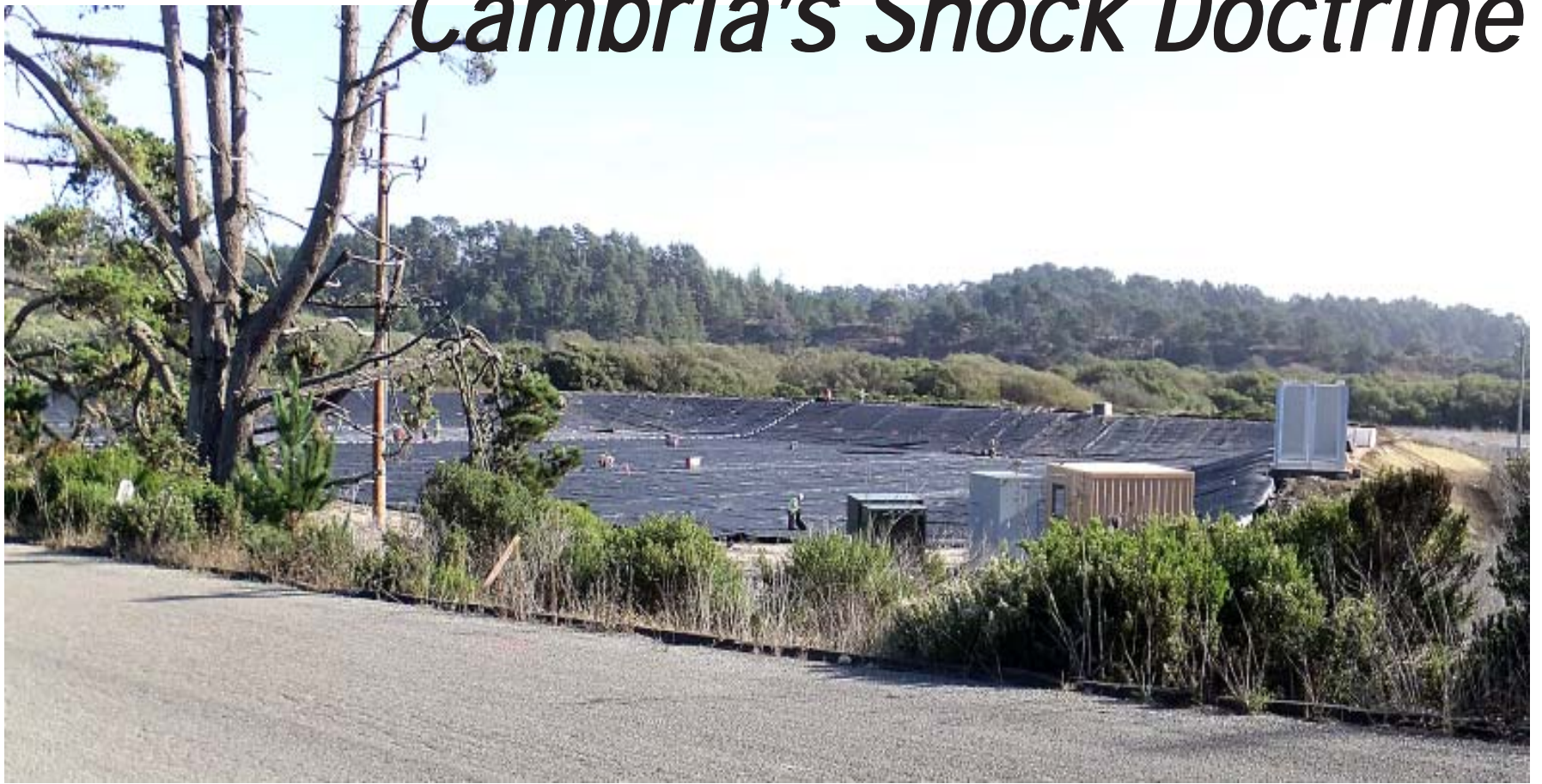


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Outings, events, and more!

Cambria's Shock Doctrine



Endless emergency Workers checked the liner in the Cambria desal plant's brine disposal pit on November 15, a long way off from any review of the project's environmental impacts.

In her 2008 book, *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein identified an unmistakable pattern: In the wake of wars, terrorist attacks and natural disasters, corporations swoop into stricken areas and reengineer societies — seizing oil rights, snapping up beachfront property for tourist resorts,

razing public housing and erecting high-end condos, replacing public school systems with private school vouchers, etc.

For “disaster capitalists,” crisis is an opportunity to get things they could never get under normal circumstances.

Which brings us to Cambria's Emer-

gency Water Supply Project, the desalination plant and brine disposal pond that, after twenty years of failed attempts, now nestle in the environmentally sensitive habitat area between Santa Rosa and San Simeon Creeks, much to the dismay of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California

Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Coastal Commission.

For decades, the Cambria Community Services District has been trying to get around coastal protection laws and environmental statutes in pursuit of desalination as the silver bullet they believe would solve all their water woes -- and, not coincidentally, end the town's longstanding development moratorium. (See “Cambria CSD Still Crazy After All These Years,” Sept. 2014). Last spring, the CSD saw its chance to push through the project they have tried and failed to build for decades, seizing on the opportunity presented by the drought and attendant temporary regulatory changes. Using the drought as cover, they built a permanent, growth-inducing, \$9-million water project, discarding the option of a temporary packet desal plant that would have gotten Cambria through the dry spell for about one-tenth of the cost and could have been funded entirely from the state's drought relief grant funds.

All the rules and regulations that are on the books to protect threatened and endangered wildlife and sensitive habitat were skirted by the Cambria CSD, which secured a free pass by declaring an emergency — claiming the community was about to run out of water due to the prolonged drought — and therefore, under an Executive Order issued by Governor Brown on April 25, 2014, the CCSD could forego environmental review and obtain an emergency permit. Construction commenced without the environmental impacts of the desal plant and brine disposal pit being identified, analyzed or mitigated under the California Environmental Quality Act, California Coastal Act, and every other law protecting threatened and endangered species.

That claim of an emergency now appears to have been a house of cards built on a foundation of sand. The evidence of Cambria's 2014 water emergency comes down to the fact that everyone said Cambria had an emergency.

On December 15, Landwatch of San Luis Obispo County and the Sierra Club filed a petition with the State Water Board seeking review of a November 14 decision by the Regional

Healing Together All Year ‘Round

By Victoria Carranza

I am sitting staring at my chickens jumping up on the straw — exploring and enjoying their time. My sweetheart and I spread out straw in the backyard in an attempt to promote good bacteria, insects, and soil health for our chickens, the land, and us (plus, they're a hoot). They're eating collard greens we transplanted from a friend who has nurtured a local food forest on her property here in San Luis Obispo.

It will be time for dinner soon, and I am thinking it's also time to eat that sauerkraut that has been sitting, too. It ruminates, ferments and produces a whole food antidote to all the holiday goodies I have consumed over the past three months.

What a wonderful, challenging, and incredible 2014 it has been. One of the memories I hold dear in my heart is the Reskilling Expo 2014, the first of its kind in San Luis Obispo County, that took place during persimmon season with Transition Towns' leadership. I relish the conversations and intellectual and physical sharing that went on — also the personal and community empowerment that happened.

I went with an intent to teach others about troubleshooting and maintaining their compost systems. I left with a heart filled with love (from all the smiles and hugs I received), my mind at ease knowing that we are strong, resilient, and have so much social capital that will carry us through when things we depend on outside of our locale are more than at risk — climate change, energy, toxins in our water, etc. Sometimes education and understanding unveils not just the facts of the matter, but our own personal fears. The antidote to this is skill sharing.

I am scared, and have a responsibility to adhere to on whether I should bring children into this world. Will

they be able to survive? The toxins in the water are in my blood stream like a dark canal. I know a friend who makes bikinis and hats out of plastic bags. We don't have to accept the way things are. We can recreate. Redesign. We don't have a pollution problem as much as a production problem. Pollution is the symptom. The people who frequent the same shops, mountains, and waters as I do can come together to share their stories, their talents, and passions.

I'm left with the feeling of wanting to contribute as well. We all have hobbies, knacks, and desires. Let's move into that space — make clothes from upcycled old t-shirts; buy in bulk

with your neighbor; turn off the television and craft with your friends or make a meal with a loved one, or share with no intent to get anywhere, with a complete stranger. That stranger and your loved ones are just people in healing, just like you.

Let's take on reskilling all year long and share our trials, errors, and successes with one another. May this year be extraordinary. Welcome to all that comes our way. Beauty and healing await. We are the solution.

Victoria Carranza is a young professional in the community and a youth educator for sustainable living.



You Can Turn “Free Trade” Into Fair Trade

So you know about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), right? Giant free trade agreements with 11 Pacific Rim countries and the European Union? Corporations will get to sue governments in secret tribunals over environmental laws that might reduce their profits? No policies allowed to protect the climate? And Congress is all set to fast track these bad boys? Not if we can help it. And “we” includes “you.” Check out our activist toolkit and all the ways you can influence the outcome of the TPP, TTIP, and fast track. Go to: www.sierraclub.org/trade/activist-toolkit .

