
Obispoensis

Newsletter of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society



Melissa Mooney. *Leptosyne gigantea* (Giant Coreopsis) on Coreopsis Hill, south of Oso Flaco Lake



Melissa Mooney. View of Oso Flaco Lakes from Coreopsis Hill

March 2020

A Few Rare Dune Natural Plant Communities

Melissa Mooney

Everyone's been to the beach, yes. But how much have we looked around to see what vegetation patterns are there to greet us? San Luis Obispo County dunes, and the Oceano dunes surrounding Oso Flaco Lake in particular, are awesome places that are full of rare plants and at least three rare natural communities, as defined by the **Manual of California Vegetation** (Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf and Evens, 2009). Let's explore them. And remember, we give these communities names only to make it easier for ourselves to talk about them. We draw lines around them as we see them repeating in nature, but plants don't always adhere to our neat little coloring books and boxes. There is really a continuum in vegetation; we separate areas mostly for our own convenience.

Closest to the beach, but not actually on the beach, are what are called **dune mats**, the *Abronia latifolia-Ambrosia chamissonis* **Herbaceous Alliance** and its associations. Some of you may know this as central or southern foredunes (**Holland's Preliminary Descriptions of Terrestrial Natural Communities of California, 1986**), others as pioneer dune communities (Holland and Keil's **California Vegetation, 1995**). In this community, sand verbena and beach bur-sage are characteristically present. It has a global ranking of G3 and a State ranking of S3, meaning it has less than 21-100 viable occurrences, or occupies a certain rather small area. Dune mats are characteristically found on small hummocks in between sandy areas within about a quarter mile of the surf zone. You might also see sea rocket and the invasive European beachgrass here. Rare plants found here include the surf thistle (*Cirsium rhotophilum*) and beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*).

Remember that dune communities exist in an unstable environment, with frequent winds, salt spray, and shifting sands. As mentioned above, the communities also shift and sometimes blend into each other. And in extremely protected areas in between the hummocks we often find dune swales containing wetland vegetation. We'll save those wetland types for another time, but let's move on to another upland dune community.

Inland from the foredune community and on slightly more stable soils, we find **silver dune lupine-mock heather scrub**, the *Lupinus chamissonis-Ericameria ericoides* **Shrubland Alliance** and its associations. Again, this community has other names such as central dune scrub (Holland 1986, referenced above), and dune scrub communities (Holland and Keil, 1995). Hoover's **Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County, 1970** refers to these areas as coastal sand plains. In this community, either silver dune lupine or mock heather is "conspicuous." This community also has a ranking of G3 S3. This community can extend far inland, to almost 3 miles (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2016). Here you might also see sea cliff buckwheat, California poppy, and occasionally, giant coreopsis (now *Leptosyne gigantea*), which blends into the next community. If you're lucky you might find the den of a burrowing owl here, or even see an owl. Rare plant species found here include Blochman's leafy daisy (*Erigeron blochmaniae*), dune larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *blochmaniae*), and Kellogg's horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *sericea*).

South of Oso Flaco Lake is a very rare natural community that many of us have visited and know its location well as Coreopsis Hill. Did you know that the community is called **Giant coreopsis scrub**? Its official name is *Coreopsis gigantea* **Shrubland Alliance**, but as we all know, the major dominant plant species, giant coreopsis, has had its name changed to *Leptosyne gigantea*. (But note that *Leptosyne gigantea* is not considered a rare plant.) In our area, this community inhabits the stabilized backdunes, but further south it occurs on bluffs immediately along the edge of the coastline. This community is ranked G3 S3 and is also considered sensitive. According to the **Manual of California Vegetation**, wherever the giant coreopsis occurs at greater than 30 percent relative cover, we can call the community giant coreopsis scrub. It typically co-occurs with *Ericameria ericoides*, *Artemisia californica*, and other dune-lupine-mock heather scrub species. Coreopsis Hill is its northernmost natural occurrence. This is the community shown on our front cover this month.

