



W.E.WATCH

Working together to sustain the beauty and environment of the Santa Ynez Valley

Spring 2011

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Cathie McHenry

Still here after all these years! In a time of great polarization, W.E.Watch stands out as a strong example of forward looking, focused, pragmatic community involvement. We thrive by welcoming different points of view in our analysis process.

Since 1992, W.E.Watch has served its members and the community. Some county officials have been heard to say that W.E.Watch is the only "real" community group. While it would be tempting to accept that appraisal, it is, at best, an over-simplification. There are others working in the valley. However, we do have a broad spectrum of interests and activities with a considerable annual dues paying membership. All of us can be proud of just under twenty years of active participation in community affairs.

One person can make a difference. Recently, several *Save Our Stars* committee members attended a Solvang government meeting, during which they heard of a plan involving the removal of an ancient oak tree. **Susan Bott**, W.E.Watch member, felt there should be a better plan. Having been alerted, W.E.Watch sprang into action. Now a plan to preserve the tree has been accepted by Solvang. Largely because of Susan, that majestic tree will not be removed. Not every member has the time or inclination to be a board member but we do need you to be our eyes and ears in the community.

One person can and has made a difference. We hope you will continue to support our activities and encourage your friends to join with us.

Come say 'hello' at our spring event on April 30 at the Sedgwick Reserve.



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Susan Musgrove



Our 2011 membership renewal letters have been mailed! If you did not receive one, or know someone that might like to join, please contact me at susanmusgrove@comcast.net or 688-1536. We really need your support so that we can continue to carry out our mission here in the valley. Our goal this year is to be more inclusive with our members. We have plans for outings and speakers throughout the year. Check out our Sedgwick Reserve event, page 5.

Members, with your thoughts and ideas, are always welcome at our monthly board meetings, 10:00am, 3rd Tuesday of each month, Santa Barbara Bank & Trust at the corner of Alamo Pintado and Highway 246. Or check us out at www.we-watch.org.



W.E.Watch Board Members L to R Gerry Shepherd, Barb O'Grady, Jody White, Elise VanEnoo, Pat Simon, Cathie McHenry, Susan Musgrove, Nicole Pena, Theresa McNeil **MacLean Not pictured: Carol Herrera** Photo by Kathleen Day

Your W.E.Watch Board, pictured above, believes in and acts on our motto, "*Working together to sustain the beauty and environment of the Santa Ynez Valley.*" Feel free to share your input as you see us around town. Recent board changes:

Patricia Simon has joined the board. Pat is a longtime resident of Solvang. Coming from Southern California, as so many of us did, she readily appreciates the value of our beautiful tranquil valley. We look forward to her able assistance on the board and the *Protect Our Valley* committee.

Susan Musgrove has rejoined the board. Longtime W.E.Watch members will recognize her as a past president of our organization. We are extremely glad to have Susan on board. She has always been, and will continue to be, a terrific asset. Welcome back, Susan!

Nancy Emerson has decided to step down as a board member. We all owe Nancy a big and continuing debt of gratitude for her exemplary service to W.E.Watch. This move will allow Nancy to concentrate her considerable efforts as chairperson for the *Save Our Stars* committee. Each of us can enjoy the benefits of SOS work in the increased brilliance of our night sky.



A GOOD NIGHT FOR QUERCUS LOBATA
Susan Musgrove, Susan Bott, Carol Herrera
Restore Native Plants Committee

On February 7, 2011, a request to allow for the removal of a heritage white (valley) oak *quercus lobata* as part of the expansion project for Theatrefest was heard by the Solvang Planning Commission. W.E.Watch members, **Susan Bott, Susan Musgrove** and **Carol Herrera**, attended and listened carefully to the builder's presentation for removal of the valley oak. The reasoning had concluded, after consulting with an arborist, that with the damage to the root system and branches that might ensue, it would be better to remove the tree now and not risk breaking branches or dealing with the expense and liability of a deteriorating tree.

