



# **SAN DIEGO**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**

### ***The Future of Conservation***

**September 17, 2022**  
**San Diego State University**  
**Alumni Center Fowler Ballroom**

*The Environmental Center of San Diego recognizes that we all rest on the ancestral homeland of the Kumeyaay Nation. The Environmental Center offers its respect and gratitude to the Kumeyaay people who have lived here since time immemorial.*

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*Sierra Club San Diego Chapter*

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# Agenda

**9:00 AM**

Check in

**9:15 AM**

**Kumeyaay Blessing of the Summit: Bobby Wallace**

Kumeyaay - First Peoples of San Diego

Introduction by Pam Heatherington

**9:20 AM**

Welcome: Pam Heatherington

**9:25 AM**

## **Keynote Speaker**

**Dr. Jennifer Norris**

Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat

**California Natural Resources Agency**

**10:00 AM**

**Session 1**

## **Broadening the Scope of Ecological Conservation**

Past conservation practices and efforts have focused on saving important pieces of our environment. That emphasis has forced difficult choices in what and where to make commitments and how to optimize the benefits of conservation. Looking forward, our efforts have to address both the existential threats from climate change as well as changing expectations about where, what, when and how conservation efforts fit with competing - and historically unmet - needs. This panel provides insight into how local entities are successfully making that happen.

## **Session 1 - Panelists**

**Dr. Jeff Crooks:** Research Coordinator,  
Tijuana River National Estuarine  
Research Reserve

**Tito Marchant:** Ecology Director,  
Nature Collective

**Andrew Meyer:** Director of Conservation,  
San Diego Audubon Society  
Program Manager,  
ReWild Mission Bay Coalition

**Clayton Tschudy:** Executive Director,  
San Diego Canyonlands

## **Moderator**

**Bill Tippets:** Southwest Wetlands Interpretive  
Association

**11:00 AM**

**Session 2**

## **Funding the 30 x 30 Roadmap**

With millions of dollars in dedicated funding in the 2022-23 state budget, it's safe to say that California's statewide 30x30 initiative has finally advanced to the implementation stage. In this panel, we'll hear from representatives of the public agencies tasked with doling out state funding for local conservation projects. Additionally, we'll gain both a tribal and county watershed perspective on what our regional priorities should be. Our goal is to demystify the funding process so that San Diego County's environmental community can work together to successfully advance our regional conservation goals.

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**Session 2 - Panelists**

**Crystal Benham:** Program Director,  
San Diego County Watersheds

**Megan Cooper:** Southcoast Regional Manager,  
Coastal Conservancy

**Rebecca Fris:** Assistant Executive Director,  
Wildlife Conservation Board

**David Mayer:** Senior Environmental Scientist,  
California Department of Fish  
and Wildlife

**Bobby Wallace:** Kumeyaay - First Peoples of  
San Diego

**Mary Beth Woulfe:** Fish & Wildlife Biologist and  
Section 6 Coordinator,  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Moderator**

**Mitch Silverstein:** Policy Manager,  
Surfrider Foundation San Diego  
County

**12:15 PM  
Lunch**

**12:45 PM**

**Session 3**

**Engaging Youth in Conservation**

As we look to the future, we must find and support the next generation of conservation activists. Join moderator Steffani Clark-Jijon in getting to know and learning from a panel of young environmentalists ranging from high school students to recent college graduates.

**Session 3 - Panelists**

**Sree Kandhadai:** San Diego Audubon Society

**Vanessa Munoz:** Hispanic Access Panel

**Lucero Sanchez:** San Diego Coastkeeper

**Bella Santos:** San Diego 350

**Juan Troncoso:** Escondido Creek Conservancy

**Eelyn Xiong:** Girl Scouts for  
Environmental Action

**Moderator**

**Steffani Clark-Jijon:** Educator,  
Escondido Creek Conservancy

**1:45 PM**

**Closing Remarks**

Pam Heatherington



**SAN DIEGO**  
ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

**Goals for the 6th Annual Environmental Leadership Summit**

*The Future of Conservation*

- To invite all organizations to forge an affirm a collective vision to fund a sustainable San Diego.
- To feature and celebrate the coalition-based environmental efforts to date and to encourage participation in these coalitions shared values.

**Dr. Jennifer Norris - Keynote Speaker Biography**

Jennifer serves as Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat at the California Natural Resources Agency. She leads the state's 30x30 initiative and oversees "Cutting Green Tape" in support of landscape scale habitat restoration. Jennifer has held numerous positions in federal and state government including most recently as supervisor of the Sacramento Office for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. She has extensive experience in conservation policy, endangered species protection and ecosystem management. She holds a B.S. in Resource Policy and Planning from Cornell University, an M.S. in Conservation Biology from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of New Mexico. When she is not at work, Jennifer can be found exploring wild beaches, forests, and deserts with her family.