These are only three of our rare natural communities that inhabit dunes along our coastline. Again, it is important to point out that there are variations and subdivisions within these types; these are called Associations. Some associations have been identified and classified; others have not. This means there is more work for our Plant Communities committee to do!

WANT COLOR? The latest edition of our monthly newsletter Obispoensis is available for download as a PDF file from the link below. Find out about upcoming events, field trips, local issues impacting native plants, invasives to be on the watch for, horticulture tips for growing natives, contact info and more in each issue: <http://cnpsslo.org>
Having trouble opening the file? You need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your device. It can be downloaded here: <https://get.adobe.com/reader>

“PROJECT A” OF THE OCEANO DUNES STATE VEHICLE RECREATIONAL AREA: A POTENTIAL DISASTER FOR THE ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OSO FLACO LAKE AND THE SURROUNDING DUNES

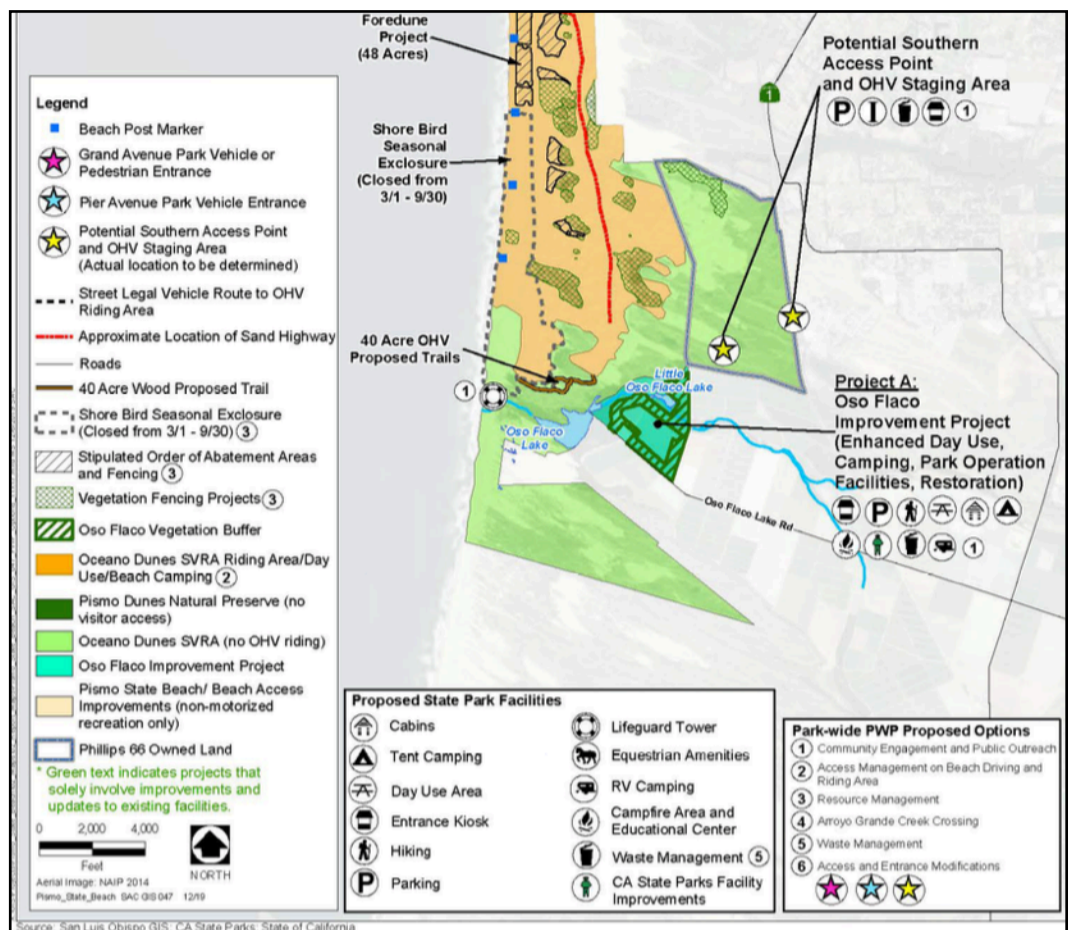
History has record of the strong local effort to protect the wetlands and lakes of the Oso Flaco area, including the work done by the ‘Dune Mother’, Kathleen Goddard Jones. Our comments are hereby confined to issues surrounding the Oso Flaco Campground and Public Access Project, also termed Project A in SVRA Public Exhibits.

