



The Sustainable Advocate

Dedicated to the long-term health and vitality of our region

Sustainable San Mateo County November 2003

Imagining Sustainability

Stephanie Sarver, Executive Director

When I joined SSMC, I anticipated a big job. We're responsible for helping people understand sustainability. When I told family, neighbors, friends, and former colleagues that I was coming to work for SSMC, many were embarrassed to admit that they knew little or nothing about sustainability. They would mull over the word. "Sustainability. Is that about recycling?" It's a great question. What *is* sustainability?

San Mateo County is a mix of culturally and economically diverse communities, with urban and rural environments. In addition to being one of the most ethnically diverse counties in the nation, San Mateo County includes some of the wealthiest but least affordable cities. We've been an incubator for emerging technologies yet struggle with basic transportation issues and housing shortages. We're blessed by open spaces, beaches, and parks, but must be diligent to protect them under the pressures of a growing population. When we speak of sustainability, we acknowledge the dynamic interaction of our society, economy, and environment. We understand that the greatest quality of life is achieved when we provide equitably for the needs of all citizens, when the economy is sound, and the environment is healthy. This is the essence of sustainability.

Sustainability is about the future. It requires that we envision the relationship between current actions and future outcomes. When Gaspar de Portola first viewed the Bay from Sweeney Ridge in 1769 he probably didn't anticipate that the old-growth redwood forests to the south would be harvested a century later. Or that landfill would replace Bay wetlands to create ground for homes, businesses, and highways. Or that

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sustainable San Mateo County Awards

Nominations Invited

Sustainable San Mateo County is now accepting nominations for our 2004 Sustainability Awards. The awards recognize actions demonstrating a dedication to the long-term health and well being of our county. Nominations are requested for individuals or groups from government, business, labor, education, social services, religious and civic organizations.

The nominees should support the key elements of sustainability:

- ▲ Future-oriented and long-term
- ▲ Aware of ecological and resource limits
- ▲ Regional as well as local in scope
- ▲ Cognizant that all things are interconnected
- ▲ Concerned with creating diverse and balanced communities
- ▲ Promote social equity and well-being
- ▲ Supportive of public involvement in community decisions

Nominations must be received by November 28, 2003

WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE



For more information or to request a nomination form, contact SSMC at 650-638-2323, or download the nomination form at: www.sustainableanmateo.org (look for the Program/Award section)

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Imagining Sustainability, continued

his view from Sweeney Ridge would someday include an international airport. In 1769, when the entire human population of North America was roughly two million, it would have been difficult to imagine a San Mateo County populated by over 700,000 people. But that's what happened in slightly more than 200 years, with our greatest growth occurring in the past fifty years.

It takes imagination to look at our past actions and understand how they resulted in today's San Mateo County. It takes even more imagination to consider today's choices and anticipate how they will translate into our future. This is the mission and central challenge of SSMC. Our goal is to build a broader understanding of sustainability concepts, which speak to our ability to meet *today's* needs without compromising the ability of *future* generations to meet

Again this year: Green Building Award



SSMC, in partnership with the RecycleWorks Green Building

Program and SM Co. AIA, is again offering special awards to the owner, architect and developer of the most sustainable building in San Mateo County. For more information and selection criteria, contact John Hermannsson at 650-364-8016. (Green Building nominations' deadline is November 1, 2003.)

Mark your calendar for February 11, 2004, and join us to celebrate the Sustainable San Mateo County Awards Dinner, which will be held at the Villa Radisson in San Mateo.

their needs.

I am honored to serve Sustainable San Mateo County and to join the community who has helped to establish SSMC as a respected presence in San Mateo County. The past two years have been significant for SSMC. We have acquired an independent non-profit status and defined our mission and vision. In the coming months we will be shaping our strategic plan, drawing on the ideas of volunteers, advisors, community members,

and colleagues to ensure that we reach the widest audience possible as we fulfill our mission.

