



SIERRA  
CLUB

January 2009  
Volume 46 No. 1

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### General Meeting

#### Coming Up:

#### An Energy Town Hall in Morro Bay

watch for  
announcements!

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# SANTA LUCIAN



Protecting and  
Preserving the  
Central Coast

The official newsletter of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club • San Luis Obispo County, California

## Why We Need No Nukes

It would cost several trillion dollars and require multiple nonexistent permanent waste repository sites to accommodate the five new reactors per year, every year, for the next 50 years, that would be necessary for nuclear power to make any significant reduction in the U.S. carbon footprint.

If this doesn't seem like a likely or desirable scenario, you'll be glad to know it's also not necessary.

On October 29th, the Cal Poly Chapter of the Sierra Student Coalition and Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility presented "California's Carbon-Free Energy Future: Options and Opportunities," a talk by Arjun Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research in Maryland.

An electrical engineer and Fellow of the American Physical Society with a specialty in nuclear fusion, Makhijani told the audience that he once believed that nuclear power was necessary to get off our fossil-fueled road to hell. After studying the issue, he no longer does.

Makhijani focused much of his talk on the infeasibility of reliance on nuclear power to get to a carbon-free future powered by clean, alternative energy.

Asking rhetorically "When did it become sexy to boil water by sticking radioactive rods in a pot?" and giving succinct advice to the renewable-averse: ("Don't like the view of windmills? Deal with it"), he made a timely economic analogy to the financial meltdown: "Calling nuclear power 'sub-prime energy' is being generous to nukes." He noted the exorbitant subsidies and high real

### Is SLO Prepared for Diablo Canyon's Closure?

The ground is shifting under  
California's nuke plants

By Rochelle Becker, Alliance for  
Nuclear Responsibility

PG&E announced the discovery of a new earthquake fault—1,800 feet offshore from the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant—at the November 20th hearing of the California Energy Commission, as they met to approve a cost/benefit and risk analysis of the state's dependence on aging reactors. The result of PG&E's disclosure was stronger seismic recommendations by the CEC for new studies and mapping at both



Arjun Makhijani detailed a plan for a carbon-free, nuclear-free future to a Cal Poly audience.

costs required to produce a kilowatt of nuclear-generated energy, and that a single 1000-megawatt reactor consumes 10 to 20 million gallons of water a day. His bottom line: Coal and nuclear power can and should be

phased out of the electricity sector simultaneously.

He dismissed the popular myth that France has solved the problem of

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## Our Environment, Energy & Climate Plan for Obama

On November 25, the Sierra Club and 28 other environmental, conservation, and science groups released a detailed roadmap, "Transition to Green: Leading the way to a healthy environment, green economy, and sustainable future," for the incoming administration of President-Elect Barack Obama. (Read it at [www.saveourevironment.org](http://www.saveourevironment.org)).

The document lays out a detailed vision for action across the federal government during the first 100 days and beyond, highlights the environmental community's top priorities and offers an agency-by-agency set of policy prescriptions. The plan, which was given to President-Elect Obama's transition team, sets out bold measures that will channel America's ingenuity into solving the entwined economic, climate, and environmental crises.

"Our country and our new president are facing an almost unprecedented

set of challenges," said Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope.

"President-Elect Obama has shown unprecedented leadership in the face of these challenges and has charted a course that will put Americans back to work, put our economy back on track, and make the clean energy future a reality. Our community has risen to the occasion and come together with this plan so that we can help the Obama administration achieve these critical goals as soon as possible."

In addition to the exhaustive set of recommendations contained in the community's joint action plan, Sierra Club has worked with some of the world's top climate scientists, engineers, and energy experts to develop a Climate Recovery Agenda that will help our economy recover, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, cut carbon

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photo/Karen 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.

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

# What Lies Beneath

by Ralph Bishop, Nipomo Creek Dogs

For decades, we Creek Dogs have walked the watershed of Nipomo Creek in search of agate, never knowing that concealed beneath our feet were contaminate plumes of petroleum.

Our hearts were saddened as the song of the lark was silenced in the meadow and the ker-plops of the frogs no longer preceded our footfalls at every pool in the creek. We wonder now if the petroleum leaks that have occurred since an oil pipeline was placed along Nipomo Creek in 1906 might have contributed to the silent springs in what used to be a vibrant stream of life.

In 2003, Conoco, while repairing their modern line, discovered a substantial contaminate plume. To their credit, they reported it to County Environmental Health Services.

Conoco hired Terra Pacific, an environmental engineering firm, to investigate the impact of the contaminate. Testing began in December 2003, just below the Dana Adobe.

To the public, mum was the word, and only a few landowners and county employees had knowledge of these

issues impacting community safety, water quality and ecological detriment. They remained silent for years.

In the summer of 2006, a good Samaritan came to know of his community's "Ox in the ditch," and decided not to stand mute.

Creek Dog Daniel Diaz bought a car from a Conoco employee in Bakersfield. During the pre-sale banter, the employee asked "So what do you think of your oil spill?" Diaz said "What oil spill?," at which point the employee clammed up, knowing he had let the skunk out of the bag.

Daniel, being a no-nonsense guy, said "You do want to sell this car, don't you?" and the story was soon forthcoming, with the comment "Everybody in Bakersfield knows about it."

In August 2006, Mr. Diaz told the story to Fred Collins of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, who took it to KSBY and Tony Cipolla on the 6 o'clock news.

Terra Pacific published a very limited edition of their investigative report in January 2007, and the Creek

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# Go Big

As you can see by our front page, the Sierra Club has a lot of advice for our new president.

If you go to the listed website and read the exhaustive document that we sent the Obama administration along with two dozen other environmental organizations, the words "pent up" might occur to you. Eight years of destruction, inaction, collusion with polluters, suppression and distortion of science, beating down of regulators and aggressive stupidity on the part of the Bush administration certainly contributes to one's to-do list.

Likewise, for the past five months, the Santa Lucia Chapter has had a lot to say to San Luis Obispo County's incoming Board of Supervisors, for many of the same reasons. We've been saying it in a five-part series in the pages of *New Times*. (If you missed any of our "Messages to the New Board," go to [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org) and click on the feature by that name). It consists of advice and counsel on the policies needed to bring about affordable housing, smart growth, food security, clean energy and real protections for ag land — none of them possible or implementable under the late, unlamented old board.

Our final advice to the new board before it's seated are the two words at the top of this column — the same advice that *In These Times* senior editor David Sirota gave Barack Obama in the December issue of that publication. "That is not merely the better way," Sirota added, "it is the only way," pointing to Franklin D. Roosevelt's commitment to "direct, vigorous action" in his 1933 inaugural address.

Counseling against this advice, we have Robert J. Samuelson, *Newsweek* magazine's conservative economic commentator, who, in that magazine's December 8 issue, warned the new president against creating "conflict" and "uncertainty" if he strays from the status quo. Bold

moves in areas such as energy will be "complicated, controversial and contentious" and "create massive uncertainties for businesses" and "bruising legislative battles [that] will not bolster confidence."

Instead, Samuelson counsels "reviving the economy and relieving the financial crisis" — unaware that fast, bold action to curb global warming is what will be required to do just that.

A new economy, not a "stabilized" resurrection of the one that just failed, will be a green-collar economy. As noted by the Apollo Alliance and Green for All, "the American Solar Energy Society estimates that in 2006 alone, renewable energy and energy efficiency were responsible for \$970 billion in industry revenues and 8.5 million jobs. This number will grow exponentially if our nation commits itself in earnest to reducing carbon emissions and making economy-wide improvements in energy efficiency."

While it is tempting — and basically correct — to think of Mr. Samuelson as a relic of a bygone era, along with George Will, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board and the rest of the wrong-way wrecking crew whose "free market good/government regulation bad" fantasy world collapsed with Wall Street, none of them are actually likely to be going away any time soon. A lack of ideas and credibility does not, alas, equate with a lack of financing or an audience. The loyal opposition will do everything in its power to curb, hobble and hamstring this administration and this Congress, warning loudly of the dire perils of taking action.

In our neck of the woods, we can expect plenty of local R. Samuelsons to pour forth their concerns to the new Board of Supervisors should it show any inclination to take up the challenges before it in a meaningful way. The economic special interests

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## SANTA LUCIAN

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The *Santa Lucian* is published 10 times a year. Articles, environmental information and letters to the editor are welcome. The deadline for each issue is the 11th of the prior month.

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### Santa Lucia Chapter

#### 2009 Executive Committee

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**Steven Marx**  
TREASURER

**Melody DeMeritt**  
MEMBER

**Linda Seeley**  
MEMBER

**Cal French**  
COUNCIL OF CLUB LEADERS

The Executive Committee meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 2:30 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 547-B Marsh St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

### Committee Chairs

**Political**  
Chuck Tribbey

**Conservation**  
Sue Harvey [lfSusan@tcsn.net](mailto:lfSusan@tcsn.net)

### Membership

Cal French

### Litigation

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### Water Task Force

Jack Morrow

### Other Leaders

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Bonnie Walters 805-543-7051

**Chapter History**  
John Ashbaugh 805-541-6430

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## Change of Address?

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85 Second Street, 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441

### or e-mail:

[address.changes@sierraclub.org](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org)

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Outings, events, and more!

