



SAN DIEGO

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Stewardship

September 23, 2023
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.

Copied on tree-free paper

Thank You to Our Generous Sponsors

Golden Eagle

Sierra Club San Diego Chapter

San Diego Foundation

Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation

Wm. Toulis Trust

Surfrider Foundation San Diego County

Burrowing Owl

IBEW 569

Quino Checkerspot Butterfly

Todd T Cardiff Law Office

San Diego County Democrats for Environmental Action

Environmental Center of San Diego

We also appreciate the help from our friends at the

Endangered Habitats League and 350.org

Friends of Rose Creek

Agenda

8:30 AM

Check in

9:00 AM

Opening of the Summit: Robert ‘Bobby’ Wallace

Kumeyaay - First Peoples of San Diego

Introduction by Pam Heatherington

Welcome: Pam Heatherington

9:10 AM

Keynote Speaker

Assemblymember Tasha Boerner

California State Assembly

District 77

9:30 – 11:00 AM

Session 1

Taking Care of What Belongs to Everyone

In California, tidelands and navigable waters cannot be owned. Under the principle known as the Public Trust Doctrine, these tidelands, submerged lands and other navigable waterways are held in trust by the State for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the citizens of California. These rights are guaranteed by Article X, Section 4 of the California Constitution and the 1976 California Coastal Act, which requires that the public have “maximum access” to coastal lands and waters.

Session 1 – Panelists

Reid Boggiano: State Lands Commission
Public Land Management Specialist

Julia Chase: Chief Resilience Officer
City of San Diego
Planning Department

Dr. Charles Lester: Director of the Ocean and Coastal
Policy Center in the Marine Science
Institute at UC Santa Barbara

Lesley Nishihira: Director of Planning
Port of San Diego

Moderator

Matt O'Malley: Environmental Advocate and Attorney

11:00 - 12:30 PM

Session 2

**Conservation and Recreation:
Challenges Looking for Solutions**

Session 2 – Panelists

- Crystal Benham:** Chief - Resource Management
Division County of San Diego
- Mark Berninger:** Natural Resource Manager
City of San Diego
- Robert Fisher:** Supervisory Research Biologist
U.S. Geological Survey - Western
Ecological Research Center
- Libby Lucas:** Advisor to the Wildlife
Habitat Conservation Coalition
- David Mayer:** Senior Environmental Scientist
California Department of Fish
and Wildlife
- Bethany Principe:** MSCP Program Coordinator Resource
Management Division County of
San Diego Department of Parks and
Recreation
- Cristina Santa Maria:** Conservation Manager
San Diego Audubon

Moderator

- Clayton Tschudy:** Chief Executive Officer
San Diego Canyonlands

12:30 – 1:00 PM

Lunch

1:00 PM

Session 3

**Caring for the Earth as a Career
Employment Opportunities in Conservation**

“Engaging Youth in Conservation” was the theme of our youth panel at last year’s Environmental Leadership Summit. We carry this theme a bit further this year and look at turning this engagement with nature into a meaningful career.

Session 3 - Panelists

Maria (MJ) Aguirre: California Climate Action Corps
Fellow at San Diego Audubon
Society