Susan Bott spoke at the hearing, reviewing the history and current status of the white (valley) oaks in our region, the status of a greatly diminished and threatened native oak, and the difficulty in attempts of restoring these long-lived trees by planting acorns, saplings, or larger container oaks. Susan described the panorama of a downtown Solvang area during the early settlement days, with a few storefronts and the giant oak trees, along with the Mission, spotting the landscape. Susan spoke in such a sincere, clear, impromptu manner in support of saving the oak tree that she had the attention not only of the commissioners but of the audience as well. Someone was speaking for the majestic oak and requesting that a solution other than its removal be found.

Susan Musgrove also spoke, remarking on the excellent use of appropriate exterior lighting for the project and congratulating the builder on behalf of the W.E.Watch *Save Our Stars* committee. Carol Herrera, representing the W.E.Watch *Restore Native Plants* committee, spoke of the community's potential cultural and

environmental loss by removal of the valley oak tree. Reference was made to the nearby oaks in the center of First Street, covered by asphalt and being allowed to live undisturbed even though they are in the roadway. Additionally, Ed Skytt spoke in favor of saving the oak in a straight-forward manner. He got right to the point and did not mince words and was effective in doing so.

The outcome was a unanimous vote to not remove this white oak, with each commissioner commenting on their interest in the ancient oaks and the importance of protecting them. The Planning Commission chairperson commented that she felt the speakers for the oak were directing their words "right at her" in the sense that it was an area of importance to her. The Planning Commission recommended that care be taken to protect the root system and that measures taken for its care and survival will be the financial responsibility of the property owner, not the City of Solvang.

If you are surprised that an oak has been given a chance even though it stood in the path of commercial expansion, you can imagine how surprised the supporters of the tree were to hear such a positive response from the commission members.

Let's hear it for the oak! And "thank you" to the Solvang Planning Commission!



WHY I LOVE THE SANTA YNEZ VALLEY



Teresa McNeil MacLean

I love being able to walk to town, past wildflowers and the creek, without walking on paved curb or sidewalk, stepping on good dirt and rock. I love evening walks by moonlight and flashlight, warm dry summers, cooling afternoon breezes, unique small towns, festivals, happy vacationers, antique cars and planes, horse-drawn carriages, art galleries, wineries, animals, open expanses of ranches, soul-enriching back-country within sight. I dreamed of living here the first time I drove through the valley in 1970, through waves of golden hills, with a spectacular sunset at my back. Santa Ynez is the only place I've lived that fits the clothes I wear. It's where I finally need the truck I've always wanted. As an artist, I'm continually inspired by the crooked branches and deep shade of the oaks, the varied greens of chaparral, windy grasslands, sudden wildflowers, serpentine-covered mountains, surprising skies! I feel safe here. I like seeing familiar faces everywhere I go. Smiles and waves come easily in our valley.

In 1983, having just moved here, building our house, knowing no one except the increasingly familiar people at building supplies stores, markets and the post office, I was thrilled that strangers driving opposite directions on two-lane roads usually waved. The pace was slow enough that drivers parked in the middle of the street to talk. Along with the brilliant night sky that was largely undimmed by night lighting, much of this has unfortunately changed. Recent arrivals from the city have brought the city with them, forgetting why they chose to move here. In their hurry and city-pace, they are changing what is unique and naturally beautiful about this valley. I want to suggest that there are better ways to live in a place and that many of those ways are easier and happier, more fulfilling, and more responsible. This is why I've joined W.E.Watch: to be involved in my community and work to protect what is to me a very special place and to educate others as to why they might want to do the same for this valley.

Ed.Note: Ms. McNeil MacLean wrote this essay in 1996. She recently commented, "I find it interesting how in fifteen years some things have changed, and some have not. Among those that have not changed is why I support W.E.Watch."