I look forward to sharing our progress and to meeting all of you who have built and supported SSMC. As we plan for the future of SSMC, I also welcome your ideas for reaching a wider audience and enhancing our presence throughout the County. Please feel free to write to me at slsarver@sustainablesanmateo.org.

On October 23, SSMC supporters enjoyed the Suit Up For Success fundraiser at the South San Francisco Conference Center. The event was conceived and planned by Carol A. Tanzi, aka the Goddess of Garbage, and the Honorable Helen Fisicaro who brought imagination and a sense of humor to the event, which benefited SSMC and San Mateo County Peninsula Works.



Guests were asked to bring one gently-used business suit for the benefit of Peninsula Works. The crowd then went on to enjoy delicious hors d' oeuvres and a fashion show that set a new standard for sustainable style. Guests were treated to models featuring recycled and reused fashions for women and men that set a new standard for high sustainable style. They also provided some instruction for job-seekers by featuring humorous examples of what-not-to-wear at the office.



Carol Kittermaster, Ruth Peterson, Stephanie Sarver and Louise Della Maggiori at registration

Thanks to the many businesses and individuals who contributed to the event, and who joined SSMC and San Mateo County Peninsula Works in making Suit Up for Success a ... success.



Chair Report

by Ruth Peterson

The comprehension of sustainability in all of its facets still seems to elude most of the people that I meet and talk with. Therefore, I welcome the message about sustainability's different aspects that our new Executive Director, Stephanie Sarver, has written in this newsletter. Please read it and respond if you have additional thoughts on the topic. We appreciate receiving all points of view.

Stephanie, who came to fill our Executive Director position at the beginning of August, has an impressive background. She has been a nurse, a technical writer and corporate manager in the pharmaceutical field and has taught at the university level. Somehow in between and during all of that experience, she also managed to receive a doctorate in English. Stephanie also has a keen interest

in sustainability, which has been increasing over the past years. We consider it quite a boon and very fortuitous to have our paths come together at this particular time. She brings a fresh perspective to the organization that will help us to regroup and make an increasing impact on our community.

We also want to say a fond farewell to Stephani Scott who was our staff person for this last year. (No, we didn't purposely try to find another Stephani, in order to make it easier for us!) Stephani Scott brought an energy and personal devotion to sustainability that helped move our organization along with new momentum. But when she was offered a job at the Sequoia Health District, she felt she couldn't turn it down. We shall miss her and her ebullient personality and we all wish her success at her new position.

As usual, we have a lot going on at SSMC. In addition to the recent fund raiser, **Suit Up for Success**, that two of our Board members, Helen Fiscaro and Carol Tanzi, organized on October 23, we are starting work on the 8th Edition of our Indicators Report. Marcia Pagels, our Founder, has headed up this project through the last seven Reports and will continue as a researcher. This year, through a generous grant from the Peninsula Community Foundation, we were able to hire an editor. Linda Bagneschi Dorrance has had experience at this kind of a report and is already working hard. We continue to be very grateful to Marcia for her lasting vision for this remarkable document, which remains the centerpiece of our efforts in communicating sustainability to our community.

If you have not had a chance to attend any of the programs in our lecture series on Green Building, Remodeling and Resource Use, I encourage you to do so. The lectures are being held at Eco Design Resources in San Carlos, which sells all kinds of eco-friendly products.

The work of Sustainable San Mateo County is carried on by many volunteers with the aid of only ONE full-time staff person. We would have to sharply curtail our activities if we were unable to financially support her, and, frankly, sometimes it is a stretch to do so. I am sure that you are aware that the current economic conditions and the cutbacks to our cities and County have adversely affected all of us non-profits. Your donations are most welcome in any amount. We are lucky to have an equitable distribution of donations between the public and private, but individual support is a substantial percentage of our resources. THANKS TO THE MANY OF YOU WHO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT US! It is critical to our well-being.

The Sustainable Advocate is published by Sustainable San Mateo County. All contributions to SSMC are tax deductible.

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Marcia Pagels, Founder
Stephanie Sarver, Exec.
Director

Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of SSMC, its members or funders.

