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University of California
Berkeley, California

Bob Doyle

Bob Doyle: An Environmentalist's Perspective on Land Conservation

Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Shanna Farrell
in 2021

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Robert Doyle at Mitchell Creek on Mount Diablo in 2017, Photo by Tina Batt.

Abstract

Robert Doyle was born in 1952 in Concord, California. He was first introduced to Mount Diablo as a Boy Scout and developed an interest in science and environmentalism at a young age. He became involved with Save Mount Diablo in 1971 shortly after it was founded. He worked with the organization until the 1980s when he was hired at the East Bay Regional Park District, though he continued to be involved with the organization individually. In this interview, Doyle discusses his early life, education, developing an interest in conservation, the early days of Save Mount Diablo, working closely with the founders, involvement with environmental activism, hiring Seth Adams, transitioning to the East Bay Regional Park District, how his work there overlapped with Save Mount Diablo, the role of land acquisition in environmental conversation, the importance of parks, and his hope for the future of environmental activism.

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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: July 15, 2021

01-00:00:46
Farrell: Okay, this is Shanna Farrell with Bob Doyle on Thursday, July 15, 2021, and this is an interview for the Save Mount Diablo Fiftieth Anniversary Oral History Project. Bob, can you start by telling me where and when you were born and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:01:07
Doyle: I was born in Concord, [California] on Mount Diablo Street in downtown old Concord in 1952, very close to the Queen of all Saints Catholic parochial school. My mother played organ for the church, so it was close by the church, and about I think fourth and fifth grade, we moved to Dana Estates, which was next to the Concord Naval Weapons Station, a fairly new subdivision at that time. What was happening all over Concord is all the orchards and fields were being plowed under for new housing after World War II [during] that growth period.

01-00:02:04
Farrell: What are some of the sights or sounds or images that you remember from the neighborhood growing up?

01-00:02:11
Doyle: Just at that time, every young child was told to go outside and play all day, very different than today, just go out and find a friend and play, and that's what we did and explored. The neighborhoods were very busy. A lot of kids being born at that time, and there was a high population of children playing and being outside. It was the older part of Concord, and it was right next to the Mount Diablo High School. One of the places everybody played was to go over to the high school. It has a really big field, much bigger than probably schools are today, for some reason, that area. It had the football field, the track, but also just had a lot of field area.

01-00:03:07
Farrell: Did you spend much time hiking or camping when you were growing up?

01-00:03:13
Doyle: Not until Boy Scouts. I was in the Mount Diablo pack of the Boy Scouts, and that's when I really started doing outings and camping.

01-00:03:28
Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents, what their names are and some of your early memories of them?

01-00:03:34
Doyle: My mother is Sadie Doyle, and my father is James E. Doyle. They came to Concord like late 1930s before the war. My dad created a company to haul hardware equipment and later grew that into a fairly big truck company. My mother was a musician and a home keeper, and she always loved music and

played piano and organ. She actually played violin and viola in college. They were both from the Seattle area of Washington state.

01-00:04:21
Farrell: Do you know what brought them down here?

01-00:04:24
Doyle: A job. The Seattle area after the war or before the war was like so many other things, having the Depression, and there were no jobs. My dad came to work for his brother who was in construction in this area.

01-00:04:41
Farrell: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

01-00:04:45
Doyle: Yeah, I have two older brothers, Bill Doyle and Dennis Doyle.

01-00:04:50
Farrell: Are they older or younger or older?

01-00:04:53
Doyle: Both older, both older.

01-00:04:54
Farrell: Older, okay. Did they spend time outside? I'm also trying to get a sense of how interested in the outdoors your family was when you were growing up.

01-00:05:05
Doyle: Not very much. They're older than me, and there's a space between them. My dad was very much into sports and was a coach, was a basketball and baseball coach, actually played some baseball out of Saint Mary's College league when he was younger. But no, I wouldn't say they were outdoor campers at all. Most of my camping started with the Boy Scouts and then ended up with friends whose families camped.

01-00:05:39
Farrell: Okay, I see. How did your interest in the environment develop?

01-00:05:45
Doyle: Well, oddly enough, it really started with just gardening. Even as I was growing up in grade school, I was starting to get little gardening jobs and so I was gardening a lot and had a vegetable garden. I always, always enjoyed gardening and so that was kind of the outdoor dirt part, dirt digging, very important. I just ended up being one of those kids, like so many at the time, that would be looking for frogs and snakes. There was a creek at the Mount Diablo High School downtown and so a lot of kids would be looking for frogs in the creek and hiking around, getting lost, things like that.

01-00:06:31
The actual first ever introduction to Mount Diablo was because the Ginochio family, a very large property owner and six generations or more, they live

very close. One of the kids there was in my class, and we were good friends. I actually would remember very vividly getting in Mr. Ginochio's Cadillac and driving up to Mount Diablo on North Gate Road and hanging out in the barn and the animals. That was really the first introduction; I really enjoyed it.

01-00:07:14
Farrell: What do you remember about Mount Diablo at that point?

01-00:07:21
Doyle: Well, the big issue for most people at the time is that several times a year when there would be snow on it and it looked like a much bigger mountain. My mother loved to drive, go on a very, very long drives. She actually helped my dad drive some trucks during the war when there were less drivers. She just always had this knack for liking to drive and go out into the country, so I'm sure she drove me up to the top of Mount Diablo just for a Sunday drive. She loved to drive in the country; she loved scenery.

01-00:07:59
Farrell: When you were in grade school and high school, were you interested in earth sciences or biology? Were there any science-based classes that you found yourself gravitating towards or were you interested in other subjects?

01-00:08:15
Doyle: Yeah, absolutely. It really, really became a focal point probably my sophomore year in high school when biology was a requirement. I had a biology teacher named Martin Shea, a very important mentor who really, really was a great teacher and gave his extra time to do that, so I got very interested in that. Then, he actually taught an ecology class at the time, environmental studies, which was fairly new term at that time. His books were Rachel Carson's *Silent of Spring*, Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, *Population Bomb*. It was just a very heady time in the late '60s and early '70s for the environment. Really, the first Earth Day happened, it was the environmental movement. The teachers at Concord High School where I went were really very into that, but I took chemistry, I took all advanced biology, I was really headed for a biology major.

01-00:09:25
Farrell: Yes, how did that overlap with what you were studying when you were in college?

01-00:09:30
Doyle: Same thing, I went to Diablo Valley College first, and actually, the biology department paid for all my tuition and books at Diablo Valley College. My family didn't have much money at that time. By the time I was in college, I was so involved with Save Mount Diablo and other environmental issues that I just continued there, but the formative issues really all happened in my junior and senior year in high school.

01-00:10:09
Farrell: Okay, and, yeah, given that the first Earth Day was happening then, the environmental movement was starting—the period of years when all a lot of the environmental regulatory acts were being written—what do you remember being discussed about them or learning about them, and how did that spark your interest? How impactful was that?

01-00:10:39
Doyle: Well, I think that goes back again to my biology teachers. But really, I would say a big thing that happened at that time, so I was in advanced biology, but I was offered a teaching assistant or TA job for credit—I think it was either my first part of my senior year or the last part of my junior year. Another biology teacher said, There was this teacher in the middle school across the street from Concord High, and she has an opening for a teaching assistant for her class in science, and so that but different than Martin Shea and other biology says, So why don't you go meet her?

01-00:11:25
So I went over, and I was getting credit for that and went over and met her. Her name, Jane Helrich, she's another founding board member, and she is just this amazing, amazing person who loved to teach young people. She would say, I could've been offered to teach high school or college, but by that time, people were too strongminded and she loved the open-mindedness of young people. She had this class where she actually brought legislators in, and that's where I met John Nejedly at the time who became the assemblyman then senator, and assemblymembers. She'd have them in, and she had really a legislative class even though it was focused on the environment. That was so fascinating to me, to listen to Nejedly who became a very good friend later on, a very, very good friend, and he talked about the Delta.

01-00:12:30
Well, what happened is that led to a summer job. She, Jane Helrich had the teaching job to go out on the Delta boat. I forgot the name of it, but it was a boat that was sponsored by the water district, and they had classes out in the Delta, and we would go out and test. We'd take mud samples and water samples, it was really great, and it was really interesting to learn about the Delta. She loved the Delta and she's a very good bird watcher. She would actually go up to the steel plant in the boat, DuPont and take samples. I remember as the assistant there, that actually security came out on a patrol boat and said we couldn't take any pictures, and we had to leave, so it was an interesting shock to me of environmental activism. She was just so great, and she really introduced me Save Mount Diablo.

01-00:13:39
Long before, not long, but before Save Mount Diablo was created, she helped organize an organization of all the Mount Diablo School District high schools, and it was called Save America's Natural Environment. Again, at the time of all the ecological things going on and so I became president of that

organization. What happened is first, the Contra Costa Youth Council, which was park youth council, the president invited me there but then she invited me to join the Save Mount Diablo. It really started with tours on the properties with the East Bay Regional Park District, very vivid memories of meeting, Hulet Hornbeck for the first time, who ended up being my boss later on, and just to be young.