Besides the obvious disruption to the natural environment of Oso Flaco Lake through vastly increased vehicle traffic, which will disrupt an extremely important birding area, CNPS plant-specific concerns are hereby listed and should receive thorough analysis of projected loss and mitigation in the environmental review process.

These plans for the southern entrance represent an existential threat to the rare plant species in the Oso Flaco region.

- (a) Federal and State Endangered *Arenaria paludicola* have extant populations (verified 9/2018) on the west and east shores of Oso Flaco Lake (northern half). Improvements in the causeway, and the riding area extension trail will destabilize the hydrology of the northern half which supports this population.
- (b) Federal Endangered and state endangered *Nasturtium gambelii* (California Rare Plant Rank: 1B.1) seriously threatened and eligible for listing) had populations immediately north and south of the causeway, and any "traffic capacity" improvement in the causeway would directly impact those locations.
- (c) Federal Endangered and state endangered *Lupinus nipomensis* (California Rare Plant Rank: 1B.1) is found growing within the refinery waste pipe right-of-way, and using that ROW, as envisioned in the Concept 1 plan threatens this core population.
- (d) *Cirsium scariosum var. loncholepis* California Rare Plant Rank: 1B.1, State of California as Threatened and by the Federal Government as 'Endangered) was recorded growing in damp swales south of the Refinery ROW in the OHV trail drawn in the Concept 1 plan.
- (e) The locally significant stand of *Leptosyne gigantea* (aka *Coreopsis*) is found on the west side of Osos Flaco lake, and within the redline OHV route shown in the Concept 2 plan.

In view of the long history of labor and resources that has taken place in the protection of these species, and of the integrity of the dune scrub ecosystems, we believe that a southern entrance to the SVRA should be removed from future development plans.



Screen shot from the SVRA’s planning documents. Note the two entry points that would carve roads across vegetated dunes on the eastern edge, and the proposed 40 acres of new OHV roads just north of the Oso Flaco Lake area. You can find project documents at <<https://oceanoduneswp.com/en/documents>>.

PRESIDENT’S NOTES

As we focus this month on the Oceano Dunes and its rare plants, habitats, and proposals that could change this area forever, it is worthwhile to look at the area in the larger context. Recall that the Oceano dunes are part of what we call the Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes Complex, a 10-mile stretch of coastline running from Pismo Beach to Point Sal, consisting of multiple areas of differing land ownerships and management strategies. (See the attached figure from the Guadalupe Dunes National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Management Plan.) Within this complex, there are County parks, State Beaches, a national Wildlife Refuge (Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes), and two preserves. We are lucky to have these areas. But it has taken years to gain this, and we need to be ever diligent in monitoring and protecting what we have. The Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area can be argued to be the “heart” of the area, including its valuable wetlands, numerous bird species, surrounding dunes, sensitive plant species, and rare natural communities. Let’s keep it that way.

