



SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

PINING OVER PINE MOUNTAIN – A LOGGING PROJECT THAT MUST NOT PROCEED

The Pine Mountain Ridge of the Los Padres National Forest lies deep in the backcountry of Ventura County, with numerous high mountains including Reyes Peak, which stands the highest at 7,510 feet. Reyes Peak is a “sky island,” meaning it provides unique habitat to higher-elevation species that cannot survive in nearby lowland regions. The unique topography of this east-west running ridge is covered with beautiful old-growth conifer forest and chaparral. Located on the ancestral lands of the Chumash, the area is historically and culturally important to the indigenous people. The area also offers prime recreational opportunities including mountain climbing, hiking, and camping, includes critical habitat for the endangered California condor, and is home to other sensitive wildlife and rare plants.



Photo: Bryant Baker

Unfortunately, a commercial logging and vegetation removal project, equivalent in size to 575 American football fields, was proposed by the Trump Administration in 2020 and recently approved by the U.S. Forest Service in violation of laws mandating meaningful environmental and public review. Last month, EDC filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging this project on behalf of Los Padres ForestWatch, Keep Sespe Wild Committee, Earth Island Institute, and the American Alpine Club. Also joining the suit is Patagonia Works, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), and California Chaparral Institute, all represented by CBD. Our lawsuit alleges violations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Roadless Area Conservation Rule, Endangered Species Act, and National Forest Management Act.

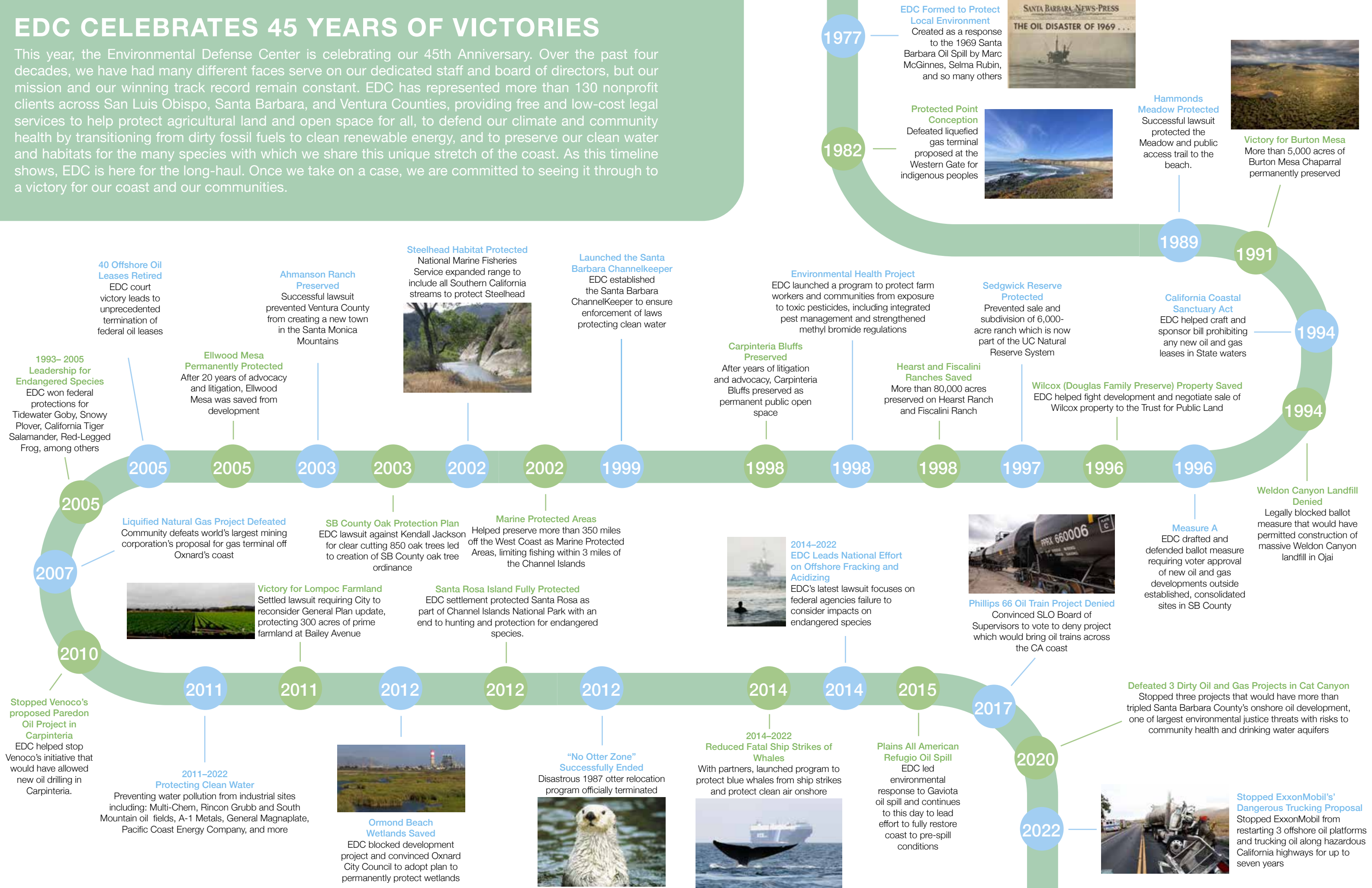
The Pine Mountain logging project would allow an unlimited logging of both dead and live trees of any age up to two feet in diameter and an undisclosed number of trees up to five feet in diameter, as well as the destruction of chaparral across 755 acres. These large trees are important roosting areas for the endangered California condor, and the area is home