01-00:14:34

The emphasis there, although most people in Save Mount Diablo were in their fifties and sixties at the time, they really wanted a voice for youth at the time and so they really encouraged me to speak. I spoke before Nejedly's natural resources committee in Sacramento on a tax measure for the Park District in the early 1970s, probably '71, probably, maybe 1970. Everybody went on a bus to support parks and so that was where I first Dr. Mary Bowerman. I remember being very nervous of meeting this prestigious PhD and pioneer botanist from Mount Diablo. There was just a lot going on even that early in my life and with all these marvelous activists at the time.

01-00:15:32

Farrell: It really sounds like you were taking these classes, I'm assuming with other people your age, but you're really connecting with an older generation. Were there people your age that were interested in the environmental movement or these organizations at that time? Given that you're the president of these organizations and you start to get involved with Save Mount Diablo, how were you helping recruit the younger voice too?

01-00:16:03

Doyle: Yeah, well, that's interesting, and I really haven't talked much about this in the past, but the same biology teacher, Martin Shea, wanted to form a science club at the high school and because a lot of my friends were interested in gardening and vegetables and things like that, in organic gardening actually. He became the sponsor, and we called it the Botanical Society and actually was an ecology club. But we became the richest club in the high school because we had permission from the school to have all the recycling. Any money we did with recycling, we got to keep it, and I think that was one of the first things I remember. The same thing happened at Clayton Valley High School; they also had the recycling. In the high schools, the recycling centers became a way for clubs to raise money. I remember going to Clayton Valley High School and them giving me a check for a thousand dollars, $500 to give to Save Mount Diablo.

01-00:17:23

Long story short, there were a lot of young people involved. We probably had thirty people in the Botanical Society that were all young people. We were raising money, we were doing recycling, we were doing plant sales, we actually had musical festivals. We ended up having so much money that we gave the senior class a loan because we had just really raised money. I think that that's really funny because that's definitely a thread throughout my career

is fundraising. But it really started that early with just recycling glass and cans and throwing events and we had bands at the high school, we had the multipurpose room, so we had everybody coming. We just started making money and giving donations to Save Mount Diablo but other organizations as well.

01-00:18:30
Farrell: It sounds like a lot of these actions or the concept of thinking about the environment was really integrated in a lot of things. It doesn't seem like you had to push super hard for it. Do you feel like that's because there was so much going on in the period of time, historically, in that context?

01-00:18:50
Doyle: Absolutely, I think about that so much today with all the climate change concern and the issues of equity and inclusion and the whole social youth effort. I just go like, Well, I'm so lucky because we had more senior mentors that guided us on how to be effective in being an advocate or raising money or these important things, and it's just I feel so lucky. We're talking about Vietnam War, we're talking about Nixon, we're talking about assassinations of presidents, it was very tumultuous. I think a lot of young people were looking for something positive to do, and you couldn't be more positive than to try to save the Earth. And because of the guidance of these other people, we really focused on the local things. We were very active in Earth Days. We were organizers for Earth Day until that got more corporate and greenwashed, but early, it was all young people and people who were really involved in these things. If you think about the Bay Area, Save The Bay was created at the same time, People for Open Space was created was an organization, just a lot going on. If you just look at that generation of things about the same time at Save Mount Diablo, there was a lot of things happening not only state and federal legislation, which is huge, but just organizational, environmental groups being founded.

01-00:20:27
Farrell: Yeah, yeah, and so given all this, I'm curious about the formation of Save Mount Diablo. You mentioned that you met Mary Bowerman when you were in Sacramento speaking at that committee. What were your first impressions of her?

01-00:20:45
Doyle: Well, she had a British accent. She was very quiet, and she had these eyes that would penetrate you and just very curious and very, I would say, cautious in her conversations. Clearly, she hadn't been around a lot of kids, she never had kids herself, but just she was a special person, and I knew that. I'm sure I was talking to other people particularly, Jane Halrich and some of other people at the time.

01-00:21:21
Farrell: And at what point did you meet Arthur Bonwell?

01-00:21:25

Doyle: Probably at the first meeting of Save Mount Diablo. Art was an active bicyclist, Diablo Wheelman, and was an engineer by trade, by vocation, and just very interesting, probing, strong, asking questions. That was always an interesting thing to me because when you're young and you have these older wizards, it's interesting because they always—Mary did this and Art did [this]—if you'd say anything, they'd say, Are you sure, how do you know that? I mean this, kind of the testing of facts to be careful. and I'm sure Art got that from his science engineering background and Mary had it from her—you know, botany is very specific and very minute in looking at the details. But just a wonderful group of people, incredibly generous spirit.

01-00:22:27

I think particularly that Bill and Gen Sattler were two of my favorites. Bill Sattler was the co-owner of the Sattler's Appliance in Concord, which was a big store at the time, kind of like Fry's became later, and very quiet. He was the treasurer forever but very, very interesting, wonderful person. He had grown up hiking on Mount Diablo because he was local, and I was surprised to hear there actually was a Boy Scout camp in Mitchell Canyon, which later on I can figure out where that was, a big, flat space with a ball field that no longer exists. Gen was very active in Audubon and was a nurse. So people, they had jobs, they were busy, but they dedicated their time to this. Obviously, Mary was full time with her botany.

01-00:23:27

Farrell: What was your interest in joining Save Mount Diablo? I know that you grew up on a street called Mount Diablo, it's in your backyard, and you're involved in other organizations, but why focus your energy on Save Mount Diablo in those early days?

01-00:23:44

Doyle: Well, it was pretty simple. I was invited to some of these early hikes to look at property that might be a park, and I was just fascinated that, really, we're deciding where the parks are going to be? We would have like Hulet Hornbeck to hike or Walter Knight who's the person who first hired me at the Park District who became a park manager who's a botanist also, so there's a relationship there. But we would go out to explore property, and it was just a lot of fun. You had the botany expert, a lot of times, you had the geology expert, you would have a biologist, you'd have a historian, you have all of these people that were just so knowledgeable about different things and then we sit in a circle and talk about the politics of raising money and how do we get the state park, and I was just like a sponge. I don't really know why, but it was just so fascinating to me to be with these people and learn so much and realize that we can actually do something. But it was really fun to go explore.

01-00:24:57

Farrell: How, in those early days as a founding board member, were you trying to get people involved, especially considering that there's a lot of other things

happening at that time, like Save the Bay and the Sierra Club, and that kind of thing?

01-00:25:11

Doyle: Well, if you look at the early membership, the majority was from Concord of the members that—Peg Kovar that was Walnut Creek and Egon Peterson was Danville, but most of them were from the area, so it was really focused on our immediate area. We cared about our area and Mount Diablo being the center point of that, so I think that was easier that way. From the very beginning, the discussions at the formal meetings both before it became incorporated and in the beginning was really focused on these discussions of what do we do, what's this, what's this property, there's no money, how do we get some money? It was very, very clear that it was to be 100 percent focused on expanding the state park. We were supporting regional parks, but it was really focused on the fact that Mount Diablo State Park had not been receiving its fair share, as we looked at it, of statewide money.

01-00:26:18

I mean that's the other side is that you're talking local, but in Sacramento, a lot was happening with park bonds. William Penn Mott who was the director, who I had his job, honored to say, at the Park District, but he was the state park director at the time. That's really where I met him was through Save Mount Diablo. We would go meet with him, and here's this group of maybe five people, go up and meet with the director of state parks and say, How come we're not getting any money and this is really important? Then we'd meet with the head of land acquisition and would say, Here's what we think is important, and then we'd meet with Nejedly. This is before term limits, so Nejedly was there for a very long time before Senator Boatwright ended up taking his place. But we would meet the same day we'd meet with legislators and say, We really want to get money for this property or that property, and it was just because Nejedly was such an environmentalist, a republican environmentalist and such an outdoors person. John was really, really focused on youth, he always had been, he's a true Boy Scout, but he also really liked to be involved with kids. He had started a camp in the Sierra Nevada for kids with handicaps, just a marvelous man.

01-00:27:49

Interestingly enough as a sidebar, Congressman George Miller was the same way. They're so used to meeting with adults who are hammering them on things and politics, and they always said, Well, we want some young people here, where are [they]? And both of them would just be much more animated and interested and took the time.

01-00:28:14

My very first experience with John Nejedly was at his house. I was invited, and this was the fight over Blackhawk development, the first big development that changed everything in San Ramon Valley, and he wanted to pull together the Sierra Club and some other people to talk about it. I walked into his house,

and I'm like this kid, and he says, Relax, sit down, and then he'd actually say, Well, what do you think? I go, I think we should preserve as much as we can, how brilliant. I don't know if that happens today, and this was at his house. It's just a very interesting time for engagement.

01-00:29:00
Farrell: Yeah, and sometimes, I feel like you just need that youthful optimism and looking at a problem from a different, fresh perspective and that makes a big difference.

01-00:29:09
Doyle: Yes, they're going to ask, Why can't we? rather than, Why should we?

01-00:29:14
Farrell: Exactly, exactly, yeah. I want to talk about the state park relationship in a few minutes, but first, when you were in those early days, how were you deciding who would be a board member and who would be a volunteer or a steward?

