



SIERRA
CLUB

February 2005
Volume 42, No. 2

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GENERAL MEETING

Socially Responsible Investing
- See page 2
February 15 @ 7:00 p.m.

Are you a home gardener who doesn't want corn that's been genetically engineered to produce its own pesticide shoved down your throat or spreading to your own crop? Join a contingent that will be telling that to the County Board of Supervisors this month! Call Jesse Arnold at 927-3096.



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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

CARRIZO PLAIN AND SIMPLE

Grazing Does Not = Conservation

About 50 miles southwest of Bakersfield and 50 miles southeast of San Luis Obispo lie 250,000 acres of a federally designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This is the portion of San Luis Obispo County comprised of the Carrizo Plain, Elkhorn Plain, portions of the Temblor Mountain Range and the Caliente Mountain Range, known collectively as the Carrizo Plain Natural Area (CPNA). It is also a repository of vast archaeological and cultural resources.

In his proclamation designating this area as the Carrizo Plain National Monument, President Clinton noted: "Since the mid-1800s, large portions of the grasslands that once spanned the entire four hundred mile expanse of California's nearby San Joaquin Valley and other valleys in the vicinity have been eliminated by extensive land conversion to agricultural, industrial, and urban land uses. The Carrizo Plain National Monument, which is dramatically bisected by the San Andreas Fault zone, is the largest undeveloped remnant of this ecosystem, providing crucial habitat for the long-term conservation of the many endemic plant and animal species that still inhabit the area."

The land is managed under the Monument's management plan and the Caliente Resource Management Plan, which has the stated objective

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A Nuclear Alliance

The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, a newly formed statewide organization, went on line the week of January 10 at www.a4nr.org. Its goal is the promotion of legislation to prohibit re-licensing of California's nuclear plants and the development of energy alternatives to replace them.

State law currently prohibits the construction of new nuclear plants in California until the problem of permanent, safe storage of

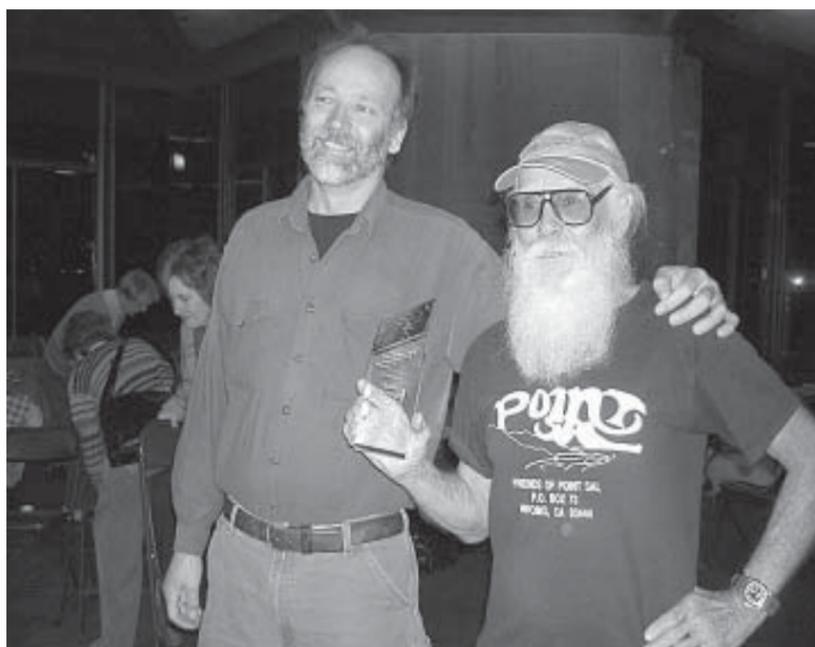


Rochelle Becker (center) convenes a meeting of the ANR

nuclear waste has been solved, a 20-year-old prohibition that has spared the state the fate that has befallen Illinois and many states in the southeast that are now riddled with nuclear reactors. The ANR is lobbying for the sensible extension of that prohibition to the continued operation of existing nuclear power plants in California.

"It is vital that Californians realize that there are two high-level radioactive waste dumps in our vulnerable earthquake-active coastal zone," said ANR Executive Director Rochelle Becker. "To continue to produce plutonium, uranium, strontium-90, cesium-137 and other radioactive elements when there is no safe place to store this lethal material could have devastating consequences for us. Even if the nation's only proposed nuclear waste facility, Yucca Mountain, should someday be allowed to open, there's no space for the radioactive waste that

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Thanks, Bill

Sierra Club California Chapter Liaison Pat Veasart presented the Kathleen Goddard Jones Award to wildlife biologist and local legend Bill Denneen (right) at the Chapter's January 18 general meeting.

"Kathleen was my mentor," said Denneen of the Chapter's founder. "She was a giant, and she taught me to always fight for what you believe in and never, ever give up."

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"Every good thing,
great and small,
needs defense."

—John Muir



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



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Visit us on
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www.santalucia.
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Outings, events, and
more!

Santa Lucia Chapter General Meeting

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

Put your money where your life is

Socially Responsible Investing is about creating the momentum to bring about social change. Are your investments in sync with your values? Are you paying a company to worsen global warming? Did you know that "green" mutual funds can provide better returns than traditional portfolios?

Learn about avoidance and affirmative screening, community investing, and shareholder activism from Jack Brill, co-author of *Investing with Your Values*, a registered investment advisor and one of the nation's foremost authorities on SRI. He's also a Sierra Club member, which is why we are able to offer this very special program FREE. Bring your questions!

The monthly meeting has moved! Note our new location in the Ludwig Center on Santa Rosa Street.

Meetings are open to all Sierra Club members and the general public.

