

The Roadrunner

A bimonthly publication of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club — Sept–Oct 2008

BE VOCAL ABOUT YOKOHL RANCH PROPOSAL.

CHIME IN, SPEAK UP AGAINST THIS PROPOSED SPRAWL

The source of this material is the summer newsletter of the Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth. More information can be found on their website. The Mineral King Group is part of this organization.

The J.G. Boswell Company and its wholly owned subsidiaries, the Eastlake Company and the Yokohl Ranch Company, want to re-zone the 36,000-acre Yokohl Valley property—which is now protected under the Williamson Act as an Ag Preserve—so it can build a new city “straddling” Yokohl Creek and consisting of 10,000 custom home sites, semi-custom estates, and single-family detached homes designed to attract “active adults” from Los Angeles and the Bay Area, and “a small offering of attached town homes” as well as a dam and a reservoir, a 500,000-square-foot shopping area, a conference center, a private recreation center, and at least one golf course/destination resort. 30,000 persons are expected to call this home.

SOME CONCERNS: accommodating the traffic generated by this new city, rerouting water supplies including Yokohl Creek to supply the people, houses, pools, reservoir and newly-landscaped areas (including the golf courses), and destruction of ag land.

The Foothill Growth Management Plan, (FGMP) which governs development in the foothills, was purposely developed to guide land use so as to “maintain the agricultural viability of the foothills” and “protect its fragile environment.” It also identified those areas suitable for future growth. The proposed development at Yokohl Ranch does not fall within any of the designated development corridors and is inherently inconsistent with both the General Plan and the FGMP.”

If the Supervisors do approve the sprawling city at Yokohl Ranch, it won’t be long before more foothill open space will be developed. Already, landowners adjoining Boswell’s are talking about rezoning and selling to developers.

Yokohl Ranch Is NOT Inevitable! Not if we ALL do our part!

Residents and other Californians need to tell the Supervisors that you want Tulare County to adhere to the already agreed upon development areas in Tulare County and to protect ag land, protect natural habitat, protect permeable surfaces for groundwater recharge, support oak woodlands that help purify the air, and preserve the natural space that enhances the quality of life and draws visitors and tourists from across the country and around the world.

Will this project have an effect on all of us who live in or on the edges of the valley? Yes, indeed. Less ag land, more cars, destruction of natural places. Results: *more roads, more air pollution, more cries for government services in far-out places, more taxes to pay for unnecessary expansion, more impact on the natural cycles that, if allowed to function, would keep our air clean and our water available and pure.* Contact Board of Supervisors 2800 West Burrel Avenue, Visalia, CA 93291 FAX 559.733.6898

**WORKSHOP ON CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)
OFFERED BY PLANNING & CONSERVATION LEAGUE**

SATURDAY, SEPT 13, 2008, Bakersfield (See next page)

CEQA WORKSHOP DETAILS—WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND?

CEQA is the statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. **AND it is the legislation that requires there be opportunities for the public, you and me,** to have opportunities to speak our piece.

How to be truly effective in preparing presentations in regards to a project, written or oral, is what this workshop is all about. An environmental lawyer will be the presenter. This person will guide us through the basics of the CEQA law with emphasis on what points to be looking for and how the various elements of this law have been interpreted in the courts. In addition, we will learn how the new requirement of taking into account the effects of global warming is being treated.

This type of information will help you know what to look for in the prepared documents in order to enable you to write a truly effective letter of persuasion to public officials as to your concerns. Just saying you don't like a project doesn't cut it.

To sign up for this workshop go to Planning and Conservation League Home Page and you will see Workshops. Click along and you will get to more details and an opportunity to register. The cost of the workshop is \$35, which includes a copy of the newly revised PCL guide to the law. If you are not on the web, call Justin at this number to get details as how to register, etc. 916.313.4506

This workshop will be well worth your time. Do plan to come!