01-00:29:33
Doyle: Well, I think the very first meeting was really trying to get a broad representation of people who would be committed to it, and it was all voluntary and who would give the time. I don't think there was a lot of discussion about—I think if you were there and showed up, you could be a member. The interesting thing to me is the very beginning meeting with all the names, that lasted for maybe a year or two, but then it really got down to the core, core, which was the same people I mentioned. It was Mary Bowerman, Art Bonwell, Gen and Bill Sattler, Betty Zilen who was also a teacher. She really is a historian, so she loved to talk about the families and the ranchers and the history. There were people, Bob Canning and other people that came and went, but those were really the core for a very long time. Peg Kovar was first president. Until she got into politics, became the mayor of Walnut Creek, she was on board. But the core group was that core group, and it expanded later on. Bob Walker was there and all of his activism for Sierra Club and everything else. We tried to get representatives of the Sierra Club, representatives of Audubon, representatives of all the other groups within Save Mount Diablo, but it was really the core that kept it going.

01-00:31:02
Farrell: Who was Save Mount Diablo for in those days?

01-00:31:07
Doyle: What do you mean?

01-00:31:08
Farrell: Who were you trying to attract, or who were you hoping would be involved, and who were you hoping to do these actions for?

01-00:31:21
Doyle: Well, I think there's a very, I would say, defined change. The beginning was really always talking about property and money from Sacramento, and that

went on for a very long time. When I became president, it became because there were more development challenges. Creeping up the mountain, I always envisioned as kind of a tide, like climate change with the seal level rise, but it was houses not water creeping up the side of the mountain, and became more focused on how you build, support the organization. We had a big meeting one time over a property that was threatened, and Dean Lesher who founded the *Contra Costa Times* hosted this meeting and the developer—it was pretty high-level pro-development. I remember Dean Lesher saying, Well, what are you saving Mount Diablo from? It's already a state park. I really thought that was a hurdle because most people look at it and go, There's no threat there, it's all state park. Only the top was in the state park at the time till we added Mitchell Canyon and Donner Canyon then Pine Canyon. All those happened in the early period of Save Mount Diablo in the seventies. I realized at the time that—and probably this was a philosophical discussion with Art Bonwell because he was the most engaged in those kind of philosophical discussions. Mary was just like, "How are we going to buy this?" I realized that you really needed to get people educated about it.

01-00:33:03

We really started doing more and more of what Seth does today of trying to get articles in the paper about what's threatened and how beautiful Mount Diablo is and really started picking off environmental writers in the newspaper. One of the early things we did was there were a lot of walkathons, and hike-a-thons was the popular. I guess that'd be comparable to GoFundMe now but, I mean, that was the mechanism for people to raise money. We would have a hike-a-thon starting at Mitchell Canyon and you had to hike all the way to the top of Mount Diablo, and you get sponsors, and it was very successful. I mean we had lines and lines of people trying to hike on Mount Diablo. If you could only go up to Deer Flat or part way up, you'd still get a sponsor, and you get money, I remember those days where I actually I ended up probably hiking up Mount Diablo twice to get to the different people in the different stations because what was part of my responsibility was to help make sure there were people at card tables.

01-00:34:11

That's always the funny part for me in the early days of activism. For Save Mount Diablo, it was Gen and Bill Sattler, but somebody always had a card table that they're going to bring. Whether it's a shopping center or a state park, they would have a card table with fold-up chairs, and they'd be sitting there with the information. I'm sure Save the Bay did that, and I'm sure many, many other, but it just kind of that funny. Today, it would be a series of computers at a table getting donations. It was very basic in those days.

01-00:34:47

That really got more people and kids involved because they were doing the hike. A real interesting thing, and it's pertinent today is who wants to go to a meeting for three hours, four hours? I think that generation of people was really used to sitting at a board meeting for four hours. Another very

wonderful environmental activist was Jean Siri who was an urban activist in West Contra Costa. But she would be famous for sitting at a board of supervisors meeting knitting the whole time, hours and hours sitting there and then finally got up, and basically, she probably yelled at the board of supervisors. She was very, very strong and wonderful. People were willing to put in that time, and a lot of that time, you're fidgeting. I mean there's nothing to do, you're waiting, you're just listening. I think that that's a challenge for a lot of activists today is I don't want to go to a meeting or I don't want to be on the Zoom call for three hours just to say three things. Having action in the field, and we had people collecting—I think we collected 10,000 or 20,000 signatures for a bond measure for state parks in the early days. There were a lot of bond measures, some of those were sponsored by Planning & Conversation League. If you collected so many signatures, you'd be able to get some language in the bond measure for funding for Mount Diablo or parks. There were a lot of those type of external, nonmeeting actions that I think are more motivating to people.

01-00:36:29

Farrell: Also, you'd mention that in those early days, you're still in college, and this is a volunteer organization, so what are your career aspirations at this point?

01-00:36:40

Doyle: I had worked in a nursery for selling plants, and I had always worked summers and weekends even when I was in high school and so mainly focused on gardening and landscaping. I had done that as a job and then I was offered a job by Walter Knight who met me on a hike with Save Mount Diablo and knew I was interested in botany and that I knew how to—he would say I knew how to run a chainsaw. That was in 1973, twenty-one years old was my first job with the Park District. I realized that it paid pretty well compared to having to get paid and pay for everything else, it had medical and everything else.

01-00:37:38

The next year I did not get hired because the East Bay Regional Park District had a strike, a union strike for about a very short period and so I was working for the city of Martinez at the marina. The next year, I got hired back by the Park District and eventually got on permanent. I worked in about six of the regional parks before I was tapped by the planning department again because of Save Mount Diablo, my experience there, to read EIRs and respond to them and do planning. And then Hulet hired me later to try to get the regional trail system going.

01-00:38:23

Farrell: Okay, so your transition into the district—and you started as a ranger—was pretty seamless it sounds like?

01-00:38:30
Doyle: Yeah, and it was like nothing. It was just like, wow, this is a job, this is what I like to do, how lucky am I, and maybe I could get on here permanent. It was never like as a kid, I want to go be a ranger—just it was a good job, and I was happy to have it.

01-00:38:49
Farrell: How did you balance your time between the Park District and your work with Save Mount Diablo?

01-00:38:57
Doyle: Well, it was always a challenge because I was president for a very long time and a board member for twenty-five years. Eventually as I started to go up in the Park District, there were just too much, and I had a family, it was just too much to do. For a couple of years, I pulled back early on and then later, I got more involved again, particularly on the fight over the towers that were built in the state park, which is today still remarkable to me that that was ever allowed—private towers within property the state owned. I got very involved again during those periods. I was living on Mount Diablo for about six, seven years in Donner Canyon, which certainly had a very strong impression for my commitment because I was living in the wilderness or practically the wilderness at that time. Clayton was just starting to build out into the countryside and so my activism was pretty strong at the time. Again as I got more responsibilities, particularly in the land department, there was pressure. Save Mount Diablo was willing to take on tough fights, had the courage to fight things that were being purposed all the time and again what Seth has continued to do is fight the good fight for open space and wilderness. I got a little pressure to like, Okay, you're really busy here and you have an important job, so we want you to cool it on your activism for Mount Diablo. That was fine because I was married and I just had young children and so I then really focused on the land department in the Park District, and that was 1980 or mid—'85, '86.

01-00:41:03
Farrell: Okay, got you, okay. Thank you.

01-00:41:06
Doyle: I did the trails from '79 to '85.

01-00:41:11
Farrell: Okay, got it, okay. And then speaking on the note of land, I am interested in talking about the relationship with the state parks because I think that's a really interesting part of Save Mount Diablo's history. You had mentioned that one of the early goals, the organizing, the focal points was getting more land, getting more money from the state parks. How were you appealing to them for more money for this land preservation?

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Doyle: Well, pretty much exactly the regular meetings. It was probably twice a year we went up to Sacramento, but it was a combination. Maybe it was Jane Halrich or Art, but we'd meet with the management at state park system and say, You know, we're not getting our fair share, or This is really important. We would meet. We did have some allies in the state park, particularly the head of resources in state parks. I'm trying to remember his name, but a wonderful man who really, really liked Mary and really liked Mount Diablo and so he had a good ear to hear. And obviously, Bill Mott—William Penn Mott knew, because of the regional parks knew the area and cared about it, but he was balancing the whole statewide system. Bill would always say, There's no money, really you're doing a great job, but there's no money, and we said, Well, the legislators make that decision with the governor. Then we meet with Nejedly and then we'd meet with whoever our assemblymember was at the time; there were a lot of different ones. We didn't really go broader than that.

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Remember too that in the '60s, the population of Contra Costa County was 400,000—it's now over a million—so it was a lot. We had less assemblymembers at that time, less legislative districts and so that's just how we did it. It was always the impactful process of realizing that we had a chance to make something happen, and without it, it wouldn't happen. Even today, the struggle for state park funding attention is very, very difficult, very frustrating. The East Bay Regional Park District because they were local and because they were the two full counties. At the time, they weren't two full counties, about half of each county—they always had them because of Hornbeck and others and Dick Trudeau and the staff then. They were always very, very active and looking ambitious to expand and very assertive about building that park system. The state park was always harder. It was just because it's spread out throughout the state, and this is the way we've always done things, and very subject to the politics of Sacramento.

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Farrell: How important were state park bond acts and bond measures for fundraising efforts at that point?

