Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

The Most Gorgeous River

When
I got there
I was astonished!
The river was like a waving snake
With fish in its arms
And
Egrets on its sides.
Cattails danced in the wind.
Tules twisted and turned
And
Caterpillars crawled
Slowly
Across the leaves.

—Ian McCaffrey
4th grade student

Celebrating the Pajaro Watershed

p. 6
Coastal Commission recommendations could strengthen Monterey County General Plan

At the end of 2003, the California Coastal Commission staff released a draft Periodic Review of the Monterey County Local Coastal Program (LCP) which is required by the California Coastal Act. The purpose is to determine whether or not the County is properly implementing their LCP and to study any resource changes in the coastal zone since the plan was adopted in 1988.

Sierra Club would like to see the recommendations put forward in the staff review incorporated into the Monterey County General Plan Update now being considered by the Board of Supervisors.

The periodic review emphasizes the many changes that have occurred in the 15 years since the LCP was certified. Environmental, scientific, social, legal and political changes as well as population growth all have serious impacts on planning in the coastal zone. For example, since 1988 two species, steelhead and red-legged frog which rely on coastal waters and drainages, are now listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. This means we need to update protection of their habitat to ensure recovery of these species. There is now more information available on coastal resources including more precise aerial photography to track habitat destruction and development. Also, some of the agencies which manage coastal resources have changed the ways in which they work and collaborate with other agencies.

The Monterey County LCP includes four Land Use Plans which include North County, Del Monte Forest, Carmel Area and the Big Sur Coast. Because of the scope and detailed study of these areas, the recommendations are all of great interest to Sierra Club members:

- New information and better understanding of native central maritime chaparral from Ellkohn Slough south through the Big Sur coast. Awareness of the rarity and fragility of this habitat has encouraged land acquisitions to protect the resource, but the LCP has still allowed too much development in and adjacent to maritime chaparral. This development has incrementally fragmented the habitat and has negatively affected this ESHA.
- Recommendations to conserve much larger stands of connected pine forests.

Unexpected consequences

When I was 11, I learned in a dramatic way that things don’t always go as planned. I was up in a tree on the farm of one of my schoolmates. A grazing horse innocently wandered beneath me. Without thinking, I jumped from the tree limb onto the horse’s back. After all, I had seen that same maneuver on TV countless times.

Only, that particular horse had not rehearsed the scene. He snorted, and took off like a shot. The next thing I remember was sitting on my butt in the pasture and the horse seemed headed for the next county.

Today, as I look around, it appears to me that humankind, like the 6th grader I once was, is blindly launching itself from tree branches with no forethought as to the result. Like a child, our society seems capable of great gymnastic feats with little consideration of the consequences.

We build houses far from jobs and stores and then complain about the traffic congestion and air quality. We clearcut steep slopes then bemoan dangerous mudslides. We cover our ocean cliffs with concrete and wonder why our beaches are disappearing. It’s like that song from the 1960s—“When will we ever learn?”

Is the human race capable of planning for the future or are we forever relegated to the forthought abilities of a grade-school child? I eventually grew up and no longer impulsively fling myself at passing horses. Is our society capable of growing up too?

—Debbie Bulger

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Debbie Bulger, Editor 1603 King Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 e-mail: dbbulger@cruzio.com
CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Do not call editor! Send address changes to Debbie Bulger, Editor 1603 King Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 e-mail: dbbulger@cruzio.com

POSTAL NOTICE
Changes in address must be published 6 times a year, (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec.) paid by postal service only. Name changes are those of the individual author. Names may also be changed by request of the author and may be repeated only with their permission.

UNSUBSCRIPTIONS FOR SUBMISSIONS
All materials for publication must be received by the deadlines listed in the Ventana publication schedule of 2. All submissions may be edited for clarity and length. Submissions are preferred via e-mail or on a high density 5 1/4 inch diskette. Save files as “text” or “ascii.” Mail hard copy to editor, address below.

WHERE TO SEND SUBMISSIONS
Send submissions to: Debbie Bulger, Editor 1603 King Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 e-mail: dbbulger@cruzio.com

Sierra Club, The Ventana, P. O. Box 12968, Boulder, CO 80302-2968.

Deadline
Articles received after deadline may not be published.

SUBMISSIONS FORMAT
Please limit all articles to 500 words to 1200 including charts and artwork. Articles and photographs are copyrighted by the author and cannot be reprinted without written permission.

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Help support rail right of way purchase

by David Wright

Environmentalists have been hoping for years that, someday, they might walk and cycle in the Santa Cruz County rail right of way, a 31-mile transportation corridor that runs from Davenport to Watsonville. Until recently, the prospect seemed as though it might become a reality. Unfortunately, opposition has arisen and now threatens to derail the project.

There isn't much controversy around the idea of having a rail trail in Santa Cruz County. Most people seem generally enthusiastic about the chance to walk or ride their bikes away from cars in the flat, scenic corridor. The trail will encourage tourism, increase property values along the trail, and provide transportation alternatives to Hwy. 1. The disagreement begins when discussing the best way for the county to purchase the corridor from Union Pacific.

There are two options for buying the corridor. The first involves accepting $11 million of State Prop. 116 money (specifically earmarked for Santa Cruz County) and matching it with transportation funds already allocated to the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). The second option involves taxing residents as part of the highway widening sales tax measure planned for the November ballot.

In the first option, the State will provide the $11 million only if the county moves forward with some form of passenger rail service such as the proposed recreational Trolley. For many, this is a fair trade off. In fact, many people like trains and think the idea of moving around Santa Cruz by rail attractive.

The second option of a tax measure is fraught with complications. A recent RTC survey showed that the tax measure is likely to fail at the polls. Following on the heels of both a highway widening sales tax measure and a recent acceptance of Prop 116 money to purchase the rail right of way, a 31-mile transportation corridor that runs from Davenport to Watsonville.

The Santa Cruz County rail right of way is a 31-mile transportation corridor that runs from Davenport to Watsonville.

The Trolley project and the use of the rail corridor for bicycle travel has enormous potential to reduce automobile trips in Santa Cruz County.

How to help

Contact your Santa Cruz County Supervisor to support using Prop. 116 monies to purchase the rail right of way.

• Write a letter to the editor in support of this purchase and the rail project.

• Attend the RTC public hearing on this issue, 7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 4 at the County Supervisors Chambers, 721 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, to show your support. Project opponents will be there, and we must have a good turnout in support of the project.

