# **Panelist Links and Backgrounder**

**Black Leaders Charting the Path in Conservation**

**Wednesday, February 26, 2025, Noon-1 p.m.**

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

CNRA Black History Month 2025 Events – Celebrate with us! [www.resources.ca.gov/blackhistorymonth](http://www.resources.ca.gov/blackhistorymonth)

Celebrate Women’s History Month with CNRA - <https://resources.ca.gov/womenshistorymonth>

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

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

**Panelists:**

- Dr. Justin Cummings, Third District Supervisor of Santa Cruz County and Chair, California Coastal Commission (and former Santa Cruz mayor)

- Mark Stanley, Executive Officer, River & Mountains Conservancy

- Carousel Gore, EEO Officer & Training Office Manager, California Energy Commission

- Doria Robinson, Executive Director, Urban Tilth

**Dr. Justin Cummings, Third District Supervisor of Santa Cruz County and Chair, California Coastal Commission**

**Discover Santa Cruz District 3:** <https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/Government/BoardofSupervisors/District3.aspx>

**Coastal Commission:** [**https://www.coastal.ca.gov/**](https://www.coastal.ca.gov/)

Santa Cruz County Supervisor Justin Cummings named chair of California Coastal Commission – The Mercury News: <https://www.mercurynews.com/2024/12/13/santa-cruz-county-supervisor-justin-cummings-named-chair-of-california-coastal-commission/>

**Public Education Program of the California Coastal Commission:** [**https://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/pendx.html**](https://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/pendx.html)

Justin Cummings was elected as Third District Supervisor of Santa Cruz County in November 2022 and is the first African American to serve on the County Board of Supervisors. In December of 2024, Dr. Cummings was chosen to chair the California Coastal Commission.

Justin grew up on the South Side of Chicago and attended Eastern Illinois University where he received a bachelors in Spanish and Biology.  In 2007, Justin moved to Santa Cruz to pursue a Ph.D. at UCSC in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.  His Ph.D. research focused on invasive species management and tropical forest restoration in Panama.

After receiving his Ph.D. in 2013, he moved to Miami, FL to conduct post-doctoral research at Florida International University studying the impacts of climate change on the Florida Everglades.  Since returning to Santa Cruz in 2015, he has helped create numerous non-profits at UCSC including the UCSC Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program, which focused on preparing early career college students from diverse backgrounds to become leaders in the field of environmental conservation as well as the UCSC CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research, which trains students from diverse backgrounds on the use and application of drones for good.

In 2017, Justin began engaging in local politics, spurred by the housing affordability crisis and the inability of young working professionals and families to afford to live in Santa Cruz.  In 2018 he was elected to the Santa Cruz City Council, receiving the most votes of any other candidate on the ballot.  In 2020, Justin was the first black man appointed to serve as Mayor of Santa Cruz.  As Mayor, Justin provided leadership during a global pandemic, social unrest after the murder of George Floyd, and the CZU fires.

As a renter, environmental scientist, and young professional in Santa Cruz, Justin has placed diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental protection at the forefront of the decision-making process.  As a Councilmember and Mayor, he fought for policies that increased tenant protections, increased the percentage of affordable housing in new developments, championed policies to reduce carbon emissions and protect our environment, brought the community together with law enforcement to address policies related to use of force, transparency, and accountability; and helped expand COVID testing capacity Countywide, among many other accomplishments.

**The Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program at UCSC**, founded in 2016 focuses on to growing a diverse community of emerging leaders to strengthen conservation. <https://conservationscholars.ucsc.edu/>

**Mark Stanley, Executive Officer, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC)**

<https://rmc.ca.gov/>

LinkedIn: [https://www.linkedin.com/in/mark-stanley-7a56a011/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.linkedin.com%2Fin%2Fmark-stanley-7a56a011%2F&data=05%7C02%7CGita.Chandra%40resources.ca.gov%7C1d244d25272b451e2ab408dd550a3968%7Cb71d56524b834257afcd7fd177884564%7C0%7C0%7C638760224573844063%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=qkIJW3nZZjDWeGlYBS5CuAAus0copASr4uQGuJcxOBo%3D&reserved=0)

RMC grants: <https://rmc.ca.gov/grants/>

RMC Resources: <https://rmc.ca.gov/resources/>

Stanley Institute/Harriet Tubman: <https://harriettubmanbyway.org/stanley-institute/>

NEWS ITEMS:   
**Rivers and Mountains Conservancy names new executive director** - <https://www.sgvtribune.com/2011/08/22/rivers-and-mountains-conservancy-names-new-executive-director/> (San Gabriel Valley Tribune, August 2011)

Mark Stanleyis the Executive Officer of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy.  His focus is on achieving the goals of the RMC’s mission “to preserve open space and habitat in order to provide for low-impact recreation and recreational uses, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, watershed improvements within its jurisdiction.”  In addition to serving as the RMC Executive Officer, he is the Executive Officer of four joint powers authorities including the Watershed Conservation Authority, the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority, the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority, and the Azusa-RMC JPA. Since serving as Executive Officer of these organizations, he has overseen a variety of implementation efforts related to parks and open space. More than 500 new acres have been added to the public domain and the RMC has received more than $80 million dollars to grant to communities. “I love the job. I love the idea of this job. This is a unique conservancy in that it is in an urbanized area … so there is a greater opportunity to impact and educate so many people,” said Stanley.

Stanley last headed up the Riverside Transit Agency. Before that, he worked for ATC/Forsythe as director of operations and planning for Foothill Transit, which operates the blue-and-white buses in the San Gabriel Valley. Previously, he was president and co-owner of Path Finder Transportation Service LLC and operations planning supervisor at the Phoenix Transit System. He later worked for Oakland-based Korve Engineering as transit division group leader before moving to Alabama to become executive director of the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority. Stanley, whose background is in transportation and engineering management, has a Bachelor of Arts degree in urban studies from the University of Maryland and received a master’s degree in environmental planning from Arizona State University.

