

Sharing our Stories: Interpreting the Estuary—Introduction

Moderator: Will Travis, Climate Change Consultant, willtravis@sbcglobal.net

Key to the challenges facing the Bay-Delta Estuary is an engaged local community. Without understanding how the public perceives the Bay and Delta, and without actively finding ways to generate community involvement; restoration projects, decisions about water use, and developing a plan for sea level rise lack the broad support required to be successful. Despite wide-scale planning decisions having significant impacts on the future of the Bay and Delta, it's estimated that over 80% of Californians can't locate the Delta and few understand the extent of the Bay's lost tidal marsh.

The session focuses on both understanding and shaping human perceptions of the Estuary. Topics include tribal knowledge and conservation of the Bay and Delta; environmental history and people's perceptions of the Bay; outreach and engagement of the public through local museums; and public access and education through trails, recreation plans, and heritage areas. The session will reflect the overall theme of the conference, and provide an understanding of both past and future directions within the public community and decision-making. It will link to other efforts around the Estuary, such as the SF Bay Restoration Authority's ballot measure for a parcel tax increase for restoration projects (discussed in a separate SOE session), and will suggest the importance of people valuing a healthy Estuary to support similar efforts.

This session coincides with a number of opportunities for public engagement and interest in the Bay and Delta. 2013 has been designated as the Year of the Bay and marks the opening of the new Bay Bridge span, the 150th anniversary of the Port of San Francisco, and the 34th America's Cup Series taking place on Bay waters. Additionally, this year the Bay was designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

Keywords: Public, Community, Decisions, Estuary, Bay, Delta, Tribal, History, Education, Heritage

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Moderator Biography: Will Travis is a consultant on climate change. From 1995 to 2011, he served as the executive director of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and in 2012 served as the senior advisor to the Bay Area Joint Policy Committee, four regional agencies working to advance future economic prosperity and address climate change. He spearheaded the public acquisition of 10,000 acres of privately-owned salt ponds along the northern shoreline of San Francisco Bay, which are now being restored to wetlands. Will is a popular public speaker and has been a lecturer at universities throughout North America. He serves on the boards of directors of a number of professional and civic organizations. Will earned Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Regional Planning degrees, both from Penn State University. He is the 2009 recipient of the Jean Auer Environmental Award and the 2012 recipient of the Frank C. Boerger Award.

The Indigenous Bay: Tribal Knowledge, Conservation, and Challenges

Chuck Striplen, San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI), chuck@sfei.org

Over thousands of years, tribes living by the Bay and elsewhere in California have developed frameworks for resource management. This collective body of knowledge is today called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). These practices and principles have applications to modern resource protection and restoration beyond existing tribal lands, including landscape approaches to the protection of wildlife and water quality around the Bay.

However, the precise mechanisms by which TEK can complement scientific approaches to resource management and restoration have yet to be fully developed and tested, and there is a great need for more collaborative relationships between tribes and watershed scientists. Additionally, there is a tremendous deficit of representation of these topics in the region's interpretive and educational institutions.

SFEI is seeking to meet some of these challenges through development of a Cultural Landscapes initiative that is being designed to address facilitate connections between watershed science, local and State government, and California's Tribal governments. Cultural Landscapes at SFEI will incorporate a broader and more inclusive definition of watersheds, one that acknowledges the inherent sovereignty of tribal governments across the state. Other objectives include facilitating public and tribal engagement; partnering with museums and educational institutions to develop new interpretations; collaboratively developing information, data, and tools; and providing policy-oriented analysis and assessment.

Keywords: Indigenous Bay, Tribal Ecological Knowledge, Cultural Landscapes, Historical Ecology

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Speaker Biography: Chuck Striplen is an Environmental Scientist at the San Francisco Estuary Institute, where he works with the Resilient Landscapes Program. He is developing a Cultural Landscapes initiative, using early historical documents, oral histories, and other ethno-ecological sources to analyze Native resource management that shaped the landscape first encountered by European explorers. He is experienced in applying historical ecology and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to contemporary landscape-scale resource management. Mr. Striplen is currently a PhD candidate in Environmental Science, Policy and Management at the University of California, Berkeley. He is also a Visiting Scholar in Anthropology at the University, and was a 2003 Switzer Fellow. He joined SFEI in 2002.

Above and Below: Stories from the Changing Bay

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Louise Pubols, Oakland Museum of California (OMCA), lpubols@museumca.org

Layers of human history intertwine with the region's natural processes to form a hybrid landscape—a landscape partly determined by water, wind, underlying soils and geology, plants and animals, and partly engineered by humans. The exhibition at the Oakland Museum of California (through February, 2014), *Above and Below: Stories from Our Changing Bay*, explores the dynamic stories of how humans have shaped and been shaped by this unique environment over the last 6,000 years. Several years in the making, this multidisciplinary exhibition highlights place-based stories about the Bay and engages viewers in discussion about the Bay's future.

The exhibit was developed through collaboration between the OMCA and SFEI and also involved a wide network of partners in the community, including local environmental organizations, artists, visualization experts, and science and management agencies.

Involving the community in environmental issues requires a nuanced approach, and collaboration between a science organization and a museum brings its own set of challenges. Louise Pubols (OMCA) and Ruth Askevold (SFEI) will discuss strategies used to engage visitors and the opportunities and challenges in this collaboration. Visualizing the Bay has been critical to the exhibit's success, and artifacts, art, maps, and other media used in the exhibit will be presented.