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Comment line: (202) 456-1111
FAX: (202) 456-3766
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Dick Cheney
(202) 456-1414
vicepresident@whitehouse.gov

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-2841
FAX: (916) 445-6633
www.governor.ca.gov

Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-3841
(415) 225-0707
1 Fair Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94104
senator Feinstein senate.gov

Senator Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-3514
(510) 623-0200 (Voice)
700 Montgomery Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
senator boxer senate.gov

U.S. Representative Sam Farr
1128 Atlantic Avenue
Salinas, CA 93901
(831) 425-6791 (FAX, Washington, D.C.)
samfarr@mail.house.gov

U.S. Representative Anna Eshoo
598 Emison Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 245-2339
FAX: (650) 323-3498
eshoo.house.gov/contact.html

State Senator Bruce McPherson
721 Ocean Street, Room 318-A
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 426-5641 (Salinas)
(831) 753-6386 (Salinas)
toll free: 1-800-224-8250
senator.mcpherson@sen.ca.gov

State Senator Jeff Denham
319 Main Street, 95208
Salinas, CA 95073
(209) 789-4460
senator.denham@sen.ca.gov

Assembly Representative Simon Salinas
150 W. Alisal Street, Room 134
Salinas, CA 93901
(831) 753-8676
assemblymember Salinasassembly.ca.gov

Assembly Representative John Laird
701 Ocean Street, Room 138-B
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 426-1563
100 Campus Center, Building 58
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Contact Your Representatives
Water savers collect rain for summer use

by Debbie Bulger

When it is pouring outside during a winter storm, have you ever wondered if you could somehow save that water to use on your garden during the long, dry summer? Or perhaps keep the water on your property to nourish the soil and prevent it from running into the gutter and collecting oil and tire dust and depositing them in the Monterey Bay?

Sierra Club member Silvia Sweet started harvesting winter’s bountiful crop of rain about eight years ago during Monterey Peninsula water rationing. Her modest 550-gallon cistern sits next to her driveway in the front yard of her Carmel Valley home. It’s a simple system; the water flows off the roof into the cistern. Sweet fills her watering can from a spigot on the bottom of the cistern and gives her container plants a drink. She purchased her cistern from a local nursery.

At their house high up on the hillside above Carmel Valley, Tom and Rhonda Augustitus use a water collection system that Tom built himself. The water is collected off the roof in a 500-gallon tank and then transferred to a 6000-gallon above-ground swimming pool purchased to be used as a storage vessel. The swimming pool was an inexpensive solution that appealed to Tom’s do-it-yourself personality. His motivation was to build French drains which capture water from downspouts directing it into dry wells filled with crushed rock replenishing the water table. French drains can be concealed with filter cloth and topsoil which can be planted with flowers or other greenery. The connections with the downspouts are buried making the drains virtually invisible.

Many people install French drains to control runoff or standing water which
can cause building damage or erosion. But an additional environmental benefit is that the water is diverted from running into the street and instead is redirected into the ground where it recharges the water table.

Club member Charles Koester of Boulder Creek installed French drains in an L-shape around part of his garage to keep the building from sitting in water after a rain. At Koester’s house, the water drips off the garage eaves and into the French drains below on his gently sloping property.

When Richard Stover and Debbie Bulger were remodeling their house in 1995, they built French drains as an alternative to directing the water into the street (and ultimately into the Bay)—the other choice presented by the City of Santa Cruz Planning Department. “We didn’t want to send more pollutants into the Marine Sanctuary,” recalls Stover.

Costs
Water storage cisterns are available in a great range of sizes from 55 gallons to 5000 gallons and up. They cost from approximately $150 for a 55-gallon drum to about $850 for a 2500-gallon size.

UCSC to sponsor events about native oaks
The Arboretum at UC Santa Cruz will host an art exhibit and educational display about oaks and the threats facing our native landscape. Accompanying the exhibit will be two lectures:

Sunday, February 29, “Sudden Oak Death: Ecology of an Epidemic” presented by Keyt Fischer. 1:30-3:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 7, “California’s Oak Woodlands & Forests” presented by Glenn Keator. 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Lecture tickets are $10 members, $15 general. For reservations, call 427-2998 by 5:00 p.m. Friday before each lecture. Gallery admission is free, closed during lectures. The Arboretum is located on Flath St. in Santa Cruz, 1/2 mile north of the main entrance to campus. For more information visit www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum.

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Sierra Club Member Profile
Advertising in this newsletter packs more clout into your advertising dollars. Sierra Club members are one of the most valuable audiences in America. They are “opinion leaders” and “influentials,” by any name they are some of America’s most sought-after advertising targets. Their own purchasing activity is substantial. But, more important, they influence others—in everything from opinion and outlook to choice of products. They are not only consumers, but also doers and leaders.

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Sierra Club Members are Great Prospects
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Male/Female: 63% / 37%
Median Household Income: $56,227
Attended/Graduated College: 81%
Professional/Technical/Managerial: 36%

Outdoor Sports Enthusiasts
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Whitewater Rafting 5.5 times more active

Source: 1996 MRI Doublebase

For Rate Information, Contact: Debbie Bulger - 457-1036
Potluck - The Grand Canyon
Jeff West will present slides from his trip to the Grand Canyon. The potluck begins at 6:30 p.m. Bring food to share and your own plate, cup, utensils and serving utensils. We love home-cooked food, but store-bought items (minimum value $4) make great contributions too. For directions call George, 335-7748.

Tuesday, February 22
Potluck - Galapagos
Join Polly Thomas to see flamingos and penguins, fur seals and marine feeding iguanas, old time whalers’ mailboxes and Darwin’s famous finches. Share in the fun of discovering this bizarre land and its creatures. Bring food to share for 8 and your own plate and utensils. Drinks available. Carmel. 6:15 p.m. Turn east at Hwy. 1 and Rio Road; turn south at the last stop light at Carmel Center Place; park in the lighted area behind the Safeway and enter the side entrance of the mall. For more information call Marion Chilson, 624-5510.

Friday, March 12
Potluck - Amazonia
This slide show will be presented by Don Nielsen. The potluck begins at 6:30 p.m. Bring food to share and your own plate, cup, utensils and serving utensils. We love home-cooked food, but store-bought items (minimum value $4) make great contributions too. For directions call George, 335-7748.

Saturday - Sunday February 12-22
Banff Mountain Film Festival
The best films and videos from the Banff Mountain Film Festival will thrill and inspire you. Different films each day. Rio Theatre, Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz. 7:00 p.m. $12 general, $10 students. Tickets available at Bagaboo, Pacific Edge, Adventure Sports, and UCSC Box Office. Benefit for the UCSC Wilderness Orientation Scholarship Program and the UCSC Recreation Adventure Outings Scholarship Fund.

February 21 - April 24
Arctic Wildlife Photos
This exhibit features eight wildlife photographers including Subbaranya Baterje, the photographer whose book Senator Boxer displayed during Senate debate over oil drilling in the Arctic Refuge, and photos by Santa Cruz photographer Kenan Ward. Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, 420-6115.

Sunday, February 22
Worm Workshop
Learn how worms can eat your garbage and make beautiful compost. FREE workshop for Santa Cruz Co. residents, Radouch Ranch, 25140 Highland Way, Los Gatos. 1:30-5:00 p.m. Optional worm bin $15. Call to reserve bin. Sponsored by Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. Call Karin Grove 427-3452.

Non-Sierra Club events of interest
The following activities are not sponsored or administered by the Sierra Club. The Club makes no representations or warranties about the safety, supervision or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service.