HELP WANTED!

We need YOU to solicit and/or donate items for the Silent Auction and Raffle for the Sustainability Awards Dinner. Anything from a condo in Hawaii for 2 weeks to an afternoon wrapping Christmas presents for someone to straight cash would benefit all of SSMC's programs. Call 638-2323 for more information and forms.

IPM, A Soapy Opera Sequel, The Continuing Story

Part 2 of Alane Weber's sustainable gardening series

Integrated pest management, or IPM, is a systems approach to garden maintenance and pest control. It pairs the wisdom of ecology with the power of human intelligence to achieve low- or no-noticeable pest damage in a thriving garden. IPM relies on wise design and the integration of good management choices from “nature’s tool box” to produce solid results. Within a sustainable landscape, the IPM tools can even lead to the complete elimination of the need for toxic pesticides and inorganic fertilizers, thereby reducing groundwater contamination, water use, and garden maintenance.

IPM guidelines are a series of control strategies. Cultural controls, the topic of this article, are the simplest and most effective way to achieve a healthy least-toxic garden.

Good cultural care of our garden plants is a huge topic that includes such facets as fertilizing, pruning, watering, sanitary practices, and wise design choices. I want to start, literally, from the ground up, with the facet of greatest influence on plant health: fertilizing.

Good soil management fosters a full and diverse compliment of the **soil food web** specific to your garden, climate, and plants. The soil food web, a term coined by Dr. Elaine Ingham, is the ecosystem of the soil. It is the interrelated chain of organic matter, microbes, and higher soil critters (from

beneficial bacteria to sow bugs) that consume each other in nature’s succession of nutrient recycling. I call it the “poop loop,” but the more scientific term is the nitrogen cycle, and here it is being provided by nature, free of charge and effort, in balance with a plant’s needs.

Equally important are the many soil microbes that live in symbiotic relationship with our garden plants. They hang around the root zone to be fed simple sugars in the plants in exchange for delivering some of the plant’s other mineral needs. Also, these beneficial microbes— bacteria and fungi—cluster so closely to their food source on the root surface that they usually out-compete pathogenic microbes for infection sites. Now *that* is a sustainable system: self-fertilizing, self-cleaning and with built-in health care!

The soil food web occurs naturally in all soils, but the use or accidental drift of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, or poor maintenance practices can upset the balance or completely kill this web of life. When this happens, the soil can no longer provide a plant with the benefits of its living matrix of microbes and their door-to-door poop loop delivery and protection services.

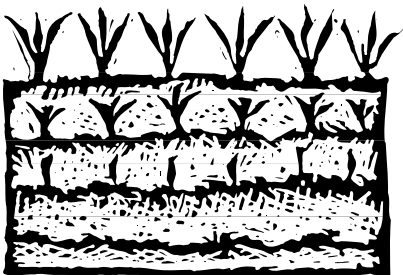
The best way to re-inoculate your garden soil with these super good guys is with live compost or professional grade compost tea. I say ‘live’ because much of what is sold today as compost has been sterilized or so mistreated in handling that few beneficial microbes remain. Dead compost temporarily will improve the texture, drainage, and water-holding capacities of garden soil, but without the life, there is no nutrient cycling. And without a functioning poop-loop, nature must rob nutrients from the surrounding soil to kick start that cycle of life in your wood chips and sterilized

soil amendments.

When you feel the urge to fertilize your plants, think, “feed the soil” and know that it actually means feeding the microbial life of the soil. Good compost provides nutrition for the bottom level food web inhabitants and also re-inoculates your garden soil with the beneficial microbes necessary for a healthy soil ecosystem. Most soils with a healthy microbial compliment require only small additions of mineral and nitrogenous supplements. Choose the least processed, naturally occurring substances for this task such as composted manures, fish or alfalfa meals for nitrogen; pulverized oyster shell for calcium; and rock dust and kelp for micronutrients. If in doubt, have your soil tested periodically to determine its microbial and mineral compliment, especially if you’ve had a persistent problem.

