

The logo for SERCAL (California Society for Ecological Restoration) is displayed in a stylized, multi-colored font. The letters are filled with various patterns and colors, giving it a textured, artistic appearance.

Special Issue:
**Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion in California's
Restoration Community**

Ecesis

California Society for Ecological Restoration *Quarterly Newsletter*

#RestorationForAll

by Allegra Bukojemsky, Lindsay Teunis, and Julie St John

The public outrage ignited by the murder of George Floyd last year prompted many of us to reflect on our own white privilege and to look closely at the cultural racism and social inequity prevalent in the US and our industry. We are lucky to have a board of passionate and engaged individuals who came together to listen, learn, and have tough conversations on the subject of diversity and racism with the goal of identifying and ultimately influencing positive change. A Diversity Task Force was formed to keep this effort and these conversations active and relevant now and into the future. Similarly, a youth engagement and mentorship program was formalized as a bridge to under-served and under-represented communities with the goal of having a restoration industry that reflects the communities we live and work in. As a society and organization we have been quiet for too long and that has to change. As one of the leading restoration forums in California, SERCAL will now and into the future use our voice and elevate other voices to advance diversity and equality, including use of our social media platform, newsletter, events, and conference. We are eager to take this journey with all of you. If you are, have, or know of a voice or project that we should highlight, please reach out and let us know. In the meantime, we look forward to our continued conversations.

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Summer 2021 Volume 31, Issue 2

Guest Editor: Lindsay Teunis, SWCA

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Managing Editor: Julie St John
Contributing Editor: James Mizoguchi

Ecesis is published quarterly by the California Society for Ecological Restoration, a nonprofit corporation, as a service to its members. Newsletter contributions of all types are welcome. See sercal.org/newsletter for a link to our Guidelines.

SERCAL Diversity Questionnaire: Preliminary Results

SERCAL sent out a diversity questionnaire to our members in January 2021 as a first attempt to gauge how our membership experiences and views the state of diversity within the field of restoration, rather than the board simply making assumptions. Here is a summary of the responses:

- * 42 respondents
- * 8 identified as disadvantaged, under-served, or under-represented person in the field (19% of the respondents)
- * There was an overwhelming perception that the restoration field lacks racial diversity
- * The majority that responded believe that there is stratification of diversity by type of work in the industry (e.g., implementation, design, management)
- * Top factors that are perceived contributors to lack of diversity include:
 - * Barriers to education (financial as well as personal connections for internships),
 - * Limited exposure to the field of restoration as a career path,
 - * Implicit bias,
 - * Barriers to job access, and
 - * Systemic racism
- * The two leading factors affecting respondents directly are:
 - * Implicit bias, and
 - * Microaggressions
- * The two leading factors respondents have directly witnessed are:
 - * Barriers to education and opportunities, and
 - * Implicit bias

These results are representative of only a fraction of the overall membership (300) and should not be interpreted as a generalization for all of our current members, or the field of ecological restoration. We plan to recirculate this questionnaire based on the responses and feedback received, and guidance from others. If you would like to participate in addressing diversity within SERCAL's Diversity Committee please email Jamie Silva at jamie.silva@water.ca.gov.

#RestorationForAll *continued*

To date we have set in motion the following:

Formation of the Diversity Task Force — Led by Jamie Silva and staffed by member volunteers, the task force will continue to identify new programs and organizations that are bringing equity to under-served and under-represented communities.

Diversity questionnaire — Sent to members at the beginning of 2020 to get a broader assessments of diversity in the industry. See box to left for a brief summary.

Amplifying diverse voices and perspectives in Ecesis and social media — Special thanks to Lindsay Teunis for the idea and energy to bring this issue to fruition

Focusing on Diversity at SERCAL 2021 — Chairs Lindsay Teunis and Barbra Calantas have engaged an inspiring group of presenters in next month's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in California's Restoration Industry. See page 12 for details.

Free registration and our new Mentorship program — For students, emerging professionals, and aspiring young scientists from under-represented communities. SERCAL's new connections with Literacy for Environmental Justice and Ocean Discovery Institute are just the beginning.

Working together, our efforts are stronger — SERCAL reached out to other aligned nonprofits this summer to discuss ideas, actions, and experiences. We will continue this important conversation.

Investing in Diversity — the Board has committed to four workshops with an amazing diversity workshop leader, Nailah Pope-Harden (see related article page 17). We look forward to sharing what we learn in future programs and events.





SERCAL Diversity & Inclusion Conversations

Thank you for walking with me: Setting intentions as we redefine the terminology

Volume 1.1 by Leticia Morris¹

Thank you for joining me today. We are going to go for a walk. I'm hoping this will be the first of many. And some of you reading will lead many of these walks. Although I am not sure where we are going or how far we will walk together, I can tell you that nothing I share on this walk with you will be new or novel. Yet, I have a deep knowing that wherever we walk, we may see old things more fully and older things more clearly. Perhaps the things that we see in-between may unravel within us a sense of wonder for the new things that we might be better able to discover or uncover together. I use the phrase "unravel within us" because I want to acknowledge that the seeds of every part of this walk are already

Our walk through diversity and inclusion terminology will be like walking through the mud and the grassland and the stream to the places you may not have seen and to the people you may not have heard in the lands that you may already love.

planted within each of us and may simply require stirring. And so, on these walks, we will water these seeds as authentically and as honestly as we can with liberation in mind. We will water these seeds walking respectfully into direct intersections of race, gender, sex, income, ability, "isms" and restoration ecology.

Some parts of this walk will not be comfortable, not for you and not even for me. Some parts of this walk may feel like the floor falling out beneath our footsteps. But sometimes the floor has to come out in order to transform a space and make it as expansive as what we imagine can be co-created. Any conversation of race and place in our industry comes with it a responsibility not only to see things as they are but also to see and envision things as they can be.

¹Ecologist, GEI Consultants. (see *Meet the Contributing Member* on page 5). lmorris@geiconsultants.com

continued next page

SERCAL Diversity & Inclusion Conversations *continued*

Which is where we are beginning this walk today. A while back, I was kindly, gently, and lovingly approached by a friend and fellow botanist colleague to see if I was interested in sharing anything within (or even beyond) the general umbrella of *diversity and inclusion* within SERCAL. What spoke to me as a topic was *Terminology within the diversity and inclusion* framework. And I want to *walk with you* on this journey and talk *with you* about defining terms because language and the way we define and choose to present terms has the power to breathe life into our ability to invigorate spaces where less liberatory definitions often reign. But I can only do that so far as we both are committed to seeing each other in this process. And to do that we have to be open to the process of unlearning. There is a sacred simplicity in this process: in order to learn about these terms, we have to unlearn some terms both individually and together.

Like the process of ecological restoration of a stream as we, in the restoration field, are often sought to look at a landscape that we love which has been degraded and then try to help return it to a more sustainable version of its former self, we often find that we have to take a step back before making any prescriptive assessments. We have to walk the extent of the watershed. We have to be open to learning from those who have tended to the land and its needs for generations. We have to be accessible to the stories and perspectives from the point of reference of the land's inhabitants. We have to sit still and listen in some places and meander in others. We have to walk around and seek out the quietest conditions in the upstream and the faintest indicators downstream. We often have to travel great distances to see the parts that may not be readily apparent from

Any conversation of race and place in our industry comes with it a responsibility not only to see things as they are but also to see and envision things as they can be.

standing in the middle of the land and looking down at the watershed. Or maybe we have to walk uphill to look at the things that we couldn't hear from standing beside the rapid streamflow. As brother James Baldwin so clairvoyantly tells us, "If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you cannot see." I imagine that if you are reading this article, you and I, we have a common interest in loving the land and wanting to help make it better than it is right now. And if we love the land authentically, we also learn how to authentically love all who steward it.

