

Bay Area Conservation Career Fair

IMPACT REPORT

2026



MIDPENINSULA
REGIONAL
OPEN
SPACE

Executive Summary

The 2026 Careers in Conservation event demonstrated strong regional demand, meaningful cross sector engagement, and clear alignment with workforce development and equity centered goals. The event attracted 1,300 registrants and over 800 attendees participating day of, signaling both high interest and a solid conversion rate for a first time regional convening.

Participants ranged from early career individuals and students to mid- career professionals seeking transitions into conservation, reinforcing the need for accessible and inclusive entry points into the field. Motivations were strongly values driven, with purpose and mission alignment as primary drivers.

The event functioned as more than a traditional job fair. Attendees engaged broadly in networking, career exploration, and educational opportunities, positioning the event as a regional platform for career development and thought leadership rather than solely a hiring mechanism. Breakout sessions emerged as the strongest performing component, with favorable ratings and high participation. These sessions delivered meaningful content, diverse perspectives, and strong alignment with attendee interests. Sessions centered on equity, Native perspectives, and inclusive approaches to conservation were particularly well received, with consistent demand for expanded programming in these areas.

Partner engagement was exceptionally strong, with near universal satisfaction, full intent to return, and clear value placed on participation. Organizations reported meaningful interactions with candidates and strong alignment with mission driven goals, underscoring the event's effectiveness as a convening space for the conservation sector.



Executive Summary

While overall sentiment remained positive, the data highlights several opportunities to strengthen future iterations of the event. Due to the high attendance of the event, increasing venue capacity, parking and transportation needs, and addressing layout, spacing, and navigation will be critical to improving the quality of interactions between attendees and partners. Similarly, strong interest in breakout sessions exceeded available capacity, indicating an opportunity to expand programming through larger spaces, repeated sessions, or additional formats that allow for broader participation. Attendees also expressed interest in more structured opportunities for networking and continued engagement with presenters beyond scheduled sessions. These insights reflect the success of the event in generating demand that exceeded initial capacity and point to clear opportunities for growth.

Overall, the 2026 Careers in Conservation event reflects Midpen's mission in action, connecting people to open space through opportunity, education, and meaningful engagement. By opening pathways into conservation and bringing together partners, communities, and future leaders, the event helps cultivate the next generation of stewards who will protect and care for these landscapes. With continued growth and collaboration, this initiative has the potential to deepen community connection, strengthen shared responsibility for the land, and support the long term preservation of open space for generations to come.



Event Overview: Stats and Reach

1,300

Attendees
Registered

800+

Attendees
Participated

35

Organizations
Participated

10

Breakout
Sessions



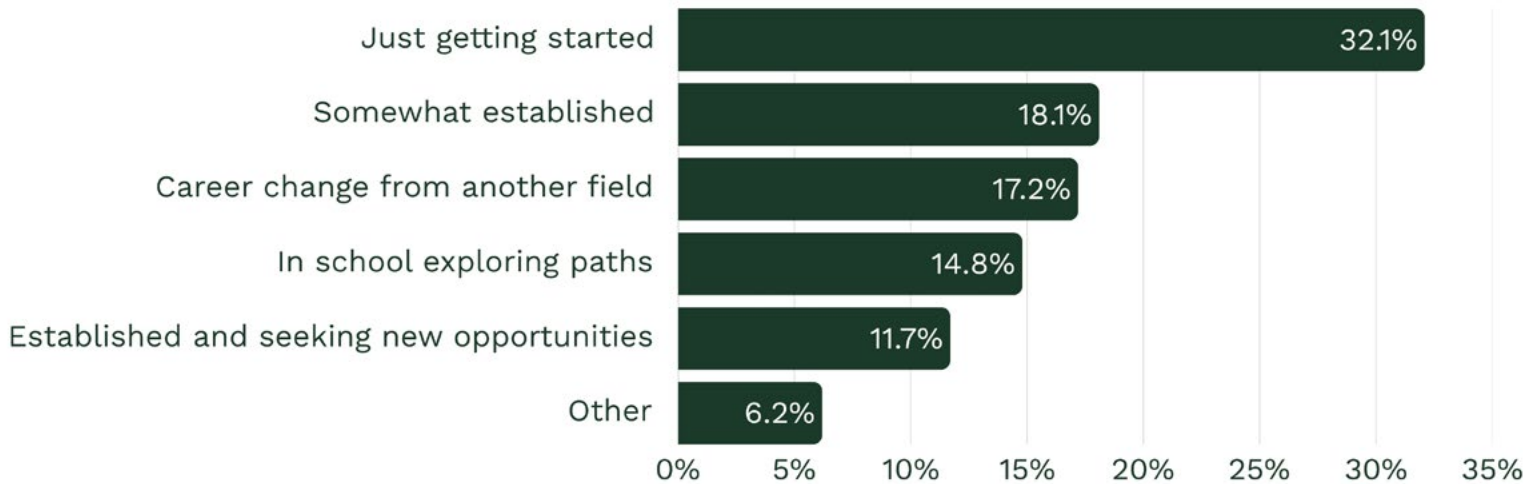
And More!