KERN KAWEAH ROUNDUP

Wanted! Leaders *Have you ever thought about becoming a Sierra Club Outings Leader? Do you have some special places you would like to share with like-minded people? The Sierra Club is now actively recruiting Outings Leaders, in all Chapters and Groups. If you are interested, call Jim at 760.375.8161, or write to jnichols@ridgecrest.ca.us*

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY IF YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN SIERRA CLUB HIKES: *Everyone is welcome, Sierra Club members and non-members, to join in any of the outdoor activities. Requirements: You must be in condition for type of hike, equipped appropriately for the activity, and prepared to sign a Sierra Club release from liability. You must be willing to follow leader's directions. Be sure to bring any personal medicines you might need. Customary appropriate equipment includes good hiking shoes, plenty of water, snack, sunglasses, suntan lotion, layered clothing. The following might be helpful but definitely not required: compass, whistle, matches or lighter, and a good first aid kit. Long pants recommended. Unprepared for the prospective hike? It will be a no-go for you. Participation must be leader approved. Please let the leader know ahead of time that you are intending to participate. Check individual group listings for desired means of communication.*

Since unexpected change of plans may be necessary, it is recommended that YOU contact the hike leader the night before to be assured that the hike is still going to happen.

New CA legislation designed to protect the consumer requires us to publish this notice: CST 2087755-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. This legislation was designed to protect the user of outdoor activities that require cash payments of more than \$50 for participation.

Buena Vista Group

More info? Call Donnel Lester, 661.831.6784 or Isabel at 661.246.6195

OUR NEW LOCATION FOR SATURDAY BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

CAMINO REAL RESTAURANT, 3500 TRUXTUN AVE., BAKERSFIELD CA 93301

At the corner of Truxtun and Westwind Dr. Enter parking lot from Westwind Drive or Truxtun.

Tuesday Conditioning Hikes of 4 or 5 miles are at 7:00 PM at the corner of Highways 178 and 184. Contact Gordon (gnipp@bak.rr.com) or Larry (661.873.8107) for more information.

Sept 6 (Sat), 2008, 8:30 AM. Breakfast meeting program: Arthur Unger, Kern-Kaweah Chapter Update with guest speakers; Ara Marderosian, *Sequoia: Straight Talk about our Forests* and Lorraine Unger,

Tejon: An Update. See the Camino Real Restaurant location in note above. Breakfast is optional for \$7.50 incl. tax and tip.

Sept. 20 (Sat), 9:00 AM Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup. Meet at the corner of Old River Road and Highway 119. Bring water, a hat, and good hiking shoes. We will provide gloves and cleanup gear. Call Donnel at 661.319.6996.

Oct. 4 (Sat) 8:30 AM Breakfast meeting program : Ken Hersh of HM Holloway “**Holloway, An Open Pit Gypsum Mine and Exceptional Landfill.**” See the Camino Real Restaurant location in NOTE above. Breakfast is optional for \$7.50 incl. tax and tip.

Oct. 18 (Sat), 9:00AM Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup. See our Sept. 20 entry for location. Call Donnel at 661.319.6996.

Condor Group Hikes? Dale Chitwood, 661.242.1076. More info? Lockhart, 661.242.0432 jmal@frazmtn.com Meets Pine Mountain Club

Sept 27 (Sat) Here we go again—another try at **Thorn Peak**. 8 AM, PMC parking lot. Really a great hike with great views on all sides, and even of the Pacific Ocean on a clear day! Strenuous but well worth it. Call Dale 661.242.1076 to let us know you are coming and for more info.

Oct 4 (Sat) SNAKES Herptologist from LA ZOO presenter (and snakes plus). Pine Mountain Clubhouse. 6 PM potluck, 7 PM program.

Oct 11 (Sat) SPECIALTY: Hungry Valley State Park Expedition. Kim Matthews will take us to native grassland sites, to oak trees 600 years old and more. There will be minimum walking. Meet 8 AM. Return (approx) noon. More info? Call 661.242.0432.

Oct 25 (Sat) 8:30 AM SPECIALTY: Condor Viewing at Bittercreek National Wildlife Refuge. Meet 8:30 at PMC Parking Lot. Return time: about noon. You MUST make a reservation. Numbers limited. Little walking. Call 661.242.0432

Nov 29 (Sat) Craft Fair Pine Mountain Clubhouse, 9AM until ? Nice time of year to drive up to the mountains and do a little holiday shopping.

(No more hikes until spring. Hunting season keeps us out of the woods, weather conditions too uncertain.)

Kaweah Group *More info?* call Pam, 559.784.4643 or Diane, 559.781.8897.

Sept 18 (Thur)Big Planning Meeting. 7:30 PM, Pam’s home (Call for directions if necessary) Everyone is invited and urged to bring ideas for meetings, hikes and other possible occasions for the coming nine months.