And so, our walk through *diversity and inclusion terminology* will be like walking through the mud and the grassland and the stream to the places you may not have seen and to the people you may not have heard in the lands that you may already love. Maybe these walks will bring you into some spaces that you will learn to love. And throughout each walk, we will flow back to our intention: to learn and unlearn terminology in this industry in a way that allows us to see each other authentically. As this is a *diversity and inclusion column*, the perspectives as we define and redefine terms will be especially *from and with* those whom many of us may not have seen or heard from in this process. Our goal is rooted in love in that on every walk we may listen, see, and feel so that we may better care for each other and our landscapes and all of our relations which we seek every day to restore.

And so now that we have set our intention on this walk, I would like to ask you: what definition would you like to walk to from here?

In thanks and in gratitude until we walk again...

SERCAL, the California Society for Ecological Restoration, is a non-profit membership-based organization dedicated to advancing the science, art, and practice of restoring native California habitats.

See what's new at www.sercal.org.

Meet the Contributing Member: **Leticia “TC” Morris**

Occupation: I'm an ecologist with GEI Consultants. I joined this fabulous restoration team last October and am loving it! (P.S. Our team is hiring. Check out our website.) :)

County of residence or work:

These days, I'm much more local than I've ever been. I live in Sacramento County work in several neighboring counties! Much of the land I work in has been stewarded traditionally by the Nisenan, Miwok (Me-wuk) and Maidu Peoples since time immemorial. It's a blessing to work here and enjoy these lands!

How long have you been a member of SERCAL? Since college in 2014.

What is the biggest benefit of your membership? SERCAL has helped me connect with other professionals from a broad spectrum of disciplines and expertise, both near and far! It's great having a network to share project milestones and learn about similar (or different) restoration events.

What do you like best about the SERCAL conferences? I enjoy the broad range of topics that are offered at each conference. And the depth shared for each sub-topic. So much goes into preparing for these conferences, and it really shows! It's fun to learn from others about region-specific restoration projects as well as the highlights from interagency collaboration projects targeting multiple benefits.

What is your specific discipline (or underlying education)? I graduated from CSU, Sacramento's with a B.S. in Environmental Studies. My focus was Wetland Ecology and I had several supportive mentors along the way!

What services do you provide for restoration in California, or what is your restoration passion? My passion is for conserving and protecting wetlands, grassland and riverine ecosystems, including the critters and the flora! As a biologist for several years, I

learned how to survey, delineate, permit and monitor projects in these various habitats. Now as an ecologist, I help our team provide design, planning and

implementation services for riparian floodplain, levee tidal marsh and grassland restoration plans, habitat mitigation and monitoring plans, long-term monitoring plans, master plans.

How did you get into the field of ecological restoration? Well that depends on who you ask. My Grannie would say that from the moment we are born, we are actively contributing to the restoration of our communities. So at birth, we are already part of this process of small footprints in restoring our lands. But if you ask a technical professional, I got into this field through an internship in

college when I found a natural resources intern for a flood control agency. And now fast forward several years, I'm two feet in to restoration planning and design, honoring my Grannie and my technical professional teams.

What is your favorite California native species? Oh goodness! That's a tough one! One of my favorite native grasses is California melicgrass (*Melica californica*) because it sways so sweetly in the wind. And I have a soft spot for vernal pool species so Sacramento Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia viscida*) warms my heart. And as for the critters: California red legged frog and California Tiger Salamander are my dazzlers.

Any advice for others in the field of restoration? 7 Things come to mind. Be honest. Drink lots of water. Listen to those who have done what you're doing. Imagine creating the things you want to see. Reach out to new people. Thank the people you already know. Be willing to suck at something new...like really suck. Because if you're too sure of something or too comfortable, you're probably not growing. And when you grow, so do we as a restoration community!





RECON Crew Leader Junior Chavarin installing plants.



RECON Crew Leader Ariel Meza.

Habitat restoration would not be possible without the hardworking field staff (crews) who work long days in all weather conditions installing and maintaining each and every project. The majority of the field staff are from historically underrepresented groups, often first generation or immigrants themselves from Latin American countries with English as their second language. These individuals work behind the scenes in our industry and are generally not seen at conferences and trainings, often not recognized, celebrated, or included — an unsung workforce. This article examines their perspectives about the work they do and provides a foundation for the SERCAL Conference session around this topic as we will discuss how we can help to elevate this important group within our industry.

The Unsung Workforce

by Raquel Atik¹ and Jean-Luc Brulot² Photos courtesy the authors

When asked to be involved with the topic of “the unsung workforce”, it was with excitement to have the opportunity to involve the habitat restoration field crew leaders in this conversation. For all of us who work in the industry, more specifically in the field, we have worked on implementation and/or maintenance restoration projects in many different habitat types with varying complexities, and we already understand that our field crew leaders and crew members play a vital part in the overall success of our projects, however we don’t typically

see them at our meetings, our conferences, or involved in the conversation of “diversity” in our industry.

As a project manager and biologist, we have had the honor of working closely with the field crews for the last 15 years. From this experience, we know that some of them are just as passionate about the work they do as we are. For this article, we are highlighting several crew leaders to hear about their experiences and opinions on working in the industry. The excerpts below were taken as part of a question/answer type of interview with the field crew leaders. Crew members included come from various companies including RECON Environmental, IO Environmental, ACS, Habitat West, and D&D Wildlife.

¹Restoration Biologist, RECON Environmental (see *Meet the Contributing Member* on page 8). ratik@reconenvironmental.com ²Senior Habitat Restoration Specialist / Arborist, ICF. Jean-Luc.Brulot@icf.com

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The Unsung Workforce *continued*

What do you like about your job, about working in the industry? What's your favorite thing about the work you do?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: I really enjoy working outdoors, since I was young I knew I wouldn't like working in an office, or really anywhere indoors all day. I appreciate being out in the environment, breathing the fresh air. One of my favorite things about this work is taking care of the native plants that we install for projects. I really enjoy watching them grow, even after one month you can see the change.

Ariel Meza, Crew Leader, RECON: One of my passions is to work outside and perform habitat restoration work. Not only are we performing the actual physical labor in the field, we are also the eyes and ears for the project managers. There are remote projects where we may be the only ones on-site for the project, no visits from the client, project manager, or biologists. It is up to us to make the projects successful and work as a team to get the job done.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: Being outside in the field, every day I learn something new. For me it is the best way to learn the different plants, birds, and how best get the job done.

Crew Leader, Habitat West: I like everything about my job; more specifically I do enjoy spraying herbicides and installing irrigation systems.

Crew Leader, ACS: Being outside, helping nature, seeing nature/wildlife, observing the progress of our projects, and my co-workers.

Crew Leader 2, IO Environmental: Off-roading, being outside, and giving back to the environment and to the people who enjoy nature.

Crew Leader, D & D Wildlife: I like to restore sites and improve habitat for wildlife.

What do you like the least?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: The more tedious maintenance tasks, like hand weeding within vernal pools, you need to be very patient and work slowly, which can be difficult when you are under the pressure of getting the work done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Crew Leader, D & D Wildlife: Sometimes the deadlines we are given to accomplish tasks are very tight which leads to stress. The weather conditions can also be challenging.

Crew Leader 2, IO Environmental: The weather can sometimes be rough, working outdoors all day, and it would be appreciated if project managers recognize that more.

Crew Leader, Habitat West: Driving long distances, and I have to wake up very early to cross the border every morning.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: The extreme weather and bird breeding season.

Crew Leader, ACS: The extreme weather, and dangerous wildlife.

