Shelter from the Smoke

Conservation Before Construction

ZEV Revenue

Open Space Networking
The League on the Move

You've read a lot in this publication about the Bay Area's housing crisis — but residential costs aren't the only ones on the rise. Office rents have skyrocketed, squeezing us out of downtown Oakland along with our co-tenant, the League of Women Voters of Oakland. So take note: LWVBA has a new mailing address — PO Box 22516, Oakland, CA 94609 — and has accompanied LWVO to a new space near the MacArthur BART Station.

As the picture above shows, we've spruced up the office with reminders of our lengthy history, which remains a major focus as nationally the League approaches its 100th birthday on February 14, 2020. We'll be marking the centennial that month both at Bay Area League Day and in a special edition of the Monitor.

In our current edition, Leslie Stewart looks at efforts to shelter residents from wildfire smoke, the haze of which enshrouded San Francisco during last November's wildfires, as captured in our wrap-around cover photo of the city's skyline provided by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. We also feature coverage of resource conservation from Robin Meadows, transportation fees from Cecily O'Connor, and regional open space connections from Aleta George. We hope you find it all useful, and we will be back to you with more in December.

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Shelter from the Smoke

By Leslie Stewart

In November 2018, as the Bay Area was overwhelmed by smoke for the second year in a row, Santa Clara County agencies quickly adapted emergency plans for protecting vulnerable residents during extreme weather. Instead of sending people to facilities for keeping cool or staying warm, officials focused on getting them to indoor spaces with safer air quality.

The county’s Office of Emergency Management worked with cities and associated law enforcement agencies to expand the availability of public facilities throughout the county that could offer residents a respite from the smoke. “We call them ‘Cleaner Air Shelters,’ explained Public Risk Communication Officer Patty Eaton, “because they really can’t provide healthy air, but it’s better than what is outside.”

She remarked that last fall’s collaborative response to the threat “was an unprecedented effort, but we’re planning to do it again if necessary.”

Agencies throughout the Bay Area are recognizing that wildfires are an increasingly frequent emergency and therefore communities need to prepare for smoke events. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District board was briefed recently on the progress of the agency’s wildfire air quality response program, which outlines how a growing partnership of organizations will prepare for smoke events, with an emphasis on reducing and mitigating the associated health effects.

As the briefing demonstrated, a primary focus of preparation will be the creation of Clean Air Centers to provide respite and cleaner air to those in need when wildfire smoke affects the region. Officials endorse upgrading air filtration systems for protecting health and as the long-term solution to prepare for wildfire smoke.

This option is favored over masks, which according to experts have many shortcomings. Even N95 masks that are certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health for worker health and safety must be fit-tested to ensure their effectiveness. When not sized properly or fit-tested, masks can make it harder to breathe, and trap fine particles in the breathing zone if taken on and off. People with facial hair don’t get a proper seal around masks, and masking is not recommended for children.

Under their program, the Air District is hoping to partner with the Red Cross to help provide air filtration equipment so that more than 1,000 existing Red Cross facilities in the region can be used as Clean Air Centers if needed. These facilities include schools and colleges, and other communal spaces such as community centers, libraries, government buildings, and event centers.

The Red Cross also sees the importance of evaluating which shelters should be prioritized to open during a catastrophic smoke event. Red Cross shelters are typically opened close to a disaster site, which can mean a greater smoke burden. Conversely, smoke can affect people living miles away from the source, and can inundate vastly large areas. Because wildfires are unpredictable and the potential impact from smoke is so great, officials hope to encourage local partnerships with the Red Cross in order to help expand the number of Clean Air Centers and provide a network of facilities that can be made available during a smoke emergency.

Tracy Lee, from the Air District’s compliance and enforcement division, stressed to the agency’s board that shelters or evacuation centers are different from Clean Air Centers. Not all current Red Cross facilities are adequately equipped to serve as Clean Air Centers. For example, many are...
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in schools; schools often closed during last year's heavy smoke because they could not protect their staff and students, and many would need better filtration to serve as Clean Air Centers.

Providing the necessary upgrades to air filtration systems wouldn’t just help prepare for emergency situations; as Lee observed, “Improvements in schools and recreation centers also have daily benefits.” The Air District has funded such upgrades in the past, paying for improved air filtration retrofits for five elementary schools in San Francisco’s Bayview neighborhood less than a decade ago. This past spring, the Air District approved a new program funding similar retrofits at selected schools in communities prioritized for an air quality monitoring program launched via Assembly Bill 617 (C. Garcia).