Mineral King Group. *More info?* call 559.761.0592 Please visit *mineralking.sierraclub.org* for more info on group events and activities.?

Dinner Socials: **Sept 9 (Tues)** at Panera’s, S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia. 6 PM.

Oct 14 (Tues) Akamaru’s at 120 W. Main, Visalia. 6 PM

Outings: All outings will meet in the parking lot by Taco Bell at Mary’s Vineyard Shopping Center at the corner of Noble and Ben Maddox in Visalia.

Sept 13 (Sat) Heather Lake, Sequoia National Park. This is a moderately strenuous 8 mile round trip hike to beautiful Heather Lake. Call Joanne at 559.733.2078.

Oct 11, (Sat) Sunset Rock in Sequoia National Park. This is a moderate 6 mile hike with a nice view from Sunset Rock. Call Joanne at 559.733.2078.

Owens Peak Group *More info?* **Dennis Burge**, Chair 760.375.7967 **email:** dennis93555@yahoo.com
Jim Nichols, Hikes 760.375.8161 jnichols@ridgecrest.ca.us Mtgs: Maturango Museum, Ridgecrest
Please use email for hike questions.

Sept 20 (Sat) MUAH MOUNTAIN (Located SE of Horseshoe Meadows in the Cottonwood area, 11016 max elevation, 2900 ft elevation gain, 10.7 mi RT). The route of this ambitious Sept hike follows a little-visited necklace of meadows, the prize jewel of which is Dutch Meadow. The route ends at Diaz Meadow. Those not wanting to climb Muah (saving 1400 ft of elevation gain) may just want to visit scenic Diaz Meadow and try to locate an old plane crash site there. We may also visit the notorious Portuguese Slide off the E ridge of Muah, where cowboy “Portagee Joe” greased his cattle and pushed them over the edge for a slippery slide 6000 ft back down to Owens Valley. As Muah lies on the eastern edge of the Sierra, towering over Owens Valley, the view from the summit is outstanding. We will loop back a different route, using a piece of the PCT. Strenuous due to length. Meet Sat, Sept 20 at 7:00 AM at the Ridgecrest Cinema parking lot. Note the earlier meeting time. Call Dennis Burge at 760.375.7967 or Jim Nichols at 760.375.8161 for more info.

Oct 18 (Sat) ASPEN GROVE TOUR (Kern Plateau, ~ 8500 ft elevation, ~ 1500 ft gain; 6 mi RT) Leisurely hike to visit and photograph the best of the groves turning golden with fall splendor. The location depends on climate, seasonal variations, and maybe the current fire limitations. Hooker, Jackass, McConnell, Albanita and other meadows may be included. If the aspens don’t cooperate, we’ll find somewhere else interesting and of comparable difficulty to go and will send out an announcement prior to the hike. Easy/Moderate due to length and elevation gain. Meet Sat, Oct 18 at 7:30 AM at the Ridgecrest Cinema parking lot. Call Dennis Burge at (760) 375-7967 or Jim Nichols at (760) 375-8161 for more info.

Oct. 27 (Mon) 7:30 PM. Join Janet Westbrook for a fascinating 1150-mile journey around Lake Michigan. You will visit Milwaukee, Chicago, sand dunes, a blueberry farm, cross the Mighty Mac Bridge, Door County, which includes Green Bay with Lambeau Field. So many interesting little places that most people just drive right by! Maturango Museum.

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| California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee Desert Committee Outings |
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The CNRCC Desert Committees purpose is to work for the protection, preservation, and conservation of the California/Nevada desert; support the same objectives in all desert areas of the Southwest; monitor and work with governments and agencies to promote preservation of our arid lands; sponsor educational and work trips; encourage and support others to work for the same objectives; maintain, share and publish information about the desert.

For questions about, or to sign up for a particular outing, please contact the leader listed in the write-up. For questions about Desert Committee outings in general, or to receive the outings list by e-mail, please contact Kate Allen at kjallen@qnet.com or 661-944-4056.