How were you introduced to this industry?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: I started fresh out of high school, when I was 18 years old. I had a cousin that was working at RECON and convinced me to come and work with him. I remember the work being very hard at the beginning, physically demanding, long hours, learning a lot of new information, but I loved working outdoors and wanted to learn more.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: At 18 I was looking for a landscape position and have been doing it now for 8 years.

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Habitat West Crew Member installing mulefat cuttings.



D&D Crew installing and watering plants



ACS Crew Member salvaging cholla.



RECON Crew creating watering basins for native plants

The Unsung Workforce *continued*

Do you prefer working as part of a group (a crew) or more independently, and why?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: I like both, when I first started working for RECON I would drive the water truck and go out and water plants on my own, and didn't mind the solitude. But now that I've been doing the work for so many years, I also enjoy being a crew leader and teaching junior staff how to perform certain tasks more efficiently.

Crew Leader 2, IO Environmental: It depends on the work task, but for the most part, I prefer to stay close to the crew to ensure the job is being done correctly.

Crew Leader, ACS: I like working with other crew members, but my job also gives me the flexibility to step away and be by myself, when needed.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: I like working as a group. It is more fun and makes the day go quicker.

Crew Leader, Habitat West: Personally, I prefer working alone. I think I work better independently.

Crew Leader, D & D Wildlife: I like to work as a group. It is more fun, and we are more productive when we work as a team.

Tell us how you feel working under the supervision of a biologist or project manager?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: It depends on the project manager, but for the most part the project managers I work with trust our work and by working together, we can figure out the most efficient ways to complete the necessary work. However, there are times when project managers have different opinions on how to do

the work, which may not necessarily be the best way to do it, and they end up slowing down the work rather than helping it. When I disagree with something I speak up, but in the end I'll do what the PM wants us to do, even if I don't agree.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: I like it. I have no problem taking orders or recommendations from a biologist or project manager. I also learn a lot from their advice.

Crew Leader, ACS: It depends on the biologist or project manager, but I learn from them, and know that I can ask them questions, which relieves my stress.

Crew Leader, Habitat West: I like to work with biologists and project managers. They explain the work, and we can learn from them.

Crew Leader 2, IO Environmental: It depends, of course, on the biologist or project manager, but overall, the relationships are good.

Crew Leader, D&D Wildlife: I like it and prefer it when someone is with us. I also like to know that we are meeting their expectations.

How do you communicate with newer staff working in the industry of habitat restoration?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: I am always happy to answer any questions they may have, and get people more interested in the field they are working in, for example teach them the name of plants and/or explain what the purpose of the project is and why the work is being performed.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: It is difficult, as sometimes the newer person has a different way to solve a problem, and some people learn much faster than others.

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The Unsung Workforce *continued*

In general, do you feel that you as a crew leader are left out of the “habitat restoration” conversation? If yes, do you have interest in becoming more involved?

Junior Chavarin, Crew Leader, RECON: Yes, I do think we are, but I don't personally have an interest in attending conferences, but would be interested in being involved if it is field related. I am open to volunteering my time to do more habitat restoration work.

Crew Leader, D & D Wildlife: No, I think the company keeps me informed of the necessary tasks we need to accomplish and keeps me informed of the compliments we receive on a project.

Crew Leader 2, IO Environmental: We feel our companies may get recognized for good work, but unfortunately the recognition does not always translate to the field crews.

Crew Leader, ACS: Yes, I would like to receive more recognition on the projects' successes. Unfortunately, it feels like more of the norm to not get recognized for good work.

Ariel Meza, Crew Leader, RECON: I am always interested in attending seminars, conferences, etc. More training leads to better results in the field.

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: I am not feeling excluded but am open to attending meetings to share my field expertise and experience.

Crew Leader, Habitat West: I would like more recognition from our company about projects that we have completed.

What advice would you give others in the industry?

Crew Leader 1, IO Environmental: Do not hesitate to ask questions and try your best to stay motivated.

Ariel Meza, Crew Leader, RECON: To try to stay positive and be appreciative of all the work we are awarded and able to perform in the field. And that there's a balance, I give a lot to RECON every day during work hours, but RECON also gives a lot back to me.

We have so much experience, for example today I am working with two other seasoned crew members, and between the three of us we have 60 cumulative years of experience working in this industry. I also really appreciate meeting and working with others that have a lot of knowledge of the industry and are able to communicate the how's and why's of the work we do.

SERCAL

Meet the Contributing Member: Raquel Atik

Occupation: I am a Senior Project Manager / Restoration Biologist at RECON.

County of residence or work: San Diego and Orange Counties

How long have you been a member of SERCAL? About the last 10 years.

What is the biggest benefit of your membership? I really enjoy reading the articles in the newsletters. Even though I've been in the industry for quite some time now, I am continuously learning new things from others in the industry.

What do you like best about the SERCAL conferences? I like hearing the various presentations, and seeing the passion people have in the work they do.

What is your specific discipline (or underlying education)? I received undergraduate degrees in Biology, and in Environmental Science.



What services do you provide for restoration in California, or what is your restoration passion? I feel very fortunate to be working as a Restoration Biologist / Project Manager in southern California. I prefer to be involved with projects at every stage including preparing proposals and cost estimates, writing the technical plans, implementing the work, and maintaining the project, with the help of my restoration team!

How did you get into the field of ecological restoration? I started in the consulting world doing more biology-related work and

realized my interests were much more aligned with habitat restoration work, and working directly with the field crews.

What is your favorite California native species? One of my favorite plants is the barrel cactus (*Ferocactus viridescens*).

Any advice for others in the field of restoration? We are lucky to be in the field of restoration, enjoy it as much as you can!



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Meet the Guest Editor: **Lindsay Teunis**

Editor's Note: Lindsay has been an active member of the SERCAL Board since she was elected last December, co-chairing the DEI session at our upcoming conference and conceiving this amazing issue of *Ecesis*. Thank you, Lindsay!

What is your Occupation and where do you work? I am a restoration ecologist and restoration program manager with SWCA. I am also one of the lead trainers for the California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM).

County of residence or work: San Diego County, southern California, but I will dabble anywhere I am invited.

How long have you been a member of SERCAL? 12 years

What is the biggest benefit of your SERCAL membership?

SERCAL give me a sense of connection to the larger restoration community. It also provides an opportunity to learn from other technical specialists and continue to grow in my own career.

What do you like best about the SERCAL conferences?

I like to talk... I like to present... I like to learn... I get all of that plus I sometimes win cool raffle prizes. Seriously though, there are always so many great presentations and posters and I find a lot of inspiration and motivation from all of the amazing work happening.

What is your specific discipline (or underlying education)?

I have an undergraduate in Ecology from San Diego State University and a masters in Marine Ecology from San Diego State University. My masters thesis focused on eelgrass habitat structure and invertebrate community composition.

What services do you provide for restoration in California, or what is your restoration passion?

I like to think that I specialize in complicated projects where doubters abound but teamwork and creative ideas

always win. I love urban restoration, estuary restoration, watershed assessments, wetland condition assessments, riverine restoration, comprehensive restoration programs, opportunities & constraints, teaching and mentoring. I honestly love it all!

How did you get into the field of ecological restoration?

Woah that is a long story, I will do my best. I was a microscope, Mr. Wizards, love nature kid so I always knew I would do something that complemented my

love for science and nature.

Ecology has always felt like a second language for me, it is safe and makes sense to me... it feels intuitive. During my senior year of college I took an evolutionary biology class and realized I had to continue on for my masters. That lead me to marine ecology and eelgrass restoration work. Post graduate school I pushed my way into consulting where I had to make a hard transition to terrestrial ecology. I had the opportunity to work on a restoration project on the Santa Ana River and an urban stream project in Laguna Niguel. I immediately knew my path and I was lucky to have some amazing mentors and opportunities that

helped me learn the entire restoration program life cycle. To be continued...