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Doyle: Absolutely. Today, most people talk about the organizations raising money, and even though they have, and Save Mount Diablo just completed their fifteen—I think $15-million capital campaign, but millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars literally flowed from Sacramento. When Nejedly was there and Boatwright after Nejedly, there was probably a bond measure every two to four years, every two to four years, and we always were able to get. I remember one time I got—this is when I was president and was very active. With Boatwright, I think we got $6 million in the budget for Mount Diablo and also got $6 million for the East Bay parks too. But there was just a time when the leg—I mean just to segue a tiny bit, but Boatwright was not an environmentalist. He was really pro-development, he was very

conservative even though he was a Democrat, but he really liked Mount Diablo—I just had a relationship early on. He actually was from my neighborhood. He lived in my neighborhood when I was growing up, and he got on the schoolboard and then worked through the process politically. He was considered really pro-development but he really embraced parks, and he got into a position where he was the chair of the budget committee and chair of the finance committee. He had both committees, which would never happen today. He just got money all the time, and it was just a different time between bond measures and actual budget allocations because Nejedly did that too.

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I tell the story many times about Nejedly and money, which is Albert Seeno had bought a piece of property next to Donner Canyon that Save Mount Diablo was trying to buy themselves, had made an offer on it. He came in and bought it, and we came to Nejedly and said, Look, we really need the money right now to buy this if we can do it because we had still an opportunity to maybe get it out of the hands of Seeno. He got very, very angry because he says, Well, you've been coming up here for years now, you know it's too late for any budget legislative appropriation. He was just mad because I think he wanted to help, but we were pressuring him to help, and it was too late in the Sacramento cycle for the budget. I remember Mary just looked at him and just said with her piercing eyes, blue eyes and said, Well, you know, we just really need this, you have to do something. He was pretty frustrated. He told me later he was very angry. We went away with our tail between our legs thinking, this is not going to happen.

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Two days later, he had pushed the bill through for—I think it was a million one to buy that property. So just that's the type of—really mad, we were late, but he had such power as a committee chair that he was able to get something in the budget. It was all about Sacramento money, very little was raised by Save Mount Diablo in the early years, a lot of that was donations from Mary Bowerman herself and others. But it was really about getting bond measures on the ballot and getting them passed and getting the appropriations through the state budget. We had champions in Sacramento to do that; Boatwright and Nejedly being the foremost at that time. It continued when Tom Torlackson became assemblymember then in the Senate. He was very, very helpful but always had that activism in Sacramento because very little money came from the federal government at that time. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is the federal source of funding for most parks and natural resources went to the state and so that stateside share. We got some of that for some things. Most of that went to the Redwoods and expanded the Redwoods greatly. But the overall picture is that period from the '70s to the '90s was an incredible period of funding and expansion of coastal parks and state parks and other parks who just had a lot of money coming out of Sacramento until really the '90s when things really had some budget problems. Wilson and

Deukmejian were both more conservative and had some tough times, and state parks really started going downhill as far as funding.

01-00:49:41

Farrell: Yeah, can you tell me a little bit more about that, about that transition from this period of time—twenty years essentially—where open space preservation is being expanded and then going from that to all of a sudden less of an interest from the state to fund these things? What was that like and how it affected Save Mount Diablo?

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Doyle: Well, at that time Save Mount Diablo had really grown. The good part is it had more support and really grown a lot. But I really attribute it to term limits. What started to happen in Sacramento across the board is you have a limited time to be there, so when you get elected to the assembly, it's not going to be a lifelong job or commitment, so you may literally start thinking, where I go next? Well, the Senate is where I go next. If you look at all the last twenty-plus years or since term limits, you can see that's what everybody did. They went from board of supervisors or local mayor to assembly and then to senate, and it just became a constant revolving door of campaigns to raise money. They're there with less tenure and less power and less opportunity to really build a champion for parks, and that's something I've spoken a lot about nationally and statewide about you have to build champions in your elected bodies or they're going to—you know? Like right now of course, it's homeless and everything else. There's so many pressures, but there are just less champions.

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Until Prop 68 in 2018, we went through a period of eighteen years without a bond measure, and again, every two to four years, it used to have it. I had a legislator who told me when I was the general manager and pushing for Prop 68 actually said, We do that? We do bond measures for parks in Sacramento? They had completely forgotten. Those term limits created a situation, and the same is true with the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Washington where legislators have never heard of them, so it was like you're doing something brand new when you're not. It got out of the queue and out of people, the environmental movement had gone very professional, less activism and so just really a remarkable change. The impact on state parks was that they're operating on a budget that's really back to the '90s, yet there's been incredible growth in population. It's really gone downhill, and it's gone downhill because a lack of money and because as people retired out, you did not get another generation.

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The activism that happened from organization like Save Mount Diablo and others was really great, but you also had internal activism. You had people like me eventually who came up through that process and became leaders who were really committed to expanding parks and conservation and

environmental education. They stopped hiring people in Sacramento, so you didn't get people who were really internal activists like Bill Mott was. If you look at the succession of state park directors now, a lot of them are political appointees who weren't park professionals and just did not have the clout that they used to have. There are some significant changes, I won't take the time, but in some administrations particularly under Wilson, state parks became more of a subset department rather than a leadership role. With Bill Mott there, he reported directly to the governor, to Reagan, and Reagan would always say, Well, I'll take care of the politics, you take care of the parks, and I'll support you. When it became department of the resource agency like fish and game, like water, like everything else, and it just became a secondary role and really didn't have the clout for funding that it had back in those golden years.

01-00:54:19
Farrell: And that led to lack of engagement with the state parks because there was just this disinterest. From what I understand, Save Mount Diablo began to work more closely with the Park District, and so how did that relationship help with funding for land acquisition?

01-00:54:36
Doyle: Yeah, I think that's a very correct statement, as the state got less and less money for expanding the state park system, the Park District was getting more. And 1988 was the big change, and Bob Walker and along with Seth and everybody else really worked to pass the first—in many others, the first bond measure in the history of the Park District, and I cowrote it and wrote the acquisition section. What you do frankly when you're going to go out to the voters, you go meet with everybody and then say, What's your highest priorities? You don't invent it; you create it with people who are going to fight for it. I made sure that there were money for those regional parks surrounding Mount Diablo and for new ones. That was very important at the time. There's no question that now that I'm retired that there was a lot of influence from my own philosophy in preserving what I consider the last best places in the East Bay. I always had to balance that because there were some board members who accused me one time of like I only care about Contra Costa County not Alameda County, which wasn't true because I was really expanding the urban shorelines massively, which was a lot of fun. Intellectually and activity-wise that was as much fun as expanding the other park, the big parks.

01-00:56:14
Farrell: I want to take a minute to specifically talk about Bob Walker. He's come up a couple of times, but I want to talk about the work that he did. My understanding is that he really loved that Morgan Territory and that range, and he was really good at meeting locals and saying, You really love this land, don't you want to preserve this instead of having it overly developed? and was great at forming those relationships, so they would sell their land to Mount Diablo or to the Park District. Can you tell me a little bit more about him and the impact that he had on Mount Diablo?

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Doyle: Well, it's the classic case of—I'll call Bob Walker the Ansel Adams of the Park District in East Bay. There's a long, long history all the way back to John Muir and the painters who—people didn't have videos and computers and everything, it was painters, and they painted Yosemite, and they painted beautiful places across the Yellowstone and everywhere else. There was always this connection that fascinated me, and this is going to go all the way back to my high school—and my biology teacher told me to read these books Aldo Leopold, et cetera—that there's this connection between the advocate and the artist. It's really a neat, neat connection, and it is true. It's the same thing in the beginnings in the National Park Service with Stephen Mather, the first director who was so worried that this experiment of national parks would never get support. He brought painters and promoters as early posters with—he got the railroads to pay for these posters about visiting a national park on the Northern Pacific railroad. There's always been this marketing promotion side of conservation along with the advocacy side or the activist side. John Muir had the painters, and he brought people. I mean sometimes ironic, John Muir really was about we need to get people to Yosemite to preserve it, and you wouldn't think that today. It was like, don't go there, it's like we need to preserve it, everybody stay away. Today, it's the same thing, is there going to be money when we're overcrowded with people now to expand parks?

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Bob was really the photographer who came from San Francisco who had a dog, and his dog wasn't allowed in a lot of parks, so he found the park district who allowed dogs and he started taking pictures. He got hired by assistant general manager Jerry Kent at the time to take some pictures; he saw his picture somewhere. He found me downstairs in the land department and would come in and ask more and more about who owns what and, Gee, can I have that map? He would say, Jeez, do you still need that map? I saw you used it today, can I have it? and he'd collect all the maps, and Hulet was the same way. All three of us were really about maps, we love maps and looking at topography and ownership and so that's really where he learned about who owned what. He learned that from me downstairs probably seven o'clock at night, and I'd be getting ready to go home after a long day at the Park District to the family and then he was like, Could you stay a little bit longer? Being an activist myself, we really had great conversations.

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Bob had a knack of educating people with incredible enthusiasm without being confrontational. Even when he opposed something, it seemed like development of Pleasanton Ridge. It was more of always promoting and educating the beauty of something through his pictures rather than being in a fight. I probably had more of the fight in me to fight some of these battles because they were big battles. That was Bob's skill, he can really convince people, and he went around doing slide shows at libraries and schools and in chambers of commerce and all over to show the beauty of the parks we had and why these areas need to be preserved.

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Farrell: Yeah, and it seems like there's a confluence of things that helped the range expand from 6000 acres to now, what, a hundred and twenty, and Bob being a part of that confluence.