Sept 27-28 (Sat-Sun) Service And Hiking in the Carrizo: This is an opportunity to visit and to assist an outstanding and relatively unknown national monument. Saturday is the National Public Lands Day and we will assist monument staff and join with other volunteers working on improvements for the Selby Campground. Sunday is reserved for recreation. Our group will plan a moderate hike in the Caliente Mountains. The views are spectacular; and the monument is known for the number and variety of raptors present. Contact leader Craig Deutsche, 310-477-6670, or deutsche@earthlink.net CNRCC Desert Committee

Public Hearing on Management Plan for BitterCreek Condor Wildlife Refuge

Bittercreek Wildlife Refuge, a Condor refuge, is working on developing a management plan for the 14,000-acre site. Even though it is not required by law, Fish and Wildlife wants to have public input on their plans. A hearing is tentatively planned for late in September. All the proposals regarding the plans are available on the web. Just google in the name of the refuge to find up-to-date information on all topics, including an announcement of the date of the meeting. Your voice is important.

Contact: Wildlife Refuge Manager: Mike Stockton **Email** mike_stockton@fws.gov **Mail:** PO BOX 370, Maricopa, CA 93252 **Phone** 661.343.3332

“Navigating the Carbon World”

Two of our Chapter activists, Cynthia Koval and Mary Moy of the Mineral King Group, attended this conference held in San Diego. This is an abstract of their report. The full text is in the electronic version of the Roadrunner. You are urged to read it

for full details and impressions of this meeting.

The 21st century is the beginning of the clean tech revolution, and we must now learn to navigate the carbon world. Sadly, the U.S. is nowhere in the lead.

The basis is to cap CO₂, or carbon emissions a.k.a. GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, ultimately to reduce it to a carbon-free world. The strategy is a free market trading system based on market value of carbon, which fluctuates up and down similar to stock market commodities. Much of the world has taken on caps, the U.S. has not.*

California Assembly Bill 32 passed in 2006 places a cap on carbon emissions in California and requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a plan to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and further reduce to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This is huge. This means the typical 13.5 tons/person will be reduced to 1.5 tons/person.

The idea of carbon as a market commodity is very unnerving. Most likely it will be a trading system based on caps and offsets. ... There is good reason for concern and reason enough to proceed with caution. First of all, anyone who has lived in these last ten years or so will know that for the average investor and even the experts, Wall Street can be a treacherous place. If these market schemes (they actually used the word *scheme* repeatedly to describe cap and trade models, hmm.) are to work, then there must be tough and thorough government regulation.

We are at a crossroads. As we shed our oil addiction, there will be opportunities and whole new vistas that we are only beginning to imagine. Big oil and utilities are going to want to keep the upper-hand position they now hold—not to mention the extraordinary profits the oil companies have grown accustomed to. We may find that it makes more environmental sense for people to generate their own power in their own communities. In order to keep the status quo, will we use the capital generated through cap and trade to finance large, remote energy infrastructure and delivery systems, even though these methods of reducing CO₂ may nevertheless degrade the environment (i.e., wildlife habitat destruction)? Or will we carefully explore *all* avenues of power generation and utilize only those that are best for the planet and the people on it? If citizens do not demand a voice in the process, it may be “business as usual,” with all the power (the human and the generated kind) continuing to remain in the hands of the highest bidder. I don’t think any of us want to see the utility companies become the next generation of oil barons. Could it be that John Lennon was literally foretelling the future when he said “Power to the People”?

**Definition: The cap and trade system would work like this example: The Air Pollution Board says that two industrial plants together can pollute up to a cap of 200 tons. One plant emits 125 tons, the second emits 75 tons. The second plant can sell its “extra” 25 tons to plant one so that then together the two plants will have reached the cap of 200 tons. In the future, the first plant might find it cheaper to cut down its pollutants rather than buy permits to pollute. The second plant, with the money it has made, may continue to cut back but at this point, it could use the money it earned for other purposes.*

Sierra Club speaks out on CALIFORNIA’S AIR RESOURCES BOARD DRAFT PLAN for taking on the pollution that causes global warming.

This plan is to be designed to set a course of action for the next 30 years—or more. Here are excerpts from what Bill Magavern, Sierra Club California’s Director, has to say about the new plan, and about the challenges the measure faces:

This balanced and comprehensive draft plan starts California down the path to a greener economy. *But*

big oil companies already have begun a campaign to block the clean-energy transition as they count their windfall profits and push for new drilling off our beautiful coast.

Our government should move forward to meet not only the AB 32 requirement (returning to 1990 emission levels by 2020), but also the governor's goal of an 80 percent reduction by 2050. We cannot afford to give in to the voices of obstruction and delay.

