



CAREERS IN CONSERVATION JOB FAIR

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TIME	ROOM	BREAKOUT SESSION
2–3pm	Sequoia	<u>Tools, Trails & Teamwork: Field Maintenance Careers</u>
2–3pm	Manzanita	<u>Equity in Conservation</u>
2–3pm	Apricot	<u>Conservation through Community Engagement</u>
3–4pm	Sequoia	<u>Behind the Badge: Life as a Ranger</u>
3–4pm	Manzanita	<u>The Human Side of Conservation: Working with Communities and Visitors</u>
3–4pm	Apricot	<u>Internships in Action: Alumni Career Journeys</u>
4–5pm	Sequoia	<u>Careers That Keep You Outside: Science and Stewardship in the Field</u>
4–5pm	Manzanita	<u>Innovation in Conservation</u>
4–5pm	Apricot	<u>Thriving in Your First Job</u>
5–6pm	Sequoia	<u>Native Voices in Conservation</u>



Tools, Trails & Teamwork: Field Maintenance Careers

2-3pm • Sequoia Room

Explore the essential work that keeps Bay Area parks, preserves, and open spaces safe, accessible, and thriving. This panel highlights the skilled professionals behind field maintenance—open space technicians, equipment mechanic-operators, trail crews, and more—who ensure our landscapes remain healthy and ready for the public to enjoy.

Panelists will share insights into their day-to-day responsibilities, from constructing and maintaining trails to operating heavy equipment, restoring habitats, and repairing facilities. The conversation will also cover job requirements, certifications, and training pathways, along with opportunities for growth and specialization within field operations.

Whether you're drawn to working outdoors, interested in the skilled trades, or considering a hands-on career in land management, this session offers a clear and inspiring look at the teamwork, technical expertise, and dedication behind effective field maintenance. Learn what it takes to build, maintain, and protect the places that make the Bay Area unique.



Tools, Trails & Teamwork: Field Maintenance Careers

2-3pm • Sequoia Room



VALERIE NILES (Facilitator)

Open Space Technician,
Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Valerie Niles originally entered West Valley College's Park Management program with the intention of becoming the Leslie Knope of county parks (shoutout to any "Parks and Recreation" fans), but she found her calling during the Parks Maintenance class and forged a new path. She began her career in June 2021 as a Seasonal Open Space Technician with Midpen, reporting to the Foothills Field Office and spent two seasons falling in love with the work and the crew. Valerie also spent a season with Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, where she served as a Seasonal Open Space Technician with the Sierra Vista crew in 2022. She changed her stars and achieved her professional dreams of a permanent home with Midpen in 2023 and has never looked back. Valerie loves celebrating wins with her crew, hyping everyone up, and working alongside incredible folks protecting the Bay's regional greenbelt.



Tools, Trails & Teamwork: Field Maintenance Careers

2-3pm • Sequoia Room



MEGAN ROBINSON

Supervising Open Space Technician,
Open Space Authority

Megan Robinson has built a 21-year career with the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority. She began in 2005 as a West Valley College intern and now serves as a Supervisor, leading a 12-person field staff team. Megan is passionate about her work and is committed to sharing her experience with those interested in pursuing careers in open space and land stewardship.



HEIDI MACFARLAND

Department Chair for the Park
Management Program, West Valley
College

Currently the Department Chair for the Park Management Program at West Valley college, Heidi McFarland has had a long career in Public Lands and Natural Resources for over 30 years now. She began her career as a student herself in the Park Management Program which helped launch her into the dream career of Parks and Public Land Management. Starting her first few years with CA State Parks Mountain Sector, Heidi then left and worked the next 16 years for Santa Clara County Parks spending time as a Park Maintenance Worker, Volunteer Coordinator, Outdoor Recreation Coordinator, and Interpretive Program Coordinator before she moved on to her next chapter. In 2014 Heidi started working for the Santa Clara Valley Water District as the Education Outreach Director leading all of the districts school outreach programming, field trips and developing the tours at the new Silicon Valley Advanced Water Treatment Plant.



Tools, Trails & Teamwork: Field Maintenance Careers

2-3pm • Sequoia Room



PATRICK COURTRIGHT

Park Maintenance Supervisor/Pajaro South, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California State Parks

Patrick Courtright – Park maintenance supervisor for the Pajaro Coast sector of the Santa Cruz district for California State Parks. My career started in 2000 as a seasonal with the State Parks Trail crew, and I have worked my way through the ranks in maintenance to my current position as a Park Maintenance Supervisor.



