

# Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) Agricultural & Open Space Preservation Workshop

July 8, 2015

## Speaker Bios

**Seth Adams**, Land Conservation Director, Save Mount Diablo

Seth was hired by Save Mount Diablo in 1988. His responsibilities include land acquisition, land use planning, land stewardship, grassroots activism and legislative and public policy. He lives in Martinez and is an avid hiker, runner, cyclist and weight-lifter.

**Barbara Cecchini**, Contra Costa County Farm Bureau

Barbara graduated in 1973 with a BS degree from Fresno State University in Agricultural Plant Science. Following graduation, she worked in the canning industry until 1980, conducting variety research on tomatoes and other canning vegetables and cold storage research on peaches, apricots and pears. From 1981 to 1988, she sold vegetable and field seeds and continued with cannery tomato variety research.

Since 1987 Barbara has helped her husband Robert Cecchini with their family farm business. Most recently, in the summer of 2013, she and Robert, along with their daughter Allison and a business partner, Christian Olesen, established a nonprofit community farm, First Generation Farmers.

**Kristin Connelly**, President and CEO, East Bay Leadership Council

In addition to her role with the EBLC, an employer-led public policy advocacy organization focused on economic vitality and quality of life in the East Bay, Kristin Braun Connelly is also the Executive Director of the Contra Costa Economic Partnership.

Prior to taking the lead of both the EBLC and CCEP, Kristin served as chief of staff to Contra Costa County Supervisor Karen Mitchoff. Kristin is also the former Executive Director of the California Forward Action Fund, a non-profit governance reform organization that sponsored a statewide ballot measure and advocated for legislative and budget reform. In addition, she practiced employment law at the firm Sidley Austin LLP in New York City. Kristin has extensive experience as a policy advisor and advocate for a variety of non-profit organizations that provided services to families affected by HIV/AIDS and has served as a development officer for the nation's second largest food bank.

A native of Contra Costa County, Kristin earned a law degree from Fordham University, a master's in public policy from Georgetown University and a bachelor's from UCLA. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Northern California Small Business Development Centers and the Board of Trustees of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation. Kristin lives in Lafayette with her husband T.J. and their two children.

**Joel Devalcourt**, East Bay Regional Representative, Greenbelt Alliance

Joel grew up in Santa Cruz and has worked passionately for environmental conservation and social equity much of his life. He earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Film from Hampshire College, focusing on land use patterns at the urban edge. Joel received his Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree from the University of New Orleans, while also working on the statewide recovery after Hurricane Katrina. He is now the Regional Representative for the East Bay with Greenbelt Alliance, leading open space and smart growth campaigns in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

**Robert Doyle**, General Manager, East Bay Regional Park District

Robert Doyle is a veteran of the parks and open space field with a career spanning 40 plus years. As General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) in the San Francisco Bay area, he heads up the largest local park district in the United States, with 1,000 employees serving a diverse population of users in an urban interface setting, 22 million visitors per year to its 65 parks, and 1,250 miles of trails on 119,000 acres of open space in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

In 2013 Mr. Doyle began service as a Trustee for the National Association for Olmsted Parks, an organization with the mission to advance Olmsted principles and the legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people's lives; he was also inducted into the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, an organization of distinguished practitioners and scholars committed to the advancement of the park and recreation field. He is a founding Board member of the East Bay Conservation Corps. In the 1980's he was a founding board member of Save Mount Diablo, a nonprofit land trust and conservation organization that serves to protect, restore, and add acreage to the Mount Diablo State Park, one of the Ecological Treasures of the San Francisco Bay Area. As Board president, he led the growth of the organization from 1,000 to 5,000 members. He has also served as a board member of the Bay Area Open Space Council, as a founding board member of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, and was appointed to the first Board of Directors of the Agricultural-Natural Resources Trust of Contra Costa County.

Mr. Doyle began his career as a park ranger, serving at diverse parks within EBRPD and moving to the administrative side first working in Planning & Design Department, then on trails in the Land Department. He later became a Chief and then Assistant General Manager for Land in 1990, where he served for 21 years - leading the greatest expansion of parks and trails in the Park District's 80 year history. He was appointed General Manager by the Board of Directors in 2010.

