



SIERRA
CLUB

May 2004
Volume 41, No. 5

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GENERAL MEETING

Water issues in the Owens
Valley
May 18 @ 7:00 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Water is the basis for life, our survival depends upon it. Where is it? Who gets it? Who owns it? Sierra Club will investigate these questions in fascinating detail for the April, May, and June meetings. Be sure to attend and learn the challenges in utilizing our shrinking supply of clean water.



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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

Hearst: Down to the Wire

by Tarren Collins, Chapter Chair

By the time you read this, we may all finally know the details about the plan to preserve the 82,000 acres of Hearst Ranch. The terms of the deal are expected to be released to the public before May 5, when the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments will meet to decide whether to put \$23 million of federal and state transportation enhancement funds into the \$95 million purchase.

If the principals have [just] managed to make good on their promise to allow public input on the conservation agreement before public funds are committed to it, here's the next question to ask: Is what we're getting worth what we're being asked to pay for it? For asking such questions about the Hearst Conservation proposal -- questions that the San Luis Obispo Tribune's coverage of this issue has failed to answer -- the Tribune has called the Sierra Club "obstructionist."

The Sierra Club and other community groups have been working for years to preserve the Hearst Ranch. If the Sierra Club wanted to be obstructionist, we would have opposed the skeletal "Framework for Hearst Ranch Conservation" from the start. We did not. As an attorney, I recognize the Framework as a document drafted by Hearst attorneys, with loopholes you can drive a bulldozer through.

A March Tribune editorial did some mighty spinning in order to crow about what a great deal this is for the public and to chastise anyone -- especially the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club -- who questioned that determination. The editorial claimed that the deal would allow Hearst only "a couple of private beaches -- out of the 18 miles that will be made public." Recent Tribune articles and the Hearst Corporation's web page tell a different story about private beaches and those 18 miles "made public." From the

Tribune, March 23, 2004: "Hearst would also retain ownership of four oceanfront areas: 39 acres at Old San Simeon Village and the 426 acre San Simeon Point, 15 acres at Pico Point and 239 acres just south of San Carpoforo Creek near Ragged Point." Not only are these "retained" exclusive areas (totaling 719 acres) arguably the best spots on the 18-mile coastline, when compared to the total acreage on the west side of Highway 1 (1840 acres) it is clear that the "private beaches" actually comprise 40% of the acreage west of Highway 1. Hardly "a couple of private beaches;" hardly 18 miles made "public." And just what is the "18 miles of public ocean frontage" referred to in the editorial? If you consider unobstructed views to be the same thing as "public ocean frontage", it might make sense. We can look, but don't dare touch.

continued on page 5

Forest Service Seeks Feedback on Los Padres Forest Plan

by John Monsen, Regional Organizer, Southern California Forests Campaign

Increasing development in and around Los Padres National Forest threatens its value as a haven for people and wildlife as well as the health of the forest.

Are you concerned about off-road vehicles on trails, proposed oil wells and even multi-lane highways? Worried about growing clutter on more peaks and the scarring of views from transmission lines and electronic towers? Or do you want to see more roadless and wilderness areas permanently preserved or endangered forest critters protected? Now's the time to speak up. The Forest Service will release its long-anticipated draft management plans for the four Southern California National Forests in early May. The final plan selected will guide the agency's management of the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino national forests for the next twenty years.

Beginning May 17, "open house" meetings will be held throughout the region. The Sierra Club's Southern California Forests Campaign will provide you with all of the information you need to quickly and easily make your voice heard at the open house for our region.

Several of the draft management plans the Forest Service is developing undermine forest health, allowing for more forest open space to be devoted to off-road

continued on page 6

CRUCIAL MEETING MAY 5! ATTEND OR COMMENT!!

At 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 5, the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments will hear the proposal to commit \$23 million in transportation funds to acquire Hearst Ranch land west of Highway 1. Will Hearst take the money but retain private beaches and bar public access? That depends on you! Attend or send your comments to:

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—John Muir



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sierraclub.org

Outings, events, and

Santa Lucia Chapter General Meeting

WATER RENNAISSANCE OR ENVIRONMENTAL TRAGEDY?

REMEMBER THE OWENS VALLEY ONCE AGAIN!
By Michael Prather

The controversy surrounding Los Angeles' acquisition of water rights for the construction of its Owens Valley Aqueduct in the early 1900s is relatively well known. The "Owens Valley Water War" has been the subject of numerous books, articles and even films. Less well known is the ongoing battle conducted by a handful of Owens Valley residents known as the Owens Valley Committee to save their remaining natural heritage in the face of destructive groundwater pumping.