Shock*continued from page 3*

Water Quality Control Board that will allow the CCSD to dispose of brine from the desalination plant based on its claim of a water emergency and waiver of environmental review. The Regional Board declared the CSD exempt from CEQA without substantive evidence to support that conclusion.

When confronted with the claim that there was no emergency as the law defines the condition necessary to receive an exemption from environmental laws, the Cambria CSD and their defenders in County government

usually respond with a retort that includes the word “absurd,” followed by a ticking off of all the proofs that Cambria was in a state of emergency: The State Division of Drinking Water certified that Cambria was in a drought emergency. The Office of Planning and Research and Office of Emergency Services concurred with the certification. The Department of Public Health and State Water Resources Board agreed.

But, as we note in our petition, “none of these agencies have provided documents providing an analysis of Cambria’s drinking water status or otherwise supporting CSD’s claimed emergency.” In response to a Public Records Act request, the Division of Drinking Water could furnish no documentation demonstrating that Cambria was ever, as the CSD often claimed, “60 to 90 days away from exhausting its drinking water supply,” the Regional Water Board’s definition of an acute drinking water shortage. The CSD’s well monitoring records show that well water

levels last summer were consistent with annual average levels.

And then there’s the obvious: More than 180 days passed between the time the CSD broke ground on the desal plant in May and completed construction in November. In that time, Cambria neither ran out of water nor appeared to come close to doing so, further confirming that the Division of Drinking Water’s conclusion was made without rigorous analysis of the facts on the ground.

All of the state level concurrence on Cambria’s alleged emergency appears to be based on the Cambria CSD simply declaring a drought emergency and issuing a two-sentence notice that the desal plant project was therefore exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The public has been denied the benefits of a CEQA process. The Water Board’s certification of the CSD’s exemption was improper because CEQA’s emergency exception does not apply to ongoing conditions like the current statewide drought. The emergency exception is extremely narrow and applies only to discrete occurrences – wildfires, floods, an imminent dam collapse — not an ongoing condition. Nor did the CSD obtain certification of a drought

emergency from the Division of Drinking Water and the Office of Planning and Research before beginning construction of the project.

In short, the Regional Water Board simply accepted the unsupported statements of these agencies despite the lack of evidence that the Cambria Emergency Water Supply Project qualified for exemption from CEQA under the Governor’s Executive Order.

That’s why we are requesting that the State Water Board vacate the Regional Board’s order certifying the CSD’s exemption from the requirements of CEQA, which deprived the public of an Environmental Impact Report assessing the potential environmental harms of the project and outlining responsible alternatives and mitigation measures.

We acknowledge the Cambria CSD’s successful deployment of the shock doctrine. They must now be required to account and pay for any harm they have done to coastal resources, fully mitigate or eliminate the creation of toxic air pollutants adjacent to a State Campground, and repair any destruction they have wrought on state or federal wetlands and the habitat of endangered species in the course of trying to evade normal project permitting requirements.



A Loss. . .or Maybe a Triumph

A post-election interview with Heidi Harmon

By Joe Morris, Outings Chair

In the November election, Heidi Harmon, the Sierra Club-endorsed Democratic candidate for the 35th Assembly District, ran against Katcho Achadjian. She faced a well-known, two-term incumbent, heavily supported by corporate PACs and petroleum industry interests and with an advantage in the number of Republican registered voters in the district. Though Heidi lost, she held her own compared to previous Democratic challengers. She also mobilized widespread grassroots support in dealing with climate change and other life issues of average citizens that she put front and center in her campaign.

Over multiple cups of coffee before and after her campaign, I heard about her political philosophy as she gained increasing support throughout the district. Perhaps the local 2014 election will come to be seen as essentially a boot camp for Heidi’s emergence as a savvy activist. On Black Friday after Thanksgiving, a few days after we talked, there Heidi was again on the KSBY evening news, standing with local Wal-mart workers protesting their low wages.

I interviewed her about a week after the election.

What made you decide to run for office?

I had not thought in a concrete way about running, but more about how I could be effective. In November 2012, I traveled to east Texas to march with the Tar Sands protesters. I was inspired by their willingness to undergo police resistance and even arrest for their beliefs, and I wanted to be all in on this issue. The protesters lacked an effective structure, and I wondered where my skills were best suited. Then I attended a League of Women Voters meeting and discovered that our State

Assemblyman was running unopposed. So I made the decision and my campaign started in March, just when the paperwork for candidates was due.

What were the initial challenges?

I needed to learn more about public speaking: framing the conversation, knowing the audience, and inspiring people. I cared about this, but I wasn’t good at it in the beginning, and it was hard to trust that I’d get better.

How did the local Democratic clubs respond to you?

Though they had all endorsed me, initially they weren’t very sure, but later they became very supportive of what I was doing. I think the Democratic Party today is in trouble in terms of failing to fight for the values it claims to believe in. Yet there is immense opportunity there. I was happy to see that people were hungry to have a candidate who had the courage to say what is true, who stands up for people, and who doesn’t talk only in political clichés. They are moved by that.

What was the hardest thing for you?

It was in the interactions with other politicians. It was hard to discover their true values, how they operated, and the place of money in their campaigns. Contributions like oil money can often destroy their intent to serve the people. I believe that all politicians have the responsibility to tell people the facts—their voting records and the source of their funds. They have to be clear. People should be able to know that early so they can vote accordingly.

People have questioned your lack of political experience vs. that of your opponent.



There are plenty of experienced people who are doing nothing as legislators or who are indeed detrimental. Experience can even be an indication of the degree of a politician’s allegiance to lobbyists. Admittedly, I do have things to learn, but I do have intelligence and concern for people — qualities not always easy to find.

Why was there no public debate with Achadjian?

He was approached repeatedly by three different organizations, and always refused, though on paper he had stated he was willing. If a debate had been held, he would have lost. I still have not met him.

What did you think of the media coverage of the campaign?

Because they didn’t see it as a close race, they either didn’t cover it or did the bare minimum. For what they did, the *Tribune* did a good job.

Now that the election is over, what insights have you gained?

I’m more committed and energized than ever. People have asked me, aren’t you going to take a vacation? But I feel emboldened by how much difference one person can make. “Winning” needs to be redefined. I have succeeded in my goals of bringing greater awareness to the issues of climate change and energy use and motivating others to run for office.

And there are other issues besides climate change, such as pension reform and other matters that impact people’s lives. I’m not a one-issue candidate. I am interested also in reaching out to the growing number of “decline to state” voters, those who don’t affiliate with any political party, and to young people, who often see the system as bullshit and uninspiring, a system in denial. At the many political clubs I visited, I am often the youngest person in the room. This needs to change.

Force of Nature Mixtape with Heidi Harmon -- current events, news, and issues on the Central Coast -- airs every Friday from 4 to 5 p.m. on 97.3 The Rock. On the web at Esterobaycommunityradio.com

97.3 THE ROCK

On January 13:



One evening's minimum effort = maximum return

No hype: The answer to the question of whether we will have a future of clean, renewable energy in SLO — whether we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by the necessary amount, whether we will be able to rapidly shift to a renewable energy economy, prepare for the inevitable closure of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, and take our energy choices into our own hands or will continue to have those choices dictated to us by an energy monopoly — depends on what you do on the night of January 13, 2015.

On that Tuesday night, from 6 to 9 p.m., the City of SLO will hold a community forum at the Ludwick Community Center. The basic agenda for this event involves public comment on a variety of potential priorities, followed by “dotocracy,” wherein all those present vote with colored dots to rank priorities captured on sheets of paper affixed to walls around the room.

The City wants to hear from everyone about what its goals should be for its next fiscal year. You don't need to

be a resident of the city of SLO to attend and vote.

Three representatives of SLO Clean Energy will give coordinated testimony to the council and staff. During those comments, all supporters of Community Choice will be asked to stand and show visible support. The council likes this approach over numerous people giving comment because it saves time. In this case, it can also make a big impact. When dots are passed out, please affix your dots of support next to “Community Choice Energy Program” as a prospective city goal.

The Sierra Club is pleased to support SLO Clean Energy in its campaign to make Community Choice the city's #1 goal. We need *all* Sierra Club members and supporters in the county to take a few hours out of your evening, come to the Ludwick Center in SLO on January 13 and do one thing: Peel a colored dot off its adhesive backing, walk over to a list hanging on the wall, and place that dot next to the words “Community Choice.”

How could this small action make

such a big difference? Why do we think this can be a major turning point for the Central Coast and our future quality of life?

Because SLO is the only city in the county with a Climate Action Plan that includes a commitment to study the feasibility of Community Choice. Community Choice programs have proven to be the engine behind serious, large-scale renewable energy transition in California. Community Choice programs in Marin and Sonoma Counties have been wildly successful in the amount of clean energy brought on line, carbon emissions cut, and savings realized for ratepayers while generating millions of dollars for local energy efficiency projects. Money that used to go to a monopoly energy utility and into the pockets of its investors and company executives now stays local, building a true green energy economy.