# Let's Get it Right

## Los Osos Sewer

The Draft Environmental Impact Report for the largest public works project in the county's history, the Los Osos Wastewater project, was released by the County in November.

This document, and the public comments received on it, will determine the nature of the project that is ultimately selected and built, on which depends the fate of a watershed, an aquifer, a National Estuary, a State Marine Reserve, and a community of 15,000.

Local environmental groups met with the County's Los Osos Wastewater Project Team on December 19 to discuss the Draft EIR in relation to the "Statement of Key Environmental Issues for the Collection System of the Los Osos Wastewater Treatment Project," drafted by Surfrider, Sierra Club, SLO Green Build et al and presented to the Board of Supervisors in September. (Go to [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org) and click on the link.)

Our KEI statement focused on a comparison of the two primary competing technologies for what will constitute the project's single greatest expense: The collection system that will convey wastewater to a treatment plant. We weighed the environmental impacts and benefits of a gravity system versus a STEP/STEG system. On every one of five major points of impact comparisons – groundwater protection, sewage spills, construction



The biggest water and energy projects in SLO county need to meet the goals of water reclamation and zero discharge, and avoid triggering the extinction of species like the endangered San Joaquin kit fox (right) while ostensibly saving them from the impacts of global warming.



and installation, Native American cultural sites and energy use — STEP came out the clear winner. It was a showing all the more impressive in light of the County engineering consultant's previous estimate that STEP would also be about \$20 million cheaper than a gravity system.

Our KEI statement is largely at odds with the evident technology bias of the Draft Environmental Impact Report, which proposes four potential

projects, three based on gravity collection, only one utilizing STEP collection, and selects one of the gravity projects as the "environmentally preferred alternative."

But the document's clearest deficiency comes in the disconnect between the DEIR's assertion that reclamation and reuse of water and the recharge of the aquifer are key

## Carrizo Solar Projects

There are attractive aspects to Ausra's Carrizo Energy Solar Farm Project (CESF), the proposal working its way through the permitting process at the California Energy Commission. The solar-thermal technology has the potential to store solar power as heat energy, ending the roadblock that has long been set in the path of solar power, limiting the usefulness of energy that's only available when the sun is shining. And solar thermal energy is generated at 20-40 percent efficiency, compared to the 15-22 percent efficiency of traditional solar photovoltaic panels.

But no matter how good an idea it is to get more solar power into the energy grid – and thereby less of the coal, gas, and radioactive variety — when it comes to siting solar power plants, the primary concern is the same as for any other type of power plant, and matches the realtor's mantra: Location, location, location.

The Ausra project is the first out of the gate in a race to place at least three solar facilities in the same area, just north of Carrizo Plain National Monument. How this project is handled, and the environmental protections required of it, will determine the course of review for all subsequent projects here.

The Carrizo Plain is a biological treasure house for rare, threatened

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## Grading the Coastal Commission

Chapter meets with NOAA and Coastal Commission Staff

Staff from the California Coastal Commission and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) dropped by the Santa Lucia Chapter office in SLO on December 9.

NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management was between public hearings held that week in Southern and Northern California as part of the periodic federal performance evaluation of the effectiveness of coastal management programs. They stopped off in SLO to get the local environmental community's take on the Coastal Commission's recent conservation record.

The wide-ranging discussion covered the Commission's role in the multiple regulatory failures and ongoing environmental desecration at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, the failure to require mitigation for the massive marine impacts incurred by the replacement of the steam generators at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, and the political skullduggery attempted by elected officials to jiggle the Commission's membership in an effort to allow Pebble Beach Co. to build a golf course that would decimate the last large stand of native Monterey Pines in the world.

The Commission's slashed budgets and reduced staff and resulting critical backlog and delays in permit processing, enforcement actions and



Left to right: Bob Vessely of Pt. San Luis Lighthouse Keepers, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management Director Leslie-Ann McGee, Matt Gove of NOAA, SLO CoastKeeper Gordon Hensley and Congresswoman Lois Capps' District Aide Greg Haas make themselves comfortable at the Sierra Club's Santa Lucia Chapter office for the SLO portion of NOAA's Coastal Commission performance evaluation.

Local Coastal Plan reviews was a major topic of discussion, along with the enormous influence of industry lobbyists and the need for increased federal funding for state coastal programs.

The Sierra Club presented Chris McKay, head of NOAA's National Policy & Evaluation Center, with a copy of the latest California Coastal

Commission Conservation Voting Chart, including the extremely poor conservation voting record of Commissioner Katcho Achadjian — 11 percent, dead last among all Coastal Commissioners — as tracked by the Sierra Club, CoastKeeper Alliance, Surfrider, the League for Coastal Protection and the California Coastal Protection Network.

## COSE: Your most important reading assignment of 2009

The update of the County's Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) -- essentially the master plan for all environmental planning in San Luis Obispo -- is now underway.

The County has released the draft for public review and comment. The web link at [www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning) will take you to the website where several COSE-related documents can be viewed and downloaded.

Comments on the draft COSE are due by **February 27. Send to:**

County Dept. Planning and Building  
1050 Monterey Street,  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408  
Attn: James Caruso, Senior Planner  
Email: [jcaruso@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:jcaruso@co.slo.ca.us)

### Public workshops:

January 6, 2009 3:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
Slo Vet's Hall Lounge (801 Grand Ave)  
January 8, 2009 3:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
Arroyo Grande City Council (E. Branch St)  
January 14, 2009 5:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
Paso Robles City Council (1000 Spring St)  
4th workshop TBA.

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# Sludging Toward SLO

December 1, 2008

Rich Lichtenfels  
Environmental Health Services  
San Luis Obispo County  
2156 Sierra Way  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Dear Mr. Lichtenfels,

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club is writing to submit comments on the draft "Ordinance to Establish Regulations for the Land Application of Biosolids/Treated Sewage Sludge."

While we appreciate the efforts of the Environmental Health Service Division, we share many of the same concerns raised by the Center for Sludge Information (CSI), as outlined by David Broadwater in his memo of November 3, 2008.

Specifically, we note that the proposed draft is not consistent with the direction provided by the Board of Supervisors on March, 12, 2002, to draft a permanent ordinance consistent with the recommendations of the Sewage Sludge Land Application Task Force (SSLATF).

In addition to the comments provided in the CSI memo, the Sierra Club would also recommend that any final ordinance include a cap on the

amount of biosolids that would be allowed annually, rather than allowing for carryover of any allowable amount that was not distributed in previous calendar years.

Exposure standards in the draft ordinance do not appear to bear any relationship to, or to be based on, dose-response relationships and an understanding of pathways to exposure. The prohibition against land application for food crops in which the edible portion of the plants may come into contact with the sludge does not seem to take into account the uptake of sludge pathogens through the roots of crops. Establishing a limit of five applications to a parcel is not a substitute for the establishment of an actual numeric cap on cumulative levels of pathogens and heavy metals.

Environmental Health Services has ruled out alternatives to land application as having an unfavorable "cost/benefit ratio" without establishing what the costs and benefits would be. We urge EHS to follow the directive it was given by the Board of Supervisors to provide a thorough analysis of alternatives. This analysis should include a comparison of the cost of

**Extension of Comment Period on Sewage Sludge Land Application Ordinance.** The comment period on this draft ordinance has been extended to February 1, 2009. Comments may be submitted by mail or e-mail to:  
**Rich Lichtenfels, REHS**  
**Public Health Department**  
**Environmental Health Services Division**  
**2156 Sierra Way**  
**San Luis Obispo CA 93406**

alternatives to the benefits of avoiding the ruined farms, degraded human health, dead livestock, and disrupted aquatic ecosystems that have been documented nationwide in the wake of the land application of sewage sludge.

Troubling information concerning the methods and data used by the EPA to set the federal standards for land application of sludge are now coming to light. We urge the EHS to follow the progress of hearings on sewage sludge disposal, scheduled to be held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW), and to incorporate the

information from those hearings into the text of the final ordinance.

We support the comments by CSI, which conclude that the county should either assert local control over sewer sludge land application by way of a comprehensive ordinance that is clear and enforceable, or it should move quickly to prohibit the land application of sewage sludge outright.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Karen Merriam*

Karen Merriam  
Chapter Chair

**Update:** The County Health Commission has called the proposed regulations for land application of sewage sludge inadequate and urged the County to analyze "all feasible methods of sewage sludge disposal (including energy production) and related impacts on human health and the environment...before a permanent ordinance is considered."

## What Lies Beneath

*continued from page 2*



Volunteer Coordinator Shaba Mohseni (left) introduces volunteers Evy Justesen and Linda Brownson to the wonders of the Sierra Club database as Community Development

Dogs, with great difficulty, obtained a copy. Here's the gist: The contaminate plume is larger than a football field and approximately 20 feet thick in the vertical sediments column. The most disturbing fact: The petroleum is only two feet beneath the active channel of Nipomo Creek, waiting to be uncorked with the next storm surge and flow all the way to the ocean. We have

photo documented accelerated erosion patterns four to eight feet long, 200 yards up the creek from the plume and working their way down, thanks to massive debris jams (see "Caught in the Black Web," March 2008) and plastic net "bio logs" that cause storm surge blow outs. The erosion of the clay layer that is the only thing between the creek and the

petroleum plume is not a matter of if, but when.