Nearly 240,000 acres of the Owens Valley are owned by the City of Los Angeles. Historically, little could be done by local citizens to protect wildlife and vegetation because of ownership by the "absentee landlord." The irony today is that the local residents of Owens Valley are working for the defense of its habitat and wildlife as de facto agents of the people of Los Angeles. Tule elk, neo-tropical songbirds and rare wildflowers are dependent on "the kindness of strangers." Mismanagement of cattle grazing, damage from off-road vehicles and illegal dumps are additional threats to Mary Austin's "Land of Little Rain."

To learn more, be sure to attend the Sierra Club General Meeting on May 18, 2004, at 7pm.

—Michael Prather is a 30-year resident of Inyo County, including 8 years in Death Valley National Park and 22 years in Lone Pine. He has been working on water-related issues in the Owens Valley for more than 20 years with the Owens Valley Committee and the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Tuesday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.

Meadow Park Rec Center

San Luis Obispo



Save the date!!

Greetings from the Chapter Coordinator

by Andrew Christie

Hello. I just moved up here from L.A., where I volunteered with the Angeles Chapter for the last seven years. I am not a total stranger to the Central Coast – most of my family has preceded me here, and I testified at the 1998 Coastal Commission hearing on the Hearst Ranch Resort plan – so I was fairly familiar with the issues that immediately started pouring across my desk, phone, fax, and email the day I came to work for the chapter. First and foremost among them, coming 'round again: Hearst Ranch.

This issue is reminiscent of the long fight in Los Angeles to save the Ballona Wetlands, one of the last coastal wetlands in the county. There, about 12 years ago, a conservation deal was struck that everyone said was a great deal, the best deal we'd ever get. Then some activists looked a little closer and found that it only preserved one-third of the remaining open space – itself a fragment of the historic wetlands that were drained and paved to become the cities of Santa Monica, Venice and Marina del Rey – and the rest would be developed; a portion of what was left would be the developer's urban run-off catch basin, dubbed a "freshwater marsh," and so on.

So a new batch of activists got organized and said "no, that's not a good deal" and held public protests and town hall meetings and lobbied Sacramento. And of course the developer's friends and the local media and even some environmental groups called us names and said we were screwing up the deal, the developer will walk away and sell it all off in parcels, etc. We shouldered on. And as of October 1, 2003, Ballona has been preserved in an acquisition deal where the state of California got almost three times as much land as was included in the original "best deal we'd ever get." Throughout that long haul, the Sierra Club never wavered in its long-term support for activists who were adamant in getting truly the best deal for Ballona. We held out. We won.

The details of the proposed Hearst Ranch conservation easement may or may not have been released to the public by the time you read this. From my experience, I have some advice for San Luis Obispan: If you're offered a deal that leaves you stuck with private beaches and no access to 40% of the land west of Highway 1, no access at all east of the highway, and the potential sacrifice to mansions and intensified agriculture of another 4000 acres (helping to relieve SLO's luxury home & vineyard shortage, I guess)...I'd say hold out for a better deal, demand to see all the details before you consent to a commitment of public funds, ignore the cat-calls from the local media, and go to every public meeting and hearing on the issue, repeatedly making those demands – loudly – until all parties admit to the imperative of conservation and the right of the people of California to hang on to our natural heritage.

If you want to get in on this effort, let me know. We're organizing. Contact me at (805) 543-8717 or sierra8@charter.net.

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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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98 Years and Holding ...



Photo by Chris Kornblatt

Cutting down the "Founder's Oak" that was planted at Cal Poly in 1906 was "plan A" in a street-extension project on the campus until the story broke in the Tribune in late March. After an immediate outcry from the community, environmentalists, and alumni, the University assured all that it would go with Plan B -- widening a turn loop into a parking lot and thereby allowing the 98-year old oak to live.

Until a native oak protection ordinance is passed, we can only expect repeats of this story throughout the state, with unhappier outcomes. To find out how you can help get that ordinance on the ballot this year, contact Pam Heatherington at ECOSLO (544-1777) or Rick Hawley at Greenspace (927-2866).

Duke's Dark Days

by Jack McCurdy

The Morro Bay Power Plant, which has been shut down, may be mothballed next fall by Duke Energy if limited operations during the summer are not profitable for the corporation.

Two of the four generating units at the plant were placed in what Duke termed "cold shutdown" last November, and the other two units were rendered inoperable when damaged in the Dec. 22 San Simeon earthquake.

Duke did not disclose the damage to the public, although it was reported to the County Office of Emergency Services and the California Independent System Operator, according to those agencies.

Duke has indicated in media reports that the two damaged units have been repaired and are on standby but are not operating. They presumably would be operated next summer if demand warrants.

