
CNPS – Monterey Bay Chapter
Archive of Conservation Reports
from The Wallflower
2007-2018

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2017 & 2018

November/December 2018

CARMEL AREA STATE PARKS The Chapter recently submitted comments on the Draft EIR and the Preliminary General Plan. Protection of sensitive plant habitats and continued access to the Gowen Cypress Forest were stressed.

FORT ORD The status of the Fort Ord Native Plant Reserves continues to be monitored in light of the uncertain future of the Fort Ord Reuse Authority. FORA is scheduled to sunset in 2020 and the Chapter has concerns regarding Plant Reserves #1 and #3, both of which will be impacted by potential road improvements currently under review.

SAND CITY SOUTH OF TIOGA PROJECT The Chapter expressed its dismay over the large “South of Tioga” development in Sand City, which was approved in June 2018. We will continue to track the federal and state permit process for federally endangered *Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*.

January - October 2018

[None]

November/December 2016

[None]

September / October 2016

RANCHO CAÑADA VILLAGE: The comment period for the RDEIR for the Rancho Cañada Village closed on August 8. This residential development is at the western portion of recently closed Rancho Cañada West Golf Course just below the Carmel Middle School. An alternative with lower density of 130 units compared to 281 originally was presented. In both projects, the good news is that the entire Carmel River channel and flood plain would be set aside as open space of about 31 acres and a restoration plan would convert the disturbed golf course areas back to native grassland, shrubland and riparian woodlands, with trails to link to surrounding parkland. Conservation Report Continued on Page 3 September/October 2016, Page 3 Rancho Cañada Park: The Trust for Public Land has or will acquire the approximately 190 acres of the soon to close Rancho Cañada East golf course near the mouth of Carmel Valley. Together with the proposed Village project this will preserve as parkland a substantial riparian corridor along the Carmel River to the west of the Hacienda Carmel community all the way to the lagoon. Ownership will be transferred to the Regional Park District. In the future many other local organizations will be involved with "re-wilding" the golf course, but as of yet no funds are available.

MONTEREY DOWNS: The City of Seaside released on August 2, the FSEIR for the large Monterey Downs development on the former Fort Ord lands surrounding Parker Flats and Gigling Roads. A proposed horse racing track, commercial space and 1,280 dwelling units will surround a remnant 70 acre parcel of oak woodland in open space. Another 312 acres of oak woodland will be destroyed along with habitat for numerous sensitive plant species such as Monterey spineflower, sandmat manzanita, Monterey ceanothus and Eastwood's golden fleece. The mitigations seem to involve salvage and transplanting sensitive plants and a complex 1:1 acreage mitigation for oak woodland. The oak mitigation consist of a mixture of up to 50% oak woodland restoration in the surrounding areas or elsewhere in Monterey County and the remaining acreage consisting of preservation of existing oak woodlands in the vicinity if feasible or contributing money to preserve oak woodlands elsewhere in California. In other words they really don't know what they will do to mitigate for the loss of oak woodland habitat.

This project has a long road ahead and faces a serious lack of water. There is no indication of when a public hearing will be held by the city of Seaside for comment on the FSEIR and their certification. If you would like to be notified of when public hearings are scheduled and if you will be willing to help submit comments, please email Robert Hale at hale@nps.edu. Additional approval will be needed at the county level as well as certification from numerous public agencies for consistency with Habitat Management Plans for Fort Ord. This is just the beginning of a long process.

January-August 2016

[None]

July - December 2015

[None]

May / June 2015

MONTEREY DOWNS: Seaside released the Draft Environmental Report (DEIR) for the sprawling housing, business and horse racing track they wish to have built on former Fort Ord lands around the Parker Flats area. Of prime concern will be the extensive and expansive oak woodland destruction of over 41,000 oaks as well as likely habitats for other sensitive species. It will profoundly alter the current oak forest that adjoins the western boundary of BLM lands. The arguments for ignoring oak protection ordinances is that these lands were subject to the original Fort Ord Habitat Plan that set aside BLM lands for conservation. It was assumed that oak woodlands left out of BLM lands would receive strong county protection. Our chapter will be submitting comments, but we do need volunteers to help review the document. Please contact Deanna Lynn poetviolist@gmail.com or Bob Hale 656-3108, hale@nps.edu. We may have comment points available at the May 14 general meeting. Comments are due by June 1.

CALIFORNIA FLATS SOLAR: The large photovoltaic Solar Farm covering 2,500 acres of prime wildflower lands near Parkfield received County approval. There have been ongoing negotiations with environmental groups to reach a settlement to improve mitigation protections.

CALIFORNIA CENTRAL COAST STATE PARKS GMP: Process has resumed on State Parks General Plan development for the Parks around Carmel Bay, including Hatton Canyon and East Point Lobos. Public meetings should be scheduled this spring or summer on alternative uses and defining the preferred alternatives for the DEIR.

March / April 2015

[None]

January /February 2015

NEW MONTEREY PINE PRESERVE: Monterey Regional Park District has purchased the Aquajito Woods property from Pebble Beach Company. The new 851 acre pine forest preserve is contiguous to north side of Jacks Peak County Park and greatly expands the preservation of the largest intact Monterey pine forest in the world. Long time chapter member Joyce Stevens had the dedicated vision of preserving this forest and the preserve will be named in her honor. Many heartfelt thanks to you, Joyce!

FERRINI RANCH: Unfortunately, the Board of Supervisors approved this sprawling housing development in the hills near Toro Park by a vote of 3-2. Many lupine fields that are not visible from Hwy 68 will be destroyed by this development, including one "lupine lake" adjacent to a Toro Park trail. There may be pending legal action to reverse this decision.

CALIFORNIA FLATS SOLAR PROJECT: First Solar Corporation met with members of our chapter to provide an update to the biological report for this 2,500 acre solar project just southeast of Parkfield. The project impacts 11 sensitive plant species and 500 acres of wildflower fields. Mitigation is proposed, but our chapter is not convinced it will be adequate. Unfortunately, the mitigation plan is deferred until after the project approval. Degraded agricultural lands would be much more appropriate than an area rich with sensitive plants. Conservation groups have been pursuing mediation with the Governor's office to improve the mitigation.

MONTEREY DOWNS: Just a reminder that the Draft EIR will be out soon. Many acres of oak forest will be impacted for this horse racing track and development near Seaside.

November/December 2014

[None]

September / October 2014

CALIFORNIA VETERANS CEMETERY: Comment period for Phase 1 of the CALVET Fort Ord Veterans Cemetery Environmental Assessment ended in July. Our chapter requested that a more complete Environmental Impact Report be prepared for the entire 84 acre cemetery. This initial phase of 16 acres already impacts the edge of the oak woodland that the entire cemetery would displace, as well as removing half of the population of endangered Monterey Spine flower. Locating the cemetery elsewhere on more degraded lands of Fort Ord, would have been the proper choice.

FERRINI RANCH: The Ferrini Ranch is a large subdivision of over 180 homes and a wine country visitor center to be developed in the hills south of Highway 68 between River and San Benancio Roads. The recently released revised EIR tries to address additional rare plant and oak woodland impacts with the usual additional mitigations. Another major impact, though, is on the lupine fields that splatter the hills above Hwy 68. Unfortunately, these lack any countywide protection status. It is sad that the “lupine lake” along the boundary with Toro Park, which CNPS has included on walks, will be destroyed. The project is now leaning towards a new stoplight on Hwy 68 instead of an access road through Toro Park, leaving additional traffic impacts.

CALIFORNIA FLATS SOLAR PROJECT: Monterey County’s first large scale photovoltaic plant will soon have a Draft EIR released. It will be located on private rangeland in extreme southeastern Monterey County on about 2,500 acres. The Draft EIR includes a biological assessment that actually maps wildflower fields. The county should be encouraged to require this on all future projects. Our chapter is concerned that the biological surveys have been done in the recent extreme drought years. With nearby historic populations of many rare and sensitive plant species, additional surveys during more favorable conditions are needed. It would, of course, be best to locate the solar project on more degraded farmed land, rather than on the more wildflower rich grazing lands. Unfortunately, the push for more solar power is very strong. Nearby projects on the Carrizo Plain and the Panoche Valley are proceeding after legal challenges. It is not clear how strong the opposition to this hidden project will be.

July-August 2014

CLEAR CREEK BILL HAS CONGRESSIONAL HEARING: May 20, the US House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands held a legislative hearing on Representative Sam Farr’s HR 1776, the Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act. This bill, if enacted, will undo the recent BLM decision to restrict use of the sensitive serpentine area to very limited highway vehicle touring and passive walking recreation. A return to the intensive motorized recreational usage will likely worsen protection of the sensitive habitats at Clear Creek. The elements of HR 1776 are:

- 1) Immediately reopen 270 miles of designated routes and open play areas to Off Highway Vehicle usage as defined by the preceding 2005 management plan, AND require a new management plan to be completed in two years. Local County and State input and management would be encouraged.
- 2) Designate a 21,000 acre Joaquin Rocks Wilderness Area. Our chapter has had several field trips to this scenic area.
- 3) Designate about 30 miles of five creek segments as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Protection of the wild and scenic rivers could enhance protection of the endangered San Benito Evening Primrose and other serpentine flora. Likewise, the wilderness designation will potentially provide for more secure habitat protections. However, reopening the area to OHV usage, without adequate patrol and enforcement, will likely lead to resumed degradation of the overall habitats through increased erosion and disturbance from off trail OHV usage. It is particularly disturbing that yet another round of planning for Clear Creek is mandated and that the BLM

may share management with county and state government agencies that may not have similar focuses on environmental protections.

May / June 2014

CLEAR CREEK MANAGEMENT AREA REOPENED WITH NO OHV'S: On March 14, 2014 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reopened the Clear Creek Management Area to very limited access and non-motorized recreation. This is an exceptional area of serpentine barrens and habitats surrounding San Benito Mountain in eastern San Benito County. It is home to several endangered species, numerous sensitive species and widespread, unusual serpentine barrens. Our chapter has been involved for decades, trying to get BLM to limit damage to the environment caused by largely unchecked motorcycle and Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) usage. Pressure from a lawsuit, which our chapter was instrumental in, led to the BLM finally designating a route network and open play areas— about 10 years ago. Expanding usage and limited BLM enforcement, though, allowed erosion and damage to continue. BLM then issued an emergency closure due to concerns about asbestos exposure about five years ago. So presently, the prohibition of OHV usage is a tremendous positive for plant and habitat protection. Usage will be regulated to 32 miles of main dirt roads providing access to non-motorized recreation. Access is limited to 5 (vehicle) or 12 (foot) days per a year. However, this saga may be continued. Our Congressional Representative, Sam Farr, has introduced HR 1776, a bill to reopen the area to OHV usage as a National Recreation Area. The bill has yet to move in Congress. We will keep you posted if your comments are needed to help protect the plants.

MONTEREY SHORES ECO-RESORT APPROVED: California Coastal Commission approved, April 13, the large resort in the Sand City Dunes. Mitigation requires native dune habitats be restored, but we question how they will be protected from thousands of visitors. Our chapter will need monitors to ensure the project is successful.

FORT ORD CONSERVATION OUTING: On May 17, here's a chance to get into an area of Fort Ord that has been off limits to the public since 1917. It will be a 90-minute walking tour inside the historic Impact Area to learn about the burn program and munitions clean up. It begins at 9:45 am to Noon and is limited to 100. For a reservation call Melissa Broadston at 831-393-1284 and for more information go to fortordcleanup.com.

FORT ORD BUS TOUR: On August 23, the Fort Ord semiannual bus tour will focus on habitat management, prescribed burns and munitions clean up. There will be an open house from 7am to 1pm with the bus tours at 10:00am and 11:45am. For a reservation call Melissa Broadston at 831-393-1284 and for more information go to fortordcleanup.com.

January - April 2014

[None]

November/December 2013

RANCHO CANADA VILLAGE: A revised plan for this project is expected to be submitted within the next month or two. The original plan called for 300 units built on 200,000 cubic yards of fill in the floodway and flood plain of the Carmel River next to Carmel Middle School, replacing the Rancho Canada West Golf Course. The chapter will continue to oppose any plan that would channelize the river, destroy its natural riparian plant community, or create hazards for the school.

PARAISO SPRINGS RESORT: This project proposes to construct a 103-room hotel with three restaurants and 110 parking places; day use area; spa and fitness center; 60 timeshare condominiums; and 17 timeshare villas on 47 acres of the 235-acre site, located high above Soledad on the west side of the Salinas Valley. CNPS is concerned about destruction of 7.5 acres of native oaks, development on slopes over 30%, and the feasibility of the proposal to use oaks for screening on steep slopes where they are not growing naturally. The project seems to be inconsistent with a number of county policies on these and other issues. Public hearings will be held after the Final Environmental Impact Report is released.

FERRINI RANCH ON HWY 68: This 212-home subdivision and 35-acre winery proposed for 870 acres adjoining Toro Park would destroy 921 oak trees and take 3-4 acres of parkland for the access road. Because the EIR for the project was strongly criticized last year for poor planning and inconsistency with numerous county rules including construction on steep slopes by both the public and regulating agencies, major portions are expected to be recirculated in the next few weeks/months before public hearings are held. A significant loss could be the spectacular lupine fields that delight travelers along Hwy 68 in the spring.

PICO BLANCO BOY SCOUT CAMP CONSERVATION PLAN: In response to the chapter letter of Nov. 2, 2012, listing violations of numerous environmental rules at the camp, and a field trip last April, the BSA representatives agreed to prepare a Conservation Plan for the Dudley's Lousewort (*Pedicularis dudleyi*) and the protection of the sensitive habitat in and near the camp, which has suffered Conservation Report Continued on Page 3 November/December 2013, Page 3 Conservation Report Continued from Page 2 serious losses in recent years. A draft of a proposed plan by EMC Planning Group has been circulating for several weeks, and is being reviewed by the chapter members. The initial response is that the protective language of the plan is very welcome, the plan is still very general and does not deal constructively with the many small populations of the plant that have been damaged or eradicated by camp activities. Stronger rules for protecting the exceptional Douglas fir-redwood riparian forest are needed, as well as replacing trees that were removed. The chapter hopes that the final document will help lead to a renewed respect for conservation at the camp.

MEETING WITH NEW MPRPD MANAGER: Chapter representatives plan to meet this month with Rafael Payan, the new director of the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District to discuss concerns at the various parks. An ongoing issue has been trail work; particularly overzealous clearing of special wildflower trails at Garland Park during the blooming season by inadequately trained or supervised trail crews in the past. Also of interest are conservation education, habitat restoration, and continuing to provide free educational field trips.

September / October 2013

[None]

July-August 2013

Members may have noticed that the Conservation Reports in recent newsletters have been sparse to non-existent. Part of the reason has to do with the two-month gap between newsletters, which greatly reduces the timeliness of these communiqués. A way to help resolve this concern would be to post urgent conservation issues on the chapter website encouraging chapter members to write or call decision-makers about important issues affecting native plants. Another, or perhaps additional strategy would be to send out emails to a list of chapter members who are concerned about conservation issues and are willing to help. Actions sought by CNPS are more likely to be

taken by decision-makers who see that there is broad public support behind them! Please email or call a board member with your suggestions!

PICO BLANCO BOY SCOUT CAMP: Our chapter has been working at least since the 1980's to modify activities at PBBSC that have been damaging the habitat of the rare Dudley's lousewort (*Pedicularis dudleyi*). Former Scouts and PBBSC counselors the late Jeff Norman and Kim Kuska have been very active in trying to improve protection of the plant, whose numbers have significantly declined. Last November the chapter sent a letter to the various agencies having jurisdiction over rare plants urging that protective actions be taken. Since then the local scout council has merged with the Santa Clara Scout Council. The new leadership indicated that it wants to work with our chapter to resolve the problems, and invited CNPS to meet with BSA representatives at the camp. On Saturday, June 8, President Brian LeNeve, VP Beth Benoit, Treasurer Jim Pittman, Corky Matthews, and Nikki Nedeff, along with CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife biologist Jeff Cann, met with Ron Schoenmehl, Director of Support Services; Michael Wilson, Camping Manager; and biologist Andrea Edwards, who is working on a plant management plan for the camp, to look at some of the problem areas and discuss possible solutions. Of particular concern has been the removal of "hazard" trees, especially Douglas firs, which provide essential habitat for the lousewort; methods of protecting the existing plant populations, and plans for further removal of trees for fire safety. The BSA provided a delicious lunch and Brian provided a tutorial on steelhead habitat on the Little Sur River! The chapter looks forward to having further input into camp operations affecting the lousewort as well as contributing to and reviewing the management plan.

April - June 2013

[None]

March 2013

FUEL BREAKS IN LOS PADRES FOREST. This month, the Conservation Report is a summary of a letter to Jeff Kwasny, Resource Officer of the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) from Greg Suba, Conservation Program Director of the CNPS State Office and Brian LeNeve, President, CNPS Monterey Bay Chapter. The subject is regarding fuelbreaks in the Los Padres Forest. The complete letter is posted on our chapter website.

CNPS has developed a Native Plants and Fire Safety Policy that urges the use of the most up-to-date fire science consistent with the long-term protection of sensitive plant and animal communities when devising fire plans. Following from our policy, we provide the following scoping comments regarding the Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project (SCFIP).

1. The SCFIP must incorporate measures that address fire hazard reduction within the defensible space immediately around existing structures. One of the stated needs of the SCFIP is to "increase the wildland fire suppression efficiency when in proximity to communities and related infrastructure." Studies show that residents of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) achieve better fire protection from modifications to flammable vegetation on their own property, along with fire-resistant landscaping and fire-resistant construction materials including fire resistant coatings. The thirty-foot defensible zone around a house or other structure represents the most important area of defensible space for existing structures, particularly during extreme weather. According to recent publications (Fremontia Vol. 38:2-3, 2010), housing arrangement and location determine the likelihood of housing loss due to wildfire; thus land use planning appears to be more important than fuel modification for reducing fire hazards, replacing woody fuels with herbaceous fuels appears to increase fire risks to homes, and treating the wildland-urban interface is critical for making homes safe.

2. Fuelbreaks planned under the SCFIP are excessively wide and will cause greater harm than they will provide benefits. We are particularly concerned that 150 to 300-foot wide fuelbreaks will result in, exposure of soils leading to increased erosion, increased invasion by non-native plants in treated areas, increased trespass by and

damage from illegal off highway vehicle (OVH) use, and the fragmentation of natural communities and disruption of natural ecological processes.

3. Fire pre-suppression activities in the Ventana Wilderness must be consistent with the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act protecting wilderness values.

4. The use of mechanical equipment, including chainsaws, in the Ventana Wilderness is inconsistent with the Wilderness Act and cannot be allowed under the SCFIP.

5. Full floristic botanical surveys performed at the appropriate season will be incorporated.

6. We ask that future SCFIP public hearings should occur on the Monterey Peninsula, where many forest users live.

CNPS has been an interested stakeholder working collaboratively with the LPNF to address the maintenance and preservation of the native flora of the Monterey District. Members of the Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS have participated in the series of Fire Scape meetings over the last two years. We look forward to continued collaboration with the US Forest Service, including a Ventana Wilderness Plan and appropriate fire safety measures for the Monterey Ranger District.

February 2013

"THE COLLECTION AT MONTEREY BAY" DRAFT EIR CRITIQUED: The chapter's comments on the DEIR concentrated on the impacts from this 374-unit resort development to sensitive habitat which receives considerable protection from Coastal Act policies. Even though this area was a dump for garbage and cement tailings during earlier times, native plants and animals have been recolonizing it. The Federally-listed Threatened Monterey spineflower occurs on the site, along with coast and seaciff buckwheats, host plants of the Federally endangered Smith's blue butterfly. Other special status animals reported on the site or nearby are the Western snowy plover, the black legless lizard, and burrowing owls. The mitigations to protect these species seem totally inadequate when so much of the habitat will be covered with buildings and paved walks and roads. It is critical wherever development takes place to assure that corridors are preserved to facilitate the maximum opportunity for genetic diversity. The city of Seaside also objected that the size of the project would result in unacceptable congestion on Seaside's streets.

MONTEREY BAY SHORES "ECORESORT" STILL ALIVE: This 341-unit project in the Sand City dunes has been in and out of the courts and the Coastal Commission since it appeared some 20 years ago. The project was able to establish two years ago that there would be sufficient water from Sand City's small desal plant, but there are apparently other hurdles still holding it up. The chapter opposed it early on because of the loss of coastal dune habitat. One would think that the accelerating impact of global warming on sea level rise would make investors think twice about supporting near-sealevel projects...

USFS FIRE PLAN FOLLOW-UP: The item in last month's issue noted that the public has 45 days to comment on a Federal document after it is published in the Federal Record. As it was not published until Dec. 28, the deadline is Feb. 11. The following is the introductory statement to the CNPS Fire Policy: "The California Native Plant Society opposes the unnecessary destruction of California's native plant heritage for the purpose of wildfire fuel management. The California Native Plant Society supports protecting human lives, property and California's native plants from poor fuel management practices. California's superbly diverse native plants are its most valuable resource for erosion control and water conservation, and are vital to the long-term health of California." The policy goes on to state that because there are many different fire environments throughout the state, CNPS will develop specific guidelines for implementation, supported by current applicable fire science and botanical knowledge to fit the particular wildfire environment of a given area. These specific guidelines have not yet been established; therefore each chapter should be studying its unique conditions and recommending specific science-based policies to the CNPS Chapter Council.

FORT FRIENDS SEEKS MORE SUPPORTERS: Fort Ord Recreation Trails (FORT) is an active group formed during the munitions clean-up to ensure that trail access to the back country is preserved. Members, who include hikers, runners, bicyclists, equestrians, search and rescue dog trainers, plant enthusiasts (and more), have been working with agencies and landowners to create an integrated Fort Ord Trails Plan as part of the new Fort Ord National Monument. A number of hiking, biking, equestrian, and natural history organizations, including our chapter, have affiliated with FORT, which has recently qualified as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. It welcomes new members who value the recreation opportunities at the former post and invites them to join on line at www.fortfriends.net or by mail at PO Box 1349, Marina, CA 93933; dues are \$35 individual or \$50 family (one vote), \$100 Trail Supporter, \$250 commercial patron (thanks to CNPS/FORT activist Phil Smith for providing this information).

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT LODGING PRIVATIZATION PROPOSED: The chapter received a notice in early January that the Army intends to grant a 46-year lease of land for construction of a new 54-room lodging facility. An existing building would be temporarily renovated for lodging until the new facility is completed, whereupon it will be converted or demolished. A finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and an Environmental Assessment have been prepared. Unfortunately public comments will only be accepted until Jan. 19, but the chapter is registering its concern about the potential impacts on rare/endangered plants.

FORT ORD CLEAN-UP PLAN PRESENTED: The Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office has issued a plan for munitions removal for several sites along the southern boundary of Fort Ord. A meeting to explain the plan will be held on Jan. 30 from 6-8 pm in Carpenters Union Hall, 910 2nd Ave., Marina. Oral and written public comments will be accepted at the meeting and until Feb. 13. The chapter has worked to protect several rare plants in this general area and will be requesting a botanical survey of any areas that are slated for heavy treatment.

January 2013

PUBLIC COMMENTS DUE ON FIRE PLAN: The US Forest Service recently issued a notice of preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project to reestablish and maintain 24.1 miles (includes 7.5 miles of wilderness) of existing fire lines (from Palo Colorado south to Anderson Peak and Cachagua from Chews Ridge to Hennicksen Ridge) in order to better protect at-risk communities from wildfire, reduce suppression costs, and reduce adverse impacts on the landscape. The public has 45 days to comment on the scope of the project--that is, what issues should be considered in the DEIS to be prepared by November 2013 for further public comment. CNPS is raising the following issues: the scoping letter suggests that chain saws may have to be used in the wilderness (believed inconsistent with the Wilderness Act) if hand tools are inadequate; the width of up to 150 feet (up to 300 in some areas) raises concerns about habitat damage, encouragement of invasive species and off-road vehicle use; and a general concern over whether fire lines are cost effective in actually protecting homes compared to on-site clearance and retrofit-fireproofing (current fire science suggests not). The deadline for comments is expected to be Jan. 31 or later depending on publication in the Federal Record.

PITCH CANKER RECOVERY AT ASILOMAR: On Dec. 7 a meeting of foresters and others concerned about the survival of native Monterey pines at Asilomar State Park was organized by Dr. U Win and State Park ecologist Cyndi Dawson as part of a larger study to map pine habitat from Asilomar to Point Lobos. Although heavy infection had been found at the park, over the years a number of trees have recovered, and plans are underway for additional monitoring and reforestation. Attending from Monterey Pine forest Watch and CNPS were Karen Ferlito, who is also a member of the Carmel Beach and Tree Commission, and Bruce Cowan, who is also a member of OSAC, the Open Space Advisory Committee for Del Monte Forest. The chapter hopes to have a field trip to the park in the next few months to learn about the early unexpected spread of pitch canker and later evidence of survival.

CHAPTER URGES CHANGES AT PBBSC: In a letter dated Nov. 2, 2012 the chapter listed the violations documented at Pico Blanco Boy Scout Camp and asked for a management plan to protect and restore a State Endangered Plant, *Pedicularis dudleyi*, Dudley's lousewort. The violations included illegally logging landmark trees in a Douglas fir-

Redwood Forest that has been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat. The letter was sent to the Monterey Boy Scout Council, The Monterey Co. Board of Supervisors, the California Coastal Commission, the California Dept. of Fish and Game, and the Center for Biological Diversity, a non-profit specializing in litigation to protect endangered species. It is sad that an organization that purports to develop good citizenship and respect for laws in young people would so cavalierly ignore them at Camp Pico Blanco.

DUNE PROJECTS RAISE CONCERNS: Two huge development projects in the Sand City dunes were described on the front page of the Dec. 11 Monterey Herald. A new project, called "The Collection at Monterey Bay," proposed by King Ventures of San Luis Obispo, calls for a 374-unit resort on the former dumpsite north of Tioga Ave. An EIR has been released by Sand City with comments due by Jan. 15. The city expects the EIR to be finalized and the project approved by the city in March. An appeal to the Coastal Commission is expected. An older project, the proposed Monterey Bay Shores Ecoresort, calls for a 161-unit hotel, 180 condominiums, conference facilities, a spa and restaurant. It has previously been turned down by the Coastal Commission. While there is little dune habitat left on these parcels, they are both part of the Monterey Bay State Seashore, and should provide a corridor to connect plants and animals to the preserved dunes on both sides.

