



May 2010
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Inside

Open space close-out	2
Uncooling nukes	3
One order of water, clean	5
Farm in the city	6
Our solar options	7
Classifieds	11
Outings	12

DON'T MISS

May 12

**Nature's Ballet:
The Eastern Sierra**

-see page 2

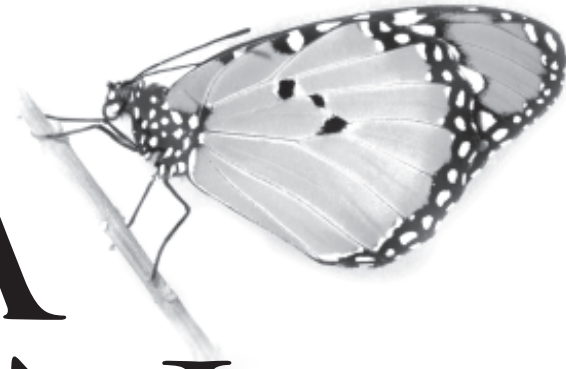


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SANTA LUCIAN

Protecting and Preserving the Central Coast



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

June 8 is Election Day

Sierra Club endorsements and recommendations

**Vote No
on
Prop. 16**

Proposition 16 is the most important item on the ballot, and likely the most fateful vote you will cast for decades to come. Even by the historical standards of pernicious, deceitful ballot initiatives powered by geysers of special interest cash and designed to shaft the public, Prop. 16 is something special. Kersten Communications, a public policy research group, has pegged Prop. 16 as an attempt by PG&E "to use the California initiative process to further solidify their monopoly of regional electricity markets and advance their own narrow corporate interests at the expense of all Californians." PG&E is prepared to spend \$35 million to kill any chance for new public power programs that can reduce the cost of renewable energy and allow local governments to meet goals for renewables, air pollution control, carbon reduction and energy security, and save millions on utility bills. Prop. 16 is PG&E's bid to strangle such potential competition in the cradle. Go to: www.powergrab.info.

For Congress, 23rd District: Lois Capps. There's not much we can add



to the environmental voting score of 100 percent Capps earned from the League of Conservation Voters last year, which included passage of the first-ever comprehensive climate change and clean energy legislation, public lands protection, and funding for promoting green building technologies. Capps is a key supporter of legislation to develop a national

early supporter of raising vehicle fuel economy standards. On the House Natural Resources Committee, she has been a leader in the fight to fully fund our national parks and has passed legislation to establish a federal program to protect coastal areas from harmful development. To help her campaign, go to: www.loiscapps.org.



policy for healthy oceans, co-founding the House National Marine Sanctuary Caucus. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Capps is a proven leader in promoting clean, renewable energy, and was an

For Attorney General: Pedro Nava. This is the second-most important position in the state government, next to Governor. As the top lawyer for the

continued on page 8

May 23: Save the Whales Again

Plan to be in Morro Bay that day

On May 23, from San Diego to Eureka, Californians will gather to send a message to the Obama administration: Do not consent to allow the legalization of commercial whaling and lifting of the global moratorium that has been in place at the International Whaling Commission since 1986. The Sierra Club is sponsoring the demonstration in Morro Bay.

A draft agreement prepared by a committee of the IWC would authorize commercial whaling by Japan,

Iceland and Norway for a ten-year period, erase the distinction between commercial and aboriginal subsistence hunting, leave enforcement of quotas to the same nations that have been in violation of the moratorium, and allow the killing of whales in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.

The so-called "consensus package," would result in hunt quotas on the California gray whale for a ten-year

continued on page 10

Wanetta Ayers



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Endorsements

continued from page 1

state, the AG enforces our environmental laws, from the Environmental Quality Act to the Global Warming Solutions Act and the Coastal Act.

As an Assemblymember, Nava has introduced important environmental legislation. He successfully fought the gun lobby to pass legislation banning the use of lead ammunition in Condor country, established a comprehensive oil spill prevention program, and strengthened watershed protection. Additionally, he has been a staunch opponent of offshore oil drilling in California Coastal Sanctuary waters. Prior to his service in the Assembly, Nava served on the California Coastal Commission for eight years where he had the highest coastal resource protection voting record.

Sierra Club California sent questionnaires to all nine viable candidates in this race. None of the three Republicans returned the questionnaires. All six Democratic candidates participated, and were interviewed by the Sierra Club.

The last two Attorneys General, Bill Lockyer and Jerry Brown, set a high standard for the protection of California's environment. Pedro Nava will continue in that tradition and enhance that standard. Go to www.pedronava.com to help make it happen.