to more conifer species than anywhere in Ventura County, including the Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, singleleaf pinyon pine, white fir, California incense-cedar, and the bigcone Douglas-fir. Additionally, more than one-third of the project area is in a protected roadless area that has never been degraded by commercial logging or industrial activities. This area is proposed for wilderness protection under the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, now awaiting approval in the Senate.

The Forest Service approved this project despite immense opposition from the community, including elected officials, Indigenous leaders, scientists, and more than 100 area businesses, environmental, and social organizations. In addition to EDC's lawsuit, the County of Ventura and the City of Ojai filed similar suits. Together we will fight to protect this area prized for its natural beauty of ancient forests, sacred cultural sites, abundant recreational opportunities, and sensitive wildlife.

EDC CELEBRATES 45 YEARS OF VICTORIES

This year, the Environmental Defense Center is celebrating our 45th Anniversary. Over the past four decades, we have had many different faces serve on our dedicated staff and board of directors, but our mission and our winning track record remain constant. EDC has represented more than 130 nonprofit clients across San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties, providing free and low-cost legal services to help protect agricultural land and open space for all, to defend our climate and community health by transitioning from dirty fossil fuels to clean renewable energy, and to preserve our clean water and habitats for the many species with which we share this unique stretch of the coast. As this timeline shows, EDC is here for the long-haul. Once we take on a case, we are committed to seeing it through to a victory for our coast and our communities.



1977

EDC Formed to Protect Local Environment
Created as a response to the 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill by Marc McGinnes, Selma Rubin, and so many others



1982

Protected Point Conception
Defeated liquefied gas terminal proposed at the Western Gate for indigenous peoples



Hammonds Meadow Protected
Successful lawsuit protected the Meadow and public access trail to the beach.