November/December 2012

THE MONTEREY BAY DUNES: A HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO PROTECT RARE PLANTS AND DUNE HABITAT

As you drive north around Monterey Bay, most of its remarkable dune system, one of the largest in the state, appears nearly pristine; yet in early 1985, prospects looked bleak for the Monterey Bay Dunes. The cities of Monterey, Seaside, Sand City, and Marina were working on Coastal Plans that envisioned a series of resorts and housing developments stretching along most of the 12-mile expanse of dunes between the Monterey harbor and the Salinas River (except for Fort Ord's 4-mile frontage). Even supposedly protected habitat areas like Marina State Beach and the Salinas River Wildlife Refuge were losing habitat to trampling and invasive exotic plants.

Many members of the public, especially those active in conservation groups, were concerned by developments like Ocean Harbor House and the Monterey Beach Hotel, both built in the foredunes before passage of the Coastal Act of 1976, which required preparation of Coastal Plans that would recognize the need to protect unique coastal resources. Because of coastal erosion, both have now built seawalls that interfere with the public's historic right to use the beach; yet they and other coastal developments remain vulnerable to global warming, an issue that had not made the headlines at that time.

Then in May of 1985 a small group of dune enthusiasts from the Monterey Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club, and the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society came together to form the Monterey Bay Dunes Coalition (MBDC). Its mission would be to educate its members and the general public about the priceless biological treasures of the dunes, to monitor development proposals between Wharf #2 and the Salinas River, and to work with local governments, the county, and state and federal agencies, including the Coastal Commission, with the goal of providing permanent protection of the dunes west of Highway 1 to the maximum extent possible. During this time the Big Sur Land Trust and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District joined the campaign to save the dunes through the purchase of several key parcels.

Spurred by the MBDC, a number of studies documented the current status of the three types of dunes (based on their geologic age: recent, Flandrian, and pre-Flandrian) which supported an unusual assemblage of dune plants, including three rare, threatened, and/or endangered (RTE) species: Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens*), Monterey gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*), and Menzies wallflower (*Erysimum menziesii*). RTE animals included the Western Snowy Plover, Smith's blue butterfly and the black legless lizard.

By the late 80s huge development plans had surfaced in Sand City and Marina. In addition to the 136-unit Sterling Center hotel and restaurant on seven acres, which had been denied by the Coastal Commission earlier, Sand City alone had two six-story hotel and condo projects in the works by Monterey Sand Co. and Fargo Industries. Marina's dune plans included a 120-room hotel on Monterey Sand Co. property, a 500 to 600 room hotel on Granite Rock land, and 1,400 rooms in two resorts on Lone Star land (still a sand mining operation), as well as other projects.

Through the years MBDC members and their allies responded to environmental documents, created educational materials, scheduled site visits, trooped to city planning commissions and city councils, and filed appeals to the Coastal Commission, pointing out inconsistencies with the laws protecting sensitive coastal habitats. The results so far—just three constructed projects: one relatively small hotel on Monterey Sand property and two motels on the rear dunes north of Reservation Road (all in Marina), where a mitigation fee has raised over \$300,000 for dune restoration. Sand City's projects have been denied at the Coastal Commission leading to developer lawsuits, notably the Monterey Bay Shores hotel, where a reduced project was approved but not yet built.

MBDC was fortunate early in obtaining a generous grant of \$10,000 from the Packard Foundation that covered preparation of brochures and graphic displays that were critical to involving the public and educating decision-makers. The funds also helped expand the Beach Garden Project, directed by Joey Dorrell-Canepa, to involve school children and other volunteers in the restoration of degraded dune areas. Generations of elementary school kids have learned to value the dunes by collecting seeds, growing flats of seedlings, and then planting them out.

The results can be seen at the Seaside Beach Park just north of the Monterey Beach Hotel (originally planned for another hotel), Monterey Beach, Marina State Beach, Fort Ord State Beach, and other sites.

MBDC efforts climaxed with the creation of the Monterey Bay State Seashore in 1994 extending the entire distance around the Bay and including 14 state beaches in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Senators Mello and McPherson supported the bill and Congressman Sam Farr was instrumental in bringing State Parks officials on board. The Big Sur Land Trust and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District were extremely active and helpful through this period in supporting preservation options and buying coastal properties from willing sellers.

Many local conservationists were involved in MBDC over the years, including Alan Church, Joey Dorrell-Canepa, the late Janie Figen, Natasha Fraley, Don Gruber, Jane Holte, Mark Ferguson, Peter Kaiser, Gloria Kauhanen, Judi Lehman, Corky Matthews, Tom Moss, David Shonman, Joyce Stevens, Ed Thornton, and the late Jack Wickham. Ed Thornton, then an oceanographer at the NPGS, now retired and on the Executive Committee of the Ventana Chapter, Sierra Club, is actively working on preservation of the former Lone Star Dunes now owned and mined by CEMEX; and our chapter has supported his efforts to convince the Corps of Engineers to limit sand mining to prevent beach erosion. The dunes still need defenders!

FERRINI RANCH (for project description, see previous issues, available on chapter website): the circulation period for comments on the Environmental Impact Report has been extended from Oct. 22 to Nov. 16 because of the inadvertent omission by the county of Appendix E: Geology & Soils; Groundwater Resources & Hydrology; and Hazardous Materials. The chapter urges revision of this project to preserve views from Hwy 68 and avoid impacts on Toro Park.

October 2012

FORT ORD OAK CLEARCUT OPPOSED: The Fort Ord Reuse Authority proposes to clear-cut twelve acres of old growth oaks adjoining Parker Flats Road for housing that is part of the huge Monterey Downs project. At press time citizens' groups were gearing up to oppose this senseless destruction at a FORA board meeting Feb. 14, asking that the item be scheduled for a full discussion at a future board meeting, rather than just at the workshop scheduled for Sept. 20. The oak-covered parcel is in the city of Seaside's share of Fort Ord land, and is zoned for open space. FORA claims the clear-cut is necessary to make the area safe for housing, yet the Monterey Downs project is far from approved; indeed, it is a concept that is based on an outdated plan that must be revamped to meet current conditions and needs (for details of the project, which has morphed from an equestrian facility to a huge urban development, see last month's Wallflower). In regard to the Reuse Plan, the chapter wrote FORA on Sept. 3 urging that the plan be updated to reflect the many changes since it was approved in 1997, e.g., establishment of the Fort Ord National Monument, growing recreational use of the area, an incomplete Habitat Conservation Plan, lack of water for intensive development, and an over supply of housing already approved but not yet built.

RARE PLANT SUFFERS AT PICO BLANCO BOY SCOUT CAMP: For many years the chapter has been involved in efforts to protect the rare *Pedicularis dudleyi* (Dudley's lousewort, a CNPS 1B plant) from damage at the intensively used camp. Two former Boy Scouts who attended the camp and then served as counselors, the late Jeff Norman and Kim Kuska (both long-time CNPS activists), were very active in this effort, and other chapter members helped with surveys that documented over a dozen small stands that are gradually disappearing because of trampling and development projects. In the last few years the camp management put up a fence around the largest stand, and the plants have recovered and even thrived in that area. Kim, who now teaches science in the Palo Alto area, is continuing to monitor the area; however, he is becoming very concerned that his efforts to get the camp to adopt a Recovery and Restoration Plan have been ignored while the losses are continuing. He states that he has documented 539 separate violations of the Endangered Species Act. Is there anyone in our membership who has

connections to the Boy Scouts and/or who might be able to help with this issue? If so, please get in touch with Corky Matthews (see masthead).

TREE REMOVAL PROPOSED FOR CARMEL DUNES: On Thursday, Sept.6, the Carmel Beach and Tree Commission heard a request by a group of residents of the Del Mar area asking for removal of most of the trees growing in the dunes at the north end of Carmel Beach. According to a study, the trees were planted long ago, and have now grown and spread to the point that they are obscuring the views from homes above the beach and shading out native dune plants. Some of the trees are Monterey cypress, which grow in many sites along the sandy bluff overlooking the beach, but others are acacia and possibly other non-natives. Apparently the project has conflicts with the Shoreline Management Plan and the Carmel Local Coastal Plan that need to be resolved before a decision is made. CNPS members familiar with this area who would like the chapter to get involved are asked to contact Corky Matthews (see masthead).

CARMEL COTTAGES OAK PLANTINGS DIE: The chapter opposed the removal of native oak trees for the construction of this assisted-living facility near the mouth of Carmel Valley. The developer finally did replant oaks, but many of them have died. The county needs to assure that replacement trees are properly planted and maintained in order to preserve the scenic views from Carmel Valley Road.

September 2012

SUMMER/FALL SPOTLIGHT ON PINNACLES: This has been a watershed year for Pinnacles National Monument for two reasons: 1) a four year effort to prepare a new General Plan, the first since 1976, is now ready for publication and public comment; 2) Sam Farr's bill HR 3444 to establish Pinnacles National Park, the first one in Monterey-San Benito Cos., passed the House in late July and is awaiting action in the Senate. The planning process is thus especially timely, as park status is expected to increase visitation. suggesting that devotees of this unique geologic and botanic treasure have a special opportunity to voice their concern for natural resource preservation. Our CNPS chapter has long had a special relationship with Pinnacles, scheduling trips in the spring to view the spectacular wildflower display and to marvel over the fascinating volcanic formations with their distinctive plant communities. The basic concept of the plan establishes five zones ranging from wilderness to various management actions to protect habitat while increasing public access. The four alternative plans that are presented include Alt. A: Continuing Current Management; Alt. B: Managing for Research and Learning; Alt. C, Emphasizing the Backcountry Experience; and Alt. D, Expanding Visitor Experience. It should be noted that these scenarios do not necessarily form a continuum from maximum preservation to maximum development. For further information, go to www.nps.gov/pinn/parkmgmt/planning.htm where you can sign up to receive details (not available at press time) about the issue date of the plan and deadline for public comments, and also be directed to the plan specifics. Letters and emails would also be timely to thank Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein for co-sponsoring the Pinnacles National Park bill in the Senate and urging passage ASAP.

JACKS PEAK PARK ZIPLINE IS ZAPPED: With the recent announcement of non-support by 5th District Supervisor Dave Potter, along with Supervisors Calcagno and Parker, the proposal by a Canadian firm to install a series of ziplines in Jacks Peak Park appears to be dead. The opposition was led by a new group, Friends of Jacks Peak Park (FJPP), which effectively lobbied for protecting the peaceful beauty of the park from a disruptive tourist attraction. Our CNPS chapter, the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club, Monterey Pine Forest Watch, and various nearby residents also opposed it because of the potential impact on the sensitive Monterey Pine Forest. Several chapter members met with the Canadian principals to express their concerns last March, and opposition has grown rapidly since then. Mary Pendlay, president of the FJPP, reports that plans are moving ahead to develop a corps of docents, trip leaders, and other volunteers to encourage the types of uses that are appropriate for JPP, such as hiking, nature study, and picnicking. Several other proposals, including changing management of the park from the county to the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, and acquisition of additional land adjoining the park, have been recommended by the various groups, but no action has been taken. Another zipline project, on state park land across Hwy 1 from Point Lobos, appears to have lost traction with the resignation of the State Parks official

who was promoting it as a funding need, after over \$20 million in unreported funds was discovered hidden in a State Parks account.

CONTINUED CHALLENGES FACE FORT ORD: Despite Rep. Sam Farr's spirited op ed piece in the Aug. 8 Monterey Herald urging renewal of the Fort Ord Reuse Authority before it expires on June 30, 2014, and Assemblyman Bill Monning's introduction of AB 1614 to accomplish that purpose, FORA has a very mixed history of operating transparently and in the public interest. Recent allegations of cronyism and misuse of funds show that FORA reauthorization should contain conditions to make it more accountable to the public and less to the developers. The hugely destructive "Whispering Oaks" project, a massive office park and transit center in the wrong location was only stopped by a heroic petition drive by Fort Ord Rec Users (forU) and allies. Now the county is pushing a potentially bigger project called Monterey Downs, which would crowd 1,400 housing units, a 200-room hotel, retail and commercial space, a 6500-seat covered arena for indoor equestrian events, stables and paddocks for 100 horses, and a 1-mile racing track into 450 acres in the Parker Flats area plus 370 homes on 50 adjacent acres in Seaside. Opponents object that Monterey Downs has morphed into a much larger project during secret negotiations with the developer. Meanwhile, many acres of old Army barracks on prime land near Highway 1 continue to disintegrate. The inescapable conclusion is that the Fort Ord Development Plan and the ignored Habitat Conservation Plan need to be revised and updated to reflect current realities. CNPS has an important role to play because of its early involvement in assuring permanent protection of the rare plant reserves.

PANOCH VALLEY SOLAR FARM EIS PLANNED: On Aug. 6 the Army Corps of Engineers announced that an Environmental Impact Statement would be prepared for the proposed solar photovoltaic energy plant proposed for a 4,885-acre (7.6 square-mile) agricultural parcel north of the intersection of Panoche Road and Little Panoche Road in San Benito Co. The project would include 3 to 4 million photovoltaic panels plus ancillary structures and transmission lines covering over 2,200 acres. CNPS and others expressed concerns when the project was proposed several years ago because of the potential impacts on rare and endangered species, and urged that thorough botanical studies during prime blooming period be conducted. Two scoping sessions to receive public input on issues to be covered in the EIS have been scheduled for 6 pm Aug. 21 and 22 at Panoche School in Paicines and Veterans Memorial Bldg. in Hollister, respectively; written comments will be accepted until Sept. 7 to US ACE Regulatory Division/1455 Market St./San Francisco, CA 94103-1398; email: spn.eis.@usace.army.mil For further information call Project Mgr. Katerina Galacatos at 415-503-6778.

FERRINI RANCH HOUSING PROMOTES SPRAWL: This proposed subdivision would carve 866 acres into 212 lots on Highway 68 that would impact Toro Park. It has been described as a "classic example" of suburban sprawl in an area with severe traffic and water supply problems. LandWatch and other opponents have pointed out that the county already has a glut of some 10,000 homes approved but not yet built.

July-August 2012

[None]

June 2012

CNPS URGES FIRE POLICIES BASED ON SOUND SCIENCE

The following is a summary of the Statewide CNPS Fire Policy adopted last year and presented at a Firescapes Workshop in Carmel Valley last summer. The meetings are still going on in an effort to come up with a County Fire Plan that will meet the needs of residents of the Wildlands-Urban Interface, especially in the Big Sur area, without destructive and costly clearing of native vegetation.

THE PURPOSE of CNPS is to preserve CA native plants in their native habitat. There are practical as well as esthetic reasons for this policy. These are plants that have evolved in response to conditions in their specific habitats over millions of years. They are the basic building blocks of life, supporting whole ecosystems of insects and animals,

and exist without any additional inputs of water, fertilizer, etc. They prevent erosion, help moderate climate, conserve water, and provide amazing biological diversity that enhances our lives.

But a lot of these plants are flammable, so how do we live next to them?

CNPS has been evolving policies to cover a variety of issues for decades, and the first formal one on Fire Management dates from 1995. It simply stated that CNPS supports fire management policies that protect life and property and conserve native plant species and their habitats. Vegetation management aimed at reducing fire risk must be interdisciplinary, science-based, consistent with State and Federal laws, and must minimize damage to native plants and their habitats.

Also in 1995 a separate policy on avoiding seeding with ryegrass or other non-natives was approved because extensive research during the 80s showed that in many native communities a seedbank of plants called "fire flowers" would spring to life after a fire, doing a more effective job of preventing erosion than non-native grasses. It turns out that their seeds only germinated when they were stimulated by a chemical or physical effect of fire, serving to hold the soil until the slower growing shrubs and trees reoccupied their habitat. After the Basin Complex Fire there were incredibly beautiful displays of seldom-seen wildflowers such as *Gilia splendens*, a bright pink member of the Polemonium Family, along with many others. After a few years they tend to disappear, but their seeds remain in the soil until the next fire.

In March of last year CNPS circulated a policy on Fire Safety and Native Plants expanding recommendations to several pages, pointing out that because California is so large and diverse, there are different fuel systems that require different solutions to minimize the wildfire threat without degrading native habitats.

Fuel management should be "locally adapted and account for all combustible materials, including building materials, ornamental vegetation, other landscaping materials, and adjacent native ecosystems."

Building codes and ordinances should require structures and landscaping in high fire risk areas to be situated, constructed, retrofitted, and maintained using materials and practices that minimize the ignition and spread of wildfires. Laws and land use policies should discourage new development in areas of high fire danger.

The policies emphasize using state of the art science, which has shown that most of the wildfire risk in existing neighborhoods at the Wildlands Urban Interface (WUI, pronounced woo-ee) is found in structural vulnerability to firebrands (embers), hot air/wind, or direct flame impingement. So by far the most important preventive measures are within 30-100' of residences. The policy does not specifically deal with the impacts of firebreaks in wilderness areas (by eradicating protected rare and endangered plants, introducing invasive non-natives, increasing erosion, and encouraging motorized use). However, fire scientists have pointed out that in the past firebreaks have caused severe damage to native ecosystems without reducing wildfire risk; and should be replaced by proven fuel management practices that minimize the wildfire threat without devastating native plant habitat.

May 2012

LANDWATCH PLANS FORT ORD PROGRAMS in May and June: Increased interest and concern about development at Fort Ord has inspired several public meetings during coming months. In its series Around the County, LandWatch has scheduled three informative meetings, all held at the Hyatt Hotel in Monterey at 1 Old Golf Course Road on Monday evenings from 5:30 to 7:30. The first, titled FORA Background and the Current Plan, was held on Apr. 9 featuring our own Bruce Delgado, BLM Botanist, who has led many Ford Ord field trips over the years; Tom Moore of the Sierra Club; and Kristi Markey, Chief of Staff to Supervisor Jane Parker. They made a strong case for protecting the unique natural resources of Fort Ord for scientific and recreation uses. Coming up on May 14 is an update on ongoing clean-up efforts featuring U.S. Army Wildlife Biologist Bill Collins, Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) Program Manager, and Dan Amadeo of Marina in Motion. A third meeting on June 11 is titled "What Next?"

Meet the Community Groups Involved in the Future of Fort Ord," will present various viewpoints from non-profit groups working to protect Fort Ord. The meetings are free to the public and members are encouraged to attend.

BLM SCHEDULES FORT ORD NATURE WALK MAY 19: A walk through newly cleared impact areas at Fort Ord that were burned in 2009 and 2010 will be held from 10 am to Noon on May 19. The event offers a one-hour, 1.5-mile walk and a two-hour, two-mile walk. Advance registration is required by May 1 and the number is limited to 50. Call Melissa Broadston, 373-1284 or email melissabroadston@us.army.mil. In addition, the semi-annual open house and bus tour will take place on Sat., June 23. See next newsletter for details about this event.

GENERAL PLAN PROCESS STARTS FOR FOUR CARMEL PARK UNITS: The CA State Parks Dept. recently announced the first public workshop for the Carmel Area State Parks General Plan for the following units: 1) Carmel River State Beach, 2) Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, 3) Point Lobos Ranch (an unclassified park unit across Hwy 1 from Point Lobos), and 4) Hatton Canyon (an unclassified park unit). The meeting will be held from 6 to 7:30 pm Wed., Apr. 18, at Rancho Canada Golf Club and will serve as the "CEQA scoping meeting" at which the issues to be covered in the plan will be identified. Additional information about the process and how the public can be involved will be found at the project website: www.parks.ca.gov/caspgp. CNPS members are encouraged to participate in future meetings in this process, which apparently was initiated because many local residents opposed a proposal last year for a zipline in the unit across from Point Lobos without having a General Plan in place.

TRI-COUNTY WEED-MAPPING GROUP TO MEET APR. 24: A new effort to get a handle on the spread of invasive weeds in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties will get underway at 1-3 pm Tuesday, Apr. 24 at the Elkhorn Slough Visitor Conference Room. The meeting has been organized by members of the California Invasive Plant Council to introduce CalWeedMapper, a new mapping technique to expedite knowledge and control of weed infestations (Note: a description of this program appears in the Apr.-June issue of the CNPS Bulletin sent to all members and can be accessed at <http://calweedmapper.calflora.org>. Members concerned about the spread of invasives are urged to attend. For details, email dfmorawitz@cal-ipc.org. For directions to the meeting place, go to: <http://elkhornslough.org/esnerr/map.htm> .

REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT'S TRAIL CLEARING FOLLOW-UP: The chapter received letters last June 28 and Sept. 11 from James M. Sulentich, General Manager, responding to what the chapter in a June 15 letter had described as "excessive" clearing on favorite wildflower trails at Garland Park during the spring blooming period. Mr. Sulentich stated that staff would work with docents to prepare a map prioritizing plant species and their location for special protection, providing a copy to the chapter, and would coordinate trail maintenance activities with the docents. The chapter had also asked that no pruning be done during the spring wildflower season, that more effort be concentrated on removing invasive weeds, and that thorough instruction and monitoring be provided to trail crews. In a follow-up call Apr. 11, the chapter will be sent a copy of the map, and we were assured that docents Michael Mitchell and Gordon Williams would be working closely with trail crews to protect wildflower areas.

BEACH CLEAN-UP REMINDER: The next two monthly Beach Clean-ups sponsored by Save Our Shores will take place 10 am to Noon on Saturday, May 10, at Asilomar; and Saturday, June 9, at Carmel Beach. For more information, contact cleanup@saveourshores.org .

April 2012

SUPPORT GROWS FOR NATIONAL MONUMENT AT FORT ORD: The visit of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to Fort Ord on Jan. 13 marked a high point in the effort to designate the BLM lands as the Fort Ord National Monument. The object is to provide another level of protection for habitat and recreation as well as to honor the troops who were trained there between 1917 and the deactivation of the base in 1994. The proposal grew out of a policy of the current administration to support local efforts to protect special sites around the country, for which Fort Ord qualifies both biologically and historically. It was first nominated by the Conservation Lands Foundation, and was quickly supported by grassroots groups working to protect Fort Ord including CNPS, with a good number of members attending the Jan. 13 meeting, at which overwhelming support was expressed. For a brief history of our

chapter's long involvement in Fort Ord issues, see our CNPS January newsletter (go to montereybay.cnps.org/news and click on January). Letters thanking The President (The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500; email: comments@whitehouse.gov) and Secretary Ken Salazar, (Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington DC 20240; email: feedback@ios.doi.gov) would be appreciated to help this project move forward.

TRIP LEADERS SCOUT ZIPLINE COURSE: In an effort to alert the public to the potential impacts, field trip leaders from CNPS and the Sierra Club Ventana Chapter have been checking out the areas where the proposed ziplines would affect Jacks Peak Park. For those who would like to walk the route, print out the map at <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/parks/jackspeakmap.html> and then use the following directions: from the entrance, turn left and then keep right to the East Picnic Area at the end of the road, where a wide trail drops down to join the Madrone Trail. The first overhead zipline segment would go roughly from behind the restroom down to the first junction of the Madrone and Ceanothus Trails. The second segment would cross back about halfway between the first crossing and the junction with the Earl Moser Trail. The third would cross again just below the 700' contour line (visible on the map). Thus park hikers would be subject to the noise and distraction of flying zip riders making three crossings of the Madrone Trail. Visual impacts would include 8-10 looming towers and a crisscross of cables above the trail. After a short walk connecting to the Iris Trail, three more segments down Martin Canyon would lead to the pickup point off Carmel Valley Road (thanks to Rita Dalessio, Mary Gale, Bob Hale and the developers' brochure for this information). Although the County had announced in December that it would do an Environmental Impact Report, the most thorough level of analysis of the impacts of a project (as requested by concerned citizens), it now appears to be backpedaling to a lesser effort. Let Co. Parks Planning Mgr. David Lutes know an EIR is essential! (email: parks@co.monterey.ca.us) In the meantime, a very active group, Friends of Jacks Peak Park, was recently formed, headed by retired teacher Mary Pendlay, who made an excellent presentation at the Feb. chapter meeting.

AB 2014 REAUTHORIZING FORA NEEDS CHANGES: With the Fort Ord Reuse Authority set to expire in 2014, Assemblyman Bill Monning has introduced AB 1614 in the State Assembly to extend FORA, so far with NO conditions. Those concerned about protecting habitat and recreational values are deeply distressed over FORA's encouragement of destructive projects like "Whispering Oaks," the Monterey Downs Horse Park, and the East Side Freeway, particularly in view of recent allegations of secret deals with developers. With a hearing set by the Assembly Local Government Committee for March 21, emails and/or faxes are needed ASAP to the committee (Katie.Kolitsos@asm.ca.gov [email] or 916-319-3959 [fax]) urging that the outdated FORA Plan adopted in 1997 be updated, the Habitat Management Plan to protect sensitive habitats be completed before any further developments are considered, and that development be guided to blighted urban areas before targeting natural habitats.

OPPOSITION TO COST OF APPEALS MOUNTS: Along with many other non-profit groups, CNPS has been very concerned about the rising costs of appeals of land use decisions of the Board of Supervisors. These fees have increased from \$100 in 1996 to \$5,040 now, said to be by far the highest in the state. Ill-considered decisions such as approving development on steep slopes or in sensitive habitat must go through the administrative process, e.g. filing appeal to supervisors, in order for an opponent to have standing to file a lawsuit. While CNPS rarely files such suits, it has been asked on occasion to provide supportive testimony about impacts on sensitive habitat areas. The current fee is prohibitive for most residents as well as local non-profits. Supervisor Jane Parker and retired lawyer Jane Haines have been leading the effort to reduce the fee. The chapter wrote a letter of support and The Herald editorialized for a lower fee. More letters to the supervisors are needed!

FERRINI RANCH THREATENS OAKS: The proposal to divide this 866-acre ranch adjoining Toro Park into 212 lots would cut down an estimated 921 oak trees in addition to exacerbating traffic and water problems on Hwy 68. The county is said to be considering selling off part of Toro Park to improve access to the subdivision. Watch for this misguided project to resurface as economic conditions improve.