Tuesday, February 15, 7:00 p.m.
Ludwig Center, Room A
864 Santa Rosa St. (corner of
Mill)
San Luis Obispo



Jack A. Brill

Save the date!!

Bush Administration's New Forest Rules: More Logging, Less Wildlife Protection, Dirtier Water, and No Input

For the second year in a row, the Bush Administration announced a harmful new forest policy on the eve of the Christmas holiday. On December 23, 2003, the administration announced they were opening up pristine parts of the Tongass National Forest to new logging and development. Last December, they released damaging new regulatory changes to the rules that guide sound forest management.

The Bush administration's new rules effectively remove 20 years of National Forest protections. The new Forest Service planning regulations undermine important wildlife, clean water, and other environmental protections. Instead of protecting wild forests limiting damage to wildlife and clean water, these new regulations allow agency discretion to carry out harmful projects and revise management plans at will. Additionally, the new regulations will sharply limit the opportunity for meaningful participation by citizens in local forest planning.

"The new forest rules clearly reflect the Bush administration's belief that logging companies should be the primary beneficiary of our National Forests," said Carl Pope, Sierra Club Executive Director. "Americans want to protect the places where they hike, hunt and fish, but when the Bush administration rewrote the rules, they wrote the public out of the equation."

America's National Forests deserve better. With these new rules the administration rejects sound science, ignores the importance of public input, tilts the playing field sharply toward the logging companies by creating a presumption that all national forest lands are open to industrial or timber uses unless explicitly prohibited, and leaves monitoring of logging impacts at the discretion of individual forest supervisors.

The new rules for long-term forest planning will reduce protections for forest wildlife and eliminate requirements that forest plans comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. The regulations also change enforcement of the 1976 National Forest Management Act, and, not surprisingly, conform closely to a timber industry "wish list" presented shortly after the 2001 presidential inauguration.

Taken together with the administration's plan to remove wild forest protection for National Forests, these changes will create serious threats to many of our last-remaining wild roadless areas and old-growth forests. Instead of bowing to timber industry pressures and undermining existing National Forest protections; the Bush administration should work to protect our clean water, restore wildlife habitat, and preserve the wild forest heritage of all Americans.

For more information and to take action: visit www.sierraclub.org/forests

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 1st of the month prior.

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The Executive Committee meets the fourth Friday of every month at 5:00 p.m. at the chapter office, located at 1204 Nipomo St., San Luis Obispo. All members are welcome to attend.

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www.santalucia.sierraclub.org

HopeDance

FILMS IN FEBRUARY

presented by HopeDance Media
www.hopedance.org, 544-9663.
Cosponsored by the Sierra Club, Information Press and the Green Party of SLO County.

All films and presentations are at the SLO Library (Osos & Palm).

Friday, Feb. 4, 7pm, \$5. Two films, CODENAME ARTICHOKE: the Secret Human Experiments of the CIA, which coordinated all 1950s military projects involving psychedelic drugs and poisons. And THE MAN WHO KNEW: FBI special agent John O'Neill warned that Osama Bin Laden was going to strike and no one listened. A Frontline presentation.

Thursday, Feb. 10, 7pm, Donations, MONUMENTAL: David Brower's Fight For Wild America. Not since John Muir has an American fought so hard, or been more successful, in protecting our natural heritage. (77min)

Friday, Feb 11, 7pm, Donations, two Films: SEX AND THE HOLY CITY. The BBC travelled across four continents to talk to those directly affected by the Vatican's role in the bitter global debate over women's rights and reproductive health. And INSIDE MECCA, 3 pilgrimages to the Haj by a white woman from Texas, a black man from South Africa, and an Indonesian businessman.

Sunday, Feb 13, 7pm, \$5: PROMISES, An Academy-award nominee documentary about 7 children, Palestinians and Israelis, who give us an insight into the prejudices, hopes, despairs and realities of their home. "A movie that changes you." —Mike Nichols)

Wednesday, Feb 16, 7pm, Donations, Slide-show Presentation: Fair Trade Chocolate in Ghana: Cal Poly Professor, Tom Neuhaus will discuss what Fair Trade means for the cocoa farmers of West Africa, where 70% of the world's chocolate comes from. Free samples!

Friday, Feb 18, 7pm, Donations, TWO BILL HICKS PERFORMANCES Stand up comedian / "preacher" - Bill Hicks, who died a decade ago, is more relevant than ever.

Sunday, Feb 20, 7pm, Donations, "CUBA: What's Wrong with This Picture?" and "Mission against Terror" (about the Cuban 5), with director Bernie Dwyer from Radio Havana Cuba and local activist Jorge Milanes. One of the most contentious political trials of the last 100 years.

Friday & Saturday, Feb 25 and 26, GLOBAL MUSIC FILM FESTIVAL Babaa Maal, Dances of Ecstasy, 1 Giant Leap, Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan, Youssou D'our, and others TBA. A Celebration of global music documentaries for the entire weekend. Dancing permitted. Schedule TBA.

David Brower: Monumental

By Andrew Christie

Like most people who live in the public eye, David Brower was required to compose a "bio" — an official summary of self, suitable for excerpting by editors or reproduction on the backs of book jackets. His went, in part, like this:

Joined the Sierra Club in 1933, was a world-class climber when it took little class (first ascent of Shiprock, New Mexico, his best), and helped add ten units to the National Park System, keep dams out of Dinosaur National Monument, the Grand Canyon, and the Yukon, lobbied to establish the National Wilderness Preservation System, invented the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review, published or edited about a hundred environmental books, started the Sierra Club Foundation, Friends of the Earth International (now in 58 countries), the League of Conservation Voters, Earth Island Limited (UK), Earth Island Institute (U.S.), Earth Island Action Group, the North Cascades Conservation Council, the Fate of the Earth Conference (in four countries), starting the Global CPR Service (Conservation, Preservation, Restoration), and the Ecological Council of the Americas... once a sophomore dropout from U.C. Berkeley, twice a visiting professor at Stanford, once at Case Western (where he wrote a page in the NYT Sunday Magazine about how to manage the Earth, and Reader's Digest liked it), ten honorary degrees, on Advisory Board of the Yosemite Concession Service, on the "Dream Team" of Interface Corporation, three times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.... shiftless procrastinator and master of creative sloth, enjoying the delights of retirement by getting nothing done, talks endlessly, writes the same way.