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Doyle: Yeah. Even though I was in charge of the land acquisition program for the district, and it had money at that time, there were things that I just couldn't do as the manager or the public agency side that he could do. It really was a bit of a stealth, and same thing, Save Mount Diablo and Greenbelt Alliance, the former People for Open Space, were all doing those things. The landowners always accuse us of the grand conspiracy, and to some degree, there was an effort to work together absolutely to preserve as much property as possible.

01-01:01:50
Farrell: Yeah.

01-01:01:51
Doyle: On the land side, those were very difficult years because there was such a boom town of growth, and you had the garbage wars, the ridge land wars, all these crazy proposals in some of the most beautiful—I mean Round Valley was going to be a garbage dump. You had Los Vaqueros flooding, beautiful Los Vaqueros Valley, so there just was a real conflict of land uses. Because of the great activism of Save Mount Diablo and a little more maybe institutional, the Park District, but the state park at that time just wasn't—they were, kind of, just trying to survive.

01-01:02:37
Farrell: Well, in the '80s, I guess, the Save Mount Diablo's priority started to expand from what I understand to the interest in creating wildlife and recreational corridors that connect with various parks. Is that accurate?

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Doyle: Yeah, I would say that description is more mine, which I brought to the Park District, but I will say the ever-growing circle around Mount Diablo was definitely Save Mount Diablo. They're, what they call, the area of interest got bigger and bigger and bigger, and now Seth has put it all the way to the entire backbone of Central California, the Mount Diablo Range.

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But I want to be fair is that while I may have some differences on focusing on priorities, Mary Bowerman was the one that kept going to John Nejedly, and every time we went showed the map, he goes, That really looks a lot bigger than it was last time you met with me. Mary started expanding that area more and more because her dream was always Mount Diablo and its foothills, and it really was the East Bay Regional Park District who bought the foothills; it wasn't so much the state park. The back side with Creek Canyon by—say Mount Diablo is all part of the foothills and then all those—Morgan Territory, Round Valley, Brushy Peak, they all connect now.

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I had a lot of convincing to do internally at the Park District to create the corridors, and it started with the trail system that I learned the land because I was knitting the trail system to get it park to park and then I realized, well, that's not enough, really, we should connect corridors. There was a lot of studies I was involved with statewide about wildlife corridors and endangered species, things like that. The Park District really wasn't enamored with linear parks or corridors, and they wanted a park, a park, a park, and I really was successful at quietly kind of just piecing the pieces together until they had to connect, but it became more overt later. But it was really clear to me that with the population growth and with the importance of understanding biology and all the species that that connectivity in corridors was really critical, and it's been very successful.

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Farrell: Was there support for that within Save Mount Diablo?

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Doyle: Absolutely, absolutely, yeah. Save Mount Diablo was always more is better and here's another beautiful place, we should try to connect that. But really for me, it started with the very first time was to get the trail from Mount Diablo to Black Diamond and then from Diablo Foothills across the valley. I was doing all the trails and that was probably my biggest education on what was out there and who owned it, and that's why Hulet hired me to be his replacement because I was knowledgeable about all those issues and he wanted a more activist than a manager.

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Farrell: Okay, got you, okay. And then in 1980—I know we're backing up in time a little bit—but Save Mount Diablo became a nonprofit. I'm wondering what went into that effort if that was always part of the plan to become a nonprofit, if that was a new idea, and how that impacted how Save Mount Diablo worked in terms of an organization and even fundraising efforts?

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Doyle: Part of that was that the realization to get more broader donations from people, we needed the legal status of donations and nonprofit status. There were some concerns about that, but we hired this incredible lawyer Robert Jasperson who was a longtime lawyer for Save the Redwoods League and was the Sierra Club lawyer as well for some very big. He kept the big ski resort out of Mineral King in Sequoia National Park. I knew him from Save the Redwoods League and so I asked him when he was more private practice if he'd help, so he did the incorporation stuff for us and just said, It's just much better for your IRS designation and stuff to get the donations, and it's a formality that we needed to do.

01-01:07:09

Farrell: You had mentioned at a certain point in, I guess, the late '80s, there was a need for you to step back, and you were responsible for hiring Seth Adams.

Can you tell me a little bit about what you were hoping or some of the characteristics of the person you were hoping to hire? I know that the youth activism and incorporating youth is really important and a through line through your story and so I'm wondering if you could just tell me a little bit more about who you were hoping the ideal candidate would be?

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Doyle: What I did was, probably '85, '86, '87, somewhere in that range, is I became the chief of land acquisition department. I was still able to stay on the board for a while. I think it was about their twenty-fifth anniversary is when I stepped down, and Sue Watson became the president. What I did was I had gotten a grant to hire, to do an organizational study, and we hired a college student out of St. Mary's College to do a nonprofit organizational study for what Save Mount Diablo should do and what their options were. Oddly enough, it was Hulet's nephew was going to Saint Mary's at the time. John Steere. He did the study saying If we really want to do x, y, and z, you need to hire somebody, and here are your opportunities and do that. So that was the step to say, Okay, we could hire somebody part time. For the more conservative people on the board, it's like—Mary being one of those—How are we going to afford this? I just knew it was time because at that point, we had grown to like 3000 members or something like that and had a lot going on and so knowing that I need to start to pullback.

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We took that study, and that was kind of the steppingstone to get to hiring somebody, and we interviewed a bunch of people, and we weren't paying much. Seth came out as the most committed and articulate, and he got the job and has continued to do that. I always looked at Seth like his mentor, probably his hero was David Brower from Sierra Club and sometimes he went overboard, but there's just no question that he had the courage and the knowledge to get through stuff that was really difficult. There was just so much development being proposed, and he got very good. We did some initiatives and referendums because that's what we had to do at the time, Concord wanted to go up, all the way up in the Lime Ridge area and he just really has grown and really been a champion.

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Farrell: So, obviously, he got the job and so a lot of his visions for land preservation worked for you and for Save Mount Diablo, but were there any new ideas that he had that he was bringing to the table or things that you hadn't previously considered?

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Doyle: I would just say bigger, thinking bigger, wanting to do broader than just the state. I mean it really did start with the state park and I'm a little frustrated today that it's just so hard to get the state. I mean the park itself is in very poor condition as far as investment and infrastructure, and that's true of the whole state park system. I just did not want to neglect the state park side of that

because that's where Mary started and that's where we started. But I think from the standpoint of land acquisition and land conservation, most of that is purchased, not all of it, but most of it is purchased, so Save Mount Diablo was looking much broader and all the way out. The activism they've done at Concord and Antioch and other places like that and now looking to expand into the Diablo Range. Seth was the driving force behind expanding the influence and the geography of Save Mount Diablo, no question about it.

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Farrell: What were some of the things that you wanted to impart on him when he was hired especially given your knowledge, your history there and your expertise in land acquisition?

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Doyle: Well, all those are true. I think the engagement with the media. We can do great things, but nobody knows about them or know there's a problem or a need, then it doesn't matter. I think they probably have engaged less with Sacramento on the legislative side, still involved but not as much, and Seth's forte has really become the land use issues in the county, and there's probably nobody other than my total amount of years that has done more to affect land use. We just had one yesterday with the Urban Limit Line change, and they took a controversial position of, well, you can change this a little bit, it's allowed, but you'll get all this permanently protected. I think we both shared a philosophy, if you want to protect nature and address climate change, you're going to have to preserve more land period, and most of the time you have to buy it to do that or get it dedicated. I think the HCP, the Habitat Conservation Plan and the Habitat Conservancy has been a game changer in East [Contra Costa] County, and Save Mount Diablo has been a major, major proponent just like they've been a major proponent of creating our regional park in Concord.

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You can't do these things, no matter how great the effort is and the talent is in an institution, without activism and public support. Today, it's like when I look back and see, we've created all this really huge amount of parks, more than any other urban area. None of that was publicly owned except for maybe the weapon station. Very different than the rest of the world and the environment, you make a national park from forest service land, you're not really buying a national park in most times. But here we've had to buy every piece of property that's now preserved or it was donated or it was dedicated, but the majority is money and purchase, and I think that that's remarkable. Seth has really been great at being on the frontline to save these places until maybe somebody raises the money to buy them like the Park District. I think that's really, really critical, the activism.

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There's so much discussion about climate change now, and you've got the flooding on the shorelines, and you've got the burning of the—so much fire

just unbelievable. But every acre that is saved now whether it's for a park or preserve or in some way is a very big benefit to carbon sequestration, and it's grassland. Everybody talks about forest, and particularly Redwoods, which is true, the grassland and soil is also carbon sequestration. What you get with all that, you also get the wildlife preservation and the recreation. I'm really working hard now in thinking about these things, about how do you transfer that knowledge and that activism on climate change to the real action of preserving land and why and where you get the money. Natural infrastructure is not something that gets invested in anywhere near what we need to invest. We're talking about all this discussion over infrastructure, bridges, roads, things like that. But the natural infrastructure is more important than ever before, and it's a fraction of investment compared to other things. If we're going to really make any progress on dealing with climate change, we've got to preserve and manage more of these lands.

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Farrell: Was climate change always something that was a topic of conversation or concern for Save Mount Diablo, or did that become a part of the conversation at some point?

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Doyle: Oh, it's much more recent.