Victory for Burton Mesa
More than 5,000 acres of Burton Mesa Chaparral permanently preserved

1989

California Coastal Sanctuary Act
EDC helped craft and sponsor bill prohibiting any new oil and gas leases in State waters

1991

Sedgwick Reserve Protected
Prevented sale and subdivision of 6,000-acre ranch which is now part of the UC Natural Reserve System

1994

1994

Launched the Santa Barbara ChannelKeeper
EDC established the Santa Barbara ChannelKeeper to ensure enforcement of laws protecting clean water

Environmental Health Project
EDC launched a program to protect farm workers and communities from exposure to toxic pesticides, including integrated pest management and strengthened methyl bromide regulations

Carpinteria Bluffs Preserved
After years of litigation and advocacy, Carpinteria Bluffs preserved as permanent public open space

Hearst and Fiscalini Ranches Saved
More than 80,000 acres preserved on Hearst Ranch and Fiscalini Ranch

Wilcox (Douglas Family Preserve) Property Saved
EDC helped fight development and negotiate sale of Wilcox property to the Trust for Public Land

Ahmanson Ranch Preserved
Successful lawsuit prevented Ventura County from creating a new town in the Santa Monica Mountains

Steelhead Habitat Protected
National Marine Fisheries Service expanded range to include all Southern California streams to protect Steelhead



Ellwood Mesa Permanently Protected
After 20 years of advocacy and litigation, Ellwood Mesa was saved from development

1993-2005 Leadership for Endangered Species
EDC won federal protections for Tidewater Goby, Snowy Plover, California Tiger Salamander, Red-Legged Frog, among others

40 Offshore Oil Leases Retired
EDC court victory leads to unprecedented termination of federal oil leases

2005

2005

2003

2003

2002

2002

1999

1998

1998

1998

1997

1996

1996

Weldon Canyon Landfill Denied
Legally blocked ballot measure that would have permitted construction of massive Weldon Canyon landfill in Ojai

Measure A
EDC drafted and defended ballot measure requiring voter approval of new oil and gas developments outside established, consolidated sites in SB County



Phillips 66 Oil Train Project Denied
Convinced SLO Board of Supervisors to vote to deny project which would bring oil trains across the CA coast

2014-2022 EDC Leads National Effort on Offshore Fracking and Acidizing
EDC's latest lawsuit focuses on federal agencies failure to consider impacts on endangered species



2014

2014

2015

2017

2020

2022

Defeated 3 Dirty Oil and Gas Projects in Cat Canyon
Stopped three projects that would have more than tripled Santa Barbara County's onshore oil development, one of largest environmental justice threats with risks to community health and drinking water aquifers

Stopped ExxonMobil's Dangerous Trucking Proposal
Stopped ExxonMobil from restarting 3 offshore oil platforms and trucking oil along hazardous California highways for up to seven years



2014-2022 Reduced Fatal Ship Strikes of Whales
With partners, launched program to protect blue whales from ship strikes and protect clean air onshore



"No Otter Zone" Successfully Ended
Disastrous 1987 otter relocation program officially terminated



Santa Rosa Island Fully Protected
EDC settlement protected Santa Rosa as part of Channel Islands National Park with an end to hunting and protection for endangered species.

SB County Oak Protection Plan
EDC lawsuit against Kendall Jackson for clear cutting 850 oak trees led to creation of SB County oak tree ordinance

Victory for Lompoc Farmland
Settled lawsuit requiring City to reconsider General Plan update, protecting 300 acres of prime farmland at Bailey Avenue



Ormond Beach Wetlands Saved
EDC blocked development project and convinced Oxnard City Council to adopt plan to permanently protect wetlands

2011-2022 Protecting Clean Water
Preventing water pollution from industrial sites including: Multi-Chem, Rincon Grubb and South Mountain oil fields, A-1 Metals, General Magnaplate, Pacific Coast Energy Company, and more

Stopped Venoco's proposed Paredon Oil Project in Carpinteria
EDC helped stop Venoco's initiative that would have allowed new oil drilling in Carpinteria.

