



The Splash

Fall/Winter 2020

General Meeting:

Virtual Meeting
Date to be announced

Upcoming Events

- **Community Garden Design Workshop for Cary Drive Property**
<https://sanleandrocommunitygardendesign.ventbrite.com> Saturdays, November 7 and 14
- **Viewing of the film, "The Story of Plastic"** with discussion, Sunday November 15
Zoom 4:00 PM—invitations will be emailed to you
- **Creek Cleanups TBD** Group volunteer activities are not yet cleared through the City of San Leandro

This Issue: The Strange Year

As with many folks around the world, we at FSLC seemingly disappeared for the last several months. We didn't really, but I wasn't allowed "here" - meaning my office at City Hall. And because of my status as a part time employee, I was also not allowed to work from home. It was really a hard time - a bit of reflection of relevancy occurred. It was never a question of the importance of the FSLC, but of my own status. It was limbo, a purgatory of work on hold. I think we all had to dig deep to what mattered to get through.

While we have all been indoors sheltering in place, the natural (Continued in next column)

world still went on (Earth abides!). In fact, many species of animals enjoyed a brief respite from all the loud human related activity. Many came out and made themselves comfortable in our absence. Scientists called this brief but quiet time, "anthropause—the dramatic slowdown in human activity caused by the pandemic".¹ As you have seen or suspected, some excellent, if not fleeting things have occurred in the natural world. Unfortunately, there were plenty of not-so-great things that befell the Earth as well. Below is a bit of *the good*, and of course *the bad* of this epic Covid 19 year.



The Bad:

- Online shopping, among other things, from household goods to food items have spiked plastic use and disposal. Inorganic and shipping waste have both increased due to quarantine practices. Discarded face masks now dot the streets and trails that we frequent. Other medical waste has increased worldwide. Some hospitals are producing up to 6 times more medical waste than before the outbreak. Many countries have halted their recycling programs with fears of the virus being carried on product surfaces². Unfortunately, one time use bags is one thing that has rebounded during Covid. Plastic bag ordinances around the Bay had changed trash itself -

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Officers and Board of Directors:

President Michael Gregory; *Vice President* Steve Wiley, *Secretary* Jan Woycheshin, *Treasurer* Carol Bardoff, *Membership Coordinator* Claudia Taurean, *Member at Large* Mike Vukman
Watershed Awareness Coordinator/Newsletter Editor Susan Levenson

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 105(c)(3) non-profit organization made up of citizens, students, and businesses dedicated to improving community understanding and awareness of San Leandro Creek and its watershed.

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and was quite noticeable to those of us engaged in habitual creek cleanups. The plastic industry has had a boon with slacks in policy. Cities and states have rolled back bans with fear of spreading the virus on surfaces. "The plastic industry seized on the pandemic as an opportunity to try to convince people that single use plastic is necessary to keep us safe, and that reusables are dirty and dangerous," said John Hocevar, ocean campaign director at Greenpeace. "The fact that neither of these things is supported by the best available science was irrelevant."³

- The Amazon Rainforest in Brazil has really taken a beating. Between January and April of this year, 464 square *miles* of the rainforest were razed by illegal loggers and miners. The Brazilian President, Bolsonaro, known for lax environmental standards has done little to enforce laws against poaching. Destruction of the Amazon surged to an 11-year high last year and continues to climb in 2020. "The pandemic has not helped because there are apparently less agents out there, and illegal loggers obviously don't care about the virus in remote areas of the Amazon," said Paulo Barreto, senior researcher for non-profit Amazon institute Imazon.⁴



Human in 2019



Human in 2020

- Many international negotiations have been delayed due to Covid-19. In what started as the Paris Climate Accord (COPD 21) in 2015, the world pledged to keep global temperatures from rising more than 2-degrees. It is now known that despite those actions there could possibly be a catastrophic 3-degree increase. Due to Covid the United Nations Climate Change Conference, (COP26) has now been delayed until 2021. Hopefully the US *will then* be an active participant. The World Conservation Congress, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the 2020 Ocean Conference and the High Seas Treaty were all due to take place this year and have all been delayed.⁵ Even the EPA has announced that it will temporarily "exercise enforcement discretion" on environmental law violations. Companies have been left to monitor themselves because of their now lax penalties. Gina McCarthy, head of the EPA under the Obama administration, now president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, called it "an open license to pollute."⁶
- Donald Trump recently rolled back US Environmental measures such as waiving environmental review for infrastructure projects such as highways and pipelines. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has been allowed new "flexibility" to put aside normal rules and reviews with these projects.⁷

The Good:

- Many beaches were "empty" due to less folks outside. Lack of tourism everywhere prompted
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an absence of beach trash and to some even made the appearance of water clearer.