The agency has estimated that retrofitting every high school in the region to serve as a shelter would cost approximately $50 million, but for facilities which normally experience good air quality, investing in permanent filtration upgrades may not be necessary. Air District Communications Officer Lisa Fasano told the Monitor that because of their flexibility, portable units could serve the region's needs during most emergencies. During the Camp Fire last November, the Red Cross had difficulty obtaining enough mobile industrial-grade air filtration units for their evacuation shelters. The Air District proposes to purchase portable air filtration units that will be warehoused by the Red Cross and deployed to the appropriate areas when an event occurs.

“Cleaner air shelters” like those set up in Santa Clara County last fall may be the preferred option for some communities, based on their perceived potential need. Other communities may choose to go farther and retrofit facilities to use as Clean Air Centers. Dan Bowers, emergency management director for Sacramento, described how the city improved weatherization and installed carbon filters at two community centers that served as Clean Air Centers last fall. “It improved the Air Quality Index, but not enough for sensitive populations,” he reported. An engineering consultant has advised the city on adding sensors, improving air ducts, and isolating indoor air from smoke, possibly with “air curtains” to force air outward at entrances. A downtown senior center may receive similar upgrades.

Speaking to the Air District board, two health officials — Dr. Shruti Dhapodkar of San Mateo County and Dr. Jan Gurley of San Francisco — strongly supported adding weatherization and filtration to buildings as the most effective protection against smoke. Gurley emphasized that N95 respirator masks have their own health concerns because of the effort needed to breathe through them. Dhapodkar cited research indicating that investing in filters protects more people and costs far less than purchasing single-use masks.

Funding for some portable filtration units, as well as more permanent ventilation improvements, may be available through a new law, Assembly Bill 836 (Wicks), which at press time was still awaiting the governor’s signature. It would create a statewide incentive program funding ventilation retrofits to create Clean Air Centers for vulnerable populations. Funds may come from a wildfire bond issue expected to be on the November 2020 ballot.

Another important aspect of operating emergency sheltering facilities is communicating with the community.
Conservation Before Construction: Bay Area Pilots New State Program

By Robin Meadows

The San Francisco Bay Area is already crowded, ranked among the nation’s top ten most congested metropolitan regions, and soon it will be even more packed. Over the next two decades, our population is projected to swell by about one third, surpassing 9 million people. To get ready for this influx, hundreds of regional transportation projects are in the works. But while extra lanes and streamlined interchanges will help ease congestion, road construction can also divide open spaces and destroy wetlands. The Bay

A new pilot program is aimed at conserving habitats such as wetlands, which are home to wildlife like the tiger salamander. photo by John Cleckler-USFWS

about when and where to use them. In the Bay Area, a regional messaging toolkit will help provide agencies, health departments, and others communicating to the public about smoke with coordinated information to residents and visitors on air quality conditions, tips for making homes smoke-resistant, and alerts on when to consider using shelters. Gurley told the Air District board, “You should not be out looking for a better option if your home [air quality] is already better than outdoors.”

While not specifically focused on air quality, many emergency management agencies have local alert systems and also post online using social media and platforms such as NextDoor. Emergency managers also suggest using alert services such as Nixle. Fasano recommended signing up for alerts in both home and work locations. In Santa Clara County, homeless residents can access extreme weather alerts on their phones by texting a message to the homeless support agency.

An important addition to the public messaging is that in hot weather, staying cool is more important than breathing cleaner air, even for those with respiratory problems. “You cannot stay indoors in 100-degree heat with no air conditioning,” Gurley said, adding that “some of our most frail die in these circumstances, and they die very quickly.”

Agencies hope that clear and consistent messaging will reinforce basic smoke-protection information that was sometimes ineffective in the past. Eaton recalled, “Last fall, I was driving home in the heavy smoke and saw kids playing soccer in the park.” During future smoke events, the goal is to have those children sheltered in a smoke-protected home or Clean Air Center instead.

Leslie Stewart covers air quality and energy for the Monitor.
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Area is piloting a new state program designed to optimize offsets, or mitigation, for these environmental impacts.

