**Panelist Links and Backgrounder**

**Women Leaders Shaping California’s Conservation Movement**

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

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

Women’s History Month with Us! <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Equity-and-Environmental-Justice/Celebrating-Cultural-Diversity/Womens-History-Month>

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

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

**Madeline Drake, Assistant Deputy Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat**

California Natural Resources Agency: <https://resources.ca.gov/>

More about protecting biodiversity: <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Protecting-Biodiversity#:~:text=California%20is%20home%20to%20more,found%20nowhere%20else%20on%20Earth>!

Learn about California’s 303x30 initiative: <https://www.californianature.ca.gov/>

Madeline Drake serves as the California Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary for Biodiversity and Habitat where she advises and coordinates with external stakeholders and CNRA departments, boards and conservancies to implement California’s 30x30 strategy. Prior to this role, Madeline was the Biodiversity Coordinator for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife where she was responsible for coordinating with state and federal agencies and other partners in efforts to preserve, manage, and restore critical ecosystems throughout California. She also led the team that developed California's “Pathways to 30x30” document, the strategic framework for conserving 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030. Prior to her time with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, she worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where she was a Senior Biologist working on Endangered Species Act listing determinations and recovery actions for threatened and endangered species.

* Madeline received her Bachelor of Science in Marine Science from the University of South Carolina, and Master of Science in Animal Biology from the University of California, Davis. When not working, she enjoys exploring and continually learning about California’s exceptional biodiversity through hiking and scuba diving.

**Andrea Ambriz, General Manager of Exposition Park**

**Exposition Park:** <https://expositionpark.ca.gov/>

General Manager – Exposition Park: <https://expositionpark.ca.gov/general-park-manager/>

Andrea Ambriz serves as the General Manager of Exposition Park, one of the largest public, open spaces in the heart of Los Angeles welcoming millions of visitors annually. With a commitment to building healthy, vibrant and safe communities, General Manager Ambriz was appointed by California Governor Gavin Newsom to steward Exposition Park and bring her experience working successfully in community and policy development and engagement.

Exposition Park, a 160-acre renown state property, is home to celebrated museums, leading-edge sporting venues, recreational and educational facilities, and community assets that engage, entertain and accommodate visitors from near and far.  General Manager Ambriz believes in championing park and green equity and access through the Park, particularly to over half a million residents who live within a three-mile radius. As well, she recognizes the Park’s potential to serve as a world-class destination and community economic opportunity as it prepares to host the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, following historic hosting of the 1932 and 1984 Summer Olympic Games.

Prior to serving as General Manager, Ambriz was Deputy Secretary of External Affairs at the California Natural Resources Agency, cultivating strategic partnerships to facilitate the agency’s protection of California’s natural, historic and cultural resources. She previously served as Chief Operating Officer at River LA and as Chief of Staff at SEIU Local 2015. She also formerly held notable roles in the U.S. federal government, including for 44th U.S. President Barack Obama as White House Deputy Director of Private Sector Engagement and at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Ambriz has also worked in the California State Legislature, advising on diverse policies and initiatives, including advancing the allocation of over $400 million equitably to park-poor neighborhoods across California and supporting landmark clean-air legislation.

She serves on the Board of the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pension Commission and the Municipal Improvement Corporation of Los Angeles among others. She is a Los Angeles native, and earned undergraduate degrees from DePaul University, and holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Karen Buhr, Deputy Executive Officer, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy**

Delta Conservancy – <https://deltaconservancy.ca.gov/>

**Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy** **2024 Annual Report**: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c9a5d4d2320f48f7afbd9bf836e67603>

Karen Buhr is a dynamic and collaborative leader dedicated to fostering impactful public/private partnerships. She specializes in building broad coalitions among Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), state and federal agencies, local governments, funders, nonprofits, and other key stakeholders to address critical environmental challenges. With a deep commitment to equitable, community-driven solutions, Karen works to develop strategies that balance environmental impact with agricultural, economic, and societal needs.

Currently serving as the Deputy Executive Officer of the Delta Conservancy, a state agency focused on protecting, enhancing, and restoring the Delta’s economy, agricultural landscapes, and environment, Karen is working to advance collaboration, provide impactful funding and support creative solutions to the Delta ecosystems and community.