Melissa Mooney

RETAIL SALES POSITION OPEN

WE BADLY NEED A VOLUNTEER TO MANAGE OUR BOOK/T-SHIRT SALES TABLE. CONTACT MELISSA MOONEY



The Annual Hike to Coreopsis Hill

The Annual Hike to Coreopsis Hill (in the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes), is scheduled for **Sunday, March 1, 2020** from 9am to around noon. This hike is sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Chapter of CNPS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. It will be led by Jenny Langford, Lauren Brown, Dirk Walters, and other local botanists and volunteers. The hike will begin at 9:00 AM (please plan to arrive between 8:45 and 9:00), leaving from the south end of Beigle Road at the USFWS access road (fenced road). It will be a casual walk through the dunes to the top of Coreopsis Hill. This is a moderate hike, about 3 hours round-trip. Dress in layers, bring water and snacks, and have your “Dune Mother’s Wildflower Guide” by Dr. Malcolm McLeod for the trip. Long pants and closed shoes are recommended as the habitat is coastal dune scrub and there is the possibility of poison oak and ticks in the natural dune areas (we will watch for and point these out so they can be avoided). For more information call Lauren Brown at 460-6329 or 570-7993. Heavy rain cancels this trip (light rain, bring appropriate clothing).

NOTE: Pets, smoking, or alcohol are not allowed on the Refuge, including the parking area, or other properties accessed during the hike (i.e., State Parks and Private Property). Pets may not be left in cars in the parking areas.

Directions from the north: Take Hwy 101 south from San Luis Obispo. Turn right (west) at the new Willow Road off ramp (Exit 180). Proceed west on Willow Road for about 4.3 miles, to Highway 1. Turn left (south) on Highway 1 and proceed for 2.7 miles, to Oso Flaco Lake Road. Turn right (west) on Oso Flaco Lake Road. Proceed west on Oso Flaco Lake Road for 2.5 miles to Beigle Road. Look for a 6’ tall wire mesh fence and steel gate.

Directions from the south: Take 101 north to Santa Maria and take the Main Street exit toward the town of Guadalupe. Turn right onto Highway 1 and head north to Oso Flaco Lake Road (about 3 miles north of Guadalupe), turn left onto Oso Flaco Lake Road and proceed 2.5 miles to Beigle Road (on left).

Parking: We will have people posted at the entrance of the USFWS fenced road to direct parking. The gate will be open around 8:30. Please do not park on Oso Flaco Lake Road near the gate as there is not much room and it could be hazardous. There should be plenty of room to park along the access at Beigle Rd. If you need to use a restroom before the hike (there are none along the hike route). the Oso Flaco Lake State Park lot is another $\frac{3}{4}$ miles west of Beigle Road

Additional Information: The Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes-Point Sal Coastal Area contains the largest, relatively undisturbed coastal dune tract in California and was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1974. Five major plant communities are represented including pioneer/foredunes; coastal dune scrub; riparian woodland; coastal dune freshwater marshes, ponds, and swales; and active interior dunes. The flora includes many endemic plant species and the dunes habitats support numerous rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals.

Jenny Langford

Lighthouse fundraiser and Pecho Coast Plant Walk scheduled for March 22

On **Sunday, March 22**, learn about the native plants that thrive along the Pecho Coast Trail and discover their medicinal uses. California Native Plant Society botanists Kristin Nelsen and Bill Waycott along with Pecho Coast Trail docents, will be helping you explore the beauty of the local flora and learn how the Native Americans and pioneers utilized these plants for their nutritional and medical uses.

The hike is 3.75 miles round trip and will depart from Port San Luis at 9:30 am. Return time is around 1:30 pm. The hike is along the coastal bluffs leading out to the Point San Luis Lighthouse, with a break being taken at the Lighthouse's events building.



You will be given a guidebook to take home, and a luncheon will be provided by the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers featuring the opportunity to taste some of the edible plants that are found along the Pecho Coast Trail. It is recommended that you wear sturdy footwear like hiking boots, bring water, and carry a light jacket for the hike.

This event is a fundraiser for the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers in honor of their 130th Anniversary. The fee of \$50 per ticket goes directly towards the restoration effort of this beautiful historic site. This is one time event only, so get your tickets today!