Vanessa Munoz: Conservation Program Manager
Hispanic Access Foundation
San Diego

Allie Sifrit: Education Director for
Groundwork San Diego - Chollas
Creek

Moderator

Lucero Weber: Community Engagement Organizer
RWE Clean Energy

2:00 PM

Closing Remarks

George Heatherington



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Keynote Speaker Biography

Assemblymember Tasha Boerner, District 77

Tasha Boerner was first elected to the California State Assembly in November of 2018 and re-elected for her third term in November of 2022. She represents the 77th District, encompassing Carlsbad, Encinitas, Solana Beach, Del Mar, and the coastal communities of La Jolla south to Coronado. Tasha was selected by Speaker Anthony Rendon to chair the Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee for the 2023-24 session. She serves on the Joint Legislative Audit Committee and the following policy committees: Local Government, Health, and Veterans Affairs. In addition, she chairs the Select Committee on Sea Level Rise & the California Economy. Before serving in the State Assembly, Tasha served as a local City Councilmember, businesswoman, and former PTA leader. A fourth-generation San Diego County resident, she served as a member of the city's Planning Commission prior to her election to the Encinitas City Council in 2016. Professionally, Tasha has worked for global Fortune 500 companies, non-profits, and higher-education institutions. In response to her daughter's struggle with a sensory processing disorder, Tasha started a business designing sensory-friendly clothing for little girls. Tasha earned an M.A. in International Studies from Claremont Graduate University Institute of Politics and Policy.

Assemblymember Tasha Boerner, District 77

Biography (Continued)

She received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley. Tasha is the proud Mom of two children.

Email: Assembly.Boerner@assembly.ca.gov

Robert ‘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’s 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 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.

Session 1 - Biographies and Contact Information

Panelists

Reid Boggiano:

Reid manages the California State Lands Commission's Granted Lands Program and serves as the Commission's liaison for California ports, harbor districts, cities, and counties of the state's legislatively granted public trust lands. The State Lands Commission has a proven record of successfully facilitating and promoting maritime commerce, navigation, trade, and waterfront development and revitalization. Reid serves as the lead negotiator and project manager for various land management issues including land exchanges and title settlements, and working with trustees to facilitate waterfront and maritime development along the California coast. Email: Reid.Boggiano@slc.ca.gov

Julia Chase:

Julia Chase is the City of San Diego's first Chief Resilience Officer where she oversees implementation of its climate adaptation and resilience work program. She is currently managing citywide implementation of Climate Resilient SD, the City's comprehensive plan to address climate change driven hazards including as wildfire, heat, sea level rise, and precipitation driven flooding, as well as leading development of a Coastal Resilience Master Plan which will identify nature-based solutions for locations along the coastline that are vulnerable to sea level rise. Julia previously led the completion of the City of San Diego's Coastal Erosion Assessment, Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessments, Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, and strategy and plan development for Climate Resilient SD. Julia is a certified sustainability practitioner with over nine years of experience in climate resilience and sustainability planning. Julia has also worked in the private sector, supporting climate resilience planning at

Julia Chase Biography (Cont'd):

the local, state, and federal level, including adaptation strategy, development and prioritization, energy

resilience, innovative funding strategy, and risk assessments.

Julia holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies

and Master of Science in Environmental Science. She

is a member of the American Society of Adaptation

Professionals and the International Society of Sustainability

Professionals and holds a Sustainability Excellence

Professional and LEED Green Associate certifications.

Email: ChaseJ@sandiego.gov

Dr. Charles Lester:

Dr. Charles Lester is the director of the Ocean and Coastal Policy Center in the Marine Science Institute at UC Santa

Barbara, where he researches, writes, and advises about sea

level rise, coastal resilience, and other aspects of coastal law,

policy and management. Charles previously worked for the

State of California and the California Coastal Commission

for twenty years, including serving as the agency's fourth

executive director from 2011 to 2016. Previously, Charles was

an assistant professor of political science at the University

of Colorado, Boulder, where he taught environmental

law and policy, with a focus on public lands governance

and coastal zone management. He received his Ph.D. and

J.D. from UC Berkeley, and a B.A. in Geochemistry from

Columbia University. Charles is an expert in integrated coastal

management and California coastal law and policy. He has

extensive experience in California, including managing or

directing hundreds of coastal planning and regulatory projects

for the Coastal Commission. In 2015, he led the agency's

completion of California's first comprehensive land use

guidance for addressing sea level rise and coastal protection

on the outer coast (Sea Level Rise | Adopted Policy Guidance).