Wednesday, March 17
Singles St. Patrick’s Party
Meet at 6:20 p.m. at Tony & Alba’s, 226 Mt. Heronon Road, Scotts Valley (King’s Village shopping center). $8.00/person, drinks extra. Be prepared so we know how much pizza to order. Wear green, eat green or be pinched. For more information, call Karen Kaplan after 11:00 a.m. 335-3342.

Rail/Trail Hearing
Come to the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission meeting at the County Government Center at Ocean & Mission Sts. FREE. Contact Liz Love, 647-4255, liz.love@noaa.gov.

Volunteer to restore native habitat in state parks in Santa Cruz Co. Wear layered work clothing. Bring water & gloves. Tools provided. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. We work rain or shine, but, if things get particularly unpleasant, we call it a day. Contact Linda Brodman, 462-1438, liz.love@noaa.gov.

Coastal activist training set for Feb. 9
Coastal Commissioner Sara Wan will conduct the first of two 3-hour training sessions for those interested in becoming effective coastal protection activists. The training is sponsored by ORCA, Organization of Regional Coastal Activists, a group established to teach activists all they need to know about the Coastal Act and how to be effective advocates for the coast. Learn how to use the Coastal Act, file appeals, work with Coastal Commission staff, lobby Commissioners, and make a memorable presentation at hearings. Plug into the support provided by ORCA activists up and down the California coast.

The training will be held in the Santa Cruz Police Community Room, 155 Center Street, Santa Cruz, 6:15 to 9:30 p.m. FREE. For more information call 423-8587.

Habitat restoration - Watsonville
Sponsored by Watsonville Wetlands Watch. 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Meet in the Orchard Supply parking lot at Green Valley Road and San Geronimo Rd. in Watsonville. Gloves, tools and lunch provided. Call Laura Kummerer, 728-4106 for more information. No experience needed.
GENERAL INFORMATION:
All outings begin and end at the trailhead. Carpooling to and from the trailhead is strictly a carpool among participants and guests. Carpooling drivers are not agents or employees of the Sierra Club. All are welcome on GLS outings.

EXPLANATION OF RATINGS:
The outings described vary in difficulty from leisurely walks to strenuous hikes. The following explanation are general guidelines. (For more information about the difficulty of a particular hike, call the leader).

Walking: 2 - 5 miles a day; easy pace. Easy. No more than 5 miles a day; slight elevation gain, easy pace. Moderate: 5-10 miles; up to 2,000 feet elevation gain; 1 to 2 1/2 mph; boosts; better than average fitness required.

Strenuous: Distance variable; may involve off-trail demanding pace for experienced hikers in good condition only.

MEETING PLACES

Big Sur Land Trust Parking Lot: 3785 Via Nova Marne, Carmel. From Hwy. 1 heading south in Carmel, turn left on Rio Road, left on Via Nova Marne, then left into the parking lot behind Monterey County Bank, opposite the Post Office.

Albertson’s/Bagel Bakery: Heading south on Hwy. 1, pass through Monterey. One mile past the Ocean Ave. intersection, turn left on Carmel Valley Road (Hwy. G-6), toward Carmel Valley. Go approximately 0.1 mile and then right at the light toward the shopping centers. Albertson’s and the Bagel Bakery are then 0.5 mile.

Santa Cruz County Govt. Center: This is the large grey building at the corner of Ocean and Water Streets in Santa Cruz. We meet at the corner of the parking lot that is nearest to the gas station.

Felton Faire: From Santa Cruz take Graham Hill Rd. toward Felton. Just after you pass Roaring Camp (on the left), make a right into Felton Faire shopping center. We meet at the edge of the Safeway parking lot nearest Graham Hill Rd.

41st Avenue Sears: From Hwy. 1 in Capitola, take the 41st Avenue exit and continue toward the 41st Avenue toward the Mall. Pass the main Mall entrance and turn right into the next entrance heading toward Sears. We meet behind the bank located at 41st and Capitola Road. Senior Saunter meets in Sears parking lot close to 41st Avenue.

MPC Parking Lot: Monterey Peninsula College Parking Lot. From Hwy. 1, take the Fisherman’s Wharf exit, go straight one block, turn left and left again into the first parking lot, parking lot A. This is the site of the Thursday Farmers Market. Plenty of parking without a fee on weekends.

FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 8

HIKE: MOUNT MANUEL

We'll hike up from Big Sur State Park. Strenuous 11 miles, 3000’ elevation gain with incredible views. Wear boots, bring lunch and lots of water. Meet at Albertson’s at 9:00 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Steve Loguarda, 655-3109 (new number).

Saturday, February 7

HIKE: TASSAJARA LOOP

This strenuous hike in the heart of the Ventana Wilderness is best done in winter. Expect a great Wonderful tour. Call for necessary information. Leader: Betsy MacGowan, 510-215-9255 or Bmaccowan@hotmail.com.

Sunday, February 8

HIKE: PINNACLES

Winter is the best time for the Pinnacles. We'll do the High Peaks, Balconies and caves. 9 miles, 1200’ elevation gain. Bring lunch, water, a flashlight and $ for carpool and parking. Meet at K-Mart in Seaside, next to the gas station at 8:30 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Suzanne Arnold, 626-4042.

Sunday, February 8

WALK: POINT LOBOS

Easy, 1/2 mile coastal saunter around Whaler’s Cove, the Pit and Moss Cove to the south end of Monastery Beach. Splendid or your money back. Meet behind Bistro’s at 10:20 a.m. Bring snack, water, and dress for weather-windbreaker advised. Rain cancels. For more info., call leader: Joyce Stevens, 624-3149.

Tuesday, February 10

HIKE: JACKS PEAK

5 mile perimeter loop of the park, with some elevation gain. Great views of Monterey Bay and Pt. Lobos. Bring water and lunch. Meet at K-mart parking lot (gas station side) in Seaside at 10:00 a.m. Rain cancels. Leader: Andrea Phelps, andrea_phelps@csu.edu.

Sunday, February 15

WALK: SOMEWHERE IN MONTEREY CO.

We’ll take where the whim will take us. Easy for weather. Bring water and lunch. Meet at Albertson’s in Carmel at 9:00 a.m. Definitely call for more information. Leader: Harry Rockey, 625-7632.

Tuesday, February 17

SENIOR SAUNTER: WILDER RANCH

We’ll climb up the Bald Knob Loop Trail, a 3.5 mile steep uphill with great ocean vistas. Bring sit-upon for wet ground. Dress for weather. Meet at Sears 41st Ave. before 9:30 a.m. or at 9:50 a.m. at Mission and King next to Shem’s Gallery. Bring lunch, water and $ for carpool. Leader: Beverly Meschi, 662-2434.

Wednesday, February 18

HIKE: EL SERENO OPEN SPACE

This 1141-acre preserve, named for Mt. El Morro, in the heart of the Carrizo Plain, is one of the region’s premier hiking areas. For more info., call leader: Sorensen’s Resort, 662-2434.