What is your favorite California native species? Yikes, yerba mansa (*Anemopsis Californica*) and sycamore (*Platanus Racemosa*) and Valley Oak (*Quercus Lobata*)

Any advice for others in the field of restoration? Find good people and good projects to work on. Never give up on a good idea. Keep learning. Don't let your ego get big. Teach others. Be creative. Look for all the connections.



Early Bird Registration ends Sep 6 ✨ Free Student Registration

Mentorship Program for students, emerging professionals, and aspiring young scientists from under-represented communities

Mon 13 Sep

Technical Session: Wetlands

Session Chair: Keatie Pretzlav, Balance Hydrologics

Madeleine van der Heyden | *Successful Creation of over 10 Acres of Wetland Habitat for San Francisco Garter Snake and California Red-legged Frog*

Chris Campbell | *Tidal marsh restoration and mitigation project in the Yolo Bypass*

Gwen Santos | *Restoration Elements of the Klamath River Renewal Project*

Andria Greene | *Nitrogen Source or Sink? Results from a soil core incubation experiment during winter in an Elkhorn Slough salt marsh*

Joanna Tang | *Vernal Pools in Urban Mitigation*

Mark Young | *Natural Processes Restoration: Looking over the sand bar*

Laura Moran & Mark Brandt | *Marsh Restoration and Resiliency: A co-benefit for safeguarding critical infrastructure in San Francisco Bay*

Meet & Greet with H. T. Harvey & Associates

Panel: Cutting Green Tape, an Introduction

Moderator: Mauricio Gomez, South Coast Habitat Restoration

R.J. Van Sant | ICF

Erik Schmidt | WRA

Madeleine Wieland | California Dept of Fish & Wildlife

Tue 14 Sep



Special Session: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in California's Restoration Community

Session Chairs: Lindsay Teunis, SWCA, and Barbra Calantas, ESA

Mamie Parker, Keynote | *Reflecting, Renewal, and Restarting: A journey of discovery.*

Leticia Morris | *The Joy in Cultivating Liberatory Inclusion in Restoration Spaces: Shifting from diversity as an afterthought to inclusion as a necessary foundation*

Sonya Vargas | *Behind the Scenes of Restoration: The Unsung Workforce*

Nina Omomo, Patrick Rump, and LeeAndrea Morton | *How LEJ Youth are Restoring and Lifting Up Their Communities*

Nallah Pope-Harden | *Morrison Creek Revitalization*

Lindsay Teunis & Christina Contreras | *Engaging the Next Generation*

Barbra Calantas | *How to start in your own company? Internships and more...*

Valentin Lopez | *Highlighting Indigenous Stewardship*

Panel Discussion

Meet & Greet with HRS / Dudek



Wed 15 Sep

Technical Session: Invasives

Session Chair: Cassie Pinnell, Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting

Scott McMillan | *Herbicide Use in Habitat Restoration: Organic Versus Outcome*

Alys Arenas | *Finding Balance When You Are Stuck in a Marsh: Achieving effective invasive plant management in Upper Newport Bay*

Erich Schickenberg & Charlotte Soergel | *Invasive Species Management for Fire Risk Reduction in the Los Gatos Vegetation Management Plan*

JP Marie | *Vegetation Management of Native Grasslands*

Chad Aakre | *Saltcedar (Tamarix ramosissima) Control at CD Hillman Mitigation Site, Kern County*

Meet & Greet with Westervelt

Panel: Building the Workforce

Moderator: Gregory Andrew

Mark Cederborg & Sally Bolger | Hanford ARC

Jody Weseman | CCC

Lindsay Dailey | Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance

Thu 16 Sep



Technical Session: Restoration in Our Backyard

Session Chair: Denise Knapp, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

Denise Knapp | *Introduction*

Jennifer Zell | *From Parking Lot to Tidal Salt Marsh*

Kristen Williams | *Community Based Habitat Restoration at Byrne Preserve: Keys to success*

Sarah Phillips | *Restoring in Urban and Rural Settings: Motivating communities to get on board with restoration in their backyards*

Patrick Reynolds | *Improving Habitat Values in a South Davis Neighborhood*

Megan Wolff | *Adopt-a-Plot: Empowering the community to restore habitat*

Rachel Saunders | *Transforming Farmlands: Planting a dream for a new park in Salinas*

Julia Michaels & Haven Kiers | *Different Jargon, Same Goals: Landscape architects and ecologists can work together to maximize biodiversity*

Rachel Davis | *Habitat Horticulture: How to encourage your community to bring habitat home*

Panel Discussion

Meet & Greet with Ecological Concerns

Fri 17 Sep



Technical Session: Fire

Session Chair: Eric Piehel, AECOM

Marc Doalson | *Achieving Wildfire Resilience that Supports Both Ecological and Built Communities*

Tom Rolinski | *Southern California Edison is conducting live fuel moisture sampling to help assess wildfire risk*

Bill Agnew | *Successful Re-vegetation Strategies on High Severity Burn Areas on the Carr Fire*

Michelle Halbur | *Back-to-back burns: Post-fire restoration of coast range grasslands and forests*

Jenn Hyman | *Glass Fire Impacts on the Upper York Creek Restoration Project*

Laura Cunningham | *Observations of Cultural Fire in the Klamath River Watershed*

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Being a Brown Biologist *by Barbra Calantas¹*

As a member of ESA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force, I often think about how to incorporate a "DEI lens" on all aspects of the employee-owner life cycle at ESA. I recently had a reflection on what it means personally to me as a Brown woman in our industry, specifically what my field experiences have taught me as a field biologist.

One of my first field jobs when I first started working as a wildlife biologist was conducting a before-after-control-impact (BACI) wildlife movement study for road widening and improvements in a rural, unincorporated area of San Diego county. The client had coordinated with landowners with properties along the road to allow us access along their driveways; essentially we were surveying about 200 acres of backcountry land along this road corridor, behind private properties. There was one property owner with the name of a widely-known white supremacist group across their driveway gate, and I recall the first time my survey partner (a white woman) and I went there and her comment when one of us had to unlock their gate. "Hey Barbra, I'll unlock this one." I remember I thought to myself how grateful I was for that, the fear that crept over me as we drove along

their driveway and past their gate to get to their property boundary, and the sheer terror I felt being behind their property as we hiked along as I noticed rifle bullet casings along the trail. Logically I told myself that it was likely they were target shooting or shooting at deer, but that didn't

stop my heart from beating quickly every time I had to access that area. I never spoke up to my colleagues about this fear as I didn't want to be perceived as being silly or unmotivated to get the work done.

We conducted this BACI study for two and a half years. As I gained more experience over time, I began to take more of a leadership position in the survey effort and found myself becoming the more familiar biologist with the project — sometimes I was the one who unlocked the gate and led, covering the transects and tracking stations in that area. I was always very conscious about making sure my company magnet

was on the truck, putting on my safety vest and holding my clipboard and equipment prominently to legitimize myself, and wearing long-sleeved shirts to keep my brown skin barely visible. A few times the residents came out of their home, and I would smile widely and wave cheerfully under a wide sunhat and big sunglasses hoping they couldn't see the color of my skin too clearly. No incidents actually ever happened

I was always very conscious about making sure my company magnet was on the truck, putting on my safety vest and holding my clipboard and equipment prominently to legitimize myself, and wearing long sleeved shirts to keep my brown skin barely visible.

¹Southern California Biology Director, Environmental Science Associates (ESA) (see *Meet the Contributor* on page 13). bcalantas@esassoc.com

continued next page

Being a Brown Biologist *continued*

with those residents but I really dreaded it every time I was in that area, and yet still I never said anything to my coworkers.