Email: [californianature@resources.ca.gov](mailto:californianature@resources.ca.gov)

## **Session 1 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Panelists**

**Jeff Crooks** - Research Coordinator, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. Jeff Crooks started studying the coastal wetlands of San Diego in the late 1980's as a graduate student, focusing on the ecology of invasive species in urbanized ecosystems. Since 2002, he has worked for the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association as the Research Coordinator of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. He leads the Reserve's Research and Monitoring Programs, and has been involved in a variety of efforts focused on wetlands conservation and restoration in Southern California.

Email: [jcrooks@trnerr.org](mailto:jcrooks@trnerr.org)

**Tito Marchant** - Ecology Director, Nature Collective. Tito is an ecologist with 28 years of technical experience including wildlife and entomological studies, rare plant species monitoring, development of habitat management plans, design-build native habitat restoration for sensitive species, and the design and implementation of large-scale ecological monitoring programs. His research has focused on the conservation of rare plants, population genetics of narrow endemics, and pollination ecology. Tito is the Ecology Director at Nature Collective.

Email: [Tito.Marchant@NatureCollective.org](mailto:Tito.Marchant@NatureCollective.org)

**Andrew Meyer** - Director of Conservation, San Diego Audubon Society/Program Manager, ReWild Mission Bay Coalition. Andrew is the Director of Conservation for San Diego Audubon and the ReWild Mission Bay program manager. He has a Masters in Geography from the University of Colorado, Boulder. He works with great staff members and fantastic volunteers to support conservation advocacy projects and get on-the-ground habitat conservation accomplished for birds, other wildlife and their habitat. His favorite bird memories involve oystercatchers on Anacapa Island, auklets and albatrosses on the Aleutian Islands and Short-eared Owl at Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge. Email: [meyer@sandiegoaudubon.org](mailto:meyer@sandiegoaudubon.org)

## **Session 1 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Panelists**

**Clayton Tschudy** - Executive Director, San Diego Canyonlands. Clayton Tschudy is the Executive Director of San Diego Canyonlands, a community and environmental nonprofit focused on the promotion, protection, and restoration of the urban habitats in coastal San Diego. Clayton is an environmental biologist and botanist with 20 years experience in nonprofit management, environmental restoration, and sustainable horticulture. Before his tenure at Canyonlands, he was the Director of Horticulture at the Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. He has served on the Board for numerous organizations including California Native Plant Society San Diego, the Pacific Horticulture Society, and the Wildlife Advisory Board consulting on environmental planning and management for the Port of San Diego.

Email: [clayton@sdcanyonlands.org](mailto:clayton@sdcanyonlands.org)

### **Moderator**

**Bill Tippetts** - Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association. Bill Tippetts is an ecologist and conservation biologist who has worked on environmental issues throughout California for over 40 years with California State Parks and Department of Fish and Wildlife, County Water Authority and The Nature Conservancy. He helped launch and managed the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Natural Community Conservation Program in southern California. His project and policy work has spanned evaluating river outflow requirements for the San Francisco Bay-Delta, habitat protection and restoration, and advocacy for climate change mitigation and adaptation policies and practices. He currently serves on the Board of the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association.

Email: [billtippetts@gmail.com](mailto:billtippetts@gmail.com)

## **Session 2 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Panelists**

**Crystal Benham** - Program Director, San Diego County Watersheds. County of San Diego Watershed Protection Program Manager (Department of Public Works). Crystal has nearly 15 years of experience working in the fields of sustainability and water resources management. She currently serves as the Manager of the County's Watershed Protection Program where she oversees stormwater management programs as well as the County's capital program for green stormwater infrastructure. In her current role, Crystal is also heavily involved in County efforts related to improving water quality in the Tijuana River Valley and addressing other long-term community issues associated with water quality. Prior to serving in this role, Crystal was a Group Program Manager in the County's Department of Parks and Recreation where she oversaw environmental compliance and sustainability programs, including working on the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program. Prior to her time at the County, Crystal was a consultant working in the fields of water resources and conservation planning. She holds a bachelor's degree in Ecology from UCSD and a master's degree in Conservation Planning from the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at UCSB.