Today's draft has the potential to be the premier greenhouse gas reduction effort in the country, with a 33 percent clean-energy standard to drive innovation, energy efficiency measures to keep dollars at home, and clean-vehicle requirements to reduce toxic air pollution. Still, it can become stronger. We'd like to see more measures that reduce vehicle miles traveled, accelerate production of zero-emission vehicles, preserve farmland and boost recycling rates.

The Air Board's draft plan also considers the trading of greenhouse gases. If California does join a regional carbon market, it should require all big polluters to pay for their emissions, and should enforce strict limits on any emissions offsets. Also, ARB must analyze the impacts of any market system on the air quality of our most polluted communities. Finally, emissions fees should be analyzed along with carbon markets, as the draft proposes.

With this draft plan, the Air Board demonstrates again that California is taking real actions to fight pollution that causes global warming, even while the Bush Administration fails to act.

From the Chair

by Art Unger

If you think humanity's victory over climate change is as important as was Allied victory in World War II, please give those you talk to some of your ideas about transportation, walkable communities, green buildings, water conservation, recycling, how to sequester carbon in forests, electricity feed in laws and/or other ways to win. Continue to live your conservation life style. Those are the ways you can help lead the 6+ billion of us to victory.

Many think we can meet Al Gore's goal of obtaining all our energy from wind, solar and geothermal if the developed world cuts its energy use in half by using currently available conservation and efficiency.

As my 7/08 message said, Letters to the Editor are a good way to try to contact the public without working as hard as I wish more of us could. To help you write, I saved the Bakersfield *Californian's* 7/24 front page photo of a private vehicle with dense black emissions heading for the test track at Famoso. The day's weather appeared four inches below the picture, including "Air quality: 150 (unhealthy)." The story suggested that it was better to speed on the track than on the street; it did not mention air pollution.

Please contact me at artunger@att.net for details or discussion.

Midgebuzzings

MY GARAGE DOOR opens to an alley. One day last month as I was preparing to drive out, I heard a high-pitched commotion. There, just at the back of the garage, was a terrified baby bird, obviously evicted from his nest by circumstance and way too young to fly. My reaction was what anyone's would be: both startled and dismayed. What can one do with a helpless, flightless creature like that? A quick and

merciful stomp? A hard whack with a shovel? I remembered what a high school friend did upon seeing a jeering mob of campus yahoos surrounding a very injured and flailing pigeon. He parted the crowd, picked up the bird and wrung its neck with a quick twist. Then he took my arm and led me away from the startled idiots before they could realize that they had been outdone by a better man. I still admire him for that, though I could never have done it myself. Nor could I have done it to the shrieking and desperate little creature that morning.

A little later, the bird was in a cat carrier on my guest bathroom sink where my two felines could not get at him, and I, muttering and resentful, was on my way to the corner grocery for some jars of Gerber's Baby Food. I had been advised of this diet by a friend who is by nature and habit a rescuer of defenseless creatures. At home again I mixed a little beef in a shot glass with rice and lentils and a bit of warm water, and with an eyedropper drew up a good portion of the brew. The baby opened his oversized beak, the eyedropper went in as far as I dared, and down the hatch went the appalling concoction. When he'd had enough, he shook his head and Gerber's went all over the sink, the wall and even the window screen. This charming exercise became a daily and nearly hourly routine.


For the next two weeks I took the bird out of the carrier every morning and set him in the screened bathroom window so that he could look out on trees, hear the rustle of leaves and catch a glimpse of other birds. Soon he could flutter to the top of the sink, and then to the floor.

One afternoon I walked in to find that he had vanished. I opened the door again to admit one of the cats, who had been stationed outside since day one listening intently for the rustle of wings. She came in and paused, then pointed almost the way a dog would do. I put her out again and found the little rogue perched on a slender pipe that leads from the back of the toilet to the wall.

Soon he could fly from the window to the top of the carrier where he would stay, being unready to make the return flight which required more skill. But at last one day I heard a rush of wings, pushed aside the excited cat and entered to find that Birdie had passed the ultimate flight test by landing in the window with perfect accuracy. At that point, I opened the screen and he flew out with a wild and beautiful rush right into the trees from which he had probably fallen. Then I set to work with Clorox and scrubbers to reclaim the spare bathroom for unsuspecting guests. The hardest part was the screen.

