Event 1: Q&A with Armando Quintero

Moderators: Becky Hunter, Grayson Peters,[*] *& Holly Doremus*[**]
Panelist: Armando Quintero [***]

INTRODUCTION

Becky Hunter: Our very first event of the day is an interview with Armando Quintero, Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, facilitated by Berkeley Law Professor Holly Doremus.

Director Quintero was named Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation on August 18th, 2020. He is an experienced parks professional with expertise in park operations, outdoor education, equity and access, and diversity and inclusion in hiring and retention. Director Quintero has a degree in environmental science and biology. He held multiple positions in the National Park Service from 1976 to 1998, including chief of the Special Park Uses Group and district ranger at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Director Quintero was a personnel staffing specialist for the National Park Service, park ranger and supervisory park ranger at the Point Reyes National Seashore, and park ranger at Sequoia National Park and at John Muir National Historic Site. That is not even the half of it.

Grayson Peters: Professor Holly Doremus is the associate dean for Faculty Development and Research, the James H. House and Hiram H. Hurd Professor of Environmental Regulation, the co-director of the Law of the Sea Institute, and the co-faculty director of the Berkeley Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity. Pretty topical. Professor Doremus received her JD with an Environmental Law Certificate from Berkeley Law, where she was an articles editor for the *Ecology Law Quarterly*—which is, if you ask me, a really good journal.

Professor Doremus is an elected member of the American Law Institute and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She's also served on the board of directors of Defenders of Wildlife and Audubon in California. Without further ado, Professor Doremus, take it away.

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[***] Armando Quintero is the Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Holly Doremus: Thank you both. I think Director Quintero is going to start us off in just a few minutes.

Armando Quintero: We live in an extraordinary state. I, as a child, did not go to parks. My parents didn't go to places like that. As a child, I was inspired by magazines and stories and things like National Geographic. I dreamt of going to these places, honestly never thinking I'd be able to do it. I have created a path that's sort of accidental, and I think of it as dendritic. Just like a tree branch, it goes up and then it goes off in different directions. Basically, inspired by my interests.

I feel extraordinarily fortunate to have gotten to know California so well—and by California, I mean Alta California and Baja California. I've worked with Indigenous groups since 1983 in different capacities, and one thing is that I was also executive director of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute for several years at UC Merced. I chaired the Water Commission all through the teens of this last decade and absolutely love everything about our state. I feel like I live in the most wonderful country called California in the world, so I'll stop there.

Holly: That was a great way to start. The first question I had for you is almost exactly where you started, and I wonder if you can tell us a little bit more. For many people in this room, I think our interest in and commitment to nature goes back to some early experiences. You said you grew up dreaming about being at these places. Can you tell us a little bit about what your early experiences of what you think of as nature were like, how they drew you into the career that you've pursued, and maybe a little bit about how that background informs your vision of parks today and into the future?

Armando: We didn't practice these questions and answers. Holly, I'm sorry I didn't call you about that, but I actually prefer it because, as you're asking, when I'm being asked a question, my mind goes to places that are just available, and it's really great. I have to say Jose Gonzalez who's up here and will be part of this event later is a very good friend of mine and I think we have a common background in a sense.

As a child, I loved stories. I only spoke Spanish. I liked to draw, and I was very interested in birds. As a kid—I'm the oldest of eight kids—we didn't have a lot of books in our house, but we did have a set of Encyclopedia Britannica. I drew all the birds in the bird plates of the 'B' Volume of that encyclopedia, enough that I could probably draw them by memory, and I just loved them.

Then that led me to where are they from, in Central America and all these places, and I learned their names. Then, the first bird I remember seeing in the wild—meaning not in my backyard—was at a water treatment sewage plant. It was a killdeer, and I was so excited to not only see this killdeer but having known a little bit about it. That was my—I don't know. That was like the seed going through the gut of an animal and getting all scarified and ready to bloom.

From then on, I pursued things of my own, and that led to an interest in Mayan culture, which I ended up reading a lot about and thinking about someday

going to Latin America. I'll run forward to when I became a National Park ranger. Shortly after that, I went to Washington, DC, for training, and we had to wear a uniform one day for the training, and we were right across the street from the Smithsonian. I ran over there to the Natural History Museum because I wanted to see this, and I was in a ranger uniform. I walk into the museum, turn the corner, and there, in glass cases, are the birds that I drew as a child, and I started crying.

