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Ted Clement

Ted Clement: Through Nature's Portal on a Deep and Diverse Conservation Journey

Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Amanda Tewes
in 2021

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Self-portrait of Ted Clement on the summit of Mount Shasta, 2020.

Abstract

Ted Clement has been the executive director of Save Mount Diablo (SMD) since November 2015. Clement was born in Massachusetts in 1969 and grew up in rural Vermont. He attended the University of Vermont from 1987 to 1991 and majored in environmental studies, later attending Vermont Law School from 1996 to 1999. His career in land conservation includes time with the Peace Corps in Thailand's Ramkhamhaeng National Park, Aquidneck Land Trust, and Hawaiian Islands Land Trust. He and his family moved to the Bay Area in 2015 when he accepted the position with SMD. Clement has overseen SMD's growth and an expanded mission, as well as managed the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic. In this interview, Clement discusses growing up in Vermont, including early experiences in nature; his education at the University of Vermont, including joining the Outing Club and curriculum about climate change; working for the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School; his Peace Corps assignment in in Ramkhamhaeng National Park in Thailand, including tensions between park rangers and local residents, and establishing an environmental education program with schools; meeting his wife, Boonsuay, and interacting with the Karen hill tribe; attending Vermont Law School, including working for the Vermont Land Trust and learning land conservation law; working for Aquidneck Land Trust, including his approach to leadership and teamwork, as well as acquiring land trust accreditation; joining SMD, including his decision to apply, his first impressions of the East Bay, implementing a new strategic plan system, SMD's finances and the Forever Wild Capital Campaign, longtime staff member Seth Adams, education and outreach like the Conservation Collaboration Agreement Plan and Mangini Ranch Educational Preserve, partnerships, SMD's expanded mission and Climate Action Plan, conservation easements, and SMD's COVID-19 response; reflections on SMD's land conservation work; reflections on his family and the SMD team.

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Project History

By the early 1970s, the Bay Area was in the midst of great social and cultural change. With plans for the extension of BART into the East Bay, and suburban sprawl threatening Mount Diablo and other open spaces, Save Mount Diablo (SMD) answered a call to action. SMD was founded by Dr. Mary Bowerman and Arthur Bonwell in 1971. It became a nationally accredited land trust based in the San Francisco Bay Area comprised of biologists, conservationists, hikers, cyclists, equestrians, bird watchers, artists, and people who just loved to look at and enjoy the mountain. SMD has been preserving lands on and around Mount Diablo and educating the public to the mountain's natural values since its founding. However, the organization's focus on educational programs and protecting Mount Diablo's connection to its sustaining Diablo Range has grown substantially over the last few years due in part to new leadership and the growing severity of the climate crisis. As an organization, Save Mount Diablo is both an exceptional example of local land conservation efforts, as well as representative of national and international environmental activism that extends beyond the Bay Area. This oral history project began in 2021 as SMD approached its fiftieth anniversary. All of the interviews were conducted remotely due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Interview 1: October 13, 2021

01-00:00:00
Tewes: This is an oral history interview with Ted Clement for the Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project, in association with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. The interview is being conducted by Amanda Tewes on October 13, 2021. And Mr. Clement joins me in this remote interview from Walnut Creek, California, where I am, as well. So thank you so much, Ted, for joining today.

01-00:00:28
Clement: Thank you, Amanda.

01-00:00:30
Tewes: Starting at the beginning here, can you tell me when and where you were born?

01-00:00:35
Clement: I was born on January 5, 1969 in Massachusetts. My father was wrapping college at Babson College after he had served in the Vietnam War, and shortly after his graduation, we moved to Vermont.

01-00:00:54
Tewes: And you grew up in Vermont, correct?

01-00:00:56
Clement: Yeah, you know, my family and I lived in a few places, but I really consider Vermont to be the state where I grew up, because I lived there for many years as a kid. My grandfather built a ski house on Mad River Glen, where we used to regularly go for ski trips. I went to the University of Vermont; I went to Vermont Law School. So yeah, the quick answer is I grew up in Vermont, but the reality is I did live in a few places, but Vermont's really where I consider my formative years happening.

01-00:01:32
Tewes: That's a great distinction though. Can you tell me what was formative about your time in Vermont, and what it was like living there in the seventies, I think, too?

01-00:01:41
Clement: Yeah, so my family in many ways moved to Vermont to get back to nature, because it was sort of that period in our history, go back to nature, back to a simpler way of life, flower power. All of that stuff was going on, and my parents were certainly a part of that. Prior to being drafted for the Vietnam War, my father had gone into New York City to become a professional folk musician, and so, you know, they were very much a part of all of that. So Vermont was absolutely that, it was about getting back to nature. We lived near the Green Mountains. Some of my earliest memories are of camping in the Green Mountains with my family, going to nearby farms to watch baby calves being born, or helping farmers during the sugaring season with the maple sugaring process. And I still have memories of drinking hot maple

syrup on snow that we put in a bowl. So yeah, lots of fond memories of growing up in Vermont.

01-00:02:52
Tewes: Did your family have farmland themselves, or was this just surrounding?

01-00:02:56
Clement: They were surrounded by farmland and forestland. We had a home, and I don't recall the size of the lot, maybe it was an acre or so, but it was more that we lived in an area surrounded by farms and forests.

01-00:03:15
Tewes: So you mentioned this back-to-nature lifestyle that your parents are a part of. I'm curious, the '69 to basically '70—or sorry, '80—[is] the environmental decade in American history, and I'm wondering how you engaged with that as a kid. Did your family talk about it? Were you aware of it?

01-00:03:45
Clement: We talked about nature a lot, and my family, you know—and this goes back generations—active outdoors people. I like to use the term these days of "outdoor practitioner," someone who regularly has as part of their life this practice of being out in nature, to connect with nature, to get healthy in nature. And you know, whether it be riding horses or hiking, skiing, you know, my family, they were very active in the outdoors, had a great love and appreciation of nature. And that was absolutely passed on to me, and I could not be more grateful to my mom and dad for raising us that way.

01-00:04:28
Tewes: In addition to this love of nature and this connection to the land, I'm curious what other values you think your learned from your family.

01-00:04:38
Clement: You know, my father was a very hard worker, and I definitely received that from him, showing up to meetings early, because early bird gets the worm kind of thing. And just, I remember him passing on lessons like that. They loved to recreate in nature, but when it came to work, dad was a very hard worker. Mom was very committed to the family as a homemaker and was a great mother—is a great mother—she's still alive, and my father is also still alive. So yeah, they passed on a lot of values. And eventually that kind of set me on a certain course. And later in high school, I remember a very influential teacher, Mike Dalton at Salisbury School, really helping me understand that I could take my love of nature and turn that into a real field of study later in college, and ultimately a career path.

01-00:05:49
Tewes: I'm glad you mentioned a mentor there, because that's something I want to discuss a little more later. But you mentioned the Salisbury School. Can you tell me about that and what that meant in your early years?

01-00:06:00
Clement: Yeah, thankfully my family sent me to a wonderful high school, a boys' boarding school in Salisbury, Connecticut, surrounded by hundreds of acres of woods. And yeah, it was just a great place to grow as a young man, and great teachers, great classmates. I was given a lot of leadership responsibilities at Salisbury, which helped me develop a lot and grow a lot. Again, you know, really thankfully with this one terrific teacher, I really figured out how I could turn my love of nature into what I'd be studying in college and beyond, as well as turning it into a career path.

01-00:06:55
Tewes: I'm really curious, because of the time you were entering college in the late eighties, what options were open, career-wise, for those interested in nature, and how your decision to go to the University of Vermont impacts that.

01-00:07:13
Clement: Amanda, it's a great question, and as you correctly pointed out, you know, the environmental movement, the modern environmental movement really kicked into gear with the first Earth Day, 1970, and then it sort of grew from there. So the University of Vermont had one of the earliest environmental studies programs on the East Coast, one of the most established and well-resourced environmental studies programs. So you know, it became very apparent to me as I was looking at various colleges that UVM really had, of all the New England colleges I was looking at—and I looked at a lot of them, I remember so many different college tours—but it was just so clear the University of Vermont had the biggest Environmental Studies Program. And guess what? It was in Vermont, which I absolutely love Vermont: I love the mountains, I knew the natural resources there were just so spectacular. And I knew I'd be active with the outing club there and things like that, so yeah, I wanted to study the environment and I wanted to be in a great place of natural beauty, so UVM quickly took the role of my lead college, and I applied there early decision and was accepted there early decision, so that made the process much easier after that.

01-00:08:44
Tewes: Easier to say yes. [laughs]

01-00:08:45
Clement: Yes.

01-00:08:48
Tewes: I should specify for the record that you were there 1987 to 1991, and you majored environmental studies.

01-00:08:56
Clement: Correct.

01-00:08:56
Tewes: I'm curious how you talked about climate change at that point, and what you learned about that in the curriculum.

01-00:09:24
Clement: Yeah, that's something I've written about and spoken about a number of times just in the last few years as climate change has clearly moved into a climate crisis. And it's really stunning to me that in the 1980s at the University of Vermont, I was learning about climate change, along with the other students in the program. And it was nonpartisan, it was just very matter-of-fact science that this was the direction we were headed with our carbon emissions and way of living on this planet, and that eventually, it could become a true existential threat if we did not change, and we talked about clear-cut solutions. You know, it's amazing to me that we knew about the problem, the causes of it, we knew the solutions way back then. And to be honest, we even knew about it before the 1980s. But as an undergraduate student at the University of Vermont, I learned about all of those things in the 1980s and we still have not substantially addressed them.

01-00:10:17
Tewes: How do you think about that, in the course of your lifetime of work in this field, that you knew this long ago, and the solution has not presented itself yet?