We have praised the Regional Water Board for taking action on this, requiring Conoco to come up with a plan ASAP to fix the immediate problem. We urge the board to find out what else might be leaking throughout the length of that 1906 pipeline.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Opportunities to volunteer abound at the Santa Lucia Chapter:

**Bookkeeper:** Make deposits, simple bookkeeping chores, and assist the Treasurer. 4 hours a month.

**Database Technician:** Enter donors, new members, and event/meeting participants into HELEN, the Sierra Club's national database. Create queries to find existing contacts.

**Fundraising Committee:** Identify what sources of funding are available and which ones will fit best with the Santa Lucia Chapter; make basic plan for the sources and programs; identify volunteers for implementation.

**Education Outreach Committee:** *Tablers* - Present at Sierra Club booth and special & ongoing events. *Program Coordinator* - Help coordinate monthly Chapter meetings, select topics and speakers.

For more information, call Linda, 543-8717, Mon.-Tues. 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., or write to [brownson.linda403@gmail.com](mailto:brownson.linda403@gmail.com)

## Sand Mines & Salinas

### How much is too much?

*by Sue Harvey, President, North County Watch*

The lame-duck County Board of Supervisors has granted a Conditional Use Permit to Paul Viborg for a sand mine on the Estrella River, overturning a denial by the Planning commission.

The Planning Commission decision was based on the demonstrable inadequacy of the project's environmental review. Numerous documents from various agencies have demonstrated the need for, at minimum, a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report.

The long-term health of the watershed resource requires a Specific Plan for the Salinas River Watershed. The county has an obligation to consider the cumulative impacts that might be associated with all of the applications for sand mines.

The courts have found that projects that are undergoing environmental review are reasonably probable future projects. We conclude that any future project where the applicant has devoted significant time and financial resources to prepare for any regula-

tory review should be considered as a probable future project for the purposes of evaluating cumulative impact.

In the unincorporated areas of the Salinas River Planning Area, there are at least four sand and gravel mining operations along the Salinas River. Others, such as Union Asphalt on the Huer Huero, are on tributaries within the Salinas River watershed. Still others operate within the Paso Robles and Atascadero City boundaries. The four operations on the river outside the cities -- Templeton/Ormonde, Miller, Nesbitt, and Smith -- are located within a several mile stretch of the river in Templeton.

Three of the four mines are currently extracting resources. The total of known permitted and applied-for annual gravel removal clustered around San Miguel is 492,000 annual cubic yards.

What has yet to be determined is the actual remaining volume of sand resources that can be extracted from the watershed.

### Where the Wild Things Aren't

(In November 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. Navy could continue sonar testing regardless of the impact on migrating whales on the Pacific Coast)

*They say the sonar stays to detect enemy submarines, deep-diving machines that do not suckle their young do not sing elaborate songs don't breach and slap their tails do not have sperm oil to light lanterns, or whalebone carved into fanciful shapes by ancient mariners.*

*The whales must live disoriented, perhaps dumbstruck, or leave our Pacific Coast, a place where wild things aren't.*

- Judith Amber  
November 16, 2008



**We Need No Nukes**  
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nuclear waste by recycling the fuel from their nuclear reactors — “a statement that’s less than one percent true” — and said that attempting to kick-start a nuclear renaissance while simultaneously warning the world against nuclear proliferation is a doomed effort, noting that “The days when the U.S. could say ‘do as I say, not as I do’ are dead.”

Instead, Makhijani urged an achievable mandate of zero net CO2 emissions in new buildings and communities by 2020 and cited case studies where the energy footprint of houses have been cut by 85 percent even in cold weather climates.

We need to move away from “the 100-year-old model of doing things” in electricity generation and distribution, he said, and get to a smart grid that deploys natural gas and hydro-electric power differently, uses plug-in hybrid electric vehicles as a Distributed Energy Resource and coordi-

nates wind and solar energy input to balance availability of those power sources at their complementary peak times. (“Wind often blows at night, making it very advantageous to join wind and solar development in a way that would reduce costs for the same reliability.”)

Makhijani’s Institute for Energy and Environmental Research has produced the first diagram of what a renewable, distributed grid would look like. “We’d be happy to sit down with anyone in California and get this done,” he said.

Writing on the alleged nuclear resurgence in the April 18, 2008, *Baltimore Sun*, Dr. Gwen DuBois concluded “As in medicine, when a treatment is associated with rare but serious complications, we choose safer alternatives. Increased energy efficiency, conservation, solar and wind power are the safer alternatives.”

Makhijani’s plan to achieve a carbon and nuclear-free U.S. energy system by 2050, along with news reports and case studies, can be downloaded at [www.ieer.org/carbonfree/](http://www.ieer.org/carbonfree/).

# GE Corn Survey Update

by Jesse Arnold

According to Cal Poly’s Dr. Jeff Wong, Cal Poly is growing Bt corn this year. Bt corn has been genetically engineered by the Monsanto Corporation to produce the toxin *Bacillus thuringiensis* to kill the corn earworm. The corn is registered with the EPA as a pesticide.

Wong would not say where the Bt corn would be sold and would not agree to label it. Cal Poly could sell its unlabeled Bt corn at a farmers market.

Cal Poly has been selling what the student vendors say is conventional corn at the SLO farmers market. How do we know the conventional corn has not been contaminated by Cal Poly’s Bt corn and Round-Up Ready silage corn?

Your safest option when buying corn from Cal Poly is to inquire if it comes from the organic farm.

If you think Cal Poly should accurately label whatever kind of corn it is selling, call Crops Department head Dr. John Peterson at 756-1237, or head of genetically engineered crops Dr. Jeff Wong at 756-2428.

# On Smokoska Time

Herewith, a week in the life of Ken Smokoska, the Chapter’s Community Development Coordinator and chair of Sierra Club California Energy & Climate Change Committee:

On December 3, Ken went to San Francisco to discuss the creation of a workforce for education and training for a green economy. The multi-agency task force meeting, hosted by the Public Utilities Commission and California Energy Commission, was attended by the state’s four private utilities, municipal utilities, community colleges, the University of California, Apollo Alliance, workforce investment board, labor unions, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Ken swung back to SLO in time for our Energy Town Hall the night of December 3rd, where he spoke with a KSBY reporter for the evening news.

On December 5th and 6th, Ken attended a solar training for SLO county schools. A \$75,000 grant from the Irvine Foundation will make possible a program for the development of vocational training in green jobs, involving Atascadero Unified and other county school districts, Cuesta College, Cal Poly, REC solar, Ausra, OptiSolar and Solarponics.

Also on December 5th, Ken met with the director and deputy director of communications for Lt. Governor John Garamendi – who is a trustee of CSU and the University of California, and chair of the State Lands Commission and the Commission on Economic Development. The Lt. Governor will keynote “Focus the Nation” on February 5th, of which Ken is a key organizer, as he was last year. Ken suggested fellowships for student leaders to work on economic development for a green economy, and briefed the Lt. Governor’s staff on the “Behavior, Energy and Climate Change” conference that he attended in Sacramento over November 17-19, hosted by Stanford and the University of California.

Mr. Smokoska is our favorite source of alternative energy.

## SLO GE Free 2008 Corn Survey

By Jesse Arnold

Genetically engineered Bt corn was developed by the Monsanto Corporation. It is created by inserting into the DNA of the corn a gene from a bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* which produces a toxin that kills the corn earworm. Bt corn is registered with the EPA as a pesticide, but approved by the Food and Drug Administration for human consumption and no labeling is required.

| Growing & Selling   | Chaparral Gardens         | Clear Farm            | Chesborough Farm | Clark Valley Farm    | Hansen Valley Farm | Jack Creek Farm | Mt Olive Organic Farm      | Overts Greens | Park Organic   | State Farms |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| Are you growing genetically engineered (GMO) corn, also known as Roundup Ready corn?                                | No                        | No                    | No               | No                   | No                 | No              | No                         | No            | No             | No          |
| If you are growing genetically engineered corn, are you labeling your corn as genetically engineered (GMO)?         |                           |                       |                  |                      |                    |                 |                            |               |                |             |
| Are you growing certified organic corn?   | Yes                       | Yes                   | No               | Yes                  | Yes                | No              | Yes                        | No            | Yes            | No          |
| If you are growing certified organic corn, are you labeling your corn as certified organic?                         | Yes                       | Yes                   | No               | Yes                  | No                 |                 | Yes                        |               | No             |             |
| Do you sell your corn at market?  | At a local farmers market | CSA subscription farm | Farm stand       | Farmers market & CSA | CSA                | Farm stand      | Farmers market, Farm stand |               | Farmers market | Farm stand  |
| Contamination Concerns  |                           |                       |                  |                      |                    |                 |                            |               |                |             |
| Are you aware that genetically engineered corn is being grown at two locations in San Luis Obispo County?           | Yes                       | Yes                   |                  | Yes                  | Yes                | Yes             | No                         | No            | Yes            | No          |
| Are you concerned that genetically engineered corn being grown in the County might contaminate your field or seeds? | Yes                       | Yes                   | Yes              | Yes                  | Yes                | Unsure          | Yes                        | Yes           | Yes            | No          |

**Correction:** In the SLO GE Free 2008 Corn Survey (October 2008 Santa Lucian), Chesborough Farm did not answer the question “Are you concerned that genetically engineered corn being grown in the county might contaminate your field or seeds?”



