



OJAI VALLEY GREEN COALITION

Newsletter Issue 11

March 2009

Michael Brune to Offer Strategic Solutions to the Energy Crisis

On March 25 at 7 p.m., Rainforest Action Network executive director Michael Brune will speak in Ojai as part of the Coalition's Ecology and Community Series. Brune will read from his new book *Coming Clean: Breaking America's Addiction to Oil and Coal* and start a conversation with attendees about the collective actions we can take for a clean energy future. The event, to be held at Chaparral Auditorium, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, with a \$5.00 suggested donation at the door, is part of Brune's nationwide organizing tour to bring together diverse people

and organizations to promote tangible and innovative solutions to the energy crisis.



Besides being the executive director of Rainforest Action Network (RAN), Michael Brune is a founding board member of Oil Change International, an organization dedicated to dissolving the political barriers to a clean energy transition. At age 26, he joined RAN to direct its campaign to convince Home Depot to stop selling wood from endangered forests. After a year of creative protests, celebrity activism, and shareholder advocacy, Home Depot agreed. *Time* magazine called this the top environmental story of 1999, and the announcement led to the protection of 5 million acres in British Columbia's Great Bear rainforest. Under Brune's leadership, RAN has successfully campaigned to change the environmental policies and practices of some of America's largest corporations, including Citi, Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Kinko's, Boise, and Lowe's.

We suggest that you mark your calendar for this last-Wednesday-of-the-month event and come early, as in February we had a capacity crowd. ▲

A Lighting Ordinance, Start to Finish

In 2005, Gail Topping began noticing that Ojai's night skies were becoming more and more obscured by the glare of the lights in our valley. That's when she embarked on a learning path. What she discovered in the process can be a lesson to all of us who seek to make changes by working within "the system."

Gail first attended Supervisor Steve Bennett's Ojai Valley-wide Discussion Group meetings in 2007-8, and spoke to her fellow participants about the issue. On a trip to Tucson, Arizona, Gail came across an article about that city's efforts to maintain dark skies. She then found some Internet sites that addressed the issue. Shortly thereafter, Gail began to seek out an Ojai Valley Green Coalition committee with which she could pursue light pollution as an environmental issue.

In March of 2008, Gail began attending the meetings of the Energy Committee. The other members of that committee read some of the articles Gail had found on the issue and helped her design an action plan. She then discovered that a light ordinance did exist in the City of Ojai.

After that, Gail searched the Internet for guidance and education on how to proceed. Her fellow Energy Committee members helped her uncover the deeper issues of light pollution such as crime, safety, energy reduction, nocturnal wildlife patterns, the glare of
Continued on page 4

In and Around the Valley

March 16, OVMAC Meeting, 7 p.m. at the Oak View Community Center, 18 Valley Drive in Oak View.

March 21, Low-Flow Irrigation with John Lamar, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Ojai Community Demonstration Garden, 401 S. Ventura Street.

March 23, USGBC C4 presentation with Michael Brune, 6 p.m., Patagonia Firehouse Community Room, 259 W. Santa Clara Street in Ventura.

March 25, "Ojai Reads" presentation with Michael Brune at 7 p.m., Chaparral Auditorium.

March 28, HHW Collection Day: Call (805) 658-4323 for an appointment.

By appointment, get a free energy-efficiency plan review for your project. Info at www.vcenergy.org

Save the Date

April 22, Advocacy 101 Workshop
April 25, Earth Day at Oak Grove

www.OjaiValleyGreenCoalition.org

Harvesting Rainwater in Our Backyard

By Dianne Uylon Bullard

Editor's Note: Gene and Dianne Bullard own a 1,200-square-foot home that sits on a third of an acre near the River Preserve. When we heard they were going to install a rainwater catchment system in their backyard, we asked if we could document the process through articles, photos, and film for educational purposes.

The installed system will allow the Bullards to capture a thousand gallons of water for every inch of rain that falls. With an average rainfall of 17 inches in the Ojai Valley area, that's 17,000 gallons a year. With a plan that includes the use of drought-tolerant plants, Gene and Dianne expect to incur no water expense in maintaining an attractive backyard. The system has been designed so that they can later add rainwater storage tanks with a 5,000-gallon capacity.

When the Ojai Valley Green Coalition was first organized two years ago, I saw an opportunity to learn more about water resources in Ojai. I volunteered to assist Paul Jenkin of the Surfrider Foundation as the co-chair of the Watershed Committee. At the time, I didn't know that in working with Paul I'd be getting an opportunity to learn from one of the top water resource activists in Ventura County. Everything that led my husband and me to the decision to do a rainwater catchment project came from what we learned through the Coalition's Watershed Committee.

Ojai is unique for its location in one of the few California watersheds that can be sustained without drawing water from the State Water Project or the Colorado River. Our valley is part of a watershed that originates in the Los Padres National Forest and drains out to the ocean at the mouth of the Ventura River. The Casitas reservoir holds 254,000 acre-feet of water—enough to see us through a 20-year drought if conservation measures are followed.