THOSE DAM EFFECTS ON ENDANGERED STEELHEAD

EDC has always prioritized the protection of endangered Southern California steelhead, a keystone species which used to number in the tens of thousands across our region. Twitchell Dam, located east of Santa Maria on the Cuyama River, is a major problem, preventing steelhead from reaching their historic breeding grounds. In 2019, on behalf of Los Padres ForestWatch and in partnership with San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper, EDC filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging that the Dam's operators, the Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District and Bureau of Reclamation, are violating the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by limiting the quantity and timing of flows in the Santa Maria River to levels that harm the steelhead population. In April, EDC attorneys had their day in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, arguing that the agencies must comply with the ESA and adjust their water releases to protect steelhead. Now, we await the justices' decision.



Photo: Mark Holmgren



CLEAN WATER FOR LOMPOC

The City of Lompoc receives wastewater from homes, businesses, schools, and industrial processes from the City of Lompoc, Vandenberg Village, and Vandenberg Space Force Base which is then processed at the Wastewater Reclamation Plant to remove pollutants. The treated water is then released into the Santa Ynez River via San Miguelito Creek. Unfortunately, the City is in violation of its Clean Water Act discharge permit, with its own reports showing chronic toxic discharge repeatedly for more than 10 years. These discharges from the Plant impact downstream water quality and the health of the Santa Ynez River ecosystem, which is important to snowy plovers and other shorebirds, along with endangered steelhead that travel through the River

estuary to the ocean and back upstream to spawning grounds as part of their lifecycle. EDC filed a lawsuit against the City in 2021 for violations of the Clean Water Act. In April a federal judge issued a preliminary ruling finding the City to be in violation of its permit; a full trial to assess penalties is scheduled for February 2023.

WATERSHED HEALTH AND FIRE HAZARDS

EDC's Watershed Program works to safeguard local water resources with sufficient creek-side buffers to provide habitat and filter pollution from stormwater runoff, a direct benefit to our community's water supply. Cleaner creeks enhance fish, wildlife, and natural ecosystems, and result in a positive impact on human health and enjoyment of the environment, providing safe access to upstream as well as coastal waters. Recently, EDC's Watershed Program Director, Brian Trautwein, and our Watershed Program Intern, Natalie Blackwelder, surveyed the Mission Creek Watershed - including Mission Canyon and Rattlesnake Canyon, and Lower Mission Creek - to identify watershed health problems and associated fire hazards. The survey resulted in a detailed report documenting problems at 31 locations with recommendations to enhance watershed health and reduce fire hazards, including replacing flammable invasive nonnative vegetation such as eucalyptus trees and Arundo with native riparian and oak woodland species. The report will be provided to the County Fire Department, and to City, County, and State agencies.



Nonnative plants, including palm trees, eucalyptus trees, pine trees, and acacia trees can increase fire hazards and reduce the health of Mission Creek's riparian habitat. Photo: Natalie Blackwelder.



Tanker crash in the Cuyama River. Photo by Santa Barbara County Fire Department.

EXXONMOBIL DENIED

In March, EDC and our clients, Get Oil Out! and SBCAN, celebrated Santa Barbara County's denial of ExxonMobil's dangerous proposal to restart three offshore oil platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel and send nearly 70 oil-filled tanker trucks per day on our coastal and inland highways. EDC worked diligently since 2015 alongside our clients and our partners to ensure the County's denial, which was based on the significant harms to biological, water, and cultural resources in the event of a spill, as well as other threats to community health and public safety. In considering their decision, the County relied on EDC's data on tanker truck accidents, which demonstrate the risks of spills, deaths, injuries, and fires. This was a huge win in the fight to protect our climate, public safety, and our land and watersheds, and we are thankful to everyone in the community who spoke up against this project.

PROTECTING LOS CARNEROS CREEK & HABITAT

EDC has a long history working to protect and restore streams for the benefit of native habitats, wildlife, clean water, and the public's use and enjoyment. Heritage Ridge is a large development proposed for 332 rental units, 104 of which would be much-needed affordable housing, next to Los Carneros Creek in Goleta. EDC and our clients (The Goodland Coalition, Citizens Planning Association, Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, Urban Creeks Council, and Audubon Society) have been working to ensure the project will meet the City's requirement for developers to protect our creeks with a minimum 100-foot buffer. EDC is working closely with our experts and the developer to ensure this project gets approved while providing the required creek buffer, protection for sensitive habitat, and minimization of impacts to the important wildlife corridor. EDC is participating in hearings before the Goleta Planning Commission and City Council, and expects a final decision by the City Council later this spring.