Participant Demographics

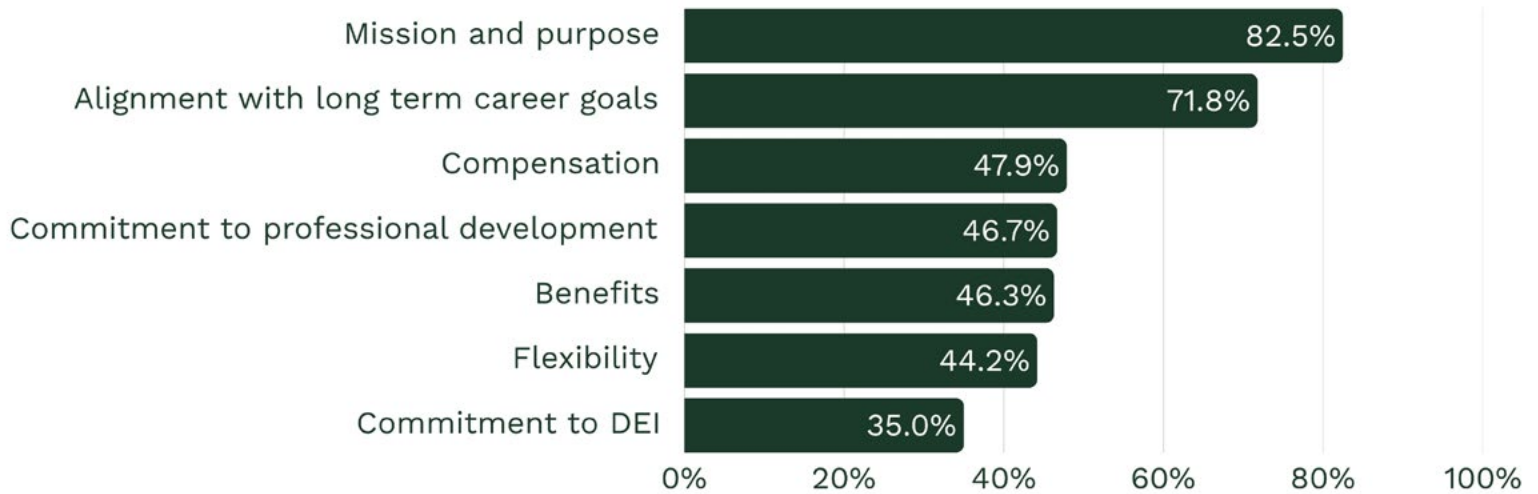
Attendees from diverse backgrounds, passionate about nature and careers in conservation, participated in the event. A total of 1,207 registrants completed the survey, with most coming from Santa Clara County, but many also traveled from other Bay Area counties and out of state. This highlights the demand for conservation career programming and the event's profile as a regional hub. Note: Multiple choice questions; therefore totals may be over 100%.

