

# Earth Day Two decades of environmentalism in Santa Cruz County



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

County Supervisor Gary Patton, here at Lighthouse Field, authored Measure J in 1978 to combat against "runaway growth."

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County Supervisor Gary Patton, here at Lighthouse Field, authored Measure J in 1978 to combat against "runaway growth."

## Without the activism, a different landscape

By KATHY KREIGER  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Oil rigs dot the offshore panorama. Massive oil tankers head across the bay to the Moss Landing tanker port, and there's a nuclear power plant at Davenport Landing, if it survived the 1989 earthquake.

Without two decades of environmentalism, that's what Santa Cruz could have looked like today.

"The Monterey Bay would be a much different place," said Dan Haffley, director of Save Our Shores, which has successfully worked to protect the bay's waters and wildlife under the about-to-be-created Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary. "We probably would have had two or three medium-magnitude spills at least."

In this could-have-been version, a day at the beach is only for those who own one.

But because state voters passed the 1972 Coastal Initiative, public beach access is something taken for granted by Santa Cruzans, along with the rest of California.

Swimming in the sewage- and heavy-metal-laden waters of this scenario that did not come to pass isn't a good idea. Nor is fishing — although there probably wouldn't be much to catch anyway.

Now lift your eyes to the hills.

In this alternate vision of a Santa Cruz that never heard of the 1979 Greenbelt ordinance, the rolling green meadows and the forests surrounding the city have given way to rows of townhouses marching up the hills.

Instead of its current 49,000 residents, the city of Santa Cruz by 1990 is home to between 125,000 and 140,000 people, following a general plan devel-

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## Recycling as a habit

By DENISE FRANKLIN  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Recycling has become a household habit, but county residents are doing more than saving their aluminum cans to help the Earth.

They also are conserving water, composting, carefully selecting products, cutting back on pesticides, and getting out of their cars.

So they said in door-to-door interviews conducted last week in Santa Cruz, Felton and Scotts Valley.

But mostly, residents said, they recycle.

"We recycle cans. That's about it," said Noelle Locatelli, a 22-year-old housewife who lives on Cooper Street in Felton, a middle-income neighborhood of older homes.

"We really don't go out of our way.

oped in 1964.

Wilder Ranch is a town of 20,000 to 30,000 people, living in 10,000 medium-to high-density housing units.

Lighthouse Field in Santa Cruz boasts a seven-story hotel, luxury con-

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## By the numbers

Has the county's environment, from earth to sky, improved over the past 10 years or so? You be the judge:

**Population:** 1980: 186,873. 1990: 217,127.

**Bus riders:** 1980-81: 6,364,457 riders. 1990-91: 6,290,672 riders.

**People ride-sharing:** 1981: 238. 1991: 659.

**Vehicles registered:** 1980: 165,879 1990: 221,739

**Recycling:** 1981: 9,600 tons. 1991: 15,441 tons.

**Garbage at county landfills:** 1981: 121,874 tons. 1991: 127,722 tons. (Peak year 1988: 169,812 tons).

**Stream fisheries:** 1981: 4,500 steelhead and 400 salmon returned to spawn. 1991: 2,300 steelhead and 85 salmon returned to spawn.

**San Lorenzo River pollution:** 1981: Unsafe for swimming at Boulder Creek 40 percent of summer. 1991: Same.

**Land in timber preserve:** 1981: 63,156 acres. 1991: 63,136 acres.

**Timber harvest:** 1981: 65 million board feet (average 1981-85). 1991: 60 million board feet (average 1985-91).

**Timber grown:** 1981: 200 million board feet (average 1981-85). 1991: 225 million board feet (average 1985-91).

**Air quality:** 1981: 0 violations of state pollution standard. 1991: 2 violations.

**Harvested farmland:** 1981: 32,992 acres. 1991: 29,552 acres.

## Recycling as a habit

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We do the easy things that don't take up too much time. For instance, we buy biodegradable cleaning products from Amway and Arm and Hammer," she said.

Recycling has become convenient, with curbside recycling and recycling centers in most of the county.

"I recycle. I compost, which I think is part of recycling. I try to avoid products that pollute... I plant a garden — trees and vegetables. And when I garden, I do it organically," said 38-year-old Kristen Freedman of Zinfandel Circle in Scotts Valley.