Holly: That's super powerful. Becky and Grayson mentioned, in their introduction, that the national parks are still visited mostly by white and fairly wealthy people. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about the demographics of visitation for California State Parks.

Armando: As a Latino park ranger, I was always treated like somebody who didn't know much, and it astonished me how many times people would explain things to me. In fact, one time, a good friend of mine said, "That's an orange tree." I said, "My dad was born in an orange orchard when my grandparents were migrating." I'm not kidding you. The thing is, I was struck by—and I'm grateful for this—I was really struck by people treating me like I had to be acculturated to their view of parks and conservation and language.

One of the things that I've thought about, by experience, is the need for us to always be thinking about the language that we're using, and does it really work. I will say that I started working at the Muir home and—quick commercial break—Muir's descendants still live in Martinez and I grew up with my dad being a milkman there, so I knew them without knowing them.

When I started working at the Muir home, suddenly, I didn't realize that I knew John Muir's granddaughter-in-law. She went to Scotland every year for a few weeks, so I ended up taking care of her house while she was in Scotland. I spent like nine weeks of my life sleeping in John Muir's bed. A Mexican. Anyway, the thing that really struck me is—if you know about John Muir—that even the conservation movement really sort of bloomed around the turn of the century when Teddy Roosevelt was president.

What really happened is, I think these places, and also when Europeans first started to explore this place, the language is really rooted in a Victorian language. I kid you not, if you look at brochures in parks today, there are paragraphs in those brochures guaranteed that were written in the forties and fifties. When you talk about a diversity of people coming to these places, it's a foreign language, it's a weird language. I recognized it as that.

I've often thought about, and I'll probably mention some of this stuff later, I think about, "What am I saying, and really is this accurate or am I just playing pieces of tape that I've spliced together?" That's how I'll answer that.

In terms of diversity. One time, I think this actually illustrates the point of your question or, for me, my answer to your question. I was asked to go to Yosemite to talk to them about recruiting a more diverse workforce at Yosemite. I was sitting at the headquarters with the directors of that park, and they proceeded to tell me that they were going to go to El Paso to recruit Latinos to

come work in Yosemite. I kid you not; they were going to go to Louisiana to recruit Black Americans to come to work in Yosemite.

Right out the window of the meeting, we were at was the post office in the visitor center, for those of you who know Yosemite. I said, "Can we take a break? Let's meet out there by those benches." When we did, I had everybody stand around me, and I said, "Here's what I need you to do." I said, "I'll keep time for five minutes. I don't want you talking to each other. I want you to look at everybody who is in the visitorship there. Look at them and try to identify what their ethnicity might be." It was the world. It was as diverse as anything.

What I have experienced in national parks is that we rangers see and have been a part of it. When you are in a park, you see yourself. They don't see diversity, and so they don't change anything that they're doing. When I hear about recruitment, needing to go out and bring people in, we need to begin by looking right outside the door and begin with the people who are there. That's part of it. It's not the whole thing because—I know Jose is going to be talking about this—your stories are really wonderful, and your experiences are so powerful. That's something that I saw.

Actually, when I worked in Sequoia National Park, one of my roommates was a young Black gentleman from Louisiana who really liked humidity. In the cabin that we lived in, he kept the heat up and a teapot steaming on the stove. Anyway, I think diversity has a whole bunch of lenses, but that's the lens that, for me, makes—Then also, I'll just say this: when I first went to national parks because I wanted to be a park ranger, the first person that I talked to, I said, "Hey, I'm really interested in being a forest ranger." He yelled at me, and he opened up a drawer, which I now know is BS, and he said, "All these applications are from people who know what they're applying for. We don't hire forest rangers. We hire national park rangers."

I did my homework, came back, went to the John Muir home, and there's this ranger standing behind the desk, almost at attention, and I walked in and I was very careful to articulate, "I'm really interested in being a national park ranger." Jim Tuck is the guy's name. He looks at me and he goes, "No, you don't."

I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "You should go be a dentist or a doctor, and then you'll be able to spend more time in parks than I do." This brings up one other thing, and then I'll stop. That is, my experience in parks, literally, is that if an ethnic minority, and actually anybody, would do this, the next time you go to a park, walk up to a ranger and say, "How can I get a job like yours?"

Almost guaranteed, you're going to be handed what I've referred to as the witch's broomstick from *Wizard of Oz*. They'll send you off on a chase so they don't have to compete with you. It's amazing. That's what I've done a lot, is play those games around diversity. Anyway, then there are serious efforts that we need to take to create a connection.