Career Journey

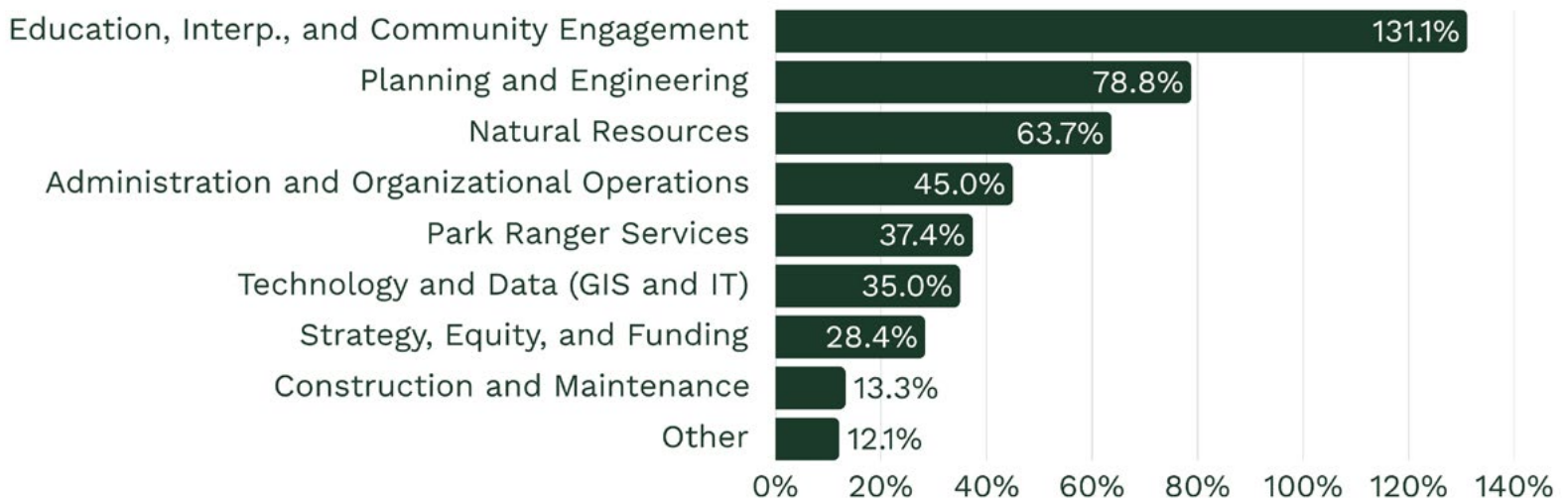


Participant Demographics Contd.

Motivations for Job Search



Work Interest



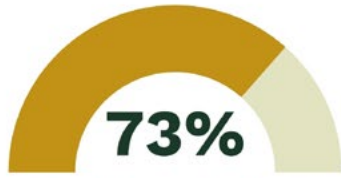
Goals: Inspiring Future Leaders

The event was designed to advance regional workforce development by increasing awareness of conservation careers, elevating thought leadership, and providing clear education on career pathways across the sector. It also prioritized strengthening partnerships across organizations regionally to support long term workforce sustainability.

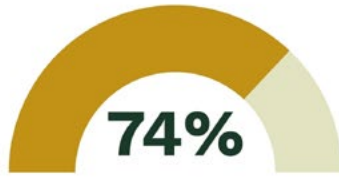
These outcomes were designed to contribute to a more accessible, diverse, and resilient conservation workforce aligned with the needs of both the sector and the communities it serves.



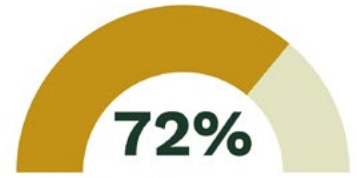
Attendee Experience



Would participate again in the future



Event felt welcoming and inclusive



Attending was a valuable use of time

Overall Experience

The event delivered a strong and positive attendee experience, particularly for individuals early in their careers or exploring a transition into the conservation field. Attendees described the event as welcoming and inclusive, noted it was a valuable use of their time, and expressed strong interest in attending again, reflecting solid engagement and alignment with audience expectations.

The event was especially effective as a platform for connection, learning, and thought leadership. Breakout sessions and the presence of diverse, relevant organizations created meaningful opportunities to engage, explore career pathways, and build connections. Attendees consistently expressed appreciation for diverse perspectives, including the inclusion of Native voices, and indicated interest in expanding Native presence, thought leadership, and identity specific topics and networking in future events.