By feeding your soil and focusing on the health of the soil food web, the resulting vitality of the soil ecosystem will produce resilience to pest problems. At the same time you provide greater stability for plants to deal with the occasional environmental stresses that result in pest predation, poor growth, or death. The greater proportion of each plant lies below the surface in the root structure, where the stage is initially set for the life above ground; or, as below, so above.

Alane O’Rielly Weber consults in San Mateo County on sustainable gardening practices. She is the instructor for the San Mateo Co. Master Composters, and is know as the worm lady of San Mateo. She can be reached at wormlady@sbcglobal.net or at (650)341-2094. Also visit www.soilfoodweb.com or call (541)752-5066.



Update on SSMC Activities

Progress Underway on 8th Annual Indicators Report

by Marcia Pagels

Sustainable San Mateo County has hired an Indicators Project Coordinator and Editor. Linda Bagneschi Dorrance comes to us with exceptional credentials and experience. She served as Project Manager of the 1999 and 2003 Silicon Valley Environmental Index Reports published by the Silicon Valley Environmental Partnership. She also collaborated with Marin County to create a "Green Buyers Network" to encourage more consumers to shop at businesses certified to the County's Green Business Program. Linda authored a policy report, *Access at a Crossroads: Strengthening the Public Voice in U.S. Environmental Affairs*, which will be launched soon. She started in mid-September, just in time to begin on the 2004 *Indicators* report.

We were able to hire Linda through a \$7,500 grant from the Peninsula Community Foundation and the continuing support from our county and its cities. The following have thus far contributed toward the 2004 report: Belmont, Brisbane, Burlingame, Colma, Half Moon Bay, Portola Valley, San Bruno, San Carlos, and San Mateo. With their own funding reduced, we feel especially grateful for their support.

SSMC's 2003 *Indicators* report is still available—call 650-638-2323.

Sustainability Education in School Gains Support

Carol Kittermaster of the Education Task Force (ETF) reports that two San Mateo County school districts, Belmont/Redwood Shores and San Carlos, are recipients of funding

from a California State "Environmental Ambassador Schools Program." The ETF is exploring working with these districts in implementing new curriculum appropriate to this program. Other good news is that Governor Gray Davis signed a package of legislation that incorporates environmental principles into the curricula of California classrooms.

SSMC Partners with Recycle Works to Increase Restaurant Recycling

SSMC, working in collaboration with RecycleWorks, has commenced a program to distribute free recycling bins to qualified San Mateo County restaurants. The program, which is funded through an anonymous grant, will provide up to two bins free of charge. The bins are available on a limited first-come, first-serve basis starting November 1, 2003. To qualify, a restaurant must be a casual restaurant in San Mateo County (delicatessen, taqueria, café, snack bar, cafeteria, or in-store lunch counter), sell beverages in glass, plastic, or aluminum containers, and have waste containers placed in the public area of the restaurants.

Green Building Events

Green Building Task Force chair, Isabelle Gecils, reports on a five-lecture series that has been underway since September. The series has featured expert discussions on energy efficiency, solar energy, water conservation, and remodeling. The lectures provide practical information for making homes and businesses more environmentally sustainable. The final lecture on November 12, will offer tips on locating hard-to-

find green and energy-efficient products. Alicia Peche and Ryan Nestal, founders of Eco-Design Resources, have co-sponsored the event. All lectures are held at 7PM at Eco-Design Resources, 633 Quarry Road, San Carlos.

SSMC will again participate in the Home and Garden Show in San Mateo. The event occurs February 27 – 29, 2004. SSMC will share a booth with RecycleWorks and Eco-Design Resources. The joint effort will provide educational information on sustainable green building practices and practical information about eco-friendly building products.

The Green Building Task Force is evaluating Green Building Awards nominations for the 2004 Sustainability Awards. This will be the second year these awards will recognize distinctive green architecture and construction.