01-01:16:22
Farrell: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

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Doyle: In the environmental movement, it really started with population, again back with the environmental fights, population bomb and things like that and the demise of California for overpopulation, and that's not talked about anymore. Sierra Club has changed that platform because of the controversy, the fact is there is a carrying capacity for how many people we can squish into the sardine can in cities, and that's happening more and more. It, clearly certainly twenty, thirty years ago was being discussed. I mean Ronald Reagan had solar panels on the White House for energy that he took off. I always like to use that as an example where we lost thirty years. Jimmy Carter wanted to do that stuff but mainly for the oil embargo. But we had solar power panels on the White House during Jimmy Carter and Reagan took them off, and after that, the whole effort really pushed back on climate. We lost, we could've been so much further ahead on gaining with climate change with less pain if we would've actually done it thirty years ago. It reminds me of the fight over tobacco and how long that took to get the truth out about how much death and destruction is caused by cigarette smoking and the industry pushing back so hard. The industry has done the same thing now with climate. All the petroleum chemical industries are like, “Oh no, it's not that bad and the science is bogus and it's just not true.” So that there's always these hurdles.

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Farrell: Yeah, and I also think it's interesting with the decline of interest or how these conversations have been subdued with how newspapers like the *New York Times* used to have an environmental section and they had environmental writers and now they don't. You start to actually see that come back again a little bit, so, anyway it's just interesting to see how all those things kind of fall together.

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Doyle: Yeah, and the public has to drive that. Particularly, we had three great environmental writers in the *Contra Costa Times* for years, for decades, and you have Paul Rogers in the *Mercury News,* and he's about the only one left, and he's covering everything, and he's great. But the *Contra Costa Times* always had really great writers, covered parks, covered the environment, and did some great coverage. Again, without that, for just an organization to be the only voice box, it's very hard, very, very hard.

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Farrell: Exactly. At what point in time did climate change start to get introduced into the conversations at Save Mount Diablo?

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Doyle: I think that Seth probably knows that better than me since I've been stepped back, focused on the Park District for so long and certainly starting in the Park District probably in earnest twenty years ago and it has been more and more. It's really more recent from the standpoint and a lot of this is the flooding on the shoreline that we're seeing. Ironically, when I was doing all the shoreline acquisitions for the East Bay parks and working with state and federal partners, it was like, Well, you can only buy the marshes, you can't buy the upland because it's too expensive, and I kept saying, Well, you need an upland as a buffer. Now what we realize is all those marshes maybe underwater and a lot of development is right next to it now. We did the marshlands, and we were very successful in buying marshland in the bay. It wasn't nearly as much as it should've been to address climate change, so this is going to be a really big deal along railroads and highways and the ports and everything to how you're going to deal with that.

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In the hill lands, it's really about drought and fire, and we're burning so much of California. Part of that is even in the state park system, 1.4 million acres, nobody did anything on fire. Mary Bowerman was very involved in the fire plan for Mount Diablo State Park, and they never implemented it because it never was funded. To some degree, even the Sierra Club was and others were, you know, woodsmen. Spare that tree, don't do anything, leave nature alone, and you can't because so much of the land had already been farmed or altered or forested and cut then it comes back and just grows too much. I know with the Park District and even with Mount Diablo particularly, it catches fire every five years, and now that's more frequent. That was a big thing that Mary

studied was the fire ecology. She was studying fire ecology and restoration in the 1930s. A lot of her early pioneer work about Mount Diablo is fire ecology, and nobody was talking fire ecology at that time. She never got the credit I think due for that forward thinking of communities and ecology and fire.

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Those are the big things, and it's going to be a tremendous sacrifice for everybody. Any time I would talk to more conservative republican friends or elected, and they would argue about it, I say, Well, if it just doesn't matter what the cause is, but the impacts are there? You've got to deal with it. You got to deal with it. You can argue over what, how, and when, but it is very much accelerated and it's frightening. A hundred and fifteen degrees in Portland, Oregon; a hundred, what, in fourteen, fifteen in Canada? We're just not investing enough. We're arguing but not investing in natural infrastructure, and that's what's going to make some progress over a long period of time on climate change.

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Farrell: Yeah, and while you were more closely working with, say, Mount Diablo, acquiring the land also requires land management and stewardship. Was fire suppression or methods of managing the land in terms of how we see climate change manifest in fire and droughts, was that being discussed with the stewards of the land?

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Doyle: Well, interesting because I was living in the state park in 1977 when the lightning struck Twin Peaks and burned 4000 acres. The experts all wanted to replant Mount Diablo, and it just drove Dr. Bowerman crazy. They raised money to replant Mount Diablo led by the *Contra Costa Times*, and Save Mount Diablo did everything they could to undermine that and said, Well, why don't you educate people about fire? That's how the wonderful Fire Ecology Trail got built. I laid out the trail at the time when I was working for the Park District on the trails. I did the trail, we just laid it out with the state, and Mary at every step. We took that same money that was going to plant Mount Diablo, which is just silly when you think about it, but it was a big effort and so they're determined we raise this money and we have to replant Mount Diablo. We got them to spend that on the Fire Ecology Trail now called the Mary Bowerman Trail. It was to educate people about fire, but it wasn't educating people about increased fire, it was just that fire is natural and things recover, and there will be fire. That was a focal point of Save Mount Diablo because of Mary's interest in what happened in 1977 and before. Just that was a modern fire and there has been successive fires since then.

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Farrell: I mean even last week.

01-01:25:02

Doyle: Oh, yeah.

01-01:25:04
Farrell: Yeah. Seth gets hired in '88 and then after that, the staff starts growing. There's executive directors Ron Brown, later there's Ted Clement. How did growing the staff—and also support staff too—the entirety of the staff, help continue to shape Save Mount Diablo?

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Doyle: Originally when it was a nonprofit, it was not a land trust, and I think what happened is because there was a big national movement on land trusts. My wife created one in the Muir Heritage Land Trust, now John Muir Land Trust. There's a lot of land trusts that really grew at that time. Save Mount Diablo evolved more into a formal land trust and managed that way, and they just got bigger and bigger. I have no knowledge of the internal discussions about who got hired when and how much and what they could afford, but they were getting more and more professional and more engaged, particularly at the local level. Ron Brown, to his credit, really engaged with local chambers of commerce and local business groups who really helped that way. Ted has really led the way even more because he comes from a land trust side of that. I think it's had to have had growing pains with managing staff and budgets but the community support with their major donors and just general support has continued to grow, and they've done very well, and I think that's just part of that evolution. I mean the Park District started really small too, and things have grown with the population but Save Mount Diablo has really kept the connection with the people and with their members, and they have actually really grown a very excellent stewardship committee that have done some really great things on the stewardship side.

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Farrell: Yeah, absolutely. There have been a number of events that take place on Mount Diablo throughout the years including the BioBlitz, the four-day hike, there's Moonlight on the Mountain. How involved in these events are you at this point?

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Doyle: Well, I usually was asked to be a speaker on Four Days Diablo particularly when it got to the connections between Mount Diablo and Morgan Territory and the parks. But those were all I think Seth ideas and other board members' ideas, Moonlight on the Mountain. I think those are just part of their evolution and creative ideas have been very, very successful. The Four Days Diablo in the Mount Diablo Trail is basically the trail that I started piecing together decades ago, but they really promoted it, and it really brought people out. Again, all the way back to John Muir, get people out to see what you're talking about. Yes, you can do great videos, which they're doing now and things like that, but there's nothing better than people actually being out on the land.

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Farrell: Are there any historical events in Save Mount Diablo's history that we haven't talked about that you want to make sure that we highlight?

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Doyle: Well, there was one really. I think the twenty-fifth anniversary was one, but earlier anniversary was we were able to connect Morgan Territory to Mount Diablo, and we actually had great state park involvement. I came up with the idea to actually—[laughs] it was pretty funny. I came up with the idea to rent floodlights like you have in front of movie theaters, and we were able to haul these floodlights all the way up to three peaks connecting the trail from Mount Diablo. That may have been the tenth anniversary, maybe not, I just can't remember exactly when it was. We had the state park director and everybody on top of Mount Diablo, and we just flipped the switch and these floodlights—it's kind of like the Diablo Beacon—all went on, and it was really an amazing scene to see how those peaks connect now. I actually thought that the Morgan Territory would look a lot closer, but it was very faint because it was so far out—it was such a large expanse.

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I think both Seth and I really have been promoters—and it's also a formal movement in state resources—of conversation of a large landscape scale. It's great to have parks and it's great—even urban parks, little parks are really important, but having conservation on that connectivity on a large landscape scale is really where I started putting my focus, and Seth has done the same thing.

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Farrell: How did you get the floodlights up the mountain, and did you plug them in?

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Doyle: They came with their own generator. Obviously, we could bring a truck up in North Gate Road or whatever. The hardest one was in Morgan Territory and the park supervisor, a very close high school friend, part of the Botanical Society in the early years of that was Roger Epperson, and he was the supervisor. He somehow hauled up the light with four-wheel drive up to the top of the fire road and the peak and was able to do it. There was a couple of hesitations because it was so far away, but it was a spectacular time to do that, and it was the big first connection of all that together.

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Farrell: During your tenure with Save Mount Diablo, did you feel like you were making a difference?