Holly: Yet you did not become a dentist, much to the benefit of the state.

Armando: Yes.

Holly: Not that you would have been a bad dentist.

Armando: I like to see teeth. I like to see big smiles.

Holly: Just to follow up a little bit on that, actually, I heard something really interesting from you a moment ago. Lots of people spend a fair amount of time, including people in state parks and national parks and academia, thinking about what are the barriers to changing the demographics of visitation. What do we need to do? One of the things that you pointed out is to make the language more accessible and welcoming.

That, I think, is something that people have been somewhat, at least, aware of recently. There are some efforts to change it. The other thing I heard you say, I think, is much more fundamental, but also more subtle. That is that the assumptions of everybody in the room and in the parks and leading these institutions are unintentionally a barrier to changing those things, just the ways that they're seeing the world.

How do you make that change without—wait, I used to be a natural scientist once upon a time. There's an old saying that science advances one funeral at a time, which, of course, is quite slow. We don't want important changes in society to advance only through generational time. How do you change the assumptions of those people? How do you get them to see their assumptions without accusing them of bad faith? It seems to me that this is likely to make it harder rather than easier. How do you change their assumptions?

Armando: As the director of state parks, my focus has actually been, first, to study the cultures within state parks and to encourage reflection of those cultures within the cultures. When I talk to peace officers, it's like, you can't be wearing all of that protective gear when you're meeting the tribes, because you are actually tapping into trauma. There's no way they can hear you. There's no way they can feel comfortable because when California first became a state, the first governor, in his inaugural speech, actually also announced the bounty for Indian men, women, and children.

What happens is, if you look at the histories that are written by Indigenous people of California, and you go to that period of history in California, they don't talk about our state government. I kid you not. They name the militias from the regions in California. There were three militias in the gold country up by Coloma. That's their history. Those militias were uniformed people.

Today, when we're working with tribes, and the state uniformed officers are there, it's not okay. I changed that policy. Now, when we meet with tribes, if there are uniforms, it's because the tribal leaders know it. What we will do is pair a park ranger with tribal police so they're together. There's that. I also think that I heard something in a documentary. What I heard was policy is implementation, and implementation is policy. You actually have to do it. I would say that you need to bring in people with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, ethnicity, and gender and let them craft how they want to present themselves to the world. One of the wonderful things that I saw in state parks was one time when I was in the South. I walked in, and instead of wearing a ranger hat, the guy was working with the farm worker's hat with his uniform.

Also, language. We need people who are multilingual. When we work with tribes, there's actually ninety tribal languages in California. There's ninety. I think of them as our, there's ninety domestic languages in California. Up in the Yurok world, there's a visitor center there that we created with the Yurok people, and we only hire Yurok staff there who speak the language.

That building—or the buildings in the park—are rarely visited by the Yurok. That one, it's like a home base, and it's on a traditional ceremonial site. I think you have to think about the context of the place, and you have to bring people in who can represent what you're interested in capturing in the place. I know Jose's going to be talking about this sort of thing. Anyway, sorry that I'm talking so much.

Holly: No, this is why you've been invited. You're so great at explaining these things. I think you've provided a really nice segue. I know you're doing, and State Parks is trying to do a great deal with tribes right now. Can you tell us a little bit, generally, about both the background of that effort and what the key parts of it are?

Armando: Sure. We have tribal liaisons in every park. We have a division chief for cultural resources, and she has seven positions that work with tribes. Those positions work with the repatriation of items and also remains. Right after I got this job, and I was calling the division chiefs to get to know them, and Leslie, I was talking to Leslie, and I said, "How many individuals are represented in our archives of Indigenous people in terms of the remains?"

She said, "I don't want to say." I said, "Can I guess?" She said, "Yes." Actually, I don't want to tell you the number, but I exaggerated. She said that's actually about right. I choked up, and I might do it now, just thinking about this. I said, "Those are parents. Those are grandparents. Children. Parents, grandparents, and children. We have thousands of them in boxes." So does [the UC Berkeley campus], as you know.

We have seven positions that are working on repatriation of remains and artifacts. What we also are doing with tribes is we're looking at co-management agreements. The largest ones and the most complex ones are joint powers authorities, where what that essentially allows you to do is to exchange resources, people, finance, plant weeds. We really do everything as a partnership.

Then there's different levels of co-management. Really, the way I think right now, at this point, we have eleven agreements with tribes across California. We're targeting being able to do five more each year. I can tell you that the fundamental thing that we try to do with those is reconnect tribal members with their ceremonial sites, with the resources that the tribal cultures are dependent on—like places where they can harvest basketry materials.