Mitigation projects — which include protecting habitat for endangered species and restoring wetlands — are often done as one-offs rather than in the context of regional conservation priorities. “California conservation is fragmented,” said Elizabeth O’Donoghue, director of the Sustainable Development Strategy for The Nature Conservancy’s California Program. “It’s hard to stitch together a greater vision.”

Wetlands are a small part of that vision by acreage but have an outsized importance to conservation. Forming where water meets solid ground, wetlands include the swaths of tidal marsh that ring the Bay as well as the ribbons of riparian forest that flank streams. Many of these transitional habitats are year-round but some, like vernal pools, are ephemeral. These shallow depressions fill with winter rains, burst into life with flowers and aquatic creatures in the spring, and then dry out in the summer. Wetlands support so many species that they rank up there with rain forests and coral reefs as among the most productive ecosystems on the planet. Likewise, they are also among the most imperiled.

The continental United States has lost more than half its original wetlands, according to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service analysis, and California has the unfortunate distinction of leading the country in percentage of wetlands lost. We have lost 90 percent of our original wetlands, a decrease from 5 million acres to 500,000 acres. This puts wetlands at just 0.5 percent of our total land area — far less than the 5 percent across the lower 48 states as a whole.

To optimize mitigation for impacts to wetlands, other wildlands, and at-risk species, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is developing a program called the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS). The program was authorized in 2016 by Assembly Bill 2087 (Levine), and is launching with four pilots, including one in the East Bay (Alameda and Contra Costa counties) and another in Santa Clara County.

Each RCIS identifies top conservation needs, such as habitat for sensitive species, which include those that are endangered or declining, as well as linkages between protected areas. More than half of the 16 sensitive animal species in the East Bay RCIS depend on wetlands for all or part of their lives, including red-legged frogs and tiger salamanders.

O’Donoghue, who is involved with both of the Bay Area pilots, explained that RCIS also promotes conservation with a key provision called advance mitigation. This approach essentially frontloads offsets for the environmental impacts of, say, highway projects. Currently, ecological damage is not mitigated until construction is well underway and, as O’Donoghue noted earlier, this tends to result in piecemeal conservation.

Under RCIS, however, mitigation can be done well before even breaking ground on a project. This will let transportation agencies do bulk mitigation for future projects, accelerating conservation of the highest priority ecological needs. “Advance mitigation will get us ahead of the curve,” O’Donoghue said. Draft versions of the East Bay RCIS and the Santa Clara RCIS are now before the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and final approval could come by the end of the year.

Kenneth Kao of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is poised to take advantage of these Bay Area RCIS pilots. “Right now, we don’t know what we will need to mitigate for,” said Kao, who leads the Programming and Allocations Department of MTC, which serves the nine-county Bay Area. “It’s hard to predict the environmental costs and a lot of the time it’s a scramble to find more money.” Besides straining the budget, surprise costs can also delay projects. Advance mitigation will give transportation agencies certainty over their environmental obligations. “We’ll be ahead of the game,” Kao said, echoing O’Donoghue. “If we know we’ll need to mitigate for 100 acres, we can just say, ‘Let’s do it now.’”

Not all projects require mitigation. When infrastructure and conservation planners coordinate, they can often avoid or minimize ecological harm. For wetlands, the law requires
avoiding impacts whenever practicable. Kao anticipates that mitigation will be required for roughly one quarter of the nearly 400 transportation projects identified in Plan Bay Area 2040, including widening a stretch of I-680 in Santa Clara County and building a new highway through Contra Costa County to the Tracy area.

MTC is working with UC Davis researchers to estimate the environmental impacts of and mitigation for these projects. “If we can do it all in advance, we can get the transportation and environmental benefits sooner,” Kao said. “It’s a win for the region.”

Travis Hemmen, who works on the mitigation side at Westervelt Ecological Services, also sees benefits to the RCIS approach. The company protects and restores wildlands in the Bay Area as well as other parts of the country, and regional conservation planning could add assurances that they are choosing the best sites locally. “It’s really hard to find pieces of property that meet the standards,” Hemmen said. “Location, location, location is key in real estate and it’s true for restoration sites too.”

Many environmental offsets are relatively straightforward. Mitigation for a project that affects oak trees, for example, would entail preserving oak woodland elsewhere in the area covered by the RCIS. Likewise, mitigation for a project that affects mountain lions could entail connecting habitats for them in another part of the region. But wetland mitigation is far more complex due to stringent protections that reflect their rarity and ecological importance. Federal and state laws stipulate “no net loss” of wetlands: for every wetland that is destroyed, another must be restored.