01-00:10:29
Clement: Yeah, that has hit me hard. And you know, I've studied and worked in the conservation field for well over thirty years at this point—it's probably something closer to thirty-five years at this point if I mapped it all out. But in land conservation, we've enjoyed so many great successes over many years. But honestly, when you really look at what's going on in the world right now, the climate crisis, the mass species extinction event, can you really say with a straight face that we're winning the war in conservation if you're faced with an existential threat like the climate crisis or you're in the midst of a mass species extinction event? And so I think we have to be very humble as land conservation practitioners and be really grateful for all the great victories. And many of those tools that we've been successfully using for years—legal tools, scientific tools, land acquisition tools, advocacy tools, et cetera—you know they're great and they've enabled us to win a lot of important battles, a ton of important battles, but something's not right, seriously not right, deeply not right. And we have got to be humble and be able to look at our shortcomings and where we've failed to enable, or to allow society, modern societies to get us in this very precarious place and think about new solutions, new ideas. And some of those we may realize—and I'm sure we'll talk about this later—but thankfully, I've had a lot of experience living with people from what I term "earth-centered cultures," very old, old cultures. And I think there are a lot of solutions to be realized from those long-standing earth-centered cultures.

01-00:12:61
Tewes: Yes, thank you for making that connection. I want to get there in just a second, but I do want to acknowledge that you mentioned that during college, you continued your love of nature with an active element here, with the Outing Club. And also, you had a summer course with the National Outdoor

Leadership School. And I'd be curious to hear about that one in particular, and how that was foundational to your early work in this field.

01-00:13:20

Clement: So my freshman year at the University of Vermont, it started with an introductory program for incoming freshman. It was an optional program, but it was called TREK, and TREK was this optional orientation program where incoming freshmen could go on an outdoor expedition, backpacking, a bicycle trip, or I believe there were paddling options, too. I signed up for the backpacking trip. It was put on by the University's outing club. The University of Vermont had an outstanding Outing Club. I believe it is still quite outstanding, but it's just been many years since I've been active with them. Back in my time, it was always headed up by professional staff, and those staff were, at least during my time, all former Outward Bound instructors. And so it was so great, because I went to a small boys' boarding school, and all of a sudden I'm at the University of Vermont with 12,000 or so students, you know, and coming from a high school with about 250 students in total. So it was a little intimidating, but so great that I started off in this outdoor way, really connecting with a great group of students on a backpacking trip for three or four days, and really becoming tight with those people and really looking up to the student leaders of that backpacking trip and just realizing they're just such down-to-earth people and so caring, not only for one another and the students, but for the natural world. So I realize I had found my tribe immediately. And so they could see that in me, as well, and so they encouraged me to become a leader for the Outing Club, which I did. You know, by that fall I think I was already active with the Outing Club and leading trips, and then eventually put on the executive board.

01-00:15:28

By the end of my freshman year, you know, it was just so apparent my love was about being in nature, taking groups of people in nature, going on expeditions, that I got introduced to the National Outdoor Leadership School and was encouraged by various people to do a course there. So I did a course in Alaska with the National Outdoor Leadership School. And that also kept honing this leadership thing that in many ways was started for me back at Salisbury School, in various ways. I was the school president, had leadership roles with the soccer team. It was not something I ever sought, but they seemed to just come, and it was—I realized someone's got to step up, and if people are asking you to step up, someone's got to step up. So that process started in high school and through the Outing Club at the University of Vermont, it kept growing.

01-00:16:34

Tewes: Thank you for pointing to that theme, as well. That is an important part of our discussion today. But I do, before we move on a little bit, I do want to give you the opportunity to speak about a study abroad opportunity you had in Nepal. I'd be curious to hear about that.

01-00:16:53

Clement: Yes so, you mentioned earlier correctly, Amanda, that I was an environmental studies major at the University of Vermont, got my bachelor of science there when I graduated, was an environmental studies major. I was also a comparative religion minor. A lot of people don't know that about me. It all kind of started simply because the woman I was dating encouraged me to take a comparative religion class with her, maybe spring semester possibly my freshman year. I don't recall exactly when it was, but I think it was probably spring semester. There was a great professor of the course, and I realized the University of Vermont's Religion Department was stacked with all these incredible professors, many of them who had studied directly with Mircea Eliade out of the University of Chicago, who's really considered by many to be one of the founding minds behind comparative religion and recognizing all these deep similarities in the world's religions, and sort of the oneness of it all. You know, I just took the course because my girlfriend encouraged me to, but I was really blown away by it, and realized nature was talked about a lot in class, and a lot of earth-centered cultures and their religions, and then a lot of the similarities in other religions, sacred spaces, sacred mountains, and so my interest was getting piqued. Somewhere along that journey, you know, I realized the Himalayas were filled with sacred mountains. Of course, I love mountains, I lived and breathed mountains.

01-00:18:49

With the other people in the Outing Club at the University of Vermont, there was a core group of us who were very hardcore, and we all wanted to go on to be great mountaineers, and so we started a club for kind of the wackos in the Outing Club called the Breakfast Club. And we would get up crazy early to practice alpine starts, and we wanted that to be a normal thing for us so that we could easily do it on mountaineering trips. So we'd get up at one in the morning in Burlington, two in the morning, whatever it was, and get out to one of the larger mountains in the Green Mountains. Mind you, these are the Green Mountains. The big mountains there are 4,000 feet or so, so much smaller. The Green Mountains, of course, are a very old mountain range, and that's why they're so small, they've been eroded over time. Beautiful mountains, but small. You know, we had great aspirations, so we'd wake up early, pick one of the big mountains—and big is a relative thing—and go do a sunrise hike, get to the summit of the mountain, towards sunrise, eat our breakfast on top, which was probably a banana and a bagel, and then get back in time for our 9:00 a.m. class, 9:30 a.m. class, whatever the first class was. Back to that thing of the outdoor practitioner, we were really trying to live that lifestyle and get good at it.

01-00:20:19

That had a big impact on me. And again, trying to tie this all together with studies in comparative religion, as well as my environmental studies work, as well my time in the Outing Club and love of getting into the mountains, I learned that I could do a semester abroad with the School for International Training in the Himalayas, get full credits for it, a full semester worth of

credits, it would cost less than a semester at the University of Vermont, and I'd get to climb some of the big mountains in the world, and also learn more about these cultures. I had heard a little bit about Tibetan Buddhists, Hindus who had these sacred mountains and trying to understand people that took their love of nature to totally different levels and dimensions. So yeah, I jumped on that opportunity. And I think it was maybe 1990, maybe it was spring 1990—that sounds right—spring of my junior year that I went over and did that, and it was incredible. I was absolutely blown away by it, absolutely fell in love with the people that I met, became very close with a couple of amazing Tibetan people, and yeah, that started a love affair with the Himalayas that's really lasted ever since. But back when I was young and carefree and didn't really have many expenses, I mean, that's—after college when I taught for Outward Bound, I would work to save money to go back to the Himalayas, the Himalayas in Nepal, as well as India.

01-00:22:08
Tewes: Yes, you've mentioned that after college you worked for Outward Bound at Hurricane Island, I believe?

01-00:22:14
Clement: Yes, the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School.

01-00:22:18
Tewes: I want to speak especially about your time in the Peace Corps. And I know from other people who've joined the Peace Corps that you don't always get to choose what happens to you once you've signed your name to this organization, but I'm curious what you were hoping to accomplish on that trip, and then what the experiences ended up being.

01-00:22:43
Clement: You know, I'm not sure if I should necessarily say things like this, but hey, I'm pretty open. So if you want to get a sense of who I am, I should be upfront about these kinds of things. I'd been teaching for Outward Bound, it was my first job after the University of Vermont, and I had mentioned earlier how the paid professionals of the Outing Club of the University of Vermont were all former Outward Bound instructors, so there were a lot of mentoring and just good discussions. They directed me that way and I'm so glad I followed their advice and applied to work for the Outward Bound School, because I loved it. Taking groups of people out on great expeditions, seeing them just deeply connect with nature, teaching them how to live safely and respectfully in the natural world, and I did that for about three years. I just remember I started to feel like, I want to settle down a little bit more, because I was always on the go. You know, it was, yeah, basically you'd go out, take maybe it's a month-long course and then come back and maybe you have a week off, maybe you have just a couple days off, and then you're back in the field again, and maybe this time it's a semester-long course for college students. And I loved it, but I really thought it would be nice to settle down a little bit more, and everything's relative.

01-00:24:06

So yeah, I actually started to think a little bit about divinity school. And I remember going to tour the divinity school at Yale, and that just didn't really feel right, and it felt cloistered. Again, I just wanted to be out in nature. And I was driving up to Vermont, I think, after that tour, of that campus tour, and I had maybe a few more days off until my next Outward Bound course, and I was driving up to Vermont to see an old friend from the University of Vermont. And as I was driving, I felt my shoulders were kind of tense, and I was like, I realized something had to give; I was at a transition point. I couldn't just keep doing Outward Bound courses, I needed something that was different. All of a sudden, the Peace Corps logo literally came into my mind's eye, and I just physically felt my shoulders drop, and the world just seemed to open up with possibilities. And I got to my friend's house in Burlington, and it was great to see her; I hadn't seen her in a while. I had never met her roommate before, but her roommate had just been accepted to the Peace Corps, and it was so—it was just unbelievable, because I just, you know, while driving had to have that experience with the Peace Corps logo, it seemed so right, my physical reaction to it was so positive. Then before I know it, I meet her roommate, she was just accepted to the Peace Corps, and she gave me all the information I needed to apply, and I did.