*I have a Dream.....*

Local Musicians performing:  
Louie Ortega,  
The Shival Experience,  
Guy Budd,  
Bob and Wendy,  
Maheyla & the Ritual  
and  
An All-Star Music Jam



The 14th Annual  
**SHARING THE DREAM**  
Concert & Cultural Art Festival  
Celebrating  
*The Dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

**Music, Art, Poetry,  
Local Speakers &  
Historic Films**



Date: Jan. 17th  
Time: 11am -5pm  
Where: Laguna Middle School  
(Los Osos Valley Rd., San Luis Obispo)

General Admission Donation \$10  
Students and Children Free.

Lunch from Bon Temps Creole Cafe  
will be served at \$5 a plate.













**INFORMATION PRESS**

Sharing the Dream  
Contact us at:  
EMail: [SharingTheDream@KCBX.net](mailto:SharingTheDream@KCBX.net)  
Mail: Sharing the Dream PO Box 5403, San Luis Obispo, Ca. 93403  
Phone #: 805.784.9410

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(888) 550-9340

The primary objectives and purposes of this corporation shall be to promote through the arts the celebration and importance for all Americans of any race, color, creed, cultural background, sex or sexual orientation, to celebrate the nationally recognized King Holiday Weekend as well as Black History Month and support programs that promote community service, non-violence, teaching tolerance, and helping at-risk youth.

# SLO Powers Up

## An energy town hall

Last December, the City of San Luis Obispo had just become the first city in the county to complete a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, the crucial first step toward developing a climate action plan.

It was the perfect time to champion the idea of a local renewable energy economy. So we did, with an Energy Town Hall, sponsored by the Santa Lucia Chapter and held at SLO's Steynberg Gallery on the evening of December 3rd.

San Luis Obispo's accomplishment was a major focus of the event, with City Councilpersons Jan Marx, John Ashbaugh and Andrew Carter in attendance and engaging in conversation with the capacity crowd about our shared energy future.

A presentation on the City's greenhouse gas inventory from Cal Poly Graduate student Geoffrey Chiapella was a highlight, followed by an interactive workshop led by former leaders of the Empower Poly Coalition and current Sierra Club interns Chad

Worth and Nancy Cole.

The audience learned the basics about current and upcoming state energy policies. Their responses to questions about what they want to see happen as a



Energy Town Hall organizers Chad Worth (above right) and Nancy Cole (above) working the crowd.

community in shaping a future in which local energy is clean, affordable and secure were collected and tabulated for presentation at a future SLO City Council meeting.

**SLO ENERGY TOWN HALL**

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

|                            |        |  |
|----------------------------|--------|--|
|                            | 7:00pm | Energy and Our Future: What's hot in California? |
| Jan Marx and John Ashbaugh | 7:15pm | San Luis Obispo: What's the City up to?          |
| Geoffrey Chiapella         | 7:30pm | Community Strategies: What's your role?          |
| Chad Worth and Nancy Cole  | 8:00pm | Workshop: What's your vision?                    |
|                            | 8:30pm | Closing  |

Now is the time for San Luis Obispo to champion the local renewable energy economy!

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**ENERGY TOWN HALL**

**YOUR COMMUNITY! YOUR CHOICE! YOUR VOICE!**

**STEYNBERG GALLERY**  
1531 MONTEREY ST  
WEDNESDAY, DEC 3RD  
7:00PM TO 8:30PM

Hors d'oeuvres and light refreshments will be provided.

For more info, contact Chad Worth, [ceworth@sierraclub.org](mailto:ceworth@sierraclub.org)

## Silence and Santa Margarita

### Developer lap dogs heel, fetch and roll over but don't speak

Over the course of four long meetings on November 18 and December 16, 19 and 23, County Supervisor Katcho Achadjian and lame duck incumbents Harry Ovitt and Jerry Lenthall sat silently rather than discuss the Santa Margarita Ranch project's multiple violations of the County's General Plan and the failure of the project's Environmental Impact Report to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

As a parade of wildlife and resource agency and planning staff professionals laid out the problems and painted a painfully clear picture of a project that was simply unapprovable as designed, these three supervisors did not engage the issues. They only came to life in order to tweak trivia ("putting lipstick on the Titanic" as Supervisor Bruce Gibson dryly observed) and as necessary to vote against any motion that would take the time necessary to actually review the project, its Environmental Impact Report or the torrent of last-minute developer-written conditions and deleted mitigation measures, or any attempt to work out a compromise on a project that could be built without incurring numerous violations.

Throughout, Katcho and his two chums sat like Easter Island stone heads. On this development's unprecedented size and number of environmental impacts, they just had nothing

to say.

At the end of it, the Three Amigos found their tongues just long enough to vote "yes" to issue a permit for the project as proposed. Immediately after the vote, Achadjian suggested a private chat with the ranch owners about amending the General Plan, a gambit that would pave the way for even more future development at Santa Margarita but which allowed him to adopt the pose of a concerned elected official willing to sit down and try to work things out -- despite having voted against every proposal to actually do so, and then voting in favor of an act of ultimate civic irresponsibility. (After his vote in November to tentatively approve the project, Achadjian told *New Times* that he might have changed his vote "before we got so passionately attacked." That's right: Katcho attempted to blame his deafness to the facts and his terrible vote on *the people who protested his deafness to facts and his terrible vote.*)

#### Get Out Your Checkbooks

For the sake of this land and future land use planning in SLO County, the Santa Margarita permit and the precedent it sets must not stand. The violations are obvious, the record is clear, and a court needs to bring the weight of the law to bear.

North County Watch has taken the lead in preparing the litigation necessary to right the enormous wrong done by K. Achadjian and the lame-duck board of '08.

Justice won't come cheap. You need to give now, and give like your quality of life depends on it.

Send your tax-deductible contribution to:

North County Watch  
P.O. Box 455  
Templeton, CA 93465



Laid at their feet: "Shoes of shame" were dumped before Achadjian, Lenthall and Ovitt at the Dec. 19 County Board of Supervisors meeting on Santa Margarita Ranch.

## Pole Cats Can Turn You Into a Quadruped, Part 2

By David Georgi, Pole Cats Leader

*Previously: "Pole Cats" is a Santa Lucia Sierra Club group dedicated to demonstrating optimal use of trekking poles on easy day hikes. In part one (Nov./Dec), skeptical trekking pole user Greg had reluctantly agreed to give the poles a try while hiking Kauai's Alkali Swamp with the author and found that they helped in negotiating uneven trail stairs and a stream crossing involving algae-covered stepping stones.*

"Okay, I'm starting to see how these things can be useful," Greg said. They really helped going up and down the stairs and this stream would have been scary without them."

We finally reached our objective, an overlook above the Na Pali coast. Clouds at first obscured the view, but soon began opening and offering brief glimpses of the jewel-like ocean and verdant valleys below. We took in the beauty around us while enjoying some trail mix and a long drink of water.

On the way back, we ascended and descended the flights of stairs in reverse order. Seeing that Greg's attitude toward poles was improving, I sought opportunities to elicit positive perceptions from his personal experience as a strong skier. On one strenuous uphill stretch, I asked if he could apply any techniques from using ski poles. He sarcastically responded between exhausted breaths, "I don't often ski uphill." I decided not to pursue the issue.

By the time we neared the trailhead, Greg said, "You know, I don't think I could have made it without these poles." He didn't ask for any pointers, however. Weeks later, he told me he purchased a set of his own. And, yes, Greg and I are still friends.

Greg's response to trekking poles is common. Most people assume you can use them intuitively. I have found



that to use poles optimally, training is needed to develop appropriate muscle memory. Then you can realize such benefits as:

- \* Using all muscle groups for more endurance, strength, stability and efficiency
- \* Getting a full body workout and cardiac conditioning
- \* Reducing injuries and impact on hips and knees
- \* Increasing fat burning

Recent technical advancements make poles high-tech hardware. To optimize these advances, the appropriate software is needed. Physical therapist Jayah Faye Paley has developed a training program that includes a number of skill sets to develop muscle memory that allows optimal pole usage.

When I first bought some poles, I assumed anyone could use them instinctively. One day, I forgot them at the trailhead after a hike and decided to replace them. Looking through a recreational equipment catalog, I noticed Paley's training DVD for poles. I ordered it on a whim and upon watching it immediately saw that I was doing everything wrong, including potentially harmful practices. I began practicing using individual skill sets on my hikes and found that my muscles could develop proper memory after applying the training principles for several miles of hiking. It took me about six months

*continued next page*

# Water Futures

**Water Watch**  
Atascadero Mutual Water Company November 2008

**Freezing Temperatures can Freeze your Pipes!**

When the temperature is freezing outside, there is a chance your pipes could freeze unless you have taken some precautions to prevent it. Following are some suggestions that could help prevent your pipes from freezing and possible bursting:

- Wrap all exterior pipes with insulation.
- Turn off any exterior water that you will not be using this winter.
- Drain any exterior lines you will not need to use, such as irrigation lines.