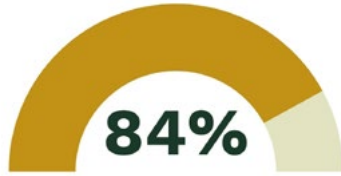
Strong attendance also highlighted opportunities to build on this success. High demand for booths and sessions reflects an engaged audience seeking deeper interaction, pointing to potential to expand space, extend event time, and increase access to networking and sessions.

The data also points to differences by career stage. The event performed strongest for recent graduates and career changers, while mid career professionals and graduate students reported a more varied experience, suggesting a chance to tailor programming and networking to meet the needs of more experienced audiences.

56% of attendees reported increased interest in conservation careers, indicating many participants were already motivated and attending to build connections, reinforcing the event's role as a connector within the existing talent pipeline.

Overall, the event created a welcoming, engaging environment that supported learning, connection, and career exploration, with clear opportunities to scale and deepen impact in future events.

Attendee Experience



Breakout Sessions

The breakout sessions were a highly successful component of the event, receiving an overall favorable rating of **83%**, with **85%** of attendees highlighting the value of diverse perspectives. Sessions were widely viewed as both informative and relevant, achieving 81% favorable ratings. Participation was strong, with **73%** of respondents attending at least one session, and the **Native Voices in Conservation** session drawing the highest attendance. Attendees consistently expressed appreciation for the quality and range of topics, with many indicating interest in similar sessions in the future.

Feedback also identified opportunities to expand access, as demand exceeded capacity in some sessions. Attendees expressed interest in larger spaces, more opportunities for interaction with presenters, and options to access additional sessions through recordings or reduced scheduling overlap.

Overall, the breakout sessions played a critical role in advancing thought leadership and career pathway education, with strong engagement and clear opportunities to scale.



Booths

The booth experience was a valuable and well utilized component of the event, with **52%** of attendees rating it favorably and an additional **17%** neutral. Participants consistently noted the relevance and **quality of the organizations present**, highlighting the opportunity to connect directly with employers and learn about career pathways across the conservation sector. The booth area served as a central hub for engagement, supporting both networking and career exploration.

At the same time, **31%** of attendees indicated opportunities to enhance the experience, primarily related to crowding, layout flow, and ease of navigation. Feedback suggests that improving spacing, reducing wait times, and strengthening signage and wayfinding would further support more meaningful one on one interactions.

Overall, the booth experience played a critical role in facilitating connection and advancing awareness of conservation careers, with clear opportunities to build on a strong foundation to enhance attendee experience and impact

Partner Experience



Would participate again in the future



Overall event satisfaction



Attending was a valuable use of time

Overall Experience

Partners reported an exceptionally strong experience, with **70%** of partner organizations represented in the survey, providing a grounded view of feedback. Overall feedback was **99% favorable, with 100% favorable ratings for overall satisfaction, mission alignment, and value of participation.** All partners indicated they would participate again, and nearly all would recommend the event to others, reflecting strong alignment with partner goals and priorities.

The booth experience was a clear highlight, with **100%** favorable feedback. Partners found the event to be a valuable use of their time and reported meaningful engagement with attendees, including conversations focused on career opportunities, organizational awareness, and pathways into the field. These interactions reinforce the event's effectiveness as a platform for direct connection between employers and prospective candidates.

Breakout sessions were also well received, with **93%** favorable ratings. Partners noted strong facilitation, engaged audiences, and the value of diverse perspectives, with opportunities to further enhance impact through expanded space, additional time for interaction, and more interactive or skill building formats. There was strong interest in future topic expansion, including career readiness, Native partnerships, and identity based perspectives in conservation.

Partners expressed enthusiasm for growing the event's scale and impact, including expanding space, increasing networking opportunities, and extending the event duration. Feedback on event communication was positive, with appreciation for preparation and coordination, alongside opportunities to further streamline communication and extend planning timelines.

Overall, the event delivered significant value to partners, strengthening relationships, supporting recruitment and outreach goals, and reinforcing its role as a key regional platform for collaboration and workforce development.