So here's the deal: Enough green dots in the right place on that sheet of paper will make Community Choice a priority project for the City of SLO,

which will then seek Community Choice partners among its sister cities and the County. We can take that giant step into the future that Marin and Sonoma have made.

We've been telling you about Community Choice for several years (see, for instance, “CCA is on the Way,” March 2007) and the opportunity this state law has created. Now's our chance to make it happen here.

The future starts on January 13 at the Ludwick Center, but it can't happen without you.

Go to www.Eventbrite.com and click on “Make community choice a SLO City priority!” to register.

TAKE ACTION

City of San Luis Obispo Community Forum for 2015-17 Budget Tuesday, January 13, 2015 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Ludwick Community Center 864 Santa Rosa Street, SLO

Meeting to consider comments and suggested goals from residents, community groups, Council advisory bodies and other interested individuals.

- All county residents can attend
- You will be given green dots to place on the boards next to “Community Choice”
- Join SLO Clean Energy for free pizza and a SLO Clean Energy t-shirt at 5 p.m. at the SLO Library, then walk over to the Ludwick Center.

Please plan to be there for the whole evening. Being here on this night will change the future of energy in SLO County forever. It's worth it.

There is no need to speak. You can if you want to, but we encourage you to speak with your dots.

Sierra Club Defends Dust Rule

Court filing supports Oceano Dunes ordinance

On December 17, the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club filed an amicus brief in a lawsuit brought by a local off-road recreation group against the County Air Pollution Control District.

The suit is an appeal of the court's dismissal of a lawsuit brought by the Friends of Oceano Dunes, an off-road group seeking to overturn the Dust Rule, an ordinance passed in 2011 by the board of the Air Pollution Control District. The ordinance requires State Parks to reduce the amount of dust blowing off the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, which has created the most hazardous air conditions in the county over the Nipomo Mesa. The Sierra Club's brief provides arguments refuting the claims of Friends of Oceano Dunes and supporting the superior court's ruling that the APCD has the authority to require that dust emissions from the ODSVRA be reduced to non-hazardous levels.

“The local off-road lobby is using the appeals process to challenge the regulatory authority of the APCD, rehashing arguments that they lost in their court case, despite the fact that State Parks and the APCD have agreed to an enforcement procedure for the dust rule,” said Babak Naficy, attorney for the Sierra Club.

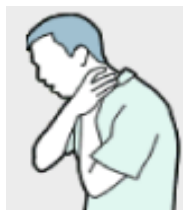
“It's time for the off-riders to face reality,” said Michael Jencks, Chair of the Santa Lucia Chapter. “The same people who tried to trump up ‘controversy’ around the overwhelming scientific evidence that off-road

vehicles are the primary cause of dust pollution from the dunes are now attacking the ability of a pollution control agency to protect the quality of the air we breathe. This needs to stop.”

To many, the implementation of the dust rule by State Parks has been no more helpful than the efforts of off-riders to overturn it.

When the dust rule was being debated, State Parks joined the off-riders in hotly contesting the conclusions of the APCD dust pollution study. Since the adoption of the ordinance, State Parks has not focused its dust control efforts on the riding areas within the park, despite the fact that the level of dust emitted from the riding areas is up to five times higher than dust from non-riding areas. In November, emergency measures implemented by State Parks were found to be failing to reduce the amount of dust coming from the dunes, which continues to violate state and federal air quality standards. State Parks has yet to complete its application for a Coastal Development Permit for ongoing dust control measures and a monitoring program.

APCD board member Joe Costello, summing up the frustration of fellow board members and Nipomo Mesa residents with the long delay, recently characterized State Parks's progress in implementing a dust control program as “glacial.”



Overgrazed (left) and ungrazed areas on the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve, Oct. 2009.

Celebrating the End of an Era on the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve

Commercial livestock grazing indefinitely suspended

For the first time in decades, commercial livestock grazing will not be allowed anywhere in the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve, a 30,000-acre wildlife preserve in San Luis Obispo County adjacent to the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument.

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife — the agency charged with managing the reserve — has decided not to renew a long-standing grazing lease after it expired last month. With no lease in place, grazing is indefinitely suspended on the Reserve, and Department officials have vowed to not allow grazing to resume until they first complete an overarching management plan for the Reserve.

The Reserve includes nearly 40,000 acres of ecologically sensitive habitat linking the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument in southeastern San Luis Obispo County. The Reserve contains rare blue oak woodlands and native grasslands as well as some of the region's only populations of Tule elk and pronghorn antelope. The Reserve also provides habitat for at least 26 sensitive, threatened, or endangered species including burrowing owl, San Joaquin kit fox, southwestern pond turtle, California red-legged frog, grasshopper sparrow, California jewelflower, and tri-colored blackbird.

Wildlife throughout the Reserve has suffered from years of intense overgrazing. A Los Padres ForestWatch survey in 2009 discovered severe overgrazing across much of the Reserve, fencing in disrepair, trampled wetlands and springs, cattle trespassing into areas where the lease expressly prohibits grazing, and other unsatisfactory conditions resulting in severe environmental degradation of lands that were supposed to have been set aside for the protection of rare wildlife.

ForestWatch and the Sierra Club then filed suit challenging DFW's practice of approving grazing leases on the Reserve without first conducting environmental studies and without having a land management plan in place. As a result of the lawsuit, the Department agreed to prepare such studies and to use a “good-faith effort” to finalize a management plan by 2012.

A management plan was first envisioned by the legislation establishing the Reserve in 2001, which required State officials to complete the plan by 2004. That plan has still not been finalized, and the Department has come under increasing public pressure to limit or eliminate livestock grazing across the Reserve pending the plan's completion.

Diablo Canyon's Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Year

The writing is on the wall for California's last nuke

On December 6, John Geesman, attorney for the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility and a former California Energy Commissioner, sat down in the Grover Beach living room of A4NR founder Rochelle Becker, and, surrounded by local activists, reviewed 2014 and ticked off all the bad news for PG&E and the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. It was quite a summation.

First and foremost was the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's suppression of the Peck Report, the determined dissent by Diablo Canyon's lead NRC inspector stating in no uncertain terms that it's not okay to change the rules on the fly in order to keep maintaining that the plant can withstand whatever the surrounding earthquake faults might throw at it.

As a result, the NRC has been sued for handing PG&E a de facto license amendment without bothering with established procedure, public hearings and scrutiny that would accompany an actual license amendment. None of PG&E assurances that the plant is safe serve to deflect Peck's conclusion: "PG&E continues to operate the Diablo Canyon reactors outside the

from disclosure requests under the Freedom of Information Act. And there it remained for eleven years, until the A4NR discovered its existence and prodded the Diablo Canyon Independent Safety Committee to demand that the NRC release the full damning report to the public.

Then there was the December 3 hearing held by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, chaired by Barbara Boxer -- a "game changer," said Geesman, due to the testimony of Sam Blakeslee, a geophysicist, former leader of California's Republican Caucus in the state legislature and former California Seismic Safety Commissioner. His 26-page report to the committee tracked the history of seismic discoveries at the plant and PG&E's depressing responses.

The history of the Shoreline Fault, discovered less than a mile from the plant in 2008, is a case in point. First, PG&E said it didn't exist. When its existence was confirmed, they declared it was a minor fault, with no connection to the Hosgri Fault, and the idea that both faults could rupture simultaneously was impossible.

"Under pressure from the U.S. Geological Survey and independent seismologists," said Geesman, "PG&E eventually adopted the position 'We assume they're connected.' Now they say 'We believe they're connected.'":

Blakeslee's devastating 26 pages of testimony torched PG&E's standard p.r. line (*The effects of earthquakes on the nuclear reactors has been exhaustively researched.... Major components are designed to withstand and perform their safety functions during and after a major seismic event...public health and safety are assured, etc.*), revealing, in granular detail, how the utility has been moving the seismic goal posts for years, massaging data and lowering standards, without the facts to back up those decisions. This has given rise to an odd phenomenon: As the faults have been found to be stronger and stronger, PG&E has kept tweaking the equations for ground motion to declare their assessment of potential seismic energy to be below or within the plant's design basis. "Somehow," Geesman noted dryly, "the faults keep getting stronger, but the plant keeps getting safer."

Geesman reviewed the roles of the Public Utilities Commission, State Water Board and the California Coastal Commission in the relicensing process, noting that "the state agencies hold the fate of Diablo Canyon in their hands."

Earning Diablo the sobriquet of "California's largest marine predator" from the Coastal Commission (see facing page), 78% of all destructive once-through cooling coastal power plant impacts off the California coast come from Diablo Canyon. The Water Board is widely expected to hand down a ban on OTC early in 2015.