Never leave hoses if your pipes are frozen, as a leak could have developed in your pipes and may not be detectable until after the pipes thaw.

If you are planning to leave town when temperatures could dip into the freezing range, you may want to shut the water service at your house off. This could prevent flooding in your home, not to mention a large water bill, if a pipe freezes and breaks while you're gone. If your house is equipped with fire sprinklers, consult with a fire protection consultant before turning the water off!

For free or low cost AVHC, at 466-2629 if you have questions regarding freezing pipes.

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**FREE WORKSHOP**  
**Living With a Gray Water System in Your Home**  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3RD, 6-8PM  
ATASCADERO LAKE PAVILION

Art Ludwig of Oasis Design will cover designing, permitting, installing, maintaining and living with a gray water system in your home.

Art Ludwig is an ecological systems designer with 27 years full time experience in water, wastewater, energy, climate and low water potential concepts. His specialty is complex, integrated systems of systems. Art has studied and worked in 22 different countries, consulted for the state of New York and New Mexico on water reuse policy, and given dozens of lectures and workshops.

For More Information Contact: JESSICA@SEMMECSO.COM OR 803-466-6737 X203  
Brought to you by: The Appropriate Technology Coalition of San Luis Obispo County (combined local offices of SLO Green Build, Surfrider, and Sierra Club), Atascadero Mutual Water Company, and the City of Atascadero.

**What is gray water?**  
Any water that has been used in the house, except water from toilets, is called gray water. Dishes, showers, sinks, and laundry water comprise 50-80% of residential "waste" water. This may be reused for other purposes, especially landscape irrigation.

**Why use gray water?**  
It is a waste to irrigate with gray quantities of drinking water when plants thrive on and waste containing small bits of soap. The benefits of gray water recycling include:

- Lower fresh water use
- Less energy and chemical use
- Less strain on failing septic tanks or treatment plants
- Groundwater recharge
- Gray water treatment is reported to be highly efficient
- Plant growth
- Ability to build in areas unsuitable for conventional treatment
- Reclamation of otherwise wasted resources

## Gray water = silver bullet for the central coast



SLO Green Build's Jessica Steely and Surfrider stalwart/Morro Bay City Councilman Noah Smukler (above) help Art Ludwig (right) get the message out at "Water Futures."



The Appropriate Technology education & outreach campaign, conducted by SLO Green Build and the local chapters of Surfrider and the Sierra Club, held the fourth water planning presentation & sustainability social in our popular series on December 2nd in Arroyo Grande, and December 3rd in Atascadero.

The event, "Water Futures: Integrated Design for Water and Wastewater Systems," featured keynote speaker Art Ludwig, award-winning water resources planner and founder of Oasis Design in Santa Barbara.

Examples of appropriate technologies available now include composting toilets, grey water systems and dual flush toilets, all on display,

along with plenty of music (thank you Honeyguide and Wads-worth Bluff Rats!) and food (thank you Noah Smukler, La Terrazas organic produce, New Frontiers and Full of Life Flatbread!).

Ludwig, an ecological systems designer and author of the books *Water Storage, Principles of Ecological Design and Create an Oasis with Greywater*, affirmed that irrigating with greywater can make a significant difference in our water use patterns.

SLO Green Build, the San Luis Bay Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club are working together with local government agencies to create an Appropriate Technology education & outreach campaign to spread the word on the importance and applica-

tion of current and emerging technologies that will enable local sustainable development and expanded green building practices.

Appropriate Technology was defined by California State Architect

Sim Van der Ryn as "Technology appropriate to sustain a society of finite resources at a human scale," utilizing triple bottom line accounting: economy, ecology and social equity.

### EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT NUCLEAR POWER\*

\*but were afraid to ask



Check out this remarkable 30-minute documentary— made possible in part by a grant from the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club — to get a full understanding of why nuclear power is *not* the solution to climate change or our future energy needs.

Kudos to the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility for creating this cogent work.

See it at: [www.everythingnuclear.org](http://www.everythingnuclear.org)

### Pole Cats

continued from page 6

to get the entire set of skills down pat. I attended some seminars given by Paley, who verified that I was proficient in her technique.

I started Pole Cats to share this revolutionary technique. All Pole Cats hikes are easy and include uphill and downhill sections and brushed over areas. I demonstrate basic techniques by modeling the use poles for uphill by planting the poles a little ahead of my feet, and as I walk past them, fully extend my triceps to give forward momentum. My legs love the assistance. By concentrating, I can incorporate other muscle groups. As the trail becomes steeper, I take shorter steps and increase how often I set the poles down (from alternating steps to every step). For the steepest and longest trail segments, I combine use of poles with the rest step, where I lock my knee for an instant each step, giving my leg muscles a chance to rest (much like the heart between beats). This lets me continue, however slowly, for hours, adjusting my pace to my heartbeat.

For downhill sections, I adjust the poles to their maximum length and use them to reduce impact on hips and knees. Paley estimates that this technique can reduce 250 tons of impact on an eight hour hike. Optimal pole usage exercises biceps,

continued on page 12

### Carrizo

continued from page 3

and endangered species of plants and animals unlike any other in North America. The area focused on by multiple solar companies here is considered critical to the recovery of state and federally listed species. Its proposed industrialization is not a matter to be undertaken lightly nor bypassed by "streamlining" the permit process so as to get a free pass on environmental review by regulatory agencies.

There is no debate among conservation biologists: Fragmentation of habitat creates biological "islands," especially when it involves the severing of wildlife corridors, and significantly increases the chances of extinction for the endangered and threatened species that rely on that land for their survival.

In its review of Ausra's application, the California Department of Fish and Game noted that the application "relies more on characterizing the site as highly disturbed, rather than providing defensible survey data, to rule out species' presence;" that in several of the species surveys they did conduct, "survey protocol was not followed;" the surveys appeared to be carried out during the time of year when endangered species in the Carrizo area – specifically, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard – "are typically the least detectable, even in good survey years;" and that the applicant

had been told in advance that a survey conducted at that time "may not detect the species."

In hearings before the CEC, the attitude of Ausra's representatives toward the potential environmental impacts of their project has come across as a mix of unconcern and impatience. They have denied that the 1,040 acres they've optioned functions as a north-south kit fox corridor (contrary to the conclusion of the Department of Fish and Game) or may be serving as foraging grounds for the California Condor and other large raptors.

OptiSolar representative Kathryn Arbeit, writing in the December 10 edition of the *Tribune* concerning her company's plans for a solar photovoltaic facility encompassing nine square miles of the Carrizo adjacent to the Ausra plant, was likewise troubling in her description of the site as "nonprime, previously disturbed agricultural land..." echoing the position of Ausra identified as unacceptable by Fish & Game. It is abundantly clear that the impacts of both companies' projects on foraging area and habitat connectivity would extend far beyond their construction footprint, and that the project sites, disturbed or not, provide open foraging ground and underground refuge, and that the range of the kit fox extends through the Salinas and Pajaro River watersheds and from the Salinas Valley to the Carrizo Plain.

Ausra should replace lost habitat at

a ratio of at least five to one, and it must consist of habitat or equal or greater value, if the project is to be approved, and any subsequent alternative energy projects in the Carrizo must do the same. Options that could meet some of this requirement include purchasing and donating inholdings in the Carrizo Plain National Monument and purchasing the leases of Vintage Petroleum.

Risking the extermination of the San Joaquin kit fox to add solar power to the San Joaquin Valley's energy portfolio would not be a great trade. Every proposal for every alternative energy plant in the Carrizo, and every agency reviewing those proposals, needs to guarantee that we are not making that trade. The staff of the California Energy Commission is now coordinating a wildlife corridor study for the Carrizo Energy Solar Farm Project.

A postscript: On December 17, as President-elect Obama named his Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, the *New York Times* reported that "he said their responsibility would be to balance the protection of farms and public lands against the need to find new sources of energy.

"Mr. Obama said, 'That means ensuring that even as we are promoting development where it makes sense, we are also fulfilling our obligation to protect our national treasures.'"

Let's do that.

# Taking Issue

problematic environmental coverage & commentary in our local media

“Hard-core environmentalists are to blame for ranch mess,” by Charlie Whitney, *The Tribune*, Dec. 7, 2008

**Summary:** A deal to protect Santa Margarita Ranch from development could have been had eight years ago, but local environmentalists insisted on more, and, by way of “secret meetings” and political influence, sabotaged the great deal. Therefore, it is they -- not the developers or the lame-duck county Supervisors who just rammed the horrendously destructive Santa Margarita Ranch development through the permit process -- who are responsible for the project that was approved.

This is a misuse of the word “entitlement.” The ranch owners were not legally entitled to 550 homes or anything else. That is the ceiling in terms of what they could apply for. Any approvals or denials are entirely discretionary on the part of the Board of Supervisors, as any development on the ranch would have to comply with all state and federal environmental laws, as well as local ordinances.

The prior ranch owners had successfully negotiated with the county and the community for entitlements to build 550 homes....