OPERATION MEDICINE CABINET

Nicole Pena

Healthy Alternatives Committee

Teenagers and young adults are abusing medications, some taken directly from their parents, grandparents, or friends medicine cabinets. One in five teens has abused a prescription pain medication.

For everyone's safety, monitor your medicine cabinet. Rid your home of unused, unnecessary or expired prescription medications immediately. You can do so responsibly by participating in the local prescription drug "take back" programs available nationwide.

In response to growing demand for a safe, convenient way to dispose of household medications, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department has teamed up with County Public Works to install drop boxes at each of the Sheriff's nine substations throughout the county.

Our wastewater treatment facilities are not designed to remove any of the chemicals found in medications, so these materials remain untreated in our water system. Think of it. You could be drinking someone else's medicine! Medications thrown in the trash are also in danger of being picked up by individuals or ingested by pets. In our landfill, medications decompose and can enter the environment.

The following can be deposited in the "take back" drop boxes (pictured to the right):

1. Over-the-counter medications
2. Prescription medications
3. Medication samples
4. Medications for household pets
5. Medicated lotions and ointments

It is requested that you keep medications in their original containers and remove or scratch out all personal information, including your name, address and phone number.

Our local drop boxes are located at:

Solvang Sheriff's Station — 1745 Mission Drive 805-686-5000

Buellton Sheriff's Station — 140 W. Highway 246 805-686-8150

SAVE OUR STARS AND WILDLING ART MUSEUM

EXHIBIT AND RECEPTION

Nancy Emerson

Save Our Stars Committee

The culminating activity for Santa Ynez Valley Grade 3 teachers and students studying astronomy will be a month long art exhibit in the Education Gallery at the Wildling Art Museum from May 4 –31, 2011.

Please join teachers, students and their families on Thursday, May 5, 7:00-8:00p.m. for a "Dark Skies-Bright Art" reception and brief recognition program at the Wildling Art Museum. Participating teachers and students will be honored. Students will sing with **Marcia Gibson** and **Teresa McNeil MacLean** the delightful song they wrote for use with the "Dark Skies-Bright Art" activities done as part of the students' astronomy unit. Your presence will make this event even more meaningful for the students.



SAVE OUR STARS COMMITTEE—2010 & 2011

Nancy Emerson,
Save Our Stars Committee



Your *Save Our Stars (SOS)* committee, formed in 2000, continues its efforts to preserve and enhance our starry night skies. Here are highlights of our work in 2010:

1. Sponsored **Chuck McPartlin's** inspiring presentations to more than 600 Santa Ynez students in Grades 3, 5 and 8, who responded with tons of questions. One student in each presentation received a T-shirt from SOS. We added a Grade 3 art and song experience for teacher use, entitled "Dark Skies-Bright Art" (see page 3).

2. To better educate residents, we printed a new brochure, "*Are Your Outdoor Lights Neighbor Friendly?*" (see insert), updated our display and the website plus wrote 3 newspaper articles and 3 'letters to the editor'.

3. SOS members monitored outdoor lighting issues and spoke at meetings of the County Central Board of Architectural Review (CBAR), City of Buellton Planning Commission and City of Solvang Board of Architectural Review and Planning commission. We participated with *Protect Our Valley* chair, **Cathie McHenry**, in monitoring agendas of the County Planning Commission and attended those meetings when appropriate.

4. SOS members met with the North County Planning Supervisor to better understand the "ins and outs" of outdoor lighting and the planning process, especially how to help citizens deal effectively with neighbor-unfriendly lighting problems.

5. Gave the outdoor lighting award to Jack In The Box in Buellton.

In 2011, with your help, we plan to:

1. Give more outdoor lighting awards. Please contact me (sos@we-watch.net or 693-1386) if you see homes or businesses that might qualify.