In some places, we're able to state-gift things to folks. With the JPA [Joint Powers Agreement], we can say, "Hey, all your tribal members do not have to pay an entrance fee." The way that I think of these agreements, and this is a language change that I recognize. When I did the first couple of formal signing agreements with tribal leaders, it was like, "This is an agreement between the sovereign nation of the Yurok and the state of California." Then, honestly, I

thought, "What the hell? Who am I to be granting permission to these ancient people to have access to their ceremonial sites, their traditional plant materials, the places where their ancestors are buried and born?"

What I have started saying, for some time now, is this: I never mentioned the state of California when we were doing these formal agreements. What I say is that these agreements represent the removal of a cultural dam. That's really different. Then what I've also been saying, for some time now, and just thinking about it, is that what these agreements are really doing is creating a reconnection of deep time, memory, culture, language, and arts to the present. The way we're doing these agreements is with the intention of strengthening them in such a way that future park managers and future tribal leaders will continue this momentum forward together.

Holly: Because this is an audience that includes a bunch of lawyers and soon-to-be lawyers, let me ask you the lawyerly follow-up question to what you've just said, which is you've got a bunch of agreements with tribes. You're working hard to get more of those, to reconnect them with their historic lands. As you know, California's efforts to repair its relationship with tribes are relatively recent. We regularly have changes of administration and changes of priorities. So far, we haven't had strong legislative action on this.

You're doing it more or less on your own. Obviously, the governor is behind your efforts, and you're not doing it on your own, [but] without the legislature acting, how confident are you that these agreements will be robust into the future? What steps are you taking, or do you think you need to take? Because you talked about deep time. Agreements that last only for one gubernatorial term are not deep time. What steps are you taking?

Armando: That's a great question. The first agreements were signed for like five years. Now we're doing them for thirty, forty, fifty years. We're working with tribal lawyers and our lawyers. We're working with the assistant secretary for tribal relations. The governor has a secretary for tribal relations, and her name is Christina. We all know each other. We all work with each other. It's all iterative. Every time we go to work with a tribe, it is a different conversation, and it's a unique conversation.

We're trying to really reflect, in these agreements, the strongest agreement possible. Two quick examples of what I think are really the kinds of things that we're incorporating in the awareness about these agreements. One of the really key traditional materials for basketry is these sedge roots. You have to really cultivate the sedges so you get these long, clean roots. Because tribes have been excluded from their traditional lands, they've had to seek out places where they could collect these roots.

One of the best places to collect sedge and roots is along highways, because those places get mowed and all of that. The way you—when you're working with those materials to do basketry and other things, is you harvest the roots, and then you peel the bark back with your teeth. Indigenous women in California have the highest mouth cancer rates of any group in California, and it's because of that.

The agreements we have include things like the newest state park, which we're going to open in early summer. It's called Dos Rios and actually includes a specific five-acre area that is already being cultivated by the Miwok groups of tribes from the Yosemite region, specifically for them to be able to cultivate traditional plant materials that are safe. That's what we're also identifying in parks across the state.

I think what we're doing is really human rights agreements within these agreements. We are really identifying, if you look at NAGPRA, the Repatriation Act, what we're also identifying are those places which are actually everywhere in California, where there are Indigenous burials. We're identifying really important resource agreements.

Then one last quick thing: the Klamath Parks with the Yurok, our agreement there allows Yurok tribe members, when there's a fee area, they just need to say, "Hey, I'm a Yurok tribal member," and they get in for free. You know Taralyn. Taralyn Pena is the chief operating officer for the Yurok. She has a daughter who, at the time, was like six or seven. When she was driving into a park that used to be called Patrick's Point, we've changed the name down to Sue-meg. That's another thing that we're doing: doing name changes for places, which is also really memorializing what these agreements are about.

Anyway, when they got to the entrance station, her six-year-old daughter said, "Mom, can I tell them we're Yuroks?" She said, "Yes." She got out of her seat, put her head behind her mom's car seat, looked at the ranger, and said, "Hey, we're Yurok." The ranger said something like, "Well, welcome to your ancestral lands," and they drove in. As they drove in, this little girl said, "Mom, they see me." I think that what we are doing, really, is empowering the people of California to assert their rights.