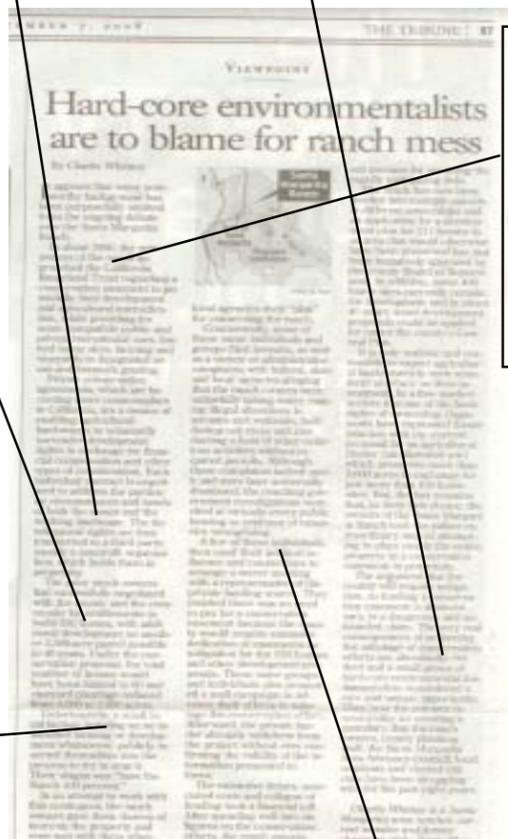
The very real consequences of suborning the sabotage of conservation efforts are abundantly evident and a small group of hard-core environmental fundamentalists squandered a rare and unique opportunity.

Rossi entered into private negotiations with The Nature Conservancy. The details of those negotiations, as with all such negotiations, were confidential. TNC has very specific criteria for preserving biodiversity on properties it gets involved with.

One may assume, given Rossi’s subsequent actions, that TNC refused to accommodate the level of development that Rossi wanted to pursue because it was inconsistent with TNC’s mandate to preserve biodiversity.

Not surprisingly, this proposal was met with mixed reviews. Many were offended at the idea of allocating valuable and highly competitive state conservation dollars to a plan that conserved relatively little. Others were simply happy to see the number of homes on the ranch reduced, and to gain “closure” on the development issue, irrespective of the merits of the actual outcome. Also not surprisingly, when the proposal was reviewed by state and federal agencies, like the Wildlife Conservation Board and General Services, and by the private funding foundations who would also need to participate, it was summarily rejected as not being worthy of public conservation efforts.

Under the conservation proposal, the total number of homes would have been limited to 60 and vineyard plantings reduced from 5,000 to 2,000 acres.



In about 2000, the new owners of the ranch approached the California Rangeland Trust regarding a conservation easement to potentially limit development...while providing for some compatible public and private recreational uses, limited home sites, farming and vineyards....

After negotiations with The Nature Conservancy fell through, Rossi approached the California Rangeland

Trust, seeking funds for a “conservation easement” on the ranch that would allow substantial development of the property in addition to an easement for which he would be paid many millions of dollars. CRT was willing to support a plan that allowed a significant amount of development. CRT met with many local environmentalists to get feedback on the proposal, which looked a lot like the current development proposal. It allowed conversion of 3,000 acres of prime valley oak habitat and riparian areas to vineyards, multiple wineries and tasting rooms, a golf course, dude ranch, etc. It also allowed for residential development, at some number less than the 550 homes that could be applied for under the general plan. In short, it would have provided seed money for Rossi’s development plans by selling a conservation easement on the spaces left in between the development areas. (Picture Swiss cheese.)

Unfortunately, a small local faction...publicly inserted themselves into the process to try to stop it.

In 1999, when the community learned that the Santa

Margarita Ranch was in escrow to Rob Rossi, a coalition of state and local environmental groups and community leaders formed the Coalition to Preserve the Ranch (CPR) to demonstrate strong public support for a conservation outcome, a necessary component of public acquisitions, and to educate Rossi about the significant economic incentives available to him, should he pursue conservation over development. CPR discussed bond funding and tax advantages, and hooked Rossi up with some of the land trusts (Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, etc.) and several representatives of state and federal resource agencies who could be conduits for public acquisition dollars. All of the resource specialists were enthusiastic about the habitat values on the ranch, as well as conservation opportunities, as the state was flush with bond funds at that time.

A few of the individuals then used their political influence and connections to arrange a secret meeting with a representative of the private funding source...[who] abruptly withdrew from the project....

The idea that anybody here in SLO has the ability to either scuttle or consummate a statewide conservation deal is preposterous. Any conversations, or “secret meetings,” would simply have been held to confirm with agency and foundation staff what was

obvious upon an analysis of the proposal by any knowledgeable person: It was a development plan masquerading as conservation, in hopes of turning a quick buck without significantly diminishing future development rights.

## Upshot:

The California Rangeland Trust was passionately committed to the conservation easement proposal, and bitter about its rejection by state agencies. Rather than responding constructively to the feedback, returning to the drawing board, and coming up with a more reasonable offer, they, the ranch owners and hangers-on blamed the messengers -- the local folks who had offered the original critique of the flawed plan, chosen not to support it, and correctly predicted its demise -- whom they blasted for “undermining the conservation easement” because they were too “pure,” etc. Thus began the most enduring myth in the Santa Margarita Ranch development saga, a myth that was hauled out again late last year to put a blame-the-enviros spin on what the developers and three irresponsible county supervisors have wrought -- over the objections of county planning staff, the Planning Commission, state and local regulatory agencies and a majority of the citizens who testified in opposition to a project that violates multiple county ordinances, land use policies, and the California Environmental Quality Act.

# Letters

send to: [sierra8@charter.net](mailto:sierra8@charter.net), or Sierra Club, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. Letters may be edited for space.

Your two articles on local transportation, by Eric Greening and Gerald fox were most excellent. I am so glad to be a member of our local Club that prints well-written and timely articles.

Should planning for transportation be based on local needs or super-regional needs, and what motivates people to use transportation? A crucial issue as this is what a successful transportation system must be focused on.

Locally based needs should be the base for planning. So far we have planning priorities that favor schemes that supposedly connect large urban centers together such as L.A. and S.F. But the majority of people trips occur between suburban outlying areas to suburban outlying areas. Thus the big super systems meant to establish a transportation backbone don't work.

Better to base systems on local connections, and when those systems become viable, the larger trunks will become obvious and also efficient. That means local needs create

regional realities.

As Mr. Greening says "Express runs need to be seen as a supplement to, not a substitute for, local runs that directly serve the places people live, work, and take care of their needs and desires."

Which now lands us in the issue of personal motivations, which should be the base of planning for local transportation! Since a successful system will be one that satisfies personal transportation needs best, the personal situations that dictate the needs of transportation are the real issue here. The biggest demand for transport is usually work or school-related. Also shopping for food or consumer goods, and social networking. If all those activities are within easy walking distance, then walking would be the best answer. The most efficient and least costly. Of course, that is not how our society is arranged. So we need an extensive system to deliver people any and every where at anytime. This is not efficient and very costly.

Here is the point. If you have a

private citizenry that is separated from the places they must go by large distances then you will have an inefficient transportation system. The reason why the public is placed in this situation is improper planning or short-sighted planning. The reason you have insufficient planning is because those with capital and land choose to employ both in an anarchic and piecemeal fashion for their short-term goals of profit, which create a planning scenario that places transportation as the last element of planning.

We should place transportation planning first! This should be a basic principle that underlies all urban planning.

This will not limit private opportunities; in fact it will increase them, but it will require that private resources be channeled in the proper direction. All attempts to build a really sustainable transportation system will always depend on this dichotomy.

Peter Risley  
Morro Bay

## Meet Our 2009 Executive Committee

The votes are in for the Chapter's 2009 Executive Committee election:

1. Cal French: 3-year term, ending Dec. 2011 (second term)
2. Melody DeMeritt: 3-year term, ending Dec. 2011
3. Steven Marx: 3-year term, ending Dec. 2011 (second term)
4. Mark Shefrin: 2-year term, ending Dec. 2010
5. Linda Seeley: 1-year term, ending Dec. 2009 (by appointment)

The Committee accepted with regret the resignations of John Ashbaugh, who must devote his attentions and undivided loyalties to his new job as a SLO City Councilman, and Cleve Nash, whose personal obligations no longer permit him the time to be involved with the chapter to the degree he'd wish. Linda Seeley was appointed by Chair Karen Merriam to complete Nash's term.

Terms are determined on the basis of number of votes received and seats to be filled. The chapter has term limits of two consecutive terms.

## Climate Plan

continued from page 1

emissions 80 percent by 2050, and protect our natural heritage, communities, and country from the consequences of global warming. Putting our planet on the path to economic and climate recovery will require Congress, working with the Obama Administration, to:

- Invest \$150 billion in clean energy to create millions of new, high-quality jobs.
- Reduce our dependence on oil by making our cars go farther on a gallon of gas, deploying innovative technologies, low-carbon fuels, and more transportation choices.
- Move America to 100 percent renewable energy for electricity and dramatically increase the efficiency of our buildings and homes.
- Tackle global warming by establishing an economy-wide cap on carbon emissions. Ensure that carbon permits are auctioned, not given away. Action by Congress will provide leadership on the international stage to both work with and be competitive with other nations as we invest in these advanced technologies.
- Acknowledge the consequences of global warming that are already occurring and the need to protect vulnerable communities, wildlife and their habitat from drought, flooding, wildfires, and other dangerous impacts.