“Wetlands mitigation is ten times harder,” Hemmen said. “You look for places where mother nature had wetlands before, and then you have to convince a farmer to sell.” And all that comes before actually restoring the wetland. Farmers reshaped the land to drain it and Hemmen’s company does the reverse, for example, returning the land to its natural contours so streams flow through it once again.

RCIS could also give his company clarity on the market for offsets, Hemmen says. The wildlands they protect are called conservation or mitigation banks, and they sell credits in these banks to offset environmental damage elsewhere. Advance mitigation could help them gauge demand for credits, spurring timely sales.

Hemmen and other mitigation bankers have to be poised to act fast when ecologically valuable properties become available. “Those landscapes aren’t around forever — you need to buy and restore them now,” he said.

Robin Meadows covers water for the Monitor.
Power-Driven: Can ZEVs Rev up Transportation Revenue?

By Cecily O’Connor

When Senate Bill 1 (Beall) passed in 2017, it raised the gasoline excise tax for the first time in 20 years to generate tens of billions of dollars to restore aging transportation infrastructure. It also launched two annual fees to further boost the repair budget in anticipation of a shift to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). The proceeds of those payments could help replace and even surpass gas tax revenue as more consumers electrify their ride.

This potential is laid out in a new research report, The Impact of ZEV Adoption on California Transportation Revenue, by the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI). Study authors Martin Wachs, Hannah King, and Asha Weinstein Agrawal examined the state’s transportation revenue through a lens focused on the speed of ZEV buying activity. They also cracked open perceptions about ZEVs threatening the state’s transportation funding structure — reliant on gas sales tax revenue — since owners don’t buy fuel to operate them.

California has yet to experience the extent of this concern since the ZEV market remains relatively small and gasoline-powered cars constitute the vast majority of new car demand. However, electric enthusiasm is building for reasons like positive environmental impact and less maintenance. This is especially true in the Bay Area, often considered ground zero for ZEV adoption.

So as the market heats up, the question for policymakers is what effect do clean cars have on traditional funding sources like the gas tax?

The answer depends, in part, on the two new fees, according to MTI number-crunching. The first is the Transportation Improvement Fee (TIF). Every car owner started paying it last year, shelling out between $25 and $175, depending on vehicle value. The second payment, a $100 Road Improvement Fee (RIF), switches on next July for owners of electric cars of model year 2020 or later. California is among two dozen U.S. states that have instituted fees on ZEVs to help recoup fuel tax revenue lost at the pump.

Another important part of the equation is the pace of ZEV sales activity. MTI researchers looked at this variable by modeling two future scenarios. Their low-adoption scenario assumed the number of ZEVs in California would continue to grow at its historical rate of net increase, approximately 26,000 a year. Their high-adoption scenario represented a future in which California meets its goal of putting 5 million ZEVs on state roads by 2030, a policy approach aimed at significantly reducing car-produced carbon emissions.

Currently, California is about 4.4 million shy of its ZEV goals. There were 626,824 ZEVs (battery, plug-in hybrid, and

MTI projected California’s annual transportation revenue from 2018 to 2040 under two different scenarios. The low-adoption scenario assumed growth of ZEV ownership at its historical rate of net increase, which has been 26,000 vehicles per year. The high-adoption scenario assumed growth of ZEV ownership such that the state meets its goal of having 5 million ZEVs on the road by 2030. These charts show the percentages of total revenue by source. Under both scenarios, annual revenue starts around $8 billion in 2018. By 2040, annual revenue is expected to be roughly $9 billion under the low-adoption scenario and roughly $11 billion under the high-adoption scenario.
hydrogen fuel cell) cruising California as of August, according to cumulative sales data from Veloz, a Sacramento nonprofit focused on accelerating the transition to electric vehicles.

Both of MTI’s scenarios start from when TIF collection began in 2018, with the state bringing in $8 billion in total transportation revenue that year. The scenarios align with each other through 2020, when annual revenue reaches $11 billion; after that, revenues fall under both scenarios and projections begin to splinter. But by 2040, MTI sees revenue back on the upswing, hitting $9 billion in the low-adoption scenario and $11 billion in the high-adoption scenario.

