



# CRC's GREEN SCENE

*A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College*

September/October 2015  
Volume 8, Issue 1

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## Transit Tales: Stories from Readers about their Light Rail Commutes

*Fred Deneke reports...*

I was making good use of my transit time to read a recent *Scientific American* article about global climate change. He was staring at me, perhaps about to ask me for money. Now, I've never been scared on light rail—though I've occasionally been annoyed by others. Still, I was unprepared for him to ask, "What do you think about what happened in Ferguson and Baltimore?" I tried to ascertain his motives so that I could decide how honest I cared, or dared, to be. But then we dialogued for about 30 minutes on race, racism, politics, police, and discrimination. He was stunned that our thoughts and feelings aligned. I was surprised that he defended many of the actions by police.

Challenges with vision have prevented me from driving since 2005. I wish I could say that I take mass transit just to promote sustainability, reduce pollution and congestion (and stress), and save money. But my body also benefits from the regular exercise, my mind enjoys keeping up with my reading piles, and my spirit soars by being spared the reckless drivers rushing without regard to others. There's also time to think, daydream, and people-watch. How much justification does one need for

*(see Light Rail, Page 2)*



### Students for a Sustainable Future Launch New Website

Students and staff interested in learning about SSF should check out its new online presence at [CRCSSFClub.com](http://CRCSSFClub.com). There you will find information about club goals and initiatives as well as ways you can get involved with SSF campaigns. You are also welcome at weekly club meetings, Fridays from 10:30-11:30am in L105.



*Light rail's new Blue Line includes four new stations (at Morrison Creek, Franklin, Center Parkway, and CRC) with drought resistant landscaping and water-bottle filling stations.*



## Light Rail Commute Stretches Horizons

(From page 1)

choosing a 25-minute walk followed by 40 minutes of light rail over 20 minutes by car?

I've impatiently awaited light rail to CRC. I now save 10 to 30 minutes per day, free from anxieties about the timeliness of busses at CRC and Meadowview. Unfortunately, however, many of society's advancements erode human contact. A wall of separation from light rail drivers has replaced

the pleasant demeanor of—and conversations with—my favorite bus drivers. But there are always my fellow riders. I have not seen my serendipitous friend again, but I appreciate him stretching my horizons to make the journey enjoyable regardless of the destination.

*Editors' Note:* We want to hear *your* tales of riding light rail—or other forms of public transit. Send us your stories! ♦

## Detroit RISEUP Internship has Surprise Focus

*Jaime Gonzalez reports...*

I wasn't quite sure what kind of academic adventure I had gotten myself into this summer when I was awarded a RISEUP internship with Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. I just knew it would be nice to get out of Sacramento for a while, especially to do sustainability work. The RISEUP (Research Internship for a Sustainable Environment with Undergraduate Participation) program solicits hundreds of applications from undergraduates across the country and then selects four or five lucky individuals to spend the summer doing high-level academic research at Wayne State University, Detroit's premiere research institution.

I arrived in Michigan mid-May, settled into my dorm room, and was immediately put to work on my research project: The Role of Environmental Education & Community Outreach on the Organizational Sustainability of the Belle Isle Aquarium. To my surprise, the focus of my project did not fit the traditional definition of sustainability that I was familiar with. Instead, the focus was on “organizational

sustainability”—essentially, how an organization can continue to thrive and complete its mission over time. The case study for my research was the Belle Isle Aquarium (BIA). Situated on an island in the Detroit River, the Belle Isle Aquarium opened in 1904 and is the oldest continuously operating aquarium in the United States. Its age and a controversial closure from 2007 to 2012 made it a fascinating case study.

I spent three months conducting

research both on and off the island and reached a number of conclusions about the BIA. Although the aquarium has environmental education and community outreach programs in place, their impact is limited because public awareness of these programs is extremely low. Increasing visibility and expanding capacity of these programs will help boost attendance and help the BIA take another step towards becoming sustainable once again. I was able to present these results in front of several judges at an undergraduate research symposium. Although I didn't place into any prize categories, I was still tremendously proud of my project and of all of the work I had put into it over the summer.

The RISEUP internship was a truly formative learning experience that challenged me every step of the way. I feel so fortunate to have had this kind of experience as an undergraduate community-college student, and I hope more CRC students will feel inspired to apply for RISEUP next year. Detroit is an amazing city, and the program is really unlike any other. ♦



*CRC student Jaime Gonzalez in front of the Belle Isle Aquarium in Michigan during his Summer 2015 internship.*

## SSF's New Initiative: Seize the Grid!



*César Aguirre reports...*

Energy. Our campus demands large volumes of it daily to power everything from heating and air to lighting—not to mention all our electronics. Where

and how is all of this energy produced? What are the effects of its production? These are the concerns that prompted the Students For a Sustainable Future's new undertaking: Seize The Grid.

