# **Panelist Links and Backgrounder**

**AAPI Joy in Nature**

**Wednesday, May 28, 2025, Noon-1 p.m.**

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

CNRA AAPI Month 2025 Events – Celebrate with us! <https://resources.ca.gov/Asian-American-and-Pacific-Islander-Heritage-Month>

Celebrate Pride Month with CNRA - [resources.ca.gov/Pride](https://resources.ca.gov/pride)

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

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

**Dr. Rod Fujita, Ocean Innovations, Consultant**

Ocean Innovations - strategic advice, concept development, and project planning to protect the ocean and the people who depend on it

[**https://www.oceaninnovations.me/**](https://www.oceaninnovations.me/)

**EDF Oceans:** <https://www.edf.org/people-and-nature>

**Ocean Innovations:** <https://www.oceaninnovations.me/>

**BOOKS:**

**Heal the Ocean: Solutions for Saving Our Seas:** <https://www.amazon.com/Heal-Ocean-Solutions-Saving-Seas/dp/0865715009>

**Making Shift Happen: Designing for Successful Environmental Behavior Change:** <https://newsociety.com/book/making-shift-happen/#:~:text=Making%20Shift%20Happen%20is%20a%20must-have%20guide%20for,environmental%20outcomes%20and%20a%20better%20future%20for%20all>.

BLOG POST:

**Can Seaweed Save the World?:** [https://medium.com/@rfujita56/can-seaweed-save-the-world-33c49c0ff9e8](https://medium.com/%40rfujita56/can-seaweed-save-the-world-33c49c0ff9e8)

NEWS:

**CSP Welcome Three New Adjunct Faculty:** <https://csp.ucsc.edu/csp-welcome-three-new-adjunct-faculty/>

**Shorter Bio:**

Dr. Rod Fujita is a marine ecologist with experience in wetlands, coral reefs and systems ecology. He is currently studying the safety and efficacy of approaches for drawing down atmospheric carbon dioxide in order to slow the rate of climate change. He has authored over 80 peer-reviewed papers and two books. He has received numerous awards for his work over his 36+ year career at the Environmental Defense Fund as Senior Scientist and Director, Ocean Innovations. Dr. Fujita now runs his own consultancy firm, Ocean Innovations.

**Longer Bio:**

Rod is a visionary scientist who has spent his career studying and advocating for ocean sustainability. Over 35 years ago, he co-founded the Environmental Defense Fund’s Oceans program to apply science and economics to fishery improvement and worked in system mapping and analysis to understand complex system dynamics identifying high leverage interventions for system change.

Rod published the well-received book, *Heal the Ocean: Solutions for Saving our Seas* and co-authored the Nautilus Book Award Winner *Making Shift Happen: Designing for Successful Environmental Behavior.* As a leader in the sustainable oceans scientific community, he has authored or co-authored over a hundred peer-reviewed articles including articles on aquaculture, research on behavior change to reduce illegal fishing, and waste-to-energy regenerative production systems. He has trained hundreds of government officials, scientists, and community fishery practitioners domestically and abroad.

Internationally, Fujita has been integral in the successful TURF-reserve system and fishery reform in the Philippines and Belize, contributed to the passing of Japan’s most important fisher reform legislation in 70 years, and leveraged data-limited assessment and management methods in Belize, Mexico, Cuba, Chile, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

An early advocate of Marine Protected Areas, Rod has been involved in the establishment of over 10,000 square miles of MPAs including areas in California, Florida, and the Channel Islands.

Fujita has been integral in policy development helping create and implement California’s Marine Life Protection Act which resulted in the protection of 850 square miles of ocean habitat (15% of state territorial waters). He also participated in the creation and implementation of California’s Marine Life Management Act and served on its Master Plan development committee, and he helped create and fund California’s Ocean Protection Council.