I have had similar instances in my field career where I felt uncomfortable or unsafe conducting wildlife surveys in rural backcountry areas, having been confronted by property owners who have shown me their firearms, walking past a resident's home with a large confederate flag posted in their front yard, or being the only Brown person/woman onsite leading environmental construction compliance trainings, instructing mostly white construction foremen (though with some Brown and Black construction equipment operators). I came to learn this fear/discomfort is just something I have to live with and deal with in the outdoor spaces I love to work in, but also where I spend my time personally.

This fear/discomfort has prepared me even as I face it today on every single family camping trip we go on. On every trip in the past four years I have always noted driving past multiple homes with large banners promoting (now) former president #45, near the campgrounds we would visit. I wonder if white families who drove by these same signs felt that same sense of fear for the safety of their families, as the support of that president is so easily linked to racist, bigotry, and violence towards Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC). I think back to the incident in Forks, WA, last summer when a multiracial family was intimidated and harassed on their way to their campsite, and barricaded in their campsite from residents who suspected they were part of Antifa, and how terrifying that must have been...

(<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/multiracial-family-washington-state-camping-trip-accused-being-antifa-menaced-n1228281>). I was at the nearby Hoh National Forest campground with my family in 2019.

The Central Park incident with Christian Cooper last year is something that resonated very deeply with me as my Latino husband and I are avid birders and enjoy looking for the rare migrant in urban canyons. I know I always have to stand prominently with my binoculars pointed upward towards trees to be clear what we are doing behind backyards, with an ear listening for potential passerby who might think us doing something suspicious, as this is our reality of being Brown birders. I feel strongly that this barely touches what Black birders and Black nature lovers feel when they are in the outdoors. I know this unsettling feeling that is always in the background of my mind when I'm in these outdoor spaces is similar to but surpassed by the level of discrimination that Black birders like Christian Cooper face. This article in particular is a powerful articulation: <https://lithub.com/birding-while-black/?fbclid=IwAR2RpsfAZWVj94TfmO0nlI8hww3OdVo0vRm5GfBboOcJHwaqjFhv6gGp4To>.

In everyday life, reports of violence and harassment towards the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community continue to grow in the news headlines, leading to the Stop Asian Hate movement (<https://www.oprahmag.com/life/a35604044/what-is-stop-asian-hate-movement-join/>). As a Filipina-American I am saddened especially by

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Being a Brown Biologist *continued*

those stories of our elders — seniors revered and respected in our community — who are also vulnerable, fragile, and the epitome enduring silently (what we know in our cultures as “saving face”) — being targeted with the blame for the pandemic aka the “Chinese Virus”/ “Kung Flu Virus.” How many of these stories go unreported/not captured on video? I wonder, will we start seeing stories of discrimination against AAPIs in campgrounds and outdoor spaces also?

There are common threads throughout these stories that create a historic and ongoing trauma for BIPOC that then bleeds into the workplace. There are many facets of thinking through safety for all field personnel when we do our work; making sure we’re always considering the inherent risk of being in situations where we have exposure to environmental hazards like working in or around water, fire, and poor air quality; natural resource hazards like poison oak, ticks, spider and rattlesnake bites, and potential interactions with hostile people we may encounter. As I think about my silence earlier on in my career, I feel a sense of empathy to other BIPOC field team members who have similar experiences, and encourage the conversations that should take place with supervisors and project managers if anyone feels this sense of discomfort as a result of the color of their skin, or if confrontational

issues arise for any type of bias, discrimination, or assault on field staff that may happen on a given project.

I’ve had discussions about this perspective with our ESA Safety Program Lead and others leading practices with field staff within our company and am reassured by knowing ESA’s strong stance to support ESA employee owners if we experience discrimination while conducting project work. I am hopeful that sharing my experiences and knowing the support we have from ESA leadership will empower our BIPOC employee owners in particular, to feel secure enough to report incidents and know that ESA has their back in addressing these types of situations. At ESA we are in the process now of updating our Safety Program on several key issues, and incorporating BIPOC field safety is one of our updates as an important component towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environmental for all of our employee owners. I am also hopeful my story resonates with others throughout the environmental industry, to consider how their operational processes can better incorporate this perspective of BIPOC field safety, and ensure all of their team members feel safe conducting work in the outdoors.



Meet the Contributor: **Barbra Calantas**

Occupation: I'm a Biology Director for Environmental Science Associates (ESA).

County of residence or work: San Diego

How long have you been a member of SERCAL? I've been mostly on the edges of the community since starting my career in the industry 20 years ago.

What is the biggest benefit of your membership? I am not a member but I have heard SERCAL is a wonderful community of passionate restoration experts/advocates and look forward to connecting with this group.

What do you like best about the SERCAL conferences? I haven't been before but I'm really looking forward to the collegiate nature of this conference and hearing the interesting talks at the sessions. This year, I am especially interested in the Sept 14 session focused on equity and inclusion in the industry and really excited to be a part of it.

What is your specific discipline (or underlying education)? I am a wildlife biologist by technical practice and training,



and have a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in Biology from the University of San Diego.

What services do you provide for restoration in California, or what is your restoration passion? Specifically for restoration projects I help to manage the projects, coordinate deliverables, schedule, and field surveys, and provide wildlife presence/absence surveys or advice regarding minimizing impacts to wildlife species during restoration implementation.

How did you get into the field of ecological restoration? I have helped to manage and coordinate tasks on restoration projects through my role as a project manager on biology and restoration projects in the environmental consulting industry.

What is your favorite California native species? The golden eagle.

Any advice for others in the field of restoration? Don't be afraid to ask questions and meet as many people at different companies to grow your network and increase potential for being hired.

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Sacramento River
Cypress Avenue South
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Making Community Connections: Morrison Creek is a natural pathway from Elder Creek Elementary to Will C Wood Middle School to the community center. In 2018, while teachers helped with the creek clean-up, students collected data for the citizen science portion of Creek Week.

Project Spotlight: *The Revitalization of Morrison Creek*

“It was huge. A lot of people describe it as like a David-versus-Goliath type of thing because we were one really small neighborhood taking on a gas company. ... So it just really felt right. It felt good. It felt like our hard work paid off.”

— Nailah Pope-Harden,
Lead of the Morrison Creek
Revitalization Project

What began as a movement to stop a proposal to inject and store 7.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas underneath a densely populated urban neighborhood has become a community-led mosaic of partnerships that is taking ownership of their vision, parks, and open spaces. And while Covid-19 put a year-plus halt to much of the progress, this is what’s in store:

- ✦ The establishment of a secure, walkable route that links the elementary school, park, and community center; and, potentially, a bike path, walking paths, more trees, an amphitheater, benches, play areas, public art, and gardens.
- ✦ The creation of a natural space for the community to tend and enjoy; and, potentially, the revitalization of an important tributary (and historical fish passage) to the Sacramento River.
- ✦ Future generations of activists, scientists, and community leaders, inspired by the tireless, can-do efforts of Pope-Harden and fellow activists.

“By revitalizing this urban creek to what the community feels is best for them,” said Esther Tracy, DWR environmental scientist, “we are instilling a sense of stewardship and community pride.” And no doubt, inspiration for many community-led projects to come.

Future issues of *Ecesis* will follow this project. Til then, for “the long read,” visit <https://www.comstocksmag.com/longreads/laying-groundwork>.



Staff from cbec eco-engineering, a company which has played an active role in the planning process, served as chaperones at the creek cleanup. family members regrouping after finishing the creek clean-up. All photos from 2018 Creek Week courtesy CA DWR Public Affairs Office.

What is your favorite project in an under-represented/under-served community? Let us know!



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Diabold Valley, 1992.



Upper reaches of arroyo in Diabold.

e'Muht Mohay (Love of the Land)

by Michael Connolly Miskwish, M.A.¹ Photos courtesy Campo EPA.