RANCHO CANADA VILLAGE GEARING UP: This 280-unit mixed-use "Traditional Neighborhood Development" has completed its specific plan and is going through the county approval process, with an EIR said to be starting soon. This project raises concerns about manipulation of the Carmel River flood plain and natural habitat, traffic, and water supply. Watch for it later in the year.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ON BEACH CLEAN-UPS: The next two monthly Beach Cleanups sponsored by Save Our Shores will take place Sat, April 21 (Earth Day!) at Del Monte/Monterey Municipal Beach 10 am-Noon; and Sat. May 10 at Asilomar 10 am-Noon. For more info contact: cleanup@saveourshores.org

March 2012

PEBBLE BEACH DEVELOPMENT DEIR: Chapter comments on the build-out proposed by Pebble Beach Co. urged modification of the housing proposed immediately above the Indian Village plant reserve for protection of Hickman's Potentilla. The homes are situated so that run-off could adversely affect the endangered plant. The chapter also emphasized strict enforcement of conditions to protect and restore Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) which receive strong protection under the Coastal Act. In addition, the letter urged that the loss of some 7000 Monterey pines to development be further mitigated by dedication to Jacks Peak Park of property owned by PBCo. adjoining the park.

WHISPERING OAKS: Thanks to a successful referendum on the Board of Supervisors' approval of this project, the Board decided at its Jan 24 meeting to rescind its rezoning of the huge and destructive conversion of oak woodland at Fort Ord. CNPS along with a large number of the public, urged the Board to rescind and look more closely at several alternative proposals to site development in blighted areas of Fort Ord instead of its native oak woodlands.

MONTEREY DOWNS: Also threatening recreation and natural habitat areas at Fort Ord, this huge project proposes a 200-room hotel, 1400 housing units, a village with retail and commercial space, a 6500-seat covered arena for as many as 50 indoor equestrian events each year, a one-mile racing track, miles of equestrian trails, and more. The County Redevelopment Agency has been negotiating with the would-be developer, and once the terms of the contract are settled, the public will have only 10 days to challenge the agreement. The environmental impacts of the project will only be considered after the agreement is signed—a clear case of putting the "cart before the horse!" It seems that the county has learned nothing from the back-room dealings that have apparently upended the regional water project.

FORA REAUTHORIZATION AND PLAN UPDATE: With pressure from developers to move the above projects and others along before the Habitat Management Plan is even finalized, the public is becoming increasingly frustrated with the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) created by the State Legislature to oversee redevelopment after closure of Fort Ord. With FORA expiring in 2014 there is growing urgency to restructure FORA if it is reauthorized and also to require updating the Fort Ord Reuse Plan, which is clearly failing to concentrate on "reuse" of the dilapidated areas instead of sacrificing valuable wildlands habitat. CNPS urges that revision of the plan and completion of the Habitat Plan should be highest priority along with refining FORA's governance to give the affected public more influence.

JACKS PEAK ZIPLINE: The Mitigated Negative Declaration that was supposed to have been released by now on the proposed zipline at Jacks Peak Park has not appeared, while opposition has continued to grow. Opponents cite a list of potential impacts and have urged a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The chapter agrees that an EIR is required because of the long history of the park for passive use. Late Flash! The county just announced that an EIR would be prepared!

February 2012

PEBBLE BEACH DEVELOPMENT DEIR: Chapter comments on the build-out proposed by Pebble Beach Co. urged modification of the housing proposed immediately above the Indian Village plant reserve for protection of Hickman's Potentilla. The homes are situated so that run-off could adversely affect the endangered plant. The

chapter also emphasized strict enforcement of conditions to protect and restore Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) which receive strong protection under the Coastal Act. In addition, the letter urged that the loss of some 7000 Monterey pines to development be further mitigated by dedication to Jacks Peak Park of property owned by PBCo. adjoining the park.

WHISPERING OAKS: Thanks to a successful referendum on the Board of Supervisors' approval of this project, the Board will decide at its Jan 24 meeting either to rescind its rezoning of the property or set a date for a vote of the people on this huge and destructive conversion of oak woodland at Fort Ord. CNPS urges the Board to rescind and look more closely at several alternative proposals to site development in blighted areas of Ft. Ord instead of its native oak woodlands.

MONTEREY DOWNS: Also threatening recreation and natural habitat areas at Fort Ord, this huge project proposes a 200- room hotel, 1400 housing units, a village with retail and commercial space, a 6500-seat covered arena for as many as 50 indoor equestrian events each year, a one-mile racing track, miles of equestrian trails, and more. The County Redevelopment Agency has been negotiating with the would-be developer, and once the terms of the contract are settled, the public will have only 10 days to challenge the agreement. The environmental impacts of the project will only be considered after the agreement is signed—a clear case of putting the "cart before the horse!" It seems that the county has learned nothing from the back-room dealings that have apparently upended the regional water project.

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FORT ORD CLEAN-UP & WILDFLOWER TOURS: The Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Field Office has set its semi-annual free guided bus tour of Fort Ord clean-up projects for Sat. Feb. 25. There will also be an Open House with information on groundwater cleanup, habitat management, and landfill actions. Also this spring BRAC will again offer a 1.5 hour walking tour inside the Impact Area. The date will be determined by winter rainfall for optimum wildflower viewing. For details or a copy of the current quarterly newsletter listing the release schedule of environmental documents, email: Melissa/Broadston@us.army.mil or call her at 393-1284.

JACKS PEAK ZIPLINE: The Mitigated Negative Declaration that was supposed to have been released by now on the proposed zipline at Jacks Peak Park has not appeared, while opposition has continued to grow. Opponents cite a list of potential impacts and have urged a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The chapter agrees that an EIR is required because of the long history of the park for passive use. Late Flash! The county just announced that an EIR would be prepared!

January 2012

CNPS HAS A LONG HISTORY OF PLANT HABITAT PROTECTION AT FORT ORD

CNPS members attending the State Council Meeting at Sunset Center Dec. 2 were treated to an absorbing program on the important plants and habitats of Fort Ord by BLM Botanist Bruce Delgado and long-time volunteer David Styer, a presentation that will be repeated for our own members at the January general meeting. Even before CNPS existed, local botanists had been studying the unique plants and plant communities of the historic Army base. Shortly after the Monterey Bay Chapter was approved by the state board in 1966, an informal agreement was reached by chapter co-founder Bee Howitt and Gen. R.G. Fergusson, then commanding officer of Fort Ord, to

set aside nine small plant reserves to protect certain rare plants that had managed to survive and even thrive on the busy base.

Earlier, in 1964, retired virologist Howitt from UC's Hastings Reservation and John Thomas Howell of the California Academy of Sciences had co-authored *The Vascular Plants of Monterey County*, pointing out that Monterey is "one of the richest and most important research areas for field studies in systematic botany in Western America." Soon the chapter was having regular field trips to Fort Ord and preparing plant lists that have now grown to over 900 species. With the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, the reserves developed increasing significance, bringing the Army an award for its stewardship of the reserves.

Why are there so many rare plants at Fort Ord? the answer seems to be a combination of geology, geography, and climate. The sandy soil brought down by the Salinas River in glacial times weathered into the Aromas red sands, a sandstone-like formation. Later changing ocean levels created a thick layer of paler sand dunes on top of the older consolidated sands. The combination of sterile soil and moist, foggy conditions during the growing period provided a habitat where certain unusual plants could thrive without heavy competition from more common or invasive species.

This habitat became noted for the maritime chaparral that had developed throughout Fort Ord's sandy areas. Dominant in many areas are the shaggy-barked manzanitas, *Arctostaphylos tomentosa* and *A. crustacea*, and their various forms. Less common is the Monterey (aka "Toro") manzanita, *A. montereyensis*, which at first was known only from one plant near the Monterey airport. Also in the sandy areas are Hooker's manzanita, *A. hookeri*, Pajaro manzanita, *A. pajaroensis*, and sandmat manzanita, *A. pumila*. Frequently found with them are three blue-flowered ceanothus species, Monterey ceanothus, *Ceanothus cuneatus* var. *rigidus*; cropleaf ceanothus, *C. dentatus*; and blue blossom, *C. thyrsoiflorus*. A real rarity is the southernmost stand of coast whitethorn, *C. incanus*. Other rarities found in the reserves include Monterey spineflower, *Chorizanthe pungens*; Eastwood's goldenfleece, *Ericameria fasciculata*; Coast wallflower, *Erysimum ammophilum*; sand gilia, *Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*; and Seaside bird'sbeak, *Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *littoralis*. Many plants have been added to the list by indefatigable plant hunter David Styer in recent years.

A tenth plant reserve had been established in the western dunes to protect the habitat of Smith's Blue Butterfly, but all of the reserves existed in a sort of limbo because they had no legal standing. However, in 1989 the Army decided to close down the Ammunition Supply Points (ASPs) in the dunes and move the contents to one large, secure location inland. Unfortunately this involved removing a large acreage of maritime chaparral. As mitigation for this loss, the Army signed an agreement with CNPS to establish the reserves permanently. Consequently, when the base closed in 1991, most of the land encompassing the reserves went to the BLM along with the impact areas to the south and the highlands and grasslands on the east. The dunes, including two reserves, went to the State Parks Department. Recreationists, scientists, hikers, and plant enthusiasts have reason to be glad that these early efforts led to the preservation of so much open space.

However, there have been constant efforts by development interests to insert major projects into areas that have great value for low impact recreation and habitat preservation, particularly areas serving as wildlife corridors between the dunes and the BLM lands. With the prospect of FORA (the Fort Ord Reuse Authority) phasing out in 2014, some highly destructive proposals like the Eastside Parkway and Whispering Oaks (dubbed "Whimpering Oaks" by opponents) are being pushed ahead. All who support the sensitive and rational development of Fort Ord need to be watchful and involved in decisions made in coming weeks and months.

November/December 2011

ZIPLINE REMINDER: The Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the proposed zipline at Jacks Peak Park is supposed to be released in the next month. The device is similar to a chair lift except it operates by gravity and riders are strapped in one at a time. Up to five different lines connected by short trails would be necessary to bring riders down from the ridgetop to Carmel Valley Road, where they would be bused back to their cars. If you are concerned about this type of project in what has been a passive use, low impact wilderness park protecting the best remaining stand of native Monterey pines in existence, please contact the County Parks Dept. to get on the county's list to receive a copy of the MND (755-4899 or PO Box 5279, Salinas, CA 93915 or parks@co.monterey.ca.us). Even contacts = concern!

SUPERVISORS DENY VILLAS DE CARMELO REZONING: In an unprecedented display of environmental unanimity, the Monterey Co. Board of Supervisors on Oct. 11 denied the developer's request for rezoning from medium to high density to allow a 46-unit condo development on the site of the old Carmel Convalescent Hospital just north of the Highway 1-Ocean Ave. intersection. CNPS had opposed the project because of the loss of Monterey pines and oaks, but the principal objections by the supervisors were the development's significant impacts on water and traffic. SUPERVISORS APPROVE

EASTSIDE PARKWAY: Despite strong opposition to approving this project at Fort Ord on the Consent Agenda, the Monterey Co. Supervisors on Oct. 11 voted 4-1 (Jane Parker voting No) to support a proposed alignment that would impact sensitive habitat including one or more of the ten Rare Plant Reserves that were established by an agreement between the Army and CNPS over 40 years ago. CNPS and other opponents had urged that such a controversial project should be removed from the Consent Agenda and set for a public hearing to allow full public participation.

NPGS PLAN TO PROTECT LISTED PLANTS: The US Naval Postgraduate School has announced the release of a draft Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan on Nov. 11 and has invited CNPS to participate in the process. The plan addresses three federally listed plants on Navy property: Yadon's Piperia (*Piperia yadonii*), Monterey spine-flower (*Chorizanthe pungens*), and Dune Gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*). A meeting to discuss the plan has been scheduled for Monday, Dec. 5.

"FIRESCAPE" PLANS SYMPOSIUM AND WORKSHOP: The ongoing collaborative effort by the US Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy to establish a framework for managing fire in the Los Padres National Forest and the Ventana Wilderness has included a number of meetings starting last March. The continuation of this work to bring together all of the groups involved in fire safety and ecosystem protection will take place at a symposium on Oct. 26 in the Carmel area, where a variety of speakers will discuss the multiple values of fire-adapted natural communities. A second meeting on Oct. 27 will hope to incorporate this information in local fire plans.

FOREST SERVICE CLOSES TWO ROADS: The USFS recently announced that for public safety reasons, two roads in the Los Padres National Forest that have recently been graded will be closed temporarily because of "inclement weather." The Arroyo Seco-Indians Road will be closed at Memorial Park and Piney Creek Road will be closed at the first gate. They will reopen "as conditions permit."

October 2011

ZIPLINES PROPOSED FOR TWO PARKS: The county is about to release a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) on the proposal for up to five ziplines at Jacks Peak Park, despite requests for an Environmental Impact Report on the effects of a commercial development in a park designed for habitat preservation, walking, and nature study. The same Canadian firm, Ziptrek, also was involved in inserting up to 10 "aerial trails" into the state park budget for the land across from Pt. Lobos State Reserve. Park officials were considering letting the project go ahead before the parkland even has a general plan, but public outcry halted that effort. Those who are concerned about the

proliferation of "thrill rides" in our local parks should get on the public comment list for the state park plan, which is already underway, and get a copy from **the** county of the Jacks Peak MND.

WILDFLOWER "CLEARING" AT GARLAND PARK: The chapter has received two constructive letters (6/28 and 9/1) from James L. Sulentic, General Manager of the Regional Park District, responding to chapter criticism of the needlessly harsh trail-clearing that slashed wildflowers along the Terrace and other trails just at the height of bloom last spring. Following suggestions from CNPS, the district has taken steps to identify and map prime wildflower viewing areas and has held meetings with docents and district staff to make sure that the schedule and practices for annual trail maintenance are consistent with policies and laws protecting wildflowers.

NATIONAL MONUMENT STATUS PROPOSED FOR FORT ORD: The chapter has been invited by the Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF) to support a bill to establish the Fort Ord National Monument on the federal public lands managed by Bureau of Land Management. The CLF has been working for many years to protect the National Conservation Lands, some 27 million acres included in National Monuments, Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Historic Trails, areas not protected by National Park and Wildlife Refuge designations. The chapter is very interested in this proposal because, while the original 10 Rare/Endangered Plant Reserves were set aside administratively by the Army, they later received permanent status as mitigations for development, leading to about 15,000 acres going to the Bureau of Land Management in order to protect some 35 species of sensitive plants and animals when Ft. Ord closed.

VILLAS CARMELO NARROWLY APPROVED 6-4 AUG. 31: With all four Planning Commissioners from the peninsula area voting NO, the Commission reversed course to approve the 46-condo project northwest of the intersection of Hwy 1 and Ocean Ave. The project still has problems getting approval from the Coastal Commission for more than a 500% increase in density from existing zoning as well as the additional water that would be required.

SEPTEMBER RANCH ALSO HAS WATER PROBLEMS: Although the Supervisors approved this 95-unit luxury housing development in prime Monterey pine habitat off Carmel Valley Road several years ago, and lawsuits were unsuccessful, a recent water study lends credence to the claim by opponents that the ranch does not have a dependable separate aquifer (how reminiscent of the Carmel Valley Ranch "separate aquifer" that turned out to be non-existent!).

"WHISPERING OAKS" PETITION DRIVE SUCCEEDS: Enough signatures were gathered to call for a public vote next year on the supervisors' approval of this massive office park and transit center that would destroy thousands of oak trees. The supes can now either rescind their approval or set a county-wide vote for next June.

September 2011

SEPTEMBER RANCH EXTENSION DENIED: On Aug. 10 the Monterey County Planning Commission denied on a 5-5 vote a request by lawyer Tony Lombardo for a four-year extension because of adverse economic conditions. CNPS opposed the 95-unit project on steep slopes between Del Mesa Carmel and the Eastwood project in Carmel Valley because of the extensive impacts on the Monterey Pine Forest. Other groups opposed it through lawsuits that achieved some minor improvements on water and traffic issues. Nevertheless, the project has an automatic extension to 2014.

"WHIMPERING OAKS" HEADED FOR VOTERS: A referendum drive to overturn the Supervisors' 4-1 vote approving this massive industrial park at Fort Ord appears to have tallied enough signatures to go on the ballot next year. Officially called "Whispering Oaks," the project that would destroy between 3400 and 4400 oaks and an unknown number of rare or endangered plants. The proposed industrial park was strenuously opposed by many groups and individuals because it had been relocated to a pristine oak forest instead of the degraded site originally proposed, or the more logical site at the Marina airport. Opponents were outraged at the chutzpah of the county in using redevelopment funds intended for rehabilitating blighted areas to convert important wildlife habitat to industrial use.

VILLAS DE CARMELO IS BACK: On Aug. 10 the County Planning Commission narrowly reversed (6-4) its earlier vote not to consider the 46-condo development until the increase in density is heard by the Coastal Commission as part of a package of amendments to Local Coastal Program required by the project. All four commissioners from the Peninsula opposed the reversal. Current zoning, supported by neighborhood and environmental groups, would allow only seven units. CNPS opposed the project, located at the old Carmel Convalescent Hospital site north of Ocean Ave., because of excessive removal of Monterey pines and live oaks along Hwy 1, a designated scenic highway. The proposal is now scheduled to come before the Planning Commission on Aug. 31.

FIRE RETARDANTS RESTRICTED: Because of documented toxic impacts of fire retardants on some 65 threatened and endangered species, the US Forest Service has been required by a federal court to cease retardant drops in critical habitat areas or within 300 feet of creeks except to protect human lives. The Los Padres National Forest has incurred more such drops than any other national forest in the country—twice the volume of chemicals used by the second-place forest, according to Keep the Sespe Wild, a forest conservation group in Ojai.

TREE-CLEARING FROM LEVEES OPPOSED: Conservationists are opposing a recent proposal by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) to clear trees off levees to make them "safer." When trees were cleared along the Pajaro River some years ago, flood waters from a severe storm broke through and flooded farmlands and homes. CNPS pointed out at the time that the roots of vegetation help sustain the levees and provide valuable habitat for wildlife, urging that levees be kept well vegetated with native plants. A coalition of environmental groups has filed suit against the ACE to stop this short-sighted program.

DOUGLAS RESIGNS FROM COASTAL STAFF: The long-time executive director of the CA Coastal Commission, Peter Douglas, announced his retirement at the regular CCC meeting this month after a long battle with lung cancer. Widely praised for his skill and eloquence in defending the CA Coastal Act, considered to be the most protective U.S. coastal legislation in existence, Douglas not only co-authored the original legislation but also served on the staff for some 40 years. Although decisions are made by a 12-member appointed Coastal Commission, Douglas is credited with key input into staff recommendations, supported by CNPS and other conservation groups, that protected vast stretches of sensitive coastal habitat from being converted to mega-mansions and luxury resorts. Douglas, who attended the R.L. Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, is being honored by local friends at a meeting in Carmel in late August.

ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION ACHIEVED: The largest-ever landmark agreement was recently struck by the Center for Biodiversity and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to protect 757 endangered plant and animal species on a fixed and enforceable timeline. One of the longest lists was for California and included the following CA plants: Brand's phacelia, Orcutt's hazardia, Goose Creek milk-vetch, San Fernando Valley spineflower, Ramshaw Meadow sand-verbena, Red Mountain buckwheat, Red Mountain stonecrop, Shasta chaparral, Siskiyou mariposa lily, Soldier Mountain cinquefoil, Tahoe yellow cress, Tehamana chaparral, Webber's ivesia. None is known from Monterey Co. The agreement represents the end of a listing logjam that has gone on for years while many plants and animals have slipped toward extinction.

July-August 2011

"WHISPERING OAKS" APPROVED BY SUPERVISORS: A disappointing 4-1 vote by the County Board of Supervisors June 14 approved a zoning change to allow a massive industrial park that would destroy 3400-4400 oaks at Fort Ord while providing a controversial new location for a \$100 million Monterey Salinas Transit headquarters to consolidate all its bus operations. The chapter deplores the failure to consider degraded sites that could preserve most of the oaks and the current bicycle, horse, and hiking trails that would be disrupted by the project. A key point of the opposition was the change in zoning to allow a much denser development than was originally expected, as well as using "redevelopment" funds, intended for rehabilitating blighted areas, to destroy a pristine oak forest. Reportedly the opponents are considering a referendum on the decision.

RARE PLANT ISSUES AT PBBSC: Chapter members participated in a recent field trip to Pico Blanco Boy Scout Camp to review the chapter's long-standing concerns about the loss of habitat for the threatened Dudley's lousewort (*Pedicularis dudleyi*). Over the years many of the small sites surveyed by chapter members along the N. Fork of the Little Sur River, mostly on PBBSC land, have disappeared because of trampling as well as logging of redwood and Douglas fir trees that provide the plant's preferred habitat (and is very rare in Monterey Co). Belatedly after years of efforts by former Boy Scout, camp counselor, chapter member, and current San Mateo science teacher Kim Kuska, the PBBSC management has fenced one large remaining habitat area and has promised to protect it. Recovery of the outlying populations continues to be threatened by trampling and inadvertent removal by US Forest Service trail crews working near Little Sur Public Camp.

FIRESCAPE MEETINGS SEEK CONSENSUS: A total of six all-day meetings during the months of March-June, called by the US Forest Service and moderated by Nature Conservancy facilitators, brought together a very heterogeneous group ranging from conservationists to scientists to firefighters to discuss the knotty issues of preserving forest habitat while affording better protection to residents in the Wildlands Urban Interface (WUI, or woo-ee). Arising from the loss of homes in Big Sur during the 2008 Basin Complex Fire, and the controversy that arose during hearings last fall on the Monterey Co. Fire Plan, the formal meetings have ended, but the results will be refined by a "Core Committee" that will report later this summer. The chapter's view, based on scientific studies, is that the primary focus should be on fire-resistant construction and landscaping in areas 30-100' around houses in the WUI rather than wide firebreaks throughout the national forest.

PRESIDIO EXPANSION COMMENTS DUE JUNE 21: The Defense Language Institute (DLI) Draft Environmental Impact Statement proposes a new master plan replacing the 1983 plan. It includes an eight-story classroom building, new barracks constructed on slopes over 25%, a fast food restaurant, and ancillary development. Three alternatives are considered: 1) No project, retaining the 1983 plan; 2) DLI Concentric Plan, with all of the new development on site; and 3) Partial development on site and part at Fort Ord. The preferred alternative is (2) which would involve a transfer from Fort Ord because of the water deficiency on the Peninsula. The chapter is concerned about building on steep slopes and the potential impacts on the Huckleberry Hill Natural Preserve and the sensitive plants that are found there, including Yadon's piperia, several manzanitas, and the Monterey pine.

PEBBLE BEACH EIR DUE AUGUST 10: As reported last month, the Environmental Impact Report for the PBCo. build-out is expected to be released August 10 for a 45-day comment period. While the plan is significantly improved over the one denied by the Coastal Commission three years ago, the chapter still has concerns about the impact on listed plants and sensitive habitat by new development in the vicinity of the Morse Reserve, the Huckleberry Hill Natural Area and Indian Village. The spread of invasive species is another area that needs to be addressed more specifically.

June 2011

PEBBLE BEACH EIR SCOPING MEETING APRIL 27: A standing room-only crowd attended the meeting at the PB Community Services Office for a description of the revised plans for the Pebble Beach Co. build-out. Planners from the county, Coastal Commission, consultants, and officials from the Pebble Beach Co. explained the changes from the previous plan and outlined the timeline for the application process. CNPS members expressed a number of concerns about the impacts on the rare and endangered plant and habitats in Del Monte Forest, including the timing and thoroughness of botanical surveys and the issue of retaining wildlife corridors for both plants and animals. The chapter is particularly concerned about housing development proposed for the Huckleberry Hill Natural Area and the spread of invasive nonnative plants in the S.F.B. Morse Preserve. Written comments were to be accepted until May 10, with the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be circulated for 45 days starting August 10. Public hearings before the County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors on the amendments to the Local Coastal Plan are scheduled for November and December, with the application to be forwarded to the Coastal Commission by December 30. The Final EIR is to be prepared by January 31, 2012, with more public hearings leading to a decision by the Board of Supervisors in April 2012.

FIRESCAPES "SECOND-ROUND" WORKSHOPS HELD: Following the March 8 & 9 meetings held at Big Sur Lodge, the group gathered again May 3 & 4 to continue discussions about fire issues. The Tuesday meeting involved a morning field trip through Palo Colorado Canyon with stops to look at the problems of defending this remote area from wildfire and visualizing from Bottchers Gap how the fires spread from the east. It was estimated that 1500 people live in this fire-prone area! The afternoon was spent in small-group discussions at Pico Blanco Boy Scout Camp's impressive new lodge building, designed to provide safe shelter in case of fire while the camp is in session. Led by facilitators from The Nature Conservancy, the group identified "targets" such as protecting human communities, protecting watersheds, preserving natural diversity, and protecting cultural resources. Then the threats to these values were listed, along with opportunities to minimize them, utilizing the shared knowledge of the participants. A third two-day workshop is planned for the summer to focus on specific actions to reduce the fire hazard while protecting all of the target values.

"KEEP BIG SUR WILD" BILL RESCHEDULED FOR JUNE 18: The public meeting planned for March 19 at the Big Sur Lodge was postponed to June 18 from 10 am to Noon because of the landslide that closed Highway 1. The chapter strongly supports this bill and urges members to write sponsor Rep. Sam Farr (1126 Longworth House Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20515) supporting the bill and to attend the Big Sur meeting if at all possible. While many local residents support the bill, an outspoken group in Big Sur opposes it unless changes are made to allow far more clearing than necessary for fire prevention. Besides establishing a Botanical Area honoring the late Jeff Norman, the bill would convert the 325,000 acres of the Monterey Ranger District into the Big Sur Management Unit to provide for more effective management and greater budget authority; protect over 90 miles of the regions most ecologically sensitive rivers and streams by designating them as federal Wild & Scenic Rivers; and designate a National Recreation Trail on 11 miles of the Arroyo Seco-Indians Road for bicyclers, hikers, and equestrians.

