

Biographies

Day 1 - Keynote Speaker

Paul Souza *Southwest Pacific Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Paul Souza has spent more than 25 years working in conservation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

He joined the Service in 1997 as a Presidential Management Fellow and went on to lead the South Florida Ecological Services Office as a field supervisor, where he led actions to recover 67 listed species and protect a host of important habitats for migratory birds, fish and other wildlife. He helped lead the effort to restore America's Everglades with partners, implementing projects to improve the health of the environment for species such as the Florida panther, wood stork and snail kite.

He later served as the Service's Deputy Assistant Director for the Ecological Services program in Headquarters. In this capacity, he provided national leadership for the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Clean Water Act and many other statutes. Paul worked closely with partners to leverage resources that benefit wildlife conservation and other important needs, such as farming and ranching, military readiness, and energy and infrastructure development. From there, he served as Assistant Director for Science Applications also in headquarters. In that role, he oversaw the nationwide network of partnership-driven Landscape Conservation Cooperatives; guided efforts to implement an integrated, strategic landscape-scale approach to adaptive wildlife management; and built the agency's capacity to develop and apply science-based solutions to real world conservation problems.

For the past eight plus years, Paul has led the Service's Pacific Southwest Region in Sacramento. As Regional Director, he oversees programs in California, Nevada and the Klamath Basin of Oregon, implementing federal laws and policies including the Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He also leads the region's 50 national wildlife refuges, three national fish hatcheries and 13 fisheries and ecological services field offices from the region's headquarters in Sacramento.

He has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from Florida State University. Paul and his wife have a teenage daughter and son.



Biographies

Panel Discussion: Building Bridges Between Indigenous Communities and HCPs

Margaret Park *AICP Chief Planning Officer Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians*

In her position as the Chief Planning Officer for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Margaret leads a diverse team managing all facets of land use including land planning and development, natural resources, water resources, historic & cultural preservation, GIS, real estate, grants and emergency services on the 32,000-acre Agua Caliente Indian Reservation. Prior to her position with the Tribe, Margaret worked 8 years as a planner in local government and spent 6 years with a private sector engineering and planning firm. Margaret was the project manager for the development of the Agua Caliente Tribal Habitat Conservation Plan that was approved by Tribal Council in 2010.

Ebru Ozdil *Cultural Analyst with the Pechanga Band of Mission Indians*

Ebru Ozdil is the Cultural Analyst for the Pechanga Band of Indians, with 25 years of combined experience in urban and regional planning. She has over 12 years of experience in both the private and public sectors, where she gained extensive knowledge in urban planning, zoning, subdivision map design, and conservation. For the past 13 years, Ebru has worked closely with the Tribe, specializing in Cultural Resources Management.

Her expertise encompasses a thorough understanding of key State and Federal regulations, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Ebru collaborates with local, state, and federal agencies on preservation efforts and complex conservation plans, including the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Her experience in both planning and cultural resource management allows her to make a significant impact in protecting the Tribe's cultural and environmental heritage for future generations.

Karin Cleary-Rose *Inland Division Supervisor for the Palm Springs U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office*

Karin Cleary-Rose is the Inland Division Supervisor in the Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Service Office. She has worked resolve conflicts between human community needs and endangered and sensitive species in southern California for more than 30 years, 25 of those with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She has worked with local jurisdictions, water agencies, and other public and private partners on the development and implementation of complex multiple species habitat conservation plans including the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, the Upper Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan, and the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan. She also worked with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority to establish the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Biological Monitoring Program.



Biographies

Session 2a: Protecting Pollinators

Lou Thomas *Lead Conservation Biologist at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens*

Emily Lou Thomas is a budding conservationist working at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. As the Lead Conservation Biologist, Lou plays a key role in the Conservation Department's restoration efforts in Southern California aimed at rehabilitating native ecosystems. She also manages the Desert Plant Conservation Center at the Zoo, where she oversees native plant propagation and engages volunteers in hands-on conservation work. In addition to habitat restoration, Lou is heavily involved in educational outreach, emphasizing the importance of pollinators and native plants in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Drawing on her field experience in diverse environments—from the deserts of the southwestern U.S. to savannahs in Africa—Lou is committed to fostering a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between species and the landscapes they inhabit.

Tanya Agrawal *Senior Planner, County of San Diego*

Tanya Agrawal is a Senior Planner in the Sustainability Planning Division within the County of San Diego's Department of Planning & Development Services. With a B.S. in Environmental Sciences with a concentration in Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution from the University of California, San Diego, she applies her understanding of environmental systems to planning principles and land management for the protection of the region's precious natural resources. Over the last 5 years at the County, Tanya has worked on a variety of projects including implementation of the Multiple Species Conservation Program and developing strategic conservation plans. Tanya's passion for the environment is expressed in her drive to continue to work through the important challenges of balancing development and conservation for current and future generations to come.



Biographies

Session 2b: Corridor Crossings and Connection

Julie King *Principal Land Management Specialist, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency*

As the Principal Land Management Specialist at the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Julie King is committed to advancing environmental stewardship, habitat conservation, and sustainable land management within the Santa Clara Valley. With extensive experience in wildlife management, project oversight, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, she plays a pivotal role in implementing regional habitat protection programs. Julie excels at leveraging her expertise in wildlife connectivity, environmental assessments, and rangeland management to promote biodiversity and ensure the long-term health of the region's natural ecosystems. Her proactive approach to addressing environmental challenges and fostering partnerships supports the Agency's mission to conserve vital habitats for future generations.