The Campo Indian Reservation is a 24-square mile portion of the Kumeyaay Nation which historically spanned the California-Baja California Border by 60 miles on each side. Currently 12 Bands of Kumeyaay reside on separate Reservations in San Diego County and 4 Bands reside on Indigenous Ejidos in Baja California. *Ejidos* are communal lands. *Ejido Indigena* refers to communal lands for an Indian population. This is the closest thing they have in Mexico to the Reservations in the U.S.

The central valley of the Campo Indian Reservation is bisected by the Diabold Creek drainage. This valley has a watershed basin of about 15 square miles, making it one of the largest on the Reservation. From 1895 to 1990 the valley had been subjected to agriculture and cattle grazing. The lower 3 miles of the valley had developed an arroyo over 12 feet deep and riparian vegetation was almost non-existent.

It was against this backdrop that the fledgling Campo Environmental Protection Agency (founded in 1990) was charged with finding a way to mitigate the erosion that was gradually accelerating.

The Kumeyaay, as with most indigenous peoples, had a culture deeply intertwined with the natural world. Kumeyaay land practices had formed the basis of forest rejuvenation through fire, harvesting, and planting. The hydrology of the watershed was enhanced by

traditional rock weirs. The fire mosaic sustained a varied ecosystem that enhanced the carrying capacity of the land and sustained over 30,000 people at its peak. As with many traditional practices, however, the stories of survival and adaptation, in the face of invasion and disease, oftentimes involves the abandonment of traditional practices.

For the Kumeyaay of the California-Baja California border region, these changing relationships with the natural world began with the entry of Spanish colonialists at San Diego in 1769. In the area of the San Diego Mission, traditional planting and burning was replaced by Spanish agriculture with devastating effects on the ecosystem. Grazing animals replaced the native browsers, seasonal grasses gave way to invasive plants, and the loss of ground cover made the lands around the mission much more susceptible to seasonal flooding.

The lack of food was so severe that the Mission leaders were unable to achieve their goal of bringing all the converts into the Mission for indoctrination and the Spaniards actually became dependent on neighboring Kumeyaay villages for food. Because of this, many of the Kumeyaay villages maintained a great degree of autonomy. Even more frustrating for the Mission, the Kumeyaay in the mountains and desert managed to maintain their independence, until the coming of American settlers after 1850.

Under American policies of assimilation, Native American practices continued to be criminalized, denigrated, or unacknowledged. One of the first laws in California was to criminalize open burning (which stopped traditional burning). Water rights were apportioned based on measures related to financial return rather than ecosystem health. Oak woodlands were cut down to provide firewood and to clear more land for grazing.

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¹Michael Connolly Miskwish, M.A. is the founding Director of the Campo EPA and has worked with the Kumeyaay Diegueno Land Conservancy and Kumeyaay Community College as a technical advisor and educator. He works as a consultant in public policy and resource economics. He is a Kumeyaay historian with written and on-line presentations on many aspects of Kumeyaay history and culture. m.connolly@shuluk.com

e’Muht Mohay (Love of the Land)

continued

The Bureau of Indian Affairs established an office on the Campo Indian Reservation in 1910, and began an intensive program of teaching the Campo Indian people to farm and raise cattle. The wet meadow of the central valley was cut to enhance drainage in the name of “reclamation” or converting wasted wetlands into what was claimed to be productive use. European grains were planted each year and within 20 years, the sandy loams of the valley had lost their productivity. The dropping water table and the continued pressure of agriculture and cattle grazing gradually desertified the valley, to the point that it was a dry desert wash with a few weeks of stream flow at the end of the rainy season. Commercial farming ended after which the land was leased for a small return to a local cattle rancher for grazing. This was the most consistent use of the land until the late 1980s. In 1988, the Campo Tribal Council tried to reduce the pressure on the land through leasing to a different rancher but it made little difference.

So now we come back to the Campo EPA. As an environmental regulatory agency, the Campo EPA was responsible for establishing and enforcing standards for environmental protection. But within that modern regulatory identity was a deep-seated goal to revive as much of the traditional relationship with the land as was feasible in the present day. One traditional Kumeyaay practice had involved the construction of rock weirs across stream channels to enhance wetlands. In traditional Kumeyaay society, it was the wetlands that were the more valuable land. From there we got food, medicine, building materials, tools, and game. Furthermore, the enhanced wetlands indirectly increased the productivity of the oaks in providing the traditional food staple of acorns.

It seemed natural to explore the return of rock drop structures as a tool to restore the wetlands and stop the erosion. But there was a problem; traditional rock drop structures involved moving rocks by



Geofabric liner in arroyo.

hand, a labor-intensive process. Seasonal storm events could undermine the structures or jump the channels and form new arroyos. Brush was used to mitigate the potential for undermining, but the combination of small rocks and degradable brush meant that the traditional structures required continuous maintenance. We wanted to improve on the traditional structures by using larger rocks, ones that could be moved by loader. We could thereby build three structures along the channel in one season to help maximize the beneficial effects while reducing the long-term labor requirements. To address the feasibility of our ideas we turned to the Soil and Conservation Service (later becoming the San Diego Resource Conservation District). They were familiar with many types of erosion and wetland-enhancing weirs, and they helped us to design culturally inspired structures that could utilize large rip-rap. A central dip in the design allowed for flood waters to overflow the barrier, rather than cutting around the outside, and geofabric was

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Piling of rip rap on fabric.



Rock drop at junction of two arroyos.



Above: Willows sprouting in sand bank, Spring 1994.

Left: Water at surface, Spring 1994.

e’Muht Mohay (Love of the Land) *continued*

installed prior to rock placement to ensure there was no undercutting of the soils. The rest was essentially the traditional design, magnified.

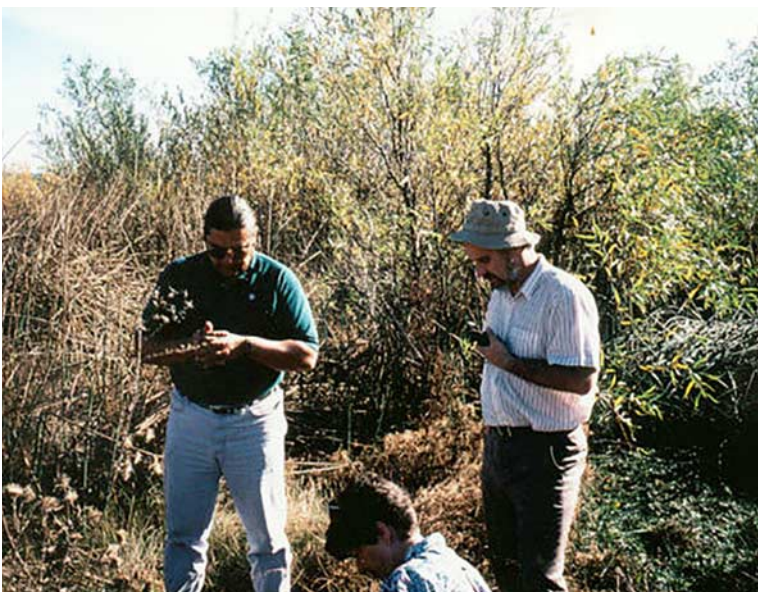
By 1992, three rock drops were in place. Sadly, it was a disappointment that first winter. The rains were too weak to move any sediment behind the structures and the channels quickly dried up at the end of the rains. The end of 1993 was a different story. Some strong storm surges banked large amounts of soils against the structures and the slowing of the surface flow allowed the underlying decomposed granitic soils time to absorb increasing amounts of water. This was sufficient for surface stream flow to return and continue through the entire next year. We started a program of reforesting cottonwoods and willows, but by spring there were hundreds of thousands of willow seedlings that sprang up on their

own in the sediment banks. Tules, cattails, juncus all began to appear in the riparian area for the first time in many decades.