At the start of the OTC review process, PG&E said they would

DIABLO CANYON POWER PLANT Lawmakers criticize nuclear regulators over quake safety

facility's license does not reflect new knowledge of faults, Lois Capps and Barbara Boxer say

By Dawn Sneed

Two federal lawmakers representing San Luis Obispo County and former state Sen. Sam Blakeslee harshly criticized the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Wednesday, saying the agency is not doing enough to ensure that Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant can withstand earthquakes.

The remarks came at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, chaired by California Sen. Barbara Boxer, on Tuesday, an hour after the release of the 26-page report by the California Seismic Safety Commissioner.

Rep. Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara, testified at the hearing and called for an independent review of all seismic data concerning earthquake faults surrounding the plant.

Boxer said the Fukushima disaster should be a wake-up call for the NRC. The accident caused widespread radioactive contamination around the plant that will take tens of billions of dollars to clean up.

"The Fukushima disaster



Sam Blakeslee, left, a former state senator, and Sen. Barbara Boxer express concern about Diablo Canyon's safety, below.

ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS



NRC downgrades a Diablo safety rating

inspection finds nuclear plant's emergency

By Dawn Sneed

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission notified PG&E by letter this week that it has

changes in the plant's emergency warning procedures for boats offshore from the plant.

The agency has tentatively decided that a color-coded

from green to white. Green represents the lowest level of safety concern and white indicates a low to moderate level of concern.

Emails Suggest NRC, PG&E Downplayed Diablo Quake Danger

Heavily redacted communiqués point to collusion

More than 100 pages of emails between the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Pacific Gas & Electric have been obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request filed by Friends of the Earth, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Mothers for Peace and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The emails indicate that PG&E and the NRC may have worked together to counteract news coverage of Diablo Canyon's seismic safety issues.

Numerous outlets reported that the former chief inspector of the Diablo Canyon power plant had warned superiors that new seismic data means the nuclear plant is operating with an invalid license and may not be safe from previously unknown earthquake faults. Many emails were heavily redacted but nonetheless show that the NRC knew the exact date and time PG&E would release a long-awaited report on the plant's Diablo Canyon's seismic safety, and the NRC simultaneously released its verdict rejecting the former inspector's dissent. The documents also show that while the NRC denied collaborating on release of the reports, they had worked for weeks on a media strategy based on prior knowledge of the PG&E report.

We have filed an appeal with the NRC demanding release of the redacted emails and their attachments.

"These emails leave little doubt that the NRC and PG&E colluded to spin the story, against mounting evidence

that Diablo Canyon may not be able to withstand the powerful shaking possible on these previously unknown faults," said Damon Moglen of Friends of the Earth. "We know from the San Bruno pipeline scandal that PG&E is not above backdoor tactics to try to influence a government regulator, but this is a new and shocking example of such collusion on an issue that could affect hundreds of thousands of lives."

On August 25, a news report revealed the existence of a report by former Diablo chief inspector Michael Peck (known as a Differing Professional Opinion or DPO) and that the NRC had kept it secret for more than a year. The dissent called for shutdown of the plant unless it could be proven that the plant had a valid license and could withstand shaking on several faults that were unknown at the time it was designed and built. The Associated Press story was widely carried by news outlets across the state and nationwide.

On September 10, the NRC announced it had ruled against Peck. Within hours, PG&E released a lengthy and long overdue seismic safety study to the State of California. It contained the startling admission that faults near the plant are much longer than previously known and are interconnected, making possible a quake that could produce more shaking than Diablo was built to withstand. Those admissions, buried in the avalanche of



Let's review John Geesman reflects.

bounds of the facility design basis as defined by the NRC Operating License."

The timing of the NRC's response to Dr. Peck on September 10, the same day on which PG&E executed a data dump of new information on Diablo Canyon, is an item of ongoing interest. (See "Emails Suggest NRC, PG&E Downplayed Diablo Quake Danger," right.)

And then there was the matter of the NRC's suppression of a 2003 tsunami assessment that finally came to light last year, forced into public view by David Weisman of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility. The report, conducted by Dr. Robert Sewell, one of the world's foremost authorities on tsunamis, found that of 13 tsunami scenarios that could be triggered by near-shore submarine landslides, 11 would result in swamping the plant's water intake/outflow and generators.

When Dr. Sewell submitted his findings to the NRC, the regulators decreed that no follow-up studies based on his data and conclusions were to be conducted. They redacted entire pages of the report and ordered that it be kept in "draft" status, exempting it

Sierra Club Summit for a Nuclear Free Future

By Linda Seeley, Sierra Club Nuclear Free Campaign

Over November 14–17, seventy-five dedicated and ingenious members of the Sierra Club gathered at the Summit for a Nuclear-Free Future in Washington DC, learning from experts, strategizing together, and forming long-lasting bonds. The Summit was planned by the Nuclear Free Core Team, which has been meeting weekly by phone for the past two years. The Sierra Club adopted a strong anti-nuclear policy in 1979 after the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island, but has

not done a lot lately to promote it. That’s changing. Nuclear power is neither a solution to climate change nor an acceptable part of the Sierra Club Energy Policy. The Summit was living proof. For three solid days, we heard about uranium mining, milling, processing and fabrication and the vast, irreparable environmental and health effects associated with these practices. The Dine (Navajo) and Hopi people suffer the most from the 10,000+ open pit uranium mines that dot their sacred landscape. At the Summit, we heard about the impossibility of safely storing highly radioac-

tive waste. We were presented with the facts on Yucca Mountain, consolidated waste storage, transport of radioactive waste by rail, highway, and barge. We learned about legal challenges, technical problems, and possible routes for opposing new licenses and relicensing applications. We absorbed new facts about high burnup fuel, safer storage of used fuel in dry casks, and the challenges of decommissioning these toxic and vulnerable sites that are scattered throughout our nation. Diablo Canyon got special attention as the last nuke standing on the West Coast. Nuclear expert Arnie Gunderson

calls it the most dangerous nuclear site in the nation – our own Fukushima waiting to happen. I was able to give an update on legal and strategic plans for shutting Diablo, and I have received tremendous support from Sierrans throughout the nation since returning home. On November 17th, we lobbied our Congressional representatives. I was able to meet with staff from Senators Boxer and Markey’s offices and had a rare opportunity to meet with Ralph Nader for two hours. He gave sage and practical advice on how to proceed if we are to win this struggle against the corporate forces that are pushing to continue subsidizing dirty, dangerous and expensive nuclear power.

Follow the Nuclear Free Campaign on the Sierra Club website by joining the Activist Network. You can add to the dialogue and become a part of this most important campaign. Our nuke-free campaign is entirely volunteer-based. Please let the Sierra Club Board know that shutting down nuclear reactors in the U.S. is a high priority for you.

Go to sierraclub.org/nuclear or contact me at lindaseeley@gmail.com if you would like more information on how to get involved in our nuclear-free work.

And don’t miss the Nuclear Free California strategy session in SLO, Jan. 24-25! Contact marybeth@eon3.net for details.

Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Diablo takes path to relicensing,” by David Sneed, *The Tribune*, Nov. 25, 2009.

Summary: Five years ago, PG&E announced it was getting an early start on its application for the relicensing of Diablo Canyon, predicting the process would be complete in about three years. Not.



Several speakers at the press conference addressed the economic importance of the plant and its 1,200 employees. PG&E pays \$25 million in property taxes, \$15.6 million of which go to schools....

“...it’s inevitable that there will come a day when the plant is gone, whether

it’s 10 years or 30 years from now. When that happens, the financial fallout will be grim.... The forecast for the San Luis Coastal School District is especially dire.” -- *The Tribune*, February 27, 2013.

Plants like Diablo Canyon could be forced to replace once-through cooling with other types of cooling that use less water. PG&E will continue to work with state water officials to resolve the issue...

“PG&E is arguing that the cost to phase out once-through-cooling at Diablo Canyon is too high....Some members of a review committee, (including the California Public Utilities Commission and California Energy Commission), say there is no basis for exempting Diablo Canyon.... They recommend making compliance a minimum condition for relicensing the plant.”

-- “Water Board Weighs Phasing Out Diablo Canyon’s Cooling System, KQED California Report, November 19, 2014.

Other environmentalists say the decision to apply for license renewal is premature. The utility should at least wait until studies by several state agencies of the state’s electrical infrastructure are complete....

“In his testimony, Blakeslee said that PG&E has consistently downplayed the seismic hazards facing Diablo Canyon. The NRC has repeatedly relaxed its seismic standards to accommodate operation of the plant, he said.” -- “Lawmakers criticize nuclear regulators over quake safety,” *The Tribune*, December 3, 2014.

“The utility has spent \$1 billion on capital improvements at the plant in recent years, and that increases the feasibility of continuing to operate for 20 additional years,” said [chief nuclear officer John] Conway.

Question: “...wouldn’t it be logical to be making capital investments in the plant that would extend beyond the period of the current license?”

Mr. Halpin: “...we’re not looking out past the expiration of the license. We’re viewing out until the end of license.”