In addition to the Casitas Municipal Water District, which manages Lake Casitas, the Ojai watershed has many private water companies and wells tapping into its water table. And all our impermeable asphalt and concrete keeps much of our rainfall from filtering down to the water table. Instead, it's mostly channeled to the ocean, and we all *buy* water to provide moisture to the land. To me, this defies common sense.

My husband, Gene, had been eager for us to get our landscaping started but uncertain about rainwater catchment, drought-tolerant plants, and some of the other new ideas I shared with him. Then, in August of last year, Brad Lancaster, the rainwater-harvesting guru from Tucson, Arizona, spoke at a Coalition presentation. Hearing him, Gene realized what I'd gotten so excited about and became enthusiastic himself about harvesting rainwater in our backyard. At that same presentation, we met the local consultant who ultimately designed our landscaping for us.

In future articles, I'll share the project's design process and its research and installation steps. So far, the best part has been the fun we've had in getting to know so many others in the Coalition who are also working toward a sustainable Ojai Valley. ▲

A Message from the Coordinator: Greening All the Generations

I'm part of the Baby Boom Generation. After the Boomers came the short-lived Generation Jones, followed by the well-known Generations X and Y—part of the so-called Me Generation of the '70s, '80s, and '90s. (I think we're still feeling the effects of that mindset.)

Now that we're in a new century and millennium, all sorts of generation names are circulating, but the one I like best is Generation Green. And though some consider Generation Green to be made up of children of elementary school age, I like the definition given by the Earth Day Network, <http://www.earthday.net/greengeneration>, which combines the members of all previous generations and the children of this century into one "we generation."

To quote from the Earth Day website:

"The Green Generation is open to everyone: people of all ages and all nationalities, consumers who are committed to buying green; community leaders who are focused on greening their communities; parents and teachers who work to provide healthy foods and green schools for their children; those who work in green jobs; academics whose research is focused on innovative products and services; scientists and engineers who develop new green technologies; and governments that seek to implement policies and support research that will build a green economy and healthy population, and the religious community who are committed to a vision of a just, sustainable, green planet. Corporations will play a key leadership role in the Green Generation campaign, particularly those that recognize that their future success is tied to sustainable products and socially just endeavors."

So let's hear it for the Green Generation. United we stand! —Deborah

**Turn Out and Take Action:
Earth Hour ~ 8:30 p.m. on March 28**
Join millions around the world who will be turning off their lights for one hour—Earth Hour. By flipping your light switch, you can demonstrate concern for our living planet and send a strong message to our leaders that you support action on climate change. For more info, visit earthhour.org.

"I can't understand why there aren't rings of young people blocking bulldozers and preventing them from constructing coal-fired power plants." —Al Gore



Coalition Committee Business

"Knowledge Is Power, When Put into Action"

Building and Construction – Meets 3rd Tues., 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, conference room in breezeway next to Administration Bldg.

The committee will be working with the Food and Agriculture Committee to provide recycled construction materials for garden and other projects. A simple home energy audit program and checklist are also in the works. Kerry Miller will work on youth involvement in the program.

Communications and Publicity – Meets 1st Thurs., 6:30 p.m., 202 W. Aliso Street. A comprehensive PR timeline and media contacts template has been developed by new member Chris Anacker. Other ongoing activities include creating and editing email blasts, press releases, radio interviews, calendar notices, flyers, display ads, website maintenance, this monthly e-newsletter, and an *Ojai Valley News* column.

Event Planning – Meets 1st Mon., 5 p.m., 221 E. Matilija Street, Suite J. Call 653-8445 for confirmation. The committee will work with all the Action Committees to provide educational kiosks at Earth Day on April 25 at Oak Grove School. A reception is planned on December 13 for the opening of the Green Coalition's Ojai Valley Museum exhibition, "Go Green, Ojai!"

Energy – Meets 3rd Thurs. 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, conference room in breezeway next to Administration Bldg. Ojai Planning Commissioners reviewed the committee's draft light ordinance to protect dark skies and placed it on a priority basis. The County Supervisor's office has reviewed the draft and will take it to the Municipal Advisory Council. The Committee successfully completed the educational "Solar Night" community presentation.

Environmental Health – Regularly scheduled meetings have been temporarily suspended. The committee will have an educational interactive exhibit at Earth Day on April 25 at Oak Grove School. Call Marleen Luckman for more information: (805) 279-2101.

Executive Committee – Meets 3rd Wed., 6:30 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, conference room in breezeway next to Administration Bldg. Committee chairs and board members sit on the Executive Committee. Kenley Neufeld has set up an online site that will store important Coalition documents and provide opportunity for collaboration.

Food and Agriculture – Meeting dates and locations vary. Email Dulanie Ellis-La Barre at dulanie@sbcglobal.net for information. The committee has developed three main areas of interest: a harvest/gleaning subcommittee, a culinary club, and a Grow Food Party Crew. The group is discussing the possibility of a "Community Kitchen" using locally grown foods. The committee has developed a resource list for local straw, manure, chickens, and greenhouses.