Emily Perkins *Geographer, U.S. Geological Survey and San Diego Management and Monitoring Program*

I graduated from San Diego State University with a Master's in Geography and emphasis in Watershed Sciences. I have been working for the U.S. Geological Survey and the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program (SDMMP) for 12 years. My focus is on landscape connectivity, coastal sage scrub and chaparral vegetation monitoring and research, GIS and data management, and website design and management. As part of the SDMMP, we work with dozens of partners in San Diego County to coordinate management and research of over 100 species of concern. Our work is funded through the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Transnet sales tax.



Biographies

Session 3a: Diversity and Inclusion in Conservation Planning

Zack West *Reserve Management and Monitoring Manger, Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority*

As the Reserve Management and Monitoring Manger for the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority, Zack West oversees the Land Management and Biological Monitoring programs for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). Zack has a B.A. in Environmental Studies with an emphasis on Ecology from California State University, San Bernardino. With over 24 years of experience in both private consulting and at state and local government agencies, Zack has worked with the MSHCP since its adoption in 2004, including conducting focused species surveys, ensuring project consistency with MSHCP, conducting reserve assembly, and mapping riparian/riverine resources.

Barbra Calantas *Vice President, Biological Resources Practice Leader at ESA*

Barbra is the firmwide Practice Leader of ESA's Biological Resources and Land Management Team of over 200 professionals. She has 22 years of experience as an environmental consultant biologist. Her responsibilities include client management, business development, and project and task management on large projects and on-call projects; her expertise includes resource management/conservation planning and implementation, Endangered Species Act consultation; and preparation of a variety of environmental documents. In addition, Barbra has been a champion for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at ESA and in the broader AEC industry leading efforts that are creating change. She founded the Environmental Professional Diversity Collective, a program to address the industry's lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion and is also a Board Member for the Ocean Discovery Institute, an organization focused on creating learning experiences for young people traditionally excluded from science due to race, income status, and educational opportunities.

Kaitlyn Shaw *Conservation Social Scientist, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens*

Katie Shaw is a social scientist focused on the human dimensions of wildlife and conservation. She is currently a Conservation Social Scientist at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in Palm Desert, CA. She received her M.S. in Natural Resources from the University of Idaho and her B.S. in Psychology and Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh. Katie has led and worked on a number of different research and community-based conservation projects, including the 2022 social impacts assessment of the Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit and desert tortoise conservation across southern California. She co-taught the Building Community Conservation Success social science workshop in Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya. She helped lead the Torres Martinez Youth Environmental Ambassador program and the Native American Conservation Workforce Development program. She is a key organizer for the annual International Desert Conservation Summit that is hosted at The Living Desert.



Biographies

Session 3b: Innovative Monitoring Technology and Techniques

Maya Nunez *Conservation Assistant Scientist, The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens*

Maya Nuñez is currently a Conservation Assistant Scientist at The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens, working under Dr. Luis Ramirez Yañez and Katie Shaw. She has had the opportunity to contribute to conservation projects across California's diverse desert ecosystems and has also gained experience in eastern Oregon through an internship with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) this past summer. Additionally, she served as a young leader panelist at the National Tribal Indigenous Climate Conference this year. Maya has participated in a variety of restoration, social science, and biological projects, all focused on protecting, preserving, and restoring the flora and fauna of the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts.

Melody Aimar *Biological Monitoring Programs Manager, Santa Ana Watershed Association; Western Riverside County MSHCP*

Melody Aimar has a B.S. in Zoology and an M.S. in Environmental Science. She came to the Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA) in 2003, after working in the private sector as a biological consultant and for the government as a biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game. As the Biological Monitoring Programs Manager, Melody oversees all aspects of two monitoring programs. One program is the Western Riverside County MSHCP Biological Monitoring Program. This department is responsible for monitoring 146 sensitive species in the Western Riverside County MSHCP Conservation Area to provide species status data to the various stakeholders of the MSHCP. The other SAWA program is responsible for documenting the abundance, distribution and reproductive success of the endangered Least Bell's Vireo and manages a Brown-headed Cowbird control program in the Santa Ana Watershed to aid in the species' recovery.

Chad Norris *Deputy Executive Manager of Environmental Science for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority*

Chad Norris is the Deputy Executive Manager of Environmental Science for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority. He has a B.S. in Environmental Science with dual majors of Biology and Geology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake and a M.S. in Aquatic Biology from Texas State University. Chad worked for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for 23 years, where he worked on various issues, including freshwater inflows, coastal restoration, regional water planning, water rights, groundwater management, habitat conservation planning, and groundwater/surface water interactions, although much of his time focused on freshwater springs and the rare species they support. At GBRA, Chad is primarily working on the development of the Guadalupe River Habitat Conservation Plan.



Biographies

Session 4a: Recreation on Conservation Land

Kristina Tolman *Senior HCP Coordinator, Edwards Aquifer Authority*

Kristina Tolman is a Senior HCP Coordinator at the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA), she has worked on the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) since 2016. Prior to EAA, she worked as a GIS Analyst at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University. She received her B.S. in Geography and her Master of Applied Geography for Environmental Resource Studies at Texas State University. Her thesis was a comprehensive habitat suitability analysis of the endangered aquatic plant, Texas wild-rice. Her 15 years of professional experience covers a wide range of environmental topics related to water resources, habitat conservation, community engagement, regulatory compliance, and application of advanced geographic technologies including remote sensing, LiDAR-derived canopy and elevation models, and GIS mapping. She recently served as President-Elect, President, and Past-President of the Texas Aquatic Plant Management Society from 2022-2024. In her free time, she enjoys gardening and kayaking.