“One thing I have seen spread faster than coronavirus: Connection – with family, friends, and our communities.”
— Charles F. Glassman

Sea turtles in Indonesia ventured ashore to lay eggs for the first time in decades. Turtles on Florida beaches experienced similar rises. Fewer vehicles and industry sparked less environmental sound cause by engines and social activities. Folks were required to work from home (when allowed!) bringing traffic down to a whisper, unlike the roar we have become used to.

- More people worldwide shopped less and started their own gardens. Individuals have revised their diets and have reconsidered meat consumption. Growing one's own groceries has caused a step away from processed foods. Cooking at home became the norm - requiring less resources expended in processing, packaging and transporting - lowering restaurants' carbon footprint. Seeing empty shelves during those initial days caused many to *waste less* due to *having less*.
- Walking and riding bikes increased here and all over. In Oakland a program called Slow Streets banned cars on 74 miles of its streets. Other cities were encouraged by this to follow suite. Hopefully these practices have been around long enough to become habits.⁹
- Some countries took the opportunity to really make changes. Germany endeavors to explore clean energy; spending 1/3 of their stimulus plan budget (\$145 billion) on public transportation, electric vehicles and renewable energy. They have agreed to put *no money into combustion engines*. They are finding ways to lower the cost of clean energy and support sustainable agriculture. South Korea has committed to a goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 - their *Green New Deal*, making them (if it becomes law) the first Asian country to do so. France is attempting to be the largest producer of electric cars in Europe, even giving incentives to folks to turn in their old vehicles for lower-emissions cars.

What's next:

I know I'm preaching to the choir when it comes to you - the Friend in Friends of San Leandro Creek. You've already rethought how you live, what you eat, where you shop. And this is one of the most powerful things we can do - model how we live. Our care shows and others will see and learn from it. Who knows how long Covid will rule us and our activities? Being cognizant of the negatives and spotlighting the positives makes positive actions grow. FSLC hope you and our delicate world hold on until the positive becomes the norm.

Make sure to tell everyone to sign up for our viewing of the **Story of Plastic** on November 15.



1 Erik Stokstad "The pandemic stilled human activity. What did this 'anthropause' mean for wildlife?" <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/08/pandemic-stilled-human-activity-what-did-anthropause-mean-wildlife> Science Magazine Aug. 13, 2020

2 Elsevier "Science of the Total Environment Volume 728" [ScienceDirect.com](https://www.sciencedirect.com) Stoten (August 1, 2020a)

3 Emma Newburger "Plastic waste surges as coronavirus prompts restaurants to use more disposable packaging" www.cnn.com/2020/06/28/us/plastic-waste-surge-coronavirus-restaurants/index.html CNBC JUNE 28, 2020

4 Reuters "Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon surges, Bolsonaro readies Troops" [www.NYTimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com) New York Times May 8, 2020

5 Elsevier "Science of the Total Environment Volume 728" [ScienceDirect.com](https://www.sciencedirect.com) Stoten (August 1, 2020b)

6 The New York Times "E.P.A. Citing Coronavirus, Directly Relaxes Rules for Polluters" <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/us/politics/e-p-a-coronavirus-polluters.html> / New York Times March 3, 2020

7 Emma Newburger "Trump Weakens Environmental Law to Speed up Permits for Pipelines and other Infrastructure" <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/15/trump-to-weaken-national-environmental-policy-act.html> CNBC July 15, 2020

8 Laura Geggel "Baby Leatherback sea turtles thriving due to Covid 19 beach restrictions" <https://www.livescience.com/leatherback-sea-turtle-babies-thrive-covid-19-pandemic.html> Live Science 04/21/2020

9 Renee Cho "COVID-19's Long-Term Effects on Climate Change—For Better or Worse" blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2020/06/25/covid-19-climate-change/ Earth Institute JUNE 25, 2020

We're on the web:
www.fslc.org



The **San Leandro Creek Watershed Awareness Program** is a comprehensive watershed education program funded by Alameda County Flood Control and Conservation District, with additional support from the City of San Leandro, implemented by Friends of San Leandro Creek. Thank you to the following for your continued support: Alameda County Public Works, The City of San Leandro, The Watershed Project, and FSLC Members and Volunteers like you.

Friends of San Leandro Creek Membership Application

Yes, I would like to become a member/renew my membership in the following category: (Please circle one)

- Student \$ 1
 - Individual \$5
 - Family \$15
- Non-Profit \$25
 - Business \$100

Make checks and please remit to:

Friends of San Leandro Creek
C/O RHSD
835 E. 14th St.
San Leandro, CA 94577

Friends of San Leandro Creek is a 501(c) (3) not for profit corporation. Your donations are tax deductible

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I have a special skill or interest in: _____

