

State of the San Francisco Estuary Conference 2013



Photo by: Verne Nelson

Jean Auer Environmental Award



Jean Auer was a prominent player in California's water issues for over thirty years. From 1972 to 1977, Jean served as a public member of the State Water Resources Control Board, where she voted on regulations controlling pollution and establishing water rights.

Judge Ron Robie, associate justice of the State Court of Appeal in Sacramento, who served with Jean on the board, called her "a marvelous person of great spirit, enthusiasm and intelligence." "This was just the beginning of the environmental movement in America," he said. "Then-Gov. Reagan encouraged our water board to do great things in preserving the (Sacramento-San Joaquin River) Delta and providing flows and streams for recreation and fish as well as cleaning up sewage-treatment plants. She was really courageous and not at all timid."

Jean was born in Youngstown, Ohio. She first learned about water issues with the League of Women Voters and was appointed to the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Her interest continued after the family moved to San Francisco, and she was appointed to the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Auers moved to Hillsborough in 1973, where she was elected to the Town Council and as mayor.

Starting in 1987, Jean worked on the decision-making management committee of the San Francisco Estuary Project, where Marcia Brockbank describes her ability to forge agreements. "She was a phenomenal woman, a consummate Renaissance woman." In 1991, Jean became the second female president of the Commonwealth Club, after Shirley Temple Black, and for the next decade ran a fellowship program for young professionals at the nonprofit Water Education Foundation. Jean is survived by her three beloved sons, Lance, Grant and Brad Grant Auer.



2013 Awardee

Dr. Howard Shellhammer

For over 50 years Dr. Howard Shellhammer has been a champion for the wetland and marsh ecosystems of the San Francisco Bay region. His tireless efforts to protect the habitats of the salt marsh harvest mouse, especially the high salt marsh and marsh/upland ecotone, have led to ecological benefits throughout the bay region. In 1970 he successfully petitioned the USFWS to list the mouse as an endangered species. He also has studied the fire ecology of giant sequoias for almost as long. He often summarizes his research activities as having been about "a very small mouse and a very, very big tree."

Dr. Shellhammer's lifetime of work has spanned the entire spectrum of environmental vocations including ecological research, stewardship, teaching, planning and activism. His ecological research and planning efforts have been put to use in a number of critical conservation projects including the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, the California Clapper Rail Conservation Plan, the Tidal Marsh Recovery Plan, the Bay Ecosystems Goals Project, as well as restoration and management plans for Cooley Landing, Bair Island and Suisun Marsh.

We thank Dr. Shellhammer for all of his work and dedication to protecting native habitats and wildlife.