Keywords: Hybrid Landscape, Environment, Place-Based, Collaboration, Museum, Exhibition, Visualization

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Speaker Biography: Ruth Askevold is a Senior Project Manager at the San Francisco Estuary Institute, where she works with the Resilient Landscapes Program. She has over twenty years of experience in geographic information systems, cartography, and visualizations. Her experience includes spatial analysis, information design, and project management. Current and recent projects focus on the historical ecology of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the San Francisco Bay. She uses historical maps and photographs to assist in visualizing the past, and currently directs and designs historical ecology publications and educational material at SFEI. She has provided consultation to the Exploratorium and the Oakland Museum of California.

Speaker Biography: Louise Pubols is the senior curator of history at OMCA, where her projects included *Coming to California*, a reinstallation of the Museum's history galleries, and this major exhibition on the San Francisco Bay. Her 2009 book, *The Father of All: The de la Guerra Family, Power, and Patriarchy in Mexican California*, explores how patriarchy informed the economic and political systems of Mexican-era California. Prior to arriving at OMCA in 2008, Ms. Pubols was a historian at the Autry National Center's Museum of the American West, where she curated exhibitions on the Mexican North and on the fur trade.

Delta Gateways: Heritage and Habitat

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A recent study found 80% of Californians are unaware of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Those who know the Delta often learned about water supply or Delta Smelt issues from the press. Yet the Delta is an ecological and cultural treasure of local up to international importance.

Westhoff will present the concept of the Delta as a cultural landscape and discuss the five themes proposed for the Delta National Heritage Area to showcase its role in the nation's story. These themes illustrate layers of history which uniquely contributed to the development of California and other parts of the nation and world. The center of one of the largest reclamation projects in the U.S., a multi-cultural rural landscape, and a world food supplier, the Delta's stories are vast and fascinating. The Delta Protection Commission's regional planning efforts seek to further promote historical and cultural significance to advance public understanding of the Delta.

Moran will discuss the East Bay Regional Park District's Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta, which strives to provoke in the individual the fascination, richness, and personal attachment that leads to a collective understanding and sense of place for the Delta. The interpreter's job for this important and delicate California landform is not to provide "**the** answer," but to spark questions and quests for more information, understanding, attachment, and ultimately, a deeper stewardship of the Delta.

Keywords: Delta, Heritage, Habitat, Park, History, Culture, Interpretation, Stewardship, Big Break

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Speaker Biography: Alex Westhoff is an Associate Environmental Planner with the Delta Protection Commission, the State agency which oversees land use in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and manages projects to enhance the region's economy and resources. Alex is project manager for the Delta National Heritage Area and led the program's Feasibility Study through conducting historical research, developing partnerships, undertaking resource inventories, and structuring comprehensive public involvement processes. He received a joint Masters of Landscape Architecture in Environmental Planning and Masters of City Planning from UC Berkeley. He also holds a B.S. in Animal and Plant Systems from the University of Minnesota.

Speaker Biography: Mike Moran has been a Naturalist for over 25 years, 19 with East Bay Regional Park District, interpreting the Delta and assisting to develop the Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta. Mike worked with the National Park Service, California State Parks, National Marine Sanctuary System, Yosemite Institute (now Nature Bridge) and led natural history/whale watch programs in the U.S. and Canada. He attended SFSU and U.C. Berkeley (MS, Wildland Resource Science, studying San Joaquin River basin salmon). Mike was awarded the national Master Frontline Interpreter Award in 2012 and the 2013 Robert G. Brownlee Award for Bay Discoveries.

Curating the Bay: Crowdsourcing a New Public History

Jon Christensen, UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, California Center for Sustainable Communities, and Department of History, jonchristensen@ioes.ucla.edu

This presentation will report on the results of an experiment in crowdsourcing in public history as a way to engage people in environmental history around the San Francisco Bay. The experiment was undertaken in a collaboration between Stanford University's Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis, the social technology nonprofit Historypin, the California Historical Society, and other public history institutions in San Francisco during 2013, the Year of the Bay. This is one of three experiments in crowdsourcing for the humanities funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to learn more about the conditions under which crowdsourcing is useful for research in the humanities. The Year of the Bay experiment was designed to take advantage of a large public event—2013 brings the high-profile America's Cup yacht races to the Bay, the opening of a new Bay Bridge span, and the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Port of San Francisco, among other events—to work with libraries, museums, archives, and the media to bring a large, diverse crowd to engage with historical photographs that lack metadata, to help provide information about those photographs and other sources, and to contribute their own materials and memories at <http://yearofthebay.org>. The project also involved working with two museums—the California Historical Society and the Oakland Museum of California—to bring the crowdsourcing project into public exhibition spaces. Crowdsourcing and other interactive technologies afford innovative opportunities for public history in an era when many museums, libraries, and archives are experimenting with ways to remain publicly relevant. But these experiments also entail distinct costs, tradeoffs, and risks. I will share lessons from this experiment for engaging the public more deeply in the past, present, and future of the estuary.

Keywords: Crowdsourcing, Public History, Environmental History, Museums, Public Engagement, Humanities, Archives

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Speaker Biography: Jon Christensen is an adjunct assistant professor in the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, California Center for Sustainable Communities, and History Department. He is a veteran environmental journalist and science writer whose work has appeared in The New York Times, Nature, High Country News, and many other newspapers, magazines, journals, and radio and television shows. Jon was a Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford in 2002-2003 and a Steinbeck Fellow at San Jose State in 2003-2004, before returning to Stanford to work on a Ph.D. in History, and serving as executive director of the Bill Lane Center for the American West, an interdisciplinary center for research, teaching, new media, and journalism from 2009 to 2012. He is currently working on a book entitled "Critical Habitat: A History of Thinking with Things in Nature," and he is editor of Boom: A Journal of California, published by UC Press.