

2019 Conservation Action Hero Robert Doyle Expanded the East Bay Parks

by *Rebecca Pratt*

March 25, 2019

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Robert Doyle. (Photo by Andrea Laue)

Robert Doyle often wonders what would have happened had John Muir simply explored but never written about the wilderness he loved.

Over the course of his conservation career, Doyle has used the power of storytelling to secure funding, gain public support, and champion legislation for the environment. “The success of the parks is the communications side, the promotion. That’s what John Muir did,” he says.

Doyle has continually advocated for land conservation and the importance of urban parks, taking on successive roles as a gardener, park ranger, trail planner, and assistant general manager of land acquisition and planning for the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). Today, as general manager at EBRPD, he’s focused on getting more people outside, a process that begins with obtaining funding to purchase public lands for conversion into public parks.

Doyle’s efforts have expanded the EBRPD by more than 61,000 acres, the largest increase of land and trails in the park district’s 85-year history. He has worked on more than \$1 billion worth of park funding projects and pushed the district and others to adopt new approaches to public engagement and inclusion.

As a new generation grows up and diverse populations continue to seek outdoor spaces, the park district’s approach must meet changing needs, he believes. Recent initiatives such as the Multicultural Advisory Committee and Multicultural Wellness Walks won the district the East Bay Economic Development Association’s prestigious Legacy Award.

“We’re saying, ‘You just need to go breathe some fresh air,’ and it’s working,” Doyle notes. “It’s working because you have that accessibility of urban parks. We think urban parks are that portal or gateway to the wilderness. Our parks are getting more crowded. But that’s a good problem,” he adds.

Doyle’s conservation work began in the 1970s around the time of the first Earth Day, when the environmental movement was gaining momentum. “I got caught up in that tidal wave of incredible opportunity for environmental activism,” he says.

He credits early mentors, especially Save the Bay’s Sylvia McLaughlin and Dr. Mary Bowerman of Save Mount Diablo, with showing him how to fight for change and for teaching him patience. “Environmental conservation is a marathon, not a sprint,” he says. “Sometimes you have to go to ten meetings; no one wants to do that.”

But some efforts have paid off beyond expectations. Early in his career, Doyle developed the design for a trail system that linked multiuse urban trails and open space connector trails. In addition to providing paths for people, these remain an important wilderness corridor, allowing native plants and animals to grow and thrive just steps from city streets.

A founding board member of the East Bay Conservation Corps and Save Mount Diablo, Doyle co-authored two Regional Parks bond measures, AA in 1988 and WW in 2008, which supported land acquisition and preservation as well as new park development. He celebrated a victory in June 2018 with passage of California Proposition 68, the Parks, Environment, and Water Bond, which authorized \$4 billion for state and local parks, environmental protection, water infrastructure, and flood protection projects.

“Bob Doyle is a conservation giant, both as a volunteer and as a professional. No one in the past 50 years has had a bigger effect, not just on the green map of the East Bay, but on the entire map of the East Bay,” says Seth Adams, Save Mount Diablo’s land conservation director, who has worked for the organization since Doyle hired him in 1988.