01-00:25:41

I was sure they'd send me to Nepal, because my Nepali language used to be pretty decent. I had learned to speak Nepalese with the School for International Training, I had done home stays with Nepalese people, and how many guys from America speak Nepalese and have this environmental studies background? I was sure I'd be sent to Nepal to work in International Park Program or something related. And but no, they said, "We want to send you to Thailand." And you know, at first I was like, I'm not sure that's right. Then I just remember what I had had experienced, you know? I just thought, I should trust this. These doors seem to keep opening, there's something more here. So I did, I trusted it and went off to Thailand, not knowing anything about Thailand or how to speak Thai. And I imagine some of this will come up, but you know, some life-changing things happened in Thailand, so it was clearly meant to be.

01-00:26:42

Tewes: Yeah, I want to talk about those, too, but first, I'm really curious about the work you ended up doing in Thailand, and how that connects to the educational thread you've been pulling throughout this conversation.

01-00:26:56

Clement: Yeah so, I probably did not emphasize enough how meaningful my time with Outward Bound was. You know again, I get up really early in the morning; it was something we wackos practiced regularly at the University of Vermont. And so I would get up really early when we were out on our Outward Bound courses, all the students were asleep in their tents, my fellow instructor was asleep in his or her tent, and I'd be up early sitting on the shore of Moosehead

Lake in Maine or up on Mount Kineo in Maine or in New Hampshire, wherever we were. And I'd be looking at the stars and just kind of, just really appreciating that magical time where night is transitioning into dawn, and the sunrise, and usually I was by myself. But I just always remember feeling such gratitude that I was—that my job was to be out there experiencing those things and helping all those people have incredible experiences in nature, especially after the students would do their solos in nature, where they would be by themselves for a long period of time, in some courses up to three days long. And they would be out on their solos, and they'd come back and they would share realizations they had while on their solos that were so life-changing. And I realized I was helping people transform for the better, I was part of that process, not that I was doing that, but I was helping them safely have that experience where they were having major epiphanies in their life, and yeah, just felt incredible gratitude.

01-00:28:38

So when I was in the Peace Corps in Thailand, I was assigned to work for the national park program and I was given a national park in northern Thailand in the province of Sukhothai. And it was real apparent that in general there was a very tense relationship between national park staff at Ramkhamhaeng National Park and the villagers around the park, so much so that there were regular fights and shootouts. The rangers patrolled with weapons, and a lot of old M16 rifles left over from the Vietnam War, and it was a very different approach to national resource protection. It was sort of, yeah, a shock and awe, strong arm of the law approach to protecting natural resources. And it was so alien to me, and I knew it was not right. And by the way, there's a lot of things they do incredibly right in Thailand when it comes to nature, but in terms of what I was seeing the rangers do, that approach I knew was wrong. And I understood the power of bringing young people into nature from my time at Outward Bound, and I knew there were about sixteen schools that surrounded the national park, and I thought, Listen, if we could start to develop sort of Outward Bound-esque programs to get these kids into the park so they started to feel like it was their park, and it was a place that was very special to them, and they had special memories, and the parents saw their kids having these really meaningful experiences, it could totally change the relationship. And I remember when I brought it up with some of the other park rangers—it was a pretty macho group—they laughed at it. They thought it was something frilly, something childish. They needed to be out on patrol, busting poachers and all of this kind of stuff.

01-00:30:44

I eventually got one of the rangers to join me, a terrific guy who's a good friend to this day. And we went to the first school or two, and I remember coming back and, of course, the rangers wanted to know, the other rangers at the park, what it was like. And I remember my friend Yungyouth, saying, "There are a lot of cute teachers at these schools, and they're young." So before I know it, so many of these other rangers wanted to be on the

environmental education team and go around to all the schools at the park, because, indeed, a lot of them were filled with young, single schoolteachers, and these were a lot of young, single rangers. So they thought we had struck the motherlode, and they all wanted to be a part of this. And then we had to really screen people, because some of them were absolutely not appropriate to be teaching kids, they were rough and tumble. But it was a great program that we established, and that's actually how I met my wife.

01-00:31:47

So one of the schools, my friend Yungyouth—again, he was one of the rangers at Ramkhamhaeng National Park—he really fell for this one teacher, and we'd gone to the school a number of times, and we'd started to bring this school out to the national park, as well, but he really fell for this young teacher, and she was single and available and had shown him some signs of interest, as well. Dating there at that time was very old-fashioned, and it still is in many ways to this day in the more rural areas. My friend wanted to call on her, and it would not be appropriate for him to show up alone at the school. Some of the schools have apartments for the teachers to live in. It would not be appropriate for him to show up by himself to call on her. So he asked me to be a chaperone, which is customary in those parts. So I agreed to be a chaperone, and I went. And Ajan Nate is the name of the woman he was falling for; her roommate was Boonsuay, who was the woman I eventually married. [laughs] So you know, I went on a few of these trips to be his chaperone and really started to take a liking to Ajan Nate's roommate, Boonsuay. And you know, before you know it, we all got married. Ajan Nate and my friend, Yungyouth, they got married I think a week or two before Boonsuay and I got married. We all dated for about a year, but ultimately, we both couples tied the knot, and very close together. And we saw them just a couple years ago, and, you know, their kids are grown up like our kids. But yeah, I just had a very special time in Thailand.

01-00:33:27

And well, I could go on about my wife, but she's been very influential in my conservation career, because she comes from the Karen hill tribe, and that is one of those earth-centered cultures, long traditions in how you should be in a relationship with nature, how you pass it on to children, et cetera. And she's been very influential. And of course, she was an educator. She was the first woman in her village to get a college degree. She had a very enlightened father who literally got no higher than elementary school, because he had to work, like most of the villagers. But he was naturally brilliant, understood that every child who was interested in furthering their education, whether it be a boy or a girl, should be given that opportunity. And he also did very well financially, because he was so smart. He was the first one to start diversified farming in the village, was very successful starting orange groves and other efforts. They had prior to that really been a subsistence rice farming village, where it was just hand-to-mouth, but he totally changed the trajectory with his brilliance. And again, further brilliance investing in his daughter, enabling her

to be the first woman in the village to get a college degree. And she went on to be an educator and pay that back. She's now put her three nieces through college, you know, keeping up that tradition her father started. But yeah, very, very heavy influence on me.

01-00:35:02
Tewes: Ted, you cut out for a second when you were describing the hill tribe, your wife's hill tribe. What is that?

01-00:35:08
Clement: It's the Karen, K-a-r-e-n, that's how it's transliterated often, Karen hill tribe.

01-00:35:15
Tewes: Got it, thank you. I wanted to make sure we had that for the record. Yes, so this sounds like this trip was so formative for you on a personal level, as well as an opportunity to really hone those interests in education and the environment. And so I'm, yeah, amazed by this trip. I'm sure we could speak about this at length, but I do want to move on, because you were there in the mid- to late-nineties, I think. And eventually, though—I'm sorry, mid-nineties—you decided to return to the States and attend law school at Vermont Law School in 1996 to 1999. Can you tell me about the decision to move? That's quite a decision.

01-00:36:03
Clement: Yeah. Well first of all, when Boonsuay and I decided that we wanted to get married after dating for about a year, I remember going back to her village. We had made a couple trips to the village, and her family just thought it was some kind of strange joke. I think at that point I was the first Caucasian person to show up in the village, first of all. The fact that I was hanging around their daughter was just—they are a lovely family, so they were always sweet to me, but they thought it was a weird joke, just something super strange that never really meant anything. Eventually, I let them know that I wanted to marry Boonsuay. That was amazing, that got a little tense. And there's a tradition where I had to go before the village elders with the whole village witnessing the event and I had to go with representatives, older Thais that knew me. So that the head of the national park that I was assigned to, the superintendent had to go as one of my representatives; two very well-educated Thai women, older Thai women that had connections to my family, they had been educated in the States and all this, they also came to be my representatives. The village elders fired questions at me, as well as my representatives, really checking on my integrity as a person, you know, was I really worthy of Boonsuay? Boonsuay was a beloved daughter of this village, had made them all so proud with her accomplishments. And I was a poor Peace Corps volunteer, and I was going to go back to law school and be an even poorer law school student, you know, this was not making sense to them. It was really tense, but sometimes there's this collective sort of groupthink or thing that happens in those tight village settings, where it was sort of this unspoken moment where after about an hour of kind of tense grilling, all of a sudden the village accepted me as

one of theirs. And it then turned from a very tense exchange to a huge party. It turned out to be a lovely evening, but they made me work for it. They made me work for it bigtime.

01-00:38:46

Boonsuay and I talked about this a lot. She knew we would not have a lot of money and she was okay with that. She knew what I was trying to do. She knew I wanted to further my conservation career. She absolutely supported that. And you know, that's something we shared early on, a love of nature and realizing we had to do more to protect it. She fully supported me on that, and, yes, we went off to law school together and we were poor as heck. My goodness, I had to hold two jobs and be a full-time law student. I worked for Vermont Land Trust while I was in law school, and I worked for Eastern Mountain Sports, which is sort of like an East Coast REI. I hardly had any time to sleep. I was either studying or literally working, and it became so twisted that I felt like my time at Eastern Mountain Sports was—I call that my vacation time, because it demanded the least of me. [laughs] I could relax there a little bit. I was just talking with people about their upcoming trips into the mountains and advising them what equipment they should buy, so it was easy. It wasn't like the legal work I was helping Vermont Land Trust with or my studies at Vermont Law School, so I could kind of mentally relax. That was my vacation time. But you know, together as a team, we got through it, and it was not easy. Our first son was born my first year in law school. So yeah, it was intense, but we made it.

01-00:40:33

Tewes: Yeah, you don't take the easy route often. [laughs]

01-00:40:37

Clement: No.

01-00:40:41

Tewes: I do want to speak a little bit more about the land conservation law you're studying at that time, and really what the state of the field was in terms of the legal aspect.