The Duke spokesman blamed the low demand for electricity in the state for the plant being idle, along with the fact that the plant, built in the 1950s and 1960s, is inefficient and cannot produce energy at a cost that is competitive with newer plants. The corporation also is undergoing major retrenchment and is seeking to cut costs.

Duke has said it will decide whether to build a proposed new plant when and if it is approved, depending on energy demand. Other factors may include lack of capital in financial markets for new plant construction, uncertainty about California's energy regulatory climate and pending lawsuits over charges of market manipulation during the 2000 energy crisis.

Last February, a pair of rulings by the EPA and a federal appeals court dealt dual blows to Duke's plans for new plant. A hearing and final decision by the California Energy Commission on the proposed replacement plant is tentatively scheduled for May 5 in Sacramento. The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is considering a hearing on a permit for the new plant in June but no date has been set.

Chapter Calls for Coastal Trail at Port San Luis

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club is supporting the "environmentally superior alternative" and designation of a segment of the California Coastal Trail as part of the Port San Luis Harbor District's development plans.

The Draft Master Plan for Port San Luis, intended to guide the District's development policy for the next 20 years, calls for intensive development of the area. The alternative plan supported by the Santa Lucia Chapter would greatly reduce the impacts of development on coastal resources.

"The Coastal-Dependent Emphasis Alternative has clearly earned its designation as the 'environmentally superior alternative' in the Draft Environmental Impact Report," said Chapter Chair Tarren Collins. "It entails a lower net future water demand, 60% less wastewater, and 25% of the peak weekday traffic levels than the development envisioned under the Draft Master Plan."

Under the Master Plan, according to the DEIR, air quality and cumulative traffic impacts "will remain adverse after the application of recommended mitigation measures."

The draft Master Plan focuses on lateral access improvements -- pathway connections "to facilitate adequate connections between properties [which] will support other County efforts to develop the California Coastal Trail in this area." The California Coastal Commission has called for gaps in the Trail "to be bridged through legislation, acquisition, easements or dedication, and physical construction in order to realize the goal of a continuous trail system."

Without this component, the Draft Master Plan does not go far enough to meet the requirement that public access be established in new coastal developments.

The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club and ECOSLO are urging the District to consult with the Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation to establish the easements required to facilitate completion of the Trail segment in the project area and integrate the California Coastal Trail into the Master Plan for Port San Luis.

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GMO Rice Heading for SLO? California Agriculture May Get a Little Bit Pregnant

by Andrew Christie, Chapter Coordinator

On March 29th, Ventria Biosciences of Sacramento received approval from the California Rice Commission to plant the world's first pharmaceutical food crop: rice with synthetic human genes spliced in. The genetically modified organisms (GMOs) will produce human enzymes for use in drugs.

The Commission's vote — 6-5 — reflected the controversial nature of the proposal. In both potential environmental and health impacts, biotech food remains blissfully untested and unregulated. Consumers Union told the California state Senate Office of Research in 2002, "Since the FDA does not require human safety testing, just voluntary safety consultations, we feel California should have more rigorous standards. Just as Cal EPA's pesticide law is more stringent than the federal law, we feel California should require appropriate testing of GMOs."

Perhaps the greatest threat posed by genetically modified organisms is contamination of the gene pool of food crops. Biodiversity and food security are at risk from this documented phenomenon. Botanist Jack Harlan has noted that genetic diversity is what "stands between us and catastrophic starvation on a scale we cannot imagine."

Ventria and the California Rice Commission are promising that pollen will not drift far enough on the wind to contaminate non-GMO or organically grown rice, and that safeguards will prevent contamination in transport, storage, or spills (and that everything will go exactly as planned). While these particular assurances may be sincere enough, there are good reasons to see the introduction of GMO rice as the thin end of the wedge for biotech companies. Genetically engineered crops are *supposed* to pollute other crops. As California rice grower Bryce Lundberg puts it, biotech crops "are not intended to stay where they're planted, and not expected to stay where they're planted."

"The hope of the industry is that over time the market is so flooded that there's nothing you can do about it. You just sort of surrender," said food industry consultant Don Westfall in 2001. (Note: Westfall is vice president of Promar International, a supporter of genetically modified foods.) The *Guardian* of London summed up the plan succinctly: "The idea, quite simply, is to pollute faster than the countries can regulate — then change the laws to fit the contamination."

The ultimate goal of biotech and the industry's contamination strategy is to be found nestled in the trade policies of the World Trade Organization. Therein, the agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) extends patents and trademarks to genes, cells, seeds, plants and animals. "TRIPs gives the patent holder a monopolistic right to prevent others from making, using or selling seeds," writes Vandana Shiva, founder of the Research Foundation for Science Technology and Ecology. "Seed saving by farmers has now been redefined from a sacred duty to a criminal offence of stealing 'property.'"

