

## PRESERVING THE ZAYANTE HUMPBAC SLUG

The growing pains  
of the Central Coast region

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## REFERENCE

By MARY BARNETT

The city of Santa Cruz, which is planning to build a dam on Zayante Creek to provide water for future growth, received some bad news recently. It came in a letter from Thomas Lundquist, who identified himself as a professor of invertebrate zoology at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Lundquist informed the city water department that the dam would flood the last refuge of an endangered species known as the Zayante humpback slug, whose appearance, habits and sex life were described in detail. Any dam receiving federal funds, such as the proposed Zayante Dam, that threatens to wipe out an endangered species, would require special approval, he noted, and perhaps could not be built at all.

Alarmed city officials assured the professor everything possible would be done to save the creature in planning for the dam. Meanwhile a nosy newsman discovered there is no Thomas Lundquist on the university staff. The existence of

the humpback slug, which nobody but the elusive Lundquist had ever heard of, was called into serious question.

Creating a fictitious slug is only one of many ploys that residents of the Central California Coast have used to stem the influx of people from less favored places to their own personal heaven. Growth — how much, where it should go and how to control it, if at all — is far and away the region's major political issue.

## Everybody's dream

Sam Farr, young Big Sur-Carmel Valley representative on the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, perhaps sums up the situation most succinctly: "Everybody wants to live in California," he says, "and the part of California everybody wants to live in is the Central Coast."

And why not? The counties of San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito — which together make up the 16th Congressional District and are often lumped together under the term Central Coast — are blessed with a pleasant climate, fine scenery and clear skies. They also boast several of its most attractive small cities, among them San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Carmel and Santa Cruz. The three larger counties border the Pacific, and little San Benito County is a short drive from the shore. The region offers mountains, forests and lots of open space. It would be hard to find a more agreeable part of the world in which to live.

Despite its amenities, the Central Coast contains only about two or three per cent of the state's population. It was a situation which seemed bound to change, and changing it is. The Central Coast is currently the fastest-growing section of the state, increasing in population at a rate twice that of California as a whole.

State Department of Finance figures show Santa Cruz County grew 31.4 per cent in population between 1970 and 1976, San Luis Obispo, 26.2 per cent, and San Benito 12.5 per cent. Only Monterey County, with 3.3 per cent growth, fell below the average state growth of 6.4 percent in the six-year period. But Monterey County's growth is uneven. Population is flocking into the northern part of the county, particularly into its largest city, Salinas (population 76,000). Severe pressures on housing and on agricultural land are resulting.

## Santa Cruz County

In Santa Cruz County, just over the Santa Cruz Mountains from the burgeoning metropolis of San Jose, stresses have been greatest and polarization on the growth issue is most extreme. In June, voters recalled two supervisors backed by liberals and environmentalists and put in two "property-rights" people. Phil Baldwin lost his seat to Dan Forbus, the veteran Branciforte-Live Oak supervisor he

Mary Barnett is a free-lance writer who lives in Felton.