2. Work with the county on a county-wide outdoor lighting ordinance for all unincorporated areas of the county.

3. Complete the 'Dark Sky-Bright Art' project. Please attend the reception at the Wildling Art Museum on May 5.

4. Apply to International Dark Sky Association (IDA) for a Dark Sky Award for UCSB Sedgwick Reserve.

WARM GLOW OR GLARE?

Nancy Emerson,
Save Our Stars Committee

When the electric light bulb (lamp) was invented in 1879, it opened up a whole new world of light possibilities at night. However, our desire for the warmth and utility of light resulted in over-lighting. Now we have the problems of extreme sky glow, glare, and light trespass throughout the developed world and even in the cities of developing nations.

In our valley, many residents have not thought about the problems their outdoor lighting may be causing. Rather than providing a welcoming "glow" as friends approach their homes and businesses, their lights become "glare bombs", sending bright, focused rays of light that invade the privacy of those who live next to them, below them and above them. For example, light from the high school campus fixtures and a church on Highway 246 invades Quail Valley homes.

The *Save Our Stars* committee hopes that, in the 11 years since we began our work, many of you have analyzed your outdoor lighting and corrected problems which you discovered. Certainly, SOS members have been doing this, knowing we need to "walk the walk" as well as "talk."

Here are some questions you can use to eliminate "glare" while retaining "glow":

1. Are your light fixtures fully shielded?
2. Are your fixtures set at an angle that emits no light above the horizontal plane?
3. How far can you reduce the wattage and lumens of your light bulbs, while providing safety and security?
4. Are you using energy efficient lamps that emit soft (non-stark white or blue-white light) quality?
5. Are you "down lighting" rather than "up lighting" trees and other landscape or architectural features?

Our brochure, *Are your Outdoor Lights Neighbor Friendly?* will give you more useful information. Please share it with others. Feel free to email SOS at sos@we-watch.org or call me at 693-1386 if you need help. Also, please let us know what you are doing to improve your own outdoor lighting.



W.E. Watch SPRING EVENT

Co-sponsored by W.E.Watch *Healthy Alternatives*
and *Restore Native Plants* Committees

PLEASE JOIN US
SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2011

3:00-7:00pm

for a complimentary, educational tour exclusively for
W.E.Watch members & their guests & new members at

SEDGWICK RESERVE

3566 Brinkerhoff Avenue, Santa Ynez

- ✿ Tour Native Grasses Display
- ✿ Learn about Organic Farming
- ✿ Historical Tour of Ranch Home with
Sedgwick Director, Kate McCurdy
- ✿ Short hike to Sedgwick Lake
with Naturalist, Fred Emerson
- ✿ Enjoy a light, catered dinner
in the 'certified green' Tipton House

To reserve a space, email: info@wewatch.org

JOIN US TODAY!

Membership includes our newsletter, invitations to informative events, representation on valley issues, and a chance to meet and work with others committed to preserving the quality of life in the Santa Ynez Valley. Please join our "forest" of donors:

- \$ 40+ - Acorn — Single Membership
- \$ 50+ - Seedling — Family Membership
- \$100+ - Sapling
- \$250+ - Oak
- \$500+ - Great Oak

Name: _____

Address; _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Complete and mail to: *W.E.Watch, POBox 830, Solvang, CA 93464*

W.E.Watch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable organization.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

I would like to gift the enclosed donation of \$_____.

Contact us at: www.we-watch.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Cathie McHenry, President
- Barbara O'Grady, Vice President
- Nicole Pena, Secretary
- Susan Musgrove, Treasurer
- Gerry Shepherd, Editor
- Carol Herrera
- Teresa McNeil MacLean
- Pat Simon
- Elise VanEnoo
- Jody White

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- Nancy Emerson, Save Our Stars
- Carol Herrera, Restore Native Plants
- Cathie McHenry, Protect Our Valley
- Nicole Pena, Healthy Alternatives
- Susan Musgrove, Membership

*Printed on 15% post consumer paper manufactured by wind power
Editor Gerry Shepherd*