By spring of 1995 we had red-winged blackbirds and ducks beginning to nest in the area. Bobcats were spotted hunting along the banks of the wetlands. We dug out a half-acre pond to create some open water habitat within the wetland.

Our successes came under attack almost immediately. The cattle which had been so central to the creation of the initial problems were still there. Further, the cattle lease, as small as it was, was a significant source of revenue to the tribal government. The Campo EPA fenced off the riparian area but the cattle would lean on the fencing until it gave way. Hoof-activated watering dishes were installed outside the fencing to discourage the cattle but it was the rich grazing that really

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Measuring water response, 1997



Willows growing, 1997.

e'Muht Mohay (Love of the Land) *continued*

attracted them. Finally, after repeated efforts, the Campo EPA had to admit failure to the tribal Council. But having seen the successes that had already transpired, the Council was swayed enough to end the commercial cattle lease. The next few years saw a dramatic increase in the riparian vegetation. Initially, the decades of nitrate accumulation from cattle had produced algae blooms, but within three years these subsided enough that the water started running clean and clear.

The groundwater table rose over 20 feet during the initial five years. It is estimated that we regained over 600 acre-feet of storage within the central basin. This basin was critical for our community during the recent drought as many homes depended on this basin for their drinking water. The primary location for social gatherings is a ball field at the lower end of the valley. Cuttings of willow and cottonwood are regularly harvested from the area for temporary structures and traditional plant harvesting is again undertaken in the restoration area. Similar structures have also been re-introduced into other southern California Reservations and among the Kumeyaay in Mexico. For the Baja Kumeyaay, the restoration of basket-making materials from wetland areas has helped to create resurgence in



Cottonwoods towering over willows, 2015.

traditional craftsmanship and helped to spawn a lucrative cottage industry in the communities.

As regional climate change pushes us toward a more arid ecosystem, the rock drop structures offer a traditional approach to resiliency and sustainability. Campo, and other Kumeyaay Bands continue to promote traditional land management through the Kumeyaay Diegueno Land Conservancy and the Kumeyaay Community College.



Please help us highlight restoration projects and use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge on tribal lands.

Meet the Contributor: **Michael Connolly Miskwish**

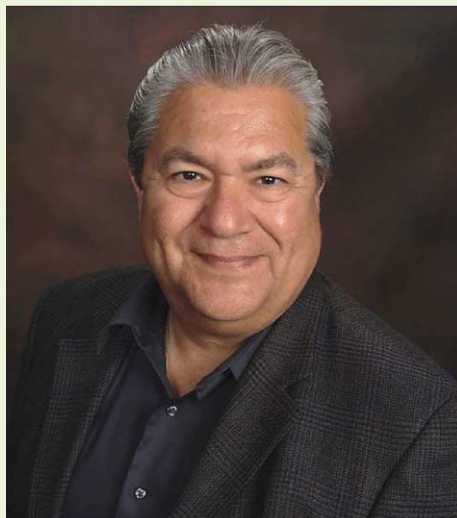
Occupation: Resource Economist, currently under contract to Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association, Kumeyaay Historic Preservation Council, Museum of Us (San Diego), Terra-Gen Wind.

County of residence or work: San Diego and Imperial Counties.

How long have you been involved in restoration ecology? 33 years.

What is your specific discipline (or underlying education)? Engineering, economics, and historian.

What services do you provide for restoration in California, or what is your restoration passion? Bringing traditional



ecological knowledge into present-day recovery and restoration projects.

How did you get into the field of ecological restoration? Working to mitigate erosion from overgrazing by cattle and researching traditional tribal wetland techniques

What is your favorite California native species? Coyote, kingsnake, red-tailed Hawk (they are the ones that visit me on a regular basis).

Any advice for others in the field of restoration? Nature is defined as

everything except humans. Redefine yourself as a part of the definition and help others to see the same.

Personal Perspective: *Lanika Cervantes*

Hi! I am Lanika Cervantes and I am a Senior Regulatory Specialist at ICF Jones & Stokes. It took a lot of determination and a bit of stubbornness to get here. This is my career story.

I am third generation Mexican American but am also a pretty good blend of lots of ethnicities: half Mexican and the other half mixed with Hawaiian and Caucasian with splashes of Asian descent. My paternal grandparents are first generation Mexicans that came to the USA in their early twenties, separately, they actually met here in San Diego at an English learning class. I grew up in the small town of Ramona in San Diego County, along with my dad's side of the family, hence I have always been closest to my Mexican roots.

Education was strongly encouraged in our household. My dad has always worked in concrete construction and works his body to the bone each day for his paycheck. He pushed us to get a good education and get a “pencil pushing job” as he always put it. He wanted us to get jobs that used our minds rather than our bodies. However, the actual logistics of college; what it cost, how to apply, how to prepare for it, was completely foreign and there was no guidance at all on this.

Luckily, I had a mentor. My older brother's best friend, Juan Griego, who we all had grown up with, was the first person I had known to go to a 4-year University. In 2004, my senior year of high school, he sat down with me and helped me apply to colleges as well as financial aid. When I was accepted and decided to attend California State University of San Marcos, Juan went with me to my orientation and helped me pick out my first semester of classes. I was clueless and needed all the help I could get! I do not think he knew how much I appreciated it, just taking those few hours out of his day really helped to get me set up for college. Juan passed away from cancer two years later in 2006; he was a great man, and I am thankful I had him in my life.

Once I was in college, the reality set in. I did not qualify for financial aid because my parents were considered “middle class” and just over the income limit. And me being the clueless person I was assumed that meant my parents would pay for my college. WRONG! They had no extra money for my tuition. Luckily, I am a natural saver, I had started working at age 16 and I had saved

most of my paychecks, so with my life savings and some help from my older brother I came up with the first year of tuition. But this also led to the reality of what going to college meant for me. I had to work, and work a lot, to be able to come up with tuition each semester. So that's what I did, I went to school full-time and had two part-time jobs: no days off. It was horrible, but I kept with it because I really wanted to finish school.

I was majoring in Biology, with an emphasis in Ecology. Towards the end of my sophomore year in college I decided to look for a *paid* internship in biology (Yes, I started thinking ahead and was getting the hang of the whole college/career idea). I knew I

needed to gain experience, but I also knew I could not afford to take anything unpaid. I found an intern position with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Regulatory Branch and got it! Let me tell you, I had NO IDEA who the USACE were, what they did, I had no clue there was an environmental permitting world! All I knew was that it was paid, and I would gain experience in biology. Ha! I shadowed project managers, learning about the Clean Water Act and all the federal laws that as a federal lead you must ensure projects comply with. Eventually I helped draft documents and was given small projects to review and process. This job opened my eyes to a whole world that I did not even know existed, and I loved every bit of it.

In 2008, my junior year of college, one year into my USACE internship, and at 21 years old I had my son, Julius. Now if I did not have enough on my plate, now I had a baby to raise thrown into the mix. A few people in my family thought I was going to drop out, but honestly that never crossed my mind. If I wanted a good life for my child, why wouldn't I want to finish college and shoot for a good career? In 2009, I was the first in my family to graduate from a 4-year University with a bachelor's degree!

I was promoted to a Project Manager with the USACE. However, my manager at the time, pushed me to continue my education and obtain a master's degree, and reluctantly I went back to school. It took me 4 years, but I got through it and received my MS in 2013.