ANDREW MARTINI

Parks Grounds Maintenance Worker,
Sonoma County Regional Parks

Andrew Martini began his career with Sonoma County Regional Parks as a seasonal Park Aide in 2016, the most entry level position to the team. After working a season in an operational position, he switched over to the maintenance department as a seasonal employee, eventually promoting to a full time Parks and Grounds Maintenance Worker for 6 years. He recently made his way back to the operations team as a Park Ranger, but still carries with him the passion for positive visitor experience, sharing a likeness for recreating in the same parks he serves.



Equity in Conservation

2-3pm • Manzanita Room

This session explores how equity in conservation strengthens when internal workplace culture and external community engagement inform one another. We will examine how creating psychologically safe workplaces allows staff to bring their perspectives and lived experiences into conservation work, shaping more authentic partnerships and greater community trust. The presentation will also address historical and ongoing inequities in access to parks, trails, and open space in Bay Area communities, and discuss how acknowledging past harms builds credibility and supports more equitable stewardship.

Participants will explore ways agencies can reduce barriers to outdoor access, co-design welcoming experiences with community partners, and practice equity in decision making, to guide priorities and programs. The session will also highlight strategies that expand pathways into conservation careers through internships, and workforce programs, alongside mentorship and sponsorship practices that support advancement and representation. We will explore how stewardship includes caring for people and communities as meaningfully as we care for the lands we protect.