Holly: Since you mentioned Dos Rios, can you tell us a little bit about the extent to which the creation of new parks is part of the strategy for increasing access and equity? Maybe, again, catering to some of the lawyerliness in the room, can you tell us a little bit about the process of creating a state park and opportunities for input and that sort of thing?

Armando: That's a great question. I can tell you that I didn't apply for this job. When I got called and said, "Hey, the governor would like to consider you for this," I thought, "Okay. I'm one of the people on the list. Sure, I'll do this." I was like, "Really?" Pretty quickly, the interviews turned toward, "What are your ideas about what the new park should be in California? How would you address organizational culture change?" No joke. That was like a core question to me. They were like, "No, how would you do that?"

When it came to new parks, when I was asked about that, what I said was, "If you look at a map of state parks in California, there is a park desert in the whole Central Valley. There's very few parks." I said, "That's where we have all these populations of low-income communities that are feeding us. They don't have a place for heat refugia. They don't have places to recreate. I would look at that." That's pretty much what I said.

Then, when I got on board several months into my job, the secretary and the governor basically said, "Hey, we want to have you propose some new parks." I was given a little bit of money. Then we took up—I had one of our park planning teams. I said, "I want you to go out into the Central Valley. These are the criteria." I got to set the criteria. This governor and the secretary are really letting me do what I think we ought to do. I said, "I want to find areas that are close to low-income communities, near major rivers, where they could be restored, or already have forest canopy that could offer heat refugia to these low-income communities where we had heat events. It would be really great if, with all the land fallowing that's going on now in California from the agricultural world, because there isn't enough water for the level of irrigation that we're doing in the state. I said, "If we could also find lands that we could reclaim and reconnect floodplains to groundwater aquifers." The team went out for a couple of months. I named specific areas that I was generally aware of.

They came back with nineteen proposed parks. Then we sat down, and we organized them, basically, by shovel-ready to the ones that would need the most work. Dos Rios just blew my mind because it's a 2,500-acre area. It's at the confluence of the Tuolumne River, which originates in Yosemite, and the San Joaquin River. Right across the San Joaquin River from Dos Rios is the San Joaquin Wildlife Refuge. River Partners, which has been a great nonprofit in California for the last ten years, has been tearing out all the [agricultural] orchards and everything and reshaping the land. They actually used agricultural methods to replant the area with native vegetation. It was pretty much ready to go.

There's a 1,600-acre area that has got a levee on it. Removing the levee reconnects a 1,600-acre floodplain with the aquifer. It's eight miles from the lowest-income community. Eight miles from the lowest income community of Modesto, twenty minutes. I went there, and it blew my mind. We wrote it up, and I can tell you guys this thing. I put it forward to the governor and the secretary of resources. A little while, about a month later, I got a call, and suffice it to say that I was told, "You have five minutes to convince us that this should be the next new state park." I think attorneys would like this. I said, "I only need three minutes."

I started down the list, and it's like, "Okay, go for it." We did up the proposal, and then we did what's called a budget change proposal, which is the way state agencies, during the budget year, what they have to do, what we have to do, when there's something new that we want to do, we create this whole justification to the legislature that we want this much money to do this. We don't want to create a new park and say, "Hey, we've got a new park," and there's no staff, there's no support services or anything. We said, "This is the staffing that we want; this is how much money we want for this; this is what we need for infrastructure."

We went through the whole thing. I pushed for it and said, "If you really want a new park, let's really deliver a new park." Because throughout California, there are parks that have been set aside, but they still have yet to be developed

for visitor amenities or just comfort. And we got it. We're probably going to be opening Dos Rios in June. We've already hired the staff. We've been working with the Conservation Corps, planners, our trail crews, and others. The infrastructure for shade ramadas and trails is already in place. They're already working there. We're probably going to be opening the newest state park this fall, but it's going to be a park when you open the gate.

I went there. Some of you may know who the artist Obi Kaufman is. He's a well-known Bay Area artist. I went for a hike at Dos Rios with Wade Crowfoot, who's our Secretary of Resources, and Obi Kaufman, and we spent the whole day just walking out there. There were beaver and sandhill cranes, and I kid you not, it felt like the African savanna, eight miles from downtown Modesto. One of the language changes I would like to see in state parks and in the language that Californians use is rather than "live the parks life" or something like that, I would love to hear people in California seeing a picture of Coast Redwoods, of deserts, of rivers, of beaches, and anybody in California saying, "This is where I live."