As conservation policy, the Sierra Club is calling for a moratorium on the planting of all genetically engineered crops and the release of GMOs into the environment, including those now approved. Releases should be delayed until extensive, rigorous research is done which determines the long-term environmental and health impacts of each GMO and there is public debate to ascertain the need for the use of each GMO intended for release into the environment.

Since 2000, seventy Vermont townships have passed resolutions against genetically engineered foods. All the resolutions demand labeling and most seek legislation for a moratorium on planting GMO crops. On March 2, Mendocino became the first municipality in America to ban bioengineered crops outright. As Mendocino had no such crops (and though the biotech industry spent \$700,000 on the effort to defeat the measure), the ban was considered largely symbolic — for about a month. Now, eleven California counties are considering ordinances to keep out GMO rice, according to Els Cooperrider, a leader of the campaign that passed the Mendocino ban. Signature gathering is underway for the November ballot in Humboldt, Sonoma, and Butte Counties.

The petition for the San Luis Obispo ballot initiative can be signed at the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo, 1204 Nipomo at Marsh Street, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday; Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To qualify for the ballot, the signatures of 8,100 SLO residents must be gathered by June.

Vote the Coast Fundraiser and Reception

On Sunday, May 23, Vote the Coast will be hosting a reception for newly appointed CalEPA Secretary Terry Tamminen at the magnificent Glen Devin Ranch in Big Sur. The event is also a fundraiser for Vote the Coast.

Glen Devin Ranch was generously donated to the Big Sur Land Trust by the Mudd family several years ago (not all land owners want to profit from coastal protection!) This will be a rare opportunity to experience the sweeping ocean views and hike the inspirational trails of this exclusive Big Sur location, between Palo Colorado Canyon and Garapatta State Park, while meeting fellow coastal advocates and elected officials from around the Central Coast. Assemblymember John Laird (D-Santa Cruz) will attend, and Senator Bruce McPherson (R-Santa Cruz) has been invited.

Vote the Coast is a grassroots organization committed to the protection of California's coastal and ocean resources. Founded by legendary coastal activists Sara Wan and Susan Jordan in 1996, Vote the Coast is the only organization focused on the political arena as it pertains to coastal protection.

Vote the Coast's purpose is to achieve coastal protection and conservation through knowledge, public education and political action. By forming alliances with other progressive causes and networking with environmental activists, Vote the Coast helps develop a coordinated policy of coastal protection.

Vote the Coast is about having a voice in Sacramento and networking with other coastal activists. It relies on volunteers, paid membership and contributions to support its work. Funds go to support the work of Vote the Coast by allowing it to provide election support to coastal friendly candidates, maintain a presence in Sacramento and by organizing a network of coastal activists throughout the State who can support each other.



For additional information on Vote the Coast check:
www.votethecoast.org

Date: Sunday, May 23rd
Time: 3-5 pm
Donation: \$100 per person

For information call Sara Wan: (310) 456-5674 or email:
executivedirector@votethecoast.org

Directions to Glen Devin Ranch
From San Luis Obispo: Drive North on Highway One to Palo Colorado Road. Look for the road sign on the right 1/2 mile before you get to Rocky Point Restaurant. Turn right and proceed east on Palo Colorado Road for approximately 1.4 miles. Turn left at Garrapatos Road which will have a small bridge and a small sign. Turn left and continue up the hill 1/2 mile to the top where the pavement ends. Glen Devin Ranch gates will be on your left. The foreman's house is on the right and the main house is straight ahead.

***Please use care and headlights on the narrow Palo Colorado Road!

No More Free Ride for Agricultural Runoff?

Waivers Expire for Ag Water Pollution, Club Presses for Strong Controls

For decades, state agricultural operations have enjoyed a waiver from the requirements of the California Water Code and an exemption from the Federal Clean Water Act.

There was a time when it was believed that agricultural discharges were not a threat to the environment and that voluntary actions by growers were sufficient to avoid egregious pollution. Today, with 30% of the agricultural chemicals used in California listed by the EPA as known carcinogens or reproductive toxins, 16 million pounds of pesticides per year covering Central Coast farmland — most of it washing into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary — and 44 segments of our rivers, creeks and estuaries listed as unsafe for fishing, swimming, or drinking due to agricultural pesticide pollution, that innocent time is no more. Fortunately, the waivers that have permitted a heavy toxic flow into California's waterways since 1983 have likewise expired.

With that expiration came a historic opportunity to use what we know now to correct the mistakes made because of what we didn't know then. A regulatory program of conditional waivers is in the works to curb the impacts on surface and groundwater of the Central Coast's previously exempt 2,500+ agricultural operations, covering some 600,000 acres of cropland under irrigation. It is being fashioned by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, with input from environmental organizations and the agricultural community.