A self-described "yuppie," Freedman, who lives in The Vineyards, an upper-middle-class neighborhood of new homes, reuses plastic bags, stores items in reusable plastic containers, and cleans with cloth rags instead of paper towels.

When her 2-year-old daughter was an infant, she made her own baby food and used cloth diapers instead of disposables and glass baby bottles instead of those with throw-away plastic bags.

"My husband says we are not fanatics, but to some, we are fanatics. I collect cans and bottles at work and convinced them to

recycle paper."

If you tend to be thrifty, said Freedman, recycling comes naturally.

Freedman said she learned her thriftiness from her mother who still uses 30-year-old, heavy-duty plastic bags once used to wrap lettuce in the grocery. Her mother's generation, she noted, saved because of their experiences during the Depression.

Gina Gentzler, 20, of Pine Street, a middle-class Santa Cruz neighborhood, also credited her mother's influence.

"If I threw a piece of paper out the window, she would stop the car and make me pick it up, she said."

Maintaining a healthy Earth "is a main focus of mine," the Cabrillo College student said. "I don't drive a car, ever. I recycle. I buy used clothing and I support local (environmental) organizations."

Her neighbor, Kim Hansen, 35, also has changed the way she gets around. Her family tries to ride bicycles as much as possible and she walks her son Cory to school instead of driving him.

Habits formed during the six-year drought are helping the environment, too.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Kristen Freedman of Scotts Valley collects cans and bottles from co-workers for recycling.



# Locals

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—dominiums, a convention center, a shopping center the size of Rancho del Mar and seven acres of black-top parking.

In Aptos, the Wingspread Beach project holds a performing arts complex and a 197- to 295-unit hotel/conference center.

All that was once on the drawing board for Santa Cruz. But thanks to local environmentalists, all three of these huge pieces of property remain undeveloped, so far, in a close-to-natural state.

Both Wilder Ranch and Lighthouse Field are now state parks. Voters rejected the Wingspread proposal in 1988, and the property where it was to be built is tied up in bankruptcy proceedings by its would-be developer.

One of the first battles took place in the late 1960s when Caltrans proposed two new freeways.

The first, a Mission Street bypass, would have gone from the interchange of highways 1 and 9, cut behind Harvey West, through the lower toe of UC Santa Cruz, and then back out to Highway 1.

The second would have run parallel to and between Mission Street and the ocean, slashing through neighborhoods in its path.

"That's the way people thought in those days," said environmental activist Celia Scott, formerly known as Celia Scott-von der Muhll. "Some people still do."

Huge public hearings eventually brought the projects to a halt, Scott said, and heralded the beginning of the end of putting freeways through communities.

But it was only the beginning for two decades of environmental skirmishes that are largely responsible for the way Santa Cruz looks today. "The freeway, Wilder Ranch, and Lighthouse Field were seminal battles in the '70s that set the tone," Scott said.

At Lighthouse Field, residents learned they could fight and win, said Third District Supervisor Gary Patton, an attorney who rode the victory to his first term in office in 1974.

Although criticized by those who dislike his policies and others who charge him with empire building, Patton has been re-elected four times. In his 18-year tenure, he has maintained a record as a slow-growth advocate who wants to protect the environment.

Two local environmental measures came from Patton's pen.

● Measure J, which limited the rate at which the county can grow, was passed by voters in 1978. It has been a key weapon in the fight to protect the county against what Patton calls "runaway growth."

"We are under incredible pressure (to grow)," he said. "It is only because we recognize in this county our unique ability to say no. We don't want to have it. We don't have to have it."

● Measure C, passed in 1990, was to usher in the "decade of the environment." It established 10 areas of environmental concern that the county regularly monitors.

"Communities are in charge of their own destinies. That's what

## Environmental report card



**Celia Scott**  
Attorney and longtime  
environmental activist

"I think we're under some illusions about how good it is, (since) other people have declined faster. Twenty years ago I would have given Santa Cruz an A."

**B-**



**Gary Patton**  
County supervisor,  
Third District

"We have as a community been willing to make hard choices in favor of the environment. We haven't done a perfect job, but we're at the top of the class compared to other communities."