Yes, our campus does boast two sets of solar arrays. However, a significant portion of the energy needed to fuel campus demands is derived from the combustion of fossil fuels. And yet we have the potential to be purchasing and investing in—as well as generating—our own renewable, equitable, and clean energy options. Tapping into this potential is the plan for the new campaign. Partnering with the Sierra Student Coalition, and with the combined effort of student

groups on other campuses across the nation, the SSF Green Hawks seek to transition not only CRC but also the entire Los Rios Community College District towards 100% clean-energy by 2030.

The research phase is already under way. The Hawks have been tracking campus energy usage through Dashboard (see *Green Scene* April/May 2014) and working with campus operations to establish the sources of CRC's energy as well as its costs, with a view to comparing purchasing prices for conventional and alternative energy sources. ♦

## When you see CRC's browning lawns, think 'The New California Gold'!

*Dave Andrews reports...*

I have been in the horticulture industry for 30 years. I started as a water-well-drilling apprentice; now I am an active licensed landscape contractor, water manager, and, for the last 20 years, an educator. One truth I have learned from my experiences working with water is that California is in a state of perpetual drought. Historically, the way we have used water in California is simply not sustainable, and our current drought situation has brought to light the immediate need for a change in our water consumption—especially when it comes to outdoor water use.

The Grounds Maintenance Department for Los Rios Community College District has been very proactive in water conservation here at CRC (as well as at the other colleges and college centers in the District). Through the use of smart controllers and water-efficient irrigation sprinklers, Grounds has been able to manage more closely the water being applied to campus landscaping.

During this current water crisis, Grounds has made some tough decisions in selecting the most important parts of campus to irrigate and in minimizing or eliminating irrigation where it is not critical. Peter Bowman, head of Grounds for the

District, reports that the goal is to use an appropriate amount of water to keep athletic fields and campus trees healthy, while cutting back on unnecessary watering of turf.

Although CRC has its own well for irrigation and is not legally bound by the current water restrictions, Grounds is adhering as much as possible to the two-day-per-week watering restrictions in order to conserve ground water resources. Turf areas that are currently suffering or have died off will be replaced in the future when critical drought conditions have eased and more water is available, and new landscape areas are being planted with drought-tolerant and low-water-use plant material. ♦

## Cosumnes River College Sustainability Committee

### Members:

Dave Andrews  
Steven Coughran  
John Ellis (Chair)  
Cindy Erickson  
Maninder Ghuman  
Cath Hooper  
Bob Johnson  
Christina Ocrant  
Sarah Pollock  
Andrea Salmi  
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Debra Sharkey  
Linnell Violet

### Student Members:

César Aguirre  
Jaime Gonzalez  
Jose Patino

### Newsletter:

Cindy Erickson  
Cath Hooper  
Christina Ocrant



*We're on the web!*

Look for archived issues  
of the  
**GREEN SCENE**  
on the CRC Homepage

## Take Back the Tap Update

*Jaime Gonzalez reports...*

The last check-in with SSF Club on the status of the CRC Takes Back The Tap Campaign came on the heels of a huge Tapapalooza contest victory last spring semester. The club worked hard, collecting more sustainability pledges than any other college in the country, and was awarded \$1500 of funding from Food and Water Watch for their efforts. When the students returned in the fall, the club was ready to decide how best to use their funds to support the Take Back the Tap campaign. In keeping with the campaign's focus of enabling student access to free, clean tap water, club members have voted that a majority of the funds be used to purchase another hydration station, to be placed on



campus in an appropriate area of the club's choosing. Any remaining funds will go towards more Klean Kanteen® bottles to help support the campaign and provide students with affordable, high quality, reusable water bottles.

The campaign will soon shift its focus towards drafting anti-bottled-water legislation, to be passed as a student senate resolution that would prohibit the use of student funds for purchasing bottled water for student events. This resolution would also target the Student Development Office to prevent staff from selling bottled water as a fundraiser. Check the next issue of the *Green Scene* to learn about campaign developments during the Fall 2015 semester. ♦

## CRC Community Garden Update

*Dave Andrews reports...*

For 15 years, the CRC horticulture program has been planning to develop a garden site with the hope that it can serve as, among other things, a campus community garden.

Many campus programs and organizations have been interested in taking part in the development of the garden, and their input has shaped the plan into a site that can serve as a farm-to-fork garden for the culinary program, a plant-based-nutrition garden for the nutrition program, a laboratory space and green-waste composting demonstration area for the horticulture program, and hopefully a community garden space for CRC staff and students. We have some district hurdles to cross when it comes to the community-garden aspect, but with the approval

of the college, we hope to move into development of the site very soon.

The 10,000 square-foot space on the north side of campus is currently occupied by the light rail construction contractors. With completion of the light rail project coming to a close, we expect that space to be free for development sometime in the next year. When the space does become available, the horticulture program will fence the site and begin construction of composting facilities and garden spaces, using materials purchased through grants and donated by local businesses.

Meetings will be organized in late fall and throughout spring to finalize the garden plan. Anyone interested in helping plan the space should feel free to contact me in the horticulture department. ♦