Neoma Lavalle *Principal Planner, East Bay Regional Park District*

Neoma Lavalle is a Principal Planner with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) where she focuses on interagency planning and leading the Park District's Conservation Lands Program. Ms. Lavalle serves as EBRPD's primary liaison with the East Contra Costa County (ECCC) Habitat Conservancy helping coordinate and implement a wide variety of joint EBRPD and Habitat Conservancy projects. Her work has included financial analysis, preserve management planning and strategizing on how to meet EBRPD's dual mission of conservation and public access. Ms. Lavalle has worked at EBRPD for 14 years and has a BA from U.C. Berkeley and a Master of Environmental Management from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment.

Christie McKaskey *GIS Analyst, East Bay Regional Park District*

Christie McKaskey is a GIS Analyst with the East Bay Regional Park District, where she provides geospatial support to the district, including departments such as Planning and Trails, Land Acquisition, Public Safety, Fuels Management, Stewardship, and Operations. She specializes in conducting spatial analysis to drive data-informed decision-making across the organization. Christie excels in managing spatial data, designing efficient data collection applications, and creating both user-friendly web maps and high-quality printed maps and visualizations. Her work focuses on delivering practical geospatial solutions and compelling visuals to meet diverse organizational needs.

Josh Philips *Ecological Services Coordinator, East Bay Regional Park District*

Josh Phillips is an Ecological Services Coordinator with the East Bay Regional Park District where he specializes in obtaining and complying with state and federal natural resources permits and guiding projects through the environmental planning process. Mr. Phillips works closely with the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy and partner wildlife regulatory agencies in planning for public access on HCP preserve lands that is consistent with the biological goals and objectives of the HCP. Mr. Phillips is also participating in developing a regional approach to balancing recreational needs and protecting biological resources on Park District lands. Mr. Phillips has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Biology and Management from U.C. Davis and a Master's in Environmental Science and Management from U.C. Santa Barbara.



Biographies

Session 4b: Commitment to Collaboration

Daniel Large, MPA, PhD *HCP Director, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority*

Daniel is the HCP Director at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), where he oversees the development of the Guadalupe River Habitat Conservation Plan. Daniel specializes in helping public and private organizations navigate regulatory compliance and achieve their environmental goals. Before joining GBRA, he worked in environmental consulting and began his career at the Edwards Aquifer Authority. Daniel earned his PhD in environmental policy and management from Cornell University in 2023.

Jennifer Weikel *Private Forest Accord HCP Coordinator, Forest Resources Division, Oregon Department of Forestry*

Jennifer Weikel is the coordinator for the Private Forest Accord HCP at Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). Jennifer is a wildlife biologist who has spent her career working on issues related to wildlife and forestry interactions as well as issues revolving around forest policy and natural resources. She has a BS in Wildlife from Humboldt State University and a MS in Forest Science from Oregon State University. Her past work includes research projects on songbirds, cavity-nesting birds, marbled murrelets, spotted owls, and small mammals. Jennifer has also undertaken habitat-based projects in both upland forests and stream habitats. She has been working for ODF since 2003, primarily in ODF's Forest Resources Division which handles private land issues and administration of the state's Forest Practices Act regulations. She has been working on the HCP project since 2022.

Sarah McCutcheon *Program Coordinator, San Diego Management and Monitoring Program*

Sarah is the Program Coordinator for the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program (SDMMP). She has a Master of Environmental Science and Management degree from the UC Santa Barbara Bren School of Environmental Science & Management and a BS in Environmental Management and Protection from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Sarah is a biologist with the US Geological Survey and has worked for the last 8 years as the SDMMP Program Coordinator. Sarah supports several of the SDMMP's regional projects, such as the conservation grazing monitoring plan pilot study and the invasive plant early detection rapid response treatment program.



Biographies

Session 5a: Species on the Brink

Mike Henry, PhD *Associate Practice Director, Dudek*

Mike has 24 years' experience involving management and analysis for a variety of biological resource projects, including regional and project-level HCPs; planning and permitting for marine and coastal projects; and a range of complex project- and program-level documents in compliance with state and federal environmental laws. He served as the contract manager and senior ecologist for the South Sacramento HCP/ARP and currently assists in implementing that plan, and is managing preparation of HCPs in California for the California Department of Water Resources, University of California Santa Cruz, and the Grandpark Landowners Group. He is also the webmaster for the NHCP. In his free time he enjoys mountain biking and restoring his vintage sports car, and coaching or cheering on his two kids in basketball, baseball, soccer and equestrian events.

Dan Calvert *JBLM Sentinel Landscape Partnership*

Dan Calvert is the Program Coordinator for the JBLM Sentinel Landscape Partnership, which brings together partners in working lands, conservation, and the military to advance innovative conservation and community goals. Dan's career focuses on finding shared values to address complex natural resource management issues.