"The American public overwhelmingly voted for change and the 'New Energy for America' offered by Barack Obama," said Mary Wells, Sierra Club Deputy Conservation Director. "President-Elect Obama has reaffirmed his commitment to the ambitious goals he laid out during the campaign: an economic recovery and millions of new jobs based on investments in clean energy, an economy-wide cap-and-auction bill to address global warming, and a serious commitment to reengage with the international community on climate issues. We will do everything we can to help the Obama administration achieve these goals, using the Climate Recovery Agenda's plan to Repower, Refuel, and Rebuild America as a roadmap."

The full document is available at [www.saveourevironment.org/](http://www.saveourevironment.org/).

## Go Big

continued from page 2

who got accustomed to getting everything they wanted out of the old board and will try every trick in the book to stop the new board from implementing the policies we need for affordable housing, smart growth, sustainable ag land, food security, clean money elections and clean energy under local control. As the County moves forward with major initiatives such as the update of the Conservation and Open Space Element and the Regional Transportation Plan and the implementation of Strategic Growth policies, much of this resistance will come in the form of urgings to slow down, whittle away, exempt and delay.

These urgings need to be ignored. Consensus and compromise do not constitute an ultimate good, or a value on a par with Truth and Beauty. They are not at all times desirable, in all circumstances. The policy prescriptions the Sierra Club has set before the Board over the last five months are a minimum, the initial effort necessary to begin the project of securing a sustainable future. When demands for compromise require veering away from the path that's headed in the right direction, that's not compromise but an invitation to wander off into the weeds, losing time that we don't have to lose.

In 1996, Michael McCloskey, then chair of the Sierra Club board of directors, circulated a memo to his colleagues that warned of the limits of collaboration. "If the status quo is environmentally unacceptable," he wrote, "collaboration gives minorities a death grip over reform; any recalcitrant stakeholder can paralyze the process and defy the popular will. As a result, only ideas of the lowest common denominator survive. The public and the environment deserve better."

Now is not the time for any of us to go home and take a nap, but to press the case for environmental and energy responsibility harder than ever. As new SLO Councilwoman Jan

Marx told the crowd at our December 3rd Energy Town Hall, "Elected officials tend to get insulated, listening mostly to staff or permit applicants rather than the public. Mostly they don't mean to do that; it's just something that tends to happen. I don't want that to happen to me. If you see me doing that, I want you to give me a hard time."

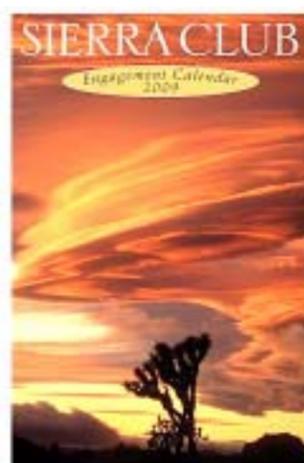
Our local electeds need a lot of feedback and backup if their spines are to be sufficient to the task of acting on the mandate they received

from the voters, and if they are to know that they may safely ignore the bleating from the vocal forces of eternal self-interest that put short-term profit over long-term survival.

Our president needs the same. In both cases, they need to know that the majority, the people who put them in office, will back them up.

We need to tell them: Go big, and we will go with you, because it's not just the better way, it's the only way. Go big, because if you go any other way, we will all go under.

## 2009 Sierra Club Calendars



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## Sewer

continued from page 3

goals of the project, and the absence of measures that would secure these outcomes. The DEIR largely ignores this imperative, excluding water reuse/reclamation from the proposed project designs.

AB 2701, the state law that allowed the transfer of responsibility for system design and construction from the bankrupt Los Osos CSD to the County, went out of its way to state that the County's efforts to construct and operate a wastewater treatment system "may include programs and projects for recharging aquifers, preventing saltwater intrusion, and managing groundwater resources to the extent that they are related to the construction and operation of the community wastewater collection and treatment system." (Government Code, Section 25825.5 c). Failing to implement measures to reduce pumping from the lower aquifer and maximize recharge of the upper aquifer as a full component of the project should not be an option. If the project alleviates the nitrate pollution problem that is its primary goal but the aquifer is lost to saltwater intrusion, nothing is gained.

The means the Draft EIR proposes to address this are problematic: 1) Disposal of treated effluent via spray fields beyond the boundary of the water basin, and 2) a leachfield at the Broderson site, eight acres just south of Los Osos Valley Road, for the disposal of treated wastewater. The County asserts that Broderson's use will return sufficient water to the aquifer to make up for the loss of groundwater returns currently provided by Los Osos' system of septic tanks and leach fields, the water on which the plants and trees in the area's environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA) largely depend.

No one can afford for the County to be wrong in its assessment of this key component of all the proposed projects. There are serious questions surrounding the science and regulatory complicity in the selection of Broderson as a viable site for disposal of effluent and recharge of the aquifer. The Final EIR needs to provide scientific analysis confirming that Broderson can accommodate the high rate of effluent proposed, at the proposed level of treatment, and that this is the best means by which to replenish the aquifer and significantly reduce saltwater intrusion. If these proofs cannot be made, other options should be pursued.

Most of these issues were raised in the course of the National Water Research Institute (NWRI) panel review of the Los Osos Waste Water Project last November. The County Board of Supervisors and the Department of Public Works have subsequently shown a distinct lack of interest in pursuing clarification of these issues. That needs to change.

The DEIR contemplates only secondary treatment of effluent. The evolution of state and federal standards for wastewater treatment has been heading in only one direction – up – and it is likely that tertiary treatment will be required by law by the time the Los Osos wastewater treatment project is completed. Morro Bay and Cayucos, with significant encouragement from the environmental community, saw that writing on the wall when they decided to upgrade their wastewater treatment plant to bring it into compliance with the Clean Water Act, and went beyond the current legal



**Not in the EIR:** "If the Broderson site is needed for seawater intrusion mitigation, it is important to evaluate regulatory compliance, particularly with regard to California Department of Public Health groundwater recharge regulations."

- NWRI advisory panel, Final Report, October 2008

minimum of secondary treatment, mandating a tertiary component.

Wastewater treated to the tertiary level is a key requirement for what needs to be an essential component of the project: "ag exchange," taking wells out of production in exchange for recycled water, thereby reducing both the pumping of the aquifer and

## When Diablo Goes

continued from page 1

Diablo Canyon and San Onofre.

The earthquake discovery was not the only finding that is shaking up California's nuclear utilities. On the same day, it was reported that mitigation for the devastating impacts to the marine environment caused by the once-through cooling systems of coastal power plants could cost nuclear operators \$5.6 billion.

Other recommendations of the Energy Commission included requiring the CEC and the California Public Utilities Commission to develop a plan for reviewing the overall costs and benefits of nuclear plant license extensions, in addition to setting the scope of the evaluation, and criteria for the assessment. These should include plant safety culture and maintenance, waste storage, transport and disposal plans, seismic hazards, comparisons of other generation and transmission alternatives, and contingency plans for long-term outages.

PG&E and SCE had hoped to complete their own in-house reviews of the feasibility of license renewal for Diablo Canyon and San Onofre with little, if any, input from the state. While PG&E has received funding for its in-house study, it now will need to consider all of the Energy Commission's recommendations and receive additional approval from the state before a license renewal can be filed at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

So what could this mean for San Luis Obispo? Since the beginning of the Energy Commission's study, the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility has been the only participant that has ensured that our community's dependence on "benefits" from Diablo would be addressed in the context of the possible phasing out of the nuclear power plant by the end of its operating license in 2025. We requested that energy generation and job replacement be given a priority in SLO, if Diablo Canyon does not operate beyond the expiration of its current license. We requested that

the use of nitrogen fertilizers that contribute to the pollution of groundwater.

The selection of the Giacomazzi/ Branin sites in three of the proposed alternatives is good to see, as both would facilitate ag exchange with ag land immediately adjacent. The final disappearance of the Tri-W site from serious consideration, along with the inevitable raw sewage spills straight into the estuary that its configuration promised, is a relief. The potential selection of the Tonini site, whether for the treatment plant or for spray field disposal of treated effluent, should be discarded as presenting a problem that is essentially the opposite of the Tri-W problem: It's too far away. Additional piping and pumps would be required, and still more pipes for ag exchange compared to the Giacomazzi and Branin sites. And again, it lies outside the groundwater basin.

We invite the residents of Los Osos to keep all of the above in mind when filling out the community preference survey that the County will be circulating shortly. Encourage the county to opt for tertiary treatment, STEP collection, and the incorpora-

tion of ag exchange as a central component of the LOWWP.

We invite all residents of the county who are concerned about water quality and future water availability to use the Los Osos Wastewater Project DEIR as an opportunity to shine a bright light on these issues and demand answers to questions that must be fully addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Report. That's what has to happen if we want a project in which treated wastewater is a resource to be utilized, not a pollutant to be disposed of; water demand and use is reduced; an aquifer is recharged and protected against saltwater intrusion; and minimal sludge is created for disposal.

**Comments must be received by January 30, 2009.**

Mail to:  
Mark Hutchinson  
Environmental Programs Manager  
SLO County Dept. of Public Works  
County Gov. Center, Room 207  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

and check our audio files at:  
[www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org/)

SLO be included in all decision-making. With the exception of a resolution passed at the request of the Alliance in 2006 to support the Energy Commission's analysis, SLO County has not bothered to participate.