Voices from the Fair

In the News

800 people attend Midpen's 'Careers in Conservation' job fair | [Palo Alto Weekly](#)

Reposted in the [Redwood City Pulse](#), [Mountain View Voice](#) and [The Almanac](#)

Appreciation

“I was blown away by the turnout — it truly showed how many Bay Area individuals are passionate about careers in conservation.” —Attendee

“It was an invaluable experience to have access to so many local organizations involved in environmental stewardship. I had many insightful and informative conversations with welcoming representatives, and the breakout sessions were especially helpful in efficiently conveying key information about different career paths and topics.” —Attendee

“The outpouring of interest by participants was wonderful...and overwhelming. I genuinely appreciate leadership and sponsorship of the event and I had a blast being on the panel.”
—Attendee

“I was also especially encouraged to see Native voices and experiences included in the programming. Learning from Indigenous perspectives and stewardship practices feels deeply important to the future of conservation work, and I appreciated seeing that reflected in the event.” —Attendee

“The targeted breakout rooms provided inspiration for many paths in conservation. Grateful for the opportunity to attend.”
—Attendee

“We were able to have a lot of meaningful conversations with the participants and I have already had participants follow up with me afterwards. I had ton of fun talking about my work and networking with other agencies. I am going to make sure I do everything I can to have us participate in this event again!” —Attendee

“The outpouring of interest by participants was wonderful...and overwhelming. I genuinely appreciate leadership and sponsorship of the event and I had a blast being on the panel.” —Partner Participant

“I'm so thankful to have been able to speak amongst fellow cousins and neighboring tribes, cannot wait until the next.”
—Partner Participant

“It was refreshing to be among like-minded colleagues and to learn from experienced leaders working across equity & DEI, public Affairs & environmental education, community engagement, people and culture and entrepreneurship.” —Attendee

Future Vision

The event demonstrated strong demand, high engagement, and clear value as a regional workforce development platform. Looking ahead, it is well positioned to evolve from a successful career fair into a flagship regional convening that connects talent, organizations, and communities across the conservation sector, becoming a defining platform for shaping the future of the conservation workforce across the region.

Future iterations can build on this foundation by expanding scale, deepening programming, and creating more structured opportunities for connection, learning, and career advancement.

This includes enhancing access through larger venues and hybrid formats, strengthening career pathway clarity through targeted tracks and workshops, and continuing to elevate diverse perspectives, including Indigenous knowledge and identity centered engagement.

Based on survey feedback from attendees, partners, and staff, there is clear alignment around opportunities to build on this strong foundation. The following ideas reflect consistent themes and recommendations to enhance scale, deepen engagement, and further strengthen the event's impact moving forward.

Key opportunities for the future include:

- Expanding venue size, event duration, and accessibility
- Offering hybrid and additional recorded sessions to increase reach
- Increasing interactive workshops, including resume support and coaching
- Creating structured networking for attendees, partners, and speakers
- Developing targeted career pathway tracks for different career stages
- Providing guidance on skills, certifications, and entry points into the field
- Expanding Native led programming and diverse perspectives
- Introducing identity specific sessions and networking spaces
- Partnering with academic institutions to highlight education pathways
- Increasing partner participation and representation
- Improved layout and themed booth groupings
- Creating more intentional gathering and connection spaces

Ongoing Engagement

There is a significant opportunity to build on the momentum of the event by extending engagement beyond a single moment and creating a continuous pathway into conservation careers. Feedback indicates strong interest in a more integrated workforce model that connects access, learning, and opportunity over time, positioning this initiative to deepen impact and expand reach across the region.

Potential ongoing engagement opportunities include:

- Regional internship share program with key partners
- Field days for hands on career exploration
- Mentorship matching between community members and professionals
- Quarterly career pathway workshops (hybrid and recorded)
 - Panels and day in the life sessions
 - Career journey storytelling
 - Partner led programming
- Conservation careers newsletter to share opportunities and resources

Together, these efforts have the potential to create a sustained ecosystem of access, connection, and growth that extends beyond the event itself. In doing so, they not only strengthen workforce development pathways, but also cultivate a more informed, connected, and engaged community that supports and advances conservation work more broadly.



Event Media

We are excited to share a collection of event media and resources to revisit and celebrate the experience. This includes photos, video highlights, and recorded sessions that capture key moments, perspectives, and conversations from the event.

Please feel free to explore and share these resources as desired.