I first heard David Brower speak at a Patagonia environmental seminar series about ten years ago, but didn't really meet him until August 1999. The Maxxam Corporation had taken over Kaiser Aluminum and the Pacific Lumber Company, much to the regret of both. Over two days that August, at the Oakland Marriott, Brower chaired a meeting of the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, which had come together earlier that year when two groups — Kaiser's striking steelworkers and environmentalists fighting to save the Headwaters Forest from Maxxam's ruthless clear cutting — realized they should make common cause. Three months later in the streets of Seattle, that realization became "Teamsters & turtles," allied against the destructive policies of the World Trade Organization and making history in images that were beamed around the world.

On those thronged streets, in rain, pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets, I met David Brower for the last time. The 87-year-old environmentalist had come there with 50,000 purple-Mohawked 18-year-olds, midwestern sheet-metal workers, people of faith, and Asian, European, African and North & South American farmers and labor leaders, all standing together in the conviction that a better world is possible.

When he died, less than a year later, I wrote a brief remembrance of him. It went like this:

David Brower, the greatest American environmental champion since John Muir, died on November 5. In the outpouring of eulogies and encomiums occasioned by his passing, one note of irony was always certain to be sounded (and equally certain to have vastly amused Mr. Brower):

Namely, the fact that those in the environmental movement whom he irritated and enraged the most, and who devoted a great deal of their time to vigorously opposing him, are those who are now praising him the loudest. The undertone of relief is unmistakable: Now that he's gone, it's safe.

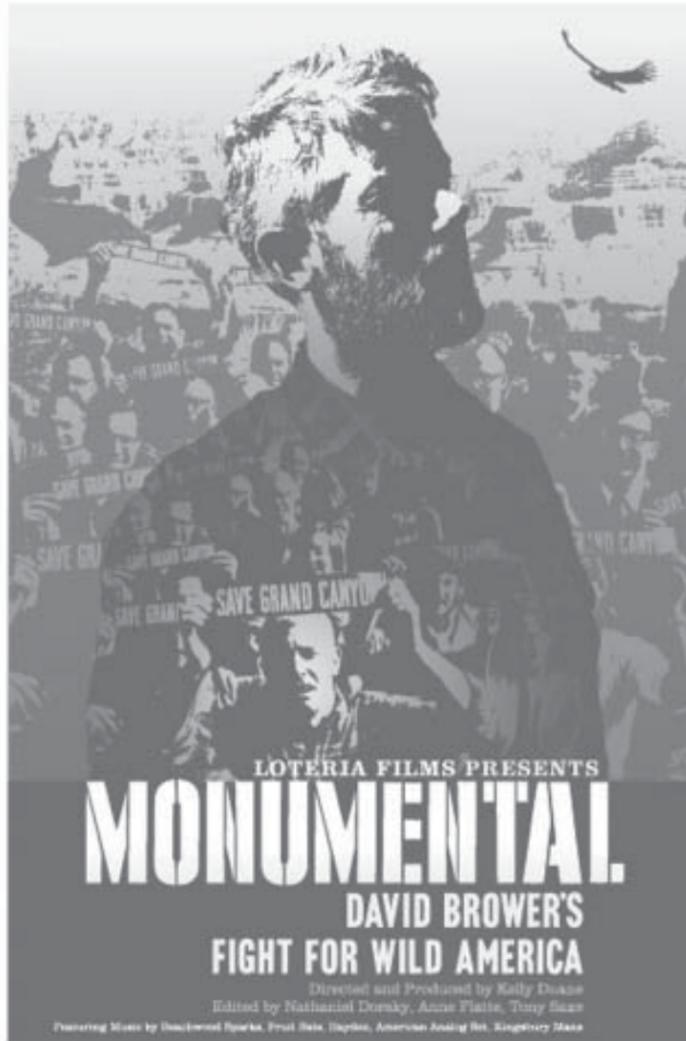
Throughout his life, Mr. Brower struggled against two breeds of *Homo sapiens*: Those who do the actual environmental rapping and pillaging, and those "boardroom environmentalists" who aid and abet them by tailoring the tone of their voices and the magnitude of their actions in defense of the natural world to fit the prevailing political winds.

Those who profess environmental concern but render the protection of the Earth's wildlife and vanishing habitat subordinate to organizational harmony or "process" were Mr. Brower's natural enemies. He never had the time or patience for their favored activities — the building of bureaucracies, the cutting of deals, the choosing of lesser evils. Mr. Brower

was an agitator and a stinging gadfly. His drive was relentless. He insisted on the urgency of the peril and the need for action as the first, last, and only concern. At the board meetings of the organizations he founded or led — organizations from which he invariably was ousted, sometimes more than once — it was clear that he was, well into his eighties, truly the youngest person in the room.

He saw his battles through. He pressed the issue. He kept at the destroyers until the destroyers relented. He was unafraid to cause strife and dissent, and grasped the fact that it is usually the ability and willingness to do so which brings about the temporary victories in our battles to gain real protections for the wild earth, and an unwillingness to do so or a longing for compromise at any cost that brings about the permanent defeats.