For more information contact **Sally Krenn** (805) 550-0150

(Editor’s Note: Geological substrates are Jurassic basalts along most of the train, and Cretaceous sandstones at the lighthouse. Beautiful examples of pillow basalt, erupted in deep ocean water at an ocean ridge, can be seen at the base of the slope at Port San Luis.)



Saturday, March 7th, 9:00 am, Native Sons Nursery Demonstration Garden. Owner David Fross has invited CNPS members to visit this garden where over 100 different selections of *Ceanothus* have been planted. Meet in the parking area just west of Chamisal Lane on north side of El Campo Road in Arroyo Grande (GPS: 35.08361N 120.5650W). Contact Bill, (805) 459-2103. Rain or the threat of serious rain cancels.

Saturday, March 28th 9:00 am, LPNF and CNPS “Drive and Stroll Tour” of Figueroa Mountain, at the Figueroa Fire Station: The Santa Lucia District, Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) will hold its fifteenth annual Wildflower Weekends on Figueroa Mountain in conjunction with the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Meet at 9 AM at the Fire Station on Figueroa Mtn. Rd. Turn at the SR 154-Figueroa Mtn. Rd intersection near Los Olivos and proceed to the Fire Station parking lot. In view of this year’s early rains and current dry spell, Helen Tarbet is guessing early peaking of blooming this year. Sturdy shoes, lunch and liquids, and camera and binoculars recommended. Call Helen Tarbet at (805) 925-9538 ext. 246 or Charles Blair (805) 733-3189 for details.

Saturday, April 4th, 8:30 am, Malcolm McLeod Annual Fieldtrip. The destination for this year’s McLeod fieldtrip will be determined one week beforehand, based on spring flower availability. For current information, visit the SLO CNPS webpage (www.cnpsslo.org). An e-mail announcement will be sent to members signed up for this service (request at info.cnpsslo@gmail.com). Be sure to bring your wildflower guides, adequate water and food, a hat, sturdy shoes, and dress in layers for the weather. For more information contact Bill, (805) 459-2103. Rain or the threat of rain cancels.

Saturday April 11th 9:30 am, CNPS and LVBHS, La Purisima Burton Mesa Wildflower Walk: Meet at the La Purisima Mission Parking Lot, corner of Purisima and Mission Gate Rds. (2295 Purisima Rd. Lompoc) at 9:30 AM for this annual California Native Plant Society and LVBHS spring tour of the beauties of the Burton Mesa Chaparral. Sturdy shoes, lunch & liquids, camera and binoculars advised. For more information, call Charlie at (805) 733-3189

Sunday, April. 19th, 9:00 am, Santa Rita Creek Rd. mountain bike ride. This will be an out and back ride of about 2 hours with a one-way distance of roughly 6.5 miles on a mostly unpaved road. Santa Rita Creek Road hugs Old Creek for several miles until it climbs out of the canyon for a spectacular view of North County. There is a steady elevation gain towards the end, leading up to the crest, where we plan to turn around. Bring your bike, helmet, other appropriate gear, and water/snacks. Meet at the corner of Old Creek Road and Santa Rita Creek Road, 3.8 miles from Hwy 1 in Cayucos, on Old Creek Road (GPS: 35.47250N 120.8558W). For carpooling from San Luis Obispo, meet at Santa Rosa Park at 8:30 am and RSVP if you plan to carpool. Contact Bill, (805) 459-2103. Rain or threat of rain cancels.



THE GARDEN CORNER



Well, with our rainy season half ways over, the outlook is dire. Looking at the “up-to-date” records, we have received about half of normal rainfall, season to date. So what does this mean for those of you who have just put in those natives after the plant sale? The bottom line is you will need to water your new plantings every other week deeply until the rains hopefully return. What does water ‘deeply’ mean? Depending on your soil type, deeply for sandy coastal soil means: fill the basin around your plant three times. If you live in Los Osos that means it could take up to 10 minutes for the soil to accept the first basin full of water. With clay soil, like in San Luis Obispo or Atascadero, one basin filling should be enough. Remember it’s always best to water early in the day.