I had my second child, Leianna, in 2013 and decided to leave the USACE and go into consulting to gain more fieldwork



continued next page

Personal Perspective: *Lanika Cervantes* continued

experience. I started at AECOM, only staying for a couple of years before moving on to my current firm ICF Jones & Stokes. I have been with ICF for over 6 years now. I worked hard to be promoted to Senior Specialist and have focused my efforts on not only sharpening my own regulatory and wetlands skills but also being a key mentor for our junior and midlevel staff.

I am fortunate to have had multiple amazing women in my career who have mentored me, helped to sharpen my skill sets, and who have pushed me to excel. I know that my drive and dedication kept me moving forward, but it was also Juan and the amazing mentors I had throughout my career who pulled me up and aided in my success. This is why ever since my USACE days, I have been involved in STEM and programs geared towards inner city kids and minorities, doing my part to introduce them to the environmental consulting world. There is not much diversity in my field, in higher level college classes you notice when you are one of a handful of nonwhite students. The same is true for environmental consulting, there are not very many minorities in our field, and I think it is attributed to kids not knowing this is a

career they can pursue. My goal has been to volunteer at least once a year to speak or lead field trips with minority kids and expose them to this type of career path. I am hopeful that we will continue to see more diversity in my field in the years to come.

As both a woman and of Mexican descent, I was taught to be humble. Work hard and opportunities will follow, not to be arrogant or ostentatious. Through my career journey I have struggled between the desire to stay humble and grateful for the opportunities that have come my way, and advocating for my career. But what I have learned is this; you and only you can advocate for yourself, if you feel you deserve that promotion then push for it. If you think you deserve that raise, then ask for it. Fighting for your career and what you deserve does not by any means imply you are ungrateful.

A manager used to tell me the following quote, “Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” That quote has always stuck — when you come prepared, you make your own luck.


We will continue to amplify BIPOC voices — please consider writing your personal perspective.




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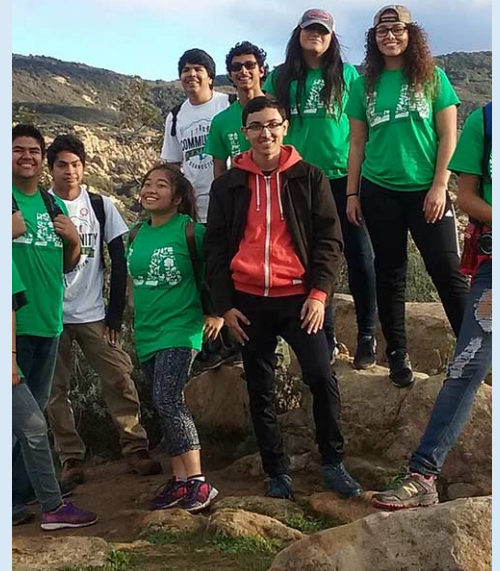
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Scrolling for Good: *Community Nature Connection*

by *Linnea Spears-Lebrun*

Looking to diversify your social media feeds and support equity and inclusion in science/outdoors? This recurring spotlight will provide suggestions for influencers and community organizations that are providing important content through social media. Our inaugural social media highlight is **Community Nature Connection**. This nonprofit based in Los Angeles, California, can be found on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Their mission is “To increase access to the outdoors for communities impacted by racial, socio-economic, and disability injustices by eliminating existing barriers through advocacy, community centered programming, and workforce development”. They have many programs to accomplish this including **a year-long internship for ages 18 to 26 that focuses on habitat and ecological restoration in the Santa Monica Mountains**. Interns work primarily at Peter Strauss Ranch and Rancho Sierra Vista leading activities and events for the purposes of park restoration and propagation of native land vegetation. The best part is after completion of a minimum of 640 hours, interns are eligible for non-competitive hiring by federal land management agencies. The Community Nature Connection also has a Training Institute that provides courses (online and in person) to learn interpretive skills, birding, native plant identification, leave no trace ethics, and more. These courses are open to the community and are no or low cost. Check ‘em out and follow Community Nature Connection!

<https://www.communitynatureconnection.org/>



Do you scroll for good? Please let us know more groups to highlight!

Progress in diversity and inclusion is everyone's responsibility.

Our legacy is to leave a better world for all.



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The Last Word: *Willingness*

“The willingness to experiment with change may be the most essential ingredient to success at anything.”
— Pat Summitt, Head Coach, Tennessee Lady Vols basketball team (1974–2012)

And we thought 2020 was strange!

Yet, here we are, showing up every day, learning new ways to work together to achieve our goals despite the challenges that continue to rise up during these (still) crazy times.

Over the last twenty-plus years, I have witnessed a steady professional growth in both SERCAL and our industry; but the events of the last almost two years have catapulted our organization from concretized thinking and into a reboot — where the key to our success will depend upon our willingness to open our eyes, our ears, our minds, our hearts, and our arms, our very *selves* to change — to not knowing, to being wrong, and to, occasionally, falling flat on our face and asking for forgiveness, or even more scary, for help.

On the eve of our 2021 virtual conference, I want to personally give appreciation to...

The passion and energy of SERCAL's Leadership Team and the volunteers of our Diversity Task Force,

The vulnerability and courage of the writers who contributed to this issue, many of whom will also be speaking Tuesday 14 September in the Diversity Session of our conference,

The presence and capacity of, really, each of you. For showing up however you do, however much you can. Together, we are making a difference. Together, our ripples are bringing positive change not only to California's native habitats and species, but to each other.

— Julie St John

Members, please be on the lookout for our **member survey** in future Mailchimp emails! It's super simple: **What are we doing *best*?**
What could we be doing *better*? What *should* we be doing?



Natural resources planning and permitting services for ecological restoration projects

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You are crucial to the resilience of California's native habitats

Just like our floral first responders, SERCAL members make California's ecological systems healthy and whole again. In the three decades since SERCAL was founded (let alone, last year) so much — almost everything — has changed. Yet one thing remains constant: *The exceptional power we have when we work together.* We are grateful for all our members and want to recognize these individuals and businesses for their generous support in 2021:

Sustaining Businesses:

Edith Read **E Read and Associates** *Orange* * Jeff Quiter
Hedgerow Farms *Winters* * Robert Freese **Irvine Ranch Conservancy** *Irvine* * Travis Gramberg **Koheid** *Costa Mesa* * Alisa Flint **OC Parks Natural Resources Team** *Irvine* * Cindy Tambini **Wildlands** *Rockland*

Sustaining Individuals:

Philip Brownsey *Environmental Science Associates* *Sacramento* * **Gina Darin** *California Dept of Water Resources* *Sacramento* * **Jason Drew** *Nichols Consulting Engineers* *South Lake Tahoe* * **Robert Mazalewski** *Consulting Horticulturist* *La Mesa* * **Ross N. Taylor** *Ross Taylor & Associates* *McKinleyville* * **Peter Warner** *Peter Warner Botanical & Ecological Consulting* *Sebastopol* * **Emily Zefferman** *Resource Conservation District of Monterey County* *Marina*

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Have you considered writing an article about a project you're working on? Or on a topic that's been top-of-your-mind? Or what about a photo essay of before and after? Take a look at the articles in this or past issues and you'll get a good idea of the spectrum of topics we cover.

Next issue:

Oct 2021—California Sycamore Restoration
Will Spangler, Guest Editor

Upcoming issues:

Published	Due*	Guest Editor	Topic
Dec 2021	Nov 1	Communications Team	<i>SERCAL 2021</i>
Mar 2022	Feb 1	Geoff Smick	<i>Theme TBA</i>
Jun 2022	May 1	James Mizoguchi	<i>Phytophthora</i>
Sep 2022	Aug 1	Isaiah Thalmayer	<i>Theme TBA</i>

*Contact Julie, James, or the Guest Editor (see contacts, previous page) *early* to secure your spot. Find guidelines at www.sercal.org/newsletter

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