[Website](#)



[Event Program](#)



[Photos](#)



[Recap Video](#)



[Recordings](#)



[Report](#)



Partner Invitation

Building the Future of the Conservation Workforce

The Careers in Conservation event has demonstrated strong regional demand, meaningful engagement across sectors, and clear momentum as a platform for workforce development. What began as a successful inaugural event is now positioned to evolve into a flagship regional convening that connects talent, organizations, and communities across the conservation field.

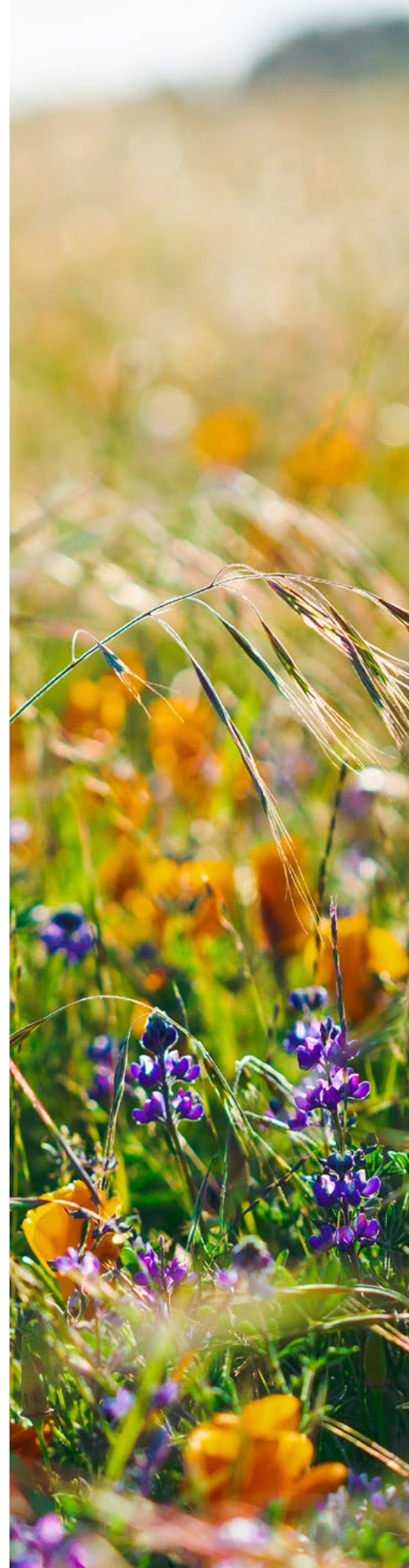
We are inviting partners to help shape and scale this next phase.

Vision

The future of this initiative is a regional Careers in Conservation summit that:

- Serves as a central hub for talent pipeline development across the Bay Area Connects early career, mid career, and transitioning professionals to meaningful pathways into conservation
- Elevates diverse perspectives, including Native knowledge and community centered approaches
- Strengthens cross sector collaboration between public agencies, nonprofits, academic institutions, and community partners
- Supports long term workforce sustainability through ongoing engagement beyond a single event

This is an opportunity to co-create a shared infrastructure for the future of the conservation workforce.



Partner Invitation

Opportunities

Partners are invited to engage in three key ways:

1. JOIN THE PLANNING COALITION

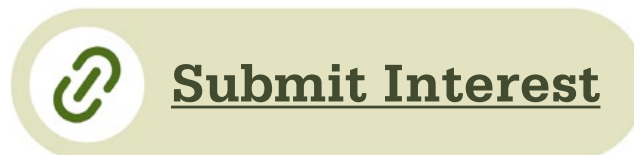
Collaborate with a network of regional leaders to co-design future events, shape programming, expand outreach, and ensure alignment with workforce needs across the sector. This includes contributing expertise, identifying priority topics, and helping guide the evolution of the event into a sustained regional initiative.

2. INVEST IN GROWTH AND IMPACT

Provide support to help expand the scale and quality of the event, including larger venues, enhanced programming, increased accessibility, and an improved attendee and partner experience. Support may be offered through shared resources, in kind contributions, sponsorship of specific elements, or partnership in delivering programming, and can be structured based on organizational capacity and desired level of involvement.