With the discovery of the new fault—and other "unknown" considerations—operation of Diablo beyond its existing license is questionable. No matter how you feel about nuclear power, SLO may not have a say in whether Diablo operates beyond 2025, or until 2025.

The Energy Commission will continue to review costs of operation at the state's aging nuclear reactors. It will also continue to monitor the status of a permanent waste facility and proposed radioactive waste transport routes. The Alliance will continue to be an active part of this process. We urge Sierra Club members to seek participation by SLO

County in Energy Commission reviews. The opportunities to replace Diablo Canyon with clean renewable technology—creating new jobs and infrastructure—are exciting, but we need you to support our call to guarantee that those opportunities will be located in San Luis Obispo County.

The Alliance will be working in local, state and federal venues this year. We ask Sierra Club members to join us. Many of you have dedicated your lives to saving this beautiful county, and are working on creating a new energy paradigm here. We have 2,000 megawatts of power that may need to be replaced. Join us and become part of the transition to non-nuclear megawatts and a limit to the production of highly radioactive waste on our earthquake-active coast. It's time for a clean, energy efficient future—whose trademark glow does not come from the atom, but the sun.



**We knew her when:** Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility exec director and Sierra Club Radiation Committee member Rochelle Becker was one of the experts cited on President Obama's nuclear power policy in the December 1 issue of Newsweek.

# Classifieds

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

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[sierraclub8@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub8@gmail.com)



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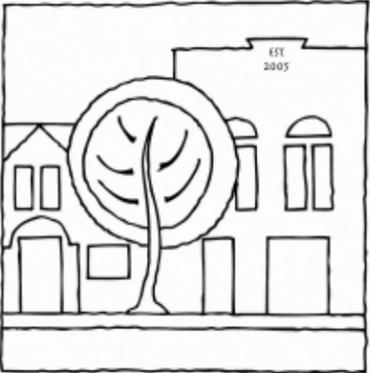
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 Graphic Artist

# Outings and Activities Calendar

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

## Hiking Classifications:

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

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

2nd & 4th Saturdays, 9am-12pm. **OCTAGON BARN - South Higuera, SLO**. Learn first-hand how historical restoration works and be part of the transformation of San Luis Obispo's iconic Octagon Barn. Stop by to check it out! If you're not "handy" contact us about joining the Barn Committee to plan and strategize on opening the Barn for community use next year. Call 544-9096 for details. (Sponsored by The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County)

Sat., Jan. 10th, **Informal Mystery Hike** (Tentative), Location to TBD depending on the weather and my schedule. Possible location Big Sur, Big Falls, or Sapwi Camp on Santa Margarita Lake. Details Gary (473-3694)

Sat.-Sun., Jan 10-11, **El Paso Wilderness Restoration**: Assist the Ridgcrest BLM in protecting this beautiful wilderness area from OHV abuse by helping to block off and disguise illegal routes. Meet late Friday afternoon north of the wilderness area and car caravan to our camping area near Sheep Springs or

## Pole Cats

*continued from page 7*

triceps and other muscle groups. Think about it: if Tyrannosaurus rex had used poles, he would not have evolved those puny little arms. (Or better, don't think about it.)

When encountering brushy trails, I use the cruising mode, in which I point my thumb and index fingers straight down and lift the poles off the ground with my ring finger and pinky. Holding the tips of the poles together behind me lets me walk through brushed over trails easily.

The benefits of using trekking poles extend to those with mobility issues. Poles give strength, confidence and stability to those who may be frail or uncoordinated. When former Sierra Club president Ed Wayburn was in his nineties, his physical condition forced him to give up hiking. Paley showed him how to use

meet near the work site on Saturday morning. Saturday evening happy hour and potluck. For more information contact leader: Kate Allen, kj.allen@wildblue.net or 661-944-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee.

Sun., Jan 11, 10 a.m. **The Eagle Rock Nature Trail**. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling optimal techniques for using trekking poles. The Eagle Rock Nature Trail is located across from Cuesta College at El Chorro Regional Park. Confirm with David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com 458-5575 for info.

Sat., Jan. 17th, 9 a.m. - Noon. **Johnson Ranch Work Party, SLO**. Bring gloves, water, snack and dress for the weather. Meet at the Intersection of Ontario Road and S. Higuera Street.

Jan. 24, Sat., 8:00 a.m. **Hike to Alder Camp via the Cruikshank and Buckeye Trails**. Join the leader and hike off the holidays on this winter hike in southern Big Sur. This is a moderately strenuous hike of 12 miles with about 2900 ft. of elevation gain. There are good views of the Villa Creek drainage and the coast. Meet at the Washburn day use area of San Simeon State Park which is just past the Hamlet Restaurant at the north end of Cambria. Bring lunch, snacks, water and dress for the weather. There is a possibility of ticks and poison oak. For info call Chuck at 805-441-7597.

Sun., Jan 25, 10 a.m. **Quarry Trail**. Pole Cats is dedicated to leading local Sierra Club day hikes and modeling optimal techniques for using trekking poles. Meet at the Quarry Trailhead. Confirm with David Georgi at polecatleader@gmail.com or 458-5575 for info.

Mon.-Wed., Feb 9-11, **Gold Butte Midweek Magic**: You've heard about the new bill for a national conservation area in Gold Butte, and you wonder where IS this place? To find out, join us in this exploratory tour. Petroglyphs, peak scrambling, redrock and granite, Joshua trees, old mining ruins. Car camping with central commissary by Vicky Hoover. Contact Vicky (415)977-5527,

poles and he was able to continue outings for several years. They allow family members with less hiking stamina to be able to keep up with the stronger ones. Anyone afflicted with one or more of the insidious O's: Old, Overweight, Out of Shape, and Optimistic can benefit from poles. I represent each and find the most insidious one is Optimistic, in which I convince myself to attempt tasks that are above my ability level.

For me, the best part of hiking with poles is using all my muscle groups to glide through the landscape as a quadruped. And, as far as hiking is concerned, quadrupeds definitely have more fun. Join me on a Pole Cats hike and become an honorary Pole Cat.

Bipeds are always welcome.

vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org. CNRCC Wilderness Committee

Sat., Feb. 21st, 9 a.m. - Noon. **Johnson Ranch Work Party, SLO**. Bring gloves, water, snack and dress for the weather. Meet at the Intersection of Ontario Road and S. Higuera Street.

This is a partial listing of Outings offered by our chapter. Please check the web page [www.santalucia.sierraclub.org](http://www.santalucia.sierraclub.org) for the most up-to-date listing of activities.

## Call for Yosemite Valley Volunteers

LeConte Memorial Lodge is a 105-year-old visitor center, environmental education center, and library operated by the Sierra Club in Yosemite National Park. We are looking for Sierra Club members who have visited Yosemite at least once within the last five years and are interested in volunteering for one week between May 2nd and September 26th. Hours



of operation are from 10 am - 4 pm, Weds. - Sun, and 7:30 - 10 pm for weekend evening programs on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. All volunteers arrive on Saturday by 3 pm and volunteer at LML that evening, and depart the following Saturday between 1 and 4 pm, after volunteering. Training takes place on Sunday morning at 9 am. Volunteers enjoy free entrance to Yosemite National Park, free camping at the campsite during the time they volunteer, and Monday and Tuesday to spend at their leisure. To provide the best opportunity for visitors, excellent communication skills are essential. For more information visit [www.sierraclub.org/education/leconte/volunteering.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/education/leconte/volunteering.asp) or contact Bonnie Gisel, the LeConte Lodge curator, at [leconte.curator@sierraclub.org](mailto:leconte.curator@sierraclub.org) or (209) 403-6676 (before May 2). After May 2nd call (209) 372-4542.

## Island Hopping in Channel Islands National Park Fundraising Cruises in 2009

May 1-4  
July 17-20  
August 7-10  
September 11-14

Come and explore the wild, windswept islands of Channel Island National Park. In spring, the islands are ablaze with wildflowers. The pristine waters of the Marine Sanctuary will entice both snorkelers and kayakers in all seasons. Watch for the highly endangered Island Fox. Marvel at the sight of whales, dolphins, sea and land birds, endemic plants, and reminders of the Chumash people who lived on these islands for thousands of years. All islands are ringed with rugged shorelines and dotted with sea caves. Each island offers special charm: San Miguel for white sandy beaches and a huge congregation of elephant seals; Santa Rosa for a rare stand of Torrey Pines; Santa Cruz for high mountains, deep valleys and the famous Painted Cave, Anacapa for the brown pelican rookery, a picturesque lighthouse, excellent snorkeling waters and a colony of friendly sea lions who will swim with snorkelers and follow

kayaks.

Cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68' twin diesel Truth. The fee, \$950, includes an assigned bunk, all meals, snacks, beverages, plus the services of a ranger/naturalist who will travel with us to lead hikes on each island and present evening programs. The proceeds from these fundraising cruises will benefit Sierra Club's political programs in California. To make a reservation mail a \$100 check, payable to Sierra Club to leader: Joan Jones Holtz, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. Contact leader for more information (626-443-0706; [jholtzhln@aol.com](mailto:jholtzhln@aol.com))