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Saturday, February 21

HIKE: KAHN RANCH
We’ll watch for early spring flowers as we take a short steep loop on the Hitchcock Canyon and Manzanita trails. 5 miles, 600’ elevation gain. Slow pace uphill. Because access to this area of Garland Park is strictly limited, phone leader for meeting time and place. Bring lunch, water, sun and/or rain gear, and your own transportation to Carmel Valley. Leader: Mary Gale, 625-3565.

Saturday, February 21

HIKE: LOWER PEBBLE BEACH
Enjoy spectacular ocean views on this 9-mile hike starting near Asilomar down to Bird Rock, then east through Del Monte Forest, Poppy Hills, and the S.B.F. Moro Reserve. We’ll proceed along Spanish Bay Golf Course. Bring water, lunch, and wear hiking shoes. Meet in front of the Fishwife Restaurant on Sunset Dr. at Asilomar Ave. in Pacific Grove at 9:30 a.m. Leader: Stacy Smith, 625-3256.

Sunday, February 22

HIKE: PINNACLES
The Pinnacles are beautiful in winter! We’ll hike the North Wilderness Trail. 10 miles with 1,000’ elevation gain. Bring lunch, water, sun and/or raingear, and your own transportation to Carmel Valley. Leader: Mary Gale, 625-3565.

Sunday, February 22

HIKE: CASTLE ROCK
9 miles with 1000’ elevation gain. Great views. Meet at the Santa Cruz County Government Center at 8:30 a.m. or at the West Pinnacles parking lot at 9:30 a.m. Call leader: Steve Legnard, 402-1422.

Saturday, February 28

HIKE: ASILOMAR/PEBBLE BEACH
Easy 4-mile loop, starting on neighborhood streets, then through dunes, and more. We hope to see spring wildflowers and possibly whale spouts. Meet across from the Fishwife Restaurant on Sunset Drive in Pacific Grove at 9:00 a.m. Leader: Jeff Darden, 465-6818.

Sunday, March 1

HIKE: VICENTE FLAT
Great views on this 11-mile hike in redwoods, and meadows. 2000’ elevation gain. One-hour carpool down Big Sur Coast. Bring water, lunch and $ for carpool. Meet at Carmel Bagel Bakery at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Suzanne Arnold, 626-4042.

Saturday, March 7

HIKE: POCONO LODGE
Explore a haunted meadow, sacred oak, kilns, and other thrilling sights. Meet at 11:30 a.m. at the Santa Cruz County Government Center. Bring lunch, water, $3 carpool and share of entrance $. Leader: Robert Franson 251-7042.

Saturday, March 7

HIKE: POGONIP
We’ll see the haunted meadow, sacred oak, kilns, and other thrilling sights. Meet at 11:30 a.m. at the Santa Cruz County Government Center. Bring lunch, water, and $3 carpool and share of entrance $. Leader: Robert Franson 251-7042.

Friday, March 6

HIKE: POINT LOBOS
Explore the beach coves and points of Point Lobos, one of the grandest spots on God’s green earth. Maximum 5 miles, easy hiking. Bring lunch and water. Bumcokers recommended. Meet at Albion’s at 10:00 a.m. Leader: Charles Gagarin, 659-1202, co-leader: Charlotte Anderson, 624-3101.

Sunday, March 7

HIKE: POCONIP
We’ll see the haunted meadow, sacred oak, kilns, and other thrilling sights. Meet at 11:30 a.m. at the Santa Cruz County Government Center.
OUTINGS

Center. 6 miles. Bring lunch and water. Leader: Sheila Dunnaway, 336-2323.

Sunday, March 7
HIKE: PICO BLANCO CAMP
Strenuous 12-mile hike with 2,200’ elevation gain from Botcher’s Gap to Pico Blanco Camp to Little Sur River Trailhead. Car shuttle. See the most beautiful pool and waterfall on the Little Sur River. Wear boots, bring lunch and water, and $ for car pooling. Meet at Albertson’s at 8:00 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Steve Legnard, 602-1422.

Sunday, March 7
WALK: CARMEL CIRCLE
Come on a 3-mile rambling loop in Carmel. We’ll start at Carmel River Beach, past Mission Ranch, up Mission Trails Park, back along the Carmel Beach. Pine trees, postcard houses, ocean beaches, spring gardens—we’ll see it all. Meet at Carmel River State Beach parking lot, south end of Carmello Street on Carmel at 10:00 a.m. Bring water and a snack. Wear comfortable shoes and a windbreaker. Rain cancels. Leader: Joyce Stevens, 624-3149.

Tuesday, March 9
SENIOR SAUNTER: POGONIP VIA SPRING STREET
Moderate 5-mile hike in this diverse city park. Enjoy fresh clean air and nice views. No bathroom until lunch. Meet at Sears 41st Ave. or at 10:00 a.m. at Hacienda Park Entrance at the end of Almaden Rd. off Hwy. 85 exit Almaden Expwy. Leader: Diane Cornell, 423-5925.

Saturday, March 13
BIKE/HIKE: PEBBLE BEACH
This outing was rained out in November; bike and hike in Pebble Beach. Meet and start by bike from Taylor Restaurant at Hwy. 1 and Asilomar Blvd. in Pacific Grove at 9:00 a.m. Gentle uphill 4 miles to Morro Reserve. Hike about 3 miles, to see trees generally found nowhere else. Bring water and lunch. Heavy rain cancels (just again). Leader: Marilyn Beck, 372-6460 or outbecks@uno.com.

Sunday, March 14
WALK: SOMEWHERE IN MONTEREY CO.
See Feb. 15 for description. Leader: Harry Rockey, 625-7632.

Tuesday, March 16
SENIOR SAUNTER: QUAIL HOLLOW
Desert Mike Fisher will join us for a hike around Quail Hollow Ranch County Park to see unique sandhills and a variety of other habitats. We’ll walk the Discovery Loop, flat and less than 1 mile. Those who wish can continue on the Italian Trail and Chaparral Loop for other 1+ mi. with moderate uphill. Meet at Sears 41st Ave. before 9:50 a.m. or at 9:50 a.m. at Felton Fair. Bring lunch, water and $2 for carpool. Leaders: Jean Harrison, 423-5447 and Mary Lou Schneider, 479-1859.

Wednesday, March 17
HIKE: ALMADEN QUICKSILVER CO. PARK
Almaden Quicksilver Park is the site of over 135 years of mining activity and an area of natural diversity with one of the most spectacular wildflower displays in the region. 8 miles. At the end of the hike we’ll have a chance to visit the park’s mining museum. Bring lunch and water. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Sears 41st Ave. or at 10:00 a.m. at Hacienda Park Entrance at the end of Almaden Blvd. off Hwy. 85 exit Almaden Expwy. Leader: Diane Cornell, 423-5925.