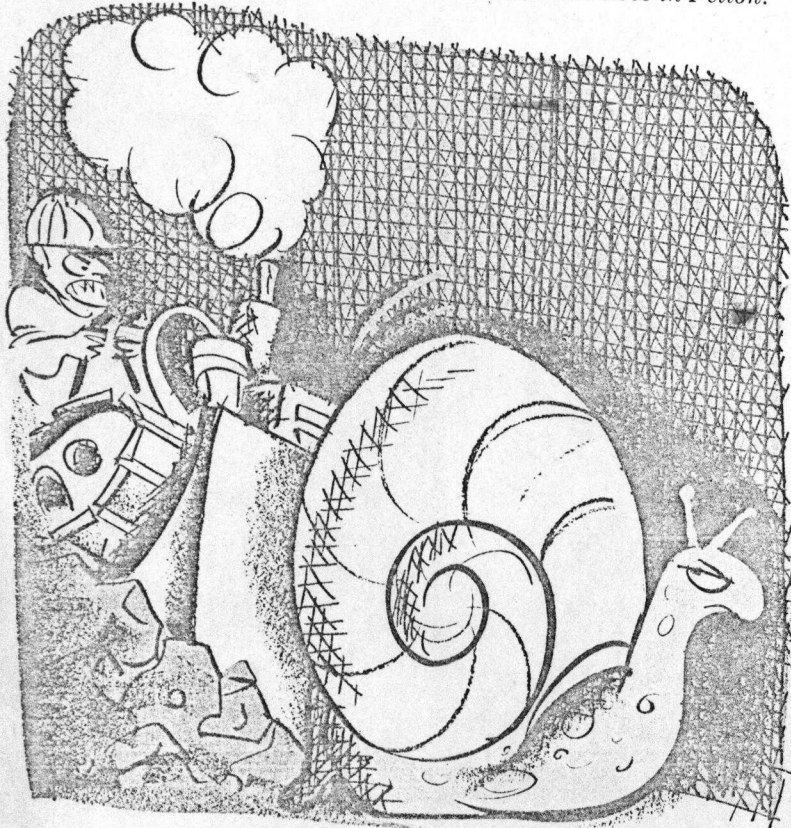


ILLUSTRATION BY RIC HÜGO

had beaten in 1976. San Lorenzo Valley Supervisor Ed Borovatz yielded his seat to Pat Liberty, whom he had defeated two years before. The recall was financed by \$100,000 contributed by developers and physicians (not mutually-exclusive classes, it was widely noted). The new line-up left only a young attorney, Gary Patton, from the board's previous three-to-two majority dubbed "anti-growth" or "pro-environment," depending on the speaker's point of view. Patton handily won re-election from his Santa Cruz city and North Coast district, which contains the University of California at Santa Cruz.

But political dopesters trying to read popular support for growth into the recall election results were baffled by passage of "Measure J" on the county ballot. Authored by Patton, it requires the board of supervisors to adopt a growth management program to save prime agricultural lands, preserve a distinction between urban and rural areas, protect resources, set an annual population growth goal limiting growth to the county's "fair share" of state growth, and set aside 15 per cent of housing units built each year for persons of low or moderate income. The people had spoken. But what had they said?

Santa Cruz County supervisors are still wrestling with implementation of Measure J. However, they decided on a 2.2 growth rate for the current year in a compromise action. Forbus and Aptos area Supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat, wife of physician and recall-leader Douglas Liddicoat, wanted no slow-down from the present growth rate. Backing a 1.4 per cent annual rate — the current state average — were Patton and, surprisingly enough, Liberty, who learned that was what most of her constituents wanted and decided her job was to represent them. At the time of the vote, the county was short a fifth supervisor because of the death of Watsonville area Supervisor Cecil Smith, generally regarded as conservative and pro-development.

Predictably, the 2.2 rate satisfied no one. Grouched Aptos contractor Chuck Holcomb, "We came off like a man who has lost only one arm." Anti-growth forces thought the rate too high. But by agreeing to the 2.2 rate, Patton and Liberty got the other two supervisors to drop a threat to seek repeal of Measure J.

Since the supervisors' action doesn't affect cities, the environmental faction turned its attention to the county's largest city, Santa Cruz (population 38,000). Turning up as spokesman for an organization called Greenbelt, the recalled Borovatz handed the city council a petition signed by some 4,500 voters — more than the required 15 per cent — to put a measure on the ballot to save the Pogonip area north of town as permanent open space. Greenbelters are also circulating a petition for a measure limiting the city growth rate to 1.4 per cent. The council reacted by voting to put an advisory measure on the ballot, giving the voters a choice among three growth rates — 1.4 per cent, 1.7 per cent and 2.2 per cent.