David Brower was the embodiment of the concept of the Power of One to make a difference. Those of us who cherish his memory owe it to that memory to let his natural enemies know: He is not gone, and it is not safe.



The documentary *Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wild America*, will have its Central Coast premiere at 7 p.m. Thursday, February 10, at the SLO Library. For information, go to www.hopedance.org or call 544-9663.

Carrizo

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to “manage the CPNA so that indigenous species interact within a dynamic and fully functioning system in perpetuity while conserving unique natural and cultural resources and maintaining opportunities for compatible scientific, cultural, social and recreational activities.... All authorized livestock grazing within the ACEC shall be managed to foster restoration and enhancement of plant communities and listed plant and animals species only, not to establish federal grazing preference.”

The Bureau of Land Management is now preparing to release a revised management plan that will guide the management of the National Monument for decades to come. In December, the Santa Lucia and Kern-Kaweah chapters of the Sierra Club expressed serious concerns to the BLM over the process for the Carrizo Plain National Monument (CPNM) Revised Management Plan, as well as the BLM’s current management decisions. The BLM seems to be moving in the wrong direction in the planning process as regards grazing, and may be in violation of the current Management Plan.

In the Management Plan, it is clear that the intent is to use grazing only *as a management tool for the benefit of native species*. While Threatened and Endangered species are often cited as the need for grazing, the language makes it clear that grazing is to be used for the benefit of all native species, not just Threatened and endangered species.

Since 1996 when the Caliente Revised Management Plan and Carrizo Plain Natural Area plan were finalized, the BLM has continued to graze the traditional leases within the Monument without data to show benefit to native species. In other words, grazing decisions have apparently been made for purely economic reasons, not to support the mission of the CPNA.

Anybody visiting the Calientes can observe extensive terracing from cattle and obvious clipping of native shrubs, trees, and herbs. One can also see springs developed and water diverted to water livestock, and cattle trampling natural wetlands. What the casual observer does not know is whether grazing is doing permanent damage and resulting in reduced native populations. Are native species in decline? Are they being affected by the diversion of water? Are non-native species being given an unfair advantage? Are Threatened and Endangered species affected? Are native species benefiting or being harmed by grazing decisions in the Temblors

or the Calientes? We don’t know, and the BLM – which has no data on any of this and is not seeking any – does not know either. It does not know if management objectives being met.

This has been going on for eight years, despite clear direction in both the Caliente Revised Management Plan and the CPNA Management Plan. After eight years, where is the data to support the need for grazing on the traditional leases? How are decisions being made to turn out livestock, year after year, without this data?

Significant departures from the existing CPNA Management Plan and the Caliente Resource Management Plan (as relates to Carrizo) are being proposed in the current planning process. Yet BLM is seeking the most cursory level of environmental review – an Environmental Assessment (EA) – for its revised plan, rather than a more rigorous and detailed



Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). ***The proper level of environmental review for a new Revised Management Plan is an EIS.***

At the crux of the issue is the conversion of the 10-year “traditional” grazing leases in the Monument to annual “free-use” permits. The 10-year leases have led to overgrazing and erosion. “Free use” permits would be managed by biologists to benefit native wildlife. Grazing on Carrizo Plain was, and is, supposed to be used only as a tool to benefit native species, not to establish federal grazing preference. It is clear in both the Caliente Revised Management Plan and the CPNA Management Plan that the intent of the managing partners is to use grazing ONLY as a management tool for the benefit of native species. It appears that the BLM is grazing the traditional leases in violation of the current Management Plan. The BLM should immediately halt all grazing on the traditional leases until such time as they have the data to prove not only that native species are not being harmed, but are actually ben-

Grazing on Carrizo Plain was, and is, supposed to be used only as a tool to benefit native species, not to establish federal grazing preference.

efiting from grazing.

As noted in the plans, there are many sensitive archeological sites (often near water where cattle typically congregate) within the boundaries of the CPNM, especially in the Calientes and along the foothills. Are cattle damaging known sites, or potentially damaging undiscovered sites?

BLM staff argues that they need more time – 5 years or more – to gather data in the Temblors and the Calientes. But they have already had 8 years to gather data and they continue to graze without it. How is it that there is enough data to continue annual grazing, but not enough data to correct inconsistencies in the current management plan in the planning process? Is grazing still to be used only to benefit native species or not?

It certainly seems that free-use permits would be a more appropriate (and flexible) tool to manage grazing within the entire CPNM and that the appropriate public process to convert the traditional leases to free-use is the CPNM planning process and the parallel revision of the Caliente RMP. Indeed, it traditional leases appear to be contrary to the stated mission and management goals of the current plan.

The fact that they continue to be grazed without required data is an indication that they have a life of their own, one that is contrary to what the managing partners intended and what the public was promised.

The “precautionary principle” and the current Management Plan dictate that one should *not* graze within the CPNM if there is the potential to harm native species. Indeed, one should not graze unless grazing benefits native species – especially given that this area has long been identified as an ACEC, the extraordinarily high concentration of Threatened and Endangered species, and that this is the last significant tract of San Joaquin Valley habitat left in California.

We do not want to wait, and the Carrizo cannot afford to wait, another 5 years (or longer) for new studies while resources are potentially being damaged. The Revised Management Plan process allows for maximum public notice and participation and is the right process by which to make necessary changes in how grazing occurs on the CPNM and to

bring current management into compliance with the original intent of the managing partners and the public. The Carrizo Plain National Monument is an extraordinary national treasure and the BLM is entrusted with the keys. Will history show that the BLM had the courage and foresight to do the right thing on the Carrizo, or will it show that the Bureau shrank from controversy and looked the other way while another piece of California’s unique natural and cultural heritage disappeared?