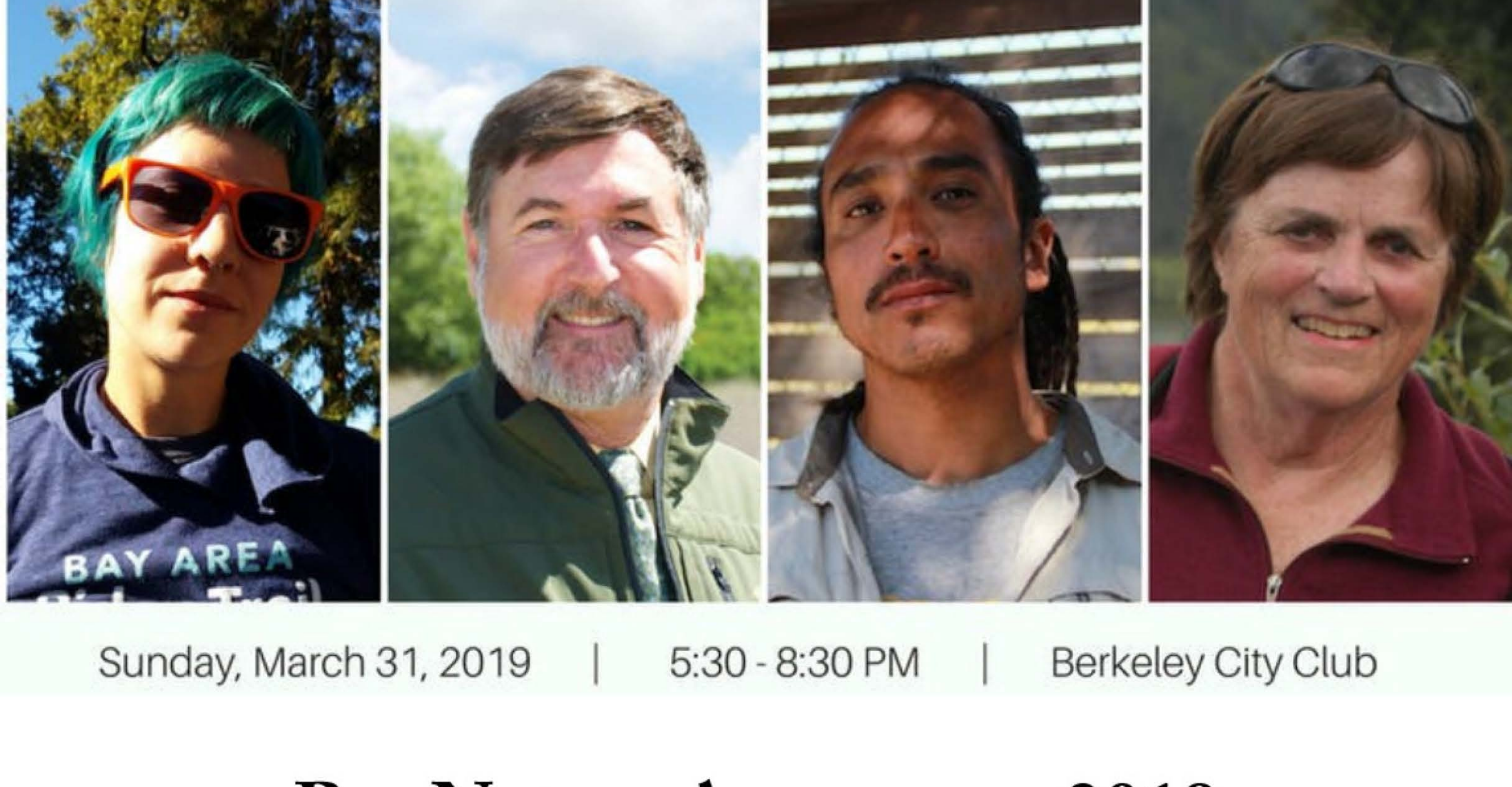
A member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and its Urban Protected Areas Committee, Doyle has presented at the IUCN World Parks Congress and national park and public lands conferences, speaking about climate resilience, youth engagement, and diversity. He has testified before Congress on national parks and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Doyle hopes he and his team can contribute to building a culture of environmental stewardship, including better land management in anticipation of wildfires.

“We’re going to preserve the last of the best open space, but will we take care of it once we get it?” he asks. “We all need to be caretakers of this land. I’m looking for these young, bright faces who want to be future leaders. To own it like we owned it.” v

About the Author

[Rebecca Pratt](#)



Sunday, March 31, 2019 | 5:30 - 8:30 PM | Berkeley City Club

Bay Nature Announces 2019 Local Heroes

by *Beth Slatkin*

September 26, 2018

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bay Nature Institute is delighted to announce the recipients of its **2019 Local Hero Awards**. Four remarkable champions of local nature will be honored at the organization's annual gala on **March 31, 2019** at the Berkeley City Club.

In addition to its three annual awards in the categories of Conservation Action, Youth Engagement, and Environmental Education, Bay Nature has added a *fourth* category this year: the **Citizens Award**, given to "an individual whose grassroots activities have had a transformative impact on nature in the Bay Area over the course of their lifetime."