OFFSHORE WIND AND THE IMPORTANCE OF "WHERE"

Considering the urgency of climate change and what it means for loss in biodiversity, EDC continues our work to advance renewable energy while protecting marine species and the places they rely on to feed, migrate, and nest. The largest offshore wind proposal in our region, near Morro Bay and Cambria, could provide enough responsible renewable energy to power over one million homes. This location is more than 20 miles offshore, which helps to reduce the impacts to many marine species with "nearshore affinity," such as brown pelicans and gray whales, and reduces conflicts with other ocean users. Two smaller projects have been proposed in waters very close to shore, just north of Pt. Conception. EDC has voiced major concerns about the siting of these projects because of their overlap with important feeding and migratory areas, and their proximity to marine protected areas. While EDC supports responsible offshore wind and we are optimistic that it can be done right, that is heavily dependent on where wind turbines end up. Not all projects are equal, and EDC will continue to ensure only responsible wind energy advances off our coast.



EDC's Kristen Hislop and Jessie Altstatt of Santa Barbara Audubon have been working to advance properly sited offshore wind projects.

CELEBRATING BRIAN TRAUTWEIN'S 25 YEARS AT EDC

In April, EDC Board and staff held a celebration to recognize Brian Trautwein, our Senior Analyst/Watershed Program Director, for 25 years of work at EDC. Brian's expertise, dedication, and passion have had a profound effect on the health of our creeks and watersheds, our wildlife, and public access. Brian embodies what EDC is about, educating community members while surveying and cleaning up the watersheds, advocating for policies at the local and state level, and using his endless knowledge to bring critical on the ground evidence to help our attorneys win cases. Brian has played a significant role in helping EDC achieve many victories, including preventing a dirty power plant on the beach of Oxnard, defeating three oil projects in Santa Barbara County that would have more than tripled onshore production, and helping the City of Goleta develop creek and watershed policies that are being used as a model for other cities throughout California.

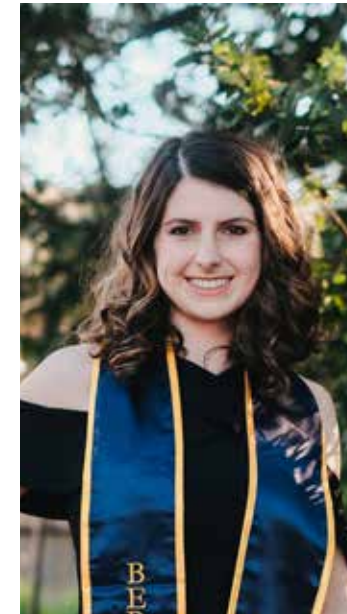


GENERAL CONSERVATION PLAN?

Since 2017, EDC has been working on behalf of our clients SBCAN and Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter to ensure a mis-named "General Conservation Plan for Oil and Gas Activities" does not get approved. Having nothing to do with conservation, this U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service plan would streamline the "take" permits for projects that would harm or kill threatened and endangered species that inhabit Santa Barbara County's Cat Canyon region, including the California red-legged frog, the California tiger salamander, and the Lompoc yerba santa. The Plan would allow permanent destruction of nearly 1060 acres of habitat collectively for these three species, and would allow oil companies to kill protected frogs and salamanders. After all three oil projects in the Cat Canyon area were withdrawn in 2020, EDC asked the Service to withdraw the Plan. Now, we await the release of the final Plan and Environmental Assessment and will continue to prepare for legal action, if necessary, to ensure protection of these species and their habitat.