Sierra Club members need to step up and encourage the BLM to demonstrate to California and the rest of the nation that it is capable of managing the lands of the National Landscape Conservation System in a responsible, sensitive, and sustainable manner.

ACT NOW!

Support Vegetation Management - Alternative 3

Mike Pool
California State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1834
Sacramento, CA 95825-1886

Re: Carrizo Plain National Monument RMP

Dear Mr. Poole,

The “traditional” 10-year grazing leases have placed economic considerations over the protection of biodiversity in Carrizo Plain National Monument. Given the clear federal directive to manage for biodiversity and not to establish federal grazing preference, these leases should be converted to free-use permits, with need assessed on an annual basis, or eliminated at the earliest possible date if their need is not substantiated by credible data. For this reason, I strongly support Vegetation Management Alternative 3 in the CPNM draft as endorsed by the California Department of Fish and Game and unanimously supported by the public in attendance at the May 2004 meeting of the Carrizo Resource Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

(your name here)



Will history show that the BLM had the courage and foresight to do the right thing on the Carrizo?

Nuclear

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would be produced during a re-licensing period.”

Becker, former Project Manager for nuclear safety and security issues for the San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, founded the ANR as a state organization to take on the legislative agenda beyond the scope of the Mothers for Peace, which will continue to pursue legal actions against the nuclear power industry.

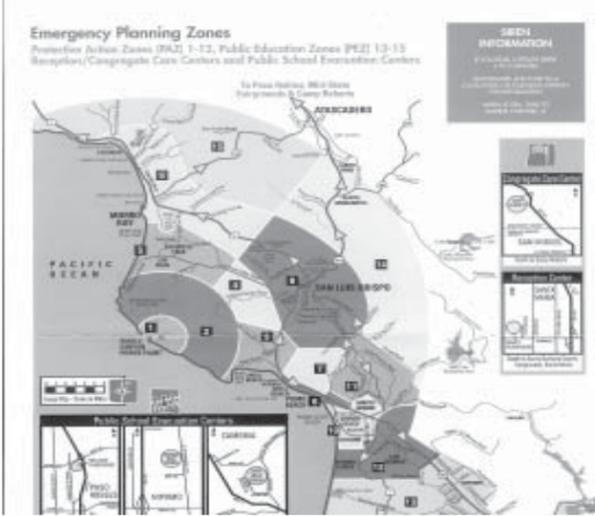
On January 14, the PBS program NOW aired *The Nuclear Option: Nuclear Plant Safety After 9/11*, an examination of the nationwide struggle to increase security at nuclear facilities post-9/11, including the efforts of the citizens of the small county of San Luis Obispo, which has taken the lead in that struggle via multiple legal proceedings brought by the Mothers for Peace in conjunction with Sierra Club, Public Citizen and others. The program can be viewed at www.pbs.org/now/thisweek/archive.html.

“It is irresponsible for California to continue to allow production of high-level radioactive waste that could severely impact our health, safety, environment and economy,” said Becker. “The risks of storage and transport, and the cost, will only go up. This is not a legacy California can responsibly leave to our children and grandchildren.”

The Sierra Club supports the systematic reduction of society’s dependence on nuclear fission as a source of electric power and the closure and decommissioning of commercial reactors. This is a necessary component of the “Smarter, Cleaner, Stronger” strategy, a report published in October 2004 for the Blue Green Alliance, a coalition of labor and environmental advocates including the Sierra Club, that provides a “roadmap to a smart energy policy for a clean environment and a strong nation” and concludes that “the time has come for America to replace its aging, inefficient energy supply system with better technologies for the new century.”

Only 11% of all federal R&D money goes to renewable energy, less than one fifth of the amount lavished on the nuclear power subsidy. Shutting down nuclear plants and redirecting the public funds subsidizing their operation and upkeep should be part of the investment in efficient, clean energy technologies. The implementation and acceleration of existing technologies, stimulation of the development of renewable domestic energy sources, and promotion of research and development of efficient new technologies would lower business costs and boost productivity.

In California alone, the “Smarter, Cleaner, Stronger” plan would result in 207,000 additional new jobs created and an average household saving on energy bills of \$770 per year.



How fast you'll need to run: The Diablo Canyon evacuation map.

Here's the Pitch...

Scattered around the offices here at the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo — the most literally named building in town — are a profuse number of note pads from Poor Richard’s Press, the printer that all local enviros who come through here use for stationery, cards, flyers, brochures and posters (convenient locations in SLO, Santa Maria, Paso Robles, Atascadero and Arroyo Grande... okay, Leslie, now can we get a discount?) Inscribed at the top of every page on the pads is the following motto: “Either print things worth reading or do things worth printing.”

It is our hope that we are doing both those things. And if you think that what we are doing is both worth doing and reading about, we hope that you will be inclined to translate that sense of worth into its monetary analog on behalf of the local chapter

conceptions: The settlement funding we just won for the preservation of our local threatened Western snowy plovers as reported on our front page last month — \$480,000, to be exact — isn’t going to anyone but the researchers, educators, plover volunteer watch docents and coordinators of the Morro Coast Audubon Society, the Urban Wildlands Group, and their contractors. The Sierra Club won’t get a dime. We won a victory for the plovers, not for our treasurers.

We were pleased with the results of our year-end fund-raising campaign. But to keep doing what we’re doing, we need to do better this year, all year.

So here’s an idea: Think of the Chapter as a monthly expense. Whenever the Santa Lucian appears in your mailbox, after you’ve read it, put it with your cable, phone, and gas bills.



of the Sierra Club (i.e. write a check).