The Regional Board, having taken all comments under advisement, is expected to implement the new waiver program on May 13. It will require that agricultural waste discharges to groundwater be free of toxic substances in excess of maximum contaminant levels for primary and secondary drinking water standards, and that the discharger not cause or contribute to conditions of pollution or nuisance as defined in the California Water Code.

"The Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands" may not sound terribly exciting, but it could signal the dawn of a better day for the environment of the Central Coast.

Running over the Plover

Early this year, the California Coastal Commission reaffirmed its commitment to saving the western snowy plovers that nest at Oceano Dunes State Park and urged California State Parks to comply with the findings of biologists requiring preservation.

But the opponents of the natural world never rest. They are now using specious biological and legal arguments to claim the Pacific coast population is not "a separate species" from plovers that nest in inland areas. (The Pacific plovers have never been considered a separate species; rather, they form a distinct population segment (DPS) that does not interbreed with mainland western snowy plovers.) They want to force the de-listing of the Pacific coast population of the plover as a threatened species and eliminate the protections granted the plover and its habitat. The ultimate goal is to pry open Oceano Dunes and the plover's other remaining Pacific Coast nesting areas to unrestricted year-round off-road vehicle use.

Comments, material, and information supporting the status of the plover as a "distinct population segment" and a threatened species must be **submitted by 5 p.m., Thursday, May 20, 2004** to:

Field Supervisor
Sacramento Fish & Wildlife Office
US Fish and Wildlife Service
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825-1846

Before you write, you can call 916-414-6600 to request a copy of the Federal Register Notice of status review, a Q & A on the de-listing petition, and more information on the plover.

Hearst

continued from page 1

East of the highway, Heart said it was retaining "home sites for Hearst family members." We now know that it is actually planning a large-lot subdivision for the development of exclusive estates and the sell-off of parcels. This new subdivision would claim over 4000 acres east of the highway and could affect a much larger area of the ranch.

More of those famous details, where the devil always is.

The Hearst Corporation and family are lobbying hard for the best deal they can get for themselves. We are lobbying for the best deal for the people of the State of California. In such contests, eternal vigilance is the price of conservation. When Hearst released its vague framework in 2002, some people thought it meant the public would get everything we ever wanted. Now we know better. Now the real deal is on the table, and now comes the hard bargaining. For this place we all love, and for all the generations to come, we must not falter in our efforts to secure the highest level of preservation for this irreplaceable land.

Chapter Responds to Tribune Editorial on Hearst Ranch

Following is a letter to the editor from Chapter Chair Tarren Collins in response to a Tribune editorial that criticized the Club.

One has to wonder how the Tribune's recent "pre-emptive strike" against the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club serves the public (Fiscal Watchdogs or Obstructionists – 3/28/04). The editor speculates on how the Club would "throw a negative spin" on the use of Transportation Enhancement funds to fund a portion of the proposed Hearst Ranch conservation proposal.

What's troubling is that the editor knew (or should have known) my position on the use of the transportation funds and actually cut my quote out of Kathe Tanner's story from the previous week about the prospect of Hearst obtaining \$23 million in federal and state highway funds. This is what was included in her original story, and what the editor removed:

"Tarren Collins, chair of the Santa Lucia Sierra Club, said 'I think the scenic value of Highway 1 is extremely important. If this is a good conservation deal for the public, and will assist in protecting that viewshed, then I think using TEA funds could be very helpful.' "

If we are going to get beat up in the press, could it at least be for something we said or did rather than for what the editor thinks we might do?



A snowy plover surveys the scene.

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

Just Another Average Day in Paradise

by Jack Beigle

As we all know, winter on the Central Coast can bring rain, fog, wind, cold temperatures or all of the above. We have canoed and kayaked on some of those days. But we really have nice weather on the average. To improve our average we have some truly outstanding days in our winter season. The difficult trick is scheduling a canoe/kayak outing on those days. I wish that I could claim this skill but it is really a matter of luck. Our last outing hit dead center on one of those perfect days.



The sky was clear, the sun was warm, the wind was light and we had thirteen boats launch on a crystal clear Morro Bay Estuary. We leisurely paddled and talked our way across the estuary to Midden Point where we beached our boats and stretched out on a warm sand dune for our picnic lunch. As usual, lunch conversation ranged from shoes and ships and candle wax to cabbages and Monarch Butterflies.

After lunch we explored across the sand spit to see if there was still fresh water in the coyote well that the sand spit animals frequent. We were pleased to find that the well was still full and the animal trails showed current use. The dune wild flowers were blooming early this year. We didn't go down to the beach on the ocean side of the spit to avoid disturbing the snowy plovers.