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Doyle: Absolutely. Yeah, I think that's what keeps you going when you have the challenges and you have the arguments and you have the opposition from developers in real estate interest and the big battles, it's very hard. But when you see what you can accomplish and you know that every acre you buy for

the park is permanent, perpetuity, I like to say that's a really long time, forever. That has always been my personal driver is just to know and to see what such a small group of people all the way back to Margaret Mead in they were always amazed at what a small group of determined people can do, and that's really the core roots of Save Mount Diablo. There were times when there were five people there, there were times when there were twenty people there, but the ebb and flow was really a core of just keeping it going. I'm so proud of how it's grown and what it's accomplished. But it is the same thing for me in the Park District. It is about accomplishment, it's not about just showing up and marking time, it's about what you can get done and always a sense of urgency. Because the environmental movement and we are literally—sorry to use it—we were literally trumped today on this overwhelming existential threat to the world on climate change and what is that going to mean and the fires.

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I'm pretty sophisticated on all the science and what's going on about climate change impact, but when you get temperatures like we're getting, that is really frightening to me. I'm a tough old bird, but it really frightens me. I mean it's just not sustainable. Four point five million acres of fire the last year is not sustainable no matter how many firefighters there are. What is on top of that that doesn't get enough discussion is that the smoke from the fires far away ended up sitting in the metropolitan areas. It does it in LA, and it did it in the bay, and we're breathing that poison. And it is poison because it's not just trees, it's chemicals and houses and cars, and its' just not sustainable. I don't understand why no matter what political base you're in, there isn't more empathy towards our children and the future children and to all people. It doesn't matter whether they're black or white, republican, democrat, immigrants, nonimmigrants, they're all of us in the same soup.

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Now, we go from fires to drought to the point where the heat is killing people. You have these really big events, fires, you had the really big events, droughts, but now you have the secondary impact, which is the smoke or the secondary impact, which is people dying from heat. Now we're going into the drought cycle that these reservoirs are not refilled; they're already way, way, way low. My attitude is Mother Nature's pretty pissed. I'm optimistic that it's very possible without shutting down every powerplant, without shutting down every oil refinery, we need to spend so much money on doing the right thing to balance this out, and it could be done, I'm just not sure on whether that's going to happen fast enough. It's going to get worse, but it can get better.

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I look at my parents' generation of World War II and the entire world in flames and somebody trying to take over the whole world, and we accomplish that. We send a person to the moon, and we did polio, but it was so hard to get through COVID because of ridiculous arguments, then how are we going to deal with climate change? I know the solutions are there and for me, it's the

same old tools. Every acre helps, preserve and sequester, every management of a park or of a forest helps, every electric car we put out there. My wife and I were just talking like, one of the best investments you could do anywhere with no impact—to really get everybody to get subsidized solar panels. You don't have to cover a hundred thousand acres with mirrors or solar panels in the desert with that habitat, you got roofs. We need some really big things. We just don't do big things anymore and even though Save Mount Diablo was small, it did big things on that scale. I'm going to preserve a whole mountain. I'm going to preserve hundreds of thousands of acres in a highly urbanized growing area, which is economically very, very successful. But we don't do that on that scale at a national level, and there needs to be some middle ground here.

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You know, we're still going to drive cars to go to work, not everybody is going to—we can't all get on BART. To me, it goes back to the earliest part all the way to high school is you need to raise money to address some of these things, and it's not going to be perfect. The percentage dedicated to natural infrastructure is just ridiculous, it's just way too small, and I just don't understand the scale.

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Farrell: Yeah, it really feels like the burden is falling on the individual to solve these things instead of it being more of a collective effort.

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Doyle: Yeah.

01-01:37:48

Farrell: That actually brings me to something that I want to talk about a little bit is kind of then versus now, so looking back. You've spent your career as an activist and looking at the future of activism and the environmental movement and its new iteration, I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about something we talked about when we first spoke, which was about when you first got started, there was a focus on a single issue, like there was more of a focal point to mobilize around. I'm wondering how you see that now if there is a focal point, if not, what it could be?

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Doyle: What I see now is the individual organizations that are doing well are so focused, maybe too focused that the collaboration and partnerships—I mean if you just take Save the Bay in the Bay, the effort to save the Bay and the funding for saving the Bay, and you take the effort for land trust and park agencies like the regional parks, I mean they've gone so far beyond being a park agency, they're really a natural resource agency. That that collaboration is the only way that we can take on such a difficult, difficult task politically and economically of climate change.

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I had these long discussions with my wife Tina, who comes from the land trust side and I come from the public sector side, and we've all got to get back together. What's happened is the successive generations have gotten more and more focused on their niche, and that's great for focusing on competencies, in their own success, but there's less collaboration. I think we need every environmental group, every land trust to be walking in the same direction to get more money not just for their cause but for everybody's cause, which is called saving this planet. Funny enough, we talk about climate change, we don't talk as much about saving the planet as we did in the 1970s. Everything in the 1970s was saving the planet. We need to get back to that with far more sophisticated tools. The young people are far, far more talented and brilliant at all these skills, but you don't have as many people joining organizations the Sierra Club, Save the Bay; they don't want to do that. They want to be online and how do I promote or show up at a big event, and there's got to be some way to collaborate.

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What I have found out, one of my biggest successes at the Park District was even though we were tremendously busy in growing and opening new parks, expanding, I had the time and the support from my board of directors to work with Sonoma County Regional Parks and San Francisco Parks and San Mateo Parks, and that's how we got Prop 68 passed, a collaboration. I think somehow, leadership needs to happen. For example, the California Council of Land Trusts, which was really a big aggregation of a land trust has really struggled now and were very, very important and strong, and they're struggling. Places like Save Mount Diablo are doing well, but there are some organizations that aren't doing well for many different reasons. But there needs to be a far broader collaboration and focus by much broader resources than just Save Mount Diablo. They're doing great and the Park District is doing great, but on the bigger scale, the collaboration is not happening because people are too busy focused on their own challenges.

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What you have is a lot of new young people who have the chance to be the leader, and they want to do the best job in the world, and that's what they're focused on. I'm a member of the National Organization of Olmsted Parks, that's what started the Park District, an Olmsted Jr. plan, and all the way from the 1800s to Central Park. What did they do? They're one of the ones that really pushed to have the fence taken down around the National Capitol [on January 6, 2021] because that's an Olmsted park, and it's a democratic place of people gathering to see these beautiful grounds. There's got to be some way just to collaborate with both the security side on the small scale and people being able to have access to the beautiful Olmsted design of the Capitol grounds. That's just an example of where we all go to our corners, and we need some way to look at this leadership on a national scale, and I don't know who the national leader is anymore. I don't know who the John Muir is, I don't know who the Stephen Mather is, I don't know Udall, all the people in the

environmental movement, Aldo Leopold. All those people were national leaders in the environmental movement, and I don't know where that voice is right now. It's so diversified. It's just so hard to do that.

01-01:43:46

Farrell: Yeah, and speaking of broadening things, and unifying as well, how would you like to see the environmental movement become more inclusive, especially when you look at the data about who's most affected by climate change, low income people, people of color. How would you like to see that become more inclusive?

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Doyle: Well, I'm really glad because that's the big issue right now. How do you get people of color engaged in climate change when they're worried about whether their drinking water is going to kill them? [laughs] I spent twenty years trying to get more and more people of color in the park system, and it starts at a young age. Right now, the Park District has what we call the Richmond Rangers where kids from the tough part of Richmond who are getting taken in the parks for the first time in their life, and they're more worried about the gunshots in their neighborhood. Same thing with Oakland. Even Concord and Antioch now have these violent situations. You find someone, and you mentor them, and that builds.

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But to me, one of my frustrations is that there is a lot of talk, and everybody jumping, to some degree knee jerking, to show how diversity, equity, and inclusion is their top thing. But I go back to where is the money? If you're inviting a family for the first time, and you're promoting it because everybody's promoting it in their publications, to a park, and they go to that park for the first time, and the bathroom is broken or there's people hanging around that doesn't feel safe or they can't get a picnic table or a campsite, they aren't going to come back. I get very—I'll just say frustrated, not angry that the rubber meets the road. If you're really going to do something about being inviting and breaking down the barriers, it goes more access, more camping because that's where most people get their first love of parks is a family campout or with friends or used to be with groups, and investment in those facilities. One of the things I'm really proud of the Park District because they started investing in very, very urban areas decades ago all the way back to Dick Trudeau when we started buying Martin Luther King Shoreline and Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline in Richmond. We continue to do those, take on those fights because everybody wants to build something there.

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But I think you really need park investment in those, not just market it that we're friendly and we want you there and we're going to do more hiring, all important, but the rubber meets the road and money talks. Are you giving those people who you're inviting or encouraging who have not had that access a huge piece of property with nothing there and they're going like, I want my

family to have a picnic, or I want to go on a little talk, or I want to be the naturalist. We've done really good at preserving property in California. I think we've done really, really well. We have not done well in opening it up for new populations, and I think that's the biggest challenge that frustrated me particularly in my last year on the park service is this would be such a big issue, and, well, nobody was hearing that we've already invested more in the urban areas than most agencies, and we need to do more, but we need to open them up, and we need to have good visitor centers. Not everybody is going to go birdwatching, not everybody is going to want to look at the leaves of trees or frogs, but they want to have an experience that's interesting. Part of that is environmental education in the park. We really started Healthy Parks Healthy People in the urban communities including working with the hospitals, and it really was very good. But I think particularly for the state and some other agencies, a lot of resolutions, a lot of studies, but the money needs to flow for urban access and for education.

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Farrell: Yeah, and also I think having leaders of color that are pillars in the community. I think about Whitney Dotson and his also connection to the land and how important that was.