'WHISPERING OAKS' BUSINESS PARK THREATENS OAKS: Another ironically-named development would create a 58-acre business park including over 24 acres for a Monterey Salinas Transit (MST) Facility at Fort Ord that would result in the removal of over 4400 oak trees, including 2400 for the MST project. According to a comment from the CA Dept. of Fish & Game, the Draft EIR does not address the fact that the project would result in a taking of the Federally Listed sand gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* ssp. *arenaria*) as well as other sensitive plants including Seaside birds'-beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *Littoralis*) and animals such as the California Tiger Salamander. It seems incredible that this huge project could be allowed to destroy pristine habitat including a magnificent oak forest when there are so many underdeveloped and degraded areas at Fort Ord. This development seems to be headed for the Planning Commission under the radar, but the chapter believes that the project should be downsized and relocated.

May 2011

ZIPLINE PROPOSED FOR JACKS PEAK PARK: Officials of Ziptrek, a firm from Whistler, British Columbia, met on Mar. 30 with Monterey Co. park officials to describe their proposal for five ziplines in Jacks Peak Park. For those unfamiliar with the device, it is like a clothesline slanted downhill in which individuals in harnesses are carried at considerable speed from one station to another. It operates on gravity, so does not require power; but it does involve building stations at each end of a zipline, and would require some pruning to provide adequate clearance. Members of CNPS, Sierra Club, and Audubon attended the meeting to raise questions about potential impacts on a park that has always been operated for its wilderness values. Park Commissioners and employees are very enthusiastic about the potential financial benefits to the park, which has suffered from lack of funding in recent years, resulting in reduced operating hours and less frequent ranger patrols. The chapter and others urged that a full Environmental Impact Report be required before any decisions are made.

CARMEL COTTAGES APPEALED: The Carmel Valley Association, assisted by LandWatch, has filed an appeal on the Board of Supervisors' 3-2 decision allowing the developer of the 78-unit Carmel Valley assisted living facility to drop the requirement for a gray water and cistern system required by the original permit. Allowing a developer to drop a key condition sets a disastrous precedent and leaves the county's credibility seriously impaired. Earlier

CNPS had written the supervisors urging that the landscaping plan should include drought-tolerant natives that are suitable for the site, which has a clay soil that may not be appropriate for many of the plants in the current plan. The chapter had also urged that the county provide a waiver or lower fee for non-profits appealing such plans, as the recently-adopted \$5000 appeal fee is beyond the ability of many non-profits to pay, and has the effect of stifling public involvement in the planning process.

REVISED PEBBLE BEACH EIR PLANNED: The Monterey Co. Planning Dept. has announced that a scoping meeting will be held on Apr. 27 on a new Environmental Impact Report for the revised build-out on Pebble Beach Co. land in Del Monte Forest. The previous plan was denied by the Coastal Commission in June 07 following strong opposition by many groups including our chapter. Some of the biologically most damaging parts of the plan were abandoned (e.g., a new golf course, relocating and enlarging the PB stables, sitting a driving range in wetlands), but the substitute plan also has impacts that need to be analyzed and mitigated. Concerns remain about the potential loss of sensitive habitat from 90 new residential lots and a new hotel across from Spyglass Golf Course. While the scoping meeting will probably be held before this newsletter arrives, there will be several opportunities to comment on the adequacy of the EIR when it comes out and at later meetings of the Planning Commission and Supervisors.

April 2011

USFS HOLDS "FIRESCAPES" MEETING: Members of various conservation groups including CNPS, Ventana Wilderness Alliance and the Sierra Club, along with Big Sur residents, participated in a two-day workshop at Big Sur Lodge Mar. 8-9 sponsored by the Forest Service and moderated by Nature Conservancy representatives. With two more such workshops planned for later in the spring, the hope is to achieve a consensus by mid-summer on fire protection policies for those living in the WUI (wildlands urban interface) that can be expressed in the environmental documents that will be required for fire protection actions to move forward. The extent of the disagreement over the amount of clearing in the Ventana Wilderness necessary to protect those living in the WUI became evident in the hearings on the county fire plan last fall, when proposals for clearing far beyond scientific justification were urged by affected residents, even to the extent of overriding environmental laws governing such actions. Ultimately the more extreme proposals were eliminated, but the chapter remains concerned about efforts to reintroduce them.

USFS PROPOSES MILPITAS PLAN: The Forest Service held public meetings in February on the proposed Milpitas Special Interest Area, which would include 9984 acres in the Los Padres National Forest on the eastern slope of the Santa Lucia Mountains extending from Santa Lucia Memorial Park ("The Indians") to Junipero Serra Peak, Wagon Caves, and the Indians and Merle Ranches. The purposes of SIAs are to "protect and, where appropriate, foster public use and enjoyment of areas that feature scenic, historical, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, or other special characteristics. Uses that are compatible with maintaining the target of the areas designation are appropriate." A major emphasis would be development of an ecocultural/ethnobotanical plan to "provide opportunities for people to connect with their ancestral past and to maintain the vegetative mosaic landscape favoring plants beneficial of traditional uses." The chapter supports many proposals in the plan, and would like to see increased emphasis on protection of the rare plants in the area from overgrazing, excessive vegetative manipulation, damage from hunting and target-shooting activities, and the proliferation of trails, roads and parking areas in sensitive locations. Continued on Page 4 4 April 2011 Conservation Report Continued from Page 3

BIG SUR MEETING CANCELLED: The public meeting Mar. 19 in Big Sur on Sam Farr's bill HR 4040 was cancelled because of the slide that closed Hwy 1 on Mar. 16. The bill would change management of the Monterey District of the Los Padres Nation Forest, add over 90 miles of rivers and tributaries to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and refine the boundaries to add certain BLM lands and eliminate some private land. The meeting is expected to be rescheduled, and in the meantime, members are urged to send letters or emails of support to Rep. Farr emphasizing the need for increased protection of the unique natural resources of the LPNF and supporting the creation of the Jeff Norman Botanical Area. See March newsletter for further information. EL SUR RANCH WATER

HEARING JUNE 16-17: This is expected to be the final hearing before the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) on the El Sur Ranch Application 30166 to substantially increase its pumping from wells alongside the Big Sur River in Andrew Molera State Park in order to irrigate 267 acres of grazing land west of Hwy 1. While it is too late to apply to testify at the hearing, which will be held in Sacramento, it is not too late to write letters to the SWRCB, Division of Water Rights/1001 - I Street, 14th Floor/Sacramento, CA 95812-2000. For more details, see March newsletter.

PLANNING COMMISSION OKS "CARMEL COTTAGES": Despite strong local opposition, on Mar. 9 the Monterey Co. Planning Commission let the developer of this assisted living facility in Carmel Valley drop the grey water system he had promised to include in order to minimize water use. As many of the landscaping plants proposed for this project are not suitable for the site, the chapter will continue to urge the use of local drought-tolerant natives and press the county to monitor both water use and plantings as the development goes forward.

March 2011

"KEEP BIG SUR WILD" BILL RESURFACES: Among the important provisions in Congressman Sam Farr's bill, expected to be reintroduced soon, is the establishment of the Jeff Norman Botanical Area honoring the long-time chapter member who died October 31, 2007. Jeff was a resident of Big Sur for many years during which he contributed greatly to the knowledge of Monterey County plants as well as to the natural and human history of Big Sur. The larger component of the bill (HR 4040) calls for conversion of the 325,000 acres of the Monterey Ranger District into the Big Sur Management Unit, which would provide the greater autonomy and budget authority that this spectacular region deserves. Also, over 90 miles of the region's most biologically and culturally sensitive rivers and streams would be designated as federal Wild & Scenic Rivers, protecting them and their outstanding values in perpetuity. In addition, the bill would designate the Arroyo Seco-Indians Road as a National Recreation Trail. The chapter supports this bill and urges members to write Representative Sam Farr (1126 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515- 0517) thanking him for this historic legislation. A public meeting to explain the need for the bill and take public comment has just been set for March 19 in Big Sur. See local papers for time and location, or visit the Ventana Wilderness Alliance website: www.ventanawild.org/hr4040.

PEBBLE BEACH CONCERNS RAISED: Discussions are underway with Thomas Quattlebaum, Environmental Manager for the Pebble Beach Company, about the chapter's remaining concerns regarding the significantly changed Pebble Beach development plan. The chapter is gratified that the projects in the prior plan that were seen as most destructive of rare and endangered plants and habitats have been abandoned; particularly the development of an expanded stables and parking area in the lower quarry adjoining the SFB Morse Reserve; a new golf course in the present stables area and a driving range in wetlands east of Spanish Bay. Instead the company proposes expanded hotel facilities in mostly developed areas, a better location for the driving range, and 90 residential units scattered throughout several sites in the forest. In these latter developments the chapter would like to see buffers between the residential units and sensitive habitat, particularly adjoining the SFB Morse Reserve; more attention to eliminating invasive exotic plants that are spreading rapidly from disturbed areas into areas slated for preservation; protection of the endangered Hickman's cinquefoil (*Potentilla hickmanii*) at Indian Village; the need for more sensitivity in fire clearance to avoid the improper clearing of Yadon's rein-orchid (*Piperia yadonii*) that has occurred in the past. The chapter appreciates the positive interest in our concerns and looks forward to working with Mr. Quattlebaum.

BIG SUR WATER HEARING POSTPONED: The public hearing scheduled for March 8 on the application of El Sur Ranch to increase pumping of water from the underflow of the Big Sur River has been postponed until June 16. The chapter along with the Ventana Wilderness Alliance, the Steelhead Association, and the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club have all written to the State Water Resources Control Board asserting that El Sur Ranch has been pumping illegally for years from two wells on Andrew Molera State Park land, adversely impacting riparian vegetation, the threatened steelhead population, and other natural resources supposedly protected in the park. Agencies also protesting the application include the Department of Parks and Recreation and Department of Fish

and Game. The 7000-acre ranch uses the water to irrigate 267 acres of pasture, though only an estimated 25 acres are in the Big Sur watershed and thus entitle the ranch to a much smaller amount of riparian water. The concern is that the ranch is seeking to establish an appropriative right to the water in order to move ahead with construction of a hotel and restaurant at the north end of the parcel toward Point Sur. This project was in a plan approved by Monterey County many years ago, but denied by the Coastal Commission. Those who are concerned about protecting the integrity of the Big Sur River are asked to follow this issue, write letters to the State Water Resources Control Board (P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100), and testify if possible when the hearing is held.

PLANNERS DING CARMEL COTTAGES: Opponents of the developer's plea to be relieved of conditions placed on this project were gratified at the unanimous denial by the Planning Commission at its Wednesday, February 9 meeting. Critics of the 78-unit assisted-living facility, located just off Carmel Valley Road near the mouth of the valley, pointed out that he ignored conditions attached to the original plan requiring landscaping of the large structures to minimize the visual intrusion and construction of a grey-water treatment plant to maintain the shrubs and trees. Because of the water shortage, those conditions were the only reason the project could be approved, yet it was constructed without them. In addition, existing trees and shrubs were removed or severely damaged during construction. Thanks are due to the two planning commissioners who represent this area, Martha Diehl and Keith Vandevere, who asked key questions that led to the unanimous decision. The chapter wrote a letter urging that the conditions be upheld and pointing out the advantages of planting drought-tolerant natives for landscaping. The developer will presumably appeal to the Supervisors, who need to be urged to uphold the commission's decision.

February 2011

WAN COASTAL COMMISSION REAPPOINTMENT: The chapter has written a letter in strong support of the reappointment of Sara Wan of Santa Barbara to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) and urges individual members to do likewise. Sara has been a strong friend of coastal protection for many years and has played a key role on many issues relating to the preservation of environmentally sensitive habitat, notably the CCC decision denying a new golf course in Pebble Beach that would have decimated the native Monterey pine forest, and the ban on off-shore oil drilling. Appointments to the CCC are distributed four each to the Governor, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly. As an appointee of the Senate Rules Committee since 1996, Sara's four-year term is up this spring, and powerful development interests are trying to get her replaced. Urgently needed letters of support should be addressed to Senator Darrell Steinberg/ Chair, Senate Rules Committee/ Room 205 State Capitol/ Sacramento, CA 95814, ASAP or by Feb. 10.

CARMEL COTTAGES POSTPONED: As noted in the last issue, this massive and very visible assisted-living facility recently constructed east of Carmel Middle School was supposed to utilize a tertiary water-treatment plant to provide water for landscaping to screen the structures from Carmel Valley Rd. The new developer didn't want to incur this expense, and the water district unaccountably let him off the hook, but this change has to go back to the county for concurrence. The developer also cut down mature trees that were required to be retained. The issue was set to come before the Planning Commission on Jan. 12, but has now been postponed to Feb. 9. CNPS urges that drought-tolerant native trees and shrubs be required. If planted soon to take advantage of winter rains, they should not need much water to get established; but the developer must be required to assure that this project does not intrude on the scenic views from this rural road. For further information, call Margaret Robbins, 624-1153.

CHAPTER SUPPORTS CARMEL RIVER FEES: A top Page 1 story in the Jan. 10 Monterey Herald was the proposed decision of Administrative Law Judge Maribeth Bushey to deny continuation of the fee that has been collected from water users to fund protection of the Carmel River, a project strongly supported by the chapter. The fee has been used by the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) to restore the Carmel River watershed, which has long served as the major source of water for the Monterey Peninsula. The impacts included

the death of riparian vegetation from the lowered water table and subsequent severe bank erosion and property damage in high water years. The work that has been carried out by the MPWMD over the last 20 years has not only helped to stabilize the river banks by restoring the native riparian vegetation along the river and its tributaries, but also has reduced the sediment flow that threatened the habitat of native steelhead population. The judge is worried about the size and scope of the fee, but the chapter has pointed out that if the fee is based on a percentage of the water actually pumped from the river, it should decrease as new sources of water come on line. The Public Utilities Commission will decide whether to accept the judge's decision at its meeting on Jan. 27 or more likely Feb. 24. Therefore letters of support are needed to the following address: CPUC Public Advisor/ 505 Van Ness Ave./ San Francisco, CA 94102.

PARKER PROPOSES APPEAL FEE WAIVER: Citizens' groups including CNPS have been protesting the County's \$5000 fee for appealing administrative decisions on land use and other important issues to the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors. This high fee is prohibitive for most non-profits or small local groups. It is far higher than such fees in other counties, most of which charge under \$500, and some provide waivers for non-profit or local citizens' groups. The record shows that when appeals are filed by such groups, the projects are frequently modified for the better. And sometimes it is only the prospect of an appeal that makes it possible to reach a reasonable compromise. Fourth District Supervisor Jane Parker has introduced a rule to waive or reduce the fees for public benefit groups that will be considered by the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 27. Letters are urgently needed making the points that Monterey attracts visitors and residents because of its exceptional scenic and environmental resources, and groups dedicated to protecting them should not be foreclosed from the political process.

January 2011

CARMEL COTTAGES RENEGES ON PLANTS: The massive and very visible assisted-living facility recently constructed east of Carmel Middle School was supposed to utilize a tertiary water-treatment plant to provide water for landscaping to screen the structures from Carmel Valley Rd. The new developer didn't want to incur this expense, and the county unaccountably let him off the hook. When this issue comes before the Planning Commission on Jan. 12, CNPS urges that drought tolerant native trees and shrubs be required. If planted soon to take advantage of winter rains, they should not need much water to get established; but the developer must be required to assure that this project does not intrude on the scenic views from this rural road. For further information, call Margaret Robbins, 624-1153.

VILLAS DE CARMEL DEIR RECIRCULATED: Following strong criticism of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for this 46-unit condo project on the 3.68- acre Carmel Convalescent Hospital site at Hwy 1 and Valley Way in unincorporated Carmel (see March issue), the county recirculated the document with further information about traffic and water issues. Unfortunately public critiques by neighbors and groups including CNPS on three other key issues--impacts of tree removal on Hwy 1 scenic corridor, increased density, and rezoning-- were not addressed in the new version. The plan, essentially unchanged, is scheduled to come before the Planning Commission on Jan. 19. For further information, email socncwatch@aol.com

MONTEREY CO. GENERAL PLAN APPROVED: On Oct. 26 the Board of Supervisors approved a deeply flawed General Plan Update, and on Nov. 24 the Carmel Valley Assn. Landwatch, and The Open Monterey Project filed a lawsuit by Michael Stamp based on five substantial issues: traffic congestion, destructive development on steep slopes, inadequate water for allowed development, preferential treatment of "winery corridors," and the last-minute improper changes without adequate public review. The chapter has repeatedly urged the county to strengthen the rules prohibiting grading on steep slopes, particularly involving the conversion of natural habitat to ag land or development, and the failure of the plan to provide for the lawful protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species. In an apparent effort to show that the plan was a reasonable compromise, several pro-development groups also filed suit; however, the current plan essentially fulfills developers' "wish list."

SUPERVISORS APPROVE COUNTY FIRE PLAN: A compromise plan was approved unanimously by the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Dec. 14, eliminating most of the language excessively destructive of sensitive habitats and wilderness values. A group of Big Sur residents, concerned about fire danger following losses in recent wildfires, had proposed policies to override the Endangered Species Act and other laws that went far beyond the best currently available scientific recommendations to minimize fire damage on the "Wildlands/Urban Interface," known as the WUI (wooooo!). The effort to modify the damaging wording proposed by the Big Sur Fire Safe Council was led by the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Ventana Wilderness Alliance, with testimony by CNPS, LandWatch, and others. For more info, see the June and October newsletters.

SEPTEMBER RANCH APPROVED ON 3-2 VOTE: On Nov. 9 three Salinas Valley and North Co. Supervisors approved a 95-unit development on the steep slopes of September Ranch between Carmel Valley Road and Jacks Peak Park. The chapter had long opposed this project because of its impacts on the native Monterey Pine Forest. The chapter and many others urged that the project be confined to the lower half of the parcel in order to protect the pines, reduce the impact on Jacks Peak Park, traffic, water, wildlife habitat, and erosion problems.

ARMY ANNOUNCES WORKSHOP JAN. 12: The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office has set the next Community Involvement Workshop for 6:30 pm Wed. Jan. 12 at the Marina Library, 190 Seaside, Marina. Topics include the groundwater cleanup program and an update on the Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement program. Further information: Call Melissa Broadston, at 393-1284 or email her at Melissa.Broadston@us.army.mil. NOTE: The next semiannual free guided bus tour of the Fort Ord cleanup projects will be Sat., Feb. 1.

November/December 2010

[None]

October 2010

MONTEREY CO. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN. The most contentious issue this last month was the workshop held by the Supervisors Sept. 21 on the Monterey Co. Community Wildfire Protection Plan , which was strongly opposed by a coalition of groups including CNPS, LandWatch, the Sierra Club and others. As described in the June newsletter, the plan written by a small group of landowners in Big Sur would designate huge areas of the county as subject to vegetation clearance, instead of concentrating on the real risk areas where houses have been built in the so-called Wildlands/Urban Interface. As pointed out in the June newsletter, the plan claims that excessive environmental regulation is hampering fire protection and therefore seeks exemption from all environmental laws as well as Monterey County permits and even asks the Governor for a State of Emergency Declaration! The proof that this plan is way off base is the comparison with neighboring plans, which in general are science based, requiring no exemptions from environmental laws, and concentrate protection efforts in the immediate vicinity of developed areas. Fortunately the Supervisors refused to sign off on the plan, and unanimously approved Dave Potter's motion to ask the Planning Dept. to convene a group from both camps to try to find compromise language by the meeting of the Supervisors on Nov. 9.

September 2010

This is more an update than a report, as organized CNPS activities tend to decline in the summer while activists take more time to "smell the flowers" and "recharge batteries" after a very busy spring. Your board hopes that members have had some enjoyable outdoor experiences this summer that will fortify them to help in any way they can with upcoming important issues. There seems to be an extraordinary number of big projects considering current economic conditions, but perhaps hard times are seen as good times for securing permits!

GENERAL PLAN HEARING AUG. 31: The Monterey Co. Board of Supervisors will hold its first public hearing on the plan that was heard by the Planning Commission at several meetings starting last spring on Aug. 31. The chapter sent a letter for the Apr. 14 hearing urging elimination of several last-minute changes to the plan inserted at the behest of vineyard operators and developers. One would allow the conversion of slopes up to 50% with a permit for "vines and orchards." Current rules for most of the county ban conversion of uncultivated slopes over 25%, recognizing the threat to wildlife and natural habitats as well as accelerating erosion, use of limited water resources and toxic agricultural chemicals, and encouraging the spread of invasive weeds. Another change would weaken the language protecting endangered species in ways that are inconsistent with environmental laws. While this notice likely will not arrive by Aug. 31, the Board is expected to hold several public hearings; so please watch the papers for additional information or attend our regular meetings the second Thursday of each month (note change from last year) at the PG Museum for further updates.

MONTEREY BAY SHORES RESORT GETS WATER OK: The Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, hamstrung by adverse court decisions, approved a water permit in August for this 341-unit resort in the Sand City dunes, despite lack of real assurance that 149 acre-feet of water can be guaranteed without impacting the Carmel River. The chapter has been opposing this massive project for over 15 years because it would have severe impacts on sensitive coastal dune resources, including rare plants and animals, as well as landform changes, erosion, and the hazards created by rising sea levels. The chapter was gratified when the Coastal Commission denied the project last December, but now that the WMD has signed off on the water issue, it will presumably be going back to the CC this fall. If we are going to preserve any semblance of our natural world on the Monterey Peninsula, projects of this magnitude need to be stopped!

"HERITAGE OAKS" DENIED JUNE 15: This ironically-named project that would destroy an estimated 418 oak trees went to the Board of Supervisors on appeal from denial last year by the Planning Commission. Thanks to able

testimony from neighbors, other concerned citizens, and Molly Erickson from the law offices of Michael Stamp, the project was denied on a 3-2 vote. While the basic concern was the inadequate water supply in north county, the loss of oaks was cited by supervisors as well as by many speakers.

SEASIDE "MAIN GATE" PROJECT: An Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Specific Plan, and Tentative Map were released this summer for a major project adjoining Highway 1 that includes 1) an open-air retail and entertainment-based shopping center; and 2) a hotel/spa and conference center, with either a 16- screen cinema or a large department store. While this is an area slated for development, the chapter remains concerned about the need for wildlife corridors including protection of sensitive plants. No public hearings have been scheduled, but this project is likely to be on the radar for next year and beyond.

"WHISPERING OAKS" PROJECT: Another inaptly-named proposal consists of a Draft EIR on the rezoning of 58 acres of Fort Ord land from Public Quasi Public to Heavy Commercial, a standard subdivision of 115 acres into 16 lots, and a use permit for a Monterey Salinas Transit facility encompassing three huge structures plus 15 acres of paved parking for up to 281 buses and 288 cars. The projects would require the removal of an estimated 4400 coast live oaks (!). The public comment period ends Aug. 27, but hearings should provide later opportunities for public involvement.

MARINA STATION PROJECT ON HOLD: Several years ago the chapter signed on to an agreement negotiated by a group headed by Sierra Club excom member Steve Zmak that would preserve habitat and provide acceptable mitigation for losses in connection with this large residential/commercial development of part of the Armstrong Ranch adjoining Marina. Since then, the developer, Creekbridge, has dropped out because of economic conditions, but a new and similar agreement has been worked out with Armstrong family representatives in the event that the project is restarted.

VILLAS DE CARMEL RELEASES NEW DEIR: Following strong public opposition last spring to this proposal for a Local Coastal Plan Amendment to change the zoning from Medium to High Density Residential to permit 46 condos on the 3,68-acre site of the old hospital between the Carmel city boundary and Highway 1 north of Ocean Ave., a recirculated Draft EIR was released Aug. 3 by the Monterey Co. Planning Dept. The chapter opposed the plan last spring because it involves the removal of 97 Monterey pines and coast live oaks adversely affecting the Highway 1 scenic view corridor. The RDEIR provides new language about preserving the trees to the "maximum extent feasible" which seems to lack certainty. This and other changes may be seen at www.co.monterey.ca.us/planning/. The public comment period ends Sept. 24.

CLEAR CREEK COMMENTS ON DRMP/EIS: For the third time in over 20 years the chapter sent a letter in April to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) commenting on the latest Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Clear Creek Management Area, part of the Idria serpentine formation that contains a unique forest of Jeffrey pine, Coulter pine and gray pine along with a number of sensitive plants including the Federally listed San Benito evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*). A long-standing controversy over the damage caused by heavy use of the area by off-road vehicles has stalled the adoption of a final plan in the past, and the chapter is still awaiting information from the BLM about the next step in this process.

PANOCH VALLEY SOLAR PROJECT: This project to turn 4700 acres of ranch land into a forest of photovoltaic solar panels has aroused considerable opposition among local people in San Benito Co. and conservation groups. The area is said to contain as many as 10 RTE (rare, threatened or endangered) plants, but the chapter has not yet been able to obtain enough information to take a position on the issue.

June-August 2010

COUNTY FIRE PLAN THREATENS HABITAT: CNPS strongly opposes the current version of the Monterey County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, allegedly written primarily by property owners in Big Sur, which contains a number of provisions that go beyond any scientific justification and are likely to result in unacceptable loss of

sensitive plants, animals, and habitat. Three specific proposals that must be modified are as follows: 1) A Firebreak is defined as "at least 10 feet wide, frequently 20 to 30 feet wide, and contains no vegetation or other combustible matter." A 200-foot-wide firebreak is recommended around Fort Ord. Exposing so much bare earth increases erosion, provides an avenue for invasive plants, dirt bike and ATV trespass, and disrupts natural ecological processes. 2) The plan invents a term "Overgrowth Hazard Zone" defined as an area where vegetation "presents an imminent threat to lives, property or the environment" without any scientific description or justification. 3) The plan claims that excessive environmental regulation is hampering fire protection and proposes to exempt the plan from most environmental laws. Approval of such an over-reaching plan would lead to environmental degradation in significant habitat areas of the county without providing real protection against worst-case fires. CNPS is in the process of adopting a Fire Policy that emphasizes scientifically valid vegetation modification, fire-proof or -resistant construction materials, and avoidance of development in high-risk areas. Fire Plans in neighboring counties have agreed on policies that protect communities and habitat without degrading priceless natural resources. Monterey Co. deserves a much better plan, and all concerned citizens should be involved.