#### Monterey County

Monterey County is also looking at growth management. After two-and-a-half years of study, the board of supervisors this fall adopted a two-page "motherhood-and-apple-pie" statement for managed growth. It now faces the task of getting down to specifics. The county planning commission has recommended implementing the plan by adopting a one per cent annual growth limit. Rejecting Farr's suggestion to adopt the proposal right off, supervisors instead set a public hearing on the issue.

Less polarized than the Santa Cruz County board, the Monterey County body has its own alignment on growth issues. Up until November 7th, two supervisors were generally regarded as favoring all development — Salinas Supervisor Ed Norris and Kenneth Blohm of Castroville.



Two were seen as being for "managed growth" — Farr and Monterey Peninsula Supervisor Michael Moore. That left the grandfatherly board chairman, Dusand Petrovic of the King City area, as the swing vote.

All this changed on November 7th when a 36-year-old Salinas housewife, law student and League of Women Voters leader, Barbara Shipnuck, defeated Norris to become the first woman member of the board. Was Norris' defeat because of his pro-growth stance? Shipnuck thinks not.

"The main issue was his approach to government versus mine," she says. "He was looked on as somewhat aloof. This was the only district with no functioning supervisor's office."

Admitting that developers view her election as meaning trouble for them, Shipnuck denies she is "no-growth." She sees herself as another swing vote.

#### San Luis Obispo County

Traditionally a cow county with an economy dominated by cattle and sheep raising, San Luis Obispo County is currently feeling strong growth pressures too. As yet county government is not considering growth limits, although there are those who would like to see it happen.

Tall, blond-bearded Supervisor Kurt Kupper of Pismo Beach is one of the new breed of Central Coast supervisors in the Farr and Patton mold — young, articulate, environmentally aware. He's also blunt. Asked how the county is dealing with growth, he replies, "We're not." He and north-county Supervisor Richard Kresja, biology instructor at California State Polytechnic University, are concerned about pressures of growth and development on the environment. Board Chairman Howard Mankins and long-time Atascadero Supervisor and rancher Hans Heilmann are usually regarded as pro-growth, but observers say they are changing. Elderly Milton Willeford, a friend to developers, retired last month and was replaced by Stephen MacElvaine of Morro Bay, as yet an unknown quantity. MacElvaine defeated county planning staff member John Ecklund, who favored setting a three per cent growth limit.

Without some growth limitation, Kupper and Kresja predict a gloomy future. They quote County Planning Director Ned A. Rogoway, who has pointed out that even if the



county didn't split one more piece of property, its population could grow from 140,000 to two million if all present lots are built upon.

Kupper thinks the situation is critical: "Calculations of water in our basins show that if we utilize as much as possible, and bring in state project water, and if the city folks use all of the water agriculture is using, we can't provide water for the population permitted by present lot splits and zoning."

### San Benito County

Even little San Benito County, with an estimated population of 20,500 in 1976, has growing pains. In sleepy San Juan Bautista, with a population of 1,170, the city planning commission has recommended a three per cent growth rate policy, which would limit the town to 20 new residential units a year. Although it might seem San Juan is scarcely threatened with becoming a metropolis, the town's chief source of income is from tourists attracted by the state historical park surrounding the Mission Plaza. Tourists don't come to see suburban sprawl — there's probably enough of that at home. Besides, agriculture is the county's major industry, and there is strong support for saving it.

Throughout the Central Coast area, in fact, preservation of agriculture is an important issue. But it is one of far more than local importance. The Pajaro and Salinas valleys and the vegetable fields of southern, coastal San Luis Obispo County are among the most productive agricultural lands in the world.

Measure J commits Santa Cruz County to preserving prime and economically productive agricultural lands. This part of the initiative has yet to be implemented — and by a board whose majority was against Measure J.

In Monterey County, Shipnuck cites "an economic and emotional commitment to remaining an agricultural community." Nor does Blohm see problems in preserving agriculture, but he adds, "There's a question whether all this agricultural land is needed." Farr thinks the philosophy of preserving farmland exists, but so far the technique does not.