Volunteer Coordinator Needed

SSMC needs someone who is well-organized and who would be able to create and maintain a database of volunteers, to manage files of meetings, and maintain the calendars of the different volunteer activities.

Can you help?
Contact Stephanie at
650-638-2323

SSMC Achievements

Ruth Peterson

1996

- Gathered community folks and members of the Peninsula Sustainability Project (soon to be SSMC) to prepare for the First publication of the Indicators Report. Published in March, 1997.
- Participated in Household Eco (Green) Teams – learning about creating earth-friendly life-styles.
- Started a newsletter for members.
- Held the first annual membership potluck meeting at Lone Pines in Belmont, with Michael Closson, Exec. Dir. of Center of Economic Conversion.
- Gets 501c3 status under the umbrella of the Tides Center.

1997

- Business Task Force formed (Ruth Peterson, Chair). Flier developed and distributed to business “Reduce, Re-use, Recycle: Environmental Economies for Offices”.
- General Plans Task Force formed to “get local general plans to explicitly include principles of sustainability” (Ricki McGlashan, Chair).
- Second Annual Membership meeting held in October with Peter Melhus, Acting Executive Director of Bay area Alliance for Sustainable Development as keynote speaker.
- Participated with the League of Women Voters on their statewide project on Sustainable Communities.

1998

- Held first announcement party for the 2nd annual Indicators Report.
- Web site launched.

1999

- Speaker talks on sustainability – Rotary Club, Half Moon Bay, Real Estate Brokers, and Leadership Redwood City
- *The Sustainable Advocate* was launched.
- May 5 - First Town Hall Meeting with the College of Notre Dame; release of the 3rd Annual Indicators Report; community groups discussed the Report.
- Launched the first Annual Sustainability Awards.
- Attended the Progress Seminar in Monterey and helped to form a breakout session on Smart Growth. Also distributed our 3rd annual Indicators Report.

2000

- A sustainable business forum for the hospitality industry was held in March with about 75 present. The theme was “Higher Profits in Y2K through Sustainable Business Practices”. Keynote speaker was Lyle Thompson, Environmental Affairs Supervisor of the Fairmont Hotels and Resorts. Rick Chinn and Kim Springer were the chief planners.
- Attended the Progress Seminar in Monterey and released the 4th annual Indicators Report .
- The 2nd Annual Town Hall was held on April 26 at The College of Notre Dame on *Clean Energy Now* in affiliation with Earth Day 2000. The Indicators Report was circulated.
- In August, a special edition of *The Sustainable Advocate* was published addressing the proposed SF Airport expansion, offering three differing points of view. In September, SSMC sponsored a public forum on the issue attended by 80 people.
- October 27th was the date of our 2nd annual Awards luncheon with 5

Award winners and one honorable mention.

- Kim Springer took over as Chair of the BTF and Ruth Peterson became Chair of SSMC. Marcia remained as the Founding Member of SSMC and took over as the principal coordinator and editor of the Indicators Report.

2001

- The 3rd Annual Town Hall was held on April 19 at the College of Notre Dame. The theme was *Water: Conserve and Protect*. It was co-sponsored by the College of Notre Dame and the Mid-Peninsula Water District.
- The 5th Annual Indicators Report was released at the Progress Seminar in April.
- The ETF was formed and developed a Sustainability Institute workshop for teachers on March 24 at the College of Notre Dame with examples of curricula containing sustainability concepts.
- The BTF presented a forum “Saving Green, Building Green” on May 24 at the SFO Westin Hotel. The forum was designed for architects, builders, and others interested in green building practices and materials. There were 90 attendees.
- On July 19, a special forum, “*Where has all the Power Gone?*” was presented in response to the California Energy Crisis at the Pen TV Studio with Moderators Mark Simon and Bob Marks. The panelists included S. David Freeman, Chief Energy Advisor to Governor Gray Davis. The League of Women Voters and the Bay Area Council aligned with SSMC to present this forum.
- The 3rd annual Sustainability Awards Event was held on October 26 with five outstanding recipients and one honorable mention.