This year's winners are:

CONSERVATION ACTION AWARD

Robert E. Doyle, General Manager, East Bay Regional Park District



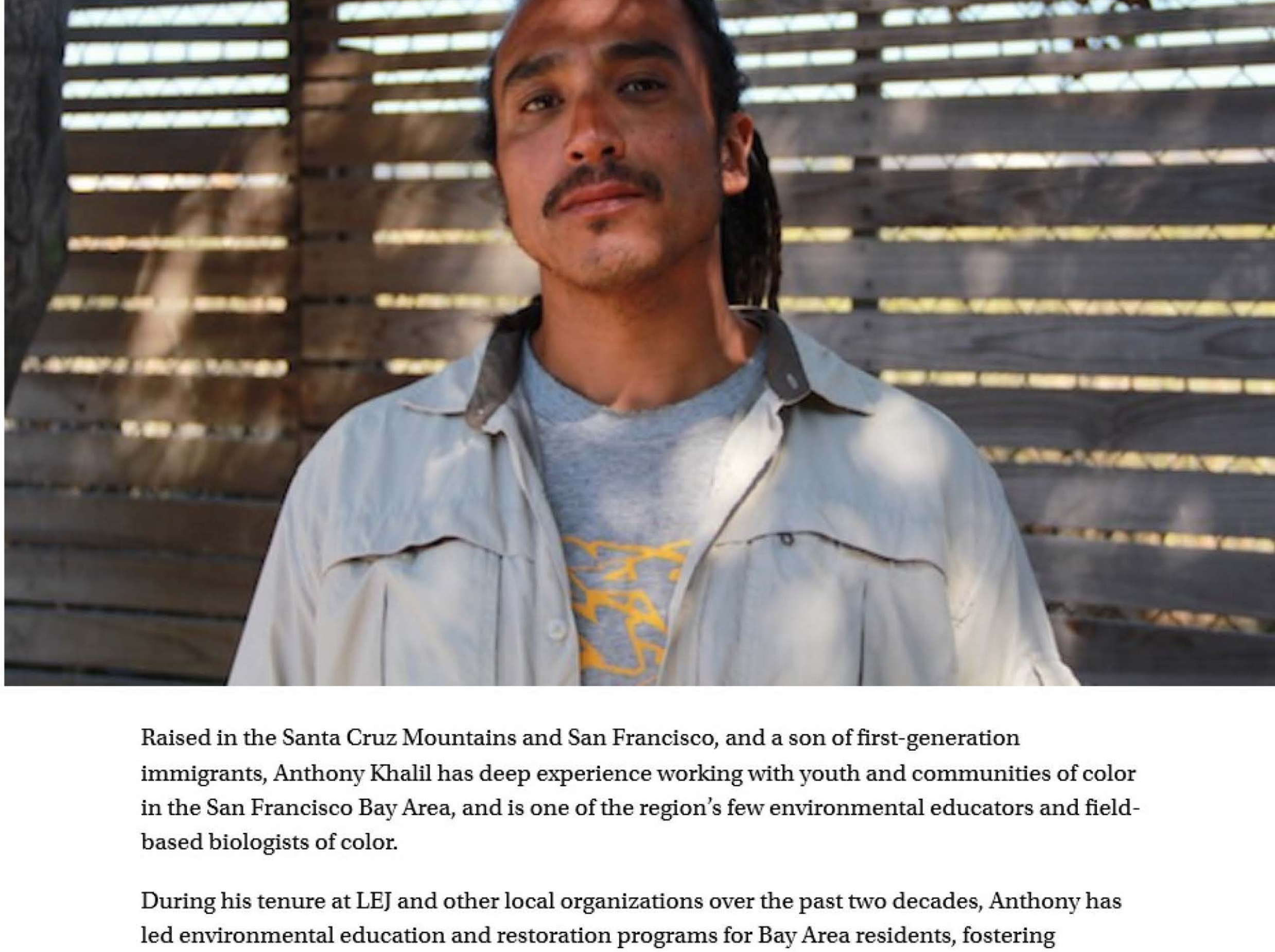
Over the past four decades, Bob Doyle has worked tirelessly to increase the number of parks and trails in the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD)—and public access to them. Starting out as a District park ranger, then a park planner, Bob served 25 years as the chief of land and trails, then as assistant general manager. He is currently the General Manager of the largest regional park system in the nation, serving 25 million visitors per year at 73 parks on over 121,000 acres across the East Bay.