In San Luis Obispo County, landowner and environmental activist Harold Miossi hoped to get agricultural and environmental interests to work together. So far he has failed. "Agricultural interests still run the county," he says. "And those that own the land still want to sell it for development when they bail out."

Rare unanimity has been achieved in the Central Coast area on one issue. Liberals, conservatives, and pro- and anti-growth factions have joined to fight threatened offshore oil drilling. So far they've not had much luck.

The Bureau of Land Management has named as Lease Sale 53 that portion of the California coast from Point Conception to the Oregon border beginning three miles offshore and extending 70 miles to sea. The area has been gridded into thousands of nine-square-mile tracts. Of those nominated by oil companies and being studied by the Interior Department as potential oil drilling sites, almost one-half are off the Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo county coasts. There are some off San Mateo County, bordering Santa Cruz County on the north. With Interior now beginning its environmental impact statement process on the drilling, it will be two years before leases can be granted.

Although none of the tracts proposed for lease was off Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, their supervisors worked as diligently against the drilling as if they were. "We all share a common ocean," says Farr. "Oil spills won't respect political boundaries."

Nine supervisors from counties bordering the lease sale went back to Washington to try to stop it or at least to cut down on the number of tracts available for bidding. They

had vigorous support from the 16th Congressional District's congressman, Leon Panetta, a Monterey Democrat. But when the announcement of tracts to be studied in the EIS came out, all tracts nominated by oil companies in the top category were included.

Energy problems are of major importance in Central Coast politics. With a small population and only one congressman to speak for it, Central Coast political leaders fear that their area is in danger of becoming what Kresja calls the "boiler room of the state."

"We are the focal point of every lame-brained energy scheme there is," he fumes. "We're second alternative for a supertanker port at Estero Bay. We're second alternative site for a liquefied natural gas port. We're ignored by the feds on our request for negative declarations on Lease Sale 53."

The supertanker and LNG ports are cups that appear to have passed from San Luis Obispo County. But then there's Diablo Canyon. Down at Avila Beach, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been holding hearings to decide whether Pacific Gas and Electric Company should get a license to operate two nuclear reactors (built at a cost of \$1.4 billion) despite the presence of a major earthquake fault offshore. The NRC's Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards has given its approval, but it noted that if the fault had been discovered before the plant was built, instead of the other way around, it would have advocated looking for another site.

Ten years ago, when the California Public Utilities Commission held hearings on PG&E's application to build the plants, public opinion was overwhelmingly favorable. At the NRC hearings, nearly all of the public testimony has been against the plant. Most plant foes think it is too late to stop Diablo, but the switch in sentiment shows a new spirit in the Central Coast.

The Diablo issue is only one indication. No longer is a supervisor necessarily a fiftyish male farmer or businessman. When Farr was appointed to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors by Governor Jerry Brown, he was the youngest person ever to sit on that body. Now there are two younger members — Shipnuck and Moore.

### Winds of change

Because of the presence of the University of California at Santa Cruz, the new wind blows strongest there. Some of the results of activism by university students and staff members include a pre-trial release program, a near miss on rent-control, an anti-speculation tax which faces legal challenge, and pressure for home births and "birth centers" to supplement the traditional delivery room. To a lesser extent, there's liberalizing pressure from California State Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo, too. Monterey County, without a major college or university, has lacked the sort of political push such institutions provide — to the relief of some and the regret of others.

But even there, the days of domination by rural and conservative interests seem to be over. Farr won a resounding victory in his first election bid, and Shipnuck beat Norris with strong support from a Mexican-American community newly aware of its political power. The Central Coast's state senator, Robert P. Nimmo, is a Republican, a conservative and a rancher. But Assemblywoman Carol Hallett, 41, Republican representing San Luis Obispo and southern Monterey counties, has shown that a woman can be elected to state office from the 29th District. And Henry Mello, the Democratic assemblyman representing northern Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, is a moderate with much liberal support.

In the tradition-bound Central Coast, times obviously are changing.