When we returned to the boats we found that the afternoon breeze had not increased and the out going tide assisted our paddle back to the marina. It was one of those days that you hate to take the boat out of the water. Some paddlers had to leave but several went back out to soak up the joy of paddling on a perfect day in a perfect place.

Check the outing schedule and join us on the water.

Chimineas Ranch -- A Vital Link

by Letty French

Goldfields turned the meadows bright yellow on the upper benches of the Chimineas Ecological Reserve. Spring was here with sunshine, warmth and flowers. Our group was privileged to spend the day exploring the reaches of this vital biological corridor between Carrizo National Monument and the Santa Lucias. Its purchase by the State Department of Fish and Game completed a territory that stretches from the San Bernardino Mountains to the sea.

The varied ecological niches on the reserve provide homes for a great diversity of species. We started our trip from Hwy 166 along the riparian woodland of Carrizo Canyon, then moved up to a small oak woodlands, seeing meadowlarks and enjoying their beautiful singing. As we climbed higher on the rough dirt roads we entered pinyon juniper woodlands with open areas of Great Basin sage. Lark sparrows abounded along with ever-present ravens. A golden eagle flew ponderously over the ridgeline. In a creek bottom was the well-defined track of a medium-sized cat; either a large bobcat or small mountain lion. Side blotch lizards ran easily over the rocks.

For lunch break, we pulled up beside a rusted-out 5,000 gallon water tank and walked a short distance to the top of a 50 foot pour-over, now completely dry. Below, in the bottom of the canyon, was a rusty-colored seep. Several black phoebes entertained us as we munched our lunch. Then we started scrambling around, and spotted a large nest hidden back on a ledge under the edge of the falls. What a thrill! There was a brooding great horned owl!

The DFG is working on a management plan for the area, and doing studies necessary to establish baseline knowledge for the flora and fauna. They are encouraging college and university students to establish protocols and studies that can be carried on. Bob Stafford, DFG naturalist, talked about kit foxes, and coyotes, and kangaroo rats and grasses, and pronghorn antelope, and intricacies of their relationships. We stopped at one meadow where the kangaroo rats had mowed down the grasses and made little stacks to dry. These little beasts can keep huge areas mowed and they survive without drinking water.

We were on the south Chimineas Ranch; the DFG is working on purchasing the north section of the ranch to widen this narrow corridor. A wider corridor will provide much greater opportunity for biological diversity and mingling. This was an eye-opening experience to see how much has been accomplished by dedicated agencies and individuals. More people need to know and support these efforts.

Within a few hundred yards of Hwy 166, suddenly came a stunning climax to the whole day. Running rapidly to beat the first car in our caravan, a herd of about 25 Tule elk crossed the dirt road right in front of us. They headed up the hill and vanished, leaving behind a light trail of dust. That was a truly thrilling finish of a visit to a fascinating place.

Los Padres

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vehicles, oil wells, roads and mining, and reduce species and habitat protection. One of the options, however, is based on a plan supported by the Sierra Club. Ron Pugh, who heads up the Forest Service team drafting the new forest plans, says "The upcoming public comment period is the most critical phase of the process. We will definitely make changes based on public input before we issue the final forest plans later in the year."

"I urge Sierra Club members to attend one of the open house meetings and let the agency know that they ought to select the management plan based on one submitted by the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations," said Joyce Burk, Chair of the Sierra Club's Southern California Forests Committee. "We need to make sure that our voices are heard now since this is an opportunity we only have every 15 to 20 years."

Either we will strongly protect our nearby national forests right now or we will let them be developed piece by piece until their wildness is just a memory.

MAY 19: FOREST SERVICE OPEN HOUSE IN ARROYO GRANDE

Wednesday, May 19
South County Regional Center
800 West Branch Street
Arroyo Grande, CA
6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Sierra Club members should submit written comments at the open house in support of Forest Service Alternative 6. For more information, visit the Southern California Forests Campaign web site at sierraclub.org/ca/socalforests or contact John Mosen at john.mosen@sierraclub.org and at 213-387-6528 x203.