Chris Chaput *Conservation Program Coordinator, Pierce County, WA.*

Chris Chaput has two decades of experience in environmental and conservation planning, policy, and management leadership. She has developed and implemented mitigation and species conservation, working in a wide range of habitats in Florida and Washington. Currently, Chris manages a land conservation grant program coordinating the development and implementation of land acquisition and conservation strategies consistent with cross-organizational missions related to natural resource protection, open space, and climate resilience goals. She collaborates with diverse interests to develop and implement policies and supports county-wide planning efforts to help prioritize and strategically deliver projects. As well as identify creative funding solutions to leverage and maximize available resources to deliver projects and stewardship activities. Chris has a bachelor's degree in biology and a Master of Science in Environmental Policy and Management

Shelly Amrhein *California Department of Water Resources*

Shelly Amrhein is the Habitat Conservation Planning Section Manager for the California Department of Water Resources Division of Operations and Maintenance, which operates and maintains the State Water Project, the nation's largest state-owned water and power generator. Shelly has over 20 years' experience in environmental policy analysis and planning, working in both the public and private sectors. She earned her degree in Biology with a minor in Theatre, which has enabled her to communicate effectively with diverse groups on environmental regulations, biological resources permitting, and habitat conservation planning. While she started her career preparing CEQA and NEPA documents and monitoring mitigation, she spent the last six managing programmatic permitting for the State Water Project.



Biographies

Session 5b: Navigating Water Challenges with HCPs

Kai Palenscar, Ph.D. *Environmental Compliance and Permitting Program Manager*

Kai is a native of southern California. He received his Bachelors of Science from CSU San Marcos in 2002 and his Ph.D. in Plant Science from UC Riverside in 2012. His dissertation focused on using native riparian vegetation to provide barriers to the reestablishment of giant reed (*Arundo donax*) after its control. Before and after his years in graduate school, he worked as a habitat restoration biologist and botanical lead for a consulting firm in the Los Angeles area. From 2014 to 2019 Kai was an endangered species regulatory biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service where he formed a passion for native fishes of the region and worked on several habitat conservation plans in the San Bernardino Valley. He currently holds a position with the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District as a biologist and works on habitat enhancement projects associated with the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan, among other water-related projects.

Anna Cassady *Biologist, Dudek*

Anna Cassady works as a consulting biologist for Dudek in Southern California. She has worked for Dudek for 11 years and enjoys working on projects that allow for a landscape level perspective and require technical data analysis (maybe this second part is more of a love/hate relationship). These interests were further explored when she completed her masters in Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology at University of California, Riverside in 2021. Today she will be presenting some of her research that was published last year in *Water Resources Research*.

David Shaw *President/CEO, Balance Hydrologics*

Shortly after completing his Geology Degree at the University of Vermont, David moved to California and joined Balance Hydrologics in 1998, taking on responsibility for field monitoring, sediment transport measurement, and watershed assessment efforts. As many of these assessment projects transitioned into restoration design phases, David decided to return to graduate school at UC Berkeley to focus on the link between landscape analysis and restoration design. David returned to full-time work at Balance in 2005 and moved to the Sierra in 2008 with his wife to raise a family and establish Balance's Truckee Office as its Principal Geomorphologist. He took on the corporate leadership role of President and CEO in 2016.



Biographies

Panel Discussion: Stewardship Opportunities to Manage and Conserve Indigenous Resources on HCP Conservation Lands

Don Hankins, Ph.D. *Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at California State University, Chico*

Don Hankins is Professor of environmental geography at CSU Chico and Field Director for the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve. His areas of expertise include pyrogeography, conservation, and Indigenous land and water stewardship. His research includes wildland fire with an emphasis on applied landscape scale cultural and prescribed fires, and their implications to biodiversity conservation and environmental change. Don engages in various aspects of land stewardship, policy, and conservation with a variety of organizations and agencies including Indigenous entities in North America and Australia.

Elizabeth Paige *Education and Stewardship Program Manager for the Native American Land Conservancy*

Elizabeth Paige is a desert naturalist, cultural educator, and a member of the Torres-Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla Indians. She's dedicated to cultural preservation, and the advancement of Indigenous people leading in fields of land management, climate resilience, and conservation.

Valentin Lopez *Chair of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band*

Valentin Lopez is the Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, one of three historic tribes that are recognized as Ohlone. The Amah Mutsun are comprised of the indigenous descendants forcibly taken to Missions San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz. Chairman Lopez is also the President of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust which was established in 2012. He is a Native American Advisor to the University of California, Office of the President. He is also a Native American Adviser to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). The Amah Mutsun are currently working to restore their traditional indigenous knowledge regarding land stewardship and ensuring that truthful history is taught. Consequently, the Amah Mutsun are very active in conservation and protection efforts within their traditional tribal territory. Chairman Lopez is working to restore the Mutsun Language and is a traditional Mutsun singer and dancer.



Biographies

Day 3 - Keynote Speaker

Wade Crowfoot *California Secretary of Natural Resources California National Resources Agency*

Wade Crowfoot serves as California's Natural Resources Secretary, leading efforts to conserve California's environment and natural resources. He has served as Secretary since 2019 and advises Governor Newsom as a member of his cabinet.

Secretary Crowfoot oversees an agency of over 25,000 employees spread across 26 departments, commissions, and conservancies. His agency is charged with stewarding California's forests and natural lands, rivers and water supplies, and coast and ocean. It also protects natural places, wildlife and biodiversity, and helps oversee the state's world-leading clean energy transition.

Secretary Crowfoot is leading efforts to achieve Governor Newsom's ambitious environmental vision, including a commitment to conserve 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030. He oversees billions of dollars of public investment to protect people and natural places from climate change impacts, and has led efforts to navigate California's record-breaking droughts, floods, and wildfires. Secretary Crowfoot has also initiated a new era of partnerships with California Native American Tribes and is shifting how the agency operates to better support all California residents and communities.

