**Conserving California:**

**Protecting our Special Places in Turbulent Times**

**Panelist Links**

**July 28, 2025**

**California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot**

<https://resources.ca.gov/About-Us/Who-We-Are/Secretary-for-Natural-Resources>

**Secretary Speaker Series:** <https://resources.ca.gov/About-Us/Secretary-Speaker-Series>

**Panelists:**

* Meghan Hertel, Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat, California Natural Resources Agency
* Mike Esgro, Senior Biodiversity Program Manager & Tribal Liaison, Ocean Protection Council
* Carolina Behe, Acting Superintendent, Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary
* Hal Holland, CalERBA Board Past-President; Regional Director, Western Region Westervelt
* Russell Galipeau, Former superintendent of Channel Islands National Park; IUCN Green List Process and Award
* Rachael Olliff Yang, PhD, Plant Ecologist, Educator, Writer, Science Technical Support Consultant

**Meghan Hertel, Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat, California Natural Resources Agency**

<https://water.ca.gov/CNRAHome/About-Us/Who-We-Are/Deputy-Secretary-for-Biodiversity-and-Habitat>

Meghan leads the Agency’s efforts to conserve biodiversity and improve habitat across the state through the implementation of California’s 30x30 strategy and associated efforts including the Cutting Green Tape initiative and supporting the implementation of large-scale habitat projects. Before joining the Agency, Meghan served as North American Director for Land Life, a technology-driven, nature restoration company, and spent over a decade with Audubon California holding several positions including Director of Land and Water Conservation, where she led statewide conservation programs focused on inland water and working lands strategies. In her free time, you can find Meghan and her husband enjoying California’s incredible outdoors—backpacking, biking and paddleboarding—or trying to keep up with their foster dogs.

**30x30 California**

<https://www.californianature.ca.gov>

**2025-30x30-Pathways-Progress-Report**

[*https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/2025-30x30-Pathways-Progress-Report.pdf*](https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/2025-30x30-Pathways-Progress-Report.pdf)

**2025 Partnership Summit - 30x30 California:** <https://www.californianature.ca.gov/pages/2025-partnership-summit>

2025 Partnership Summit Field Trips: <https://www.californianature.ca.gov/pages/2025-partnership-summit-field-trips~a657fe5c10ea4254bdefd02f257f710f>

Proposition 4 - Climate Bond: <https://resources.ca.gov/Bonds-Oversight/Proposition-4-Climate-Bond>

**Senior Biodiversity Program Manager & Tribal Liaison at the California Ocean Protection Council Michael Esgro**

Mike joined OPC in March 2018. As Senior Biodiversity Program Manager and Tribal Liaison, he leads efforts to advance OPC’s strategic priorities related to enhancing coastal and marine biodiversity, including implementing California’s 30×30 goal in coastal waters, protecting and restoring threatened ecosystems including kelp forests, adaptively managing California’s statewide network of marine protected areas (MPAs), and enhancing engagement with California Native American tribes. Mike earned a B.S. in Biology from UCLA and an M.S. in Applied Marine Science from CSU Monterey Bay. His graduate research focused on MPA monitoring and the role of “other effective conservation measures” in ocean conservation. Mike is an avid scuba diver and can usually be found underwater when not at work. Topside, he enjoys kayaking, cycling, and backpacking.

Ocean Protection Council: <https://opc.ca.gov/>

California’s Marine Protected Area Network Recognized as International Gold Standard for Marine Conservation - <https://opc.ca.gov/2025/06/for-immediate-release-californias-marine-protected-area-network-recognized-as-international-gold-standard-for-marine-conservation/>

**California’s Marine Protected Area Network Recognized as International Gold Standard for Marine Conservation**

<https://resources.ca.gov/Newsroom/Page-Content/News-List/Californias-Marine>

California Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs>

30x30: <https://www.californianature.ca.gov/pages/30x30-partnership>

Tribal Marine Stewards Network: <https://tribalmsn.org/>

**What Counts? Evaluating Potential 30x30 Conservation Areas in Coastal Waters:** <https://ca-water-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/o3JWqEGYS6S3Osa8Bjk3rQ>

**Carolina Behe, Acting Superintendent, Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary:

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage/>

Carolina joined the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries team in 2022 as the National Cultural Resource Coordinator where she has assisted in advancing approaches to working collaboratively across communities, governments, and knowledge systems. Carolina joins us with extensive experience working within and with Indigenous governments regionally, nationally, and internationally on diverse topics. Much of Carolina’s experience is rooted in establishing monitoring programs, biodiversity, conservation, marine biology, food security, and bringing together knowledge systems through a co-production of knowledge approach.