The Chapter has lately stepped up its level of activism. At the same time, national Sierra Club has been cutting back, recently eliminating its Regional Conservation Committees nationwide in a cost-cutting move. Both the Chapter’s action and National’s action, though seemingly diametrically opposed, are responses to the same reality: we are living in Difficult Times. The difficulties are both political and economic. The two often tend to merge...but that’s a story for another election.

And to correct any possible mis-

And next month, when you get a letter requesting your financial support of the Chapter, think big! While we’re not exactly what Jack Brill is talking about in his presentation on Socially Responsible Investing at this month’s chapter meeting, we *are* an investment, and a pretty responsible one, for people who don’t like the idea of San Luis Obispo turning into a giant subdivision and strip mall, with air you can’t easily breathe, water you’d rather not drink, and wildlife that live mostly in memory.

We’re here to help with that. We hope you’ll help us out.

What’s Going On with Our Otters?



Jeff Foott

By Steve Shimek
Executive Director, The Otter Project

Sea otters are considered ‘indicators’ of the health of our nearshore ecosystem, canaries in the ocean coal mine. As the otter coughs and chokes along its path to recovery, it has become apparent that the otter is also an indicator of the sometimes acrimonious relationship between conservation and science.

Researchers and conservationists, uneasy bedfellows at best, are tussling over the sheets when it comes to our sea otters, and too little work is getting done.

Some of what we know:

- For 2003 and 2004 we have conflicting data: Population counts are up but dead-strandings are way up, eclipsing previous years.
- Sea otters are dying of all the perils of living nearshore – shark bite and boat strike; but fifty percent of all mortality is due to an odd variety of diseases.
- Some sea otters are dying of toxoplasmosis, caused by a parasite (*Toxoplasma gondii*) that infects the brain. The intermediate host of the parasite is cats. This parasite is apparently widespread; many marine mammals (and many

people) have been exposed, but very few die; *T. gondii* is apparently an easy target for healthy immune systems.

- Tissues taken from some dead otters have very high levels of DDT, PCBs, and butyltins, all known immune suppressants.

We know more about sea otters than any other marine mammal. Nearly 50% of all mortality is recovered; 15% percent is recovered fresh-dead and studied to the microscopic level.

On the broader scale, it’s obvious that sea otters will thrive in a clean and healthy marine ecosystem. Anything we can do to protect and clean up the marine ecosystem will benefit otters. We must keep oil out, create marine reserves, clean our sewage effluent, and control and ban chemicals. While these are sweeping changes, there can be no doubt that we will **all** be better off if the otter catalyzes progressive action.

Myopic scientists (not meant to be pejorative; this is the way they are trained)

continued on page 6

TDCs: The Sprawling Scandal

Ag Land Abused by Flawed "Preservation" Program

By Sue Harvey
Chapter Executive Committee

TDC's are busting out all over, all over the meadows and the range (apologies to Rodgers and Hammerstein).

The TDC (Transfer of Development Credits) program was established to redirect development rights from rural and Ag lands to urban areas – offering the opportunity to appropriately increase density adjacent to cities. The Ag Commissioner's office has repeatedly stated the use of TDCs on Ag land is not consistent with the intent of the TDC program, which is to protect agricultural resources and operations. Ag zoned lands were never intended to be receiver sites, yet applications to subdivide Ag and rural lands to smaller than minimum parcel size are sprouting up like lupine in spring.

The TDC program is under review. The Board of Supervisors has directed planning staff to establish criteria to restrict the use of TDCs on Ag land or remove the use of TDCs on Ag land altogether. These applications are inconsistent with the County's Ag and Open Space Policies. Yet, nearly 40% of the new applications for TDC credits have been to divide Ag lands. Recently, the Board of Supervisors greatly increased the Ag and rural lands subject to subdivision in this manner by designating 5 mile circles

around urban and village lines. The Air Pollution Control District recommends that TDC receiver sites (land eligible to accept TDC's) be only within urban or village reserve lines. The Board's change has opened up at least 36% of the County's Ag land to subdivision with TDC's.

The Templeton Area Advisory Group (TAAG) has voiced their concern about the program to the Planning Department and the Board of Supervisors. TAAG has requested a moratorium be placed on TDC applications until such time as TAAG's community-based TDC program is in place. The Santa Margarita Area Advisory Council (SMAAC) reiterated its opposition to Ag land as a receiver site at its meeting on January 12.

Creston Citizens for Ag Land Preservation (CCALP) organized in May of 2004 to challenge the onslaught of TDC applications to subdivide Ag Land. CCALP spokeswoman Maria Lorca sees merit in the program but "...finds use of credits to divide Ag land an outrageous and unjustifiable abuse. We have not found another TDC program anywhere that allows this to happen. How does it make sense to preserve Ag land in one part of the county only to divide it up in another?"

The Grand Jury investigation of the TDC program in March 2001 recommended that the TDC program "...be

amended to provide for community based programs only, tailored to local needs...." Yet the Planning Department has unilaterally designated several areas, such as South Atascadero, as TDC receiver sites – effectively increasing density potential - without community input. As Lorca notes, "In South Atascadero, the program is being used to override community plan standards and the objections of neighbors."

Inland North County is the area most vulnerable to this rural sprawl because of the lack of community-based plans. Requests for subdivision of land using TDC's are routinely approved and scant attention is given to the cumulative effects of these de facto zoning upgrades. In the North County, TDC's are fast becoming a means to by-pass extensively reviewed, expensive General Plan amendments.

The Coastal Areas and the cities for

the most part do not accept credits. South County has its own plan, and Los Osos has a community-based plan. Unless interested citizens such as advisory councils or neighborhood groups take the initiative, the county program, with its inherent abuses, prevails. For more information about the TDC Program or how to get started with your own community-based program, contact the County Planning Department and your local advisory council.