The researchers also think transportation revenue composition will change over time. For example, in the high-adoption scenario, gasoline excise revenue is seen increasing for the next few years only to later decline. By 2040, it will make up less than 45 percent of all revenues, while the share from diesel fuel sales and excise receipts stays flat through 2040.

Bear in mind that MTI’s projections rest on several assumptions, including population growth, future gas prices, inflation, and the cost of ZEVs going forward. For example, MTI analysis showed TIF revenue will account for more under the high-adoption scenario because ZEVs generally have bigger price tags than gas-powered cars. A web search showed that the subcompact 2019 Chevrolet Bolt starts at $36,630, while the comparable Nissan Versa starts at $12,460.

Overall, the TIF and RIF represent promising revenue streams, but MTI’s projections show they can’t go the distance alone. Gas tax revenue, even with projected declines, is an important part of a “packaged” transportation funding approach that’s built on both taxes and the new fees, according to Weinstein Agrawal.

“The gas tax still matters,” she said. “It’s an appropriate, equitable way to charge drivers in exchange for their use of the roads.”

Should ZEV purchase prices fall significantly as more manufacturers bring new models to the market, then TIF revenue, and overall state transportation revenue, could fall considerably below the estimated values in the report, MTI cautioned.

The message to policymakers is to be mindful of the changing role of the gas tax over the next 20 years and consider transitioning to other long-term, sustainable funding sources like a mileage fee. With a mileage fee, the idea is that drivers pay based on the number of miles driven. That would apply to both electric vehicles and gas-powered cars.

In the meantime, anyone in the market for a new car will see showrooms drawing attention to the uniqueness of owning a ZEV. There are approximately 45 electric makes and models now available to consumers, a tally that’s very light on sport-utility vehicles and doesn’t include pick-up trucks.

“We’re expecting dozens of more makes and cars in the market in next five years,” said Josh Boone, Veloz’s founding executive director. “Consumer choice and options are a big factor in growing the market to scale.”

“I personally believe we’re on the cusp of a huge transition to a world that really thinks of electric transportation for our needs now and into the future,” he added.

Battery technology innovations that increase range and the availability of more and faster charging infrastructure are important to shaping buyer attitudes and decisions. So, too, are incentives.

Credits and rebates play a significant role in spurring adoption, especially among cost-conscious buyers who may be inclined to opt for a cheaper, gas-powered car. There are incentives available now at the federal, state, and even local level through PG&E, but whether they increase in amount or number remains to be seen.

“The big unknown is future incentives on the consumer side for adoption,” said King.

Currently, buyers of battery electric vehicles can receive rebates of $2,500 from the Clean Vehicle Rebate Project (CVRP). Since the project began in 2010, the Center for Sustainable Energy, which administers the CVRP in partnership with the state’s Air Resources Board, has issued more than 319,031 rebates totaling $720.4 million.

The state legislature approved $238 million in cap-and-trade

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Hitched to the Region

By Aleta George

The San Francisco Bay Area is unique. Most of us who live here feel a connection not only to the city or town we live in, but also to the region. We are citizens of both.

We feel affiliated with the Bay Area in large part because of its natural scenic beauty, which we can readily access and regularly enjoy. This abundance of opportunity for outdoor recreation is a vital and vibrant facet of our region's identity. However, viewing Bay Area open space through a regional lens risks ignoring the fact that these lands are managed by a wide range of disparate government agencies and environmental groups. Each managing entity has its own set of specialized issues to deal with and must attend to local priorities first and foremost. How then do we reconcile our unified vision of the region with this underlying fragmentation?

A chance to explore this question came recently via the Bay Area Open Space Council, a network support group that serves the conservation, parks, and stewardship communities across the region. The nearly 30-year-old group is undergoing a rebuild, and in true network fashion, engaged 146 people in four sessions to get feedback on its future. Seeking to learn how members of local open space communities think about their connections to the region, the Monitor attended the San Francisco session — and found that complex issues facing the broader Bay Area were not far from anybody's awareness.

Several attendees pointed out how park users bounce around the region to access public open spaces, and how those experiences connect them to the Bay Area as a whole.

While the nonprofit San Francisco Parks Alliance supports 200 local community groups and strives to build the capacity of parks and public places in the city, they also maintain a wider view. “It’s important to know that residents in San Francisco don’t stay in San Francisco,” said the Alliance’s Amanda Montez. “They head out all over the Bay Area, are very aware of what’s happening, and demand the best.”