Saturday, March 20
HIKE: BUTANO STATE PARK
Celebrate the spring equinox with a 10-mile hike through magnificent old-growth redwoods to the headwaters of Butano Creek. Hike along the north ridge, with fine views. We should see many wildflowers including perhaps a colony or two of the uncommon Calypso orchids (John Muir’s favorite wildflower). Meet at 8:45 a.m. at the Santa Cruz County Government Center to carpool. Bring lunch and water. Leaders: Peter and Celia Scott, 423-0796 or drip@ucsc.edu.

Saturday, March 20
HIKE: MOUNT MANUEL
Ascend the long sunny ridge from Big Sur State Park. Strenuous 11-mile, 3,000’ elevation gain. Panoramic views. Bring lunch, water, and $ for hour-long carpool. Meet at the Bagel Bakery in Carmel at 8:30 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Suzanne Arnold, 626-4042.

Saturday, March 20
HIKE: BLOMQUIST RANCH
Enjoy an easy 6-mile hike in upper Carmel Valley. We’ll walk up a moderately inclined dirt road to the old cabin site. Expect wonderful wildflowers and perhaps some mushroom along the way. Bring water and lunch. Meet at Mid-Valley Shopping Center near the bank at 9:00 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Larry Parrish, 622-7455.

Sunday, March 21
SWEEP AND HIKE: GLEN DEVEN RANCH
Let’s combine some habitat restoration with a short hike on this beautiful property belonging to the Big Sur Land Trust. No experience needed, just willingness to help out and a desire to explore a lovely bit of Big Sur. The number of participants is limited, so call for sign up and more information. Leader: Mary Gale, 626-3565.

Sunday, March 21
HIKE: TIN HOUSE
6-mile loop starting at Tan Bark Trail to panoramic viewpoint above the ocean. We should see some wildflowers and possibly some whales when we descend the fire road. Bring hat, water, lunch, and $ for hour-long carpool. Meet at Albertson’s in Carmel at 10:00 a.m. Leader: Andrea Phelps, andrea_phelps@csumb.edu.

Tuesday, March 23
SENIOR SAUNTER: DE LAVEAGA PARK
Feel as if you’re in the forest in your own back yard. Hike by Branciforte Creek, redwoods, laurels and oaks. Some uphill. 3 miles. Dress for weather. Meet at Sears 41st Ave.

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Feel as if you’re in the forest in your own back yard. Hike by Branciforte Creek, redwoods, laurels and oaks. Some uphill. 3 miles. Dress for weather. Meet at Sears 41st Ave.
Starting at the willow-covered banks of the Carmel River, we’ll hike 8 miles through reminders of the Rumsien Indians, 6 miles east of Hwy. 1 on Carmel Valley Rd. Leader: Diane Cornell 423-5925.

Saturday, March 27

HIKE: HENRY COE STATE PARK

Our exact path will depend on weather conditions. Hopefully we’ll see wildflowers. 11 miles with 2000’ elevation gain. Steep and strenuous. Meet at the Santa Cruz County Government Center at 9:30 a.m. to carpool. Leader: Nick Wyckoff, 462-3161.

Saturday, March 27

HIKE: UPPER PEbble BEACH

8 miles through old 101 Monterey Forest. We leave from Carmel Beach traveling through Pescadero Canyon, on to Huckleberry Point, down through S.F.R. Morse Reserve, and out through Poppy Hills. Bring water, lunch, and wear hiking shoes. Meet on Carmel Beach at the west end of Ocean Avenue at 10:00 a.m. Leader: Stacy Smith, 625-5256.

Sunday, March 28

WALK: NORTH RECREATION TRAIL

Explore a part of the Monterey Seaside Rec. Trail. We’ll walk about 2 hours or more depending on the will of the group. Wear comfortable shoes. Bring water and a snack. Meet in the Dennis the Menace playground parking lot at 10:00 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leaders: Chat and Bevy Gaudier, 373-4899.

Tuesday, March 30

SENIOR SAUNTER: FORt ORD

The Fort Ord Public Lands are managed by Bureau of Land Management to protect 35 species of rare plants and animals and their native coastal habitats. In the past, we have enjoyed good displays of wildflowers. 4 to 5 miles. Meet at Sears 41st Ave. before 9:30 a.m. Bring lunch, water, $4 carpool and wear hiking shoes. Dress for weather. Call leader if you go direct. Leader: Robert Franson, 251-7042.

Saturday, April 3

HIKE: PINNACLES WILDFLOWERS

A slow-paced, 8-mile hike with 1200’ elevation gain to enjoy and identify the wide variety of blooming plants. Bring your flower book, field lens and camera. Meet at the Santa Cruz County Government Center at 8:30 a.m. or at the Chapparral parking lot at 10:30 a.m. (on the West side, off Hwy 101). Bring lunch, water, sun protection and hiking shoes. Leader: George Jamil, 335-7748.

Saturday, April 3

HIKE: HUCKLEBERRY HILL

We’ll find our thrill on Huckleberry Hill, on the east side of Point Lobos. Moderate climb through a series of ecosystems from Monterey Pine to oak to chaparral to grassland with wildflowers to pine. Possible side trip to the redwoods of Gibson creek. 4 miles with 900’ elevation gain. Meet at Albertron’s at 10:00 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Charles Gaggin, 699-1062, work: 659-8029, co-leader: Larry Parrish, 622-7455.

Sunday, April 4

HIKE: ROCKY RIDGE

This is the place where we find the most wildflowers, in numbers and in variation. Let’s dedicate this outing to the memory of the Ventana Chapter’s unforgettable leader Joan D’Alton who loved this hike so much and led it several times each year. We’ll go up through Soberanes Cyn., hike as far as we want or to the park border, and will return on the Rocky Ridge Trail. A loop of about 5-8 miles, very steep, about 2000’ elevation gain but we’ll go slowly with many breaks. Bring water and lunch, wear shoes with a good tread. Camera and binoculars optional. Meet at Albertron’s at 10:30 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Arline Stuer, 524-1647.

Tuesday, April 6

SENIOR SAUNTER: AN NOUVEAU

Hike around the sand dunes and see elephant seals and lots of pups, 3 + miles, some in sand. We’ll return to the Visitor Center for lunch. Entrance for $5. Dress for weather. Meet at Sears 41st Ave. before 9:30 a.m. Bring lunch, water and $4 for carpool, plus part of entrance fee. Leader: Grace Hansen, 476-7254.

Friday, April 9

HIKE: VEEDER TRAIL & REDWOOD CYN.

In spring the Veeder Trail in Garland Park hosts a profusion of wildflowers. Our 3 to 4 mile loop hike will be very steep. Bring water and lunch. Meet behind Brinton’s at 9:30 a.m. to carpool. Heavy rain cancels. Leaders: Cath Ferranti and Mary Dainton, 372-7427.

Saturday, April 10

SPRING SAUNTER: BLOMQquist RANCH

We have special permission from the Regional Park District to visit the Carmel Valley Ranch. Join us for an easy saunter of up to 6 miles. No trail burners. We’ll enjoy beautiful vistas of mature Valley Oaks and spring beauty. Bring lunch, water and a windbreaker. Reservations required; space is limited. Call leader: Joyce Stevens, 624-3149.