-- Response of Diablo Canyon’s current chief nuclear officer, Ed Halpin. Transcript of CPUC proceeding, August 8, 2014.

Upshot: What a difference a half decade makes. In November 2009, Pacific Gas & Electric rolled out the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant relicensing juggernaut, assuring local residents and ratepayers that the facility would continue cranking out megawatts and money for the community—while solving climate change and energy security—for decades to come. It’s now obvious that PG&E jumped the gun, applying to relicense the plant before seismic studies required by the state were complete and issues surrounding the use of once-through cooling water at the plant were resolved. It was as if PG&E was trying to get their license before the bad news got out. But they couldn’t outrun the truth. PG&E and the NRC hadn’t counted on the determination of ratepayer advocates, seismic scientists and enlightened elected officials, or that some state regulatory agencies would actually do their jobs. Nor had they counted on Mother Nature and Fukushima making many people’s worst fears about nuclear power a reality. Five years later, PG&E’s attempt to relicense Diablo is dead in the water.

California’s Largest Marine Predator

Coastal Commission weighs in on Diablo’s cooling problem

The prepared remarks of California Coastal Commission staff scientist Tom Luster were read by Coastal Commission Legislative Director Sarah Christie at the November 18, 2014, State Water Resources Control Board hearing on the issue of once-through cooling at nuclear power plants in California.

Your board and the Coastal Commission have similar responsibilities for protecting marine life, including a shared requirement to minimize entrainment to the extent feasible.

You’ve heard comments today regarding the 1.5 billion larvae that are entrained every year at Diablo Canyon and how significant this impact is. So, to put those numbers in context, we’d like to remind you that the Board’s independent science review team has

PREDATOR continued on page 9



What big teeth it has Coastal Commission Legislative Director Sarah Christie gave the Water Board the word on Diablo.

Hard Rock

On December 11, the County Planning Commission heard nearly a full day of testimony for and against the proposed Las Pilitas/Oster Quarry project proposed for Santa Margarita (see “Las Pilitas Quarry Looming Over Santa Margarita,” July/August 2013).

In a rare display of non-deference to a project applicant – whom the Planning Department usually regards as a client to be served, with that service including maneuvers to help get around requirements for environmental protections and the provisions of the General Plan – the staff report made no attempt to put lipstick on the pig.

Planning staff tallied the boatload of significant, unmitigatable impacts the project would have on visual resources, noise levels from construction and traffic and emissions of nitrogen oxides and PM10 pollutants, degrading the quality of life for local residents and lacking any public benefit that would constitute sufficient legal grounds to override those impacts.

Staff recommended that the Planning Commission deny the applicant’s request for a permit.

The conversion of the 41-acre site – near the Salinas River and three miles east of Santa Margarita – would turn the rustic community into a mining town, with quarry trucks rumbling down Highway 58 through the center

Collusion

continued from page 6

material released that day by PG&E and the NRC, went mostly unmentioned in news coverage.

The emails show that as early as August 21 — with the news story imminent — NRC public affairs staffers were working on a “COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ON STATE REPORT.” Attached to a message with that subject was a document entitled “STATE REPORT MESSAGING,” which likewise related to PG&E’s as yet unreleased seismic report. In the emails, the messaging memo was redacted except for the heading “Draft Talking Points: State Report.”

Subsequent emails show that PG&E told the NRC exactly when the state report would be released. The NRC’s public affairs staff then made sure that the rejection of Peck’s dissent would be made public the same day.

Our original FOIA request was filed Sept. 18. Asked that day by journalists about the allegations, NRC spokesperson Lara Uselding repeatedly denied any collusion, stating: “We know of no collaboration between the NRC and PG&E regarding the individual timing of releases.”

“Under the Freedom of Information Act, a government agency may withhold or redact a document if it’s classified in the interest of national defense, or releasing it would reveal trade secrets, personnel matters or confidential sources, or interfere with law enforcement, and so on,” said Andrew Christie, Director of the Sierra Club’s Santa Lucia Chapter. “It’s hard to imagine how the NRC can justify the redaction of anything contained in a public communications strategy and a talking points memo on how to handle the release of a report to the public.”



of town in an unending stream.

Much of the testimony at the standing-room-only meeting revolved around the potential size of that stream. The Environmental Impact Report estimated an average of 273 trips a day. The project manager asserted the average would be 120 trips a day.

The Sierra Club pointed out that as averages, both numbers are meaningless in terms of real impacts in the real world, where the actual number of truck trips on any given day can far

exceed the average (which is why they call it an average). We noted that the EIR admits that “Up to 800 truck trips per day may be anticipated for a large project” and that the EIR consultants acknowledge that they did not describe or analyze the impacts of that peak number or propose mitigations for those impacts.

Mike Brown of the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB) did not disappoint, staking out a position of worship at the altar of

profit *uber alles* and introducing the novel legal argument that if the County decides to deny the project based on its crushing traffic impacts, this will somehow infringe on “the sovereignty of the state of California” as the proprietor of State Highway 58.

The permit for the Las Pilitas Quarry was continued to the January 8 meeting of the Planning Commission. However the Commission votes that day, an appeal to the Board of Supervisors is a certainty.

Wilderness

continued from page 2

The death of the Gorge, for some of my fellow Kentuckians, would be merely an act of “progress” -- a cause that they may themselves by dying for. But to me, because I knew something of what would die, it would be a great personal loss.... I knew that whether I continued to go there or not it would remain meaningful and important to me. I knew that there would be a certain irreplaceable comfort that I would draw from the knowledge that it was preserved and cherished and enjoyed by members of my species.

Dave Foreman of the Rewilding Institute sums up the arguments of anti-wilderness academics thus: “Their complaints come from a lack of knowledge about biology, a misunderstanding of the conservation movement, and carelessness about the consequences of their undercutting of wilderness.”

Finally, in its lazy race-baiting, the anti-wilderness ethic is racist in its fundamental notion that ethnic minorities are not spiritually capable of the experience of wilderness in any way similar to what John Muir experienced because they are not old and white. They are uninterested in its elemental truths, the quality of the air and water, the play of light and shadow, and any degree of communion with the other residents of the planet.

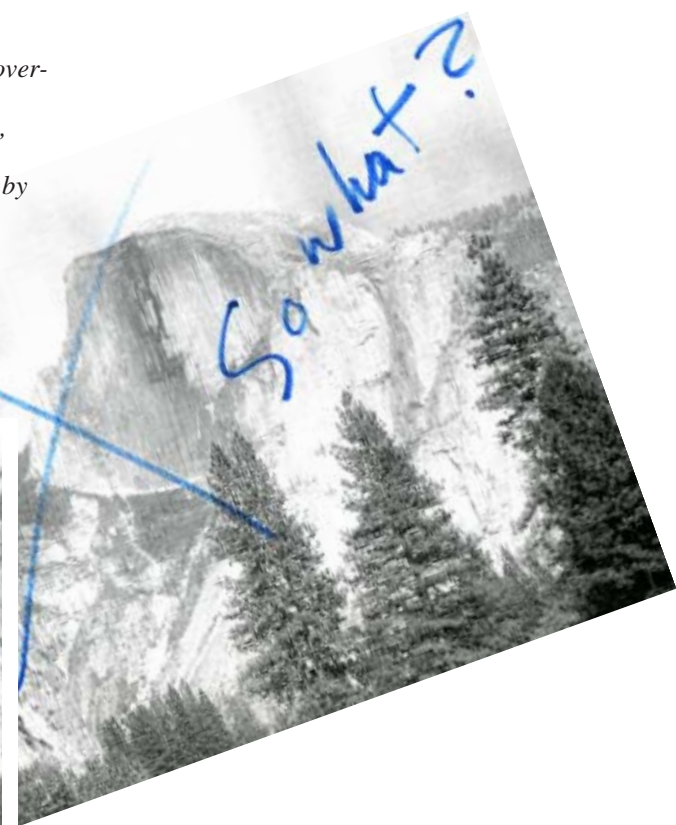
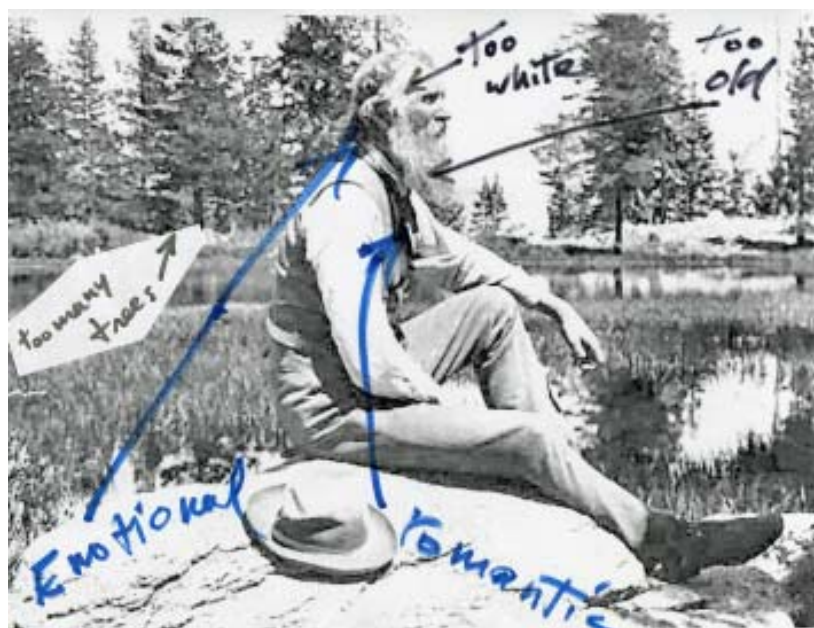
And yet, somehow, Pablo Neruda, while neither old nor white, managed to write:

*What I saw first were the trees,
Ravines adorned in flowers, wild
beauty,
Humid territory, forest ablaze,
And winter behind the world, over-
flowed.
My childhood, those wet shoes,
Tree trunks broken,
Fallen in the jungle, devoured by
lichen.*

And somehow, Gabriela Mistral thought to write of

*the old wounded springs that spring
blessed gum, eternal afternoons.
If they could, the trees would lift you
and carry you from valley to valley,
and you would pass from arm to arm,
a child running
from father to father.*

Whether considered in the light of the practical or the light of the spiritual, wilderness is what all of us are lost without.



Taking Issue - Extra

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Support Phillips 66,” by Amber Johnson, *The Tribune*, Dec. 13, 2014.

Summary: A local political operative wants you to ignore the massive opposition to the Phillips 66 Santa Maria Refinery rail spur project.

About twenty years ago, Sierra Club President Michael McCloskey pointed out the problem

The Phillips 66 Rail Project is a local issue that will be reviewed and decided on by our local decision makers. It seems to me that the 11,000 comments and the cut-and-paste form email received by the county suggest out-of-town special interest groups who clearly have their own political agenda.

when corporate interests eagerly state a preference for a local decision-making process by small groups: “Industry thinks its odds are better in these forums,” he wrote. “It is ready to train its experts in mastering this process. It believes it can dominate them over time.... It has ways to generate pressures in communities where it is strong, which it doesn’t have at the national level.”

We need to ask why special interests are trying to influence what happens in our county. They don’t live here, we do.... This decision needs to be based on what is best for our county, not what outsiders think is best.

This project would trigger the transport of millions of barrels of

dangerous tar sands oil through hundreds of communities inhabited by millions of people as it travels thousands of miles to get here. Those people understandably think they have a stake in the decision making of our local decision-makers.



Amber Johnson, San Luis Obispo

In seeking to rally the citizenry against

“special interests” with a “political agenda,” Ms. Johnson failed to mention that she is a political consultant and formerly a lobbyist, executive director of the San Luis Obispo County Republican Party, and campaign manager for County Supervisor Lynn Compton. She also failed to mention that she served as regional field director for the oil industry’s “No on P” campaign that defeated the Santa Barbara County ballot measure to protect residents from the impacts of fracking and other high-intensity oil well stimulation techniques. Per her LinkedIn profile, Ms. Johnson was in charge of “recruiting and training spokespeople for campaign advertisements, letter writers, and volunteer efforts for maximum impact.” Her labors were part of what the oil industry’s money bought in the course of spending \$7.6 million — most of it from Chevron and Aera Energy — to kill the local, grass-roots measure, swamping the \$284,000 raised in support from individuals and Santa Barbara County residents.

Predator

continued from page 7

identified this entrainment as affecting more than 500 miles of California coastal shoreline waters.

They’ve also calculated that depending on how you measure it, this level of entrainment represents a loss of ocean productivity equal to several hundred or several thousand acres of rocky reef and near-shore habitat. It would be fair to categorize Diablo Canyon as California’s largest marine predator.

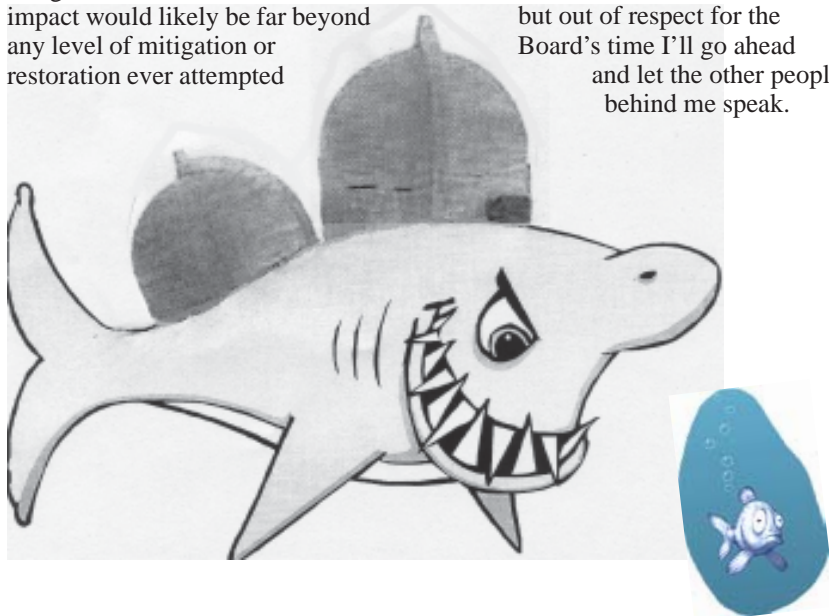
Importantly, this productivity loss is based upon a small proportion of the total entrained organisms. The 1.5 billion larvae are meant to be surrogates for the many more unaccounted species and organisms that are entrained each year.

So, if anything, the estimated loss of productivity is an under-representation. Additionally, should Diablo be permitted to continue using its once-through cooling system, the scale of mitigation needed to address this impact would likely be far beyond any level of mitigation or restoration ever attempted

in California, involving hundreds or thousands of acres or in-kind, out of kind, near field and far field mitigation and restoration. This could be as significant an effort and nearly as costly over the long term as some of the once-through cooling alternatives outlined in the Bechtel report.

Speaking of costs and alternatives, the Commission largely concurs with the subcommittee’s comments on the cost considerations, particularly as they relate to the dispute over the wide range of potential costs, from less than \$2 billion to more than \$10 billion. We believe it would be appropriate for the board at this point not to make any conclusions about whether these costs are wholly disproportionate or unreasonable. This is particularly important when viewed in the context of PG&E’s other likely relicensing costs, such as the not yet quantified costs of seismic retrofits that may be needed and the replacement costs for aged facility components.

I had a few more sentences, but out of respect for the Board’s time I’ll go ahead and let the other people behind me speak.



Upshot: In his introduction to John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton’s *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*, a landmark exposé of the public relations industry, investigative reporter Mark Dowie wrote that few of us realize how much of the information that shapes our perceptions of the issues of the day “originates from the desks of public relations practitioners. ‘The best p.r. is never noticed,’ says the proud, unwritten slogan of the trade.... It is critical that consumers of media in democratic societies understand the origin of information and the process by which it is mediated, particularly when they are being deceived.”

Both Ms. Johnson’s political campaign efforts on behalf of Big Oil and her letter to the *Tribune* were straight out of the corporate p.r. playbook, an example of the strategy known as “astroturf” — fake grass-roots attempts to masquerade as the voice of the people, originally developed by the tobacco industry and now in wide corporate use. We should all expect to see many more attempts to manipulate public opinion -- railing against “outsiders” and depicting concerned citizens as “special interests” -- seeking to marginalize opposition as Phillips 66 tries to push its project through the public process.

Bad year

continued from page 6

comply with the Water Board’s decision. Now they say they won’t.

The NRC has told PG&E they need the Coastal Commission to sign off on the impacts of another 20 years of plant operation as being consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Act before PG&E can ask the NRC to restart their suspended relicensing effort. (Again, we suggest the interested reader peruse the Coastal Commission testimony at left to gauge the likelihood that the Coastal Commission will make such a finding.)

Geesman noted that the PUC and California Energy Commission have agreed there is “no basis for an exemption” to the Water Board’s Once-Through Cooling rule. “No basis for an exemption” means the agencies have determined that the energy generated by Diablo is vital neither to the stability of the state’s electricity grid nor its overall energy supply,

which is in surplus and will only become moreso. Continuing to keep Diablo on line, the CEC has calculated, would actually require *reducing* the output of renewable energy, scaling back the state’s projected renewable energy goals in order to keep from overloading the grid.

When the decision to shut down Diablo comes, said Geesman, it will come quickly, and without advance warning, when PG&E’s financial officers decide that the road to attempted relicensing is no longer worth the cost of the journey.

On several occasions, the County Board of Supervisors has heard testimony and discussed what the County might do when the economic engine that is the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant goes away. Those discussions remain preliminary, with no decisions made and no actions taken.