Secretary Crowfoot has been on the frontlines of environmental leadership throughout his career. He served in Governor Jerry Brown's Administration as deputy cabinet secretary and senior advisor to the Governor, driving climate action. He led the non-profit Water Foundation to build water resilience across the American West. He spearheaded efforts to establish and defend California's landmark climate change policies as West Coast regional director for the Environmental Defense Fund. As an environmental advisor to then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, he helped establish many first-in-the-nation urban environmental policies. Secretary Crowfoot received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's degree from the London School of Economics.

Wade grew up in Michigan spending summers at a YMCA camp and in the woods around his family's remote cabin in Northern Ontario. He moved to California in the mid-1990s and discovered backcountry camping with friends. His first time in the redwoods at Big Basin State Park is still one of his defining California moments. He loves to camp with his wife and daughter and learn new things in the outdoors, currently including fly fishing and soon backcountry skiing. He says his best days in as Natural Resources Secretary are spent outdoors with local groups that are conserving land and connecting people to nature.



Biographies

Updates from USFWS Headquarters

Gina Shultz *Deputy Assistant Director – Ecological Services U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Gina Shultz is the Deputy Assistant Director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Ecological Service’s Program. The Ecological Services Program provides national leadership for the conservation of species and the habitats on which they depend, including species protected by the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Coastal Barrier Resources Protection Act, Oil Pollution Act, Federal Powers Act and Clean Water Act. Through leadership in environmental contaminants, environmental reviews of federal projects, listing and recovery of candidate, threatened, and endangered species, and management of decision support and mapping tools, the Program works closely with our partners to meet the conservation challenges of today and tomorrow.

Gina has been a biologist and manager with the Fish and Wildlife Service for over 29 years in California, the Pacific Islands and Headquarters. Prior to joining the Fish and Wildlife Service she worked for 5 years as an environmental consultant in Southern California working on landscape-level Habitat Conservation Plans. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from San Diego State University, where she also worked on her Master’s degree, and a Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego.

Over the past 34 years, Gina has worked on a variety of environmental issues, including large, complex section 7 consultations with federal agencies and regional habitat conservation plans with local governments; coral reef conservation; a transparent approach to endangered species listings and critical habitat designations; voluntary conservation agreements with private landowners; and regulations, policies and guidance to streamline implementation of the Endangered Species Act.



Biographies

Session 6a: Adapting to Climate Change and Climate Resilience Strategies

Lynn Sweet, Ph.D. *Assistant Research Ecologist, UC Riverside*

Lynn Sweet is a researcher at UC Riverside's Center for Conservation Biology, specializing in plant ecology. She holds a B.S. in Biology and a Ph.D. in Plant Biology. She began working in 2015 on the Center's long-term Coachella Valley MSHCP monitoring and research, which has been ongoing since 2008. Her lab focuses on applied ecology, studying the impacts of climate change and environmental threats on the geographic range and abundance of plants and animals in California's deserts.

F. Paul Bertetti, P.G. *Senior Director, Aquifer Science Research and Modeling*

F. Paul Bertetti, P.G., is the Senior Director of Aquifer Science Research and Modeling at the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) where he oversees the development and implementation of the EAA's research program and aquifer modeling activities. For more than 30 years, Mr. Bertetti has worked as a research scientist investigating a wide range of topics related to the hydraulics and geochemistry of complex aquifer systems such as the Edwards, Carrizo-Wilcox, and Trinity aquifers. He has also conducted numerous field, laboratory, and modeling studies to examine the sorption, ion-exchange, and transport behavior of dissolved radionuclides and other constituents related to the disposal of high-level nuclear waste. Mr. Bertetti holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in geology from the University of Texas at San Antonio and is a licensed professional geoscientist in Texas.

Remy Vincent *Field Biologist, UC Riverside - Center for Conservation Biology*

Remy Vincent is a field biologist at the UC Riverside Center for Conservation Biology whose work primarily involves implementing and reporting on long-term biological monitoring in aeolian sand habitats for the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). After obtaining a BS in Ecology and Evolution from UC Santa Cruz, they worked on a project collecting climate and behavioral data on American Pikas in Yosemite National Park. They later volunteered as a docent at the Santa Cruz Natural History Museum before returning to the Coachella Valley and beginning work with the Center for Conservation Biology. Currently, Remy oversees scheduling and organizing teams of biologists and community scientists to collect data on lizard, mammal, and plant species protected under the CVMSHCP. Remy's other work and research interests include vegetation communities, climate resiliency, and outreach.



Biographies

Session 6b: The 3 Cs: Conservation, Compliance, and Coordination for Sustainable Success

Kimberly Meitzen, Ph.D. *Associate Professor, Texas State University*

Dr. Kimberly Meitzen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Texas State University. Dr. Meitzen completed her B.S. at University of Texas at Austin and received her M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina at Columbia, and she was a Postdoctoral Fellow with Duke University and the Nature Conservancy in North Carolina. Dr. Meitzen teaches courses on river processes, river basin management, water resources, environmental management, and biogeography. She serves as the Texas State University representative and chair of the Stakeholder Committee of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan, public interest representative for the Guadalupe Regional Flood Planning Group, co-chair of the Texas Aquatic Connectivity Team, and advisor to the Ecological Research Group at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment.