As co-chair of the California State Park Partners, Bob was a key advocate for advancing Proposition 68, the successful Parks, Environment, and Water Bond, to the June 2018 ballot. He also serves as vice-chair of the Clean Water, Natural Resources and Parks Committee, a group that grew out of the Prop. 68 coalition. Bob leads the Park District's efforts to partner locally with the National Parks on "Healthy Parks Healthy People" programs like the Kids' Healthy Outdoor Challenge (KHOC), Stay Healthy in Nature Every Day (SHINE), Multicultural Walks, and other efforts to engage the Park District's diverse communities in healthy outdoor activities.

Bob's numerous awards include a Mountain Star Award as a founding board member of Save Mount Diablo (2002), a Lifetime Achievement Award from California Trails and Greenways (2010), a Special Legislative Advocacy Award from California Parks and Recreation Society (2018), and, most recently, the AAPRA's Pugsley Award (2018), the most prestigious national award for parks and recreation leadership.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARD

Anthony Khalil, Community Engagement Director, Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ)



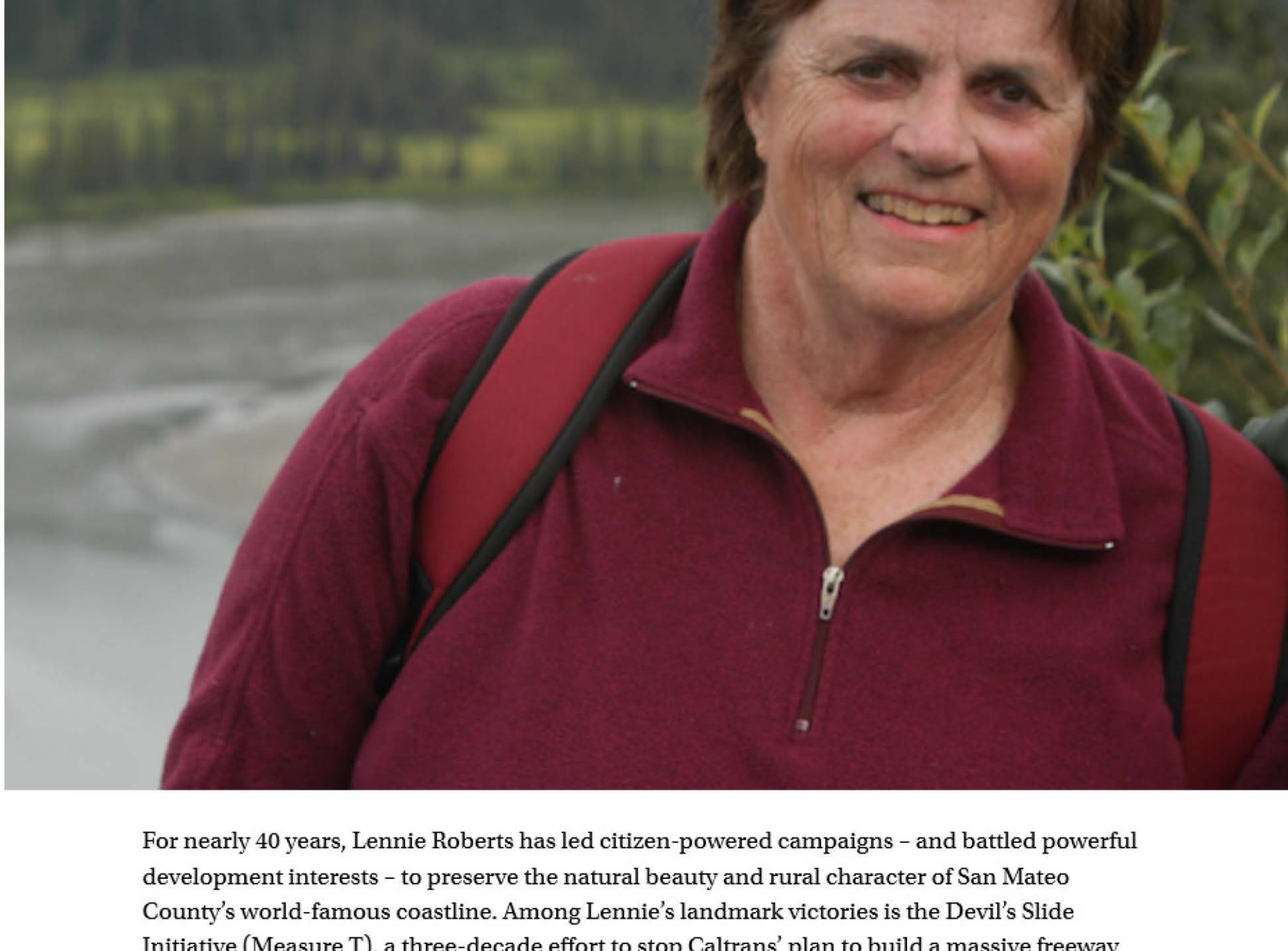
Raised in the Santa Cruz Mountains and San Francisco, and a son of first-generation immigrants, Anthony Khalil has deep experience working with youth and communities of color in the San Francisco Bay Area, and is one of the region's few environmental educators and field-based biologists of color.