**A-**



**Dan Haifley**  
Save Our Shores,  
coastal advocates

"The rivers and streams are not in great shape. Too many people are driving their cars to do too many things. (But) I'd give us an E for effort for working very hard to correct these problems."

**B**



**Jim Denevan**  
People Power,  
bicycle advocates

"We have a beautiful place to live in. It doesn't look much like San Jose. We have quite a number of bike lanes compared to other communities."

**B**



**Mark Primack**  
Architect, Santa Cruz  
Zoning Board member

"The environment is beautiful and there's still lots of it out there. Environmentalists (however) have tended to ... confuse self-righteousness with righteousness."

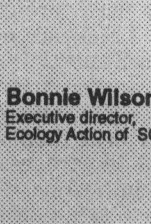
**C**



**Al Haynes**  
Watershed analyst,  
SLV Water District

"B+ for stewardship and land management. We've done a good job. C- for water quality. Erosion has increased with more people and more activity. It doesn't look like we've got a handle on it."

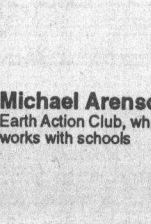
**C+**



**Bonnie Wilson**  
Executive director,  
Ecology Action of SC

"I'm more optimistic locally. There's a lot of work and a lot of groups focusing on it, and legislators and staff people sharing the view that there's no time for complacency."

**B**



**Michael Arenson**  
Earth Action Club, which  
works with schools

"I'm starting to see some change happening with kids more environmentally aware and active. A lot more of the curriculum needs to address environmental issues and community activism."

**C+**

Santa Cruz has understood," Patton said. "People sort of understand it's possible to decide what you want to do and at least come close to doing it."

Patton cited other environmental programs he said make Santa Cruz a model for others.

● Energy conservation is required in construction of new and remodeled buildings. Passed in 1982, these regulations took effect six months before state rules.

● A so-called voluntary ban in the county's unincorporated areas on the use of Styrofoam, which contains chemicals that attack the earth's ozone layer, which filters out harmful radiation. The measure was approved in 1990, but because of conflicting information, the county has not enforced it.

Another important environmental measure was the 1979 Greenbelt ordinance in the city of Santa Cruz, which put a hold on developing several major pieces of open land, including the Pogonip property east of UC Santa Cruz.

The ordinance was spurred by a proposal to build 1,200 townhouses and a conference center on the 600 acres of woodland and meadows.

Architect Mark Primack, who now is a member of the city's zoning board, was one of those instrumental in passing the measure.

Primack had come to Santa Cruz

from London, where greenbelts put the countryside only 20 minutes away for city-dwellers.

"People having proximity to open space allows for that balance in people's lives. Most people would tell you they live in Santa Cruz because it's near the ocean," he said. "But how many step foot in it every day? It's the proximity of it."

Primack said he agrees with Frederick Law Olmsted, the architect of New York City's Central Park, that "'parks (are) the lungs of the city.'"

Although Primack still believes in greenbelts, he's unhappy with the measure because it fostered "the very worst type of development: one expensive house on every 10 acres of the county. Statistically preserving open space, but dotting all of our hillside and canyons with privacy-seeking single-family residences."

Native Santa Cruzan Bob Bosso shares some of those concerns.

"We have some beautiful greenbelt areas," said Bosso, an attorney who represented the developer at Wilder Ranch. "We also have a community becoming increasingly elitist because there is no new housing and no land to build new houses."

At the same time, "we've become

anti-large employer, whether that be large tourist facilities or large manufacturing facilities," he said.

"The community's decided to make a trade, and that's what we've wound up with," Bosso said. "We've traded moderate cost housing and we've traded away jobs for a large open-space environment."

... Nobody can develop on the North Coast, nobody can develop in the other direction. People are still going to want to come here, and they will fill up every lot in the city."

Architect Primack would like to see exactly that. "The flip side of the greenbelt is to get denser at the center," he said.

Despite a 1982 ordinance allowing homeowners in single-family neighborhoods to add a small secondary rental unit — a so-called granny unit — only 18 such units have been built in 10 years. This is largely because would-be builders aren't allowed to charge enough rent to cover construction costs, Primack said.

"The real environmental movement in the next five to 10 years will take place within the city," he said. "We have to make a liveable and workable environment for people, so that it will be easy to protect our environment and open space."