Mr. Doyle's achievements at the Park District include co-authoring expenditure plans for both the \$500 million Bond Measure WW Extension approved by voters in 2008, and the earlier Measure AA approved in 1988. Under his management the District acquired 50,000 acres of parklands, expanding over 25%. His role negotiating a partnership with East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy resulted in thousands of acres of preserved open space in eastern Contra Costa County, a nationally recognized program model that continues to grow. He developed the master plan for the Park District's nationally recognized multi-use urban trail system, which received a \$10.2 million U.S. Department of Transportation Grant in 2010, thus establishing a regional trails system that has grown to over 150 miles in a network of paved commuter trails throughout the

region with connections leading beyond the two county borders. Mr. Doyle shepherded the District through its greatest time of employee turnover in its history at the same time as he lead the agency through the recent “Great Recession” with no layoffs or reduction of service, including the development of fair and fiscally responsible Union agreements, and consistently balanced award winning budgets. He also spearheaded the successful completion of the Park District’s award winning 2009 Master Plan. EBRPD is a major provider of summer jobs for young people. Mr. Doyle has made it a priority of his administration to continue to expand job opportunities for young people.

He has received industry recognition including a Mountain Star Award from Save Mount Diablo (2002) and a Lifetime Achievement Award from California Trails and Greenways (2010).

He attended Diablo Valley College and graduated from Saint Mary’s College with a BA in Management. Doyle is a resident of Walnut Creek and was born and raised in Contra Costa County.

**Chad Godoy**, Agricultural Commissioner, Contra Costa County Dept. of Agriculture

Chad Godoy graduated from Cal Poly Pomona with a Bachelor’s of Science in 2001. In the Fall of 2001 Chad began his career as an Agricultural Biologist in Riverside County, assigned to the Indio District Office where he worked in the Pesticide Use Enforcement Program. Seeking an opportunity to move closer to home, Chad accepted a position as an Agricultural Biologist in Napa County where he continued to work for 11 years and was eventually promoted to Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, managing the Pesticide Use Enforcement Program in Napa County.

**John Kopchik**, Director, Contra Costa County Dept. of Conservation & Development

John Kopchik has worked at the Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development for 20 years and has recently been appointed Director. The Department performs a wide variety of planning and building inspection functions for the County. Earlier in his career, John was the lead local agency staff for a Joint Powers Authority of cities, the County, and special districts that prepared a Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan for Eastern Contra Costa County. Following Plan approval, his duties for the County included serving as the Executive Director of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy, the Joint Powers Authority that is implementing the Plan.

**Kathryn Lyddan**, Director, Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust

Kathryn Lyddan works with farmers and the community to build a sustainable local food system for the San Francisco Bay Area. Since 2003, Kathryn has worked with the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust to permanently protect Contra Costa farmland and to create an economically vibrant future for local farmers.

A graduate of Hastings School of the Law, Kathryn practiced municipal finance law for ten years, including eight years at Cox, Castle & Nicholson. Kathryn is a Planning Commissioner for the City of Lafayette and serves on the Bay Area Open Space Council Advisory Council and the Harvest Time Board of Directors.

**Nancy Schaefer**, Bay Area Program Manager, California Rangeland Trust

Nancy Schaefer has 27 years of conservation transaction, planning, and project management experience working with nonprofit conservation organizations and public agencies in the Bay Area and throughout California. Nancy is a founding member of the Muir Heritage Land Trust (now John Muir Land Trust) and served as an officer from 1988 to 2004. After leading the Bay Area Open Space Council's biodiversity conservation planning effort, she became aware of the importance of rangelands and the vital role of ranchers in managing this important resource. This led her to join the California Rangeland Trust in August of 2012 to serve as the Bay Area Program Manager overseeing outreach, fundraising and conservation easement transactions.