Equity in Conservation

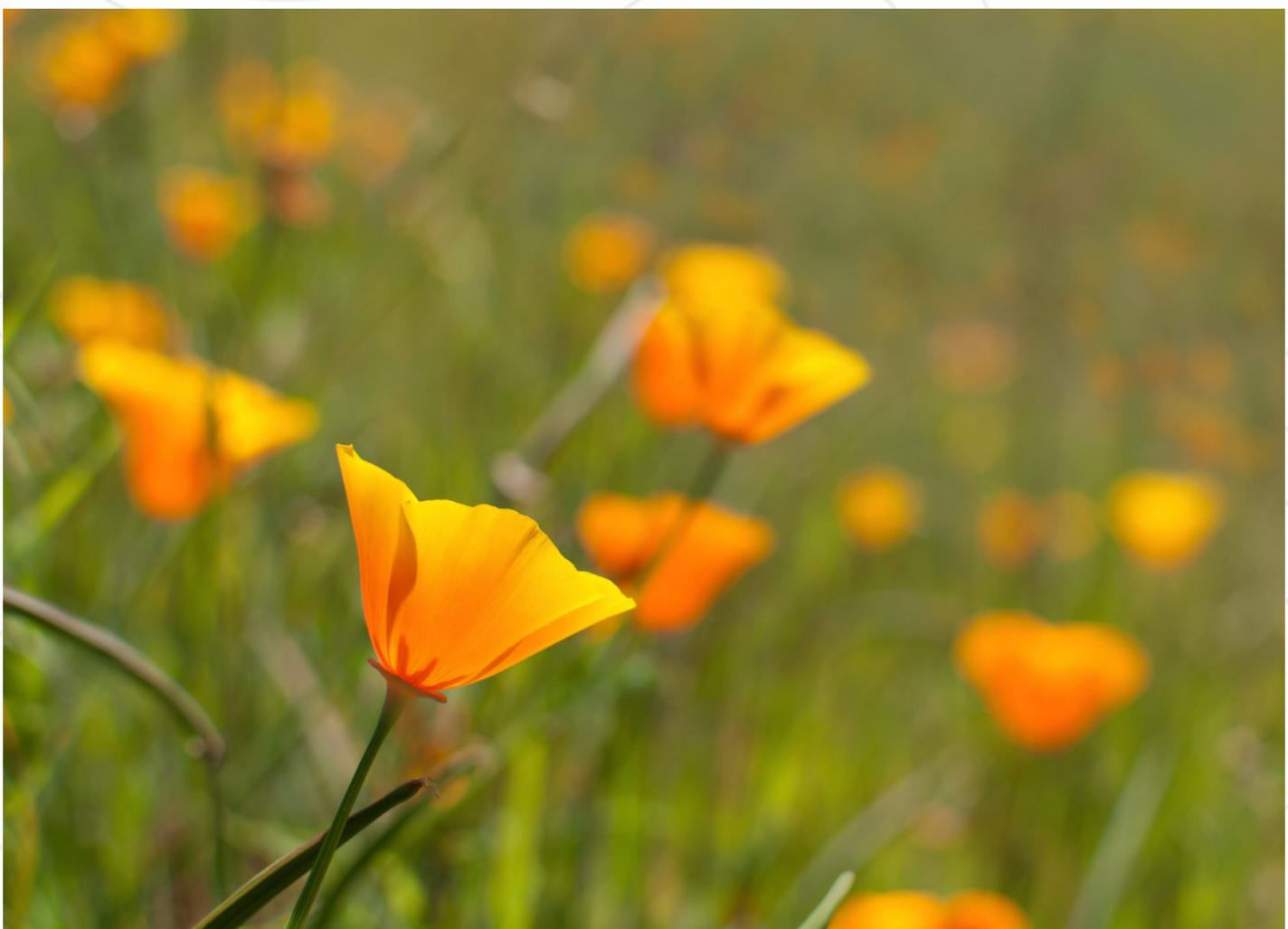
2-3pm • Manzanita Room



KATIE GILMUR (Facilitator)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist,
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Katie Gilmur is an organizational strategist and culture leader with more than 15 years of experience in leadership development, equity strategy, and systems transformation. She partners with mission driven organizations to align people strategy with outcomes, using data, collaboration, and scalable systems to drive impact while strengthening partnerships and connecting communities. She is known for translating complexity into clear, durable systems that strengthen culture, expand access, and position organizations for meaningful and lasting impact.





Equity in Conservation

2-3pm • Manzanita Room



JOSÉ G. GONZÁLEZ

Equity Officer, East Bay Regional
Park District

José G. González is a professional educator with training in the fields of education and conservation. He is the Founder of Latino Outdoors, as well as having served as a consultant at large. He currently serves as the inaugural the Equity Officer for the East Bay Regional Park District. His work focuses on Equity & Inclusion frameworks and practices in the environmental, outdoor, and conservation fields. He received his B.A. at the University of California, Davis, with teaching coursework at the Bilingual, Multicultural, Education Department at Sacramento State. He received his M.S. at the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources & Environment. He serves as a board member at Parks CA as well as a Commissioner for the California Boating & Waterways Commission, along with having served in a variety of other board and voluntary leadership roles in several conservation and outdoor industry organizations.



Equity in Conservation

2-3pm • Manzanita Room



OLIVIA WHITE LOPEZ

Director of Culture, Equity & Belonging,
Peninsula Open Space Trust

Olivia White Lopez (she / they) serves as the Peninsula Open Space Trust's Director of Culture, Equity and Belonging. She has 16 years of nonprofit leadership experience and previously led inclusion and belonging efforts with Kiva, Hack the Hood, and 826 Valencia. Olivia holds an M.S. in Organization Development from the University of San Francisco and a B.A. in Anthropology/Sociology and Studio Art from Agnes Scott College. In her spare time Olivia enjoys a good comedy show, bike-camping, and volunteering with the People's Kitchen Collective.





Conservation through Community Engagement

2-3pm • Apricot Room

Effective conservation grows stronger when community members play an active role in shaping and supporting the work. This session explores how meaningful partnerships with local organizations, cultural groups, and community leaders enhance conservation outcomes, build long term stewardship, and help agencies and nonprofits better serve their missions.

Participants will learn core principles of inclusive engagement, including listening with intention, working collaboratively, and showing cultural respect in every stage of a project. The session will highlight examples of community led restoration efforts, co-created stewardship programs, shared planning processes, and partnerships that integrate community knowledge into land and resource management.

This conversation is ideal for anyone interested in expanding their approach to conservation through authentic collaboration. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for building relationships, supporting community voices, and creating conservation efforts that reflect the values and priorities of the people who live, work, and visit in the region.



Conservation through Community Engagement

2-3pm • Apricot Room



LORI LOW (Facilitator)

Public Affairs Manager, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Lori began her career as a teacher, developing a deep commitment to inclusive learning and collaboration before working in environmental outreach and policy, and at a pioneering multicultural children's book publisher. Building meaningful connections across communities and institutions is woven throughout her 20 years of experience on complex initiatives and projects. Lori holds a Master's degree in Education and a Bachelor of Arts in American Literature and Culture from the University of California, Los Angeles.