For US Senate: Barbara Boxer. Senator Boxer has been an environmental leader for decades. As the Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, she has even more clout to reduce the threat of global warming, promote green jobs and ensure that we have a safe and healthy environment for future generations. "The Sierra Club has been my partner on so many issues, from protecting wilderness to strengthening drinking water standards. I'm proud to have their endorsement and look forward to engaging Sierra Club members in my campaign," said Senator Boxer.

The Sierra Club joins a broad coalition of organizations and individuals supporting Boxer, including firefighters, sheriffs, nurses, technology industry and agricultural leaders. The Republicans are gunning for her big time. Help her prepare for November at www.barbaraboxer.com



For State Assembly, 33rd District: Hilda Zacarias. This is a candidate who does not need the term "environmental justice" to be defined for her. As a Santa Maria City Councilmember, Zacarias supported supermarket janitors forced to use toxic cleaning supplies, saying janitors are already "working at wages that most of us couldn't make it with. To ask them to take some of those hard-earned dollars and pay an increased cost in health care is unacceptable." Attendees at Sierra Club's June 2009 Energy Town Hall in Grover Beach heard Zacarias speak eloquently on transportation and energy issues in Santa Maria and her

vision for the region's clean, green energy future.

Zacarias has assisted community-based organizations in their financial and organizational development, most significantly the Dana Adobe in Nipomo and the Alliance for Pharmaceutical Access in northern Santa Barbara County.

The Sierra Club is pleased to join a list of Zacarias endorsers which includes Atascadero mayor Ellen Beraud, Morro Bay City Councilmembers Noah Smukler and Betty Winholtz, Cambria Community Services District boardmember Muril Clift, Los Osos Community Services District boardmember Maria Kelly, and former County Supervisors Shirley Bianchi, David Blakely, Evelyn Delany, and Bud Laurent. Get involved at <http://hildazacarias.com>

For Secretary of State: Debra Bowen. Bowen started out volunteering general legal services to Heal the Bay in Santa Monica, then expanded her practice to environmental and land-use cases. She went on to six years in the State Assembly and eight in the Senate, where she demonstrated an outstanding commitment to environmental protection. We are confident that she will continue to be a champion of California's air, water and wild places.

And it doesn't hurt that she has received the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award, an international honor bestowed on "public servants who have made courageous decisions of conscience without regard for the personal or professional consequences," as a result of her decision to halt the use of electronic voting machines after flaws were discovered. She also strengthened election fraud prevention efforts, and has never accepted gifts from those who may be trying to influence her decision-making.

For State Treasurer: Bill Lockyer. One of the most reliable votes for the environment during his 25 years in the California Legislature, Lockyer went on to a seven-year stint at Attorney General, where he did a great job of enforcing the environmental protections he had previously helped make into laws. He also recovered billions of dollars for defrauded energy ratepayers, consumers and taxpayers.

He's continued that record while running the State Treasurer's Office for the last four years, acting as California's chief asset manager and banker in financing a variety of public works, including transportation projects, parks, environmental projects, and pollution clean-up.

For State Controller: John Chiang. As Calitics.com put it: "This race isn't on the radar of most Californians, but we really have a stark choice. John Chiang will bring sensible ideas to the office. Tony Strickland, former Assemblyman, husband of current Assemblywoman Strickland, is the president of the California Club for Growth! You know, the guy that extracts all those 'No Tax Hikes Ever' pledges from every candidate, even if there is a serious reason why we need them. Strickland supports the Bush plan on economic reform, including his ridiculous tax cuts in a time of war."

For County Supervisor, District 2: Bruce Gibson. You want at least one person on a board of supervisors who knows land use policy like the back of his hand, and fully grasps the reasons why we have ordinances and regulations, and what's at stake when special interests urge changing, relaxing or

eliminating those rules or the cutting of corners. For our county, Bruce Gibson is that guy, and we are pleased to renew our endorsement in his bid for a second term.

Gibson insisted on accepting the findings of the Air Pollution Control District's recent Nipomo Mesa/Oceano Dunes air pollution study, despite attacks on the science and pressure from the



management of the State Vehicular Recreational Area and the Pismo and Grover Beach City Councils. He understands the need for a land bank as effective incentive to retain the character of our rural and ag land, and to develop the potential of our local "foodshed." During the recent board hearings on the Conservation and Open Space Element, he managed to retain crucial policy

provisions to aid in the shift of irrigation from potable to reclaimed water and develop a plan to secure county access for groundwater well monitoring.

And to our friends in Los Osos who have managed to read this far but are struggling with their blood pressure: In politics, as in life, making a decision with widespread, multiple ramifications on the basis of a single issue is never a good idea. As is well known, we have disagreed sharply with Gibson over the Los Osos wastewater project. But there are too many other pressing environmental issues in the county for anyone in Gibson's district to cast their vote on that issue alone. He remains the smartest, strongest voice on the Board when it comes to land use policy, and as such, he is the Board's indispensable man.