Now we need to discuss your more matures trees and shrubs? Many of us already have old oaks, manzanitas, ceanothus and many other natives. Should I water them? If we don’t receive at least 2 inches of rain by the end of February, the answer is “yes”. I know you have always heard, ‘*don’t water your oaks or natives.*’ This is somewhat true, but to clarify: Don’t water during the summer months of June, July, August and September. Watering mature oaks during these months can cause ‘root rot’ aka oak root fungus. However, during the winter months of December, January, February and March, our native plants, especially oaks, need rainfall to sustain themselves through the long summer months.

So in conclusion, due to the unusual deficit in rainfall that we are now experiencing, you may need to apply supplemental water to your garden. Keep an eye to the sky and if the rain doesn’t return (and you can afford it), you will need to help your garden out. Set out irrigation for established shrubs and trees as well as hand water your new plantings, every two weeks until the rains, hopefully return. Until next time, collect rain water and happy gardening.

John Nowak

CHAPTER MEETING, ATASCADERO, Mar 5th 2020

Thursday - 7pm social, 7:30pm program

Rare Plant Meets New Technology: Snakeroot Science

Kyle Nessen and Lynne Dee Althouse



Snakeroot, a common name for members of the genus *Sanicula*, has a long history in early medicinal records. Sanicle species are common in chaparral and woodlands in California. A less common, and very special species occupies moist, deep clay in coastal grasslands in California. Kyle Nessen and Lynne Dee Althouse will describe ongoing research funded by a San Luis Obispo project with fascinating results regarding propagation and protection of the rare adobe sanicle (*Sanicula maritima*). They partner with the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden in this research effort. Adobe sanicle is a state-listed rare plant, and easy to find at Laguna Lake Natural Reserve in the spring. Kyle and Lynne Dee will describe the sanicle's biogeography, natural history of our local rare species, and findings from some of their early research efforts, as well as plans for using technology to better understand its distribution and habitat requirements. Kyle is Botanist and Lynne Dee is a Principal Scientist at Althouse and Meade, Inc. a local biological consulting group.

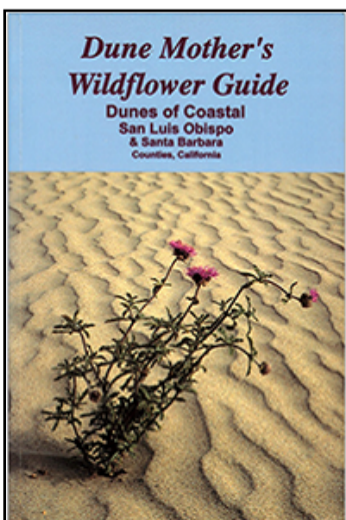
Kiwanis Hall, adjacent to clubhouse, Atascadero Lake

Driving Instructions. From US 101 Take Hwy 41 west from Freeway. Continue past Portola Avenue stoplight, war memorial, park and zoo on the left, turn left on narrow Pismo Avenue immediately west of the zoo, continue to intersection with Avenal Avenue. Kiwanis Building is single story building on your left, with parking for Hall and Atascadero Lake Pavilion to the left.

From Morro Bay drive to the first stoplight (San Gabriel Rd.). Pismo Avenue is the second road to the right. continue to intersection with Avenal Avenue. Kiwanis Building is single story building on your left, with parking for Hall and Atascadero Lake Pavilion to the left.