KATE CASALE

Bay Area Director, Student Conservation Association

Kate Casale (she/her) is an environmental leader who served as the Bay Area Director for the Student Conservation Association since the fall of 2022 before moving into a new role as Partnership Director for California, Nevada and the Pacific Islands in early 2026. Her dedication to transforming lives, communities, and natural spaces is the common thread in her two-decade career in outdoor education, youth workforce development, and climate and food justice. Kate's work spans youth-led initiatives; career pathway and green job industry partnerships; and employment of hundreds of youths in environmental justice initiatives.



Conservation through Community Engagement

2-3pm • Apricot Room



BARB KIPREOS

Engagement Officer, San Mateo Resource Conservation District



MELISSA HIPPARD

Partnerships & Equity Program Manager,
Department of Parks and Recreation,
County of Santa Clara

Melissa Hippard (she/her) is the Partnership & Equity Manager for Santa Clara County Parks. Melissa has over 20 years working at the intersection of community, government and policy in the Bay Area. Prior to working for the County, she was Conservation Director at Greenbelt Alliance and Chapter Director for the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club.





Conservation through Community Engagement

2-3pm • Apricot Room



YAKUTA POONAWALLA

Director of Community Stewardship & Engagement, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Nothing brings Yakuta Poonawalla more joy than creating programs and partnerships that inspire communities to develop a connection with nature. In her role as the Director for the Community Stewardship and Engagement Department with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy she is bringing to life and action the vision of “Parks For All” through community stewardship and engagement programs. Yakuta serves on the Steering Committee of San Francisco Children & Nature, as a Board member for TOGETHER Bay Area, and on the roundtables of the California Landscape Stewardship Network where she shares her strengths in collaborative leadership, storytelling, and facilitation. She has written for the Center for Humans and Nature, Bay Nature, National Recreation and Parks Association, and Children & Nature Network. She was the recipient of the 2024 Bay Nature Local Community Hero Award.



Behind the Badge:

Life as a Ranger

3–4pm • Sequoia Room

Curious about what a ranger's work truly entails? Behind the Badge offers an inside look into the daily responsibilities, professional pathways, and real-world experiences of Bay Area rangers who protect and steward our public lands.

In this informative panel session, rangers from across the region will discuss the varied nature of their roles—from visitor engagement, education, and public safety to habitat protection, emergency response, and resource management. Panelists will also share how they entered the field, the training and qualifications that prepared them, and the moments that have shaped their careers.

Whether you are exploring conservation opportunities or seeking a deeper understanding of the individuals who safeguard our parks and open spaces, this session provides valuable insights and firsthand perspectives from those who carry the badge.



Behind the Badge: Life as a Ranger

3–4pm • Sequoia Room



ROBIN REITERMAN CURTIS (Facilitator)

Ranger, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Robin has been a Ranger with Midpen for the last 2.5 years. She previously worked with Midpen as a Ranger Aide, and has also worked with Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks and San Mateo County Parks. She has an Associate's degree in Park Management from West Valley College in Saratoga.



MIKE WARNER

Supervising Park Ranger, Foothills, Pearson, Arastradero Nature Preserves & Esther Clark Park, City of Palo Alto

Mike Warner started as a Ranger in 2013 with the Marin County Open Space District and currently serves as the Supervising Park Ranger for the City of Palo Alto's Foothills region. In addition to this Mike serves on the Park Ranger Association of California's Board of Directors and is a Team Lead and Coordinator for the Marin County Sheriff's Officer Search and Rescue Team. He attended Sonoma State University and has a Bachelor's Degree in Historical Geography and GIS Mapping. Mike enjoys nature photography, mountain biking, and camping in his free time.



Behind the Badge: Life as a Ranger

3–4pm • Sequoia Room



KATHERINE WRIGHT

Park Ranger III, San Mateo County Parks

Katherine is a Park Ranger III for San Mateo County Parks where she leads the Interpretive Division. This work encompasses much of the environmental education and community engagement the department offers for the public.



MIGUEL MARQUEZ

Park Ranger, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Miguel A. Marquez is a Park Ranger with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex, where he leads outreach, education, volunteer cleanups, and outdoor recreation to connect community and conservation. Raised in East Oakland and the first in his family to graduate college, he earned a BA in Environmental Studies with a focus on Natural Resource Land Use Management from Cal State University Hayward and built a career grounded in access, storytelling, and stewardship.