And if District 2 voters need further incentive to resist the single-issue impulse: from the available evidence, Gibson's opponent, Marshall Ochylski, was recruited to run by COLAB, the local alliance of developer-funded "property rights" extremists that is suing to overturn the County's smart growth principles. COLAB's Executive Director has made dire statements about air pollution caused by trees as a warning against

continued next page

Meanwhile At the Party of No...



On March 24, the potential Republican opponents of Hilda Zacarias in the State Assembly race and held a candidates' debate at the Madonna Inn: County Supervisor Kacho Achadjian, Santa Maria businesswoman Etta Waterfield, Paso Robles City Councilman Fred Strong, and perennial candidate Matt Kokkonen squared off.

Strong, representing the Colonel Blimp school of political windbaggy, pronounced Zacarias "a very charming little lady" who lacks his depth of knowledge and experience (a deficiency, Strong made clear, that he believes all of his opponents have in common). After thus characterizing Zacarias — an honors graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, former district representative for Congressman Walter Capps, and the third woman to be elected to the Santa Maria City Council in the city's 105-year history — Strong then attempted to lecture the audience on the difference between Environmental Impact Reports and Environmental Impact Statements and got it wrong.

Kokkonen waxed eloquently on one of his favorite subjects — natural oil seeps and how their existence somehow equals a green light for offshore oil drilling. He flourished the statistic that natural seeps in the Santa Barbara Channel emit the equivalent of multiple Exxon Valdez spills... without seeming to take notice of the lack of local Exxon Valdez-sized oil slicks, dead seabirds and destroyed fisheries, or any other evidence of the void that separates the way the world actually works from the point he was trying to make.

Overall, the Party of No had just about one idea on offer: environmental regulations will destroy the world.

The candidates fell over each other in their eagerness to proclaim themselves walking environmental disaster areas, vying to show how passionately they agreed that California's groundbreaking law, AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, must be struck down, along with the California Coastal Act and the California Environmental Quality Act.

And furthermore: drill baby drill, more nukes, and the two-thirds majority requirement to pass a state budget is the greatest thing since sliced bread.

In the effort to one-up each other on the anti-regulatory theme, the candidates came to collectively espouse a future vision of California as an

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leaving too many of them standing. As pro-sprawl and anti-environment as it gets, COLAB has one goal: tip the Board back to its previous majority and return to the pave-it-all days of Ryan, Ovitt, Lenthall and Achadjian. Mr. Ochylski is their man. If you don't agree with that plan, vote for Gibson. And help out at www.brucegibsonforsupervisor.org.

For Supervisor, District 4: no endorsement. No candidates sought endorsement by the Sierra Club.

For Mayor, Morro Bay: Betty Winholtz. Unwavering defender of her city's urban forest, councilwoman Winholtz has insisted on protection for nesting birds, water conservation, and a bike lane for North Main Street, to name a few items from her resume.



Her elevation to Mayor will bring the availability of recycled water from the Morro Bay-Cayucos wastewater treatment plant and a completed urban forest management plan closer to reality. Smart, politically savvy, open and eager to learn what she doesn't know, a bulldog when she knows she's right, and above all a tireless advocate of public participation and the democratic process, Winholtz is everything an elected official should be. She's someone Morro Bay has desperately needed as mayor for a long time. Go to: www.winholtzformayor.net.

For Morro Bay City Council: Jack Smith. In the great tradition of citizen politicians, Smith has thrown his hat into the ring and is braving

the political waters for the first time because he wants to make his city a better place to live. The Iowa transplant worked with the Iowa River Greenbelt committee to promote recreation and preserve wildlife along his stretch of the river, and has been cleaning up the Montana de Oro dunes since the early '70s.

Here's the other thing Morro Bay voters need to know: Smith favors reconsideration of the \$28-million sewer upgrade plan in light of a proposed alternative that could produce higher quality water for use in recycling, cost less, and have a smaller footprint. Councilmembers Winholtz and Smukler agree; the other three councilmembers don't. For common sense to prevail, a third vote is necessary. Smith is it. Go to <http://smithformbcouncil.ning.com/>

YES on Prop. 15, The California Fair Elections Act. Cleaning up our political system is crucial to cleaning up our air and water, curbing global warming pollution, and preserving our coast, parks, forests and deserts. Presently, wealthy developers, oil companies, utilities and other special interests hold too much influence over our elected officials, so Californians do not get the environmental policies we need. The Fair Elections Act on would create a pilot project to make voluntary public financing available initially to Secretary of State candidates in 2014 and 2018. Public financing is a way to get politicians out of the fundraising game and back to solving California's problems. Replacing special-interest money with clean money would ensure elected officials are accountable to voters, not donors, and open up the political process so the best candidates, not just the wealthiest candidates, can pursue elected office. Go to www.yesfairelections.org for more information and to volunteer or contribute to the campaign.