**Heather Schiffman**, Government Affairs Director, Contra Costa Association of Realtors

Heather Schiffman has been working as the Government Affairs Director with CCAR for over four years. She has numerous years of experience working in advocacy and event planning. Prior to joining CCAR, Heather worked as a District Representative for then State Senator Mark DeSaulnier. Heather holds a Bachelor of Arts in Broadcasting Radio & Television from San Francisco State University.

As the Government Affairs Director, Heather serves as the legislative liaison with key CCAR stakeholders including, partner agencies, local governments, elected officials and the business community.

**Dick Schneider**, Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter

Dick Schneider is a volunteer with the Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter. He has worked on numerous East Bay open space campaigns including Alameda County's Save Agriculture and Open Space Lands Initiative in 2000, Protect the Fremont Hills Initiative of 2002, North Livermore's Urban Growth Boundary Initiative of 2003, the Protect Franklin Canyon Area Initiative in Hercules in 2004, and the Dublin Open Space Initiative of 2014.

He serves as a Sierra Club representative on the Altamont Landfill Open Space Committee which awards millions of dollars in landfill mitigation fees to preserve lands in eastern Alameda County for the protection of native biological diversity, scenic views, and non-motorized recreation.

In 2012, Dick received the Tri-Valley Conservancy's Excellence in Preservation Award, and in 2014, he received the Bay Chapter's Acre by Acre Award for Land Conservation. He holds an M.S. in Energy and Resources from U.C. Berkeley, and is co-author of *Toxics A to Z: A Guide to Everyday Pollution Hazards* (Univ. of Calif. Press).

**Serena Unger**, Policy Consultant, American Farmland Trust, California

Serena Unger is a policy consultant with American Farmland Trust (AFT) in California and is a city and regional planner by training. While food system planning is her area of expertise, she has also consulted on various projects including market studies and housing needs assessments; economic development and sector strategies; sector-based regional workforce development

strategies, assessments on public health impacts of the built environment and on access to food retail in low-income neighborhoods; and innovative agricultural conservation easements.

Serena has worked with AFT for four years. She is currently engaged in a project to investigate the need for a regional economic development strategy and financing entity for the Bay Area agricultural and food sectors. She also focuses on the San Joaquin Valley where she advocates for the development of local and regional smart growth policies, conservation practices, and economic development for agriculture.

Serena is co-author of three seminal reports on the state of the state's farming and food system, including *Sustaining Our Agriculture Bounty: An Assessment of the Current State of Farming and Ranching in the San Francisco Bay Area*, and *Saving Farmland, Growing Cities: A Framework for Implementing Effective Farmland Conservation Policies in the San Joaquin Valley*, both produced for AFT; and the *Oakland Food System Assessment: Toward a Sustainable Food Plan*, which she produced under the leadership of former Mayor Jerry Brown's office. Serena earned a Masters in City and Regional Planning from UC Berkeley and a Bachelor of Arts in Russian area studies and political theory from Wheaton College in Massachusetts.

**Lisa Vorderbrueggen**, East Bay Executive Director for Governmental Affairs, Building Industry Association | Bay Area

Lisa Vorderbrueggen joined the nonprofit BIA | Bay Area in 2014 after working at the Bay Area News Group (Contra Costa Times and affiliated newspapers) for 18 years. As a reporter, editor and political columnist, she covered everything from local government to transportation to land-use, and was instrumental in the production of televised candidate round-tables.

A fifth-generation Oregonian, Vorderbrueggen earned her journalism degree at the University of Nevada-Reno and began her career at the *Nevada Appeal* in Carson City, Nev. She also worked as a national correspondent in Washington, D.C., for the *Las Vegas Journal* and was the Carson City Bureau Chief for the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. Her work has been recognized by the Nevada and California press associations and she appeared in two Emmy-award winning documentaries about the construction of the new eastern span of the Bay Bridge.

Vorderbrueggen lives in Martinez with her husband, Joe, who recently retired from Shell Oil after 39 years. They are avid sailors but thanks to their 12 grandchildren, they no longer plan to spend their retirement years on a sailboat anchored off a South Pacific island beach. Well, maybe they'll spend a few months there ...