Some bird babies look alike to me, so I'm hoping he was a robin and not a starling. Still, the true Samaritan never asks.

Ann Williams

 *Jean Bennett, long time member and Owens Peak Treasurer, passed away Friday morning, July 18th. She was a Sierra Club life member and a renowned optical scientist. At Jean's request, no service is planned.*

***Executive Committee
of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter***

Chair: Arthur Unger (Bksf), 661.323.5569. *Vice-chair:* Gordon Nipp (Bksf), 661.872.2432. *Secretary:* Georgette Theotig (Tehachapi), 661.822.4371. *Treasurer:* Lorraine Unger (Bksf), 661.323.5569. Donnel Lister (Bksf), 661.831.6784. Richard Garcia (Min King), 559.592.9865. Ara Marderosian (Kernville), 760.378.4574.

Chapter Ex-com Meetings: All Sierra Club members are always welcome to attend.

Next meeting: Saturday, Sept. 6

Call 661.323.5569 or e-mail artunger@att.net to confirm all meeting dates, as well as location and time of day.

Sierra Club Calendars 2009 will again be available for sale. Please call Georgette Theotig to arrange for your purchase. 661.822.4371.

Join our [KERN-NEWS & KERN-FORUM](#) Email Lists
at <http://kernkaweah.sierraclub.org/>

NEWS IN A NUTSHELL

***** **New Co-editors of the Roadrunner Announced** *****

contact address sierraroadrunner@gmail.com

Welcome to new editors of Roadrunner. Marjorie Bell, former head of Kern County High School English Department and Dinah Campbell, graphic artist, both long-time Sierra Club members, will begin their new “careers” as editors with the November-December issue. We are very fortunate to have these experienced and willing persons to continue with the traditions of informing our Chapter members as to the concerns and accomplishments of our Chapter and its Groups. Many thanks to all of you who have contributed your time and efforts to the *Roadrunner* these past years. Do know you are very much appreciated. Most sincerely, Mary Ann Lockhart

GEOL 35B: Geology of Kern County Course offered by Bakersfield College. A study of the geologic history and landforms of Kern County, and the geologic forces and processes that created them. Course may be taken for either standard letter grade or credit/no credit. Meets: Tuesday afternoons Sept 16–Oct 25th. Saturday field trip to be scheduled.

Fees: Approx. \$35. www.bakersfieldcollege.edu www2.bakersfieldcollege.edu/nbursztyn

Complete report of Navigating the Carbon Future

On May 15 & 16, Cynthia Koval and Mary Moy attended the conference "Navigating the Carbon World" held in San Diego. This is their report.

Background

If you were born before 1980, think back to the 90's when PC's, the Internet, the worldwide web, and email entered our lives. There was new lingo to learn, new concepts, and new ways of doing things. There was California, Silicon Valley, and the U.S. leading the high tech revolution. Our consciousness learned to navigate the virtual world.

All of that is now so-o-o-o 20th century. The 21st century is the beginning of the clean tech revolution and we must now learn to navigate the carbon world. Sadly, the U.S. is nowhere in the lead. It is the Kyoto Protocol nations driving the reins and leaving the U.S. choking in CO₂ dust, having concluded from a government perspective that climate change is real and is a global problem that requires global solutions. It is the Kyoto Protocol nations laying down the foundations for a new economic system based on a carbon market. The basis is to cap CO₂, or carbon emissions a.k.a. GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, ultimately to reduce it to a carbon-free world. The strategy is a free market trading system based on market value

of carbon, which fluctuates up and down similar to stock market commodities. Much of the world has taken on caps, the U.S. has not.

Not waiting for the U.S. to wake up is California, when in 2006 Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) was signed into law. AB 32 may well be the most significant piece of legislation driving the U.S. to finally take responsibility for climate change. Simply stated, AB 32 places a cap on carbon emissions in California and requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a plan to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and further reduce to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This is huge. This means the typical 13.5 tons/person will be reduced to 1.5 tons/person.

WHAT IS AHEAD?

The Scoping Plan will be the ARB doctrine and must be adopted by Jan 1, 2009. Most likely will be a trading system based on caps and offsets. ARB will hold workshops around the state during the summer and open for public comments in October.