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 Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club
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Feeding Hungry Club Delegates: A Very Important Job

Three times a year, in March, June, and September, the state organization Sierra Club California meets here in San Luis Obispo County at Rancho El Chorro. They need food, since no eating places are nearby. For the past several years, Cal and Letty French have organized the food for these meetings for between 60 to 100 people. WOULD ANYONE LIKE TO TAKE ON THIS FUN JOB? Really, it is fun meeting Sierra Clubbers from around the states (CA and NV), and only involves serving 2 meals. We will gladly share what we have done, and help any new volunteer get started. The SLO restaurant Popolos has cooked the dinner for us; breakfast has been simple: fruit, bread, and cereals. However, if someone who loves to cook wants to do all the cooking; that too would be great. To take on this wonderful opportunity, please contact Letty French, 805-239-7338, lmfrench@tcsn.net, CNRCC Delegate from Santa Lucia Chapter



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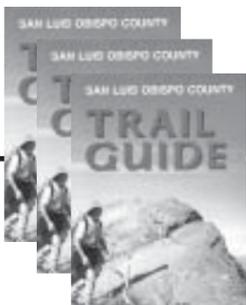
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. . . is a way to protect the environment as well as yourself. If you do not have a will, the state decides how your property and other affairs are handled. Decisions made now can later provide financial security for family, friends, and the Sierra 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

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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.

Sat., May 1, CERRO ALTO.

Short but steep hike with excellent summit views of the SLO region, Morro Bay, and a line of extinct volcanoes (5 mrt, 1600 ft. elev. gain). Trail initially follows creek then traverses steeply across open slopes to the summit peak. Adventure Pass or Day Use Fee required. Meet at 8:45 a.m. at the SB County Government Center's easternmost parking lot in Santa Maria. Hikes are subject to change, always call the leader. JERRY 928-3598 (AR)

Sun., May 2, 7:00 a.m., Hike to Pimkolam Peak (Junipero Serra or Santa Lucia). Join the leader on this strenuous hike to the highest point in the northern Los Padres National Forest. The hike is 12 miles with 3800 ft of elevation gain. We will pass through several different ecosystems, including oak forest, chaparral, and pine forest. There are also some wonderful rock outcroppings near the trailhead. The view from the top is magnificent. On the peak is an abandoned fire tower, which can be climbed. This is an all day outing as the drive to the trailhead is about 1 1/2 hours. We will meet at the north end of the Walmart parking lot in Paso Robles near the McDonalds and will carpool from there. Drivers should bring driver's license, auto registration, and proof of insurance, which is required by Fort Hunter Liggett. Bring sufficient water, lunch, good hiking shoes, and dress for the weather. The trail may be brushy in places and there is a possibility of poison oak. The trailhead is in an adventure pass area. Please confirm with the leader. For info and confirmation contact Chuck at 927-3769. (5F)

Sun., May 2, 9:30 a.m., MUSSEL ROCK. Meet on Guadalupe Beach with binos, water, lunch, and windbreaker. Dogs are not allowed at this time

of year. We'll hike along beach to MR. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org
Sun., May 9, 9:30 a.m., PISMO DUNES PRESERVE. Meet at Melodrama in Oceano. Drive about a mile to a secret way to the most spectacular dunes to a remote lake. Total distance about 4 miles. Slide down steep dune faces. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org
Sat., May 15, HAZARD CANYON LOOP. Enjoy the backcountry of Montana de Oro State Park (8 mrt, 1400 ft. elev. gain). Bring lunch & water. Meet at the Lompoc Pizza Hut parking lot at 8 a.m. or the Orcutt Long's Drugs parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Hikes are subject to change, always contact the leader. DEAN 736-6685 (AR) San Luis Obispo Hikers call for meeting time and place

Sun., May 16, 9:30 a.m., POINT SAL: Meet at the end of Brown Road. Hike 2.5 miles to 'saddle' and then decide: hike to ocean, point or turn around. Bring lunch, water, dogs that do not chase cattle, windbreaker and optional Mt. Bike. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or <bdenneen@slonet.org>

Sun., May 16, 10 a.m., CANOE/KAYAK MORRO BAY. If you didn't take your mother to some place special last Sunday for Mother's Day bring her along for a picnic on the Morro Bay Sand Spit. Bring your boat and equipment, PFDs, picnic lunch and binoculars. Bring your boat and equipment, PFDs, windbreaker and a picnic lunch. HIGH TIDE 11:44 A.M. 3.2' LAUNCH AT MORRO BAY STATE PARK MARINA, LOW TIDE 5:30 P.M. 1.2' PUT IN 10:00 AM Details call Jack Beigle 773-2147.

Sat., May 23, 8:30 a.m., Cruickshank Trail or Salmon Creek Trail. Come take a hike in the Silver Peak Wilderness Area exploring the Big Sur Coastline. Our destination will depend on my mood, but will be between 6 and 7 miles with 1500-foot elevation gain. Bring lunch, water, and dress for the weather. Some poison oak and a few ticks may be present. Details call Gary at (805)473-3694.