Also, contact Creston Citizens for Ag Land Preservation:

Maria Lorca
P.O. Box 502
Creston, CA 93432
(805) 674-1863 message
(805) 226-0892
mlorca@sbcglobal.net

CCALP will be happy to share their information with you and they can email you an Adobe Acrobat file of the County's TDC ordinance.

Otters

continued from page 5

believe it would be inappropriate to enact change without conclusively identifying the incremental benefit derived from each modification. Scientists call for more research.

So – from the conservation perspective — what can be done?

The otter's range should be allowed to expand south into the Channel Islands. Waters south of Point Conception are a federal "no-otter-zone" protecting the interests of a handful of sea urchin fishermen exporting sushi topping to Japan. California is spending millions to restore kelp, close fin-fish fisheries, and oppose sea otter recovery. As has been said over and over again, we cannot manage wildlife, we can only manage ourselves; simple common sense suggests the no-otter-zone has to go. To take action on this item, visit www.otterproject.org.

A statewide network of marine reserves should be created that places high value on complete and healthy marine ecosystems. The network should be big enough that areas outside the reserves respond with increased productivity and diversity. Reserves — areas where exploitation is prohibited — will not only provide true sanctuary, they will produce larvae to seed areas outside the reserve. Sea otters – and all of us – will benefit from the increased productivity and diversity. The Central Coast is the lead area in the revived Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative. To take action on this item, visit www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa and insert yourself into the MLPA Initiative process.

Stricter sewage and storm water treatment should be enacted. Cities with lower treatment standards, such as Morro Bay, should be brought into compliance. Specifically, we should

scale storm water treatment to be able to handle the large percentage of the total contaminant load contained in the runoff from the "first flush" — winter storms. Generally, the volume of these first storms is relatively small.

Butyltin, mixed with boat paint to kill algae and barnacles, and a powerful immune suppressant in mammals, **should be banned**. The scientific literature calls butyltin the "most toxic chemical ever introduced into the marine environment." The United Nations has proposed a worldwide ban on the use and manufacture of butyltin. The Administration, together with US chemical companies, has opposed the ban. To take action on this item write to the President and urge him to ratify the IMO convention on anti-fouling chemicals.

We must vigorously **oppose offshore oil drilling** and exploration at every crossroads. We must oppose development of the 36 leased but undeveloped tracts extending from Ventura to Morro Bay, support inclusion of Davidson Seamount, 20 miles off Pt. Sur, in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (see "Sanctuary Now!," January *Santa Lucian*).

The science and conservation communities involve like-minded people. Scientists are trained to stay focused on the issue at hand. Conservationists are trained to propel science into policy. Working together, we can catalyze positive change for the future.

For more information on the sea otter and actions you can take, visit www.otterproject.org, or write The Otter Project, 3098 Stewart Court, Marina, CA 93933.

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Calendars can be mailed or picked up at Sierra Club office, 10-2, M-F (Andrew, 543-8717) or picked up in SLO any time (Bonnie, 543-7051)

A Window on the Weather

By Jack Beigle

Paddling just before a storm or just after a storm can be outstanding. It had rained off and on all week but Saturday dawned clear and beautiful. We only had three boats launch but conditions on the estuary couldn't have been nicer. The winter sun was warm, the wind was gentle and it seemed that every air molecule was washed off and glistening.

We paddled to the sand spit and ate lunch. After lunch we walked across the fenced corridor through the plover nesting area to the beach. The recent rain made the sand firm and walking was easy. The wind picked up a little in the afternoon but it was at our backs and it gave us a nice boost on the paddle back to the marina. I wish you all could have joined us.

Check the outing schedule and join us on the water.



Classifieds

Classified ads are \$10 and are limited to 20 words. They are due by the last week of the month prior to publication (**next deadline is Feb. 21, 2005**). Please submit your ad and payment to:
Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter
p.o. Box 15755
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
sierra8@charter.net

Local Government Meetings

- City of SLO--1st & 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 781-7103
- Arroyo Grande--2nd and 4th Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 473-5404.
- Atascadero--2nd & 4th Tues.; 466-8099
- Cambria CSD -- 4th Thurs.; 927-6223
- Grover Beach--1st & 3rd Mon., 6:30 p.m.; 473-4567
Grover Beach Planning Commission-- 2nd Tues.
- Morro Bay--2nd & 4th Mon.
- Paso Robles--1st & 3rd Tues., 7:00 p.m.; 237-3888
- Pismo Beach--1st Tues., 5:30 p.m.; 773-4657
- Los Osos CSD board-- 1st Tues. & 2nd Mon., varies
- California Coastal Commission-- 3rd Tues., varies
- SLO County Board of Supervisors-- every Tues.; 781-5450
- SLO Council of Governments; 781-4219
SLOCOG Citizens Advisory Committee--1st Wed. every other month, 6:00 p.m.
SLOCOG Board--1st Wed. every other month, 8:30 a.m.

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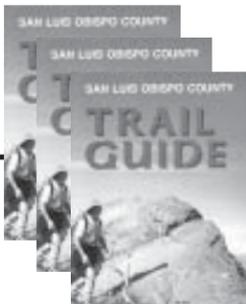
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Environmental 911

Here's an easy way to report on environmental concerns or to get information on issues affecting our ecology: Call 911! That's just a catchy title, though. The real number is. . . (drum roll):

(415) 977-5520 or environmental911@sierraclub.org

A Will . . .

. . . is a way to protect the environment as well as yourself. If you do not have a will, the state decides how your property and other affairs are handled. Decisions made now can later provide financial security for family, friends, and the Sierra Club. You may even direct your bequest to a specific Club program or your home Chapter.

For more information and confidential assistance, contact

John Calaway
Sierra Club Planned Giving Program
85 Second Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105-3441
(415) 977-5538.