For the enviro geek, the idea of carbon as a market commodity is very unnerving. You're supposed to pay for pollutants, not make money from it. From a capitalist viewpoint, it makes sense. The carbon market has spawned a whole new industry. Foremost is The Climate Registry and the California Climate Action Registry (CCAR), which sets the standards for measurement, verification, and reporting of GHG emissions so all entities are playing the same field. Another key player is Point Carbon, a sort of clearinghouse for worldwide carbon news, trade analysts, and market forecasting. Then there are the banks that hold the carbon offset credits, energy certificates, and emission allowances. Similar to the Wall St. transaction board, there is the carbon transaction board where one can find all the trading data. There are the major utilities - SCE, PG&E, Sempra, the big oil companies - Chevron, BP, all scrambling to be green.

There are numerous entrepreneurial businesses, including one founded by several castaways of Enron. It was after the fall, and a few engineers and finance professionals started meeting at IHOP to figure their future. They saw energy efficiency glistening in their syrup and started a company that designed and developed tools for industry to track, monitor, and report sources of energy usage. Having this type of data allows companies to better manage their energy usage. Utility companies will soon introduce this tool to the consumer with their "smart connect" program. All meters will be replaced with new meters with a computer system that allow customers to see usage and from what appliance.

Clean tech companies are sprouting like wildflowers and when there is money to be made the venture capitalists are there. According to Daniel Dudek with the Environmental Defense Fund "the carbon market may be the largest economic opportunity of the 21st Century".

QUESTIONS? WHAT WAY(S) TO GO? OPINIONS AND IDEAS

Yet, there are important questions. Is an active cap and trade market really an answer? Since the time when we began to realize the perilous implications of global warming, we have been accustomed to think of the abundance of carbon in the atmosphere as a negative. We certainly did not universally imagine it to be a highly valued commodity, but it seems to be. According to several of the presenters, cap and trade was first successfully practiced here in the U.S. under the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, in order to mitigate the environmental damage caused by acid rain. The Economist said of the program, "probably the greatest green success story of the past decade." (July 6, 2002).

Maybe because environmentalists usually consider themselves "science types" rather than "business or money types" there were not too many of the former at this international and decidedly "business" conference. In fact, environmentalists were just plain scarce. Included in the minority, there were two Sierra Club attendees (the writers of this article) and speaker Carl Zichella, a Sierra Club Regional Manager. Zichella's was a unique and welcomed voice from the podium, as he spoke of the social concerns that may accompany capitalistic venture in the name of saving the planet. Not yet a convert to cap and trade, he is keeping an open mind. Zichella is inclined to think of the market approach as a solution more like "buckshot" rather than a

“silver bullet”.

There is good reason for concern and reason enough to proceed with caution. First of all, anyone who has lived in these last ten years or so will know that for the average investor and even the experts, Wall Street can be a treacherous place. If these market schemes (they actually used the word *scheme* repeatedly to describe cap and trade models, hmmm....) are to work, then there must be tough and thorough government regulation. Aside from the earlier mention made of the benign and entrepreneurial ex-Enron employees attending the conference; permeating those opulent Marriot meeting rooms, there was always a just barely perceptible whiff of the ghost of Enron. Hopefully, we have learned well from the Enron debacle and the pain resulting from deregulation (and manipulation) of the electricity markets in the not too distant past. There is just no room here for shell games, revolving door regulators, or wink and nod cronyism. There is far too much at stake. And although it's nowhere near as sexy or glamorous as the trading game, let's not forget the tried and true value of conservation.

We are at a crossroads. As we shed our oil addiction, there will be opportunities and whole new vistas that we are only beginning to imagine. Big oil and utilities are going to want to keep the upper-hand position they now hold...not to mention the extraordinary profits the oil companies have grown accustomed to. We may find that it makes more environmental sense for people to generate their own power in their own communities. In order to keep the status quo, will we use the capital generated through cap and trade to finance large, remote energy infrastructure and delivery systems, even though these methods of reducing CO2 may nevertheless degrade the environment (i.e., wildlife habitat destruction)? Or will we carefully explore *all* avenues of power generation and utilize only those that are best for the planet and the people on it? If citizens do not demand a voice in the process, it may be “business as usual”, with all the power (the human and the generated kind) continuing to remain in the hands of the highest bidder. I don't think any of us want to see the utility companies become the next generation of oil barons. Could it be that John Lennon was literally foretelling the future when he said “Power to the People”?