01-00:40:53

Clement: Yeah so, you know, I'm jumping around a little bit, so it'd be fun for anyone, if anyone ever wants to read this oral history to be like, Wow, this guy was all over the place. But when I was in the Peace Corps, you know, it became very apparent to me how powerful Ramkhamhaeng National Park was as a living classroom where we could bring people in to connect with nature and have transformative experiences. It was a place with incredible biodiversity, so land struck me as so powerful. And I realized if I could learn property law and land conservation law, what a meaningful career to permanently protect significant lands like Ramkhamhaeng National Park. So anyway, yeah, I only applied to one law school, Vermont Law School. It had been the leader for years in environmental law, land conservation law. And again, it was in Vermont, just

like my early UVM sort of thing, where it's like, Hey, it's only UVM, because they got a great environmental studies program and it's in Vermont. Vermont Law School was sort of the same thing: they've got a great land conservation environmental studies component, and it's in Vermont. And so it was the only one I applied to, and I figured, If I don't get in, it's not meant to be. And so thankfully it all worked out, and yeah, I focused on land conservation law. I was so lucky that, again, we were very poor, so I qualified for the Federal Work-Study Program, which was terrific, because I got a small salary, if you will, and Vermont Land Trust got me for free; they didn't have to pay for it, because it was covered by the Federal Work[-Study] Program. So they got a very passionate person in myself, hardworking; and I got incredible experience. Not only was I studying land conservation back at Vermont Law School, but when I go to work at Vermont Land Trust and I was getting to put in practice all that I was learning, and just learning such great models and systems from Vermont Land Trust. So I'm really grateful that they gave me that experience and it's all worked out.

01-00:43:12

Tewes: Could you briefly tell me about what some of those models were like in the nineties?

01-00:43:18

Clement: Yeah, models. For example, one of the early things that I was recruited for was helping monitor properties that Vermont Land Trust held conservation easements on that had challenging landowners. And I learned that that relationship between the landowner and the land trust is incredibly important, and it should really be ideally a partnership where the landowner and the land trust that holds the conservation easement on the farm or the forest, that they are working together supporting one another. But unfortunately, oftentimes it becomes an adversarial relationship, because the land trust holds this permanent set of restrictions on the conserved property, and sometimes that can make a landowner bristle. If the land trust is not really attentive to the relationship, and investing it and sending the right people to work that landowner, it could blow up very quickly. So thankfully, I am a compassionate person, and I tend to be gentle and respectful of others, and Vermont Land Trust saw that in me, and so they again recruited me to work with a lot of the difficult landowners. So I would monitor their properties, and I would be very respectful and gentle in how I'd go about that and, you know, build up their trust so they would allow me to go on the land. We actually have the legal right to go on their land, I could have strong-armed it, but, you know, fortunately they—Vermont Land Trust understood that would just make things worse. So I was given the ability and the flexibility to gently work the relationship to the point where I could monitor it. But that really stuck with me, and realizing that's got to be—a premium has to be put into the relationships to make land conservation work long term.

01-00:45:25
Tewes: We're going to start talking about some of your post-law school work, and these are not going to get the dedication they deserve, unfortunately. But I do want to acknowledge that you worked at the Aquidneck Land Trust, first as a land protection director from 2000 to 2005, and then as the executive director from 2005 to 2012. And I'm curious, since this is your first position as an executive director of a land trust organization, what you learned about leadership on the ground in those moments.

01-00:46:06
Clement: You know, becoming the executive director was not a focus of mine. I actually remember my former boss, a great person, a great woman, Anne Garnett, was not well, health-wise. She worked out an arrangement with the board where she needed to retire, she needed to take care of herself and deal with her health issues, so was very sorry to see her go. And the board president approached me and said, "Well, Ted, we really want you." And I remember when I got the call, I was actually home with the flu, and really bad fever, bad headache, and I wasn't even going to pick up the phone, but it kept ringing. So I eventually picked up the phone, and it was Alison Vareika, our board president at the time, and she's sharing all this news with me that Anne was going to be stepping down so she could take care of her health and wellbeing, and I was so sorry to hear that. And then the next sentence is, "And we want you to take over. You're going to have to compete for it, you're going to have to be part of a national search, but we all believe you're the right one and we want you to put your name in the hat." And I didn't say yes, I said, "Oh, let me think about it, I'm really not sure." Because I knew, you know, at times executive directors, it can become very political. And I'm a land conservationist, you know, I was doing the deals, I was working with landowners to permanently conserve their land and working on stewardship matters, and that was my love. I didn't want to get into whatever, the political stuff or the HR stuff, are you kidding me? So you know, I thought about it over the weekend, talked a lot to my wife, and, of course, I was sick. [laughs] But you know, they wanted to know by early the next week if I'd be willing to also apply. And yeah, you know, after talking it through with Boonsuay, we realized, Hey, if we're going to make a difference with what Boonsuay and I dreamed about long ago about really helping the natural world, you know, I would have to step up for opportunities to do more for nature. And so we agreed I would apply, and so it all, it went from there.

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Yeah, I learned a lot about leadership. Fortunately, I had been given other leadership opportunities earlier and had learned from other mentors. This is going back to middle school, one of my middle school soccer coaches who used to run with us as a team. He'd do wind sprints with us, he would train with us. And if, you know, if kids were not listening and they had to do extra wind sprints as punishment, he would punish himself and do those wind sprints with us. It was really profound, actually. To this day, if we have a big event like Moonlight on the Mountain or if there's a lot of trash to take out, I

still step up for things like that, and always say, "Hey, do you need help lifting things?" That's carried with me from those middle school days, seeing a coach just more concerned about the whole and willing to help the whole, and at times make it very uncomfortable for himself for the greater good. That stuck with me, and I try to be very mindful of that, and willing to step up like that as much as I can. Of course, I learned a lot at the Aquidneck Land Trust and learned a lot more after that. It's an evolutionary process, and you certainly don't have it all figured out, and you make plenty of mistakes, but you grow, and you know you grow if it gets to be more and more about the team and less and less about you. Because ultimately, good land conservation is good teamwork, and it's only going to last long-term if it is about a team, and a strong team that can carry the work on going forward.

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Tewes: You've already preempted my follow-up question there, Ted. I'm curious about why teamwork is so important in this field, in particular, much less a nonprofit.

01-00:50:47
Clement: You know, I think that's a great question, and there are various reasons. But one of the big reasons why I think teamwork's especially important in land conservation, we make a promise to protect lands in perpetuity, and perpetuity is a long time. So you know, one individual's not going to cut it. I might drive home tonight, I could have a tragic accident, and it's done. You know, so you have to build up a team, and a strong team that's been given the opportunity to grow and step up, to help carry that torch forward. So I think in land conservation, because we're accepting things like permanent conservation easements and making that promise to our communities, our supporters that we're going to protect these lands in perpetuity, well then if you're serious about that, you have to be serious about developing a team.

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Tewes: I think that's a great explanation, thank you. I'm going to move very quickly through this next one, which I know is an important moment for you, but you moved from Rhode Island to Hawaii in what I think was then called the Hawaiian Islands Land Trust, where you were executive director from January 2013 to September 2015. I know you did so much work for this organization, but I'm really curious especially about the national accreditation aspect of this. Can you tell me why that was important for this organization to attain?

01-00:52:27
Clement: Well, the accreditation work began when I was the executive director at the Aquidneck Land Trust. The whole accreditation process started when I was at the Aquidneck Land Trust. There was a very precarious moment in land conservation history when The Nature Conservancy was called on the carpet publicly in a series of *Washington Post* articles, and they took The Nature Conservancy to task for insider transactions that were inappropriate, allowing oil drilling on some of their properties for profit, a whole host of issues that

were very serious and could have resulted in The Nature Conservancy losing its not-for-profit status, and really threatened the larger land conservation community. When that *Washington Post* series broke, I mean, there were calls for Congressional investigations, there were calls for the IRS to clamp down on land trusts, to possibly take direct oversight of land trusts, I mean, just stuff that really threatened the whole movement. And so the Land Trust Alliance, to counter that and to show Congress, the Internal Revenue Service and others, our donors, that land trusts were actually really responsible—maybe there were a few bad actors, but by and large, we were a responsible movement, we could govern ourselves properly—they established the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent body to start the process of accreditation for land trusts. And it was initially met with a lot of mixed reactions. I mean, some people thought it was just adding bureaucracy and burdens on top of land trusts that were already stretched thin. Some thought that it would just favor the haves over the have nots, and there'd be just more of a disparity. I really thought it was going to be critical for the future of the movement, so I really pushed the Aquidneck Land Trust to become the first accredited land trust in Rhode Island, and we took that process really seriously. I thought about being in the first class of land trusts that applied for accreditation, but better judgements said, "No, let them work out the kinks. You be in the second class. We'll be the first in Rhode Island to help show that leadership and encourage others to follow, but actually, let's not be the experimental guinea pig. Let's go in the second round." Which was a good decision with hindsight, because they did work out some kinks. So yeah, we were the first land trust in Rhode Island to get accredited, and that's something I carried to Hawaii, that experience to help the Hawaiian Islands Land Trust with accreditation.

01-00:55:25
Tewes: And something you've carried to Save Mount Diablo, I should mention, as well.

01-00:55:29
Clement: Yeah, something we're all really proud of and thankful for.

01-00:55:35
Tewes: Well, let's start talking about the organization itself. Can you tell me about your decision to apply for this position of executive director at Saint Mount Diablo?