3. PARTICIPATE AS AN EVENT PARTNER

Once a planning coalition is established, partners can engage in ways similar to the current event model, including participating with a booth and or contributing to programming. This provides an opportunity to connect directly with attendees, share information about your organization, and build relationships with prospective candidates. This level of participation offers meaningful exposure and engagement with a highly motivated audience, while allowing flexibility based on capacity and desired level of involvement.



**Users will need the authorization code
"MIDPENCONNECT26" to access the
survey.**

Partner Invitation

Strategic Value

Participation offers both immediate and long term value:

DIRECT ACCESS TO TALENT

Connect with a highly engaged, mission driven audience actively seeking careers, internships, and professional growth opportunities

STRONGER RECRUITMENT PIPELINE

Engage early with emerging talent and mid career professionals seeking to transition into conservation roles

SECTOR LEADERSHIP AND VISIBILITY

Position your organization as a leader in shaping the future of the conservation workforce and advancing inclusive practices

DEEPER COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL IMPACT

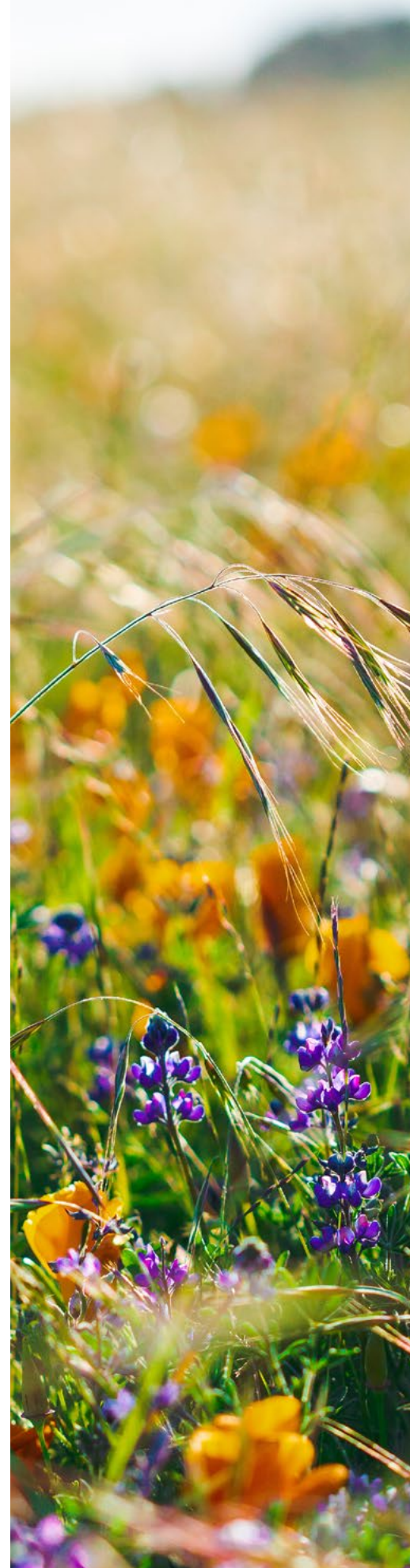
Contribute to expanding equitable access to conservation careers and strengthening connections between communities and the field

CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

Build relationships with peer organizations, academic partners, and community groups to advance shared goals

LONG TERM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Support a scalable model that extends beyond a single event to strengthen the overall talent ecosystem



**Thank you for being a part of this inaugural event,
and uplifting conservation across the Bay Area!**

Acknowledgments

**Thank you to the staff, partners and community members who made
this event possible!**

- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
- Big Sur Land Trust
- California State Parks (Monterey District)
- California State Parks (Santa Cruz District)
- East Bay Regional Park District
- Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
- Green Foothills
- Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
- Muwekma Ohlone Tribe
- National Park Service
- Outdoor365Tours
- Palo Alto Open Space (City of Palo Alto)
- Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST)
- Presidio Trust
- Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County
- Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community
- San Francisco Estuary Partnership
- San Jose Conservation Corps
- San Jose Parks and Recreation (City of San Jose)
- San Jose State University
- San Mateo County Parks
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- Santa Clara County Parks
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
- Save the Redwoods League
- Sempervirens Fund
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Stillwater Sciences
- Student Conservation Association
- Tamien Nation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- West Valley College

Thank you to TOPO Collective and Frances Freyberg for capturing the videos and photographs.