Jana Gray *HCP Coordinator, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority*

Jana Gray is the HCP Coordinator at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority where she supports development of the Guadalupe River Habitat Conservation Plan (GRHCP). She has been working in water and the environment for seven years including lab work, water quality sampling, and regulatory compliance. Jana has been involved with the GRHCP since its inception and has managed two million-dollar Section 6 grants, overseeing critical funding for habitat conservation planning. In addition to her work with GRHCP, Jana also serves as Co-chair of the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition's Programming Committee, where she helps to plan the Annual Meeting. She holds a B.S. in Biology from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and an M.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Deb Bartley *Managing Director, Environmental Planning, ICF*

Deb Bartley is a managing director in ICF's environmental planning practice with 25 years of professional experience. Deb specializes in managing the development of NEPA EISs, including leading interdisciplinary teams of analysts, conducting quality control, and supporting agency coordination and public engagement. She has been managing EISs for HCPs since 2018. Her recent projects include the Deschutes Basin, Western Oregon State Forests, and Elliott State Research Forest, in Oregon.



Biographies

Session 7a: Focus on Florida HCPs

David Zippin *ICF*

David Zippin leads the large Habitat Conservation Planning and Implementation practice at ICF. He specializes in compliance with the federal and state Endangered Species Acts and the preparation of non-federal permitting documents such as Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), Conservation Benefit Agreements, and their environmental compliance documents. Over 32 years, Dr. Zippin has prepared over 75 HCPs and other conservation plans and their NEPA documents in 35 states and territories. David also has extensive teaching experience: For 10 years he taught habitat conservation planning for endangered species at the USFWS National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. For over 15 years, he also taught at university extension programs in California. David received a Ph.D. in Conservation Biology and Plant Ecology at the University of Texas at Austin. When he is not writing HCPs, he is scuba diving and photographing the underwater world in Indonesia, Thailand, Fiji, Palau, or other remote areas.

Samantha Pitts *Environmental Program Manager, Escambia County Natural resources Management*

Samantha Pitts is an Environmental Program Manager for Escambia County Natural Resources Management Department and has managed the Perdido Key Habitat Conservation Plan since 2020. Sam enjoys connecting communities to the natural world around them to foster stewardship and advance restoration goals. In addition to her work on the PK HCP, she assists with the County's Sea Turtle Conservation program, military partnership program and community engagement. She has a B.S in Natural Resource Conservation from the University of Florida and nine years' experience in habitat conservation and community engagement.

Kristi Yanchis *Ecologist, USFWS*

Kristi Yanchis has been with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for over 20 years. She currently serves as an Ecologist and Recovery Lead for 3 endangered beach mice in the Florida panhandle but has worked in several programs and with several different species and habitats. She has been involved in HCPs as a dominant tool to address larger scale habitat conservation for private lands in the coastal ecosystem.

Tim Day *Deputy Director, Escambia County Natural resources Management*

Tim Day serves as Deputy Director for the Escambia County Natural Resources Management Division and serves as Secretary of the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition. Tim's primary interest is in coastal biology and enjoys finding solutions to managing wildlife resources in the context of public use and private property rights. He has worked with the Perdido Key beach mouse, nesting marine turtles, and shorebirds since 2004 and is in the eleventh year implementing the Perdido Key Habitat Conservation Plan. Tim holds a Bachelor of Science in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University and was the recipient of the 2006 USFWS "Partners in Conservation" award and the USFWS Southeast Region "Regional Recovery Champion" in 2017.



Biographies

Session 7b: Conservation in California: Safeguarding Nature and Wildlife

Sonya Vargas *Senior Biologist, Environmental Science Associates*

Sonya Vargas is a senior biologist and project manager, primarily focused in ecological restoration and land management. Sonya supports HCP implementation across San Diego county by developing monitoring and adaptive management recommendations for the County of San Diego and in her role as the preserve steward biologist for the City of Chula Vista's Sunbow II Preserve. Sonya has prepared vegetation management plans, invasive plant management plans, restoration / mitigation plans, and supported the development of monitoring plans that identify priority monitoring efforts to meet set goals and objectives such as the Salton Sea Monitoring Implementation Plan and the County of San Diego Targeted Monitoring Plan. Additionally, she has conducted biological resource services including baseline surveys for new preserve acquisitions, focused plant and wildlife surveys, and project specific aquatic resource delineations.

Chris Jones *Preserve System Program Manager, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District*

Chris Jones holds a Master of Environmental Science and Management (MESM) degree from the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara's, which he earned in 2006. Since 2008, Chris' professional life has been focused on addressing environmental challenges in the Santa Ana River Watershed. He joined the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District in 2018 after spending 10 years with the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

More recently, Chris' professional focus has shifted towards management issues in the headwaters of the watershed. A large majority of his time is now spent working with several great partners, on behalf of the San Bernardino Valley, coordinating the Headwaters Resiliency Partnership. In this role, Chris focuses on fostering collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the resilience of the watershed's headwater ecosystems.



Biographies

Session 8a: Past Wisdom, Future Goals

Angela Angove *Pierce County Planning and Public Works, Floodplains and Watershed Services Manager*

With over 22 years of experience in the environmental field, Angela spent the bulk of that time as a project manager for large transportation improvement projects. Since joining Pierce County nine years ago she has managed several floodplain related projects and studies. She currently manages a team of 24 hardworking, dedicated, and passionate professionals who focus on watershed planning, water quality planning and floodplain management. Her team works hard to deliver excellent services that reduce flood damage and protect and improve water quality and natural resources for the benefit of the communities in Pierce County.