Behind the Badge: Life as a Ranger

3–4pm • Sequoia Room



BEN ALLAN

Ranger, California State Parks, Santa Cruz District

Ranger Ben Allan has worked as a State Parks Peace Officer in the Santa Cruz Mountains Sector for 4 years. He attended the State Parks Academy in 2021/2022, and has a Bachelors Degree in Communications from Southern Oregon University. In his free time he enjoys hiking, camping, skiing, among other outdoor activities.





The Human Side of Conservation: Working with Communities and Visitors

3–4pm • Manzanita Room

Conservation isn't only about caring for the land—it's also about caring for the people who visit, depend on, and connect with it. This session explores the essential human-centered skills that help rangers, educators, technicians, and other outdoor professionals create safe, inclusive, and meaningful experiences for diverse communities while building understanding across different backgrounds and expectations. Learn why people skills such as communication, empathy, cultural awareness, education, interpretation, and conflict resolution are just as critical as technical and field skills in today's conservation roles.

The session also highlights how interpretation, storytelling, and educational engagement help connect visitors to the land, its history, and its stewardship, and how relational stewardship broadens the impact of conservation by focusing on people as well as the environment. These human-centered practices foster empathy, deepen public understanding, and make outdoor spaces more welcoming for all.

Whether you're new to outdoor work or advancing your career, this conversation offers practical insights into the social side of conservation and the rewarding role of serving and welcoming the public on shared lands.



The Human Side of Conservation: Working with Communities and Visitors

3–4pm • Manzanita Room



ELLEN TJOSVOLD (Facilitator)

Interpretation & Education Program Manager,
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Ellen enjoys being in the outdoors and learning about the natural history of the Santa Cruz Mountains and beyond. As the Interpretation & Education Program Manager she works with a great team of staff and volunteer docents who provide opportunities for the public to be in nature and make their own memories and connections with each other and the beautiful open spaces.



ALI HENRY

Chief Park Ranger, Manager of Park
Ranger Operations, Santa Clara County
Parks and Recreation

As Santa Clara County Parks first female chief park ranger in its 70-year history Ali Henry oversees park operations across more than 55,000 acres of public parklands. She started her career in public service fifteen years ago as an extra help park services attendant and worked her way through the ranks promoting to chief in 2025. Henry has a passion for connecting the public to outdoor spaces and supporting her team with outstanding leadership and a deep commitment to public service. Off duty, she enjoys experiencing the outdoors through the beautiful lens of her twin two-year-old boys.



The Human Side of Conservation: Working with Communities and Visitors

3–4pm • Manzanita Room



AMY CHONG

Community Stewardship Program Manager,
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Amy Chong (she/her) is a community stewardship program manager for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. She cares deeply about welcoming historically excluded communities to connect with, care for, and find healing in national park lands.

She has worked for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area for 13 years and has a background in wildlife biology, habitat restoration, native landscape design, and community events.





Internships in Action: Alumni Career Journeys

3–4pm • Apricot Room

Hear directly from former interns who turned hands-on experience into meaningful career steps across conservation, parks, and public service organizations. This panel brings together alumni from a variety of internship programs to share their stories, insights, and lessons learned from their time in the field.

Panelists will reflect on the projects they worked on, the mentorship they received, and the skills they developed during their internships. They will also discuss how these experiences shaped their career choices, opened doors to new opportunities, and prepared them for full-time roles in the conservation and land management world.

Attendees will come away with practical guidance on making the most of an internship, building connections, and translating hands-on experience into future opportunities and continued professional growth.



Internships in Action: Alumni Career Journeys

3–4pm • Apricot Room



ELEANOR RAAB (Facilitator)

Public Affairs Specialist, Midpeninsula
Regional Open Space District

Eleanor Raab is a Public Affairs Specialist at the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, leading public engagement and outreach projects. She began her career as an intern at Midpen, and later returned as a full-time staff member. In the interim, Eleanor was a journalist at The Almanac newspaper, covering local and regional politics, housing and environmental issues on the Peninsula. A passionate California naturalist and science communicator, she is especially interested in expanding pathways into conservation careers for people from all educational backgrounds.



TONALLA RENTERIA

Manager of People and Culture,
Big Sur Land Trust

Tonalla began her journey at Big Sur Land Trust as an intern after graduating from Cal State Monterey Bay and later supported youth and learning programs while earning her Master of Public Administration at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. She went on to serve as Executive Assistant and Board Liaison before stepping into her current role as Manager of People and Culture, and outside of work she enjoys outside walking time with her son Luca and her border collie Meeka.