Email: [Crystal.Benham@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Crystal.Benham@sdcounty.ca.gov)

**Megan Cooper, M.S.** - South Coast Regional Manager, Coastal Conservancy. Megan Cooper is the Regional Manager for Southern California at the Coastal Conservancy. Ms. Cooper is a marine ecologist with over 20 years of experience in coastal restoration. She became Regional Manager at the Conservancy in January 2019 and prior to that was the Deputy Regional Manager and a project manager for 11 years. Ms. Cooper has expertise in coastal wetlands and nearshore restoration, with an emphasis in repairing ecosystem functions and improving resilience, particularly in light of sea-level rise. She was a primary editor of

## **Session 2 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Panelists (Megan Cooper, M.S. – Continued)**

the landmark report, *Wetlands on the Edge: The Future of Southern California's Wetlands* (2018), a science-based report that laid the groundwork for the survival of coastal wetlands. For the past 15 years she has managed the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, a collaboration of 18 State and Federal agencies that work together to identify and seek funding for coastal restoration projects. The Wetlands Recovery Project has attracted over \$600 million dollars towards coastal restoration over the last twenty years. As a Regional Manager at the Conservancy, Ms. Cooper administers millions of dollars in grant funds each year to local partners throughout Southern California who are undertaking the excellent projects that help the Conservancy meet its mission to preserve and provide access to California's iconic coastline. Email: With millions of dollars in dedicated funding in the 2022-23 state budget, it's safe to say that California's statewide 30x30 initiative has finally advanced to the implementation stage. In this panel, we'll hear from representatives of the public agencies tasked with doling out state funding for local conservation projects. Additionally, we'll gain both a tribal and county watershed perspective on what our regional priorities should be. Our goal is to demystify the funding process so that San Diego County's environmental community can work together to successfully advance our regional conservation goals. Email: [Megan.Cooper@scc.ca.gov](mailto:Megan.Cooper@scc.ca.gov)

**Rebecca Fris** - Assistant Executive Director, Wildlife Conservation Board. Rebecca has been the Assistant Executive Director at the Wildlife Conservation Board since late 2018 where she oversees 15 different grant programs implementing acquisition, restoration and public access projects statewide. She has over 25 years of experience with both state and federal government in ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation. She also was the first US Fish and Wildlife Service

## **Session 2 - Biographies and Contact Information**

**Panelists (Rebecca Fris – Continued)** - Science Coordinator for the California Landscape Conservation Cooperative, a state-management partnership that brings climate science to landscape conservation. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Masters in Environmental Management in resource ecology from Duke School of the Environment.

Email: [Rebecca.Fris@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Fris@wildlife.ca.gov)

**David Mayer:** Environmental Program Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Dave earned his Bachelor of Arts in Aquatic Biology from UC Santa Barbara, Master of Science in Biology from San Diego State University. Dave has worked as a wildlife biologist for two different consulting firms for approximately 10 years before joining the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife where he has spent the last 23 years closely involved with the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) program.

Email: [david.mayer@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:david.mayer@wildlife.ca.gov)

**Bobby Wallace** - Kumeyaay-First peoples of San Diego Barona Band of Mission Indians and still reside in my tribal land. Former Casino Executive, Vice Chair of Barona Gaming Commission, current Chair of Barona Election Board, on the Traditional Gathering Committee, Museum Committee, Yuman Language Steering Committee, Longest Walk Chief, #2 Business owner-President-CEO, Green New Deal Member, Traditional Song helper, a husband, father and grandfather. I fight for climate justice, racism, fight against nuclear waste at San Onofre with Samuel Lawrence Foundation and Mike Levin and sit on the Committee. I led the Bee and Climate Walk in 2019 across Yuman Territory, personally slowed the WALL construction down to stop the desecration of my ancestors remains, I am the oldest member that works to stop desecration on the Upper San Diego River Park, helped make it happen- now am spearheading the stop of sand

## **Session 2 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Panelists (Bobby Wallace – Continued)**

mining in the SD River at El Monte Valley-more sacred site desecration. I will be taking all the data from the longest walk 2016, 2017, 2018 against drug/alcohol abuse and domestic violence to congress. True and real data to make it possible that more money goes to the people for our monster drug storm in our country.

Email: [bwallacewlf@aol.com](mailto:bwallacewlf@aol.com)

**Mary Beth Woulfe** - Fish & Wildlife Biologist and Section 6 Coordinator, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Conservation Partnership Division. Mary Beth is a senior biologist and Section 6 Coordinator for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Carlsbad/Palm Spring Fish and Wildlife Offices. She received her BS from California State University Sacramento/San Diego and then went to work for the USFWS. She has worked in the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office for over 28 years throughout southern California- San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Orange counties. In her position at the USFWS, Mary Beth works closely with partners from the State, local, non-governmental organizations, as well as Department of Defense on grant proposals for land acquisitions, regional conservation planning, restoration projects, and species recovery projects. Throughout her career, Mary Beth has worked on the development and implementation of many of southern California's regional conservation plans.