Petrea Marchand *President, Consero Solutions*

Petrea Marchand founded Consero Solutions, a social impact consulting firm in Northern California, after more than a decade working at all three levels of government, including four years in the California State Legislature, two years in Washington, DC at a think tank, and eight years working in natural resources policy and governmental affairs for one of California's 58 counties. As the President of Consero Solutions, she has helped local governments and nonprofits complete and implement Habitat Conservation Plans, develop and implement strategic plans, manage land acquisition, restoration, conservation, and other projects, and create and implement community engagement and advocacy strategies. She has helped clients secure over \$50 million in state, federal, regional, and local funding.

Adrienne Lee *Managing Biologist Environmental Science Associates (ESA)*

Adrienne is a project manager with expertise in land and natural resource management throughout southern California and a biologist specializing in pollinators. Adrienne works closely with her municipality clients overseeing over 24,000 acres of conserved lands in San Diego County. She develops preserve management and monitoring plans, coordinates and executes monitoring activities, provides adaptive management recommendations, and collaborates with land managers, consultant staff, and wildlife agencies, to develop and ensure compliance with regional HCPs. Adrienne serves as the Preserve Steward for the City of Carlsbad where she supports city staff in implementing their HCP, confirming preserves are properly funded, appropriate management and monitoring is provided by preserve managers, and all activities are compliant with the HCP.



Biographies

Session 8b: HCPs and Energy: Finding the Balance

Corey Schutzman *Lead Environmental Scientist, National Grid Environmental Licensing and Permitting*

Corey Schutzman joined National Grid's Licensing and Permitting Group over 5 years ago following 14 years of work in various disciplines of environmental consulting. After graduating SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) in 2003, Ms. Schutzman began her career in Arizona, designing constructed wetlands for wastewater and stormwater treatment. She has since worked in several states serving public and private sector clients on water quality and flow monitoring projects, construction management and environmental compliance, bioengineering and mitigation design and, obviously, environmental permitting and planning for utilities and linear infrastructure projects. Her Bouvier des Flanders and chihuahuas allow Corey and her partner to live in their home in Massachusetts.

Nick Ganacoplos *Senior Environmental Specialist, Eversource Energy Service Company*

Mr. Ganacoplos graduated with a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Maine, Orono in 2000 and with a M.S. in Biology from the California University of Pennsylvania in 2003. He is a native to Connecticut where he currently resides and is an outdoor enthusiast who actively fishes, hikes, boats, and skis. He has worked in a variety of ecosystems over his career in the states of Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Nevada, and California for academic institutions, state and federal agencies, consultants, and utilities. Currently in his position at Eversource Energy he supports licensing, permitting, and compliance for vegetation management operations primarily in Connecticut.

Brett Hartis *Lead Scientist, Duke Energy – Environmental Health & Safety*

Brett Hartis is a lead scientist with Duke Energy Corporation's Natural Resources Team, located in Charlotte, NC. His current responsibilities include helping the company navigate complex stakeholder-driven management planning and policy, developing species management plans for project lands and waters, and implementation of effective and realistic management strategies.

Brett earned his BS in Fisheries Science at East Carolina University and his MS and PhD in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology from North Carolina State University (NCSU). After completing his PhD, Brett worked as an extension and research faculty member with NCSU's Department of Crop Sciences. Following his time with NCSU, Brett transitioned into the utilities industry, joining the Tennessee Valley Authority as manager of the utilities' multi-state aquatic plant management program. He began his career with Duke Energy in 2018 managing the company's invasive aquatic species programs and has since shifted into supporting the company's growing efforts in conservation planning.

Brett serves an advisory role for several professional organizations including the Aquatic Plant Management Society, Water Resources Research Institute, Weed Science Society of America, and EPRI Sectors. Brett is a native of Marion, NC and spends most of his free time in the outdoors with his wife and two sons.



Biographies

Session 8b: HCPs and Energy: Finding the Balance

Elise Anderson *Director Biodiversity & Environment, EDF Renewables North America*

Elise Anderson has worked in the renewable and alternative energy sector for over 15 years. She began her career working in the public sector to administer clean energy grant funding for the state of Massachusetts, and later worked for several renewable independent power producers to develop strategies to reduce their environmental impacts and negotiate permits with regulators. Elise currently works for EDF Renewables where she is responsible for environmental compliance for EDF's portfolio of 7.8 GW of operating wind and solar assets throughout North America.

Diane Barr *President, WECAT LLC*

Diane Barr, President of WECAT, has worked in the renewable energy environmental regulatory field for over 25 years. Ms. Barr, from 2018-2023, functioned as the project manager and facilitator for the 24 Co-Permittees to complete the conservation planning process, establish legal agreements, and obtain an ITP. Upon issuance of the ITP, Co-Permittees established WECAT LLC, identifying Ms. Barr as the company President. As President, Ms. Barr serves as the Plan Administrator for the Co-Permittees. She is responsible for Condor Conservation Plan administration and implementation, which includes mitigation fund management, The Peregrine Fund management, training, permit reporting, and overall company financial and corporate functions. Ms. Barr is also the owner and founder of Camas, LLC, a regulatory consulting firm that assists renewable energy clients throughout the U.S.