Charles speaks regularly on coastal management, adaptation

and resilience. Email: charleslester@ucsb.edu

Lesley Nishihira:

Lesley Nishihira is the Planning Director at the Port of San Diego. She has been with the Port since 2004 and has been a professional in the land use planning arena for more than 25 years. Lesley is currently responsible for managing master planning efforts, as well as environment and sustainability policy initiatives, for Port land and water areas around San Diego Bay. She has extensive experience ensuring compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the California Coastal Act, and has managed notable projects such as the Chula Vista Bayfront Master Plan and the San Diego Convention Center Phase III Expansion through the California Coastal Commission certification process. Lesley presently serves as project manager for the Port Master Plan Update, which will result in the first comprehensive update of the Port's master plan since its initial certification in 1981. Her experience has been primarily in the public sector having started her career at the City of Renton, a small municipality south of Seattle in Washington State. Lesley graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz with bachelor degrees in Environmental Studies and Politics. She also holds a professional certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners. Email: lnishihira@portofsandiego.org

Moderator

Matt O'Malley:

A long-time advocate and attorney, Matt O'Malley most recently served as the Executive Director and Managing Attorney with San Diego Coastkeeper for 9 years, where he led the organization's legal, policy, and advocacy work while overseeing and guiding the organization's education, science, and community engagement programs and staff. At Coastkeeper Matt utilized strategic traditional and cross-sector partnerships, and local, state, and national laws and regulations to further the organizational mission to protect and restore San Diego County's waterways and watersheds while ensuring humans and the environment recognize their fundamental right to clean water. Matt also serves as an Alternate Commissioner on the California Coastal Commission.

Email: mattjomalley@gmail.com

Session 2 - Biographies and Contact Information

Panelists

Crystal Benham:

Crystal is currently overseeing the Resource Management Division for County Parks. Her group covers acquisitions and biological management and monitoring of MSCP preserve lands, as well as environmental permitting and compliance for Parks capital projects. Crystal has been with the County since 2017. Prior to joining the County, Crystal worked for a local environmental consulting firm working on a variety of natural resources and water resources management projects throughout the state. Crystal holds a bachelor's degree in Ecology from UCSD and a master's degree in Environmental Science and Management from the Donald Bren School at UCSB, with an emphasis in Conservation Planning.

Email: Crystal.Benham@sdcounty.ca.gov

Mark Berninger:

Mark is currently the Natural Resource Manager for the City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation Department. He and his team of biologist are responsible for managing over 28,000 acres of Open Space, and dedicated nature preserves across the city including Mission Trails, Los Peñasquitos, and Otay Valley among others. Mark and the natural resource management team monitor over 90 separate endangered plant populations, and over 950 federally protected vernal pool wetlands. Prior to Parks and Rec Mark worked at the City's Public Utilities Department Environmental Section, managing environmental impacts for the operation and maintenance of one of the most complex water and wastewater utilities in the United States.

Email: MBerninger@sandiego.gov

Robert Fisher:

U.S. Geological Survey, Supervisory Research Biologist. Over the last 20 years our research program has worked to develop an understanding of the landscape in southern California to inform conservation planning and species recovery. Our group works at many levels, from the individual where we look at their relatedness and movement patterns, to populations and to biodiversity metrics. The team works on many types of taxa to answer these questions, from golden eagles and mountain lions, down to various invertebrate species. We have been applying many modern tools including genomics, satellite telemetry, occupancy modelling, and various type of movement models into these studies, and work closely with managers to transfer the science into policy. We additionally have focused on recovery actions for critically endangered species.

Email: rfisher@usgs.gov

Libby Lucas:

Advisor to Wildlife Habitat & Conservation Coalition.

After retiring from professional ballet dancing, she earned a bachelor's degree in science with an emphasis in ecology from SDSU and began her career as a biologist with the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) where her focus was watershed protection and advocacy for implementation of urban runoff / storm water regulations. After nine years at EHC, she worked for the local USFWS office for two years on projects involving impacts on federal waterways. From there, she went to work for CDFW, where she worked for 12 years in the NCCP Program. In retirement from CDFW, her time spent on conservation is focused on advocacy for the NCCP-HCP preserves with respect to the effects of recreation on wildlife.