As I started out, my connection to parks was with imagination. I do think that getting people to parks is great, but I think that we need to be delivering imagery, language, and an invitation that has to do with ownership by all of the people of California, and I think we can do it. I will say that when I worked at UC Merced, there's a 16,000-acre vernal pool complex right next to that university. Part of it is a university campus. Once a year, there's a campout, and it's mostly botanists and archaeologists and wildlife biologists, but it's a really fun party. For three days, we go out and camp in the middle of this vernal pool complex. At night, you can't see any lights. It's a wilderness. It's also about twenty minutes from Merced.

There was a young woman who was working as a development director or fundraiser for one of the colleges at UC Merced. Her name is Hannah. I said, "You need to come out here, along with the new department chair there." We went out, it was a great weekend. It was beautiful, spectacular. We had campfires and music, ate and drank and all that. The second morning that we were there, I was standing outside my tent talking to the department chair, and Hannah was some ways away. She got out of her tent, and she was walking towards us. She pushed her hair away from her face. I can really still see it.

I said, Hannah, "Are you all right?" She was crying. I said, "What's the matter?" By the way, she came to UC Berkeley. She left Merced, came to Berkeley, got her degree, and went back because she wanted to contribute to her community. She pulled her hair back from her face and she looked at me and she said, "I didn't know I lived here."

I want us to think that way about these incredible places in California and to be able to think about that, no matter where you live and even, I would say, see it where you live, like when I saw a killdeer at the sewage treatment plant.

Holly: Yes, that's great. I think the last question I will ask you is, you've painted a really inspiring picture of the parks as they are and as they are becoming. I think, speaking for the folks in this room, really, the last question and what we'd like to hear from you is, how can we help?

Armando: CEQA. CEQA. You know what? I would say, "Challenge us, but not in the courts." You may have to do that, which is great. I do think that sometimes we, the state, are working on something, and then we need the help of attorneys. I work with the AG's office all the time, and we have a whole legal team in parks. There's just one person who does nothing but Public Records Act requests. We have all these specialty areas. We do need more solutions for how we protect these areas.

The other thing that I think is the future, and I didn't mention this, is we need to be thinking in terms of landscape scale. The boundaries that we put around these places, like parks and other things, are artificial and don't function. If you're from this area, I'd encourage you to take a look at something called One Tam. I was on the water board in Marin County and had worked for parks, and the water utility in Marin owns a chunk of the mountain, and I was like, "Why aren't we working in mutual decision-making up here? Why aren't we working together with fundraising?" In 2014, we created this thing called One Tam, and it is exactly that. It's a co-management agreement among state, federal, county, and water utilities. At Dos Rios, what I hope to do there is to create a riverscape scale network that extends from Yosemite, the origin of the Tuolumne River, to Dos Rios, which is the foot of the river.

Think about this as attorneys. How can you create partnerships that are enduring, that create a prioritization and cooperation amongst all the neighbors? I think of the river as being a place where, if we do this right, we can make decisions that reduce flooding, improve water quality, improve water capture, and improve communities. I love the idea of taking these public land areas and mixing them up—private and public lands—and creating a network so everybody really understands their role. On my computer at home, at the bottom of my screen, I have a Wendell Berry quote that says, "Do unto others downstream as you would have those upstream do unto you." I think that as land managers, that is what we should be doing writ large.

Holly: Great. I look forward to the chance to talk more with you about your riverscape idea. The Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity-

Armando: I know these guys.

Holly: -here would really love to work with you on that. The new Center for Landscape Conservation and probably also CLEE. We have lots of people who are ready to help. Anyway, thank you so much for being here.

Armando: It's my pleasure.

Becky: We have time for a few questions. If anybody has a question, just raise your hand, and I'll take this microphone and pass it around.

Audience Member: Thank you for coming. Thank you for speaking. I was really interested in your discussion of the agreements you have with tribes, especially related to removing the barriers to gathering and traditional forms of using the land. I know that at the national park level, it is a real hassle and really challenging for tribes to be able to continue those practices. It sounds like what you're doing at the state level is trying to remove those barriers. I guess I was wondering: are you interfacing with the national parks level at all to try and get

them to change the current process? Which, from what I understand, is, tribes have to go through really intense historical research and a heinous application process just to do the things that they've historically done on their lands.

Armando: That's an incredibly timely question. Point Reyes National Seashore, just across the bay on the other side of Marin from you, just signed a co-management agreement with the Graton Rancheria. The agreement covers the 71,000 acres of that park. I'm going to watch it with real interest because I think they're doing a bold experiment there. Then, up north in the North Coast Redwood State and National Parks, we actually partner together. There's a joint partnership there called Redwoods Rising. One of the partners in that is Save the Redwoods League.