Prior to joining the Conservancy, Karen spent 12 years as the Executive Director of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), where she provided strategic leadership to 95 RCDs across the state. Under her guidance, CARCD significantly expanded its impact, growing from a two-person staff with a $200,000 budget to an influential organization with 12 employees and an annual budget exceeding $3 million. She spearheaded a statewide public-private capacity-building initiative that secured over $1 million annually in direct funding, technical assistance, and training to strengthen RCDs and enhance their ability to serve local communities. This resulted in a stronger RCD network with many RCDs doubling their size and impact on local communities. Additionally, she played a key role in elevating RCDs’ presence in Sacramento, transforming them from unknown into recognized and valued partners among policymakers, State Agencies and other decision-makers.

Instrumental to her current perspective were early roles as a Corps member in the MN Conservation Corps, running an environmental internship program for youth from underserved communities, and as an environmental educator.

Karen holds a Master of Science in Natural Resource Science and Management from the University of Minnesota, where she graduated with a 4.0 GPA while also served as the graduate and professional school student body president, and a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies from Macalester College in St. Paul, MN.

**Brittany Covich, Policy & Outreach Division Chief, Sierra Nevada Conservancy**

More about the Sierra Nevada Conservancy: <https://sierranevada.ca.gov/>

Brittany Covich serves as the Policy and Outreach Division Chief at the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, a state conservancy under the California Natural Resources Agency, working to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra-Cascade region. Covich began working for the SNC in 2007 after completing a Bachelor’s degree in Geography at Chico State. Covich worked directly with community partners on wildfire risk reduction and forest resilience projects as a grant manager and field representative.

Currently, Brittany leads the SNC’s policy, communications, science, and community support work. Covich grew up in the Sierra-Cascade region where she continues to live and play with her husband and young son.

**Elena DeLacy, Executive Director, American River Conservancy (ARC)**

<https://www.arconservancy.org>

American River Conservancy – Eldorado Ranch: [https://www.arconservancy.org/eldoradoranch/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.arconservancy.org%2Feldoradoranch%2F&data=05%7C02%7CGita.Chandra%40resources.ca.gov%7C2d7483f0a1f04112929e08dd6c88f545%7Cb71d56524b834257afcd7fd177884564%7C0%7C0%7C638786057666391537%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=m%2BhudQWA2Hz646Y%2FAYjr%2FtB9uNhpqi70gvu7K%2BGaJLY%3D&reserved=0)

Elena DeLacy is the Executive Director of American River Conservancy.  Her focus is on achieving the goals of ARC's mission “to serve our communities by ensuring healthy ecosystems in the Upper American River and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds through conservation, stewardship, and education.”  Ms. DeLacy has served in this role since 2019, overseeing a variety of land conservation and watershed restoration projects in El Dorado and Placer Counties. Under her leadership, 5,200 acres of riparian corridors, oak woodlands, and working landscapes have been permanently protected, and more than 1,200 acres of ecological forest restoration work has been completed, altogether representing more than $26 million in nature-based investments in the region.  ARC's education programs facilitate experiential, place-based learning that connects people with the environment. In 2024 alone, ARC’s education programs reached over 2,100 people.

Prior to Elena's tenure as ARC's Executive Director, she has served in the roles of Associate Director, Stewardship Director, and Conservation Project Coordinator at the organization. Her career in non-profit conservation and project management began in 2003 when she volunteered as an intern at ARC while completing her undergraduate degree. Ms. DeLacy currently serves as Board Secretary for Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council and the President of Friends of Sly Park. Elena holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Biology and Management from the University of California, Davis.

Established in 1989 as a land trust, American River Conservancy exists to protect lands in the Upper American River and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds *in perpetuity*. Over the past 36 years, ARC's conservation program has permanently protected 30,900 acres. ARC uses science, volunteers, and collaborative partnerships to preserve rivers, land, and the life they support.  Through an ethic of stewardship, ARC inspires the care of natural landscapes and healthy ecosystems now and for future generations.  American River Conservancy was awarded Land Trust Accreditation in 2025.