Internships in Action: Alumni Career Journeys

3–4pm • Apricot Room



ALINA MARZANO

Environmental Education Specialist,
Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District

Alina is an environmental education specialist for the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. They are passionate about connecting people with the natural world through developing and supporting interpretive programs and community outreach opportunities.



TYLER GREENE

Founder, Outdoor360Tours

My name is Tyler Greene, a former Public Affairs Intern at Midpen. I put my energy towards physical hobbies, creative hobbies, and my business. My time with Midpen was amazing, and I am so grateful for the experience!



Internships in Action: Alumni Career Journeys

3–4pm • Apricot Room



CHRISTIAN TRUJILLO

Community Engagement Program Manager,
Golden Gate National Park Conservancy

Christian Trujillo serves as a Community Engagement Program Manager at the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, leading and scaling community-based, bilingual programs across the Bay Area. Through cross-sector partnerships and culturally relevant programming, I work to remove barriers and foster lasting relationships between communities and public lands.



ALEXANDRA MENDOZA

Environment Associate, Green Foothills

Lexi is the Environmental Associate at Green Foothills where her work largely focuses on advocacy issues within San Mateo County's coast and bayside communities. Her role requires her to collaborate with other local organizations to try and influence decisions on key environmental issues in an effort to further Green Foothills' mission of protecting local nature and farmland.



Careers That Keep You Outside: Science and Stewardship in the Field

4–5pm • Sequoia Room

Discover the wide range of outdoor careers that support the health, resilience, and sustainability of the Bay Area's natural landscapes. This session introduces participants to key fieldwork roles in land and resource management such as foresters, natural resource technicians, land stewards, ecologists, and other hands-on professionals who work directly in forests, grasslands, preserves, trails, and watershed environments.

Panelists will discuss the core skills needed for success in stewardship work, from teamwork and situational awareness to technical training and specialized certifications. Learn how seasonal positions, internships, and volunteer experiences can provide essential entry points into long-term careers in conservation, as well as the education and credentials that help open doors and support advancement.

Whether you're passionate about working outdoors, interested in applied science, or exploring meaningful ways to care for local ecosystems, this session offers practical insights and real-world perspectives on building a career rooted in stewardship and fieldwork.



Careers That Keep You Outside: Science and Stewardship in the Field

4–5pm • Sequoia Room



SOPHIE CHRISTEL (Facilitator)

Management Analyst II, Natural Resources,
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Sophie Christel (she/her) works at Midpen, where she is the climate change specialist and co-chairs the Native American Relations Team. Her background in ecology gave her a keen interest in how humans interact with their habitats, from hands-off conservation to deeply nurtured relationships. She is excited for this opportunity to facilitate a discussion amongst experts and hopefully inspire new conservation professionals!



DAVID COWMAN

Director of Land Stewardship,
Sempervirens Fund

David Cowman is the Director of Land Stewardship at Sempervirens Fund, where he leads forest restoration and land management efforts across the organization's protected properties in the Santa Cruz Mountains. He's a California Registered Professional Forester with over a decade of experience in natural resource management, including wildfire resiliency work and large-scale ecological restoration. He holds a bachelor's degree from UC Santa Cruz and a Masters of Science from San Jose State, where he studied the effects of prescribed fire on old-growth coast redwood ecosystems.



Careers That Keep You Outside: Science and Stewardship in the Field

4–5pm • Sequoia Room



DANA PAGE

Natural Resource Program Manager,
Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation

Dana Page (she/her) is the Natural Resource Program Manager for Santa Clara County Parks. She has over a decade of experience in natural resource conservation, including grazing management, forest health and wildlife habitat restoration. In her current role she enjoys fostering collaborative, long-term environmental solutions and driving regional resource management success with local partners.



LAUREL BARD

Project Manager, Resource Conservation
District of Santa Cruz County

Laurel Bard is a Forest Health Project Manager at the RCD of Santa Cruz County. They plan and implement forest health and fire resilience projects across the Santa Cruz Mountains, including prescribed fire preparation projects, shaded fuel breaks, and rare habitat restoration. They value an interdisciplinary approach to land stewardship that recognizes humans as an integral part of ecosystem processes. They are interested in prescribed fire, intentional ecosystem management, and maintaining biodiversity.