Emily Luster



Madeline Flynn

GRATEFUL FOR LAW CLERKS

EDC is grateful for the hard work of two law clerks who joined our legal team this past quarter: Emily Luster and Madeline Flynn. Emily is in her second year at the University of Michigan Law where she serves as the Communications Chair for the Environmental Law Society and Admissions Outreach Chair for the Black Law Students Association. She spent last summer interning with the EPA's Region 2 Superfund Branch. Among other work, Emily conducted research to help EDC compel the Fish & Wildlife Service to disclose documents related to its proposed General Conservation Plan for oil and gas activities. Madeline is a second-year student at Vanderbilt University Law School and previously interned with the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC). She has a special interest in the intersection of environmental law and sustainable agriculture., and while at EDC she worked on legal research supporting our lawsuit to protect Pine Mountain from massive logging.



GREEN & BLUE IS BACK

EDC's annual fundraiser, Green & Blue, is one of the Central Coast's "must attend" events and this year, it is back in person! We are excited to come together again at the Stow House to raise critical funds to support EDC's work protecting our climate, local environment, and public health. Please join us on June 5th to celebrate EDC's 45 years of work and to honor our Environmental Heroes, Violet Sage Walker and her father, the late Fred Collins, of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council. Violet and Fred have long been dedicated to the protection of coastal resources, in part through their nomination of the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, of which EDC has long been an advocate. Green & Blue will feature delicious food by Catering Connection, beverages from The Ojai Vineyard and Rincon Brewery, and the most exciting live and silent auctions you will find anywhere.

Visit www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org/GB for tickets and more information.

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO JOIN OUR LEGACY SOCIETY

We hope you won't need to use it for many years to come, but it is never too early to create a will or estate plan. Whether you are 18 or 80, having a will can give you peace of mind that your wishes and loved ones are protected after you are gone. Additionally, by making a planned gift you can support EDC and help protect our climate and local environment for generations to come. It's an important way to ensure EDC can continue our critical work and allows you to create a lasting legacy. Many types of planned gifts also provide tax benefits to donors during their lifetime. Contact our Development Director, Jessica Dias at jdias@EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org if you would like more information on how to get started.





environmental
DEFENSE CENTER

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 Daniel Elkin, Officer Manager & Event Coordinator
 Maggie Hall, Senior Attorney
 Kristen Hislop, Senior Director, Marine Program
 Rachel Kondor, Staff Attorney
 Linda Krop, Chief Counsel
 Pearl Lee, Accounting Manager
 Alicia Roessler, Senior Attorney
 Brian Trautwein, Senior Analyst/Watershed Program Director
 Betsy Weber, Assistant Director

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EDC LAW CLERKS, INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS

Natalie Blackwelder, Intern
 Amanda Costley, Intern

MISSION STATEMENT

The Environmental Defense Center protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action.

FOCUS

Since 1977, we have empowered community-based organizations to advance environmental protection. Our program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. We primarily work within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties.

FOLLOW EDC    

NEW FACES ON EDC'S BOARD AND STAFF



Gerardo Ayala



Christina McGinnis



Lauren Trujillo



Alicia Roessler

We are proud to announce three new members on our Board of Directors, Gerardo Ayala, Christina McGinnis, and Lauren Trujillo, as well as our new Senior Attorney, Alicia Roessler. Mr. Ayala currently works for the Santa Barbara County Education Office and has decades of experience serving as both staff and board member for numerous nonprofits. Ms. Trujillo brings a depth of knowledge in nonprofit administration, fundraising, and development and currently serves as the Director of Santa Barbara Library Foundation. Ms. McGinnis has a long history of working on local environmental and planning issues, having previously worked for EDC and served on the organization's board. We also welcome back Ms. Roessler, a familiar face to many in our community. Ms. Roessler has a long history with EDC, having previously served as a law clerk in 2000, later as a Board member, and as a Staff Attorney. Her strong familiarity with local environmental issues and substantial legal expertise are a great benefit to our clients and community.