In view of the year PG&E and Diablo Canyon just had, now would be a good time for our Supervisors to come up with a plan.



Recycling Vegetable Oil Into Biodiesel

The American Biodiesel Buyers Club (www.thebiodieselclub.org), a non-profit based in Morro Bay, is partnering with the Eco Rotary Club of Morro Bay and the San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority to establish a household waste vegetable oil recycling program in SLO County.

The used cooking oil from people's deep fryers, frying pans and fondue pots will be recycled into sustainable biodiesel, a clean burning alternative fuel that can be used in any diesel vehicle.

All county residents can bring their old and used cooking oil to any of the five IWMA Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Sites for recycling, including Cold Canyon Landfill in SLO, Chicago Grade Landfill in Atascadero), the Morro Bay/Cayucos Waste Water Plant, Nipomo CSD Yard, and the Paso Robles Landfill. (Businesses must call ahead for an appointment: 800-400-0811.) Having some food bits in the used cooking oil is okay. However, people should never mix any motor oil with used cooking oil, as it contaminates both products headed for recycling.

"For the last four years, we have set up our Thanksgiving collection event in the parking lot of Morin Brothers," said Margo Camilleri, president of the Biodiesel Club. "The grease collection company, San Luis Tallow, has been donating their services to collect the oil from our event's barrel, process it, and then bring it to the biodiesel production facility to be turned into fuel. They have been going out of their normal route to support our collection event. This year, people can just bring the oil in a sturdy plastic container to one of the HHW drop off sites and feel confident that it is being recycled into biodiesel."

The Eco Rotary Club of Morro Bay will partner with The Biodiesel Club to spread the word about the new drop off locations and work with The Biodiesel Club to create materials for a public awareness campaign."

Eco Rotary President Trina Dougherty said "The Club supports the new recycling program and we look forward to participating in the creation of a program that turns waste vegetable oil into biodiesel. It's exciting when we can find a way to keep waste out of our county's landfills and turn it into energy."

The Biodiesel Club is a national non-profit organization with the mission of reducing exposure to the toxic chemicals found in petro-diesel fuel and exhaust by supporting the use of sustainable biodiesel as an alternative fuel. For more information please contact Margo Camilleri at 805-235-0508, or margo_camilleri@thebiodieselclub.org.

The Eco Rotary Club of Morro Bay was chartered in 2011 as the third Eco Rotary in the world. It serves and educates local and global communities through eco-focused programs, projects and practices, and supports the efforts of Rotary International.

Train

continued from page 1

how much unhappiness this opposition has generated in certain quarters and revealed the strategy for trying to make it go away (see "Taking Issue - Extra," page 9).

What p.r. can't obscure: This project is about mile-long trains carrying millions of gallons of volatile crude in unsafe tank cars that are prone to derailing. Our railways weren't built for it and our first responders aren't prepared to fight the kinds of fires, explosions, and spills that will inevitably accompany this project.

For many other reasons -- spelled out in the comments on the Revised Draft EIR submitted to the County by Communities for a Better Environment, Center for Biological Diversity, ForestEthics and Sierra Club -- Phillips 66 gets no cigar for its second attempt at an Environmental Impact Report that can pass muster under the California Environmental Quality Act.

The RDEIR still obscures the inextricable link between projects at the Santa Maria and Rodeo facilities. These two facilities constitute the Phillips 66 San Francisco Refinery (SFR). This omission hides the true scope of the Project and precludes an adequate analysis of significant impacts.

The Project Description remains inadequate in not fully addressing the scope of the company's total shift to a different crude oil feedstock. The

In 2013 alone, more crude spilled from trains than spilled in the last four decades. The RDEIR simply omits this data.

chemical composition of raw materials processed by a refinery directly affect the amount and composition of the refinery's emissions. The amount and composition of sulfur in the crude, for example, determines the amount of sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide that will be emitted. This should be the baseline against which impacts must be measured. Significant impacts, such as increased energy consumption, air emissions, toxic pollutant releases, flaring and catastrophic incident risks, are entirely dependent on the quality of crude oil processed at the facility. Heavier crude oil feedstock has been identified as a contributing factor to potentially catastrophic incidents at refineries, and was a root cause of an August 6, 2012, fire at Chevron's Richmond Refinery.

Despite the unique characteristics of bitumen crudes and DilBit blends, including those characteristics which cause dramatic increases in corrosion in all refinery equipment components, the RDEIR avoids full analysis of the unique hazards accompanying rail transport, offloading, handling, storage, and processing of these crudes in its review of the Project's potential impacts. As a result, the RDEIR's conclusions regarding the relative significance of the Project's impacts and its assessment of mitigation measures to address them are inherently flawed.

It is impossible to make an informed evaluation of the potential environmental effects and risks to community and worker health and safety of partially refining Canadian tar sands in the Santa Maria refinery because the RDEIR still fails to include integral project components and the SFR's overall switch to tar sands in its analyses, diminishing or even foreclosing an

analysis of the Project's environmental impacts.

The RDEIR hides serious local pollution, climate pollution and chemical safety hazards from the public and Phillips' own workers. The law requires that EIRs should describe proposed projects with sufficient detail and accuracy to permit informed decision-making. The RDEIR fails to meet this standard by minimizing the degree and scope of the switch in crude oil feedstock supply.

The RDEIR still relies on an inadequate study area and therefore underestimates the Project's potential to result in a substantial increase in criteria pollutant emissions. The air quality impacts of the Project will regularly extend far beyond the county line. By artificially limiting the geographic scope of the analysis to air pollutants emitted within the boundaries of San Luis Obispo County, the RDEIR substantially underestimates the significant air quality impacts of refining tar sands at the SFR. Tar sands crudes are distinct from even the heaviest of crudes processed in the past at the SMR, for two principal reasons: because of the unique chemical composition of the bitumen itself and the presence of large quantities of volatile diluent used in its refining, which release air pollutants that cause significant public health and air quality impacts, all inadequately addressed in the RDEIR.

The RDEIR continues to omit any mention of the Project's potential to drastically increase lead emissions, the impacts of which can include permanent neurological damage, particularly in children. The RDEIR fails to identify -- much less analyze or mitigate -- this category of known potential impacts from the switch in crude stock.

The RDEIR identifies operational emissions from "the operation of locomotives (both onsite and offsite), fugitive emissions from components and from the vapor recovery carbon canisters, and from vehicles associated with employees and the transportation of materials." This fails to assess the air quality impacts of the SFR as a whole, and includes neither an analysis of the emissions that will be caused at the Rodeo component as a result of the rail spur extension, nor the increased emissions of refining increased quantities of tar sands at the Santa Maria component.

The Project's climate change implications are completely underestimated. The RDEIR fails to acknowledge the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recently voiced and serious concerns regarding the "irreversible" effects of climate change, concluding that "continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe and irreversible impacts," calling for the need for dramatic cuts in pollution.

In the face of that warning, the Project admits a climate change impact that is significant and unavoidable. But no one can intelligently weigh the question of whether to live with that

impact without first establishing the degree of the impact. Not only does the RDEIR analysis restrict the scope of impacts to locomotive and ancillary emissions, ignoring the climate change impacts of the tar sands project, but even that analysis is plagued with ambiguity. By limiting the study of GHG emissions to largely locomotive and associated operations, one component of the overall Project, the RDEIR omits entirely a significant portion of the emissions that will result from the Project, and thus vastly underestimates the Project's significant air quality impacts.

As stated in the U.S. Department of Transportation's proposed crude by rail safety rulemaking, the industry regularly underreports accident spill quantities. Thus, the RDEIR's conclusion that its analysis of accident and spill risk is "conservative" because the railroad industry's overall accident rate is declining completely misses the mark. In fact, the opposite is true. If the RDEIR had included recent data specific to crude by rail accidents and spills, the results would likely show that the risk of an accident and spill quantities are much higher.

The RDEIR estimates that spills or other accidents resulting in the release of over 100 gallons of crude oil are likely to occur between once every 46 to 76 years, depending on the rail route. This estimate relies on historical derailment data from 2003-2012, and does not include any of the catastrophic derailments from 2013 and 2014. Accident rates in 2013 and 2014, specifically for crude by rail, increased. In 2013 alone, more crude spilled from trains than spilled in the last four decades. The RDEIR simply omits this data. Hence the probability of catastrophic events is artificially low, and the risk assessment must be recalculated in order to include more recent and representative data on derailments.

The RDEIR cannot simply rely on the Department of Transportation's rule-making to ensure safer tank car designs will reduce the hazards of crude by rail transport. That rule-making proposes several alternatives for new tank car designs, which reduce risks of crude by rail transport to varying degrees. The rulemaking has not been finalized. Therefore, there is significant uncertainty about the degree of safety and risk reduction that will result from the final rule. Moreover, implementation of a rule, including a phase out of the most dangerous tank cars including DOT-111s and un-jacketed CPC-1232s, may take up to six years. As such, the safety benefits of the proposed rule will not materialize until long after the proposed project would begin operation.