Sunday, April 11

HIKE: POST SUMMIT

Very strenuous hike in Big Sur, over Pict Summit to Pico Blanco Public Camp via Mount Manuel trail, and down to the Coast Road on the Little Sur trail. 15 miles, 3400’ elevation gain. Bring lunch and water, boots and be prepared for brush (small clip-pers recommended). Meet at Albertron’s at 8:00 a.m. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Steve Legnard, 422-1422.

Wednesday, April 14

HIKE: FT. ORD

Hike over oak-studded hillsides and rolling grasslands near Lagoa Soca. Ridgepoles afford great views and a chance to see raptors and hillfowls of wildflowers. Bring water and lunch. 8 miles. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Sears 41st Ave. at 9:15 a.m. at Express Deli at Rio Del Mar exit off Hwy 1; or at 10:00 a.m. at trail head near the junction of Hwy 1 and Hwy 68 in Monterey on the north side of the highway up from redwood carving display. Leader: Diane Cornell, 423-5925.

Saturday, April 17

HIKE: GARZAS CREEK

We’ll check out the blooms along the Terraces Trail and then drop down to Garzas Canyon to return along the creek. 5 miles, little elevation gain. The flowers should make it all worthwhile. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the main parking lot of Garland Ranch (on Carmel Valley Road). Bring lunch and water. Leader: Mary Gale, 626-3560.

Friday - Sunday, April 23 - 25

BACKPACK: VENTANA WILDERNESS

Escondido to Arroyo Seco. We’ll start from Escondido Camp to Lost Valley (5.8 miles). Saturday, we’ll pass Indian Valley and the grinding rocks before we lunch at a beautiful waterfall near Tan Oak Camp. After spending the night at Strawberry Valley Camp (8.7 miles), we’ll continue to Arroyo Seco (8.4 miles). 21.9 miles total; rated B8. Individual Community, Contact leader: Henry Leinen, Hleinen@aol.com. Cost $5. Car shuttle on Friday afternoon.

Starting anew ... or Adapting the Old

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Threat to hills countywide
Planning Commission vote could set precedent for steep slope vineyards

Monterey County currently prohibits cultivation on slopes exceeding 25%. The Chapter has successfully fought to uphold this law repeatedly over the past several years. We filed a legal challenge in 1998 which resulted in the County reversing its decision to allow an exception for viticulture. Currently, the protective ordinance faces a threat from a seemingly insignificant source: a small vineyard in a residential neighborhood in Carmel Valley.

County staff agreed the steep slope ordinance had been violated on this property, but the Planning Commission voted 7 to 3 to overturn the violation. This decision threatens to be a precedent.

Why is this important? The Sierra Club, Carmel Valley Association, and a Prunedale neighborhood group spoke at the hearing about how dangerous it would be to set such a precedent which would affect the whole county. According to county staff, there are 162,000 acres of land between 25% and 35% in Monterey County. This figure does not include steeper slopes over 35% which could be opened to cultivation if this ordinance is weakened.

Steep slopes abound in coastal areas in Carmel Valley, North County, and Salinas. The local chapter of the California Native Plant Society supports prohibitions on steep slope conversion and does not want to see the ordinance weakened.

From an environmental perspective, cultivation on steep slopes presents erosion problems; increases run off; and destroys native habitat, wildlife corridors, and viewsheds. In addition, converting land in residential neighborhoods to agriculture establishes conflicts with residents because of pesticide, fungicide and herbicide use; truck traffic to plant, tend and harvest; associated noise and air pollution; and increased use of water.

In short, the law must be enforced to protect both the environment and residents' health, safety and quality of life.

Big Wine
Monterey Supervisors approve Gallo project without EIR

As we go to press, the Monterey Board of Supervisors voted 5 to 2 (Potter and Armenta against) to approve a 352-acre-foot reservoir on eight acres near Soledad to accommodate a vineyard expansion by corporate wine-maker, Gallo.

Sierra Club did not oppose the vineyard expansion itself, but argued for a thorough environmental review of this huge project. The Club called for an EIR to consider where the best site would be for the proposed reservoir, dam and drainage ditch. The site selected by Gallo, and now approved by the Supervisors, would require cutting down 321 mature native oaks adjacent to a wildlife corridor. As Supervisor Dave Potter noted, the 913,125 cubic yards of grading required by the project is more than seen in most subdivisions and would warrant environmental review.

The inadequate environmental analysis was further compounded by the fact that environmental documents were arriving at the last minute, too late for independent review. Gallo’s past environmental track record has not been sterling; the company has been assessed significant fines in Sonoma for damage to nearby waterways. Proper environmental review might determine a less sensitive site for the water structures on Gallo’s 2100-acre ranch.

The Monterey Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has expressed concern about the conclusions of the weak environmental review.
Democratic nomination to replace term-limited State Senator Joe Simitian are vying for the Assembly Member Ted Lempert in the 17th District (i.e. Verticillium Wilt and Pierce's disease.)

During his second four years in the State Assembly, Lempert authored the Ballast Water Management Program, the first of its kind in the country, to control the invasion of nonnative species along the coast.

Sierra Club endorses incumbent Representative Sam Farr for re-election. Congressmember Farr was awarded National Sierra Club's prestigious Ed Wayburn Award in September for his strong leadership in environmental legislation and causes.

In 2003, he spent time on a broad array of issues, all of which tie in to the quality of life on the Central Coast including:

- Sponsored the Southern Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act, a bill that will help bring back California's beloved sea otters by authorizing a recovery program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The bill will also aid Monterey Bay area marine scientists in determining the causes of poor sea otter health and assist in population recovery by authorizing a research program administered by the Dept. of Interior.
- Began drafting, and will continue to work on a piece of comprehensive oceans legislation in response to the shortchange the environment.
- Introduced the Puppy Protection Act which would stop the overbreeding of female dogs in puppy mills and create a "three strikes you're out" policy for chronically abusive breeders.

Sierra Club endorses former Assembly Member Ted Lempert in the 11th State Senate District, where Lempert and current Assembly Member Joe Simitian are vying for the Democratic nomination to replace term-limited State Senator Byron Sher.

has endorsed Lempert as his successor. The 11th Senate District, includes the Santa Cruz and San Mateo County coastlines. Lempert occupied the Assembly seat currently held by Simitian for eight years until term limits forced him to leave. As an Assembly Member, Lempert's environmental voting record was rated 100% by the California League of Conservation Voters.

As an Assembly Member Ted Lempert authored the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act that became a model for the country in preventing and responding to oil spills along the coast. He also authored the California Coastal Sanctuary Act that banned the offshore oil and gas drilling and established a permanent ban on all new offshore oil and gas leases in state waters between San Simeon and the Farallons.

During his second four years in the State Assembly, Lempert authored the Ballast Water Management Program, the first of its kind in the country, to control the invasion of nonnative species along the coast.