[The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Frmc.ca.gov%2Fabout%2F&data=05%7C02%7CGita.Chandra%40resources.ca.gov%7C1d244d25272b451e2ab408dd550a3968%7Cb71d56524b834257afcd7fd177884564%7C0%7C0%7C638760224573863763%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Qib%2B2%2BdWqTsydASXVaPupbo6kxKBah1aya4JYQTCJXQ%3D&reserved=0) was created by the state Legislature in 1999. The RMC is one of ten conservancies within the California Resources Agency.  Its mission is to preserve open space and habitat in order to provide for low-impact recreation and educational uses, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, and watershed improvements within our jurisdictions. This work supports the public’s enjoyment and enhancement of recreational and educational experiences on public lands in a manner consistent with the protection of lands and resources in those watersheds.

**Carousel Gore, EEO Officer & Training Office Manager, California Energy Commission**

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

Bio: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/about/executive-leadership/carousel-gore>

Carousel Gore is the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer and Training Office Manager for the California Energy Commission (CEC). She has worked in the EEO field since 2008. Carousel is one of the Executive Co-Sponsors for the CEC’s Justice, Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JAEDI) Initiative with the goal of furthering a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive workplace for CEC employees. She is also the Co-Chair for the California Civil Rights Officer Council and the Co-Founder and Co-Chair for the Statewide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

In her spare time, Carousel enjoys reading and cross-stitching. She is passionate about music and enjoys going to watch live bands.

The **California Energy Commission (CEC)** is the state's primary energy policy and planning agency, dedicated to leading California to a 100% clean energy future. The CEC is responsible for advancing energy innovation, ensuring a reliable and resilient energy system, improving energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Find more about the CEC: More on the Statewide DEI Committee: [https://www.calhr.ca.gov/state-hr-professionals/Pages/DEI-Statewide-Committee.aspx](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.calhr.ca.gov%2Fstate-hr-professionals%2FPages%2FDEI-Statewide-Committee.aspx&data=05%7C02%7CGita.Chandra%40resources.ca.gov%7C603940d2b5234b98712508dd5515369a%7Cb71d56524b834257afcd7fd177884564%7C0%7C0%7C638760271775707000%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=P5TUm%2B%2Bi%2Bl8%2B8on0mAqh%2BKX1Tp2sUj8kOguv7T3lVf8%3D&reserved=0)

Discover CCROC: [https://www.calhr.ca.gov/state-hr-professionals/Pages/ccroc-forum.aspx](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.calhr.ca.gov%2Fstate-hr-professionals%2FPages%2Fccroc-forum.aspx&data=05%7C02%7CGita.Chandra%40resources.ca.gov%7C603940d2b5234b98712508dd5515369a%7Cb71d56524b834257afcd7fd177884564%7C0%7C0%7C638760271775726560%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4CdZesLsxcAxNyht0We94WoQLaXFKb%2Ffjm%2Fl0SGSGOM%3D&reserved=0)

**Doria Robinson, Executive Director, Urban Tilth:**

Bio: Doria Robinson <https://urbantilth.org/people/doria-robinson/>

Urban Tilth - <https://urbantilth.org/>

Urban Tilth inspires, hires, and trains local residents to cultivate agriculture, feed our community, and restore relationships to land to build a more sustainable food system, within a just and healthier community.

CDFA - State Board of Food & Agriculture: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/State_Board/BrdBios/bioDoriaRobinson.html>

Doria is a third-generation resident of Richmond, CA. She has served as the Executive Director of Urban Tilth since 2007. The community-based organization is located in Richmond and is dedicated to cultivating a more sustainable, health, and just food system.

She was raised in a strong church community, where her grandfather was the minister. Growing up, she spent weekends and summers on the church’s 350-acre ranch in Fairfield California where she taught her first lessons on the power of cooperative economics. During her college years, she worked on organic farms in Western Massachusetts.

In 2014, Doria developed Urban Tilth’s 3-acree urban farm in Richmond that was expanded to the Farm to Table CSA social entrepreneurial venture that serves hyper-local and sustainably grown produce to 440 West County families each week.

Most recently, she co-founded Cooperation Richmond, a not-for-profit cooperative developer and on-stop-shop for cooperative enterprises in Richmond that build community-controlled wealth by and for low-income communities, and communities of color.

Ms. Robinson is a Certified Permaculture Designer, Bay Friendly Gardener, Nutrition Educator and Yoga Instructor. She is the co-founder of the Richmond Food Policy Council, former co-chair of the US Sovereignty Alliance Western Region, and member of the Climate Justice Alliance, Food Sovereignty Working Group.

Doria lives in the neighborhood where she grew up in Richmond with her twins.

More about Doria:

What is Environmental Justice with Doria Robinson: <https://youtu.be/Xe7y4_x-sN0?si=b-1jRKcCjSEW1CiS>

Watch: Doria Robinson Discusses the Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change | WIRED: <https://www.wired.com/video/watch/doria-robinson-discusses-the-disproportionate-impact-of-climate-change>

**Honoring Dr. King’s Legacy at the Richmond Greenway Trail**

<https://urbantilth.org/news/honoring-dr-kings-legacy-at-the-richmond-greenway-trail/>

Audubon Center at Debs Park: <https://debspark.audubon.org/>

CNRA Black History Month Mixer 5pm today at Oak Park Brewing – <https://opbrewco.com/>

3514 Broadway, Sacramento, CA 95817-2825 ·

Celebrate Women’s History Month with CNRA - <https://resources.ca.gov/womenshistorymonth>