Biographies

Session 9a: Golden State Guardians: Exploring California's HCPs

Jonathan Reinig *Natural Resource Manager- MSHCP, Riv Co Parks*

Jonathan Reinig has an B.S. in Biology, with an emphasis on evolution and ecology from the University of California, Davis. He has spent the past 14 years working with the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. First as a field biologist for its biological monitoring program, then later as a natural resource specialist, and most recently as the Natural Resource Manager for its Land Management Program. During his tenure he has been lucky enough to work with many of southern California's rare species, including one that he is particularly fond of; The Delhi Sands Flower Loving Fly.

Kristine Preston Ph.D. *Ecologist U.S. Geological Survey providing science support for the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program*

Kristine Preston is an Ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey providing science support for the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program. She guides development and implementation of regional management and monitoring objectives for sensitive species and their habitats on conserved lands in western San Diego County. Kris has over 35 years' experience with research, monitoring, and modeling the distribution, status, ecology, and habitat relationships of plant and animal species in southern California. She specializes in the study of rare, threatened, and endangered bird species and more recently, rare plants and butterflies. Kris has conducted monitoring and research studies for six Multiple Species Conservation Plan Areas in southern California. One of the highlights of her job is collaborating with many partners involved in conserving and managing species and their habitats.

Milan Mitrovich Ph.D. *Land Resources Manager, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District*

Milan Mitrovich joined the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District as the Land Resources Manager in February 2022. Milan's professional background is in conservation science with an emphasis in landscape and wildlife ecology. Over the last 25+ years, Milan has served in research and advisory roles for several public and private sector organizations addressing conservation and biological resource management across much of southern California. Milan has published peer-reviewed science articles on animal behaviour, biological monitoring, landscape ecology, recreation ecology, and habitat conservation. When not working, Milan enjoys spending time with his family, cooking dinners, helping his kids with homework, visiting museums, and traveling across the American Southwest.



Biographies

Session 9b: HCPs and Agency Partnerships

Darren S Proppe *Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

Darren Proppe is a wildlife biologist with a background in ecological research, wildlife management, and higher education. He was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, and received a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University. He served for ten years as faculty in the biological sciences at Montreat College and Calvin University after receiving his PhD from the University of Alberta. More recently, he served for three years as the Research Director at the Wild Basin Creative Research Center through St. Edward's University. His research endeavors included exploring the impacts of noise on songbird behavior, communication, and distribution; investigating the effects of development and urbanization on animal behavior; and designing novel techniques for managing wildlife populations and communities in a changing world. In his current role at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Darren works to implement on-the-ground conservation through voluntary federal agreements and creative projects for species of greatest conservation need in the state of Texas.

Lily Sweikert *Senior Conservation Project Manager, ICF*

Dr. Lily A. Sweikert is a Senior Conservation Project Manager in ICF's Habitat Conservation Planning and Implementation Practice. She is a biodiversity conservation expert with 17 years of international and domestic experience developing and implementing conservation plans, programs, and policies for national and local government agencies, private companies, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions. In her current role with ICF, Lily leverages her diverse background for the Guam Habitat Conservation Plan, the Western Riverside Multispecies HCP, and the Oregon Department of Forestry, Forest Management Plan. Lily also serves as ICF's International Biodiversity Conservation Practice Lead. Her skills and expertise are founded on an international upbringing, five years of fieldwork as a wildlife biologist, and advanced degrees in human dimensions, the application of social science to better understand human behavior and inform biodiversity conservation policy and management.

Erin Hitchcock *Environmental Compliance Director, ICF*

Erin Hitchcock is an environmental compliance director in ICF's Conservation Planning and Implementation Practice with approximately 18 years of professional experience in environmental assessments, conservation planning and management, and programmatic permitting. Erin is an experienced wildlife biologist and project manager whose background in biological resources assessment and regulatory compliance has contributed to her proficiency in navigating processes related to Sections 7 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Specifically, Erin serves as program manager for various programmatic environmental permits, programs, and plans within California and Texas. Erin has a strong history supporting the preparation and implementation of programmatic habitat conservation plans and is currently managing the consultant team developing the Bell and Coryell Counties Regional Habitat Conservation Plan in central Texas.



Biographies

Session 9b: HCPs and Agency Partnerships

Aaron Gabbe *Western Riverside County*

Aaron Gabbe has over fourteen years professional experience leading stakeholder-driven, regional Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Community Conservation Plans, and non-regulatory conservation plans (Regional Conservation Investment Strategies) across a wide range of landscapes and natural communities for a diversity of endangered and threatened fauna and flora in California and Oregon. Aaron is currently the Director of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority, which is the operator for the Western Riverside County Multi-Species Conservation Plan. Prior to this, Aaron was a Managing Director at ICF where he managed and oversaw the preparation and implementation of multi-species conservation plans for endangered species throughout California and Oregon.

Liz O'Donoghue *Director, Resilient Communities Strategy, Climate Program, The Nature Conservancy of California*

Liz O'Donoghue leads the Resilient Communities Strategy team in the Nature Conservancy of California's Climate Program. Liz focuses on innovative mitigation approaches, greenprints, sustainable land patterns, climate resilience and transportation planning and policy. Prior to joining the Nature Conservancy, Liz served as Strategic Planning Director and Public Affairs Director at Amtrak in Oakland; before that she was Legislative Assistant for transportation and natural resources policy for U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg in Washington, DC; and prior to that, a policy associate at a consulting firm in New Jersey focusing on transportation, environmental and health care issues. She holds a B.A from Oberlin College and a certificate with distinction in Business Administration from U.C. Berkeley - Extension.