Sierra Club endorses John Laird for 27th State Assembly District 2003 was John Laird's first year in the State Assembly. No other first-term member had more bills signed into law last year than John Laird. Twelve of his 13 bills were signed by the Governor, and Laird was also named Chair of the Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials.

Several bills focused on environmental issues, including:

- AB 1492 strengthens the Williamson Act by increasing penalties and closing loopholes for those who would violate the Williamson Act's agricultural land preservation contracts;
- AB 1702 preserves federal funding of toxic cleanup programs at former military installations, such as Fort Ord, helping spur economic revitalization at these sites;
- AB 1420 establishes a statewide elk management plan and increases the effectiveness of the Department of Fish & Game's code and regulatory enforcement without additional cost; and
- AB 1645 enables tighter enforcement of Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) programs, ensuring better administration of hazardous waste and hazardous materials programs at the local level.

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Vote yes on Proposition 56, the Budget Accountability Act

Proposition 56, the Budget Accountability Act on the March 2nd primary ballot, will reform the State budget process. California is one of only three states that routinely require a vote of two-thirds or more in each house of the legislature to pass a budget. The two-thirds requirement enables a minority of members who may oppose environmental funding, to block budget adoption. The requirement is profoundly anti-democratic.

Proposition 56 reduces the vote threshold to adopt the State budget and related tax legislation from two-thirds to 55%. This sensible reform will allow the will of the people to be expressed through budgets that adequately protect our resources and public health.

Prop. 56 holds politicians accountable by withholding the Governor’s and legislators’ pay until they pass a budget. It encourages responsible budget decisions by the legislature, restrains partisan extremes, eases budget gridlock, and requires a real “rainy day” fund to help balance the budget in hard times.

Through the Voter Information Guide and a website, Proposition 56 also provides voters with information on how the State spends its funds and how lawmakers voted on budget issues. This information enables voters to hold elected officials accountable for budgets that shortchange the environment.

Over the past few years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been cut from State programs that would reduce air pollution, decrease asthma, clean up toxic sites, and encourage smart growth. This year’s budget crisis, like others in the past, endangers our environment, as scientists and enforcers at State agencies do not have the resources to do their jobs.

The coalition opposing Proposition 56 is funded by big oil, alcohol, tobacco and other industries who are clearly interested in protecting the status quo in order to preserve their own polluting interests.

They benefit when a small minority retains a disproportionate amount of influence.

Public opinion polls and the approval of several recent bond measures show that voters strongly support funding clean air, clean water, coastal protection and open-space preservation. Budget accountability reform is essential to prevent an anti-environment minority from frustrating the wishes of the voters.

Prop. 56 is a good-government measure that will increase accountability. As the Sacramento Bee editorialized: “The two-thirds rule creates a system designed to produce a late budget, and usually an irresponsible one, but leaves no one accountable for the failure. It undermines democracy.”

Make legislators and the governor accountable to Californians and not to polluting special interests. Prop. 56 is endorsed not only by Sierra Club, but also by over 150 other organizations including the American Lung Association of California, the League of Women Voters of California, California Common Cause, California Budget Project, California State PTA and California League of Conservation Voters.

Go to www.budgetaccountabilitynow.org to learn more about this important initiative. Vote YES on Prop. 56. Do not confuse it with Prop 57 or Prop. 58.
The Ventana Chapter endorses Jane Parker for Monterey County Supervisor for the 4th District. The 4th District is an open race as pro-growth incumbent Edith Johnson will be vacating her seat. This is an opportunity to put someone with environmental priorities and a social conscience on the Board of Supervisors, Jane Parker plans to advocate for policies to protect the quality of Monterey County’s land, air, and water; to pursue sound land use principles such as city-centered growth and a jobs/housing balance; to bring about more affordable housing to the community, and to work to ensure access to community health care and county health services.

Jane Parker currently serves as Chair of the Monterey Peninsula College Board where she is an advocate for quality education-opposing unfair education cuts proposed by Sacramento-and leading efforts to attract and retain quality faculty and teaching staff.

Parker also serves as a Vice President for Planned Parenthood Mar Monte where she raises $5 million/year for provision of essential family health services, education, and counseling. Prior to serving with Planned Parenthood, Jane founded and managed a healthy meal preparation and delivery service targeting working families and homebound

Dave Potter
Monterey County Supervisor 5th District

The Ventana Chapter endorses incumbent Dave Potter for Monterey County Board of Supervisor’s Fifth District, now representing Big Sur, Carmel, Carmel Valley, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Pebble Beach, the Hwy. 68 corridor and Las Palmas in Salinas. Potter is running for his third term, having served since November, 1996. During this time, his accomplishments have included:

- Opposing the proposed Hatton Canyon Freeway and supporting the canyon as open space.
- Opposing the proposed new Los Padres Dam on the Carmel River.
- Initiating the County requirement for proof of water supply before issuance of building permits.
- Supporting the countywide ban on transferring water credits at the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District.
- Supporting a General Plan Update for Monterey County based on the guiding objectives that reflect values and priorities established during an inclusive public process.
- Opposing construction of a new hotel on Monterey Bay at Sand City.
- Obtaining funding for returning train service to the Peninsula.
- Assisting and encouraging the formation of local citizen-based watershed organizations such as the Carmel River Watershed Council and the Garrapata Creek Watershed Council.
- Acting as the Monterey County representative to the statewide task force on Sudden Oak Death.
- Acting as the Monterey County representative to FishNet 4c, an organization sponsored by NOAA Fisheries to improve compliance with rules protecting threatened steelhead trout.
- Preserving the local economy by working to keep agricultural lands in production.
- Statewide environmental leaders such as Mike Reilly, chair of the California Coastal Commission, and Fred Keeley, endorse Potter.

Sierra Club cruises to benefit political candidates

The Sierra Club is offering four cruises to Channel Islands National Park with a park ranger to lead hikes on each island and help identify the animal and plant life. All cruises depart from Santa Barbara aboard the 68’ boat Truth.

Cruise dates:
- March 26-28: San Miguel, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands, $480.
- April 3: Santa Cruz Island, $125.
- April 17-18: San Miguel and Santa Rosa Islands, $320.
- August 26-31: All 5 islands, $725.

To make a reservation, send a check for $100 payable to Sierra Club California F/C to Joan Jones Holzer, 11826 The Wye St., El Monte, CA 91732. For more information contact 626-443-2756 or jholzerbl@iool.com.

Would you wear a rainforest?

Co-op America’s "Woodwise Consumer Guide" has found a surprise in our closets: wood products. Rayon, Tencel, and acetate are made from virgin wood pulp. Much of our rayon comes from developing countries, such as Indonesia, where environmental laws are weak. You just might want to switch to silk, wool, linen, recycled fleece, organic cotton, and hemp. Buying used clothes and donating your old clothes to the needy or selling them at a consignment store are good ways to recycle.