What we have done, there's actually a national park visitor center on the beach right there near Orick. With sea level rise projections, that visitor center is going to get washed away, or it's going to have to be removed. State parks, national parks, and the Yurok have been working for a few years to restore a part of one of the rivers right in that area, as well as do a big forest restoration project. Through this partnership, there's going to be a new welcome center built there for the Redwoods State and National Parks, and it's going to be operated by the Yurok in partnership with us. There are some models of both partnerships and Point Reyes National Seashore.

It's a specific model. Also, the federal laws are very different from state laws. We can work easily with federally recognized and non-federally recognized tribes, which is a sad distinction because it's like yes and less than, which is sort of vulgar, I think. That's something that needs a language change. The feds only work with federally recognized tribes. My understanding, and I might be wrong here, but my understanding, as I read the agreement for Point Reyes National Seashore, is, even though there's a number of non-federally recognized tribes in that area, they now have to go to Graton Rancheria to gain access and permission, which it's complicated.

Becky: Great. Thank you. Any other questions?

Audience 2: Hi. I'm curious to hear you talk a little bit about either the processes or challenges that are unique to creating urban parks, understanding that's, part of, for example, the "30 by 30" goals is equity in urban green space access.

Armando: There's also a specific example of that. The oldest urban park that was created by State Parks is called Candlestick State Park. Since it was created, it's been historically under-resourced. It's in Hunters Point, right near the old Candlestick baseball stadium or sports stadium. The interesting thing is that just upshore from Candlestick, there are City of San Francisco parks that, in recent years, have received almost $100 million of investment from the state legislature, but Candlestick is sort of limping along. We're working with Parks California and other places like that to really build up that park. I'm sad about it because it should be a shining example.

In fact, I worked at Golden Gate when Crissy Field became part of the National Park. I keep saying Hunters Point needs its own Crissy Field, which it

really could be. We're really trying to gain momentum there. The other area where we're doing a lot of work is actually the L.A. River. There's something called L.A. State Historic Park. There's a new park that we're developing called Bowtie [Project], which—State Parks actually operates fishing programs for youth in the L.A. River, not to eat the fish, but to learn how to fish. I've actually gone fly fishing in the L.A. River. As State Parks Director, I try to do the activities in any parks that I go to, because it's how you create understanding.

Another thing is that a lot of people don't know this. I certainly didn't. When I went into this job, we had an office called the Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS). Most state agencies have granting programs that are for the category that that agency or that department is in charge of, but it's for non-state lands. At OGALS, through bond money and through some legislative actions, we get money to invest in communities that are park-poor. State Parks, since the 1970s, has actually distributed almost—It's actually more than this, I know, but I don't know the exact number, somewhere in the neighborhood of $2 billion for communities that were park poor and low income. Two years ago, right after I got into this job, or a year after I got into this job, our Office of Grants and Local Services handed me this whole list of letters, and one of them was, "Congratulations, you're getting $8 million for your proposal for Urban Park," and then the other stack was, "And you're not getting anything this time." There was a confluence of funding that year. The package was for $548 million to go to 120 communities in California. Honestly, I thought, "What the hell?" I didn't know State Parks did this. There are over 1,000 communities in California that have received this sort of support since the seventies. What I did is I called the Governor's Office and I said, "I think we need to lift this up." We did a Zoom rollout to these communities, and it was the most amazing thing. People were crying on screen.

There are a ton of stories, and I spoke with the Governor and First Partner about it. The thing about these communities is that they have to design the parks. It's not like they get a cookie-cutter park. There was one of the people who gave a testimonial when we made this announcement, and this park planner said that the kids wanted a skate park. There was an eight-year-old girl who had just fallen in love with skateboarding, so she designed a feature for her skate park, and she called it the Twinkie. They got the funding. That city planner said she's going to get her Twinkie built. I was with the Governor and his family one time we were on a hike. The Governor said to the First Partner, "What do you think that little girl's going to do when she's eighteen?" The First Partner said, "Anything she wants."

There are programs in State Parks that people are unaware of, and that's another thing that I want to elevate because I want people in these communities to know that the investment in their communities came from their vote for a proposition, the legislature's allocation of those funds, the governor's approval, and then State Parks working with them. That's the thing that's also sad to me, and that is that there's a lack of clarity in civic process that we could also be communicating in the work that we do. Sorry, that was a long answer, too.

