



Santa Cruz VOTER

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Calendar

LWVSCC Board Meeting:
Wednesday, November 8, 2023

Online

If you'd like to join this meeting, please contact our president, Barbara Lewis, at bobbi44@gmail.com

She will send you the link.

Save the Date:
Saturday, January 27, 2024

For a presentation by Santa Cruz County Clerk, Tricia Webber, on the upcoming election.

More details will follow soon.

League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County

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President's Message

I am happy to report our October 14 program on Creating Resilient Coastlines, which included a wealth of information on protecting our coast from climate hazards, was terrific, with excellent talks by coastal scientists, Ross Clark and Bill Henry, and a video presentation that added greatly to the talks.

Thank you to our speakers, to Program Chair Stephanie Harlan for doing the introduction and organizing this event, to Publicity Chair Mindy Ryan, to Karen Smith for providing such a variety of refreshments, with assistance from Peggy Marketello, Stephanie Harlan, Laura Grossman, and others in the set up. The program was also a great chance to tour the impressive Capitola library and get together in person.

As we return to in person programming, I hope some more members who have delayed renewing will do so.

---Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

Notes From Creating Resilient Coastlines

We want to keep this:



From turning into this:



On October 14, the League hosted an informative and important event about our coastlines – what’s happening to them and what must be done to save them. Hopefully, you were one of those who helped make this a well-attended event, but if you were not able to be there, here are highlights from the presentations.

Ross Clark, who is the Director of [Central Coast Wetlands Group](#), made the first presentation. He began by describing the main causes of coastal vulnerability: the major cause in the co-occurrence of sea level rise and the increase in both the frequency and intensity of storms. We need to realize that river mouth areas are especially subject to flooding: flooding in Capitola has become more frequent and severe, the Pajaro river levees failed last winter, and Rio Del Mar is vulnerable to flooding from Aptos Creek.

To combat this, we need to lower the level of greenhouse gas emissions – and we need to move from coastal *planning* to coastal *doing*. We need to determine where it is appropriate to armor the coastline, and where it is prudent to retreat. We can’t maintain the entire coastline as it is, so there must be community discussions to determine what to protect and how to do it. Our problem now is that decisions like this are hard to make, so we try to do it all.

If we try to protect all development, we will lose many of our beaches – we have already started to lose some. At the rate we are going, by 2100 we will have just Seabright and Manresa beaches, with none in between. To avoid this, we need to identify spots for beach nourishment, where we can protect these unique habitats.

There are some examples of local planning that has been going on in some areas around Monterey Bay. A harbor vulnerability plan has been developed for Moss Landing, as waves will crash into the harbor without changes being made. Those changes will consist of dune restoration, development of a wave wall and redevelopment in the hills above the slough. There are also conversations going on with landowners and local community members to allow some of their agricultural land to be given over to flooding and to natural habitats.

There have also been discussions with the Santa Cruz community about risk evaluation. For example, on Seabright Beach, waves can wash all the way to the cliff, causing coastal erosion; however, the beach hasn’t diminished because of the development of the harbor, which lessened beach erosion at Seabright but has caused beach loss in Capitola.

Storms come along – so what do we change and what do we fix? Communities must decide what the triggers for change are in their areas, as well as what the process is for moving forward on different policies, and that brings up the question of who pays for the protection of private property. To get this started, Santa Cruz is planning a process they call *West Cliff Visioning 2024-2074* that will invite community input.

Dr. Bill Henry picked up the discussion at this point. He is the founding director of [Groundswell Coastal Ecology](#). The mission of Groundswell states that “we do well when nature does well.” To make this work, they do hands-on stewardship to help maintain living shorelines. The living shorelines are nature-based, green, soft shorelines that support the coastal edge and provide natural resilience for the shoreline. This also enhances habitat, as shorelines punctuated with development are hard for migrating birds to navigate. The hard edges of development lead to a limited lifespan for the beaches – we are losing the pocket beaches along Westcliff. The more convoluted the coastline, the more biodiverse it is.

One of the ways that Groundswell is helping to build living coastlines is to bury the log debris that washes up on the beaches. The log debris will bolster the beaches, and plants can grow on the wood. They also remove ice plant, which was planted to hold the land in place, but severely limits biodiversity.

Groundswell works with the State Parks and the California Marine Sanctuaries. They want to integrate wetlands review into their work with the State Parks. The state is very involved in coastal conservation and, currently, each beach park works

independently, but the Coastal Commission is trying to put an overall strategy behind what the state parks are doing. Groundswell has worked on Asilomar Beach, the Carmel river mouth, Twin Lakes and Natural Bridges, all places where there is not a lot of infrastructure. They are trying to prioritize sites and raise funding to buy land that sits behind the parks. They have been awarded some state grants and are working toward getting some federal grants and they also want to find some local funding.

The work that Groundswell does also helps solve sea level rise issues. Bill pointed out that the monarch butterfly grove already has some flooding problems, as does Twin Lakes. At the mouth of the San Lorenzo River, they are restoring native habitat and redoing wheelchair access. They do have a wide variety of folks helping them. Veterans' groups have helped at four sites – Seabright Beach, Seacliff, Lighthouse Field and the Pescadero River mouth. In their work on Seabright Beach they also received help from Gault Elementary School, Monarch elementary School, Alternative Family Education and Costanoa High School. Nurseries also help by developing propagation materials. To see an overview of the Seabright Beach project, [click here](#).

What is the State Legislature doing about sea level rise? In 2021, the Legislature passed SB1, which directs the Coastal Commission to take sea level rise into account in its planning, policies, and activities. \$970 million for coastal protection and restoration was also provided through SB45.

If you are interested in further reading:

This link will take you to the website of the California Coastal Commission, which has been working for the last fifty years to protect our coastline. <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/>

But the Coastal Act is getting close to 50! This link will take you to a review of the past, present and future of the act. This was done in 2016, when the coastal act turned 40:

[Coastal-Act-Issue-Brief.pdf \(berkeley.edu\)](#)

The California Ocean Protection Council has released a strategic plan to protect our oceans and coasts. This is the link: [OPC Strategic plan](#)

And this link will take you the LWV California page about what the state League is doing, and which local Leagues are involved: <https://lwvc.org/sea-level-rise>.

An Introduction to our next speaker, Tricia Webber

If you have always assumed that elections are run the same way year after year, you'll learn a lot by attending Tricia Webber's presentation next January. Tricia worked with Gail Pellerin for years in the Santa Cruz County Clerk's Office before Gail took office as our 28th District Assemblywoman in 2021. That experience helped, as she had to handle the gubernatorial recall election and the development of Voting Centers, in her first year in charge.

As you know, Santa Cruz County has, in recent years, adjusted the voting process, to make it easier to cast your ballot. In our upcoming elections, Tricia, as well as the Secretary of State and the other county registrars throughout California, will also have to adjust based on some of Gail Pellerin's bills that were enacted. Those include giving more information to no party preference voters during a presidential primary, expanding access for voters with disabilities, making some changes in the processes for replacement ballots and returning voted ballots.

Gail has also passed legislation that requires the Secretary of State to request joining a number of other states in the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) that will make it easier to determine when voters have left the area and are registered somewhere else, as well as passing legislation that requires districts with at least 1000 registered voters to use a certified voting system, and not depend on hand counts.