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Clement: Well, in some ways, to be honest, it was a little bit like the Peace Corps experience I told you about when I was in a transition period. We had really encouraged our oldest son to go to the University of Hawaii, and he applied and he was accepted. When I was the Hawaiian Islands Land Trust, I had been asked to teach a course at the Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii about land conservation, which I did. And so I got to know the University of Hawaii—the Manoa campus is beautiful—and thought it would

be great for our son, and we wanted to stay in Hawaii. But like so many of his friends on his soccer team—we lived on Maui, but so many of his friends were all going to California for college. These were kids who grew up in Hawaii, so they wanted to see the mainland, understandably so. But my son got caught up in all of that, and so he thought California sounded like a great place to go to college, so he applied, and was accepted at Sacramento State to study kinesiology and nutrition—his passion—and the University of Hawaii did not have a very big kinesiology program.

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So you know, ultimately it was his decision, and we supported him in that, but we were sad. And we realized something probably would have to give, because we have three sons: our oldest son, our middle son, and our youngest son. Our oldest son is now twenty-four. My goodness, he's now graduated from Sac State a couple years ago. Our youngest son is ten years old, so he's our surprise son. We hadn't planned on him, but he came and he's amazing, so we're still thankful he did arrive. But there's a big age difference between the boys. So we've always taken this approach to try to maximize time together to make sure the youngest knows the oldest and has a relationship with his older brothers. And if we were going to stay in Hawaii and our oldest son was in California, you know, I've been a not-for-profit guy my entire career, so we just don't have the resources, we wouldn't have the resources to regularly fly back-and-forth from Hawaii to California and all of that, or have him regularly fly back-and-forth. So you know, we thought, Hey listen, if we're going to continue to work to keep our kids close, we may have to think about leaving Hawaii and going to California or at least somewhere nearby, maybe Oregon or something. And Hunter left for Sacramento in August 2015, and I think almost exactly two weeks after he left, an executive search firm that Save Mount Diablo hired reached out to me and let me know they wanted to talk to me and see if I'd be interested. And literally my first question was, "How far are you from Sacramento? How far is Save Mount Diablo from Sacramento?" And when I realized it was roughly an hour-and-a-half or so, we took that as a sign, and thankfully, it all worked out.

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Tewes: Yes, that does feel very fortuitous, certainly. I'm curious about your first impressions of Mount Diablo itself, but also the East Bay.

01-00:59:23

Clement: Yeah, it's fun to relive some of these experiences. So my family and I, well, we had been warned before we came that housing prices were really expensive the Bay Area, and we were like, Yeah sure, whatever. We thought, How could they be more expensive than Hawaii? It's just not possible. So we thought, We're used to this. And we're minimalist anyways, we're not fancy people, and so we'll make it work. Hey, if we can make it work in Hawaii, of course we can make it work in the San Francisco Bay Area. Little did we know, San Francisco Bay Area actually is even worse in terms of housing prices than Hawaii. So anyways, we lived for the first—maybe it was two

weeks, I don't remember—in a hotel, as we were trying to find something we could afford, which is not easy. But early on while we were living in the hotel, I remember my wife and I, probably literally maybe, who knows, first, second or third day here, we drove up to the summit of Mount Diablo. Well, I should back up. When I was being flown over for interviews by Save Mount Diablo, before the first one, I actually went to Mount Diablo State Park, like never been here before, and I wanted to make sure I felt a connection with the land. And thankfully, that day it was a gorgeous day. And I was coming down from Sacramento, I had visited my son, and I was coming down from Sacramento, and my GPS sent me to Mitchell Canyon, one of the entrances to Mount Diablo State Park, which is beautiful. And I saw the town of Clayton, which is so beautiful, and it kind of had a Montana feel, some of the things I was seeing. My brother lives in Montana and has lived there for a long time, so Montana's another place we love. And so it just all looked so beautiful, and I got a nice walk in in the Mitchell Canyon area. I was like, Wow, this place is really special. So that all helped set me up for the job.

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Once I had accepted the job though and we were here, I took Boonsuay and the kids up to the summit of Mount Diablo—so this was our middle son Edward and our youngest son Ty; Hunter was up at college. We went up to the summit, and at that point, California had been in essentially a five-year drought, and this was end of October, early November. We got up to the top of the mountain, we looked out, and we were horrified, we were absolutely horrified. It looked like cracked earth, everything was brown, and we thought, What in the world have we gotten ourselves into? It all of a sudden looked really harsh. That was really shocking. Then if you remember, we started to get good rains that winter, 2015 into 2016, and then the wildflowers started coming up. And I'll never forget my first hike when the wildflowers really exploded, I thought I was Alice in Wonderland. I mean, I had never seen anything so intoxicating, so beautiful. So I went from sort of being absolutely horrified about the dry, parched place—again, we're coming from Hawaii, you know—but then it fortunately, it changed quickly, and as I got to know more and more special places in the Mount Diablo area. It all came together.

01-01:02:58

Tewes: And what a great reminder of the geographical differences you've encountered over the years in this work, my gosh. I quickly wanted to ask you, as you were preparing to take this job, what your goals were moving into this organization, what you thought you could effect changewise.

01-01:03:23

Clement: Well education, you know, had really just only grown in importance in my mind. And you know, we sort of touched on that earlier when we talked about climate change and learning about it in the eighties, and then fast forward to today and, my God, we still haven't really dealt with it. And not only do we have the climate crisis going on, we have a mass species extinction event. And it was clear that we needed something additional in land conservation,

something new that would get to the clear cultural disconnection from nature. Nature is so clearly not at the center of our cultural values system, especially when I think about earth-centered cultures I've lived with, whether it be in Thailand or Hawaii. The Hawaiian people, they have absolutely an earth-centered culture. Nature is seen as sacred, nature is at the center of the value system. They have a familial relationship with nature, very similar to my wife's village. I think about a lot of the Thai forest monks I worked with in Thailand, where they have a deep, sacred relationship with nature, and that is just so fundamental to taking care of nature. And of course, you know, we have all these Nature Deficit Disorder-related studies out there that have documented how our wired generations are becoming more and more disconnected from nature, and more and more connected to their electronic devices. It just struck me that I think one of the big problems is that we simply do not have direct, meaningful relationships with nature as a modern people. That is something really lacking for most people. I've really come to the belief after thirty-plus years studying and working in conservation that the biggest environmental threat is the lack of meaningful relations between people and nature. It's that fundamental thing that is not aligned right now, it's out of alignment.

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And education is a way that you can change cultural values, it's a way you can teach a different value system. If you look at a lot of those earth-centered cultures, whether it be various Native American cultures or Hawaiian culture, Karen hill tribe culture that my wife grew up in, nature's at the center of their education system, the children are constantly being exposed to nature, taught about nature. And so I knew that would be one of my goals coming to Save Mount Diablo. I also knew there were some economic challenges—one significant debt that would have to be repaid very quickly shortly after my arrival—so I started to very much think about strategies for that. I knew the donor base was not as big as it should be and that we would really have to grow that for long-term sustainability. I knew there were some other financial things that would need to be taken care of to help ensure perpetual care of the lands; the organization did not have an endowment fund. There were a number of things like that that I knew were goals. And I knew based on discussions I had with some of our great staff—I think of people like Seth Adams or Monica Oei, you know, people that had been here for a long time—that there had also been a bit of a breakdown in morale within the staff, and that there would have to be focus and work on building up the team, especially—again, it's all about team. So yeah, there were a number of things I was aware I would have to focus on, but there were also so many positives. Save Mount Diablo is such a historic Bay Area land trust, land conservation organization. They've accomplished so many important things over the years. So I was also incredibly grateful to be able to be executive director of such a wonderful, important organization made up of so many great people. But there was some challenge, of course, great opportunities, and I would only want to come here if I could learn as well as contribute. And I knew in this

environment that there were things I could contribute to help. If I can't help an organization, I shouldn't be in it. But I also want to learn and keep growing, and I knew there were great staff and people that could teach a lot, as well. So I knew I had my work cut out for me, I knew I could contribute, but I also knew I could learn a lot.

01-01:08:10
Tewes: I think that segues well into—my next thought's really about the structure and leadership you're bringing to this organization. Again, you started in November of 2015. One of the things that we've flagged is really the strategic plan process. Could you tell me about what that entails and what the goals were for Save Mount Diablo?

01-01:08:38
Clement: Yeah, I started a rolling three-year strategic plan process back when I was at the Aquidneck Land Trust, and I did it with a couple of our outstanding board members there. When I was a brand-new executive director, we did what so many organizations do: we hired a fancy consultant, we did a five-year strategic plan. It was immaculate, it looked like a beautiful coffee table book, and then I watched it sit on the shelf largely. And so a couple board members, Rick Hodges, John McCulloch, and I, we brainstormed a totally new paradigm, one that would be vibrant, alive, constantly evolving and being updated, improve and reported on. And we came up with this rolling three-year strategic plan model, and I've been working on perfecting that ever since. And it just worked so well, because the basic process is this: you know, we have an annual staff retreat here at Save Mount Diablo where we look at the current strategic plan and especially the executive summary, and we talk about any big changes that need to be made to improve it. And then we do some redlining based on the discussion with all staff; everyone has a voice. The senior staff, the junior staff, we sit there together as brothers and sisters, sharing our insights in how we can make the place that we care about better. And we then redline the document after that. I share that with the staff after it's redlined to make sure they feel their comments have been honored. That happens in November. Then we take that to the January board retreat. The board retreat is after the staff retreat. And then the board sees the changes being recommended by the staff, and then they discuss that and they discuss any additional changes they may see. They may not agree with all the staff recommended changes, so we have to work together to ultimately create something that both sides feel good about. And then, you know, our fiscal year runs from April 1 to the end of March. So that January board retreat, we kind of get all their thoughts down, and then over the next few months, we find the compromises, we make the tweaks, we flesh out the new ideas, and we build the new budget for the coming fiscal year that will support that. And then by March, the full new strategic plan, that's been updated and the new annual budget that will help support that are approved. And then we start the new fiscal year with a fresh, vibrant, organic, recently-updated strategic plan and a good budget to support it.