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Outings and Activities Calendar

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

Hiking Classifications:

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

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

Wed. Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23, 4 p.m. Informal 1-2 hours hikes around San Luis Obispo. Check Website at <http://santalucia.sierraclub.org/index/index.html>, or e-mail gfelsman@onemain.com for meeting location.

Sat., Feb. 5, 8:45 a.m., OATS PEAK-COON CREEK LOOP: Hike from Spooner's Cove Ranger Station along gradually ascending open ridge to lunch at Oats Peak. After lunch, we'll descend along a spur ridge through a canopy of oak woods through Coon Creek valley to the ocean. Loop may be finished by Bluff trail or roadway back to the Ranger Station (9 mrt, 1500 ft. elev. gain). Meet 8:45a.m. in Santa Maria at the North SB County Government Center's easternmost parking lot. Rain cancels. SLO residents call for meeting time and place. Hikes are subject to change so always contact the leader. JERRY 928-3598 (AR).

Sat., Feb. 5., 9:00 a.m. Cerro Alto-Long hike loop. Join the leader on this 7.1 mile hike in the Los Padres National Forest. Elevation gain is about 1700 ft. We will begin at the Cerro Alto campground and hike to the summit. On the return we will pass through the eucalyptus grove and take the Boy Scout Trail back to the road to the campground. From the summit on a clear day there is a sweeping view of the coastline from Mussel Rock to

Estero Bay. Meet in the day use area at the back of the Cerro Alto campground. Cerro Alto campground is on the south side of Highway 41 and is 8 miles east of Morro Bay. This is an Adventure Pass area. Bring sturdy hiking shoes, lunch or snack, water, and dress for the weather. For info, call Chuck at 927-3769.

Sun. February 6, 11 a.m., SUPERBOWL ALTERNATIVE HIKE AND POTLUCK: If bears, dolphins, and eagles sound like animals, not teams, join us as we hike Point Sal Road to our potluck lunch destination (5 mrt, 1300 ft. elev. gain). Bring a daypack with food to share, as well as a plate, utensils, and water for yourself. Meet at the Orcutt Long's Drugs parking lot at 11am. Hikes are subject to change, always contact the leader. JIM 937-6766 (AR).

Sun. Feb 6, 9:30 a.m. Coast Hike: Meet at Melodrama in Oceano at 0930. Secret passageway to spectacular dunes. Dogs on leash OK. Water and windbreaker. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

SAT., FEB 12, 10 a.m., BIRDING IN MORRO BAY; We will tour the back bay to see how many shore birds we can find. Bring your boat and equipment, PFD, windbreaker, bird book, binoculars and a picnic lunch. HIGH TIDE 12:19 PM 4.7' . LAUNCH AT MORRO BAY STATE PARK MARINA. LOW TIDE 6:36 PM 0.4' PUT IN 10:00 AM Jack Beigle, 773-2147.

Sun., Feb. 13, 9:30 a.m. POINT SAL: Meet at end of Brown Rd. at locked gate at 0930 climb 2.5 miles to 'pass' and then decide. Dogs OK if they do not chase cattle. Water, lunch, windbreaker, nos, and a friend. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat-Mon., Feb. 19-21, Southern Nevada Hot Spots. President's Day field trip to visit two key threatened public land areas. Join a day hike Saturday to the new Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, just south of

Las Vegas, where helicopter overflights are a serious concern, if a proposed new heliport is built. Sunday and Monday join overnight car campout to the Gold Butte area at the eastern edge of the state where striking cultural artifacts and unique geological formations are in danger of being overrun by exponential increases in recreation use by off-road vehicles. We'll see these troubled treasures for ourselves and learn how we can help. The overnight features central commissary. Leader Vicky Hoover is assisted by several local experts. vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org, (415-977-5527). SF Bay/CNRCC Desert Com.

Sun., Feb. 20, 8:30 a.m. Cabrillo Peak and Beyond. Join us for this 2.5 hr., 6 mile loop hike with 900' elevation gain. Everyone welcome but beginners will fall way behind due to the non-stop pace and elevation gain. Meet at the quarry trailhead at the large dirt parking lot in Morro Bay State Park. It is located on South Bay Boulevard, 1.3 miles from Hwy 1 or 2.6 miles from Los Osos Valley Road. Rain cancels. Leader: Al (534-0462) (3B).

Sun., Feb. 20th, 9:30 a.m., MUSSEL ROCK: Meet on Quad. Beach at 0930, Hike south. Dog on leash OK at this time of year. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sun., Feb. 27, 9:30 a.m. COAST HIKE: See a remote area of Nipomo Dunes. Bring lunch and water. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sat., Feb. 26, 9am. Three peaks loop in Montana de Oro SP: Bag Valencia, Oats, and False Alan peaks on this strenuous 11 mi., 3000 ft. loop hike. Similar to last month's False Alan Peak hike but 33% more fun with the addition of Valencia Peak. Several places to loop back early for those wanting a shorter hike. Lunch break in the Coon Creek cypress grove. The wildflowers should be getting nice by now. Possible ticks and poison oak in places. Meet at visitor center. Rain cancels. Bob Schwartz, 441-9508, <rws_usa@yahoo.com> (4F)



Photo by Joaquin Palting

Sun., Mar. 6th BICYCLE RIDE from DUNE CENTER: Meet at DC with bike and helmet. We'll tour Guadalupe with many stops and then head to Pacific. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

Sun. Mar. 13, 9:30 a.m. Coast Hike: Meet at Melodrama in Oceano at 0930. Secret passageway to spectacular dunes. Dogs on leash OK. Water and windbreaker. Confirm a few days before. Details call Bill at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org

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