Careers That Keep You Outside: Science and Stewardship in the Field

4–5pm • Sequoia Room



TIMOTHY FEDERAL

Senior Program Manager, Forest Health and Fire Program, San Mateo Resource Conservation District

Timothy managed the Forest Health and Fire Program at San Mateo RCD, where he works to build landscape scale resilience within forests of the Santa Cruz mountains. Previously he worked for the Parks Conservancy and the National Park Service, where he managed field crews working in habitat restoration, trail building, and invasive species management. Throughout his career he was been able to do fieldwork in nearly 60 public land units from the North Slope of Alaska to the southern border.



EDWARD CULVER

Project Manager, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County



Innovation in Conservation

4–5pm • Manzanita Room

Explore how technology, data, and new field methods are transforming the way we understand and protect natural resources. This session highlights the growing role of Natural Resources (NR), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Information Systems & Technology (IST) in driving innovation across conservation work in the Bay Area and beyond.

Panelists will share how emerging tools and techniques—such as advanced soil sampling, tree tagging, remote sensing, climate change monitoring, and modern mapping technologies—are reshaping environmental stewardship. Discover how these innovations improve accuracy, efficiency, and insight in land management, and why adaptability is becoming an essential skill for today’s conservation professionals.

Whether you’re curious about the intersection of technology and ecology or interested in the future of conservation careers, this session offers a forward-looking look at the methods and systems shaping a more informed, data-driven approach to protecting our natural world.



Innovation in Conservation

4–5pm • Manzanita Room



CASEY HIATT (Facilitator)

Information Systems & Technology Manager,
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Casey has spent over 20 years working at the intersection of conservation, GIS, and government technology, from predictive habitat modeling to enterprise applications. She is passionate about protecting our natural landscapes and wildlife and is happiest out in nature, not behind a screen.



COTY SIFUENTES-WINTER

Senior Resource Management Specialist,
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space
District

Coty is a vegetation ecologist with 22 years of land management experience. Expertise in population ecology, ecotone dynamics, monitoring and research, and pesticide impacts. Coty has a BS in Ecology from SFSU, a professional certificate in GIS environmental analysis, and a MS in Environmental Management from USF.



Innovation in Conservation

4–5pm • Manzanita Room



LYNNE TRULIO

Professor Emeritus, Environmental Studies,
San Jose State University

Lynne Trulio is a professor emeritus of Environmental Studies at San Jose State University and is a wildlife ecologist studying primarily bird and mammal species. Her research investigates human impacts to species and habitats and seeks effective methods to mitigate those impacts. In addition to her professorship, Lynne was the Lead Scientist for the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project from 2003-2008 and 2017-2019. She has a Ph.D. in Ecology from UC Davis and a B.A. in Biology from Goucher College.



ALEXANDRA THOMSEN

Environmental Scientist, San Francisco
Estuary Partnership

Alex Thomsen is an Environmental Scientist at the San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP), where she leads monitoring of human dimensions of wetlands for the San Francisco Estuary Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program. With a background in wetland restoration science including GIS, she is interested in interdisciplinary approaches to understanding community benefits of restoration. She holds an M.S. in Environmental Science from California State University Monterey Bay and a B.A. in Biology from Brown University.



Thriving in Your First Job

4–5pm • Apricot Room

Starting your first job in conservation brings new responsibilities, evolving expectations, and meaningful opportunities to learn.

This session offers practical guidance on understanding workplace culture and developing the communication and collaboration skills that support early career success.

Participants will learn approaches for building positive relationships with supervisors and colleagues, contributing inclusive perspectives in established organizations, and navigating team dynamics with confidence. The session will also explore ways to bring new ideas forward, strengthen credibility, and show leadership through initiative, reliability, and curiosity, even before holding a formal title.

Whether you are preparing for your first conservation role or settling into a new position, this conversation provides real-world insights to help you grow, contribute, and thrive in your early career journey.



Thriving in Your First Job

4–5pm • Apricot Room



REBECCA KNISS WOLFE (Facilitator)

Human Resources Supervisor, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Rebecca Wolfe has worked in public sector human resources for over 20 years. She began her human resources career in the private sector before joining the City of Mountain View in 2005. Since 2019, Rebecca has been the Human Resources Supervisor for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. Rebecca has a Bachelor of Science in Commerce from Santa Clara University and a Master of Public Administration from Notre Dame de Namur University.