Bad air days

EPA data on air quality in the United States list five California cities as the highest ranking in the number of days of unhealthy air quality (total for 2000 to 2002). Riverside/San Bernardino topped the list with 445 days of unhealthy air followed by Fresno with 421, Bakersfield with 409, Los Angeles/Long Beach with 255, and Sacramento with 163. Also in the top 50 nationwide were San Diego with 82 unhealthy air days, Orange County with 81, Ventura with 67, San Jose with 49 and Oakland with 40.

California is home to 10 of the top 50 metro areas with the greatest number of bad air days, more than any other state. And while our air quality is generally good here on the central coast, remember, our pollution blows east.

Reason to take the train

The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that almost 43,000 people were killed in traffic collisions in 2002. That’s more people killed each month than died from the attack on the World Trade Center Towers.

Mercury threat

On December 10th, the Bush administration joined 45 states warning Americans not to eat fish with high mercury levels that can cause birth defects and learning disabilities. But days later, the administration said it wanted to give power plants permission to shower more mercury onto our lakes and streams for 10 years longer than the law allows.

There is a better way. The Bush Administration should enforce clean air and clean water laws; hold polluters responsible for the damage they do; and create jobs and clean up our environment by investing in modern technology, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources like wind and solar power to create a clean and affordable energy future.

Clean up duty

The Superfund clean-up program ran out of polluter-contributed funds in October 2003 leaving taxpayers to pick up the tab for polluting industries. George W. Bush is the first president to refuse to push for renewal of the polluter-pays tax since Ronald Reagan signed the superfund reauthorization into law in 1986.

or-gan-ic mat-ter
Transit - highway rules unfair
Brookings Institution notes Federal transportation policy favors highway construction

A report released in December by the Brookings Institution confirms what transportation reform advocates have learned from their experience in the field: there is in fact an unlevel playing field between transit and highway projects.

Report author Edward Beimborn and Robert Puentes, the report, "Highways and Transit: Leveling the Playing Field in Federal Transportation Policy," documents that transit and highways are treated very differently in federal policy, law and regulations. Highways are given a big leg up.

If highways had to be built according to procedures required of transit:

- Only 52% of their capital costs would be paid from federal sources instead of 80 to 90%.
- They would need a congressional "sponsor" who would help secure scarce funds.
- Local governments would have to demonstrate they could pay for their share and could operate and maintain the highways.
- Highway projects would have to compete with police, fire, education and other programs for funding. In lean budget years, highways could be closed some of the time to save money.

If transit rules applied to highways, highway construction would be subject to intense political scrutiny and some cities, states and metropolitan areas would never be able to build any highways, even if the public wanted them very much. Only a few highway segments could begin construction each year.

To remedy the inequity between highway and transit regulations, the authors recommend the following:

- Require the same land use guidelines for highway construction as for transit projects. Currently the federal government will only support transit projects where land use policies provide for efficient development patterns.
- Require cost-effectiveness procedures for highway expenditures. Currently there is no requirement for cost-effectiveness for highways. As has been observed, "an empty bus is bad; an empty highway is good."
- Implement peer comparisons for highway projects as is required of transit projects to encourage use of best practices.
- Additional recommendations for leveling the playing field are included in this well-referenced report.

Communities should not be faced with the choice of an effective transit project that requires mostly local funding or a highway project that is mostly funded from state and federal sources. The double standard for highway and transit projects heavily favors the most polluting and least efficient form of transportation. The Sierra Club favors the most energy and land conserving transportation modes. A level playing field between highways and transit would go far to achieving this goal.

To view the report visit www.brookings.edu.

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Sam Hopkins dies at 89
Long-time Sierra Club member Samuel Hopkins died peacefully on December 30, 2003 of pneumonia. He was 89. Sam was born in San Francisco and educated on the East Coast, attending St. George’s in Rhode Island and Yale University. As a young man, he was drafted into the army where he served 5 years during World War II including several months spent in Germany as a prisoner of war.

In 1947, he met his future wife, Nancy on a Sierra Club backpacking trip in the High Sierra. A year later, they married and moved into a home Sam and a neighbor had built on Partington Ridge in Big Sur. The Hopkins raised five children, dividing their time between Big Sur and another home in Carmel Valley. Throughout his long and active life, Sam pursued his passions for fishing, hunting, woodcutting, bicycling and skin-diving for abalone. An avid hiker, known for his fast and light style, Sam was often seen walking the trails of the Ventana and Garland Park. Close friends fondly remember him as appearing in the wilderness as a bronzed Greek god so radiant was he in these surroundings. Locally, Sam and his wife were ardent conservationists and community leaders who supported many worthwhile causes. Nancy died in 2001. Sam is survived by his five children: Jury Hopkins of Mucuge, Brazil; Darien Raistrick of Los Alamos, New Mexico; Heidi Hopkins, of Lee Vining, California; Craig Hopkins, of Big Sur; Kip Hopkins, of Carmel Valley; and three grandchildren.
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California’s oak woodlands need your help!

by Pat Veesart

Close your eyes and try to picture California in your mind. What do you see? The snow-capped Sierra Nevada? Towering redwoods shrouded in mist? The steep cliffs and crashing waves of the Big Sur coastline? Or perhaps golden hills studded with gray-green oak trees under a cyanic sky? Oak woodlands are one of California’s signature landscapes—a natural icon of the Golden State.

Oak woodlands are the richest terrestrial wildlife habitat in California. Over 335 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians depend upon them. These woodlands are also home to hundreds of species of plants and play a critical role in protecting soils, regulating water flow in watersheds, and maintaining water quality in streams and rivers.

In the last 250 years, California has lost 90% of its majestic valley oaks and one third of all species of oaks combined. Of an estimated 10-12 million acres of original oak woodlands, only some seven million acres remain. Most are degraded to some degree, and only about 4% enjoy protected status.

Oak woodlands continue to be impacted by intensive urbanization and agriculture. The California Resources Agency estimates that more than 14,000 acres of oaks are lost annually to development, rangeland “improvement,” and conversion to more intensive agricultural uses such as vineyards. Because oaks are considered “non-commercial” species, they are not subject to state laws which regulate timber harvest. Local protections through General Plans, resolutions, ordinances, and voluntary efforts generally have failed to slow the loss of California’s oak woodlands.

Senate Bill 711, introduced in the state legislature last year by Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-Los Angeles), would require California’s counties to prepare Oak Woodland Management plans or ordinances that require mitigation for the loss of oak woodlands and specify minimum mitigation measures. Unfortunately, SB 711 was bottled up in the Assembly Appropriations Committee because of opposition from development and agriculture interests. The author intends to move it out of committee and to a vote in 2004.

SB 711 is a common-sense approach to protecting California’s vanishing oak woodlands that has the flexibility to allow development and agricultural activities to continue in areas where oaks occur.

California’s oak woodlands need and deserve protection. If our children and grandchildren are to enjoy California’s unique oak-studded landscape, then it is incumbent upon us to take the steps necessary to preserve them now. Please call or write your legislators and ask them to support SB 711, or join Sierra Club California’s Legislative Action Network (http://cal-legalert.sierraclubaction.org) to receive alerts on this and other important state legislation.

See related article on p. 11.