HERITAGE OAKS IS BACK AGAIN: The north county subdivision with the ironic name is coming before the Board of Supervisors on June 15 on appeal from the denial by the Planning Commission last year. There is no change in the plan: it would still take out hundreds of oaks and construct 32 new homes in an area where the water supply is in overdraft. Considering the increasingly serious problems in this area of habitat loss, water quality and supply, traffic congestion, and the extraordinary public controversy that this project has engendered, the chapter urges that "Heritage Oaks" be denied. Instead of being sensitively designed to avoid important plant and animal habitat areas, it is designed to squeeze the maximum density permitted under a plan that is widely regarded as obsolete.

RANCHO CIELO EXPANSION PROPOSED: The chapter has received a draft Environmental Impact Report on a proposal to expand the physical facilities and programs offered by this existing facility for youth, located at 710 Old Natividad Road at its eastern terminus in unincorporated Monterey Co. About 95,070 sq. ft. of buildings would be added to the existing 25,505 sq. ft. of structures, and about 176,000 sq.ft. of roads and parking would be added. Program enrollment would increase to about 155 youth. The improvements would be constructed over some 20 years as funding becomes available. The chapter needs a volunteer to review the sections in the document on biological resources, preferably someone who is familiar with the area or who is able to visit it. If you can help, please contact Corky Matthews (see masthead). Comments are due June 28.

ENDANGERED SPECIES UNDER REVIEW: The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is currently undertaking its five-year review of 34 previously designated endangered species in CA and NV in order to determine if their status has changed. The list includes 10 plants and animals on the central coast: Morro Bay kangaroo rat, Santa Cruz Island fox, San Miguel Island fox, Santa Rosa Island fox, Gaviota tarplant, island malacothrix, La Graciosa thistle, Lompoc yerba santa, Santa Cruz Island malacothrix, and Santa Cruz tarplant. The Santa Cruz tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*) is the only species known to be in Monterey Co., where a small population has been found in the Elkhorn Slough area. Comments to the F&WS are due by July 20 by email to fw1vfwo5year@fws.gov

FREE FORT ORD TOUR OFFERED: The Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office has announced that the next free public tour will be held on Saturday, June 26. The semi-annual 90-minute bus trip will tour the clean-up sites and will also stop near the areas scheduled for burning this year. There will also be an Open House with information on groundwater cleanup, habitat management, and landfill actions. For details or a copy of the current quarterly newsletter listing the release schedule of environmental documents, email: Melissa/Broadston@us.army.mil or call her at 393- 1284.

SUMMER SIGN-OFF: As this is the last issue until September, there are likely to be other important issues surfacing between now and then. Of particular concern is the weakening changes in the General Plan (please see May issue for a summary of a few of the worst problems). Members are urged to follow this issue in the papers and write letters to the agency involved and to the newspapers. "All that is required for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing."

May 2010

CLEAR CREEK DRMP/EIS COMMENTS SENT: The Monterey Bay Chapter (MBC) submitted a letter on Apr. 19 to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) urging stronger protection of endangered and threatened plants and sensitive habitats, pointing out that most of the seven alternatives in the Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement would allow further deterioration of these protected resources. The unique Idria serpentine formation supports an unusual forest (once the San Benito National Forest), which is the only place that Jeffrey pine, Coulter pine and gray pine occur naturally together. In addition to the Federally listed San Benito Evening Primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*) there are a number of other unusual plants that deserve improved monitoring and protection from off-highway vehicles (OHVs). MBC worked to establish the San Benito Mountain Natural Area within the Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA), which was intended to be closed permanently to all OHV use according to the original Framework Plan of 1970. Instead, OHVs have continued to expand their impacts on the rare flora, as MBC has repeatedly documented with monitoring and photographs. MBC asserts that the current complete closure of the area (because of asbestos hazard) is unfair to passive, low-impact recreation uses (such as hiking, birding, botanizing, photography, etc.), which should be allowed on the county roads. MBC oppose selling off any of these lands as well as withdrawing grazing allotments to turn them into OHV play areas and opening other new areas to OHVs. For these reasons MBC cannot support any of the seven alternatives; however, Alt. C has the potential to be consistent with endangered species protection if changes are made that include adequate surveys for sensitive plants and animals; consistent, frequent monitoring; and conscientious enforcement.

HEARINGS HELD ON GENERAL PLAN UPDATE: On Apr. 14 the Monterey Co. Planning Commission began hearings on GPU5, the newest version of the update process that began over 10 years ago. MBC submitted testimony deploring the weakening changes that have crept into the plan in the interim, particularly in the areas of protection of rare, threatened and endangered (RTE) species and agricultural development on steep slopes. Regarding RTE species, CEQA guidelines state that any activity that would substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered species would be considered a significant impact. Although there is some latitude in the definitions, in practice all plant species listed or proposed for listing by a government agency, as well as plants that meet scientific standards for endangerment (generally, those that are included on List 1B and 2 of the California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California are considered rare and endangered pursuant to CEQA). Unfortunately the proposed language refers only to listed plants. On steep slopes, the plan would allow conversion of native habitats to permanent plantings of orchards and vines on slopes up to 50%, compared to the current limits of 25% in most of the county. This would destroy habitat, accelerate erosion, impact wildlife corridors, increase water use, and encourage the spread of non-native species. There are many other flaws in this plan, but these are the worst from the MBC viewpoint. Members are urged to write planning commissioners urging correction of these flawed proposals.

SUPES IMPROVE MONTEREY PINE STATUS: MBC has been working for decades to get better protection for the native Monterey pine. Although the Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) is considered the most widely planted landscape and timber tree in the world, the native forests are limited to three small areas in central coastal California, of which the Monterey Peninsula is the largest. These populations contain the genetic diversity forged over millions of years of existence, yet they are rapidly disappearing because of clearing for development, disease, fire protection, air pollution, and other urban impacts. Efforts over the years to improve protection have brought the response that the General Plan Update was the logical time to do this. Now that GPU5 seems to be in the home stretch, the Supervisors scheduled a hearing on March 16 to consider upgrading protection. A large percentage of the pines are in the Coastal Zone, where they qualify as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat according to the Coastal Act; but those on the inland side do not even have as much protection as oaks and redwoods. The staff report recommended that Monterey pines in inland areas be given immediately the same protection as oaks, and that for the long term the county consider preparation of a comprehensive Monterey Pine Management Plan that would ensure consistent treatment throughout its native range. Long-time activist and Pine Watch leader

Joyce Stevens attended the meeting to testify in support of the proposals, and the supervisors did agree to give the pines the same protection as oaks; but lack of funds prevented any action on the long-range plan.

FORT ORD CLEANUP EVENTS ANNOUNCED: On Mother's Day weekend, May 8-9, the Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office (BRAC) will sponsor a booth in the Marina Festival of the Winds with information about the cleanup program. For details, go to www.marinafestival.com. On Saturday, June 26 BRAC will hold its free, semi-annual, 90-minute bus tour of cleanup sites including stops near the areas scheduled for burning this year. There will also be an Open House featuring information on groundwater cleanup, habitat management, and landfill actions. For details or a copy of the current quarterly newsletter listing the release schedule of environmental documents, email: Melissa.Broadston@us.army.mil or call her at 393-1284.

April 2010

MOLERA WILDERNESS BILL INTRODUCED: An important proposal for the conservation of our wildlands is the recent introduction by Assemblyman Bill Monning of a bill to establish a State Wilderness Area in the eastern third of Andrew Molera State Park in Big Sur. The area is on the east side of the ridge above Big Sur and is not visible from the coast-side. It is the wildest and most pristine section of the park, spanning the South Fork of the Little Sur River. and contains no trails or roads. Like other wilderness areas in State and National Parks, it is intended to perpetuate the natural ecosystems by remaining free of the works of man. Some residents of Big Sur are opposing the bill because of the erroneous belief that it will restrict fire trails and fire-fighting capability. In actuality, the boundaries were set well beyond the existing fire lines, and mechanized equipment is allowed in the wilderness when necessary for fighting fires. Support for this bill (AB 2074) is needed to counteract the opposition: write Bill Monning at 99 Pacific St., Suite 555D, Monterey, CA 93940, phone 649-2832 or email him directly from his website.

MARINA STATION PROPOSAL REVISED: A year ago the chapter participated in an effort to find a compromise plan that would preserve habitat as part of the proposed Marina Station development in the south portion of the Armstrong Ranch north of Marina. Led by the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club, the group signed off on a plan that would set aside a larger amount of parkland adjoining Highway 1 and provide for restoration of sensitive plant communities. The developer, CreekBridge Homes, dropped out of the project recently and negotiations resumed with the Armstrong family. The principal goals of maintaining scenic views from Hwy 1 and no net loss of sensitive coastal dune scrub and spineflower habitat were retained in the new agreement. The main change is that loss of native grass habitat might have to be mitigated off-site. On the recommendation of the Sierra Club negotiators, the chapter agreed that this plan was acceptable.

CLEAR CREEK COMMENTS EXTENDED TO APR. 19: The Bureau of Land Management has extended for an additional 45 days the public comment period on the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Clear Creek Management Area. This area has been a focus of chapter concern for many years because of the unique plants and habitats that occur in the serpentine soils surrounding San Benito Mountain in San Benito County and the damage that has occurred from inadequately regulated off-road vehicle use. The chapter is continuing to review the long and complex documents in an effort to support an alternative that will give the greatest possible protection to the San Benito evening primrose (*Camissonia benitensis*) and other sensitive plants affected by this plan.

NEXT FORT ORD WORKSHOP SET FOR APR. 14: The Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office (BRAC) has announced that the next Community Involvement Workshop will be held Wednesday, Apr. 14, at the Marina Library, 190 Seaside Circle, Marina. An overview of the 2010 prescribed burn program and military munitions program activities will be presented. For the latest information, check the website FortOrdCleanup.com or call Melissa Broadston at (831) 393-1284.

March 2010

EL SUR RANCH RAISES WATER ISSUES: El Sur Ranch has riparian rights for some 15 acres that are in the watershed of the Big Sur River, but the wells from which current pumping is taking place are nearby on Andrew Molera State Park Land. The 7000-acre ranch is seeking an appropriative right to pump an average of 1200 acre-feet per year for 20 years for its proposed hotel and restaurant development located at the north end of the irrigated pasture west of Highway 1. Opponents, including the Center for Biological Diversity, the Ventana Wilderness Alliance and Los Padres Forest Watch, maintain that the Environmental Impact Report is woefully deficient in analyzing impacts on the threatened steelhead run and other habitat issues, and assert that legal action may be taken if the State Water Resources Control Board does not act promptly to stop the excessive diversions, which have been going on for over 25 years. Our chapter commented on the inadequacy of the EIR in dealing with plant issues, and, as noted in last month's newsletter, all of the groups urged not only denial of the application, but issuance of a Cease & Desist Order limiting pumping to existing riparian rights until the critical water rights issues are resolved.

HOLMAN RANCH EXPANSION CRITIQUED: Responding to the 392-acre ranch's Mitigated Negative Declaration for a Use Permit for a 3,330 sq. ft. Agricultural Processing Plant for a winery producing up to 5000 cases per year, a 3,050 sq. ft. storage cave, a 240 sq. ft. equipment storage building, removal of nine oak trees, and a variance for development on slopes over 30%, opponents questioned the claim that water use would actually be reduced from current usage by conservation measures when the wine production would be almost 17 times the current rate. The chapter objected to the removal of nine protected oaks, four of which are landmark trees (over 24" diameter), in order to excavate a "wine storage cave." The chapter believes that there is no legal justification for a variance to excavate on slopes over 30% or to remove the protected oaks.

PANOCHÉ VALLEY SOLAR PROJECT QUESTIONED: A proposal to turn remote Panoche Valley in San Benito Co. into a 4700-acre forest of photovoltaic solar panels has alarmed both ranchers and habitat protectors. The issue was covered in depth in the Feb. 25 Monterey County Weekly. The chapter was recently urged by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society to get involved in this issue, as there are ten RTE (rare, threatened, or endangered) plants in this area according to the proponent's own study. Brian LeNeve has agreed to represent the chapter at a meeting to discuss the impacts of this project in Panoche Valley at 10 am on Mar. 6. For the most part these plants have coexisted with grazing for many years, and therefore the chapter has real concerns about the loss of this much habitat.

FERRINI RANCH SUBDIVISION PROPOSED: Public criticism erupted late last year over secret negotiations between the Board of Supervisors and the developers for access through Toro Park for this 212-lot project on 866 acres adjoining the park. The chapter is deeply concerned about the proposal to cut down 921 coast live oak as well as the violation of supposedly protected parkland. There are also serious concerns about the lack of adequate water in this area and the impact of the increased traffic on Highway 68.

VILLAS DE CARMEL: Responses to the Draft Environmental Impact Report for this 46-unit condo development on the 3.68-acre old Carmel Convalescent Hospital property at Highway 1 and Valley Way were so forceful that last year's EIR has been revised for recirculation this spring. Opponents deplore the density of the project, inconsistency with the neighborhood of single family homes, impacts on water and traffic, and the large number of native oaks and pines that would be removed. The area is outside the Carmel boundaries, so decisions will be made by the county supervisors. Reportedly the local resident-owners who were promoting the project have dropped out, leaving it in the hands of NY developer Widewaters Group.

CLEAR CREEK: Clear Creek is a 70,000 acre piece of public lands managed by BLM. Of the 70,000 acres, 35,000 acres are an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) because of very high concentrations of naturally occurring asbestos. This ACEC is also a major Off Highway Vehicle recreation area. Everyone who visited Clear Creek knew of the asbestos and decided if they wanted to travel through the area or not. After studying the area and the asbestos for awhile, the EPA issued a controversial report on the asbestos and the possible affects on

humans. While there was nothing new in the report, the severity of the possible affects of asbestos was clarified. The result of the EPA report was BLM closing Clear Creek to everyone two years ago this May. Now there is a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) out asking for comments on the DEIS and the seven alternatives BLM has proposed. As the person who has represented CNPS on matters regarding Clear Creek, I have been studying the DEIS and will write a comment letter for the chapter. Brian LeNeve.

February 2010

MONTEREY BAY SHORES PROJECT DENIED At its December meeting the California Coastal Commission (CCC) unanimously denied this 341- unit luxury resort in the Sand City dunes, as urged by many environmental and public interest groups including the Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS. Through various iterations of this project over the last 12 years, the chapter has continuously pointed out that, despite "green-washing" changes to burnish the environmental credentials of the development, it continues to have severe impacts on sensitive dune resources, including rare and endangered plants and animals. It also violates a number of Coastal Plan policies affecting erosion, landform change, and infrastructure adequacy, particularly lack of an assured water supply. This project essentially would remove all of the existing vegetation on the parcel, relying on later plantings on a totally altered surface to "restore" the lost habitat. CNPS has urged that development should be confined to degraded areas so that space can be provided for continuous corridors for native plants and animals, thus helping to preserve the genetic diversity that would improve their chances of survival over the long term. The CCC deserves thanks for this important decision, which, like a previous version, is likely to end up in court.

EL SUR RANCH WATER APPLICATION The chapter has urged denial of an application by El Sur Ranch in Big Sur to greatly increase its pumping from wells located on Molera State Park land just north of the Big Sur River. Comments were due Dec. 14 to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), which is expected to schedule public hearings later this year. The chapter pointed out that perfunctory plant surveys did not meet the State Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG) protocol for rare, threatened, and endangered plants. Further, DFG protocol requires thorough surveys of Special Status Communities that have critical values and protections, such as the riparian and wetland habitats that exist along the Big Sur River. In addition, pumping to irrigate the pasture north of the park has been going on since the mid-80s without any apparent attention by the ranch or the trustee agencies to the widely recognized impacts on the threatened steelhead population, which has dwindled to a tiny fraction of its size during this period. CNPS asserts along with many other groups that over-pumping of this sensitive area without clear entitlements has resulted in serious, undeniable damage to a watershed with extraordinary natural resource, scientific, recreational, and scenic values. The opponents not only ask for denial of the application, but also urge the SWRCB to issue a Cease and Desist Order to limit El Sur Ranch to existing riparian rights until the critical issues regarding plant and animal habitat can be resolved.

PEBBLE BEACH PLAN AGREEMENT REACHED A recent announcement by the Pebble Beach Co. and the CCC that a tentative agreement has been reached on the controversial plans for additional development in Pebble Beach is good news to the many public interest groups that have opposed the previous environmentally destructive plans. The main bone of contention, a new golf course that would eliminate an estimated 17,000 native Monterey pines, has apparently been dropped from the plan. Expansion of the Lodge and Spanish Bay resort facilities into already developed areas would proceed, as would some 60-90 homesites. In the past the chapter has urged protection for several sensitive areas specifically intended for housing; so that and other issues will await the release of a detailed version of the revised plan.

January 2010

[None]

November/December 2009

CHECK OUT CBD'S NEW WEBSITE! A key sister organization of CNPS is the Center for Biological Diversity, which, after negotiation and appeals fail, has filed a number project of successful lawsuits on behalf of conservation groups. It recently created a new website, 350 Reasons We Need to Get to 350, as part of the International Day of Climate Action on Oct. 24. On that date at over 5000 events in 180 countries people called on their governments to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) to 350 parts per million (ppm) or less in order to avert climate change catastrophe. Scientists estimate that 350 ppm of CO₂ is the upper limit for an environmentally healthy earth, yet the current count is now at about 387 ppm. The new website presents profiles and photos of 350 species threatened by climate change and provides a portal to send a message to President Obama to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to share your own commitment to protect endangered species from the global climate crisis. Further information about this creative project is available from the Oregonian and BBC News websites.

VENTANA TRAILS FOREVER CAMPAIGN: Another ally in the battle to save wildlife habitat is the Ventana Wilderness Alliance (VWA), a non-profit organization dedicated to "protecting, preserving, and restoring the wilderness qualities and biodiversity of the public lands within the northern Santa Lucia Mountains." Highest priority goes to the 285,000 acres and 320 miles of trails within the Ventana and Silver Peak Wilderness Areas. Historic sites of rare or endangered plants of concern to CNPS are found throughout these wildlands. Filling the gap created by reduced US Forest Service trail budgets, the VWA all-volunteer trail crew has logged over 2000 hours per year over the last ten years repairing trails that have become difficult to impassible because of fire and erosion damage. Some of the most dangerous work, including major tread reconstruction and downed trees in steep areas, require professional, specialized crews. The VWA has embarked on an ambitious but realistic Ventana Trails Forever campaign to raise \$500,000 to serve as a permanent source of funding for this purpose. Noting that this is only 2% of the estimated \$25 million cost of building these trails today, VWA President Tom Hopkins points out that this leveraging of private dollars and volunteer labor on public lands is an excellent example of a productive public/private partnership. For further information about participating in this historic effort, go to vtf@ventanawild.org or contact Corky Matthews (see masthead).

FIRE PLAN RINGS ALARM BELLS: A Draft Monterey Co. Community Wildfire Protection Plan has been circulating recently that appears to pose severe threats to wildland habitats. A final draft is expected to be released in November. In the past CNPS has supported plans that concentrate protective measures in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), where developed areas meet wildlands. At the same time, common sense indicates that zoning and land use rules need to confine development, particularly residential housing, to areas that can be adequately defended, and to require that they be constructed of flame-proof materials to the greatest extent possible. However, this plan seems to rely most heavily on wide fuelbreaks, e. g. the "Big Box Fuelbreak" surrounding the Monterey Division of the Los Padres National Forest would have to be maintained for a distance, including but not limited to, 600 feet on each side of the fuelbreak. In addition, the document asserts exemptions from the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts and even recommends statutory exemption from the ESA for fuel reduction work and the elimination of fuelbreaks from wilderness areas. This is beginning to sound like a return to the old days when all fires were considered bad, and as a result the forests became overprotected, overgrown, and overloaded with dead material that served as fuel for massive, unstoppable fires. Many studies have shown that wildlands benefit from periodic smaller fires that are allowed to burn if they do not threaten people or property. The amazing display of fire-following wildflowers this spring is a testament to the rapid recovery of native forests and chaparral after last season's fires. Let's not have a panic attack here; let's make sure that any fire plan is based on sound ecological principles.

October 2009

LAGUNA SECA VILLAS RETURNS: This project for 104 condos on 10.4 acres in the Laguna Seca Office Park was described in the January Conservation Report, when there were so many red flags in the proposal (traffic and water impacts, grading on steep slopes, inconsistency with zoning, damage to oak habitat, etc.). that it was sent

back for more environmental studies. CNPS was mainly concerned about the loss of 25 landmark oaks (24 inches in diameter or more) and 161 oaks under that size. The development came back before the Greater Monterey Peninsula Land Use Advisory Committee on Sept. 16, but was put off again probably until the LUAC's meeting Nov. 4 or 11 because the committee still did not receive adequate maps or details on the proposed mitigations.

ROADSIDE LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVES URGED: In response to an alert from CNPS member Terry Winston in Aptos, the chapter sent an email Sept. 21 to the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) recommending that landscaping with native plants be included in the scope of work for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the 2010 Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan. The comment noted that for many years our chapter has sought to minimize the removal of native plants in highway construction, to encourage the use of appropriate native plants in highway-right-of-way landscaping projects, to avoid landscaping with invasive non-natives, and to remove invasive nonnative plants when they threaten to take over existing landscaping. The chapter pointed out the many advantages of planting natives and offered to provide detailed site-specific recommendations as needed.

HERITAGE OAKS: After a six-hour hearing Sept. 30 on the proposal to subdivide 79 acres in North County into 31 lots, removing some 418 oak trees in the process, the County Planning Commission voted (5-1-2) to deny the project. The chapter has opposed this project previously, but was unable to have a representative at the hearing. Like September Ranch, the big issue impressing staff and commissioners was the inadequacy of water, which was ably documented by Molly Erickson of The Law Offices of Michael W. Stamp, attorneys for Aromas Citizens for Planned Growth, the lead opponents of the project, who argued that the project lacked the long term water supply required under CEQA, the General Plan, and the North County Area Plan. The decision is expected to be appealed to the Board of Supervisors, where it would likely be considered in November or December.

SALINAS RIVER VEGETATION REMOVAL: Thanks to concerns raised about erosion problems and habitat damage, the application to clear vegetation from the Salinas River Channel (described in last month's newsletter) to the high water mark from San Ardo to the river mouth, a distance of 92 miles--is "dead for this year," according to spokesmen for the County Water Management Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board, which stated that a revised project for next year is likely to focus on "watershed health, with major reductions in impacts and improved mitigation, and opportunity for public review and comment." Thanks are due Steve Shimek of Monterey Coastkeepers, who raised the alarm that this project was coming in "under the radar."

ANTI-GMO FORCES GATHER STEAM: A group of environmental organizations and organic farmers is circulating a petition to make it unlawful to propagate, cultivate, raise, or grow any genetically engineered crop in Monterey Co. A similar regulation already exists in Santa Cruz Co. Farmers are alarmed because studies have shown that such crops can contaminate organic crops, while environmentalists are worried that pesticide use has increased significantly where pesticide-tolerant GMO corn, soybeans, and cotton are grown. CNPS members are concerned about contamination of natural habitats, potential development of superweeds, and adverse effects on key pollinators already suffering declines from a variety of impacts. For more information go to <http://www.gmofreemontereycounty.com/>

SALINAS LAGOON PROJECT COMMENTS DUE OCT. 23: The Corps of Engineers has just announced that comments will be accepted until Oct. 23 on a "fisheries enhancement project" that involves construction 1) A new manmade peninsula of approximately 35 by 150 feet or greater. 2) A massive concrete structure, approximately 25 feet by 65 feet, to hold four large fish screens, each 10 feet in diameter. 3) Concrete walls rising to 14 feet above mean sea level around a 7.5' x 35' forebay area. Endangered species that may be affected are the California Coast Steelhead, Smith's Blue Butterfly, and the Snowy Plover. No plants were noted, though Monterey spineflower and the buckwheats that are food for the Smith's blue are known to be in the area. For a pdf file with details including diagrams, email: Paula.C.Gill@usace.army.mil

September 2009

SALINAS RIVER VEGETATION REMOVAL: Growers working with the Monterey County Water Resources Agency have applied for a permit to clear all vegetation from the Salinas River Channel to the high water mark (hundreds of yards wide in many areas). The project area is from the Salinas River mouth to San Ardo--92 miles of river. This is similar to but less drastic than the plan for aerial spraying of vegetation with herbicides that was turned down 11 years ago because of the many adverse impacts on water quality, erosion, etc. This project is obviously on a fast track, with a short comment period that was over in mid-August before most of the public knew about it. While scientists and erosion specialists agree that vegetation on islands should be removed mechanically during lowest water when it threatens the stability of the riverbanks by directing current against the banks, the removal of bank vegetation is a different issue altogether and should not be the subject of a blanket permit. Write or call your planning commissioner or supervisor!

SEPTEMBER RANCH COMMENTS DUE SEPT. 28: Following approval of this 95-home subdivision on steep slopes on the north side of Carmel Valley 2.5 miles out CV Road by the Board of Supervisors in 2006, a lawsuit led to a court decision that the figures estimating the amount of water use were flawed. A revised Water Analysis has now been prepared and is available for public comment until Sept. 28. The chapter strongly opposed the project because of the severe fragmentation of the native Monterey pine forest, here growing near its eastern limits, that would be caused by the network of roads, utilities, and houses proposed for the project. Also wildlife corridors from adjoining Jacks Peak Park would be seriously impacted by this construction and the domestic animals, fences, etc. that would occupy former habitat. The chapter and others had proposed that a smaller number of houses be clustered in the lower, less steep portion of the property so that the forest near Jacks Peak Park could be preserved. Considering the tenuous long-term water situation, there would still seem to be a potential for a compromise position given strong enough local support.

HERITAGE OAKS RESURFACES ON SEPT. 30: This proposed subdivision of a 79-acre parcel into 32 lots including one with four affordable rental units in Aromas in North County was unanimously denied by the Planning Commission in August 2000 because its water, traffic, habitat, and other impacts had not been subjected to an Environmental Impact Report. Now it is back with an EIR that uses a remarkable sleight of hand to conclude that water use in this chronically overdrafted basin will not increase with the buildout of the new subdivision. The California Oak Foundation pointed out that the document did not meet state or county requirements for mitigation of removal of 418 oaks and the loss of valuable wildlife habitat. As part of the Elkhorn Slough Ecosystem, this parcel is recognized as having high biological values, but this development does not come close to meeting those high standards. The issue comes before the Planning Commission on Wed., Sept. 30. For further enlightenment see the county's website and read Attorney Michael Stamp's 28-page letter tearing the EIR apart!