Her Alliance colleague Claude Imbault offered his own experience as an example. He lives in the Castro District and cares about the public spaces there, such as Harvey Milk Plaza. He is also in tune with parks outside the city. “Within 15 minutes, I can be in an open space in Marin, and that does a lot for my physiological, mental, and physical health. I am a resident of San Francisco and a resident of the Bay Area. I can’t think of myself as separate,” he said.

For him, open space provides the connection. “When I’m in the Presidio and look across the bay to the Marin Headlands, to me it’s one body,” he said. “I see the green expanse and the connectivity. It brings me joy.”
Montez added that the connectivity goes both ways. “I imagine that people from Marin are just as excited to go to Harvey Milk Plaza. People [from outside San Francisco] want to feel a part of what’s going on in that public space as much as somebody in the Castro wants to feel part of an open space in Marin.”

Annie Burke, the executive director of the Open Space Council, lives in Berkeley, but doesn’t think of herself as just a Berkeley resident. “Pescadero State Beach is one of my favorite places on the planet, and I could name 45 different things that I like to do in the Bay Area that aren’t in Berkeley. I love the whole Bay Area,” she said. “We travel in the 21st century, and need to think in a much more integrated way because we are integrated.”

Considering the region when making local management decisions can be fraught; it can also be imperative. Robert Doyle, the general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), which by nature is regional in its span across two counties and 43 cities, said it can be a challenge to work regionally. “People have worked really hard to create communities with a distinctive character. They want home rule,” he said. He has also seen communities come around to embrace a more regional outlook, since many of the complex issues we face don’t recognize boundaries.

Examples of issues that call for regional approaches include transportation, wildfires, air quality, sudden oak death, endangered species, sea-level rise, and the climate crisis. “What you do in your city matters,” added Doyle, “but you also have to take a larger approach, because like John Muir said, ‘Everything is hitched together.’”

Doyle pointed out that in Muir’s lifetime there weren’t a lot of people here. San Francisco was the only major city (with the exception of Oakland), and everything else was agriculture. “Now there are so many people you can’t solve a problem in one area without solving the bigger problems. Everything is connected,” said Doyle.

Thinking regionally and crossing artificial boundaries when needed can help support science that leads to the stewardship of water, land, and wildlife. Pepperwood Preserve is anchored in Sonoma County. It also provides data and analysis to support the entire region’s efforts to conserve land and manage resources. “Data and the improvements in technology of data are helping us to see things in a more regional way,” said Lisa Micheli, president of Pepperwood Preserve. “There is a paradigm shift underway that’s part of the information revolution.”

She sees “green infrastructure,” or open space and greenbelts, as the public’s safety net. “Climate change is creating stresses in our environment, on top of the fragmentation of natural and working lands to other uses,” said Micheli. “We’re facing a potential tipping point, and in order for our human communities, even our cities, to be functional, we need this framework of natural lands that support our economy and ecosystems.”

That requires regional thinking and regional action. Measures on the ballot that affect the entire region can be powerful and help connect us. “That’s one thing to get excited about when you talk about regionality,” said Montez. “I may not be able to vote in another city’s election, but I will be able to make a difference in my region and have those conversations.”

Groups can also benefit from networks that go beyond the region. Harry Pollack, general counsel at Save the Redwoods League, the organization that hosted the BAOSC session that the Monitor attended, cited the Land Trust Alliance and its national accreditation standards as a powerful example of a network. “It helps foster better-quality work nationally. We all do a better job when we’re communicating, collaborating, and learning from one another,” he said.

Imbault recently attended a City Parks Alliance national conference, and learned how other groups are dealing with social equity, inclusion, and diversity in open and public spaces. “There are great ideas happening all over,” he said. “There’s not just one way; there are multiple ways.”

“People don’t see a bright red line when they cross from one city to another or one open space to another,” said Montez. “They just know it’s open space and they’re on a walk. Those are all voters, and their feet are going to take them to every single one of our domains.”

“It’s all integrated, but we also need to recognize we are in silos,” said Burke. “I’m motivated to think how we can work across our silos on some of the biggest challenges we are facing. What does that look like? I don’t know, but I’d love to see even more collaboration.”

Aleta George covers open space for the Monitor.
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