Rod has served as a Fellow with the Center of Oceans Solutions at Stanford University, and he has been a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation since 2000 Rod received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Ecology from Pitzer College and his PhD in marine ecology from Boston University and the Marine Biological

**Rhody Soria, District Director at Inland Empire, California Conservation Corps**

CCC: <https://ccc.ca.gov/>

Rhody began his state service in 1980 as a Corpsmember with the California Conservation Corps (CCC), later joining Caltrans before returning to the CCC to lead their fire crew at the Camarillo Center. From there, Rhody continued to grow within the organization, eventually becoming District Director for the Inland Empire.

Over four decades with the CCC, he has led several milestone initiatives — establishing the first all-Female Fire crew, launching the CCC’s first all-Veteran Corps crew and Forestry Corps crews, and helping CCC teams become the nation’s first “shovel-ready” project funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

What he is most proud of is the impact has had on thousands of young people who gained skills, earned diplomas, and launched careers all while helping protect and improve California’s natural resources.

**Harriet Lai Ross, Director of Regulatory Affairs, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission**

Harriet Ross: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/harrietlaiross/>

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission:<https://www.bcdc.ca.gov/>

**When I mention Delta Stewardship Council and comp Vulneraility assessment and adaptation plan**

**Delta Adapts: Creating a Climate Resilient Future:**[**https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-plan/climate-change**](https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-plan/climate-change)

Harriet Lai Ross joined the San Francisco Bay Conservation Development Commission as the Director of Regulatory Affairs in September 2023. In this role, Harriette provides executive leadership for the agency and leads the Commission's Regulatory Program, which includes investigating, evaluating, and recommending actions on all permit applications, consistency determinations and plan reviews, as well as administering the Commission's regulations. Harriet has over 25 years of experience in both the private and public sectors. In her previous role as the Associate Deputy Executive Officer for Planning and Climate at the Delta Stewardship Council she oversaw Delta Adapts, the Council’s comprehensive climate change study. Additionally, Harriet served as the Council’s assistant planning director, overseeing Delta Plan development, implementation, and policy to ensure long-term resilience of the region. She is experienced in translating the best available science into effective policy; working with a wide range of interests to find common ground; and preparing, updating, and implementing large, multi-disciplinary plans at both local and State levels.

**Stephanie Shimazu, General Counsel, California Natural Resources Agency**

Stephanies Bio: <https://resources.ca.gov/About-Us/Who-We-Are/General-Counsel>

Stephanie Shimazu joined the California Natural Resources Agency as General Counsel in May 2022. Stephanie has held several positions in state government, most recently as Acting Assistant Chief of the Division of Law Enforcement and Director of the Bureau of Gambling Control for the California Department of Justice. Prior to that, Stephanie worked under CNRA as Chief Counsel for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. She served as Chair and Commissioner of the California Gambling Control Commission, Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary in the Governor’s Office, and was an attorney for the Department of Social Services, Legislative Counsel’s Office, and the Department of Corrections. She began her legal career in the Sacramento City Attorney’s Office. Stephanie received a J.D. from the University of San Francisco and a B.A. from the University of California, Davis. She was born and raised in Sacramento where she currently lives. She enjoys spending time with her two children, is an avid horror movie fan, and is currently attempting to try her hand at gardening.

**Noaki Schwartz, Deputy Secretary for Equity and Environmental Justice, California Natural Resources Agency**

<https://resources.ca.gov/About-Us/Who-We-Are/Deputy-Secretary-for-Equity-and-Environmental-Justice>

Noaki Schwartz joined the Natural Resources Agency in March 2023. As the Deputy Secretary for Equity and Environmental Justice, Noaki works across our more than 26 member departments, boards and conservancies to ensure we are helping all Californians thrive. This means making sure our funding processes are more accessible, that the full talent pool has access to state jobs, that government decision-making is fair and transparent, that we celebrate the diversity that make us American and so much more. Noaki was the Deputy Director of Communications, Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs at the California Coastal Commission, where she worked for eight years.

**CNRA Equityand Environemental Justice Policies**

<https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Equity-and-Environmental-Justice/Equity-and-Environmental-Justice-Policies>

**CNRA Careers:** [**https://resources.ca.gov/careers**](https://resources.ca.gov/careers)