Fri-Sun., May 21-23, Southern Sierra Study Carcamp, Birds and More. Early explorer John Fremont traveled up the S. Fork of the Kern River through beautiful riparian cottonwood forests. Now the Audubon Kern River Preserve is a force working with the local community to return this riparian area to its former lushness. A few hour's drive south, Piute Mountain is part of a potential wilderness area into which the OHVs intrude from the lower canyons of the Jawbone OHV park open area. Our trip will visit these lovely areas in the

height of the springtime migration for birds. Learn how important these areas are for many wilderness inhabitants. First night meets for campfire at the Audubon Kern River Preserve, then an early morning bird walk on Sat. For reservations and information, contact Ldrs: Cal and Letty French, cc french@tcsn.net, (805-239-7338), Joe and Bugs Fontaine, fontaine@lightspeed.net, (661-821-2055). CNRCC Desert Com/ Santa Lucia Chap/Kern-Keweah Chap

Sat.-Sun., May 22-23, Alabama Hills, Manzanar and Lone Pine Lake. Join us on this creekside carcamp in the beautiful high desert near Lone Pine. On Saturday, we'll hike a moderate 6 mi rt, 1600' gain from Whitney Portal to beautiful Lone Pine Lake. In the evening we'll have a potluck feast and campfire. On Sunday we'll choose from a variety of opportunities: exploring the Alabama Hills or strolling through the WWII Japanese internment camp at Manzanar. Group size strictly limited. Send \$5 check (Sierra Club) (refundable at campsite), 2 SASE, H&W phones, e-mail address, rideshare info, to Ldr: Lygeia de Jesus, 1550 N. Verdugo Rd. #40, Glendale, CA 91208; (818-242-7053), Co-Ldr: Bill Spreng. Crescenta Valley Group/ Mojave Group/ CNRCC Desert Com

Sun., May 23, 9:30 a.m., BICYCLE GUADALUPE to OCEAN. Meet at Dune Centre Parking lot with bike and helmet. An easy, educational tour of Guadalupe and then to Pacific. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org
Sat.-Mon., May 29-31, "Owens Valley of Mary Austin," History, Hike, and Carcamp. Between 1890 and 1910 Mary Austin wrote a series of remarkable essays and short stories set in the deserts of eastern California. The locations were sometimes identified, sometimes only described, and sometimes fictional. We will follow her trails and search for her mines, ghost towns, and Indian villages. Our destinations include petroglyph sites, old railroad stops, several historical museums, and higher valleys of the Inyo Mountains. We will be joined by Kelly Fuller, a member of Desert Survivors, who is currently writing a dissertation on Mary Austin and her writings. Limit 12. Contact Ldr: Craig Deutsche, deutsche@earthlink.net, (310-477-6670). CNRCC Desert Com
Sun., May 30, 9 a.m., Valencia Peak Conditioning Hike. This is a 2-hour, 4 1/2 mile roundtrip hike with over 1200 feet of elevation gain. Bring water, sturdy hiking shoes and dress for the weather. Everyone is welcome, but this is a



Photo by Joaquin Palting

vigorous conditioning hike. It is intended for already fit individuals who want to maintain a high fitness level. It is not for those who want to get into shape, as they will be left behind. Rain cancels. Leader Al (534-0462) (3C)
Sun., May 30, 9:30 a.m., PISMO DUNES PRESERVE. Meet at Melodrama in Oceano. Drive about a mile to a secret way to the most spectacular dunes to a remote lake. Total distance about 4 miles. Slide down steep dune faces. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or bdenneen@slonet.org
Sat., June 12, AVILA BEACH TRAILS. We will start on the Bob Jones Bike Trail, go to the bluffs and cave, make a loop past beautiful houses, and see great ocean views (7 mrt, 600 ft. elev. gain). Meet at Lompoc Pizza Hut at 9am. Bring lunch and water. CONNIE 735-2292 (AR). San Luis Obispo hikers call for meeting time and place

Sun., June 13, COAST HIKE. To a remote area of dunes with Chumash midden, coreopsis, flowers at their peak. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or <bdenneen@slonet.org>
Sun., June 20, 9:30 a.m., PISMO DUNES PRESERVE. Meet at Melodrama in Oceano. Drive about a mile to a secret way to the most spectacular dunes to a remote lake. Total distance about 4 miles. Slide down steep dune faces.

Sun., June 27, 9:30 a.m., POINT SAL. Meet at the end of Brown Road. Hike 2.5 miles to 'saddle' and then decide: hike to ocean, point or turn around. Bring lunch, water, dogs that do not chase cattle, windbreaker and optional Mt. Bike. Confirm a few days before at 929-3647 or <bdenneen@slonet.org>

This is a partial listing of Outings offered by our chapter.

Please check the web page at www.santalucia.sierraclub.org for the most up-to-date listing of activities.