CHAPTER CRITIQUES VILLAS DE CARMELO: On June 5 the chapter responded to the Draft Environmental Impact Report for this 46-condo project on 3.68 acres including the old Carmel Hospital, stating that the plan to remove 21 oaks and 76 Monterey pines 12 inches or larger (44% of the oaks and 78% of the pines) is a significant impact that is not reduced to less than significant by the proposed landscape planting. The chapter also pointed out that the pines and oaks, an important element of the viewshed from Highway 1, a designated Scenic Highway, would be replaced by a wall of condos. The project includes rehabbing the old Carmel Hospital, requiring upzoning from medium to high in an area of single family residences. A local group "Save Our Carmel Neighborhoods Coalition" is opposing the density of the project and urges that the current zoning be retained. The final EIR responding to comments has not yet been released.

WATER WORKSHOPS SET FOR BIG SUR, SOLEDAD: The new Greater Monterey County Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP) will hold two identical workshops at the Big Sur Multi-Agency Facility in Big Sur Sept. 14 and at the Mission Room at Soledad High School in Soledad Sept.16. Both will be 7-9 p.m. The agenda will include an explanation of the IRWMP, a voluntary program operated by the State Dept. of Water Resources to partner and coordinate on projects for water supply, water quality, flood control, and environmental quality; plus a

timeline for development of the plan and opportunities for public involvement. IRWMPs already exist for the Monterey Peninsula area and the Pajaro area, and have been in use all over the state for the last three years. Interested members of the public are encouraged to attend.

July-August 2009

[None]

June 2009

[None]

May 2009

"ECORESORT" GOES TO COASTAL COMMISSION: The chapter has just learned that the Monterey Bay Shores project will be heard by the Coastal Commission (CC) on May 7 in San Francisco. The new version of this development involves the following construction in the Sand City dunes: 360,000 sq.ft. mixed-use residential and visitor serving units (Monterey Bay Shores Resort) including 160 hotel rooms, 180 condominium units (92 residential, 46 visitor serving residential, and 42 visitor-serving units), restaurant, conference center, spa, 3 swimming pools, surface and underground parking (for 841 vehicles), public and private access trails, dune/habitat restoration, and related infrastructure including water, sewer, stormwater systems, and various energy reduction technologies (solar, wind, geothermal, etc.) requiring some 695,000 cu. yds. of grading (and 418,000 cu. yds. of sand disposal) in sand dunes seaward of Highway One in Sand City. The project has a long and complex history. Originally approved in 1994 for a 136- unit hotel with restaurant and conference facilities, the CC required numerous conditions to meet the rigorous policies of the Coastal Act. At the time the project was strongly opposed by our chapter and other groups because of the impacts on sensitive species, lack of adequate infrastructure, erosion issues, cumulative impacts, etc, The project had not moved ahead in 1999 when a request for permit extension was denied by the CC on the basis that it did not meet changed circumstances affecting consistency with Sand City's Local Coastal Plan. After a long, drawn-out lawsuit, the CA Court of Appeal in 2008 required the CC to reconsider the project. In the meantime, the plan has metamorphosed into a much larger complex that the developer describes as "a model for green building design...a healing center, a spa, and place of meditation." Nevertheless, the coastal staff recommendation is for denial, and opponents agree that the use of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is inadequate to deal with the massive changes in this plan. A new EIR must be prepared to deal with the many adverse impacts that have not been reduced to less than significant by the current project.

DUNES COALITION RAMPS UP: The above issue, plus new surveys showing increased erosion in southern Monterey Bay, has reenergized the Monterey Bay Dunes Coalition, a group formed by members of CNPS, the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club, and the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society. Enjoying a breather after years of campaigns which saw numerous development projects in the dunes denied or reduced in size, and the Monterey Bay State Seashore established to provide additional protection for the dunes, the coalition is now actively working on several fronts. Applauding the opening of the new Fort Ord Dunes State Park, the group continues to work for continued restoration of the dunes and minimal development of the park. Coalition President Edward Thornton, PhD, retired oceanography professor at the Navy School and long-time researcher on bay erosion rates, has requested the Army Corps of Engineers to assert jurisdiction over the CEMEX (formerly Lone Star) sand mining operation in the Marina dunes because of documented increased erosion rates in the southern end of the bay. Because the mining operation has increased dredging an estimated 50% since 1978, the coalition asks that an environmental study be required to determine if the mining should be reduced or eliminated.

CONCERNS RAISED OVER FIRE PROTECTION: The interrelated issues of development in the wildlands-urban interface, vegetation clearance for fire safety, proposals for reseeding wildlands with non-natives after fires, and preservation of rare and endangered species have come up once again following the huge fires of last summer and

fall in the Los Padres National Forest and adjoining private lands. Alarmed about the "unnecessary destruction of thousands of acres of California's native plant heritage for the purpose of wildfire fuel management" State CNPS has issued a statement supporting the following: 1) Fuel management plans that minimize the risk to human life and property while maximizing protection of native plants and their habitat. These plans should be locally adapted, scientifically-supported, and account for all combustible materials, including building materials, ornamental vegetation, and adjacent plant communities; 2) Building codes and ordinances that require structures in high fire risk areas to be constructed, retrofitted, and maintained using materials and practices that minimize the ignition and spread of fire; 3) The creation of laws regulations and land use policies that discourage new development in areas of highest fire danger.

April 2009

[None]

March 2009

COURT DECISION PROTECTS ESHA: A recent decision by the 6th District Court of Appeal provides stronger protection to Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) in the Coastal Zone, lending credence and precedence to positions taken by the chapter in the past. A lawsuit challenging Coastal Commission approval of a 10,000 sq. ft. mansion near Kasler Pt. in Big Sur was brought by a neighbor alleging that the project would have significantly destroyed ESHA, including seacliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*, food plant of the endangered Smith's Blue Butterfly) and sensitive coastal bluff scrub habitat. Considering that a 3900 sq. ft. home had been approved by the commission in 1977 but never built, the court ruled that the project did not meet the Coastal Act and Monterey County Local Coastal Plan standard of the "least environmentally damaging alternative." Counsel for the plaintiff has stated that this decision "appears to be the first published opinion applying Coastal Act or LCP policies for the protection of ESHA in the context of approval of a coastal development permit for an individual project. Prior to the opinion, both the County and the Commission routinely allowed non-resource dependent uses... without making the required findings and without requiring development to conform to the exacting standards necessary to make those findings...The opinion will substantially increase legal protection of coastal biological resources...and confers a significant public benefit on the people of California by enforcing Coastal Act and LCP provisions." The attorneys are seeking support from citizens' groups in recovering attorneys' fees as allowed by law.

MONTEREY BAY SHORES "ECORESORT": An op-ed piece in the Feb. 14 Monterey Herald by Janet Brennan, President of the League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula, shines additional light on the issues connected with this 341-unit project in the Sand City Dunes. Because the original Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was done 11 years ago, an addendum updating the project has been prepared. However, such addenda are meant only for "minor technical and non-substantial changes," not total revisions; and was not required to be circulated to the public. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that a subsequent EIR be prepared that should deal with the following issues: 1) Concealing the project in the dunes creates issues involving sand movement that need to be analyzed by both agencies and the public. 2) A 2008 report by the Assn. of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) showing that rapid erosion is taking place in this section of the Monterey Bay shoreline must be analyzed before the project can be considered. 3) New information on climate change and sea level rise needs to be included. 4) the project now proposes to take its water from the Seaside Aquifer, already cited as overdrafted, leading potentially to extracting more water from the Carmel River, now under a Cease and Desist Order from the State Water Board. Other issues having to do with air quality and traffic are not CNPS issues, but they affect the health, welfare, and safety of local residents, who should have an opportunity to comment on them. The developer has announced an additional meeting on Mar. 4 to explain the project, but such meetings are no substitute for an objective and detailed environmental analysis and required responses to public comments.

February 2009

MONTEREY BAY SHORES ECORESORT: The developer of this project, Ed. Ghandour, announced in a column in the Monterey Herald on Jan. 29 that an additional meeting has been scheduled to explain the proposal from 4 to 7 pm on Wed., Feb. 11 at 135 Webster St., Monterey. The chapter opposed this project of 341 hotel and condo units when it first appeared years ago because of the impact it would have on the Monterey Dunes. The chapter's position has been that this is one of the largest and most significant dune systems on the California coast, and the long-term survival of the native plants and animals that depend on the dunes requires an uninterrupted stretch of preserved and restored habitat to be maintained in perpetuity. While this site is degraded from past industrial activities, and the developer has incorporated a number of environmental amenities in his plan including restoration of native dune plants, the issue of their survival in the midst of such a dense project is problematical. Other issues of water, traffic, scenic views have been raised by other opponents in the past.

WEED MANAGEMENT MEETING JAN. 21: Asst. County Ag Commissioner Bob Roach chaired this meeting of 17 representatives of various groups involved in weed eradication. An early Detection and Rapid Response phone number for the public to call in weed sightings is in the process of being set up. A list of nurseries and invasive plants that they should not sell is in preparation. CalTrans is training its work crews to ID and eradicate invasive weeds. Research is underway on Eupatorium and Cape Ivy. The county has a \$64,000 grant to eradicate Arundo on the Salinas River. The Nature Conservancy has completed a vegetation map for the Salinas River and has applied for a \$24 million stimulus grant for Arundo eradication along the river. Baseline funding is available in 2009 for the following projects: roadside weed spraying of yellow star thistle is expected to start in a few weeks; eradication of french broom along Robinson Canyon is underway. BLM, Elkhorn Slough and CA Parks Dept. are working to remove jubata grass from their properties. The US Forest Service needs help in a survey to determine if fire suppression activities contribute to the spreading of weeds. Another meeting will be set up very soon to complete progress reports on baseline funding projects due in February.

COASTAL WATER PROJECT DEIR RELEASED: The CA Public Utilities Commission has just announced release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Coastal Water Project prepared by Environmental Science Associates of San Francisco. Public comment will be taken until Apr. 1. The document is available at county and city libraries, online at cwp-eir.com or at the Monterey Co. Clerk's office, 168 W. Alisal St., Salinas. The document identifies various alternatives for solving the Peninsula's long-standing water shortage and analyzes the impacts of each, including 1) a proposal by Cal Am for a seawater desal plant at Moss Landing, 2) a closer desal plant in north Marina that would obtain water from beach wells, and 3) a Monterey Regional Water Supply Project that would integrate several water supply sources to meet not only existing needs but also future demand in other areas of northern Monterey Co. The purpose is to replace water from the Carmel River and the Seaside Groundwater Basin, which have been limited by Order 95-10 and various legal actions. Meetings to accept public comment have been scheduled for 1:30 and 6:30 pm Mon., Mar. 2, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Seaside; 6:30 pm Tue., Mar. 3, at the North County Recreation Center in Castroville; and 6:30 pm Wed., Mar. 4, at Rancho Canada Golf Club. Carmel Valley. The chapter continues to be involved in this issue because of its concerns about the impacts of overpumping of the Carmel River Aquifer on sensitive species in the riparian and aquatic habitat below San Clemente Dam.

GPU 5 FINAL DEADLINE FEB. 2: The DEIR for General Plan Update 5 was released on Sept. 5, and after many postponements, the final deadline for public comment is Feb. 2. On Feb. 11 the Planning Commission will discuss the schedule of public hearings. The process is likely to take several months. The most important change needed in the plan, from the standpoint of habitat protection, is the reinstatement of the existing policy of prohibiting conversion of natural habitats to crops on slopes over 25%. Only Carmel Valley retains this rule in GPU 5. For more information on issues that concern the chapter, see the Nov.-Dec. issue. Although it will be too late to comment to the county by the time this newsletter is received, letters to the editor of various papers can be very important in influencing decision-makers.

OAK WOODLANDS STEWARDSHIP GUIDELINES: The chapter commented on the draft plan, which needs to be approved by the Board of Supervisors in order for the county, landowners, and non-profit groups to qualify for grants from the Wildlife Conservation Board to protect Oak Woodlands. It is anticipated that most grants will be used to purchase important stands of oaks, but 20% of the funds can be used for public education. The guidelines provide a great deal of useful information about the biology of oaks and the many important ecosystem services they provide. The chapter's main concern is that changes in GPU 5 (see above item) will make it harder for the county to prevent conversion of Oak Woodlands to vineyards or other ag uses. At the same time, AB 32 gives oaks added legal protection because of their services in sequestering carbon to help minimize global warming.

January 2009

FORT ORD BRAC SETS JAN.-FEB. EVENTS: The Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office has announced that the next Community Involvement Workshop will be held at 6:30 pm on Wed., Jan. 14, at the Marina Library, 190 Seaside Circle, Marina. The agenda will include an update on the groundwater cleanup program. The semiannual guided bus trip of the various cleanup projects will take place Sat., Feb. 21. Two tours are scheduled, at 10 and 11:45 am departing from Bldg. 4522, Joe Lloyd Way, Fort Ord. The tours will also include stops at Units 18 and 22, the two prescribed burns that took place last month.

CEMEX SANDMINING PLANT IMPACTS: The former Lone Star operation in the Marina Dunes is causing severe erosion in southern Monterey Bay beaches and dunes, a recent study found. Because the plant is not taking sand directly from the bay, but from an artificial lagoon that is periodically refilled with sand by storm and tidal action, the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) has not been regulating the operation. Dr. Edward Thornton, retired oceanographer and president of the Monterey Bay Dunes Coalition, of which CNPS is a member, has written the ACE asking it to assert Sec. 404 jurisdiction over the sandmining because of its documented impacts on both public parkland and private property. The chapter supports this action and has written the ACE supporting it.

VILLAS AT LAGUNA SECA: The original comment deadline of Jan. 6 for the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for this project was extended by Monterey Co. to Jan. 26. The chapter opposes approving the development of 104 residential condos on 10.4 acres in the Laguna Seca Office Park on the basis of an MND. Because of the significant, inadequately mitigated impacts on oak habitat (not to mention traffic, water, grading on steep slopes, zoning inconsistency, etc. cited by other opponents) an Environmental Impact Report must be required. A total of 25 landmark oaks (24 inches in diameter or more) would be removed along with 166 smaller oaks. However, the original proposed mitigation of planting 3:1 for landmark oaks and 1:1 for others for a total of 241 was found to be infeasible because of lack of remaining space; so a smaller proposal including off-site mitigation has been proposed. Studies have shown that many of these plans have a dismal record of success because of substandard installation, poor maintenance, and ineffective monitoring.

JAN 16 DEADLINE ON OAK PLAN: The county has just issued a draft of the "Monterey County Oak Woodlands Voluntary Stewardship Guidelines," which will enable county landowners, non-profit groups, and public agencies to qualify to apply for grants from the Wildlife Conservation Board for voluntary oak conservation projects. In order to implement this program, the County Supervisors must adopt an "Oak Woodlands Management Plan" that meets the minimum requirements of the State Oak Woodlands Conservation Program. Comments on the draft plan are being accepted until Jan. 16. This voluntary program could reduce the impacts of development projects by helping to fund effective monitoring programs and the purchase of high quality oak woodlands for permanent preservation. The chapter supports this concept, but is reviewing the draft to assure that it meets scientific standards.

WEED WHACKERS ALERT! Two important meetings have been scheduled on Wednesday, Jan. 21, to update priorities for control of invasive weeds in Monterey Co. At 10:30 am the Monterey Co. Weed Management Area, chaired by Bob Roach, Assistant Agricultural Commissioner for the county, will meet at the Marina State Beach office just off Hwy 1. Topics will include post-fire control of yellow star thistle, eradication of tamarisk at Dolan Rd,

and removal of Arundo on the Salinas River. At Noon at the same location the Big Sur Weed Management Area Committee will meet to discuss fire-related and other weed problems on the Big Sur Coast. For further information email Bob Roach at roachb@co.monterey.ca.us .

GPU 5 DEADLINE JAN. 29 (OR LATER?): The repeatedly receding deadline for commenting on the General Plan Update 5, also known as the 2007 Plan, was recently changed to Jan. 29. CNPS is continuing to refine its comments and would appreciate suggestions from members who have been following this issue.

November/December 2008

MORE HELP NEEDED TO BLOCK BUSH RULE CHANGES. The LA Times on Oct. 31 provided more details on the last-minute antienvironmental regulations being rushed through by the outgoing administration. "The new rules would be among the most controversial deregulatory steps of the Bush era and could be difficult for his successor to undo. Some would ease or lift existing constraints on private industry, including power plants, mines and farms. These and other regulations would expand 'commercial ocean-fishing activities, ease controls on pollutants that contribute to global warming, relax drinking-water standards and lift a key restriction on mountaintop coal mining,' which is polluting streams and destroying thousands of acres of wildlife habitat." On Oct. 30, the Tucson Weekly reported that U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva, Chairman of the House Parks Committee, just released a report titled *The Bush Administration Assaults on Our National Parks, Forests and Public Lands (A Partial List)*. The report cites a shameful roster of attacks on conservation, from those efforts to weaken air quality standards and ongoing uranium mining next to the Grand Canyon, to the wholesale slaughter of buffalo in Yellowstone National Park at the behest of area ranchers. Similar misconduct at the Bureau of Land Management includes expanding gas and oil development on BLM lands; making the cleanup of contaminated sites by companies purely voluntary, allowing off-road vehicles to decimate public lands, attempting to relinquish control of much of those lands to the states, and prohibiting the designation of any new wilderness areas. Letters, phone calls, and emails are urgently needed to Rep. Sam Farr (202-225- 2861, 202-225-6791 [fax]; 1221 LHOB, Washington DC 20515); Sen. Dianne Feinstein (202-224- 3841, 202-228-3954 [fax]; 331 SHOB, Washington DC 20510) and Sen. Barbara Boxer (202-224-3553, 202-956-6701 [fax]; 112 SHOB, Washington DC 20510)

GPU DEADLINE EXTENDED: The deadline for public comment has been extended to Nov. 18 on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the 2007 General Plan (GPU 5). CNPS supports the preservation of existing agricultural land to minimize conversion of natural habitat to crops, and urges retention of the policy prohibiting such conversion on slopes over 25%. Unfortunately the only area where that policy is retained is Carmel Valley. CNPS has pointed out in past comments that converting steeper slopes to crops results in loss of wildlife habitat, increased erosion, water use, and chemicals, and reduced air quality. CNPS is also opposed to the Rancho Canada Village addition to the Carmel Valley Master Plan (a part of GPU 5) that would allow up to 10 units per acre of 50% "workforce" housing on 40 acres of land adjoining the Carmel River. The proposal would reroute the river and require filling of part of the floodplain to raise the houses above flood level. It would have unacceptable impacts on wildlife corridors, riparian vegetation, and the educational value of the widely-praised Hilton Bialek Habitat Area at Carmel Middle School. In previous comments CNPS has also urged the county to incorporate better protection for native plants and wildlife in the plan by utilizing the Dept. of Fish and Game's Special Plants and Animals list, rather than only considering those plants and animals that have made it through the listing process. Members are urged to support these positions as individuals; comments should be mailed to Carl Holm, Monterey Co. Planning Dept., 168 W. Alisal St., 2nd Floor, Salinas 93901 or emailed to holmcp@co.monterey.ca.us or faxed to 757-9516.

TAMC AGREES TO EIR ON HATTON BIKE PATH At the Oct. 22 public hearing, conservation-minded residents convinced the Transportation Agency for Monterey Co. to back off its effort to push this controversial project through on a "Mitigated Negative Declaration." The 12-foot wide paved "trail" with additional shoulders of 2 and 4 feet on its sides will now have its impacts considered in an Environmental Impact Report with full opportunity for the public to be involved and for less damaging alternatives to be considered. CNPS supports the trail concept, but questions the need for such a wide trail that will require the removal of many healthy willows, dogwoods and other native riparian and wetland plants.

BLM RMP/EIS DUE IN JANUARY. The Bureau of Land Management is in the process of preparing a new Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement responding to the closure of the Clear Creek Management Area in San Benito Co. The RMP/EIS is expected to be released in January followed by a 90-day public comment

period. For additional information or to be placed on the mailing list, contact Sky Murphy, 20 Hamilton Court, Hollister 95023; 831-630-5000; Sky_Murphy@blm.gov .

October 2008

BUSH URGES WEAKENING ESA RULES (Part 2): Last month we asked members to write or phone Sam Farr and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to oppose last-ditch actions by the current administration to exempt federal actions, including those that generate greenhouse gases, from Endangered Species Act review. We have since learned that public comments will be accepted only until Oct. 15. In another case of weakening rules, a federal appeals court has thrown out the Clean Air Interstate Rule, a "cap and trade" program that was a rare example of a policy supported by environmental groups, power companies, and the Bush Administration, but was challenged successfully in court by Duke Power and a few other producers. The rule would have greatly reduced power plant emissions that harm public health as well as wildland habitat. The above legislators should also be asked to support legislation reinstating this rule (see phone numbers and addresses in last issue).

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE DEADLINE: Public comment will be taken until Oct. 28 on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the 2007 General Plan (GPU 5). CNPS supports the preservation of existing agricultural land to minimize conversion of natural habitat to crops, and urges retention of the policy prohibiting such conversion on slopes over 25%. Unfortunately the only area where that policy is retained is Carmel Valley. CNPS has pointed out in past comments that converting steeper slopes to crops results in loss of wildlife habitat, more erosion, more water use, increased use of chemicals, and reduced air quality. CNPS is also opposed to the Rancho Canada Village addition to the Carmel Valley Master Plan (a part of GPU 5) that would allow up to 10 units per acre of 50% "workforce" housing on 40 acres of land adjoining the Carmel River. The proposal would reroute the river and require filling of part of the floodplain to raise the houses above flood level. It would have unacceptable impacts on wildlife corridors, riparian vegetation, and the educational value of the widely-praised Hilton Bialek Habitat Area at Carmel Middle School. In previous comments CNPS has also urged the county to incorporate better protection for native plants and wildlife in the plan by utilizing the Dept. of Fish and Game's Special Plants and Animals list, rather than only considering those plants and animals that have made it through the listing process. Members are urged to support these positions as individuals; comments may be mailed to Carl Holm, Monterey Co. Planning Dept., 168 W. Alisal St., 2nd Floor, Salinas 93901 or emailed to holmcp@co.monterey.ca.us or faxed to 757-9516.

TAMC TO VOTE ON HATTON BIKE TRAIL: The Transportation Agency for Monterey Co.(TAMC), lead agency for this project, described briefly in last month's newsletter, will hold a hearing to vote on approving a "mitigated negative declaration" at its next regular meeting at 9 am Wed. Oct. 22 at the Ag Center Conference Room at 1428 Abbott Street, Salinas. Residents on both sides of the canyon are particularly concerned that the 12-foot-wide paved "bike path" with a two-foot shoulder on one side and a four-foot wide shoulder on the other would require cutting into the slope on the west side and the removal of more than an acre of sensitive riparian and wetland habitat on the east side. The project has been described as "overkill" that seems more intended for the convenience of maintenance and fire personnel than for hikers and cyclists.

FORA PLANS WORKSHOP OCT. 29: The Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) will hold an informal community workshop from 6 to 8:30 pm on Wednesday, Oct. 29 to discuss remediation work planned for the Parker Flats area. The meeting will focus on the vegetation removal that must precede the munitions cleanup work, explaining why it is necessary, how it will be conducted, habitat management requirements, the timetable for the work, and how access will be affected. Pizza and beverages will be provided. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP to FORA at 883-3506 or by email: esca@fora.org

URBAN FOREST MEETING OCT. 30: Titled "Money Does Grow on Trees," a symposium on the benefits of urban forests is being sponsored by the Friends of Carmel Forest and the Carmel Forest and Beach Commission on Thursday, Oct. 30 at Carpenter Hall at Sunset Center from 2 to 4:30 PM. Speakers will be Kelaine Vargas, Urban Ecologist, on the "Economic Benefits of Trees to Property Owners"; and a panel discussion, "Fostering the Urban

Forest," will include Sharon Kelly of Canopy in Palo Alto; Brian Kempf, of the Urban Tree Foundation; and Kelly Quirke, of San Francisco's Friends of the Urban Forest. CNPS members are particularly encouraged to participate.

September 2008

BLM SCOPING REPORT RELEASED Following the closure of the Clear Creek Management Area last year because of public health threats from naturally occurring asbestos in the serpentine soil, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conducted a scoping study to determine the issues that should be covered in a new Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The issues include not only the inhalation of asbestos dust, but also the pollution of the water supply in the San Benito River and the need to provide better protection for sensitive native plant habitat areas. By the deadline of last June 21 many comments had been received in writing and at public hearings, most of them from off-highway vehicle (OHV) groups that oppose the closure and want minimal regulation of their destructive activities. Brian LeNeve testified for CNPS that because OHV travel has not been adequately controlled on the steep and highly erosive slopes of Clear Creek, there has been continued loss of habitat for the Federally listed San Benito Evening Primrose and seven other CNPS 1B plants. CNPS has been working to protect this unique habitat for over 25 years, including filing a lawsuit that resulted in a settlement that is still unfulfilled. The Scoping Report is available on the BLM website: www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/hollister. The Draft RMP/EIS is expected to be released in January followed by a 90-day public comment period. For additional information, contact Sky Murphy, 20 Hamilton Court Hollister, CA 95023; 831-630-5000; email Sky_Murphy@blm.gov.