Indigenous Heritage - Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage/indigenous-heritage/>

Indigenous Collaborative Co-Stewardship

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage/management/co-stewardship.html>

**Hal Holland, CalERBA Board Past-President; Regional Director, Western Region Westervelt**

**Westervelt Ecological Services**

*As the Western Region Director, Mr. Holland oversees the strategic and daily operations of Westervelt’s largest region in terms of projects, staff, and revenue. He is responsible for the development of mitigation and conservation projects, business development, sales, project compliance, and long-term land stewardship. In this role, Mr. Holland oversees a team of industry-leading experts in realms of mitigation banking, land acquisition and valuation, ecology, habitat restoration and construction, regulatory permitting, and land management."*

The California Ecological Restoration Business Association: <https://caecologicalrestoration.org/>

<https://caecologicalrestoration.org/calerba-leadership>

**Westervelt Ecological Services, Regional Director, Western Region,**

<https://wesmitigation.com/>

**WES Solutions**

<https://wesmitigation.com/solutions/>

**Mitigation and Conservation Bank Credits**

Mitigation and Conservation Banks offer clients the opportunity to purchase credits to offset environmental impacts. The key benefits of mitigation banks is reducing permitting time for our clients and the ability to sever liability associated with permit mitigation requirements by transferring associated compliance to WES. Because WES puts restoration and conservation on the ground ahead of client development impacts, our clients are able to mitigate at a reduced ratio and demonstrate permit compliance upon permit issuance.

**Cosumnes Floodplain Mitigation Bank - WES**

<https://wesmitigation.com/projects/cosumnes-floodplain-mitigation-bank/>

**Russell Galipeau, IUCN Expert Assessment Group for the Green List; Former superintendent of Channel Islands National Park**

BIO: <https://www.venturalandtrust.org/russell-galipeau>

Russell worked for the National Park Service from 1978 until 2018, when he retired from the position of Superintendent, Channel Islands National Park. His career brought him to work in seven of our nation’s national parks from the tip of Florida (Everglades National Park) to the largest park (Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve) to one on the most iconic parks (Yosemite National Park). He has been honored for his work in conservation as a recipient of the Stephen Tyng Mather Award by the National Parks and Conservation Association (2016) and as a recipient of the National Park Service Director’s Award for Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resources Management (2011).

Galipeau was recognized as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Recovery Champion in 2015; and for excellence in leading an interdisciplinary team of resource professionals, planners, and consultants to develop the Yosemite Valley Plan and EIS by the Yosemite National Park Department of Interior Honor Award (2001). Galipeau received the George Wright Society Outstanding Natural Resources Management Award in 1997.

He currently serves on the Expert Assessment Group for the Green List (EAGL), an appointment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Russell also serves as a part-time professor at California State University, Channel Islands and as a members of the Executive Council for the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Resources Conservation (wildlife ecology) from the University of Florida in 1982 and he has since returned to earn his Masters of Science in Natural Resources Policy and Administration.

[**IUCN**](https://iucn.org/)**:** International Union for Conservation of Nature

<https://iucn.org/>

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) is a membership Union of government and civil society organisations. Together, we work to advance sustainable development and create a just world that values and conserves nature.

**Galipeau retires from leading Channel Islands National Park after 40-year career:**

<https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/special-reports/outdoors/2018/06/02/galipeau-retires-leading-channel-islands-national-park-after-40-year-career/641477002/>

IUCN Green List: <https://iucngreenlist.org/>

**[IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas - resource | IUCN](https://iucn.org/resources/conservation-tool/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas)**

<https://iucn.org/resources/conservation-tool/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas>

How Does it Work: <https://iucngreenlist.org/how-does-it-work/>

IUCN Green List Get involved - <https://iucngreenlist.org/get-involved/>

**Links**:

**A Warning from the Former Head of Channel Islands National Park - The Santa Barbara Independent**

<https://www.independent.com/2025/06/03/a-warning-from-the-former-head-of-channel-islands-national-park/>

**Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks leadership:** <https://protectnps.org/executive-council/>

**California Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAS>

**California’s Marine Protected Area Network Recognized as International Gold Standard for Marine Conservation**

<https://resources.ca.gov/Newsroom/Page-Content/News-List/Californias-Marine>

**The Green List Expert Assessment Group for California’s Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network announced | IUCN**

<https://iucn.org/news/protected-areas/201808/green-list-expert-assessment-group-california%E2%80%99s-marine-protected-area-mpa-network-announced>

The effort to Green List California’s Marine Protected Area network took many years and involved not only IUCN, but also an expert group of key MPA partners from across

**Rachael L. Olliff Yang, PhD**

**Bio:** [***https://rachaelolliffyang.wordpress.com/***](https://rachaelolliffyang.wordpress.com/)

Rachael Olliff Yang is a conservation scientist with a PhD in Integrative Biology. As a Technical Science Support for the California 30x30 initiative, she helps connect scientists and policy makers, bringing forward cutting-edge research and the best available knowledge in support of conservation decisions. She has been working with CNRA and the California Biodiversity Network from the beginning of the 30x30 effort - from supporting the creation of the "Pathways to 30x30" document to the "30x30 Biodiversity Beat" monthly newsletter (look for that in your inbox later this week!).

***California Biodiversity Network:*** [*https://cabiodiversitynetwork.org/*](https://cabiodiversitynetwork.org/)

***GreenInfo Network Toolkit:*** [***https://calands.org/30x30-toolkit/***](https://calands.org/30x30-toolkit/)

**The Nature Conservancy California:**

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/california/stories-in-california/who-we-are/>

**Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE):** <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/Analysis/Ace>

Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE) is a CDFW effort to gather spatial data on wildlife, vegetation, and habitats from across the state, and then synthesize this information into thematic maps to help inform discussions on the conservation of biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and climate change resiliency.

ACE Viewer: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/Analysis/Ace#viewer>