In the meantime, the Department of Transportation estimates that under the current rail infrastructure network, 15 mainline accidents spilling crude will occur each year and at least one disastrous incident at least as large as Lac-Megantic -- the Quebec derailment and inferno that destroyed half a town and killed 47 people in 2013 -- will occur every two years. SLO County should not roll those dice.

TAKE ACTION

TENTATIVE DATE OF PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING: Thursday, Feb. 5. (This date was set *before* the Planning Department realized the Final EIR must respond to 23,000 comments, not 11,000 comments.)

Check the schedule for updates at: www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/meetings.htm



Classifieds

Next issue deadline is **January 14**. To get a rate sheet or submit your ad and payment, contact:
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babaknaficy@sbcglobal.net

Outings and Activities Calendar

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

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

Sat., Jan. 10th, 8:30 a.m. Reservoir Canyon/Bowden Ranch Hike. Botanist-led visit to several plant communities in coastal mountains on a moderately strenuous, five-mile hike, 1000' gain, lasting about 4 hrs. We start in the riparian corridor of Reservoir Canyon, continuing over the backbone ridge of Bowden Ranch with plants adapted to serpentine soil. Also enjoy great southern views into Santa Barbara and hills of the north. Bring water and snacks, sunscreen, sturdy shoes, hats, and layered clothing for weather changes. Meet at eastern entrance to SLO High School, near corner of Johnson Ave. and San Luis Dr. A few cars will caravan hikers to the Reservoir Canyon—owners of cars at hike's end driven back to their cars. Rain or threat of rain cancels. Info: Leader, Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com.

Sun., Jan. 11th, 2 p.m. City Walk: SLO's Secret Past. A guided, exploratory stroll to reveal the original site of the Mission, the 1860s stagecoach stop, home of SLO's first millionaire, the last remaining gas light, a forgotten WPA project, and other hidden landmarks in the historic core of SLO. Duration about 1 1/2 hrs. Meet at NW corner of Nipomo and Dana Sts. Leader: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Sat., Jan. 17th, 8 a.m. Blinn Ranch Rd./Falcon Loop Hike. Very strenuous, 13-mile hike, 2000 ft. gain, on north side of Santa Margarita Lake. We will access it from the River Rd. parking area. This is an out and back hike, with the option of going part way and turning around earlier. Bring lunch, water, and sturdy hiking shoes. Parking fee \$3. Rain will postpone this hike. Meet in front of the Pacific Beverage Co., Santa Margarita. Leader: Carlos Diaz-Saavedra, 546-0317.

Sun., Jan. 18th, 10 a.m. Sycamore Springs Trekking-Pole Hike. Polecats is dedicated to leading local hikes to model the benefits of using trekking poles effectively. This hike is 2 miles and 600 ft. elevation gain. Meet near

the entrance to Sycamore Springs Resort, 1215 Avila Beach Dr. Need to confirm beforehand with Leader: David Georgi, 458-5575 or hikingpoles@gmail.com.

Mon., Jan 19th, 10 a.m. Montana de Oro Dune Hike. Two-mile loop hike on top of dunes with great ocean views in Montana de Oro State Park. Meet at Hazard Canyon parking area, 1.6 miles from park entrance. Leader: Vicki Marchenko, marchenko57@gmail.com or 528-5567.

Sat., Jan. 24th, 9 a.m. Adobe Trail. Mildly strenuous 6-mile trail on grass- and oak-covered hills north of the Sierra Madre range for views of Mt. Abel and Pinos. Bring sturdy walking shoes, water, and dress for the weather. Take Hwy 101, then east on Hwy 166, north of Santa Maria, for 22 miles to trailhead on left side. Pass through unlocked gate and park your car. Trail is directly behind green gate. If you reach Rock Front Ranch, you have gone too far. Leader: Andrea Ortiz, 934-2792 or kenya683@msn.com.

Wed., Jan. 28th, 7-9 p.m. Bimonthly General Meeting: 6th Annual Environmentalists Rendezvous. The theme of our annual forum of local environmental activists this year is "Protectors of Our Sea and Shore." Meet the leaders of six organizations protecting our coast and ocean. In one evening and in one place, you can take advantage of a unique opportunity to hear representatives of all these groups discuss their efforts of the past year and plans for 2015, including the latest on the proposal to create a Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary on the Central Coast. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355. Meets at Steynberg Gallery, 1531 Monterey St., SLO. Info.: Joe Morris, 549-0355.

Th.-Sat., Jan. 29th-31st. Death Valley Wilderness Restoration. Join us in restoring wilderness in this remote, beautiful National Park, cleaning up a marijuana grow site. We will gather early Thursday afternoon work


on a project to be announced and then work on the grow site on Friday and possibly Saturday. Group size limited. Leader: Kate Allen, k.j.allen96@gmail.com or 661-944-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sat., Jan. 31st, 8 a.m. Vicente Flat/Big Sur Hike. Moderate, ten-mile, 1800 ft. gain hike in Ventana Wilderness of northern Los Padres Nat. Forest past redwood groves to great views of the Big Sur coast. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak on the trail. Bring water, lunch, and dress for the weather. Meet at the Washburn Day Use area of San Simeon State Park, on Hwy 1, 1.7 miles north of fourth stop light (Main and Windsor) in Cambria. Rain or possibility of rain cancels. Leader: Chuck Tribbey, 441-7597.

Sun., Feb. 1st, 9 a.m. Lopez Lake Bird and Plant Walk. Four-mile hike, 200 ft. gain, co-led by Audubon and Calif. Native Plant Society leaders, to view waterfowl and early spring wildflowers. Option to continue hike to top of Duna Vista lookout. Bring water, snacks, hat, sunscreen, sturdy shoes, and dress in layers for changing weather. From Arroyo Grande, follow signs toward Lopez Lake. After crossing the dam, but before entering Lopez Lake County Park, turn right on Hi Mountain Rd, continuing for .8 mile and turning left on Upper Lopez Canyon Rd. Then proceed 3.6 miles to the old entrance of the Boy Scout Camp (now closed) and park on road side. Restrooms available; no fee



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.




The Sierra Club Needs You!

Become an Outings Leader

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

For further information contact:
Joe Morris
 Sierra Club
 (805) 549-0355
 dpj1942@earthlink.net



John Meier, a member of the Sierra Club, in Yosemite

area. Leader: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 or bill.waycott@gmail.com Rain or threat of rain cancels.

VOLUNTEER WEB GEEK WANTED

Do you know what DRUPAL is, and do you have any experience with it? If so, please get in touch! All Sierra Club chapter websites are transitioning to this new platform in the next few months, and our webmaster would be very grateful for your assistance. Please contact [Monica Tarzier at mt@tarzier.org](mailto:mt@tarzier.org)

Activities sponsored by other organizations

Sat., January 10th, 9:30 a.m. Citizens' Climate Lobby. Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2201 Lawton Ave, SLO. Join us and learn what you can do to slow climate change and make a difference in our community. Become a climate activist and part of the solution to the most pressing issue of our time. For information email: citizensclimatelobbyslo@gmail.com.

Sat., Jan. 10th, 1-3 p.m. Rain Water Catchment at the SLO Botanical Garden. Discover ways you can catch and save water for your home garden. In this course, Master Gardener Tami Reece will cover the collection and storage of harvested water for a residential garden. \$5 for Garden members, \$10 for non-members. Followed by a free docent-led tour of the Garden. Details at slobg.org/water. 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., SLO. 541-1400 x304.

Thurs., Jan. 15th, 22nd, 29th, 10 a.m. Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love. Come to St. Benedict's in Los Osos to join the ongoing dialog between religion and science. Discussion led by a team of scientists, theologians, artists, environmentalists, clergy and laity. Info: Donna Ross, donnaross@charter.net.

Sat., Jan. 17th, 1-3 p.m. The Chumash and Channel Island Ecology at the SLO Botanical Garden. Take a journey through time to the Channel Islands. What was life like for the Chumash people living there? What was the role of plants and animals in Channel Islands Chumash society? Archaeologist Mike Glassow will paint a picture from prehistory based on years of research on the Channel Islands. \$5 for Garden members, \$10 for non-members. Followed by a free docent-led tour of the Garden. Details at slobg.org/Chumash. 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., SLO. 541-1400 x304.

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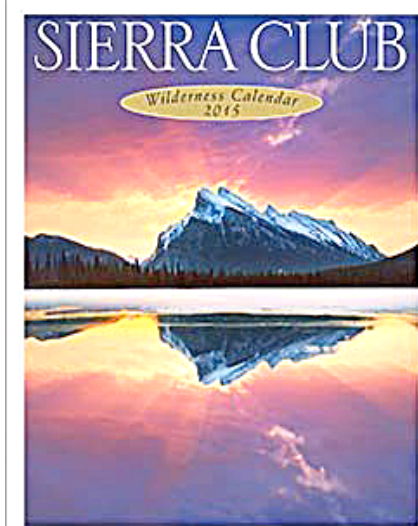
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