Email: [marybeth\\_woulfe@fws.gov](mailto:marybeth_woulfe@fws.gov)

## **Session 2 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Moderator**

**Mitch Silverstein** - Policy Manager, Surfrider Foundation San Diego County. Mitch hails from Southern California and spent 10+ years in the San Francisco Bay Area before relocating to San Diego in 2015. As an activist, he strives to raise awareness of how our everyday choices affect the ocean & planet, and advocates for sensible environmental policy at a local level. His ultimate goal is to see good environmental stewardship become mainstream, even “cool.” Mitch served in various volunteer leadership positions before being hired on as Surfrider San Diego Chapter Manager in 2018. In 2022, Mitch transitioned to the chapter’s policy role. He aims to serve as a voice for San Diego’s coast at the local, regional, and state government levels. When not fighting the good fight, Mitch likes to surf, paddle, roller skate, and hang out with his nieces. He’s also a big sci-fi nerd, but don’t tell anyone.

Email: [mitch@surfridersd.org](mailto:mitch@surfridersd.org)

## **Session 3 - Biographies and Contact Information**

### **Panelists**

**Sree Kandhadai** - San Diego Audubon Society. Sree is a rising high school senior at Francis Parker school. She has been volunteering with the San Diego Audubon from when she was eight years old when she started as a Tern Watcher. She has been part of the Audubon's advocacy program for the past three years advocating for native plants, golden eagles and eelgrass. Sree has also participated in the National Audubon's Virtual Seabird Fly-Ins, where she has advocated with congress members for protection of forage fish and funding for NOAA. She is currently a docent at the Kendall-Frost Marsh and an intern at the Otay Valley Regional Park. While she wants to be a field biologist, some of her other interests include theater, writing fantasy, and music. Email: [sree.kandhadai@gmail.com](mailto:sree.kandhadai@gmail.com)

**Vanessa Munoz** - Hispanic Access Panel. Vanessa earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Management from Cal Poly Humboldt (formally known as Humboldt State University). After college, she served as an AmeriCorps at Friends of the Dunes in Arcata, California. During her time at this non-profit organization, she cultivated a passion for the conservation and protection of natural resources and ecosystems. She recognizes the inherent connection that exists between underrepresented communities and their natural surroundings. Vanessa now works at Hispanic Access Foundation, where she is thrilled to be working with an organization that encompasses her values and vision of creating opportunities and empowering individuals. During her free time, she enjoys reading, hiking, and bird watching in San Diego.

Email: [vanessa@hispanicaccess.org](mailto:vanessa@hispanicaccess.org)

**Lucero Sanchez** –Campaigns Manager San Diego Coastkeeper. Lucero is the Campaigns Manager at San Diego Coastkeeper where she supports the organization's policy and advocacy work

**Panelists (Lucero Sanchez – Continued)** through community engagement to ensure environmental justice and equity. She is also the Board President of the League of Conservation Voters San Diego and the Vice-Chair of San Diego County’s Environmental Health and Quality Advisory board. Lucero holds a B.A. in Environmental Systems from the University of California San Diego, where she specialized in Environmental Policy. Email: [lucero@sdcoastkeeper.org](mailto:lucero@sdcoastkeeper.org)

**Bella Santos** – Bella is a youth climate activist with San Diego 350 and rising senior at Westview High School. Passionate about environmental literacy and diversifying curriculum, she is involved with UCSD CREATE’s Climate Champions Youth Advisory Board and Ten Strands’ Climate Change and Environmental Justice Project’s Steering Committee to implement interdisciplinary climate education in schools statewide. Santos volunteers San Diego 350’s Youth v. Oil Campaign, developing a resolution to call on Governor Newsom to justly and urgently phase out fossil fuels. An active Girl Scout, she recently completed her Gold Award and co-leads Girls for Environmental Action, focusing on sharing climate leadership skills and building community action for younger girls. Email: [bellasantostwo@gmail.com](mailto:bellasantostwo@gmail.com)

**Moderator - Steffani Clark-Jijon** - Steffani works as an outdoor educator with The Escondido Creek Conservancy and is involved in facilitating a statewide policy coalition in support of the California Statewide Outdoor Learning initiative. Steffani has a B.S. in Zoology & Conservation Biology and a M.A. in Community-based Conservation & Inquiry-based learning. Her studies have taken her to remote areas in Mexico, Mongolia, and Kenya to learn first-hand about how cultures around the world address environmental conservation from the bottom up, partnering community leaders with scientists to develop effective and long-lasting conservation strategies. She has worked as a field biologist for several wildlife conservation organizations, as an owl behavioral acoustic researcher with the San Diego Zoo, and she currently runs her own Bilingual Outdoor Nature School in Escondido, CA. Her passion truly lies in connecting children with nature, and empowering youth to be environmental leaders and nature stewards in their communities. The challenges our world faces are many and quite concerning. She wholeheartedly believes many of the solutions to our problems lie not only in better education, but also equal access to such education, opportunities, and experiences.

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