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And then once the fiscal year starts, every quarter, we do a detailed progress report on how we're doing against the strategic plan. Areas we're doing well, areas where we're falling behind, maybe we have recommendations, some of those action items in hindsight aren't that helpful and we decide—or we agree—Okay, we'll cut that out, that's not necessary; these other items have become more important. And then once we get to November, the whole process starts again. And it's a three-year vision; it really lays out a three-year vision, because you can get your arms around three years. You can be very realistic in your projections for three years, and you don't end up spinning your wheels talking about, well, what's going to happen ten years out or five years out. Three years, you can really do a very realistic assessment of. And so you know, when you get to November again, you're starting this process of basically starting to peel a year off the rolling three-year strategic plan and adding a new year, so you're always in relationship with that strategic plan—everyone, all staff and all the board, are always in relationship, and always have a part in updating it and monitoring it. So people actually understand the strategic plan. It's not this fancy thing that sits on a bookshelf; it's actively used and understood.

01-01:13:08

Tewes: I certainly have experience with that side of it. So I'm curious: because this organization's been around for so long, what implementing this new strategic plan has meant for the organization.

01-01:13:20

Clement: Well you know, thank goodness for the wonderful staff here. You know, I hit them with a lot when I first came in, and thank goodness for our wonderful board too, because I hit them with a lot as well when I came in. You know, back to that debt, it was a nearly $2 million debt that needed to be paid by June 2016, and again, I started in November, 2015. So this was a significant amount that had to be paid off, and I really saw that by starting a Conservation Easement Program, not only would we have another tool to protect important lands with, but it would also be a way to help us pay off the debt. And I had a good contact, he's a friend to this day, a colleague, he also went to Vermont Law School at the Conservation Fund. He got us a great bridge loan, so we could pay off the person that had given us the original loan ahead of schedule, actually, before that June 2016 deadline. And they were really appreciative of that, and they've gone on to give us some very large grants because of the respect they were shown. But then we were able to sell a couple properties that it didn't appear anyone, like East Bay Regional Park District or Mount Diablo State Park, had an interest in owning, and we weren't really interested in owning the land. But we sold those lands subject to conservation easements. One already had a house on it, one already had a building lot on it. So we sold them to private buyers so they could each have one house, subject to conservation easements that permanently protected the open space, and that generated important revenue to help pay off the Conservation Fund that had given us the bridge loan and some other strategies we used. So we also ended

up being able to pay off the bridge loan with the Conservation Fund ahead of schedule, as well.

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But you know, a new Conservation Easement Program, a new strategic plan process and other new initiatives that I hit them with and I wanted to jump into it immediately, all this education stuff, et cetera. It was a lot, and I'm really grateful they didn't murder me. Though I know it was trying, I know it was really trying. And I have a very different way of doing staff meetings. I do weekly staff meetings where there are expressions of gratitude for the work we get to do, and recognizing team members. Everything was so new and they were being hit with so much, so I think that first year was pretty stressful, not only for myself, but everyone around me. But you know what, we got through it, and the system started to work and get easier—I knew this would happen, and I told them this—that is easy to say if you've been doing it for a long time, it's harder for people to buy into if it's all brand new. But I kept saying, "It will get easier, because once you lay the strategic plan down and you know the system, it's just the annual updates." And so with time, we all got to a happier, less stressed place. And kudos to our great board and staff for, one, not killing me, but being willing to try some of these new things. But also, I was so grateful to again be with such a historically important organization that's done such great work and learned so many great things from them. So it wasn't like I was saving the day, nothing like that at all. I was helping them with some issues that needed to be addressed, and learning a ton from them, as well, and so it's all good.

01-01:17:08

Tewes: I want to switch gears a little bit and start speaking about some of the work that Save Mount Diablo does, and one being this important aspect of building community relationships. And I know this is something that the organization has long prided itself on, but I am curious to hear from you: partnerships that were already in place with you came on board, and what you wanted to create when you started in 2015.

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Clement: Well you know, I wanted to certainly respect the partnerships that were in place, partnerships with East Bay Regional Park District or Mount Diablo State Park, the East Contra Costa Habitat Conservancy, and, yes, be very respectful and attentive to those relationships. But I definitely wanted to establish some new relationships, too, especially in terms of education, especially in terms of diversifying the organization. But yeah, so it's a balance in trying to respect a lot of relationships that are historic and historically important, but also trying to build some new relationships, and also divvying things up, because you can't do it all. And so you know, we have staff that have certain historic relationships, great. I can show respect to those people, but I can allow the other staff to work on those things, and I put time into developing new relationships with schools, more diverse audiences and others. And so, yes, you have to be able to divvy those things up.

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Which gets back to team. And you know, the executive director that feels they need to be at the center of everything and do everything, that's tough. It's tough to do just as an individual, but also I'm not so sure that really contributes to good, long-term conservation. I don't think that builds up as strong of a team, that approach. So with relationships, we very much divvy that up within the organization.

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Tewes: That's interesting, I didn't realize that. Could you give me some examples of how those collaborations with partners work?

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Clement: Yeah. Well, with like some of our core partners, like East Bay Regional Park District, Mount Diablo State Park, the East Contra Costa Habitat Conservancy, we do quarterly meetings with them, and Seth Adams and I are generally in attendance at those. Seth, of course, our first staff member, a living conservation legend in the Bay Area. But you know, for example, some of the political relationships, like city councilmembers, he's known some of these people for many, many years, I don't need to interfere with that; he's a great, competent professional, he can handle that. And then I can work on building new relationships in other areas, like education or other places.

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Tewes: And we'll be speaking about education in a little bit, because that's a major part of your work here. I want to think about—now what we spoke about a little earlier—climate change and, frankly, Save Mount Diablo's role in thinking about this crisis. Specifically, could you tell me about the Climate Action Plan that you've helped author?

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Clement: So going back now probably about two years, I attended the National Land Conservation Conference, which is known as Rally, and I've been doing that for twenty-two years straight now. It's really the best land conservation conference. But I went to a great class on creating climate action plans, holistic climate action plans that help an organization focus and do a better job addressing the climate crisis across the land trust's various departments. So such a holistic climate action plan would have a section on land acquisition, it would have a section on advocacy, it would have a section on education, a section on stewardship, a section on finance, a section on organizational carbon footprint, and I thought it was really great and important idea. So I brought it back to our staff, and I put the idea on the table with the staff at our annual strategic plan retreat, and I really recommended that, you know, it's something we should do. It would fall under the umbrella of the strategic plan; it would not replace the strategic plan, but it would become a new focus of the strategic plan, and it would be this extra report or guidance document that we would create. And the staff were great, they supported it. I then next took it to the board at their January strategic plan retreat, and we had a lot of discussion

around it, and to the board's credit, they also recognized that we have got to show more leadership on addressing the climate crisis, so they supported it. With that approval a team started to work on drafting the Climate Action Plan. And we just completed that report this year in 2021 and got it approved by the board, and it has all those different sections I was mentioning. And now we're really, really excited about it, and it's already having a big impact on us. For example, our largest fund, the Stewardship Endowment Fund, we now, as it's laid out in our Climate Action Plan, we've got it invested in a fossil-free portfolio. We are starting massive tree-planting programs with all these great students and schools we've developed relationships with. This is all coming out of our Climate Action Plan.

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Before the Delta variant got really bad, we had started a new work schedule where Mondays and Tuesdays, the staff come into the office so we can have those human, organic interactions. And we do our managers meeting on Mondays, we do our full staff meetings on Tuesday, and that's where we coordinate at the start of the week. So we wanted those to be in-person meetings where we're all together as a team feeling connected. Then we'd have staff execute remotely primarily from home Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—cut down on our carbon footprint as per the Climate Action Plan. And we started to do that, and then the Delta variant got really bad and people started to work more remotely again. But as the Delta variant seems to be getting under control more and it looks like our county will lift the mask mandate possibly by December or January, we'll get back to that. But that flows out of the Climate Action Plan, that kind of thinking about how we can do a better job going forward showing leadership on addressing the climate crisis.

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Tewes: I'm just curious: do wildfires have any mention, I guess, in the Climate Action Plan?

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Clement: Absolutely, wildfires are touched on. And of course, something that a lot of people don't fully understand, but, for example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, some of the world's leading climate scientists have recognized natural lands are one of the best strategies we have for mitigating the climate crisis, because these natural lands, good forests, good grasslands, are carbon sinks. And so conserving these lands are incredibly important for helping address the climate crisis. But yes, we see a lot of other things coming out of the climate crisis like fires. And so we've got a lot about fire abatement work in our Climate Action Plan and strategic plan, our staff work very hard on our fire abatement work. And there's a huge chapter on education, because again, the climate crisis, from my perspective, is a materialization of our very poor relationship with nature. It's that poor relationship materializing in devastating ways right in front of us. And if we don't get to this underlying disconnect between people and nature, we will continue to be unable to solve

the climate crisis. Again, it's just stunning to think that we've known the science on climate change, the causes and the solutions for decades, and we have not yet substantially dealt with the problem. There are deep, underlying issues here. We have to do a cultural realignment, and education is going to be the primary way to do that.

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So the education chapter in our Climate Action Plan lays out a connect, educate, serve, and diversify philosophy for doing this. Provide experiences that help people meaningfully and directly connect with nature. So for example, in our Conservation Collaboration Agreement Program with local schools, students do contemplative solos in nature, just like they used to do in Outward Bound when I was with Outward Bound, you know, where they're alone in nature for a period of time and they have their journals and they're given a question to reflect on: what is nature, what is my part in nature, things that help them grow their roots deeper in nature—and they're also taught how to quiet their minds and be in nature, and connect with it and observe it, and then they do their journal reflections. Things that will deepen the direct relationship between these young people and the natural world. In our Discover Diablo free outings program, we've added things like meditation outings, yoga in nature outings, contemplative solos, as well. Not only for the kids, but also the adults that do Discover Diablo outings, they're all free and available to the public. But these are some of the ways we get people meaningfully connected. So that's the connect part.