Carrizo Solar

continued from page 7

San Joaquin Valley biogeographic province with only limited evidence of human alteration.

For all of these reasons, the Carrizo Plain National Monument was designated on January 11, 2001.

Current proposals for thousands of acres of industrial-scale solar panel installations adjacent to the Monument threaten this unique habitat and vital connecting wildlife corridors. Fortunately, a much more suitable site is available just north of Kettleman City. Due to salinity contamination issues, a portion of the farmland in the Westlands Water District has been set aside for renewable energy development. The proposed "Central California Renew-

able Master Plan" will use permanently retired farmlands in Westlands for solar development. Approximately 30,000 acres of disturbed land, equivalent to 5,000 MW of solar capacity will be allocated for renewable energy development. Transmission Pathway 15 passes through Westlands and can transmit 5,400 MW from south-to-north. The transmission capacity from north-to-south is 3,400 MW. The Westlands is a low-impact "shovel ready" alternative to the Carrizo Plain site for utility-scale solar projects, requiring no new high voltage transmission to move up to 5,000 MW of solar power to California load centers with no delays.

The development of utility-scale renewable energy facilities on degraded/contaminated sites like

Westlands is an environmentally superior alternative to the siting of power plants in areas that involve potential impacts to threatened and endangered species. So is the decen-

tralized, distributed generation of energy in commercial and residential areas -- aka putting solar panels on roofs and building facades, and over parking lots.

We Approve This Message



Party of No

continued from previous page

unregulated paradise, not unlike London as described by Charles Dickens when the skies and the river Thames ran in several shades of industrial black.

"Do you want the government to tell you what car to drive, what color it should be...to tell your pastor what sermons he can preach?" asked Kokkonen, apropos of the regional Water Board's proposal to require that growers monitor irrigation runoff so as to not discharge water into the groundwater that is toxic to aquatic life.

Republican talking points against AB 32 are supposed to be based on (wrong-headed) economic arguments, but the candidates turned the topic into a revival camp meeting on know-nothing climate change denial. Said Waterfield: "I am not a scientist, but when the integrity of science is disagreed upon amongst scientists, why would I, as a future legislature [sic], create legislation that would desecrate our economy based on unproven facts?" She also asserted that there is only one nuclear power plant in California.

Katcho bemoaned the frustrating success of the California Coastal Commission, on which he serves, in preserving some portion of our shoreline relatively undeveloped and accessible to the public despite his best efforts, but he had an idea on how to solve that problem: "Let's get rid of them."

Twelve days after each candidate struggled to portray him/herself as more anti-regulatory than her/his opponents, 29 coal miners died in an explosion in a West Virginia mine that had been cited for multiple safety violations. The regulations had been ignored. And as attendees at the Madonna Inn Republican Assembly candidates debate heard, regulations are bad for business.

The debate was richly evocative of a time and a belief system in which natural resources were limitless, there was always a new frontier to move on to, atomic power was the future, and corporations and Wall Street should run on the honor system because they have our best interests at heart and will bestow endless increasing prosperity, so long as they are unfettered by oversight.

Come November, we trust the voters of the 33rd Assembly District will see to it that Ms. Zacarias's opponent stays safely sealed off in that fanciful realm.

One of our Chapter's most loyal members is a tea-partying fellow in Santa Maria who has come to take a dim view of the gulf that has opened up between conservatives and conservation, and the Republican Party's increasing environmental antagonism.

He keeps us informed -- and sends us a check -- every time the Republican National Committee sends him an urgent fundraising appeal.

The full text of the most recent message he sent back to the RNC in the additional comments section of the "leadership survey" form pictured above reads as follows:

"The Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club thanks the RNC for continuing to harass an 'Independent' with contribution mailers. Every time this member receives one of these envelopes (especially labeled 'Final Notice!'), he contributes to the local chapter of the Sierra Club.

"So RNC: Keep it up! Until you

return to your *Conserv*-ative roots, the Sierra Club wins!"

In view of the news stories that broke last month concerning the more exotic expenditures of the Republican National Committee -- spending their donor's money, in one month, on such items as \$17,000 on private planes, \$12,000 on limos, \$15,000 at the Beverly Hills Hotel and the Four Seasons, and an expenditure of \$2,000 at a West Hollywood strip club, followed by revelations of "office supplies" bought at a liquor store and the daughter of the RNC's co-chair being paid \$13,000 as a speechwriter -- he feels he's made a wise investment choice.

"Why waste hard-earned dollars on black holes of National Committees whose obscene carbon footprints are an offense to nature, and all but a penny disappears as gaseous extrusions?" he writes. "I urge my fellow members to financially support Santa Lucian chapter activism."