Email: libbylucas5@gmail.com

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

Bethany Principe:

MSCP Program Coordinator, Resource Management Division, County of San Diego, Parks and Recreation. Beth is currently overseeing the MSCP team of the Resource Management Division. Her team implements and assists with the development of the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program including the existing South County MSCP, draft North County MSCP, future East County MSCP, and draft Butterfly Habitat Conservation Program. Beth joined the County in 2017 and has over 20 years of experience in local and regional natural resources management. Beth holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in Biology from California State University San Marcos. Email: Bethany.Principe@sdcounty.ca.gov

Cristina Santa Maria:

Cristina is passionate about habitat restoration, avian conservation planning, environmental advocacy and inspiring the same passion within the community. Cristina holds a degree in Wildlife Biology with an emphasis in Management and Conservation from Cal Poly Humboldt. She advocates for the environment on several committees and has experience working for the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance and USGS Western Ecological Research Center assisting in conservation research and monitoring locally endangered shorebird and riparian species. In her free time, she loves to spend time outdoors with her family and garden which sparked her love of native plants. Email: santamaria@sandiegoaudubon.org

Moderator**Clayton Tschudy:**

Clayton Tschudy is the CEO 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

Session 3 - Biographies and Contact Information

Panelists

Maria (MJ) Aguirre:

California Climate Action Corps Fellow MJ recently received her Master's in Wildlife Conservation and Management from Unity College. Throughout her program, she has prioritized her research on program management and wildlife in the Pacific Northwest. During her fellowship, she has worked with the education program of SDAS to educate youth on the importance of conservation work in local communities. Along with this, she has worked on conservation efforts at Anstine Audubon Nature Preserve and Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary to preserve native plants and influence the growth of biodiversity at these preserves. Outside of work she enjoys traveling, reading, and creating digital work for herself and friends. Email: aguirre@sandiegoaudubon.org

Vanessa Munoz:

Hispanic Access Foundation -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

Session 3 - Biographies and Contact Information

Panelists

Allie Sifrit:

Allie is the Education Director for Groundwork San Diego - Chollas Creek, an environmental justice non-profit that operates in Southeastern San Diego. With a Masters of Marine and Environmental Affairs and a passion for outdoor education, Allie has been leading the K-12 environmental education programs at GWSD for three years. She is committed to providing high-quality STEAM education to San Diego youth and supporting career exploration in the STEAM, environmental science and climate action fields.

Email: allie@groundworksandiego.org

Moderator

Lucero Weber:

Lucero is the Community Engagement Organizer for RWE Clean Energy, where she works to bring solar and wind energy to communities across the Western US. Prior to her current position, she served as the Campaigns Manager for San Diego Coastkeeper, where she supported the organization's policy and advocacy work through community engagement to ensure environmental justice and equity. She is the President of the League of Conservation Voters San Diego and sits on Sierra Club North County's Executive Committee and 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.b.weber@gmail.com

NOTES

Previous Summits

Sixth Annual San Diego Environmental Leadership Summit 2022
The Future of Conservation

Fifth Annual Environmental Leadership Summit 2021
Funding A Sustainable San Diego

Fourth Annual Environmental Leadership Summit 2020
***Environmental Activism & The Intersection of Racial, Social,
& Economic Justice***

Third Annual Environmental Leadership Summit 2019
Preserving Biodiversity: From Science to Action

Second Annual Environmental Leadership Summit 2018
San Diego at the Tipping Point

First Annual Environmental Leadership Summit 2017
Celebrating coalition - based environmental efforts

Tell Me Why-

Tell Me Why...
Ecosystems live.
Biodiversity thrives.
Where...man is least found.
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