HATTON CANYON TAMC DEADLINE SEPT. 8 Conservation groups are raising concerns about the plans to pave a bike and hike trail through Hatton Canyon that will remove a substantial amount of riparian habitat. A deadline of Sept. 8 has been set for comments on the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Carmel Hill River Trail Project, which entails construction of a 12-foot wide paved trail with an additional 4-foot wide decomposed granite shoulder from Canyon Drive to the north across the Carmel River to the south, a total of 1.7 miles. The project is sponsored by Caltrans, CA State Parks, the Transportation Agency for Monterey Co. (TAMC), The Coastal Conservancy, Big Sur Land Trust, and Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. A lighted underpass is planned for Carmel Valley Road, whence the trail will parallel Highway 1 to Rio Road. There it will connect with other existing and planned trails. CNPS supports the trail concept, but questions the need for such a wide trail that will require the removal of many healthy willows, dogwoods and other native riparian plants, which provide habitat for a wide variety of native birds. Access for fire trucks is seen as the reason for the width of the trail. The documents can be seen at the TAMC office, 55B Plaza Circle, Salinas; Harrison Library, Carmel; the Big Sur Land Trust, 126 Clock Tower Place, Carmel; or at the TAMC website, www.tamcmonterey.org. Comments should be sent to Project Manager Todd Muck at at above address or by email to todd@tamc.org. A hearing on the project is set for Oct. 22.

DEL REY OAKS PLAN ON HOLD A massive resort/golf course/housing/commercial development on 310 acres at the southwest corner of Fort Ord is apparently in limbo owing to the withdrawal of its main financial backer. Because of its potential impact on the plant reserve at the corner of Gen. Jim Moore Blvd. and South Boundary Road, the chapter has been following this project very carefully, meeting with the developers and attending field trips over the last four years. According to an article in the Aug. 21 Monterey Co. Weekly, work on the EIR has been delayed because of the departure of JER Partners, a Virginia-based private equity real estate investment company. However, Federal Development still intends to build the project, is actively looking for a new backer, and has agreed to lend Del Rey Oaks over \$1 million over the next three years to keep the project alive.

BUSH URGES WEAKENING ESA RULES "Parts of the Endangered Species Act may soon be extinct," began an AP article in the Aug. 12 Herald. It seems that the Bush administration is now trying to accomplish through regulatory changes what it was unable to do through legislative action in Congress. The draft rules would allow Federal agencies to decide for themselves whether construction projects would adversely impact sensitive plant and animal species, instead of requiring consultation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, a system that has been in effect ever since the bill was signed by President Nixon some 35 years ago. Letters, phone calls, and emails are

needed to Rep. Sam Farr (202-225-2861, 202-225-6791 [fax]; 1221 LHOB, Washington DC 20515) and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (202-224-3841, 202-228-3954 [fax]; 331 SHOB, Washington DC 20510) and Sen. Barbara Boxer (202-224-3553, 202-956-6701 [fax]; 112 SHOB, Washington DC 20510).

BRAC ANNOUNCES FALL ACTIVITIES The Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office (BRAC) has announced that its next Community Involvement Workshop will be held at 6:30 pm Wed., Oct. 8 at the new Marina Library, 190 Seaside Circle, Marina. An update on the prescribed burn program is scheduled. BRAC also plans to participate in BLM's Public Lands Day at Fort Ord on Sat., Sept. 27. Information about the Fort Ord Cleanup Program will be discussed at the workshop and is available on the website: www.FortOrdCleanup.com.

June-August 2008

CREEKBRIDGE AGREES TO PROTECT MARINA HABITAT: An agreement between Creekbridge, the developer of the Marina Station project, and the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club was signed on April 8 in which the developer agreed to make a number of changes in the plan to protect and restore endangered dune species and habitats. As noted in our March newsletter, CNPS had expressed concerns about the mitigations for loss of 51 acres of Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens*) habitat, 33 acres of coastal dune scrub, 21 acres of native grasslands, and two acres of vernal pools/wet meadows. The project, on 320 acres of the Armstrong Ranch adjoining the northern boundary of Marina, includes 1360 housing units, 60,000 sq. ft. of mixed-use retail, 143,000 sq. ft. of office space, and 651,000 sq. ft. of industrial space to be constructed in eight phases over 14 years. The changes will reduce the size of Phase 8, moving the westernmost houses back from Highway 1 to provide for a major restoration area. This area currently supports the highest concentration of sensitive habitat, but also is severely degraded from many years of grazing. It is proposed that this area will form the nucleus of an approximately 80-acre conservation corridor along the east side of Highway 1 approaching Marina from the north. CNPS is not a party to the agreement, but has been asked to participate in the Habitat Restoration Plan to be prepared by Denise Duffy & Associates.

RESORT AT DEL REY OAKS UPDATE: The proposal for a 450-unit hotel, 18-hole golf course, 691 residential units, 20,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, and a 250,000 sq. ft. senior care facility on 310 acres at the southwest corner of the former Fort Ord has been on hold since the city bowed to public demand to require the preparation an Environmental Impact Report instead of the "Mitigated Negative Declaration" prepared by the developer's consultants. The Draft EIR was to have been completed this month, but as of June 3 it is reported to be delayed for several months. The chapter has been involved with this project because of its concern over the protection of Plant Reserve #1 at the intersection of Gen. Jim Moore Blvd. and South Boundary Rd. The developer would like to move the reserve to a more convenient location down South Boundary Rd. which unfortunately does not support the rare plants for which the reserve was created some 40 years ago.

FORT ORD PUBLIC TOUR ANNOUNCED: The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office's semiannual bus tour/open house on June 21 will include stops at an Army groundwater treatment plant, an Army landfill, and sites where prescribed burns are planned later this year. The free 90-minute bus tour, open to the public with no reservation required, starts from Building 4522 at 10 am and again at 11:30. Directions from Hwy 1: Exit at Fort Ord Main Gate, stay on Lightfighter Drive, cross Gen. Jim Moore Blvd., turn left onto Col. Durham Road, turn left onto 7th Ave., turn right onto Joe Lloyd Way. Building 4522 is at the end of the road. Further information is available from Melissa Broadston at 393-1284 or at the Fort Ord website: FortOrdCleanup.com

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MARKS 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF PINNACLES. Pinnacles is celebrating its centennial as a National Monument with a series of events highlighting the successful efforts of local residents to convince President Theodore Roosevelt to protect the unique rock formations of the area in 1908. Information on events is available at www.nps.gov/pinn/parkmgmt/centennial.htm. NPS is also asking for public input on the new General Management Plan for the monument. A summary of the first round of comments is expected to be released early this summer with further opportunities to be involved. A more detailed list may be found at the above website

under planning. Comments can be sent by email to pinn_gmp@nps.gov or by mail to Pinnacles NM GMP, 5000 Highway 146, Paicines, CA 95043.

May 2008

CLEAR CREEK CLOSED BY BLM: I received a phone call Wednesday April 30, 2008 from Rick Cooper, the director of the Hollister Field Office of BLM, informing CNPS that as of Thursday May 1, 2008 Clear Creek would be closed to everyone. "Closed" means there will be no motorcycle riding, no hang gliding, no rock hounding, no birding, no scientific study and no botany field trips. The reason for the sudden closure was given as health concerns. The EPA that day released the long-anticipated report on asbestos at Clear Creek and the report, according to BLM, was worse than anticipated. My first reaction, other than shock, was that BLM did the right thing in closing. After having a chance to think about it for a few days I disagree with the sudden closure because the health concerns about asbestos are nothing new. BLM has known about the asbestos issue for many years and has known for two years that EPA was going to recommend closure. If the health risks are the reason for the closure, then BLM should have closed Clear Creek many years ago. There was a new EIS and new management plan for Clear Creek concluded in January 2006 where asbestos could have been addressed. To now say they are going to do yet another EIS to address the asbestos and to have an absolute closure in the meantime seems to once again point out the lack of BLM having clear direction. I do not consider this a victory for CNPS as the closure has nothing to do with the issues we have fought about for decades--the destruction of sensitive plant habitat by rogue motorcyclists violating BLM rules. The closure has already caused CNPS to cancel one field trip there. I will once again be attending meetings with government agencies to, this time, try to get Clear Creek reopened in some manner. -- Brian LeNeve

RANCHO CANADA VILLAGE EIR WITHDRAWN: As a result of harsh criticism from many non-profit organizations, agencies, and individuals, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this 281-unit project at the mouth of Carmel Valley has been withdrawn and will be redone and re-circulated, according to proponents of the development. Among many other issues, the EIR failed to identify sources of the 200,000 cubic yards of fill that would be required to raise the site above the 100-year flood plain, or the traffic impacts of the trucks that would transport the fill, or the impacts on air quality of this immense project. The chapter deplores the project because it involves a massive alteration of existing landforms that could wreak havoc with the Carmel River and the riparian plant community that it supports. Other low-lying habitat areas downstream would face the threat of increased flood damage from alteration of the floodplain. The project would require numerous changes that would weaken the General Plan, the CV Master Plan, and the Zoning Ordinance. The chapter has strongly supported the Hilton Bialek Habitat program at Carmel Middle School promoting education in natural history and organic gardening, values that are likely to be severely impacted by this project.

SEPTEMBER RANCH APPROVAL OVERTURNED: Conservationists were gratified to learn that the county approval of this 95-lot project extending from Carmel Valley Road to Jacks Peak Park was overturned by Superior Court Judge Susan Dauphine on May 2. The decision was consistent with the outcome of the previous lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the EIR, which claimed that a "separate aquifer" would provide sufficient water without affecting the overdrafted Carmel River aquifer. Old-timers will recall that the Carmel Valley Ranch farther up the Valley was approved in the 80s on the basis of a separate "Tularcitos Aquifer." When it turned out to be nonexistent, the project was allowed to hook up to Cal-Am, a huge drain on the resource that contributed ultimately to Rule 95-10. In this rule the State Water Board found that Cal-Am was taking more water than it was entitled to from the Carmel River, resulting in loss of native riparian vegetation, bank erosion, decline of the steelhead fishery, and a long series of proposals to increase the water supply that have never been implemented. The chapter's principal concern about September Ranch was based primarily on the impacts to the native Monterey pine forest extending up south-facing slopes to Jacks Peak Park. Most of the 800-acre parcel is too steep for development, and many of the ridges that are "buildable" are the best habitat for the pines. A potential compromise would be to reduce the number of units and site them on the lower part of the parcel, thus saving water, pines, and impacts on the park.

MIGRATORY BIRD NUMBERS PLUNGE: HABITAT LOSS IS PRINCIPAL CAUSE. A large-scale aerial survey of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, a route which passes through 22 countries, shows that migratory shorebird populations have plunged by 73 percent between 1983 and 2006, while Australia's 15 species of resident shorebirds have declined by 81 percent. The first such long-term analysis of shorebird populations and health, the study is published in the scientific journal *Biological Conservation*. The loss of habitat along the flyway, particularly the destruction of wetlands, is the principal reason for the decline, despite the existence of international treaties protecting migratory birds, according to study experts. A worldwide assessment of the survival status of all bird species will be released on May 19. Published once every four years, the 2008 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species for birds is a global assessment of every bird species on Earth.

April 2008

[None]

March 2008

MARINA STATION PROJECT CRITIQUED: The chapter sent a letter for the Mar. 4 meeting of the Marina City Council urging better protection for sensitive plants and habitats in the first development proposal for 320 acres of the Armstrong Ranch north of Marina. The overall design of the project has many good "new urbanism" features, with pedestrian-friendly parks and greenbelts integrated into the residential and commercial centers. The plan includes 1360 housing units, 60,000 sq. ft of mixed-use retail, 143,000 sq. ft. of office space, and 651,000 sq. ft. of industrial space--all constructed in 8 phases over about 14 years. However, the loss of habitat would be substantial: 51 acres of the Federally listed Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens*), 33 acres of coastal dune scrub, 21 acres of native grasslands, and two acres of wet meadows. There are also potential impacts on the dune gilia (*Gilia tenuiflora* var. *arenaria*) and seaside bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *littoralis*). The chapter has raised questions about mitigating some of these losses by restoring degraded parkland areas at Marina Dunes Preserve and Locke Paddon Park, both units of the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District; and mitigating the loss of grassland at Garland Park. These and other proposals to enlarge habitat areas and improve connectivity have been discussed and hopefully will be spelled out at the Mar. 4 meeting.

R. C. VILLAGE EIR DEADLINE MAR. 1: The EIR for Rancho Canada Village, the proposed housing development on part of Rancho Canada West Golf Course, was issued in mid-January with a comment deadline of Mar. 1. The chapter continues to oppose this project because it would site more than 300 housing units in the floodplain, requiring 200,000 cu. ft. of fill to raise the units above the 100-year flood level, and would relocate a segment of the Carmel River in the process. The impact on riparian vegetation is significant and has not been adequately mitigated. Further, this massive project would block a critical wildlife corridor from the uplands to the river, and would have a huge adverse impact on the Hilton Bialek Habitat at Carmel Middle School. Because this area has been the subject of flooding and erosion in the past, it is clearly not suitable for housing development. By filling natural land in the floodplain, the floodwaters are forced to go elsewhere--a clear threat to the public health and safety. Some of the other severe impacts are outside the purview of CNPS: water and traffic, which should be major stumbling blocks for this project. However, because it is supposed to provide about 50% of much needed affordable housing, many are reluctant to oppose it. Nevertheless, anyone who lives or works or shops in the lower Carmel Valley will be affected and therefore should plan to attend the Land Use Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and Supervisors meetings to voice their concerns.

CHAPTER SUPPORTS FOREST LAWSUIT: With the support of local chapters from Monterey to Southern California, the state CNPS has joined with the other conservation groups to sue the U. S. Forest Service and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for inadequate protection of Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) in the Forest Plans for the four Southern California National Forests (the Los Padres National Forest is the northernmost of the four forests). The suit alleges that "1) the Forest Service failed to complete consultation with the USFWS for the four southern California forests for activities that would adversely affect T&E species; 2) has not received an

incidental take permit for their proposed activities from the USFWS, 3) USFWS's biological opinion entirely fails to specify, predict or determine the amount or extent of take that would be caused by the revised Forest Plans." The suit follows strenuous efforts by CNPS, the chapters, and other groups including The Wilderness Society, the Center for Biological Diversity, the California Wilderness Coalition, and Los Padres Forest Watch to assure that the forest plans follow the Endangered Species Act requirements for protection of T&E plants (signed by then president Richard Nixon in 1972).

February 2008

RESORT AT DEL REY OAKS: The City of Del Rey Oaks held a public scoping meeting on January 30th for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on this proposal, which includes a 450-unit hotel, 18-hole golf course, 691 residential units, 20,000-square foot commercial space, and a 250,000-square foot senior care residential facility on 310 acres on the southwest corner of the former Fort Ord. Chapter representatives have met with the developer to stress the importance of protecting the plant reserve located at this site and have tried to discourage the proposal to move the reserve to another site across and east on South Boundary Road.

MONTEREY BAY SHORES RESORT: A shocking decision by a state appeals court on January 28th overturned a Coastal Commission decision unanimously denying a permit for a seven-story hotel, condominiums and apartments totaling 495 units during an appeal (by the Sierra Club and other organizations) of a permit granted by Sand City. The original plan for a ten-story timeshare and a seven storey hotel and condominiums for a total of 597 units was denied by the Coastal Commission in 1998. The "reduced" project was denied in 1999. The chapter strongly opposed this project because of its excessive size and impacts on the dunes. Environmentalists deplore the decision because of the adverse effect on the Coastal Commission's ability to protect ESHA, a primary tool of the Coastal Act.

RANCHO CANADA VILLAGE: The EIR was released last month for this 281-unit housing development on the western golf course at Rancho Canada adjoining Carmel Middle School. The deadline for comment is Saturday, March 1st. It is common sense to avoid construction in the flood plain because of the threat to life and property caused by the inevitable floods. It is not a question of "if" but "when" the waters will rise, as many areas have seen this winter. This project is particularly unacceptable because it involves changing the course of the river and placing five feet of fill to elevate the buildings. This not only will destroy wetlands and other sensitive habitats but is likely to increase flood hazard for the existing dense commercial and residential development downstream

MARINA STATION: The first big development of a portion of the Armstrong Ranch north of Marina is working its way through the process (see last month's issue). Conservation groups are urging that there should be no net loss of sensitive habitat, mitigations should be in or near the City of Marina, existing corridors should be maintained, preserved habitat should be contiguous, preserves should be large enough to be viable, and scenic views from Highway 1 should be preserved.

BUS TOUR/OPEN HOUSE: The Fort Ord BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) Office has announced its semi-annual free bus tour and open house on Saturday, February 23rd at Bldg. 4522, Joe Lloyd Way. Please meet at 10 a.m. for Tour 1 or 11:30 a.m. for Tour 2 at Building 4522 at the end of 8th Ave. Directions from Highway 1: Enter Fort Ord Main Gate, stay on Lightfighter Drive across General Jim Moore Blvd, turn L onto Colonel Durham Road, turn left onto 8th Ave., turn right onto Joe Lloyd Way to Bldg. 4522 at the end of the road. For further information and/or a map, please contact Melissa Broadston, 393-1284, or visit the website at www.FortOrdCleanup.com.

January 2008

MARINA STATION PROJECT: The largest single project ever proposed for the city of Marina is now working its way through the environmental review process. The mixed-use proposal is located on a 320-acre section of the Armstrong Ranch that adjoins the city and is included in the urban growth boundary approved by Marina voters in 2000. The project has a number of environmentally advanced design features, but it also has severe impacts on

sensitive dune habitat. The challenge is to devise mitigations that make up for the habitat loss—for example, over 50 acres of the Federally-listed Monterey Spine-Flower will be converted to urban use, as well as wetlands and other rare habitats. A proposal to mitigate these losses by restoring degraded areas on Regional Park District Lands or city parklands is simply not appropriate. A more acceptable proposal would be to set aside comparable acreage within the project area or adjoining it, on land that would otherwise be potentially developable. A suggestion for a 125-150 acre regional park could be a solution that would benefit both the community and the environment. The Marina Planning Commission will hold a meeting on this issue on Jan. 10. Members of the public concerned about protecting the dunes are urged to attend.

RANCHO CANADA VILLAGE: The Draft Environmental Impact Report on this proposed 281-unit housing project at the mouth of Carmel Valley is expected to be available to the public in early January. The project was originally proposed by the late Nick Lombardo on what is now the Rancho Canada West Golf Course in order to provide low-income and work-force housing along with market-rate units. Strong opposition has been expressed to the location, which is largely in the Carmel River flood plain, and to the impacts on traffic, air quality, water supply, etc. from such a high-density development. CNPS expressed particular concern over the extensive grading that would be required to raise the project above the 100-year flood level and the resulting interference with the natural course of the river and its highly valuable and sensitive riparian community. There will be many opportunities for public comments on these issues as the plan goes through the county process. Members are strongly encouraged to participate in this effort to protect the natural values of the Carmel River. Further details should be the press, the county website, and our next issue.

DEL REY OAKS RESORT: The chapter has been asked to participate in a committee to try to achieve consensus on the proposal for a resort/golf course/housing/commercial development at the southwest corner of the former Fort Ord. Located on the northeast side of the intersection of Gen. Jim Moore Blvd. and South Boundary Road, the project would double the size of the City of Del Rey Oaks according to an article in the Monterey County Herald of Dec. 10, 2006. The original proposal was to bypass the EIR process by using a “Mitigated Negative Declaration,” a simpler level of environmental review appropriate for small projects; but after adverse publicity, the city decided to require an EIR, which is now underway. The chapter has been involved in this project for several years because of its efforts to protect the rare plant reserve on the site. The developer has proposed to move the reserve to a more convenient location, but one, unfortunately, where the plants do not exist. Other concerns over the project’s impacts on water, traffic, air quality, etc. are likely to make this a major issue in 2008.

November/December 2007

FOREST SERVICE LAWSUIT PROPOSED: The state CNPS has signed on to a “60-Day Letter” from the Center for Biological Diversity to the USFS stating the intention of filing a lawsuit against the agency unless it corrects violations of the Endangered Species Act in the Forest Plans of the four Southern California National Forests within the next 60 days. The Monterey Bay Chapter territory includes the northernmost (Monterey) district of the northernmost (Los Padres) national forest; so identifying it as a southern CA forest is a bit of a stretch. However, because the USFS has chosen to lump the LPNF in with the Cleveland, San Bernardino, and Angeles national forests, the same shortcomings are found in all four plans. The Letter cites violations of Sec. 7 and 9 of the ESA relating to the requirement to consult with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and the inadequacy of the Biological Opinion that has resulted. While the USFS admits that adverse effects are likely on the 40 Threatened and Endangered Species in the four forests, the required “Incidental Take Permit” has not been obtained from FWS. The various chapters involved will be expected to have input on the issues in their territory. Of the 40 plants listed for the four forests, only one Federally Listed Endangered Species is shown for Monterey Co., the Purple Amole (*Chlorogalum purpureum*). However, the chapter has identified some 18 CNPS 1B plants in the Monterey District that meet Threatened or Endangered standards, and many of these plants have been accorded a level of protection in the past by the USFS. The chapter board will be discussing this issue at its next meeting in early November.

BIG SUR INVASIVES MEETING SET: Sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Big Sur Land Trust, (BSLT) a meeting to review a draft Invasive Species Management Plan for Big Sur will be held at 9:30 am on Thursday, Nov. 15. The alltaxa invasive species plan was started in 2004, building on many efforts in the 90s by the USFS, State Parks, CNPS, BSLT and Big Sur residents. The impetus for the involvement of the TNC Global Invasive Species Team came with TNC’s acquisition of the Palo Corona Ranch and subsequent transfer to the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District and the CA Dept. of Fish and Game. For details about attending, the location of the meeting, and access to the draft documents, email or call Mandy Tu, imtu@tnc.org or 503.802.8100, or call Heather Brady, 625-5523 X110. Those planning to attend the Nov. 15 meeting should be sure to read beforehand the documents available from the above.

RANCHO CANADA VILLAGE RESURFACES: Additional environmental documents including a new Biological Assessment has recently been issued for this project of 281 housing units proposed to be located on the western golf course at Rancho Canada between Carmel Middle School and the Carmel River. The chapter has strongly opposed previous projects in the flood plain because of the impacts on sensitive riparian vegetation, not to mention public health, welfare and safety. When a hearing was held in May 2005, the chapter and many others particularly objected to locating such a dense development in the Carmel River flood plain. The solution was to raise the ground level several feet by using existing and additional fill. What happens then, however, is that the flood water that cannot go where it did before, will have to go somewhere else that it did not go before. So building up the flood plain just transfers the problem somewhere else! No endangered species were found on either of the parcels, possibly because neither survey was done during the main spring and summer blooming period. The first surveyed between Oct. 30 and Mar. 17, and the second, on Mar. 31. To summarize this project in a few words: as a solution to the need for affordable housing, it is in the wrong place.

SEPTEMBER RANCH HEADS FOR COURT: The chapter continued to oppose this 100-unit subdivision on steep slopes in Carmel Valley when it came back before the county in a slightly revised form last year, primarily on the basis of unmitigated damage to the native Monterey Pine forest. The County first approved the subdivision in December 1998. The approvals were set aside in 1999 by the Monterey County Superior Court after the Sierra Club, Save Our Carmel River, and Patricia Bernardi challenged the EIR and the approval of the project on several fronts. In 2001, the appellate court upheld that ruling. The current form of the project was addressed in a revised EIR certified by the County in December 2005. After the Supervisors approved it again last year, the same plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against the County in January 2007. The current challenge is to the revised EIR under the California

Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) focusing on water, historic resources, and development standards. That case is now fully briefed. It is scheduled for oral argument before Judge Susan M. Dauphine in early January 2008 at the Monterey courthouse.

ARMY SETS TWO FORT ORD BURNS: Two 150- acre prescribed burns are planned by the Army for the southwestern portion of the impact area at Fort Ord near Del Rey Oaks and Seaside "in the next few months." However, the Oct. 16 notice stated that the final decision to use fire to initiate the clearance of unexploded ordnance had not yet been finalized. The Army and several other agencies are still considering public comments, and they expect to announce their decision about Nov. 15. If the burns are approved, those who wish to receive an automated phone or email message on the date of the burns should call 1-800-852-9699 if they have not already registered. Because periodic fire has been shown to benefit maritime chaparral, CNPS continues to support prescribed burns when weather conditions are favorable to minimize smoke impacts on nearby residents.

PBCSD POSTPONES FIRE RULES: A proposal by the Pebble Beach Community Services District to adopt a draconian fire clearance ordinance that appeared to go far beyond what is required by CalFire (formerly the CA Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection) was postponed until the December meeting after sharp criticism by residents and activist David Dilworth. Studies have shown that fire resistant construction materials are far more important in protecting homes than removing vegetation. CalFire's stricter rules do allow low and fire resistant plants as well as trees with lower branches removed. Residents need to stay on top of this issue.

October 2007

PEBBLE BEACH CO. (PBC) GETS EXTENSION: The California Coastal Commission (CC) recently agreed to extend the deadline for filing a lawsuit against the PBC for 90 days while PBC works with staff and commissioners to try to find a compromise that would reduce the impact on Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas in Del Monte Forest. As reported widely in the press and the last chapter newsletter, at its June 15 meeting the CC turned down Measure A, the PBC initiative that amended the Del Monte Forest Local Coastal Plan to permit more resort and golf courses rather than residential expansion. Without the extension, the time for PBC to file its lawsuit would have expired before efforts to resolve the conflicts had been exhausted.

BLM ANNOUNCES NEW RESOURCE PLAN: The Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Hollister District (excluding the San Benito Mountain/Clear Creek Area) has been completed and is now available for public review at the Hollister District website at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/hollister>. When the plan, which affects 274,000 acres in central CA, was circulated to the public early last year, it drew critical comments from many groups including CNPS, particularly in regard to proposals to open up the 15,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management land at Fort Ord to motorized vehicles and allow target shooting, hunting, fishing, and commercial plant collecting in areas that are now being managed for habitat protection. Also proposed were increased grazing and recreation uses on sensitive plant and animal habitat at the San Joaquin Rocks and the Panoche, Tumey, Ciervo, and Griswold Hills. The chapter hopes that it will not be necessary to file another lawsuit to give these lands the protection they deserve under the Endangered Species Act.

COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE 5: One of the worst features of GPU 4 approved by the county supervisors was elimination of the rule prohibiting cultivation on slopes over 25%. Studies have shown that over 500,000 acres of private land in Monterey County could be adversely affected by this change, which unfortunately was retained in GPU 5. If this rule stands, it threatens the destruction of oak woodlands providing valuable habitat for sensitive plants and animals, the blocking of wildlife corridors, and degradation of water quality through runoff and erosion. The chapter has repeatedly pointed out to planners and the supervisors that allowing conversion of native habitat to agriculture on steep slopes results in higher water use, increased chemical inputs, and much greater erosion rates compared to farming on the fertile soils of the valley bottomland.