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Then the educate part, you know, once people fall in love with something, that direct relationship, you want to educate them about how to take care of that thing that they now love, and they're going to be more open to learning about it once they have that loving relationship. So we teach them the facts and figures on land conservation, climate change, we teach them about natural carbon sinks, things like wildfires. So for example, back to that Conservation Collaboration Agreement Program with local schools, there's a part where there's the field experience out on the land, but there's also a classroom experience where we talk to the students about land conservation and climate change and give them the facts and figures. So connect, educate, serve. Once people fall in love something and they've been educated about how to take care of it and how it may be threatened, then empower them with service opportunities. In our Conservation Collaboration Agreement Program, the students do an environmental service project on one of our conserved lands. Maybe it's planting native trees, which, of course, is building up the carbon sink capacity; maybe it's removing invasive species, helping keep the natural resiliency of our natural systems.

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And then diversify. We have got to invite more people into conservation. We've got to show respect to more types of communities, ethnic communities, different outdoor user groups, et cetera. Sometimes there's a lot of conflict and

tension between different outdoor user groups, maybe between the mountain bikers and the hikers, or the rock climbers and the birders, you know? And to me, it's always a little comical when I see such passion and tension between these groups. I'm like, do you understand what's going on in the world right now? You know, this little spat with the mountain bikers or whatever, that's small potatoes. We've got a climate crisis right now, or we've also got a mass species extinction event to deal with. We actually need to change our thinking. We need to embrace one another, recognize that we need more people engaged in taking care of nature, which we love. And clearly, the people that recreate outdoors love nature, and they love it in different ways and they exercise in different ways, but clearly they love getting out there. So let's put the judgement aside, and let's actually welcome more people into the tent or to the table, different ethnic backgrounds, different outdoor user groups, and get them on the team all working in the same direction.

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And so look at our Discover Diablo free outings program. We've added bilingual hikes so that other communities feel that they are valued and invited to be part of this. You see mountain bike outings, you see hiking outings, you see rock climbing outings, you know? We've got to invite more people in, because it's that serious right now. This is not a time for silliness and petty little spats or holier-than-thou nonsense. This is a time to say, "Our existence and nature are threatened on our planet right now, and a planet we love deeply. We have got to be willing to try new things; we have got to embrace one another and be more respectful of one another, if we're going to get down to brass tacks in solving this."

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Tewes: You know, since we're on the topic of education, I'd be curious to hear more about the Educational Preserve you've got planned at Mangini Ranch, and really how that's come about.

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Clement: Yeah, we've done so many exciting things with education. Again, just so grateful for our terrific board, our terrific staff, our terrific supporters that are investing in education. You know, we added education to our mission statement this year. We've got this detailed section on education in our Climate Action Plan. We've formed an Education Committee made up of all these great educators from local high schools, middle schools, colleges. We've added educators to our board of directors. We are teaching a semester land conservation course at California State University, East Bay. We've created these great new education programs. And one of those is the Mangini Ranch Educational Preserve. And that, actually, that idea, I've been wanting to do a Save Mount Diablo public preserve here for a long time. It was one of the many new things I was hitting Save Mount Diablo with when I first got here, and I realized people were in overload mode, and I needed to be patient and respectful. So I put that aside. But I started to hear more and more from teachers that were doing our Conservation Collaboration Agreement Program,

that it was powerful for the students. And they really liked that students were out on our properties having these intimate experiences in nature and there was no one else there, not like a state park with lots of outsiders and other people wandering around. The teachers said it just felt very safe and intimate and really promoted the students having an intimate experience in nature.

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So I kept hearing this, and I knew there was some hesitancy within our organization to start to fully open some of our properties to the public with all that we were doing. Maybe, what if there were lots of problems or litter or trash? So I realized, Hey, this is a cool idea. Maybe we do an educational preserve. And I actually went up to Sonoma State [University] with a couple of other staff—I want to acknowledge the great people at Sonoma State, because I went up to visit them and check out their educational preserves, because they are using a similar sort of model, and we don't have anything else like that in Contra Costa County. But so eventually, yeah, this idea is: we will open up one of our special properties, and it's going to be open by March 2022, that's as laid out in our strategic plan. And there will be a whole section on our website where people can read the rules and how they sign up, and then they can pick a date, and it has to be a group for educational purposes, and it's free. So a local high school, an AP environmental science class or a yoga class, an adult photography class, a mountain bike team from a local middle school or a cross country team from a local high school, all these different groups that want to be able to get out and connect with nature, a plein air artist group. They'll be able to go on our website, pick a date that they want to reserve, and provided it's a group doing this for educational purposes—it could be a church group that wants to do a Bible study out in nature, it could be grief counseling support group; this is something I did in the past with a land trust, helping a bunch of women who had lost, unfortunately, their children, go work through their grief in nature.

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So all these great groups can sign up and have the property for themselves for the entire day. And one of our docents, if their registration and reservation goes through and that date's available, and it's a group for educational purposes, they've got it. They'll get that morning, if they want to start in the morning—maybe they want to start in the afternoon—but they'll be met when they arrive by one of our docents who will introduce them to the property, go remind them of what the rules are, and let them know that they'll be onsite all day while they go off and do their various activities, painting or cross-country running or Bible study, whatever it is. And the docent will have a first aid kit and a walkie talkie in case there are any issues, they'll be available. And then the group will go off and do their thing. The docent will stay at the staging area, and then make sure that the group safely gets out. And then the next day, maybe it's a local middle school, a teacher wants to do a field experience with the kids. So we're really excited about this. And all these great members on our Education Committee—again, local teachers—are helping us right now

work on the educational signage for the Preserve; curriculum, some of the teachers are designing curriculums that will be on a special section of our website that will go live in March. So if a group wants to reserve the property and they want to get great ideas on age-appropriate activities and educational things to do, there will be curriculums they can just use. And we want to make it as easy as possible and as affordable as possible for all these different groups of people to get out there and have a really special intimate experience in nature. It's their property for the day.

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Tewes: And what an exciting expansion of your work. I want to pause for just a second. [break in audio] Okay, we are back from a break. And very quickly, Ted, I wanted to acknowledge that Save Mount Diablo has been doing open space preservation work for the entirety of its existence, but you did mention a bit about the new conservation easements that you've helped push through here. I guess I just really quickly would be curious to hear about how you think your background in law has impacted what you're bringing to this organization in particular.

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Clement: It's related to the reason why national standards and practices for the country's land trusts and accreditation are so important to me. I just see how important things like that are. It's sort of like understanding the laws, the framework, and how to best operate and be respectful. So I have always put an emphasis on things like that, and that is directly, I think, related to my legal education. But of course, yes, it obviously helped me get our Conservation Easement Program up and running, helps me with land transactions and understanding various legal tools we can use to protect real property. I mean, law and science have been two of the fundamental tools in land conservation, and they will always be, and they should always be. And you know again, I got my bachelor of science as an undergrad and then obviously a law degree, so I'm a full believer in both science and law. Now of course, as we've talked about, we need to add a new tool that gets us even deeper into our relationship with nature, and that's going to be education, but law and science will continue to be critically important for land conservation, and I believe in them immensely.

01-01:37:48

Tewes: Thank you. I wanted to switch gears a bit here and speak about some of the major ways in which Save Mount Diablo supports itself, and one of those of late has been the Forever Wild Capital Campaign. Can you tell me about the history of this ask and what it entails?

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Clement: Yeah, it's an important subject. You know, we completed Forever Wild, this $15 million capital campaign, this year, and it's the largest, most consequential fundraising campaign in our organization's history. And we're coming up on our fiftieth anniversary this December seventh, so it's a great way to begin the fifty-year celebration knowing that we completed the largest

fundraising effort in our organization's history. It started around 2012, and it went on for a few years and raised about $6.6 million for primarily land acquisition related matters. I arrived, brand-new executive director. There was an opportunity to stop the campaign, new direction, new focus, all of that. It was made very clear to me that's something we could do, and I think there was some support for that, but I really saw continuing the campaign and completing it as important for our continued growth, to be improving our Major Gifts Program, to protect more land, and to establish sustaining funds. I really wanted to use it to build critical funds, because land conservation is supposed to be perpetual work, and also, of course, do more good land acquisition work. So we did a feasibility study just to make sure completing the campaign was a reasonable goal considering all the changes. You know, Ron Brown, my predecessor who did so much good stuff for Save Mount Diablo, he had retired, you know, and was there still support and interest in helping Save Mount Diablo complete the Forever Wild Campaign, especially with this new guy who arrived from Hawaii, you know, would that float? So we did a feasibility study, and got that back, I want to say, around November or December 2016. The campaign had been put on hold during the executive director transition and during our feasibility study. Again, it had raised about $6.6 million before I arrived. I came in November 2015, campaign was on hold to give us time to decide whether we wanted to do it again. I wanted to do it again, but I did want to see what a feasibility study would tell us. Did we really have the capacity, were we in the right place to complete it? And the feasibility study came back in November or December 2016 with an overall positive message about going forward, so we started the campaign up again after that. And obviously, there were a lot of challenges, you know, executive director's retiring, new guy coming in. We had a couple different—a few different development directors during that time, and, of course, the pandemic that's been lasting going on two years. So it was a really big deal when we completed it this year, so exciting.