CARRIE SPECKART

Director of People & Culture,
Save the Redwoods League

As the Director of People & Culture at Save the Redwoods League (SRL), Carrie is responsible for the strategic development and management of the organization's evolving human resources function, leading recruitment and retention and support of the organization strategic workforce, DEI and training & development related initiatives. Prior to SRL, Carrie spent 17 years at The Trust for Public Land. A native Californian, Carrie grew up in San Diego, holds a Master's Degree in Industrial Organizational Psychology, and has multiple professional HR certifications.



Thriving in Your First Job

4–5pm • Apricot Room



SAMANTHA ROZAL

Management Fellow, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Samantha (Sam) Rozal is a Management Fellow at the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District where she works on a variety of projects around organizational management, impact analysis, workforce development, and DEI initiatives. Prior to coming to Midpen, Sam worked in climate change research at UCSB's Ocean and Coastal Policy Center studying Sea Level Rise impacts along the California Coast. She holds a Master's Degree in Environmental Science and Management from UC Santa Barbara and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies/Biology from UC Santa Cruz. Sam is incredibly passionate about fostering inclusivity in the conservation field where diverse perspectives are valued and empowered to drive positive change.



Thriving in Your First Job

4–5pm • Apricot Room



KAVITA SHAH

Training Manager, East Bay Regional Park District

Kavita is a relationship-driven leader with 10 years of experience in instructional design, communication strategy, and training facilitation. She worked in start-ups, nonprofits, and a hospital before transitioning into public sector in 2021, when she joined the LA County Department of Public Health. Since 2024, Kavita has been the Training Manager for the East Bay Regional Park District. She is a certified mediator and provides coaching and workforce development for staff at all levels.





Native Voices in Conservation

5–6pm • Sequoia Room

This session centers Native perspectives, lived experience, and leadership in caring for land, water, and community. Through personal stories and professional insight, panelists will reflect on their pathways into land stewardship, the values that guide their work, and the importance of staying grounded in culture, relationship, and place.

Panelists will offer guidance for Native people seeking land-based careers, as well as perspectives for non-Native partners on how to engage respectfully and effectively. Together, the group will reflect on how Tribal priorities and institutional processes can move forward in better alignment, what meaningful partnership could look like in the next decade, and what is creating hope for the future of conservation. The session will also highlight how panelists are investing in youth and the next generation of land stewards.



Native Voices in Conservation

5–6pm • Sequoia Room



JANE MARK (Facilitator)

Planning Manager, Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Jane F. Mark is Planning Manager at the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. She possesses over 25 years of public sector planning experience. Jane and her planning team engage with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, diverse communities and California Native American tribes in the development and implementation of public access plans to connect people with nature and open space. Jane currently serves on Midpen's Native American Relations Team and previously completed the 2024 Together Bay Area Right Relations Program.





Native Voices in Conservation

5–6pm • Sequoia Room



JOHNATHAN COSTILLAS

Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and
Cultural Resource Officer, Tamien Nation

Johnathan Costillas is a cultural fire practitioner with experience in traditional burning, and cultural resource protection. He currently serves as the Cultural Fire Crew Lead for Tamien Nation, where he helps restore traditional ecological knowledge through prescribed burning and land stewardship practices that promote ecological health and tribal sovereignty. Johnathan has worked in cultural resources for multiple tribal communities, including Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake, and Tamien Nation. His work focuses on protecting sacred sites, conducting cultural monitoring, and ensuring compliance honoring traditional values. In addition to his field work, Johnathan is a traditional dancer who actively participates in ceremony and cultural revitalization efforts. Outside of his professional and cultural responsibilities, he enjoys hunting, fishing, and golf.



Native Voices in Conservation

5–6pm • Sequoia Room



VIOLET SMITH

Indigenous Programs Interpreter for California State Parks Monterey District, Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community

Violet is a California State Parks Interpreter in the Monterey District, where she develops Indigenous programs in collaboration with Tribal communities to center Native histories, perspectives, and land-based knowledge within public lands. She is a Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community Council Member and Representative, supporting cultural revitalization on her ancestral homelands. Within her tribal community, she apprentices with master Ohlone basketweaver Linda Yamane and dances with a women's dance group, grounding her conservation career in living cultural practice.



ESAK ORDOÑEZ

Planning Manager, Midpeninsula Regional Native Steward, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band



JOEY TORRES

Culture Bearer, Muwekma Ohlone Tribe



CAREERS IN CONSERVATION JOB FAIR