During his tenure at LEJ and other local organizations over the past two decades, Anthony has led environmental education and restoration programs for Bay Area residents, fostering increased community and youth stewardship of Southeast San Francisco's natural areas. He's also presented at numerous conferences and youth-serving agencies on the topics of race and the environment and the imperative of cultural relevancy in connecting people to the natural world.

Anthony shares a similar experience with the youth and communities he serves, possessing the ability to connect and mentor in a manner that fosters a deeper connection and commitment to nature. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice from San Francisco State University.

CITIZENS AWARD

Lennie Roberts, Legislative Advocate, Committee for Green Foothills



For nearly 40 years, Lennie Roberts has led citizen-powered campaigns - and battled powerful development interests - to preserve the natural beauty and rural character of San Mateo County's world-famous coastline. Among Lennie's landmark victories is the Devil's Slide Initiative (Measure T), a three-decade effort to stop Caltrans' plan to build a massive freeway down the California coast; and Measure A, the Coastside Protective Initiative, which mandated 38 policies that permanently protect the County's coastside forests, pastures, streams and beaches from sprawling development.

In 1992, she spearheaded the fight to prevent the pristine Apanolio Canyon near Half Moon Bay from becoming a 100-year landfill. Lennie's advocacy has also helped preserve delicate Peninsula ecosystems like Pescadero Marsh.

A co-founder of both the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and The Yosemite Fund, Lennie has received a host of honors over her long and successful career working to protect the wild places she loves, including being named a California Coastal Champion in 2001; election to the San Mateo County Women's Hall of Fame in 2003; and the Sierra Club's (Loma Prieta Chapter) 2016 Environmental Hero Award.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Tina Cuevas, Volunteer & Events Coordinator, Bay Area Ridge Trail



Tina Cuevas is passionate about protecting public spaces and encouraging others to get out and take advantage of the beautiful parks around them.

In her first year with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Tina coordinated over 550 volunteers at 15 different parks on Ridge Trail Day, an annual Bay Area-wide trail stewardship day, and helped coordinate over 30 Ridge Trail outings for more than 1,300 people, including eight nights of camping.

Tina got her start working with youth and volunteers in the parks at the City of San Bruno's Camp Kaleidoscope program, where she served as a senior recreation leader for five years starting in high school. As an undergrad at San Francisco State University majoring in marketing, she was further exposed to the importance of protecting public space and encouraging community access. Her passion for the outdoors deepened when she worked for Burton Snowboards helping coordinate their marketing and community events.

In addition to her award, Tina will receive a \$250 prize for her tremendous dedication to connecting youth with their local parks.

For more information about the Local Hero Awards, or to arrange interviews with our 2019 Local Heroes, please contact Bay Nature Marketing & Outreach Director Beth Slatkin at beth@baynature.org or at 510-528-8550 x107.



Join Us!

You're invited to join Bay Nature in honoring our 2019 Local Heroes at Bay Nature's **Local Hero Awards Dinner** on **March 31, 2019** at the Berkeley City Club in downtown Berkeley.

The evening will include a reception, hors d'oeuvres, full bar, live and silent auction, and a full-course dinner.

This year's theme is *Look Deeply Into Nature*.

Tickets are now on sale!

For information about sponsorships, please [click here](#).

About the Author

Beth Slatkin

Beth Slatkin is Bay Nature's marketing and outreach director.

Bay Nature connects the people of the San Francisco Bay Area to our natural world and motivates people to solve problems with nature in mind.

Header illustrations by Jane Kim, InkDwell

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1929 8th St., #2
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