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The campaign made a tangible, lasting difference, not only for our organization, but the whole Mount Diablo area. We raised the funds to conserve nine very important properties, totaling about 2.6 square miles of open space, through completing Forever Wild. Those lands will now be permanently protected and continue to benefit our area. We established a Stewardship Endowment Fund through the second phase of Forever Wild, which was one of those funds I wanted to start. We started that in 2017, and we already have raised over $2.6 million for it, and it's a brand-new fund. We doubled the size of our Legal Defense Fund through the campaign that will continue to benefit us. So yeah, really lasting and beneficial things came out of us completing the campaign. It was not easy. You know, this is in addition to all our annual operating fundraising and efforts, so to lay a capital campaign on top of all of that is a heavy lift. But great people got involved: great donors, great board members, great staff, great volunteers. We stayed

strong in the face of challenges like the pandemic, rose above, and we got the campaign done.

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Tewes: And so I'm clear about this: things like the Legal Defense Fund, these are endowments upon which you can continue to pull?

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Clement: Yeah, the Stewardship Endowment Fund is an endowment fund, and it will be something that we can continue to draw interest from. We were really conservative with it. We actually have a policy for it that says once it hits $3 million, then we can take a sustainable annual draw on the interest, and only the interest, and only a sustainable draw on that interest. So right now we have over $2.6 million raised for it. So we're still not touching it, we're letting compounding interest help grow it. The campaign's over now, because we reached the $15 million mark, but we have a number of other donors who have told us they'll be making gifts to the Stewardship Endowment Fund in their estate plans. It's a great way for a donor to leave a lasting green legacy, to give back in a permanent way to the mountain they love, because again, only the interest will be used. If they make a big estate gift to it, that goes in the endowment and only the interest will be used to help support our stewardship efforts of the Mount Diablo area. The Legal Defense Fund is not an endowment fund. That's just a fund that we've grown to help us if we have to defend some of our conserved lands.

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Tewes: Or even development?

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Clement: Yeah, if some landowner was trying to develop a property that we held a conservation easement on, absolutely, we could use it to defend that property.

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Tewes: Ah, got it. I know we also want to speak about—speaking of COVID-19—what that has meant for Save Mount Diablo, which is a nonprofit organization in a time in which many things were uncertain. Can you tell me about the early challenges that you faced here and how you've overcome some of those?

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Clement: Well, Amanda, if you remember, our fiscal year starts April 1. So imagine April 1, 2020. Really at the end of the prior fiscal year, we started to see the world was falling apart, and by the start of the new fiscal year, it's like, oh my goodness, what is going on? You know, social unrest throughout the country, a pandemic, thousands and thousands and thousands of people dying. I mean, it was really intense, and I will be forever proud and grateful for the way our team responded to it. We announced very early into that new fiscal year, our goal was to keep all of our staff positions, and that when we're in the game of our life, it is about team and it is not a time to be getting rid of staff. We've got to all pull together and fight the good fight to get through this. So we

maintained all of our staff positions, we didn't downsize. We also thought of new creative ways to serve our community in such dark times. We started a "Nature Heals and Inspires" educational lecture program where we bring on a regular basis—basically it works out to about once a month—interesting and free presentations [about how nature can help heal and inspire us, and these presentations are done virtually on Zoom, but can also be seen on You Tube. "The Nature Heals and Inspires" Series includes lots of different experts exploring this topic of how nature heals and inspires us like] ecotherapists helping people understand how they can go outdoors to help them work through these difficult times emotionally, psychologically; artists; conservationists; scientists; all these just great and thoughtful presenters helping folks understand nature's there for us, that's got to be part of the solution and strategy to working through such difficult times. So that was another great service that we were able to create amidst so much darkness. [That program continues to this day and it has been well received.] We also started a special program lighting the beacon [on top of Mount Diablo] every Sunday night and letting it shine until Monday morning, to really create that symbol of hope and gratitude for our first responders and nature. [Looking up to the lit beacon atop Mount Diablo is a way for our communities to lift their chins and look up to the mountain.] Those weekly beacon lightings really stood out in those dark days and meant a lot to a lot of people. And we did that beacon lighting, kept that up for an entire year. We did it from April 2020 to April 2021 during the worst of the pandemic. And once the vaccine was widely spread, and all the numbers were coming to a better place, then we stopped doing the weekly lightning of the beacon to help people get through the crisis period. The Save Mount Diablo team did so well in the thick of it, during the worst of the pandemic, and we're obviously not out of it yet. I mean, there's still a lot of challenges because of the pandemic, but we've learned that our team can absolutely come together during the most trying circumstances, and we can succeed if we really take that team approach, keep our chins up, support one another. And again, I could not be more grateful or proud of our team and the way we responded during the worst of the pandemic.

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Tewes: What have you learned in this time about the public's relationship to open space?

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Clement: Yeah, that's just, it's a silver lining amidst the pandemic. I think so many people have discovered nature, because there weren't many places they could go, so many places were shut down. You can only go to Costco so much. And furthermore, by going to Costco, you're there with a ton of other people in the midst of a pandemic. Nature is a better option. So you know, there've been some challenges that have come out of that. Some of the small, little, secret nature trails I used to know about at some of the regional parks have now tripled or quadrupled in width, because so many people have been using them.

But again, we've got to be real. We're in a crisis period when it comes to our natural world these days, and it's got to start with people getting out and falling in love with nature. Love is the basis of good stewardship. Love is what's required to take care of something, and that love needs to be developed through direct experiences. So it's really been a silver lining to [see] so many people starting to get out to nature, connect with nature. And that part I'm really happy about when it comes to the pandemic; that's a silver lining. And kudos to our partners at East Bay Regional Park District and Mount Diablo State Park. Early on in the pandemic, we used our advocacy and voice to really encourage partners like East Bay Regional Park District and Mount Diablo State Park to stay open for our communities, because some parks in the country were shutting down in the pandemic, and we really encouraged parks to stay open. Safer place for people to go, they shouldn't be congregating at Costco or Walmart; and people need something positive to get them through such a stressful period. So we put a lot of effort into encouraging our partners to keep their parks open.

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Tewes: And I think we've seen the benefit to that, certainly, almost two years in. You know, you've mentioned that you're a student of the history of land conservation. And I'm wondering if you could maybe put Save Mount Diablo in the context of the work that others are doing nationally, and maybe even regionally.

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Clement: Yeah, well, as I've mentioned before, Save Mount Diablo has such a great, great history, and is an important part of the land conservation movement. You know, we were started in 1971. Again, we've got our fiftieth anniversary coming up on December 7, 2021, and we're going to celebrate it for an entire year starting December 7, 2021 forward to December 7, 2022. So we started in 1971, shortly after that first Earth Day in 1970. A lot of land conservation organizations were formed after that first Earth Day, so we're part of that early historic expansion of land trusts. You know, the oldest land trust in the country is arguably The Trustees of Reservations in Massachusetts, which was started in 1891. Henry David Thoreau started writing about the need for things like local land trusts—he called them committees in his journaling—in the 1860s, but these local conservation organizations really didn't start to kick into gear in a major way until around, you know, after that first Earth Day. And we were part of that early big expansion. And we're somewhat unique, too. I mean, advocacy is one of the tools used by many land trusts, but our advocacy arm is especially large and significant. And I think that's in part because of where we were born. The San Francisco Bay Area is historically known for advocacy. And Save Mount Diablo was a leader in using advocacy so effectively to help with land conservation, and that's a proud part of our history, as it should be, and I think it's also very reflective of the fact that we were born in the San Francisco Bay Area; it's part of our DNA.

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Tewes: "It's part of the DNA." I like that. Well as we mentioned, we are on the cusp of the fiftieth anniversary for Save Mount Diablo. What do you hope for the future of the organization?

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Clement: Continued growth and continued great conservation. You know, I look forward to us continuing to grow these educational programs to get people more connected to nature to help us better address the climate crisis and mass species extinction event. I look forward to much more land conservation. We've expanded into Mount Diablo's sustaining Diablo Range, which is a huge thing, and I want to give a lot of credit to Seth Adams for that. It's an outstanding idea and could not be more important in this time of climate crisis, where it's all about the resiliency and connectivity of natural systems. And Mount Diablo depends on and is sustained by its range, the Diablo Range. It cannot be cut off from the Diablo Range, or it will suffer greatly. So that was an early idea that Seth brought up with me, and I was so happy to support him in that great idea and getting it approved by our Board. Thankfully, our board supported our expansion further south into the Diablo Range. And so we'll have more and more work to do in the next fifty years as we shore up the Diablo Range, make sure that Mount Diablo does not lose its life sustaining connection. Yeah, there's a lot of good conservation left to do.

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Tewes: Is there anything you'd like to add, Ted, that we haven't been able to discuss yet?

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Clement: Yeah. Well, I apologize if I've rambled all over the place. [laughs] I enjoyed the conversation. Well, Amanda, you're doing great. Thank you for your patience as I wander and thank you for keeping me on task. You've done a great job. Well, I guess if anything, I would probably want to end by expressing my gratitude to my family—I get choked up even thinking about it—[gets emotional] and my team.

01-01:53:19
Tewes: How do you think they've all supported you and this work over the years?

01-01:53:24
Clement: Oh, in so many ways. Yeah, I couldn't do what I do without my wife and kids. I couldn't do what I do without the great team at Save Mount Diablo. [gets emotional] So yeah, I'm very fortunate and I'm very grateful.

01-01:53:43
Tewes: I have to say from all the conversations I've had with other folks, they're grateful for you, as well. So I think that has come full circle.

01-01:53:52
Clement: Well, thank you. I've enjoyed it, Amanda. And again, my apologies if I've jumped all over the place. I hope it's coherent when you do the transcripts or whatever.

01-01:54:04
Tewes: No problem. Thank you, Ted.

01-01:54:06
Clement: Great, thank you.

[End of Interview]