US ARMY EXPANSION PLANS: The chapter has just received a CD of a 597-page document prepared by the US Army's Installation and Management Command at Fort Sam Houston, Texas that proposes major expansion at Fort

Hunter Liggett (FHL). It includes an Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the construction of six "Sprung structures" ranging in size from 40'Wx80'Lx26'H to 90'Wx195'Lx32'H on concrete or asphalt pads in areas that are already disturbed. The project would also relocate 212 military personnel to FHL. It is difficult to estimate the total impacts of planned development, as the document states that the Army plans other independent projects for FHL that are covered in other EAs. One concern that has been raised, for example, is the impacts of expanding a tank trail extending from Camp Roberts to FHL that passes through areas likely to support endangered plants and animals. The deadline for comments is Oct. 30; they may be sent to US Army, Environmental Division, PO Box 7090, Fort Hunter Liggett, CA 93928-7090.

September 2007

CONSERVATION REPORT OFF ROAD VEHICLE (ORV) THREATS INCREASE: According to many reports, ORV usage is skyrocketing in the west, with thousands of the destructive vehicles converging on fragile public lands, destroying wildlife habitat, displacing peaceful uses like hiking and nature study, leaving mountains of trash in their wake, and creating frightful public safety and enforcement problems. The issues appear most critical on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands, which have traditionally been managed for multiple-use; but even the US Forest Service and National Park Service have found their ability to protect their lands undercut by edicts from the current administration in DC that slash their budgets while censoring the protests of their scientists. Our chapter provides an example of the problem, with BLM officials in Hollister promising to enforce policies protecting endangered species in the Clear Creek Area, while surveys carried out by Brian LeNeve and others document continued violations by ORV groups. Summer is the quiet season at Clear Creek because of the health hazard from asbestos dust; but as soon as the rains start, the incidence of cut fences and telltale tracks of trespassing OHVs will show whether or not enforcement has improved. If not, the chapter will have to consider reactivating its lawsuit on the basis that BLM has not kept its part of the agreement that settled the suit over a year ago.

FWS RELEASES ORCHID DOCUMENT: The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) recently released a draft economic analysis that estimates cost of conserving critical habitat for Yadon's piperia (*Piperia yadonii*) at \$9.6 to \$12.9 million over a 20- year period. The FWS also reopened the public comment period on the critical habitat rule to Sept. 6. The draft and proposed rule can be downloaded from the following website: <http://ventura.fws.gov/> under "News Room." Email comments can be sent to: fw8piya@fws.gov or faxed to: (805) 644-3958. About 84% of the proposed critical habitat is on private land on and near the Monterey Peninsula, 9% is on state land, and 7% is on local agency land. The FWS points out that critical habitat designation does not affect purely private or state lands except when activities involving a protected plant require federal funding or permitting, in which case consultation with FWS is required. The chapter is very concerned that loss of habitat, primarily from housing and golf-related development, has already eliminated one-third to one-half of the historic pine forest, along with unknown but presumably substantial numbers of the orchid and over a dozen other sensitive plants dependent on the forest. The chapter is urging that several additional high quality orchid populations that seem to have been arbitrarily excluded be added to the designated critical habitat areas, including the core population in the proposed golf course site; F3, a 16.8-acre area adjoining the SFB Morse Reserve; and two small areas totaling 12.8 acres adjoining Pescadero Canyon.

COASTAL COMMISSION DENIES MEASURE A: Opponents of Measure A, the Pebble Beach Co.'s (PBC) initiative to facilitate its golf course and resort expansion, were gratified that the Coastal Commission (CC) voted 8-4 to deny the project at its June 13 meeting in Santa Rosa. Chapter members were among many presenting testimony supporting the staff recommendation for denial. The result is that the old Del Monte Forest Land Use Plan, which emphasized housing development, continues to govern the area, while the PBC wants to emphasize resort and golf course expansion. Reportedly PBC is now negotiating with the CC to find a compromise position.

USFS PLANS FACILITIES UPGRADES: The US Forest Service (USFS) announced on Aug. 27 a list of proposed improvements in the Los Padres National Forest (LP) and is seeking public comments by Sept. 28. Projects in the Monterey District include: replace/repair toilets at China Camp, Escondido, Memorial Park, and Ponderosa

campgrounds; rehabilitate Kirk Creek Campground; consider charging a fee at Memorial Campground; implement Phase 3 of the Arroyo Seco Project, including parking and group camping facilities; and improving visitor information and bilingual signing at most sites. Out of total of 108 developed sites within the five districts of the LP, 62 are proposed for upgrades over the next five years. The goal of making the projects “sustainable” suggests that fees will be charged for the upgraded sites and raises the concern that the unimproved sites may be closed. For further information about this plan see the USFS website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/lospadres or visit the Monterey District Office in King City Sept. 13 from 4 to 6 pm. Public comments on the proposed program of work should be mailed by Sept. 28, 2007 to: RFA-- POW, Los Padres National Forest, 6755 Hollister Ave., Suite 150, Goleta, CA 93117. Comments may also be submitted electronically to: commentspacificsouthwest-los-padres@fs.fed.us

June 2007

PEBBLE BEACH DEVELOPMENT PLAN: On June 13 the California Coastal Commission (CC) will hold a hearing in Santa Rosa on the consistency of Measure A with the Coastal Act and the Del Monte Forest Local Coastal Plan. Measure A was the developer-sponsored initiative to change zoning in the forest to permit the new development plan emphasizing resort expansion instead of housing development. The county was urged to submit Measure A to the CC for consistency before considering the new plan; but the county chose to hear both at the same time and approved them simultaneously in early 2005. When it became clear that the CC took a dim view of this procedure at its hearing in March 2006 and was prepared to deny the plan at its June meeting, the Pebble Beach Co. had the county pull the item from the agenda at the last moment. Now the county is doing what it should have done five years ago! The chapter and many other groups have submitted testimony over the years pointing out Measure A’s inconsistencies include the following: eliminating two conservation easements protecting the Huckleberry Hill Natural Area to allow construction of a new equestrian center to replace the historic, existing center with a new golf course; the failure to recognize the significant loss of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) including some 17,000 Monterey pines and many rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals; inadequate designation of wetlands and dune areas slated for development; and depending on experimental mitigations that have no track record of success. The chapter will be raising these issues again at the June 13 meeting. Concerned members are encouraged to contact Supervisor Dave Potter, who represents this area on the CC, by phone or email as time is short: (phone) 647-7755 or 755- 5055; (email) district 5@co.monterey.ca.us

PROPOSAL TO PLANT CANARY I. PINES IN CARMEL: The Carmel Forest and Beach Committee has stirred up the proverbial hornets’ nest by proposing to encourage the substitution of Canary Island pines for Monterey pines in landscaping within the city of Carmel. The chapter wrote a letter deploring the idea, citing the biological, historical, and cultural values of the Monterey pine and the lack of information about possible hazards of hybridizing with the native pine. The long-term potential for loss of the genetic diversity is important not only for protecting the pine against diseases and environmental shifts (think climate change), but also for conserving this critical genetic library for the benefit of the multi-billion dollar southern-hemisphere timber industry. Such plantings would be inconsistent with the Carmel Local Coastal Plan and the Carmel Forest Management Plan. The search for alternatives to the Monterey pine was undertaken because of early predictions that pitch canker disease could kill up to 85% of the native pines. However, the resilience of the trees has apparently been underestimated, with many infected trees able to recover and resistant trees identified and propagated for local landscaping purposes. A public hearing of the F&B Committee was set for June 7, at which local residents are encouraged to speak out against the use of Canary I. pines.

HYBRIDIZING THREATENS RARE LUPINE: Another alarming situation involving actual hybridization of an endangered plant is occurring in the Spanish Bay dunes, where ill-judged planting of the silver beach lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*), not native to the site, has resulted in hybrids with the endangered Tidestrom’s lupine (*L. tidestromii*). Efforts to obtain a permit to remove the beach lupine and the hybrids have so far failed to gain approval from the Dept. of Fish and Game. This plant is both State and Federally listed as endangered as well as CNPS 1B. According to the US Fish & Wildlife Recovery Plan (1997) for this and six other threatened or endangered

coastal dune species, there are only 19 small populations between Pebble Beach and Sonoma Co. totaling 433 plants. Two populations were destroyed during construction of the Spanish Bay Golf Course. The chapter recently learned that a graduate student working on the species has also expressed concern about potential hybridization at Pt. Reyes National Seashore, where CNPS volunteers have identified seven populations. The chapter is urging resolution of this issue as soon as possible and wo

May 2007

CANARY I. PINE PLANTING OPPOSED The chapter sent a letter to the Forest and Beach Committee in Carmel urging it to drop a proposal encouraging the use of Canary Island pine as a replacement for Monterey pines. The letter explained the importance of protecting the genetic diversity of the pine at a time when it is losing ground to habitat loss, fragmentation, invasive non-native plants, and disease. The letter emphasized the unique value of the pine as the iconic conifer of the Monterey Peninsula and also as the genetic reservoir for the six billion dollar timber industry in the southern hemisphere. Because the pines in these plantations have been selected for rapid growth, straight trunks, and maximum height, they run the risk shared by other plant clones (corn, tomatoes, etc.) of losing critical genetic traits that could protect them from diseases and environmental perturbations. In such cases, interbreeding utilizing the genetic diversity of the native pine can supply the critical resistance needed for survival of the resource. As a tree with a very different genetic heritage, the Canary pine or other non-native pines could hybridize with the native trees to change or reduce their genetic makeup over time. This process could not only impoverish our local native stands by reducing their ability to withstand or adapt to change, but it could also have severe long-term economic impacts on the timber industry. These are not far-fetched scenarios; they have already occurred with other important plant species. The chapter understands that substitute species have been considered in the past when experts were predicting that pitch canker could kill as many as 85% of the native trees. However, many of the Monterey pines were shown to have resistance to the disease, thanks to their diverse gene pool. Young trees that have been propagated from these survivors are the preferred source of replacement trees. Residents of Carmel are encouraged to contact the Forest and Beach Committee on this issue.

COASTAL COMMISSION TO HEAR MEASURE . Measure A, the Pebble Beach Co.'s 2002 land use initiative to facilitate the new golf course and other planned development in Del Monte Forest, will be heard by the Coastal Commission at its regular meeting in Santa Rosa June 13-15. The chapter and other appellants of the project approved by the Supervisors several years ago were notified by the commission that the appeals were moot because the Supervisors agreed to rescind their approval of the project and request the commission to take up the initiative first—as opponents of the plan had long urged. It made no sense for the county to approve the development project before the commission had even considered whether or not Measure A was consistent with the Coastal Act and the Del Monte Forest Local Coastal Plan. The chapter, along with many other groups and individuals, has pointed out the inconsistencies of eradicating some 17,000 Monterey pines as well as a large number of rare, threatened and endangered species that grow in the forest and dunes. Previous Coastal Commission staff reviews have identified a number of issues that appear to be inconsistent including the cancellation of two scenic easements, required as conditions of approval of the Spanish Bay permit in 1984, in order to construct a much enlarged stables in the Huckleberry Hill Natural Area. Members concerned about these issues should write the California Coastal Commission, Central Coast District, 725 Front St., Suite 300, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Additional information can be found on the chapter's website and the website of the Concerned Residents of Pebble Beach at www.cr-pb.org .

FORT ORD BUS TOUR/OPEN HOUSE: JUNE 23 The Fort Ord BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) Office has announced its semi-annual bus tour and open house on Sat. June 23. The free tour will visit a groundwater treatment plant, landfill, the area that was burned in the fall of 2006, and the Riso Ridge Overlook at the "Impossible City" or MOUT site, where troops are trained for Military Operations in Urban Terrain. Meet at 10 am for Tour 1 or 11:30 am for Tour 2 at Building 4522 at the end of 8th Ave. Directions from Highway 1: Enter Fort Ord

Main Gate, stay on Lightfighter Drive across Gen. Jim Moore Blvd, turn L onto Col. Durham Road, turn L onto 8th Ave., turn R onto Joe Lloyd Way to Bldg. 4522 at the end of the road. For further information and/or a map, call Melissa Broadston, 393-1284, or visit the website at www.FortOrdCleanup.com .

April 2007

SUPPORT COMMUNITY GENERAL PLAN: In June Monterey County voters will finally have a chance to vote on two very different general plans. Measure A is the Community General Plan, a smart-growth plan based on the original plan produced by the Planning Dept. (scuttled by the supervisors responding to development interests) and tweaked at numerous meetings of the public around the county organized by LandWatch and supported by 17 public interest groups including CNPS and the League of Women Voters. Measure B is a citizens' referendum to repeal the general plan passed by the supervisors (GPU4) which is basically the developers' wish list. Measure C is the supervisors' plan (again), placed on the ballot by the supervisors to make the issue as confusing as possible. Therefore, in order to protect our county from overdevelopment, voters need to mark YES on A, YES on B (to repeal GPU4), and NO on C. CNPS supports the Community Plan because it limits conversion of natural habitat to development on steep slopes, confines growth to areas where infrastructure can be provided, and in general protects our water supplies, air quality, and open space. For more information about Measure A, go to the Community Plan website: <http://www.montereyplan.org/index.html>. To see a side-by-side comparison prepared by the League of Women Voters, go to [LWVComparisonInitiativeandGPU4final.pdf](http://www.montereyplan.org/LWVComparisonInitiativeandGPU4final.pdf). Help is urgently needed to inform the public and counter the heavily financed misinformation campaign already in evidence from the pro-development forces. Volunteers are especially needed to phone voters from the Measure A office; if you can help, call 274-2646.

NEW ASSAULT ON ENDANGERED SPECIES: A top secret plan by the Bush Administration to undermine the Endangered Species Act was reported by the on-line news service Salon on Mar. 28. Kept under tight security by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the proposed changes limit the number of species that can be protected, curtail the acres of wildlife habitat to be preserved, shift authority to enforce the act from the federal government to the states, and dilute legal barriers that protect habitat from sprawl, logging, or mining. Bush has an especially dismal record on endangered species. A telling example is the number listed compared to his predecessors: Reagan, 253; Clinton, 521; Bush I, 234; but Bush II, 57, all the result of lawsuits. Furthermore, during this administration, nearly half of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees who work with endangered species reported that they had been directed by their superiors to ignore scientific evidence that would result in recommendations for the protection of species, according to a 2005 survey of more than 1,400 service biologists, ecologists and botanists conducted by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a nonprofit organization. "We are not allowed to be honest and forthright, we are expected to rubber stamp everything," wrote a Fish and Wildlife Service biologist as part of the survey. "I have 20 years of federal service in this and this is the worst it has ever been." Fortunately the Endangered Species Coalition (a group made up of over 360 national groups including CNPS) is working right now to stop this latest attack, but it needs help--visit www.stopextinction.org to donate, volunteer, get info for letters, emails, phone calls, etc

March 2007

PINNACLES RESTARTS GENERAL PLAN: Established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt to protect 900 acres of astounding geologic formations, Pinnacles National Monument has grown to 24,000 acres while becoming a favorite destination of wildflower enthusiasts, bird-watchers, rock-climbers, and hikers. In General Plan Newsletter 1, Supt. Eric J. Brunnemann describes the Monument as "home of volcanic rock formations, talus caves, riparian waterways, oak savannah woodlands, chaparral, and cultural landscapes that include prehistoric archeology, California homesteads, and historic construction from the Civilian Conservation Corps." An earlier planning effort was put on hold until the purchase of the Pinnacles Ranch and Campground was completed in 2006, providing new solutions for parking, traffic, and camping issues. Among improvements that have been made in the meantime are the introduction of California condors and red-legged frogs, removal of invasive plants and destructive wild pigs,

restoration of Chalone Creek, and rerouting the Bear Gulch Cave Trail to protect Townsend bat colonies while keeping cave routes open to visitors. To encourage public involvement, public meetings have been scheduled for Soledad Mar. 7, Hollister Mar. 19, Paicines Mar. 20, and Santa Clara Mar. 24. Too far away? Then get on the mailing list for upcoming newsletters by calling Martha Crusius, Project Manager, (510) 817-1447, email pinn_gmp@nps.gov or go to the park's website: nps.gov/pinn Comments will be accepted until May 31, 2007. The chapter hopes to schedule some field trips to Pinnacles in April, a fine time to see wildflowers and collect information about the plan.

PEBBLE BEACH PLAN: The chapter received a letter from the Coastal Commission (CC) pointing out that as a result of the Supervisors' actions in December in voiding the permit granted to Pebble Beach Co., following the last-minute removal of the project from the CC agenda on June 14, 2006, the 22 appeals filed by groups and individuals including CNPS and several members are no longer in effect. The chapter has now been advised that Pebble Beach Co. intends to submit Measure A, the rezoning initiative designed to facilitate its revised development plan, to the CC for a hearing in June or July. This is exactly the step that CNPS and many other organizations had urged over the last few years in order to determine the consistency of Measure A with the Del Monte Forest Local Coastal Plan (LCP) before considering the development permit. The opponents of the project have consistently maintained that Measure A violates the strong protections for Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) in the Coastal Act and the LCP. The chapter's principal concerns involve the removal of two conservation easements, the cutting of an estimated 17,000 Monterey pines, and the destruction of wetlands and numerous threatened and endangered plant species by the proposed golf course, driving range, and new stables in the Huckleberry Hill Natural Area. The chapter intends to continue to participate in the analysis of Measure A and welcomes the assistance of members who are concerned about this project.

THE RESORT AT DEL REY OAKS: The chapter was gratified to learn at press time that the City of Del Rey Oaks has decided to require a full Environmental Impact Report on this development before approving any amendments to its general plan to facilitate the project. As described in previous newsletters, the proposal has grown from a golf course and resort on the 350 acres to be received by the city as part of the closure of Fort Ord to a much larger proposal that would add another hotel, hundreds of housing units, and commercial development. Because of the increased density, the developer wants to move Plant Reserve No. 1, on the northeast corner of Gen. Jim Moore Blvd. and South Boundary Road, to another location across and down South Boundary Road on property that will also be owned by Del Rey Oaks. Chapter members attended meetings and field trips with representatives of the developer to see if the proposal would be feasible, but unfortunately the alternative site does not provide habitat for the Eastwood's golden fleece (*Ericameria fasciculata*) or Seaside bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *littoralis*), the main plants which the preserve was designed to protect. The chapter will continue to urge an alternative that will protect the rare plants.

February 2007

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE (GPU4): On Thursday, Feb. 1, the referendum petitions against GPU4 were slated to be delivered to the county, exactly four weeks after the severely flawed plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 3. The petitions contained almost 15,000 signatures, over 60% more than required to stop the plan from taking effect until it can be voted on by the people. Our chapter is one of more than a dozen local public interest groups that have supported the Community General Plan Initiative and have opposed GPU4. The chapter has commented that GPU4 would have many damaging impacts on native plants, including the following: 1) It eliminates restrictions on conversion of previously uncultivated natural habitat to crops on slopes over 25%; 2) It weakens other policies protecting plants and habitats; 3) It would mitigate impacts by future actions, contrary to state law, which requires up front mitigation plans; 4) It would allow conversion of 5500 acres of important farmland to development, increasing pressure to convert steeper land to crops requiring more water and chemical inputs (see 1 above); 5) It eliminates most permits for so-called "routine" actions in farming. Both plans are

proposed to be on the June ballot, but only the Community Initiative represents a sustainable and environmentally acceptable alternative.

PEBBLE BEACH CO. DEVELOPMENT PLAN: The Coastal Commission (CC) sent a letter dated Jan. 16 to the 22 persons and organizations (including the Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS) that appealed the approval of this plan by the Board of Supervisors. The letter stated that the appeals are moot inasmuch as the county rescinded its approval as of Dec. 5, 2006 following the last-minute withdrawal of the plan from the June 14 CC hearing in Santa Rosa. However, the CC pointed out that the Pebble Beach Co. is continuing to pursue a Coastal Development Permit and its Del Monte Forest Preservation and Development Plan at the county level. In order to retain standing to file any future appeal, the former appellants must participate in future public hearings before county agencies. As far as the chapter can determine, no public hearings have been scheduled, but we have asked to be informed of any activity on this issue.

DEL REY OAKS EXPANSION: The chapter received a letter dated Jan. 26 from the city of Del Rey Oaks responding to CNPS comments requesting an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the resort/golf course/housing development planned for the 360 acres of land in the southwest corner of Fort Ord that it is receiving as part of the base realignment plan. The problem is that the city is planning to approve with a mitigated negative declaration amendments to the General Plan and zoning changes designed to accommodate a much larger project than was originally proposed. Therefore, this change would have a significant impact that should trigger an EIR. Instead, the city plans to do the EIR after an application is received by the developer, who can then say the project is consistent with the city's plan and zoning ordinance even though the impacts have never been analyzed. Sadly, the leading opponent of the project, long-time mayor Jack Barlich, recently succumbed to a heart attack. It is not at all clear if there are others in this small city who will pick up the baton. The chapter's principal concern is protecting Plant Reserve No. 1, which the developer wants to move to a different location (see last issue for details), but traffic congestion and lack of water were the primary issues raised by Mr. Barlich.

FORT ORD TOUR: The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office has scheduled a public cleanup/bus tour/open house on Feb. 24 that will also include a stop at the prescribed burn last fall. The free 90-minute bus tour starts from Building 4522 at 10 am and again at 11:30. Directions from Hwy 1: Exit at Fort Ord Main Gate, stay on Lightfighter Drive, cross Gen. Jim Moore Blvd., turn left on to Col. Durham Road, turn left on to 7th Ave., turn right on to Joe Lloyd Way. Building 4522 is at the end of the road. Further information is available from Melissa Broadston at 393-1284 or at the Fort Ord website: FortrOrdCleanup.com

COAST HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT PLAN: Because of the chapter's long-standing concern about the protection of sensitive plants and habitats on the Big Sur Coast, we participated for several years in public meetings organized by CalTrans to aid in the preparation of a plan to guide future maintenance actions along Hwy 1. The plan, carried out with support from the federal Scenic Byways Program and Rep. Farr and Supervisor Potter, was completed about three years ago, but it has never been implemented because the committee to oversee it has not been appointed. In the meantime insensitive removal of trees and shrubs has drawn criticism and raised questions about the value of the effort. Supervisor Potter should be asked why this committee has not yet been appointed.

January 2007

DEL REY OAKS RESORT: The chapter has been working for many years to protect the rare Maritime Chaparral community at the southwest entrance to Fort Ord. One of the original 1967 plant reserves, it would be impacted by the widening of Gen. Jim Moore Blvd. (formerly North-South Road) to accommodate a large resort development by Del Rey Oaks. Starting about ten years ago, the chapter worked with DRO and the US Army to permanently protect a two-acre reserve at the southeast corner of the intersection with South Boundary Road. Now a new developer is proposing to enlarge the project and wants to move the plant reserve across and down South Boundary Road to a four-acre parcel adjoining the Regional Park District land on the southwest corner of the intersection. Several field trips to the new site show that it is partially disturbed and does not support the same

rare plants as the original site. According to an op-ed article in the Dec. 10 Monterey Herald and a letter to the editor on Dec. 30 by former mayor Jack Barlich, the project would double the size of the city and would add up to 900 houses, a second hotel, and condo timeshares to the original plan of a golf course and resort hotel. Further, the city proposes to approve the proposed changes through a mitigated negative declaration instead of an EIR. The chapter is studying the proposal and expects to comment before the deadline, which has been extended to Jan. 10.

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT EXPANSION: The US Army Reserve Command is proposing two new developments at FHL. The first is a firing range on Training Area 22 that would include bleachers, parking, and future support facilities on a total of 116 acres bordering Mission Road about half-way between the southern entrance and the cantonment area. According to the Environmental Assessment, the only listed plant that would potentially be affected is Purple Amole (*Chlorogalum purpureum*, which is found in several small stands just outside the development area. A condition would require protection during construction. The second project is construction of a new Tactical Training Base for up to 1000 soldiers during 2-4-week training exercises on portions of Training Areas 15 and 16 that would include perimeter fencing, roads, and concrete and gravel pads for tents. The project is located in the interior of FHL and would not affect public access to San Antonio Mission or the national forest. Some 65 acres within the 130-acre parcel would be affected by this project. The EA states that no listed plants have been found within that area. Although 36 CNPS 1B or 2 plants have been found at FHL, none was identified in the subject area. Expected construction of additional facilities would require further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Because plant impacts appeared to be minimal, CNPS did not comment on these projects other than to urge that botanical surveys be conducted during the appropriate blooming season.

CAMP ROBERTS GRAZING: The chapter recently learned that new permits for grazing have been approved in the area of Camp Roberts that lies within chapter territory in southern Monterey Co. In order to meet the public participation requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the chapter requests that the California National Guard, which operates this facility, notify us when such actions are proposed. **FORT ORD:** The chapter has received an announcement from the Base Realignment and Closure Office (BRAC) that a Community Involvement Workshop will be held at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, Jan. 10, at Stilwell Community Center across from Burger King on Gen. Jim Moore Blvd. The subject will be an update on the groundwater cleanup at Fort Ord. In addition, the cleanup team will describe the major decisions that will be coming up in the next few months. A notice was included that the cleanup of unexploded ordnance from weapons ranges would result in road closures in the vicinity of Eucalyptus, Parker Flats, and Watkins Gate roads. For further information, see the website at www.FortOrdCleanup.com.

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE: The Monterey Co. supervisors were expected to give final approval to the fourth version of the Monterey County General Plan at a meeting on Jan. 10. This plan is based largely on the prodevelopment "Refinement Group" plan, which the chapter has criticized for allowing far too much development in environmentally sensitive habitat areas. One of the worst features is the removal of constraints in the existing 1980 plan on development on steep slopes, which could allow conversion of thousands of acres of oak woodland to uses that would accelerate erosion and destroy plant and wildlife habitat. The supervisors are considering placing both GPU4 and the alternative Community General Plan Initiative, supported by CNPS and many other public interest groups, on the June ballot. CNPS strongly encourages members to support this action while recognizing that in such a campaign most of the financial resources would be on the pro-development side. The November election showed that message can triumph over money when the voters are sufficiently informed and activated!