Strategic Planning Looks to SSMC's Future

SSMC has been in existence for more than ten years. During that time it has gone through a few phases. In its early years, SSMC members focused on researching and learning about the issues that would ultimately be highlighted in the Indicators Report, which was first published in 1997. That same year the Business Task Force was formed, which initiated a period during which SSMC sponsored a wide range of outreach programs. Last year, SSMC initiated a new era when it became an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit corporation. We're now looking ahead to yet another new phase and undertaking a strategic planning process to chart the course of SSMC in the coming years.

Most SSMC members are aware of the activities that SSMC has sponsored over the years, but few

may be aware of the resources required to develop, organize, and deliver the Indicators Report and other SSMC programs. Behind-the-scenes, there were people working who ensured that donations were well-managed, bills were paid, and organization records were maintained.

From 1996 to 2002, most routine administrative matters were managed by the Tides Center. In 2002, SSMC was granted official status as an independent 501(c)(3), and stepped away from the Tides Center. This change opened new opportunities for SSMC to develop a greater presence and influence in the County. It also created greater responsibility for building a greater self-managed infrastructure.

This fall SSMC began a strategic planning process that will map its

future course. The continued success of SSMC depends not only on creating vital programs, but also on creating the internal and sometimes invisible administrative structure that can support future growth. As SSMC grows, so does the need for staff, office facilities, and the financial resources to fund programs.

The strategic plan will identify the programs that best fulfill SSMC's mission and the funding approaches to ensure their success. A lull in some activities may occur as SSMC leadership and the task forces shift their focus to creating a plan for future growth. The planning and development of the Indicators Report and the Sustainability Awards Program are continuing at full-steam during this process. Working together, the collective effort to map our future will ensure that SSMC continues to be a vital and sustainable organization.

SSMC Achievements, continued

2002

- In April we became a co-sponsor of the Progress Seminar in Monterey. The 6th Edition of the Indicators Report was circulated there.
- Our Town Hall at Notre Dame de Namur University on May 1st featured a reception for the release of our 6th Annual Indicators Report with a panel discussion on *Perspectives on the Good Life: Balance, Simplicity, Sustainability* moderated by Michael Krasny. This event was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters and Notre Dame de Namur University.
- The Education Task Force participated in two workshops for teachers – the Council of Math/ Science Educators of San Mateo County (CMSESMC) held March 2nd at Canada College and the Bay Area

Environmental Resource Fair (BAAER) on January 5th at the Marin Civic Center in San Raphael.

- SSMC disengages itself from the Tides Center and becomes an independent 501c3 in September.

2003

- The Green Building Task Force put together a special section at the Peninsula Home and Garden Show that featured green building products and resources. We partnered with RecycleWorks and the San Mateo County Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and shared a booth featuring green building materials, techniques and resources.

The 4th Annual Sustainability Awards event was held in February at the South San Francisco Conference Center. The evening event was

attended by more than 225 people, and a very successful silent auction was held.

- The ETF participated again in the CMSESMC workshop for teachers at Canada College in March.
- The Business Task Force began a program to distribute recycling bins to San Mateo County restaurants.
- In August, Stephanie Sarver was hired as Executive Director.
- In September, the Green Building Task Force organized a free five-lecture series on green building and remodeling, including discussions of energy-saving technologies, water conservation, green remodeling, and finding green and energy efficient products.
- SSMC begins a strategic planning process.

YES:

I want to support the efforts of **Sustainable San Mateo County**.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

- Benefactor \$1,000
- Sustainer \$500
- Sponsor \$150
- Regular \$35
- Senior/Student \$15
- Additional donation
\$ _____

I want to contribute time
as well as financial support:

- Help with presentations
- Help the Indicators Project
- Help with the Sustainability Awards
- Help promote sustainability through
other actions or projects
- Send me a copy of the *2003 Indicators Report*



Return this form with check made out to:

SSMC, 177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor, San Mateo, CA 94402

**Renew Your
Membership Now!**

All Contributions are tax deductible



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