Audience Member: You had talked about codifying co-management. Assemblymember Ramos is actually running a bill to do that. I was wondering if you could talk about what you think would be good to include in a bill like that to codify it?

Armando: There are a lot of tribes and bands and rancherias in California. There has been talk about doing this, "Hey, statewide, let's do this." Not that this is in there, but if a law was passed that said all tribal members in California have free access to parks, everybody would say that they are a tribal member because not all tribes have tribal IDs. I feel like there have to be regions, and also, for any of you who are from a big family, that you are in a tribe. I'm from a very big family.

The most recent MOU that I signed was with the Resighini band of the Yurok up north. There's some fishing right tensions between the Yurok tribe. When we were about to sign it, the secretary said, so we're going to be able to assert our fishing rights supremacy. I said, "No." This is an agreement between State Parks and the sovereign nation of the Resighini people. That's it. That's between you guys. Then I said, in the 1980s, when I was a ranger at Point Reyes, I came across eight guys that were poaching abalone in a marine reserve. I called it in. They were down 300 feet below me in these tide pools in this marine reserve. As the peace officers were on their way out and these guys started coming up to cliffs, I called on the radio. I said, "You need to hurry up and get out here because at least one of these people is my cousin."

What I said to the Resighini is, "You're dealing with a family issue. We're not going to get involved with that." It took twenty years for me and that cousin to talk again. That was stupid. When I finally did talk with Raymond, we both looked and said, "Well, that was a waste. That was stupid." To your question, I think we've got to be really careful about legislative work in that regard. I think it has to be people-to-people. In every region, in every geographic group of tribes, it's a different set of circumstances. That's my feeling.

Becky: All right, I think we have time for one more quick question. Then we'll let you go. I think I see one in the back.

Armando: I'm going to hang out for much of the day, because I'm really interested in what you guys are doing, so we can talk, too.

Audience Member: Thank you. That was such a moving presentation. We are incredibly lucky to have you in this role at this time. My question is about what relationship, if any, there is between the State Parks and California's environmental education curriculum. I'm wondering, in terms of inculcating this real sense of ownership, how much has been done to make it as close as possible to a universal experience for every California school child to have visited some state parks in their K-12 time?

Armando: One of the things that the governor was really interested in when I got interviewed was access. I just thought about it. I can answer your question in two ways. We actually proposed and got three state park passes advanced. One of them is a fourth-grader adventure pass. Any fourth grader in California can go online and download this pass, and it actually has a QR code on it. A family or a

fourth grader can just go into the QR code link, and there's a survey that they can choose to fill out. We're able to collect data on a lot of these permit users.

We have fifty-four state parks that have developed specific curricula for fourth graders and their families. Then I'll tell a few other passes that we created that were pretty amazing. Right now, there's about 48,000 of those fourth grader passes that are out in the world. Then we partnered with the state library, and we proposed to the legislature and to the library together that we should create a parks library pass. There's a hang tag that you can get at any state library that looks like something from Harry Potter. You just need your library card, and for free, you can get this pass for a week or two weeks, however much time that is, and also a QR code on that. It is the most popular item checked out of libraries right now in California. What librarians are saying about it is families are coming in to get this pass, and then they're hanging out and checking out books.

It's so cool. Then another group that is underserved is the Department of Social Services clientele. Historically, that clientele could get something called the Golden Bear Pass by just bringing in proof of their need and proof of the services that they're getting from the Department of Social Services. It was arcane. It was really hard to do that. Typically, in the past, there were maybe 500 to 1,000 of those that could get taken out, and people would get them, and they're free. We worked with the Department of Social Services team, and they know who their clients are. Working with them, we totally streamlined that process.

Thinking about COVID and where everybody went during COVID. Everybody went outside. Parks got just completely inundated. There's 65,000 and growing Golden Bear Passes that are out for extremely low-income members of our communities. It's insane. I would tie that back to the curriculum. Last but not least, another aspect is that State Parks developed something called the Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS). There is a whole online library of rangers and naturalists doing programs in parks. Most of them were just recorded live interactions with rangers at the bottom of the ocean at Point Lobos, literally being able to live broadcast while they're swimming in the kelp forest and saying, this is a this, and this is a that, and holding up sea stars or giant sequoias or anything else. There's thousands of those. At the beginning of this last year, we had over a million views of those PORTS programs. Those are curriculum-based.

Becky: I want to just, everybody, give Director Quintero and Professor Holly Doremus a big round of applause. That was really interesting.