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Doyle: Oh, yeah, and that's a great example, but it's also a great example somehow of the failure because I think Whitney was on seven boards, and he'd be the only Black person on those seven boards. Part of that is if you're in a more difficult economic situation, you don't really have the time to go to meetings. It goes all the way back to who has the time to go to meetings because that's what they're doing. It really starts with giving people jobs in forestry and natural resources and environmental planning and restoration and all those different things, and it is happening and we're getting young people of color who are coming up; we just should've done it a long, long time ago.

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Yes, I'm sure there are some Caucasian-dominated boards that really didn't want people of color there for some reason, but in most cases, they did, and it was just really difficult to keep those people there. I have seen, people come and people go, but they get tired or they don't want to use two hours talking about land acquisition or two hours talking about a fight in a town they don't live in. I think where you really can make progress is getting people into parks to love them. Again, it's the oldest, oldest play in the environmental playbook, get people. John Muir, Ansel Adams, all the way back, it's about getting people to where they love it and say, Well, you can influence this, and we are getting it.

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The most recent thing is the effort at the Concord Naval Weapons Station to rename that park, and it was people of color, employees at the Park District, and people of color in organizations who really lobbied for that. That's an

action, but now you need to get it open, so it's relevant to them. You need to get people in the parks, and you need to feel they're invited, but also, we're having a memorial for Judge John Sutter, former East Bay Parks Director, who was an incredible man, and he would always say, It just takes a long, long time, but you can accomplish something great. I think that was always his frustration is how long it took to get things done, and I think you've got to be honest to people when they do. I'm enthusiastic, I want to participate. Well, it's a lot of grunt work, it's a lot of work to where you get the payoff, but you want to be inviting, and some of that starts with volunteerism and Save Mount Diablo is doing a great job in stewardship again. You get young people, you get them out of college, it may be their first internship or their first job. I mean look at me, I'm very old and white, but it started the same way of somebody mentoring and getting somebody involved and saying, It's okay that you don't know everything, we're going to help you, and have fun.

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Don't take the fun out of environmental activism. It gets sometimes too intense, too serious, and we always like to say, Parks make life better, but I had a board member—we're arguing a big fight one time, and it's like she got very, very angry, and she's a professor at Carol Severin, and she said, Damn it, parks are supposed to be fun, [laughter] and she was always fun. It's just a reminder that you want to break down the barriers, you have internal ones with organizations, you have external with park access, and again I think a lot more access if needed. The Sierra Club has opposed a lot of access, it's true. Different, you know, native plant society, Audubon Society, very focused on their one mission, but they're not inviting to others that way. You need to make some changes in your philosophy and keep the bigger picture in mind. Yes, we opened up this area to people, but because of that, we preserved a thousand acres over here. That's the trade-off.

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Farrell: On that note, what are your hopes for the future of Save Mount Diablo? What directions would you like to see them go in?

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Doyle: I think they're doing fine. They're great on recognizing the importance of access and people. They're doing great science. I'm so, so happy that we've always made it a priority to have a Mary Bowerman botany seat or science seat on the board. I think that's really important. Malcolm Sproul has been a big, big part of that as well, very important. I personally would like to see them a little bit more engaged in Sacramento because that's where the big money is. For example, the surprising surplus this year, I mean amazing surplus when everybody thought that the state was going to be deeply in debt because of the pandemic, but they ended up with a lot more money. Save Mount Diablo should be at the table to get some of that money; every environmental organization should be at the table. The Park District did well mainly on fire issues, but I don't know how well other organizations did in this year because it became about homelessness, which is a huge problem, it

became about health, it became about all these things. The environment got some money, but again, on the scale, it wasn't that much.

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Their leadership is so important and the credibility and support is so high. I'd like to see them engaged a little more with State Parks. I think they're frustrated with state parks because they've done great things with state parks and not always gotten the return in that partnership because of their resource poor in state parks. But I'd like to see them engaged and get other people to engage in Sacramento with the legislators and with the state park system and obviously with the regional parks and other parks. Urban development is going to continue to be a big challenge, a very big challenge, the land use is only going to get more pressure on it for more housing, and I think they're very talented and very good at that, but I think those are their directions they go and really look at connecting climate change to people of color. It's easier for the East Bay Regional Park District with all those urban shorelines and urban parks, they're right there versus Mount Diablo, which is surrounded by some pretty affluent, residential communities for sure.

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Farrell: What do you hope people learn from your work with Save Mount Diablo over the years?

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Doyle: Well, it's the Rolling Stones song, You can always get what you want but if you try some time you get what you need, and it couldn't be more true; it really is true. I did grow up in that rock and roll era, so, have to throw in a couple of rock and roll clips, but it's absolutely true. It's a long game, I don't know how many board members I saw pass through Save Mount Diablo who are on the board and then were there for a few years and left, and I always said, You need to— and young people. I probably don't think I needed to tell this to Seth but other young people involved when they asked me, I said, This is a marathon not a sprint. I think they think marathon literally like a long— no, I'm talking years, and that's how you make progress. The Park District's heading towards a hundred years here pretty soon, created at the height of Depression, the state park system, about the same time with [Frederick Law] Olmsted [Senior and Junior] creating the incredible vision on the state park system. But it takes a long time, but it's amazing if you focus and have a commitment.

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I guess what I say now because it's just not the sexy thing to say, but I say now, it is still about getting money. It cost money to do good things and Save Mount Diablo started with getting its fair share of state park money and that was our biggest frustration—it wasn't getting its fair share. Parks were being expanded all over when Save Mount Diablo was being created, and today, I still don't think it's getting its fair share. You got to keep money in mind and balance the budget and get the support to ask people to pay for things

including the state and tax payers but it's going to continue to be a challenge because the scale of investment is really needed. Everybody talks about, Oh, that costs so much. I remember when they built the intersection at 24 and 680 Walnut Creek, at that time, it was the most expensive intersection. I think it was $250 million just for that overpass, and that sounds like so much money and it's already not working, I mean it's already more than clogged, right? I look at these investments now where you look at Washington, it's trillions, but the investment in our Earth infrastructure is just a pittance. I hope people will stop arguing about what to do and why and start saying we need more money to take care of the natural resources, to take care of it. It's not just putting out fires, it's how do you take care of the resources. It's buying more land to preserve it, and it's restoring things in urban areas that could be restored. I mean it's just a massive amount. It's a huge challenge.

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But I will say one thing about the past is everybody was pessimistic. We weren't going to save Mount Diablo. It was just so much growth, everybody wanted real estate development, nobody listened, but why, save Mount Diablo from what? I think that story is a very positive, successful story. People want to be a part of the successful thing, and we got to quit being negative, there's so much negativity, we got to have a positive opportunity in saying, we need money to do these things and we can do it.

01-01:59:48

Farrell: My last question for you is a reflective one, and I'm wondering if you could talk about what it's meant to you to have started your career with Save Mount Diablo and continue to have your entire career with the environment. What has it meant to you?

01-02:00:09

Doyle: It's just incredible appreciation and gratitude. There were things that were really, really hard and divisive and beat upon and criticized and threatened and all these things. It was very hard, hard on the family, hard on just having to work ten hours a day sometimes. But that sense of urgency got a lot done, and I look back now, and I'm just so appreciative of everybody who got me here, and how lucky I was to meet these, what I always call, people of generous spirit. It's not about their ego, it's not about themselves, it was about something special that they believed in. It wasn't always altruistic, it's something they wanted to have saved, but it wasn't about their ego, it wasn't about their money, making money. It was very about being a generous spirit. Everybody that I've seen hanging with Save Mount Diablo has really been that way, and that's been the history of board members on the Park District as well. It's gotten a little more political these days, but overall, it's just been people committed to a cause. Remember that nature is really wonderful and healing but people make it happen if you're going to protect land. But just a sense of great accomplishment and really looking back and still surprised at how much was accomplished.

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Farrell: Is there anything else that you want to add before we wrap up?

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Doyle: I think I've pretty much emphasized and said, it does come down to money, it does come down to advocacy, it comes down to longevity and passing that on. But I really think the time is now to engage even more with getting all people access to parks in a quality level. The biggest thing I see is that, most of the state parks were built in the 1930s and 1960s, and they're old. They're not even relevant to some people, I don't even want to sit at that picnic table, it's all beat up. I think we need to invest, again invest in the environment, but that includes also investing in people. What's so great if you preserve property, you preserve the environment, you help with climate change. But when you open it up to the public, you also get that too. When you make a park or you make a trail and you preserve land around it and preserve wildlife, you also are benefitting in the health of society and the people not just the birds and the bees. That's always been the debate in conservation, use versus preservation, and it's debated at the Park District a lot, but the Park District and the mission of state parks and national parks in particular says national park organic act, and it says for the enjoyment of people, and I think it was Olmsted who put that word enjoyment in there. It's about preservation but it's also about enjoyment. People are enjoying nature, they'll support it, they really will, so that's that.

01-02:03:33
Farrell: Well, thank you so much, this has been a fantastic interview, and I really appreciate your time, yeah.

01-02:03:40
Doyle: Well, thank you. I'm glad Save Mount Diablo is doing this, and I just want to thank all the people who gave their time and effort over almost fifty years. I'm glad I could be a part of it from the start. It's been great, and get out and enjoy what we preserved, that's what's important.

[End of Interview]