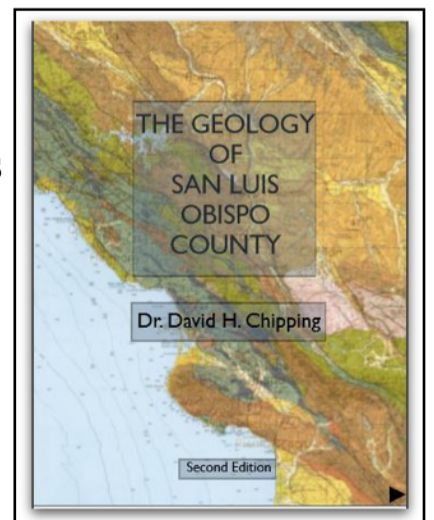
Registration Open for Rare Plant Communities Workshop

Sign up now for the "Rare Plant Communities in Coastal San Luis Obispo County" workshop, Saturday April 18, 2020, 8:30am - 12:30pm, San Luis Obispo. Presented by Melissa Mooney and local botanists. Participants will learn how the State defines and classifies plant communities and about rare plant communities in our area. We will have a short lecture followed by a field trip to see some local rare plant communities. Intermediate level - participants should have working knowledge of plant taxonomy and keying. Registration closes April 10; advance registration required; \$30 members, \$40 non-members. For more information and to register, go to cnpsslo.org.



Going to the Dunes?.. Plant and Geology books available at our on-line bookstore

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Invasive Species Report: Poison-hemlock *Conium maculatum*

A member of the *Apiaceae* (Carrot) family Poison-hemlock is a biennial native to the Europe and North Africa and is a common weed, widespread in California. Poison-hemlock may germinate throughout the year. First year plants are low-growing and may overwinter in mild climates and plants resemble carrot plants. Stems are erect, hollow, smooth and bright green with purple-reddish blotches. Leaves grow to two feet long and are tri-pinnately compound. In late spring, robust plants reach 5-8 feet tall and produce numerous umbel-shaped clusters of tiny, white, 5-petaled flowers. Poison-hemlock grows in moist areas such as pond sides, creek banks and flood plains. It tends to grow in dense thickets and when the plants have dried out it is very difficult to walk through and the dead canes are toxic! It is notorious for displacing other vegetation. Plants reproduce only by seed and seeds may survive to about 3 years. Each flower produces two gray-brown seeds. There are hundreds of seeds on each plant. Poison-hemlock is highly toxic due the toxin coniine. Seeds have the highest concentration of coniine. All parts of the plant are poisonous. Cattle are especially vulnerable. There are limitations to controlling this plant: do not cut, burn or graze. Pulling it is one of the best options and it's especially important to pull out the root.

Mark Skinner: Invasive Species Chair



EDITOR NEEDS YOUR INPUT ON MAKING OBISPOENSIS ELECTRONIC-ONLY

A lot of chapters are moving to electronic only. and I would like to do the same. Here are reasons for your consideration:

- 1) Content is not limited to, or controlled by page numbering in multiples of 4.....any size can be sent;
- 2) Color, not B&W;
- 3) Obispoensis will be searchable;
- 4) **It saves trees and energy, and also our costs;**
- 5) Room for special editions on focused issues with no additional costs or overhead;
- 6) People can print their own hard copy if needed.

You would receive an e-mail giving you a link for downloading the latest edition. In the event that a person had absolutely no way to shift away from a paper version, a special printing could be made and mailed to that person.

PLEASE EMAIL <dchippin@calpoly.edu) IF YOU ARE OPPOSED TO 'GOING ELECTRONIC', AND PLEASE GIVE REASONS. THE EDITOR WILL SHARE ANY OBJECTIONS WITH OUR BOARD, SO THAT AN INFORMED DECISION CAN BE MADE.

THE GOOD PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE CHAPTER 'HAPPEN' AND HOW TO FIND THEM

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WE ALWAYS NEED PEOPLE TO HELP OUT. OUR MISSION IS VITAL AND OUR FLORA IS AT RISK

Protecting California's Native Flora since 1965

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education and conservation. Membership is open to all. Membership includes the journal, *Fremontia*; the quarterly *Flora*, which gives statewide news and announcements of the activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



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