Resources – Meets 2nd Mon., 5:00 p.m., Ojai Unified School District, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, Tim Baird's office. The committee has three new members who are experienced in grant writing and research. Committee member Jerry Kaplan has offered to host a potential donor event at his home.

Transportation – Meeting time open. No committee business at this time; a new chairperson is needed. Call Executive Director Deborah Pendrey at (805) 653-8445 for more information.

Waste Management – Meets 2nd Thurs., 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, conference room in breezeway next to Administration Bldg. The committee has determined that legislation at the state level regarding the use of plastic bags is already in the works, and will focus more on education about the environmental impact of plastic bags and on the promotion of reusable bags, rather than on a ban of plastic bags at the city or county level.

Watershed – Meets 1st Thurs., 7 p.m., Chaparral High School, 414 E. Ojai Avenue, conference room in breezeway next to Administration Bldg. Email Brian at brian@biorc.com. The committee has conducted the next phase of an Ojai Creek (adjacent to Libbey Park) restoration project by conducting a biological survey and compiling natural setting data. The next step is to secure funding and work with the city. The members are continuing to discuss best ways to improve the education of ranchers and stable owners on manure contamination issues in groundwater.

Light Ordinance *continued from page 1*

lights in drivers' eyes, and commonly held myths about light.

In May of 2008, Gail reviewed the City's ten-year-old light ordinance and met with the City Planning staff. That was the first time she heard the term "light trespass." After the meeting, Gail researched other cities' light ordinances. She looked at cities with similar tourism, mountains, wildlife, and potential for dark skies as a preservation effort. Among those cities were Santa Cruz, Santa Monica, Santa Ynez, Berkeley, Tucson, Boulder, and Ketchum, Idaho.

As Gail puts it, "I began comparing how language was used to discuss the issues, what technology they used, how rigid they were with compliance, and their politics of light." She discovered the importance of "no cost/low cost" in the effecting of change.

The Energy Committee chairperson, Jens Riege, began working on the first draft of a proposed new light ordinance for the City of Ojai to consider. At this point, the City introduced its "Roadmap to a Sustainable Ojai." Light reduction wasn't included on the Roadmap, so Gail focused on getting it included.

Finally, in October of 2008 the Energy Committee presented its proposed draft ordinance to the Green Coalition's board for review. The board accepted the draft and gave the committee permission to send it to the City of Ojai's Planning Department. Gail personally hand-delivered the draft to City Manager Jere Kersnar and City Planner Katrina Rice-Schmidt. The item was placed on the City's Planning Commission agenda so the commission could decide whether to give the ordinance priority status. The commission voted to place the light ordinance on a Priority 4 status, which gives it a six-month trajectory for adoption and allows the City time to check compliance with state and federal guidelines.

That brings us up to the present.

Gail Topping has served as a role model for any citizen who cares deeply enough about an issue to seek to initiate a change. Her diligence and persistence can be an inspiration to all of us. ▲

The County's Lawnmower Trade-In Program

You can practically hear the grass growing after a good soak and a few warm days. But before you crank up your gas-powered lawnmower for the season, consider trading it in for an electric version. You'll reduce emissions and also make some brownie points with the neighbors.

The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District has a rebate program to assist residents in making the switch. Check out www.vcapcd.org/lawnmower_en.htm to learn the details on what lawnmower brands are included in the program and where you can purchase them. It's very important to follow the steps for retiring your old lawnmower and getting rid of the used oil and gasoline. This is the perfect time of year—and a cost-effective way—to make the switch. ▲

. . . Or, Even Better, Change Your Lawn to a Garden

You can roll up your sleeves and transform a water-guzzling lawn into a garden paradise with spiral paths, edible plants, and bee-and-butterfly-attracting flowers. That's what Ojai resident Pat Allen will be doing to *her* front lawn on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 17 and 18, and you can join her! For \$50 you can get dirty, have lunch, and learn the basic principles of Permaculture and sustainability with one of the West Coast's leading professionals.

Larry Santoyo is a nationally and internationally known teacher of Permaculture. He is based in the city of San Luis Obispo, where he heads Earthflow Design Works, a consortium of professionals in the

burgeoning field of sustainability: <http://www.earthflow.com>. With more than twenty years of experience in ecological land use, planning, and design, Santoyo is passionate about replacing lawns with gardens. According to him, lawns cover more than fifty thousand square miles of American soil, and consume more fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides than all food-related agriculture does.

Urgent advisories to reduce consumer water use make headlines daily, and farmers are concerned that water for crops is becoming increasingly scarce. So replacing lawns with gardens makes sense from any angle. Whether you're a homeowner who's tired of mowing grass and paying big water bills, a foodie who wants to grow her own kale, or a concerned citizen who wants to learn more, this workshop will expand your knowledge and skills. For more information or to register, contact Pat Allen at (805) 646-4870. *Note: Not a Coalition event.*

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