



# Wandering & Wondering

**John Maybury**

## BLOCK BIG WAVE

Committee for Green Foothills (CGF, [greenfoothills.org](http://greenfoothills.org)) has filed suit in San Mateo Superior Court against San Mateo County in an effort to prevent the controversial Big Wave Project from moving forward. Big Wave proposes to build 225,000 square feet of office and commercial space, plus housing for 50 developmentally disabled adults and 20 caregivers in a Tsunami Hazard Area next to environmentally sensitive Pillar Point Marsh in Moss Beach. "The Board of Supervisors ignored basic common sense in granting approval for this project," says Lennie Roberts, CGF legislative advocate. "This project threatens our waterways and puts dozens of our most vulnerable residents at risk. Turning a blind eye to the many real dangers associated with the Big Wave Project will not make them go away." Big Wave is the largest development San Mateo County has ever approved on the coast. It would nearly double office and commercial space between Pacifica and Santa Cruz. The 46-foot-high office park buildings would loom over single-story homes, farmed fields, and preserved open space. "California's strict environmental review laws are in place for a reason," says attorney Winter King of the law firm Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP ([smwlaw.com](http://smwlaw.com)), which represents CGF in the lawsuit. "The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors overstepped its bounds when it approved this project despite gaping holes in the environmental impact report. How will the project dispose of its sewage? What will the residential facility actually look like? These fundamental questions were never answered."

## EUROPEAN TERROR ALERT

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent events in Libya and have therefore raised their security level from "Miffed" to "Peeved." Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to "Irritated" or even "A Bit Cross." The English have not been "A Bit Cross" since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. Terrorists have been re-categorized from "Tiresome" to "A Bloody Nuisance." The last time the British issued a "Bloody Nuisance" warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the Spanish Armada. The Scots have raised their threat level from "Pissed

Off" to "Let's get the Bastards." They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years. The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from "Run" to "Hide." The only two higher levels in France are "Collaborate" and "Surrender." The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white-flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability. Italy has increased the alert level from "Shout Loudly and Excitedly" to "Elaborate Military Posturing." Two more levels remain: "Ineffective Combat Operations" and "Change Sides." The Germans have increased their alert state from "Disdainful Arrogance" to "Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs." They also have two higher levels: "Invade a Neighbor" and "Lose." Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels. The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy. Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from "No worries" to "She'll be alright, Mate." Two more escalation levels remain: "Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this weekend!" and "The barbie is canceled." So far no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level. (John Cleese, British writer, actor, and tall person)

## UNDERWATER PARKS

Northern California Marine Protected Areas ([caloceans.org](http://caloceans.org)) stretch from Alder Creek in Mendocino to Pigeon Point in San Mateo County. One year ago, this system of undersea parks was created to protect treasured coastal areas such as Bodega Head, Point Reyes, Fitzgerald, and the Farallones Islands. It connects with a network of protected areas along the central coast, and will eventually form part of the statewide system called for in the Marine Life Protection Act. California's marine protected areas act as sanctuaries for marine plants and animals, but they also give visitors a chance to learn about sea life, and function like living laboratories where scientists can study

the impacts of different activities on ocean systems. Coastal residents helped to design the north central coast's marine protected areas, and they continue to play a hands-on role in their management, helping to staff citizen science programs, educate the public about new rules, and keep their eyes on the water. Right now, government and community groups are working together to gather information the state can use to assess the effectiveness of the new protected areas.

## GREAT BLUE HUNTER

Around Oceana High School in Sharp Park, a great blue heron stalks, catches, and eats gophers. I tried to capture the drama with my trusty Blackberry, but I couldn't get close enough for a good shot. So I put out a call for help, and Lee A. Haynes sent me jpegs and his Flickr stream for posting on Pacifica Riptide, including the Oceana heron (see below) and several nice surf shots.

## GREASE THIEVES

Rises in fuel prices have led to an increase in the number of used fryer grease rustlers roaming restaurant alleys in the United States. Grease thefts have spiked whenever fuel prices climbed during the last four years and this spring is no different, according to Tom Cook, president of the National Renderers Association. "It's on the rise and it's because of higher oil prices," Cook told Reuters in a telephone interview. "I have one member who told me it's costing his business \$1 million a year." Recyclers typically contract with restaurants to pick up the waste product. The grease is cleaned and sold for use as biofuel, livestock feed and other products. Processed fryer oil is not trash. It is called yellow grease and is traded. Its value is driven by higher prices of

gas and ethanol. Recyclers and collectors pay restaurants about 18 cents a pound for grease. After further processing, it can be sold for 42 to 45 cents a pound, said Cook, who is based in Alexandria, Virginia. Yellow grease was trading for less than 8 cents a pound in 2000. Cook said he plans to conduct an industry-wide survey to determine the extent of the losses. Many restaurant owners don't realize what they are losing and local law enforcement agencies have other crime-fighting priorities, he said. One way to curb demand for stolen grease is to alert potential buyers, especially in the feed industry, to only buy from known sources to ensure the product they receive is free of impurities and moisture, Cook said. "The price (of yellow grease) is real good right now," he said, "and those who steal it are really getting a good deal because they're not paying for it." (Reuters)

## SITeseer

Jake Sigg's newsletter goes online: [naturenewssf.blogspot.com](http://naturenewssf.blogspot.com)

## BOOK OF THE WEEK

"The Elements of Style" by Strunk/White/Kalman (illustrated Penguin paperback reference book)

## SWAMI SEZ

"A world without lasagna is a world without love." (Giovanni Mayburro)

## MAYBURRITOVILLE

Columnist: Pacifica Tribune, Loma Prieta (Sierra Club)  
 Blogger: [PacificaRiptide.com](http://PacificaRiptide.com)  
 Copyeditor: [goofbuster.com](http://goofbuster.com)  
 Teacher: Inner Editor class  
 Email address: [mayburrito@goofbuster.com](mailto:mayburrito@goofbuster.com)

