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Abby Fateman

Abby Fateman: Executive Director of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy

Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Shanna Farrell
in 2021

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Abby Fateman, 2022.

Abstract

Abigail (Abby) Fateman was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1971. Her family moved to Berkeley, California when she was a child and grew up in the Elmwood neighborhood. Fateman attended Wesleyan University in Connecticut for college. After graduating in 1993, she moved to Washington, DC, where she interned for the Children's Defense Fund. A year later, Fateman took a position in Juneau, Alaska through the new AmeriCorps program. At the end of her year of service, she returned to the San Francisco Bay Area and worked with the East Bay Conservation Corps. She continued working in youth development for a number of years before returning to school. Fateman earned a Master of Science degree from the School of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Michigan in 2002. Shortly after graduating, Fateman again returned to the Bay Area and was hired by John Kopchik at Contra Costa County to help with the development of the Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan. Fateman became executive director of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy in 2014. In this interview, Fateman discusses her early life, family, education, early career, joining Contra Costa County, work with the Habitat Conservancy, working with Save Mount Diablo, how their work dovetails, taking over as executive director, and hopes for the future.

Table of Contents

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: August 18, 2021

01-00:00:10
Farrell: Okay, this is Shana Farrell with Abby Fateman on Wednesday, August 18, 2021. This is an interview for the Save Mount Diablo Fiftieth Anniversary Oral History Project, and we are speaking over Zoom. Abby, can you start by telling me where and when you were born and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:00:33
Fateman: Sure. I was born in June 1971 in Boston, Massachusetts. [coughs] Excuse me. Well, we lived in Boston at that time, and my father got a job at the University of California at Berkeley and we relocated here when I was about three years old and my younger sister was an infant. We moved into Berkeley, I'm actually sitting in that same house that we move into fifty years ago. So, yeah, so I grew up in Berkeley. Oh, you are muted.

01-00:01:13
Farrell: Sorry, about that.

01-00:01:13
Fateman: No problem.

01-00:01:14
Farrell: I know that you grew up in Elmwood neighborhood of Berkeley, and I'm wondering if you can tell me about some of your early memories of the neighborhood? Maybe some of what it looked like or some of the smells or sights that you remember?

01-00:01:30
Fateman: Interesting. Well, we lived on a street in Elmwood that's very narrow and has large acacia trees. In the springtime, the trees meet across the street and they have these pink and white flowers, and it almost snows in the springtime on our street. It's a very special street in Berkeley. There are other streets right in our little area that are one-block long, but none of them are quite as narrow or have quite the same tree, so I feel like that's one of my most visceral memories of my street where I grew up. On the street where I grew up also, I was one of the younger kids on the street. You know how like kids rove in packs? I was on the younger end of that and so the big kids were always ruling the street. I wasn't out on the street quite as much because they were intimidating in terms of like goofing around in the evenings and stuff like that. But we were definitely in the neighborhood where you could wander around by yourself as a kid and explore.

01-00:02:34
We lived pretty close to College Avenue, and there were a lot of small shops in that area. I do remember we used to walk down to Bott’s ice cream parlor on warm summer nights, and that was our haunt on warm nights, and there would be a big, long line. Bott’s isn't there anymore, I think it's like a sushi place or a nail salon or something now, but that was where everybody would

go on hot summer nights to stand in line to get ice cream. I went to John Muir Elementary School, which was the other direction from our house. I went there for kindergarten through third grade and I'd walk to school with some other neighborhood kids.

01-00:03:22
Farrell: You mentioned that your father, Richard, had worked at UC Berkeley. Can you tell me about some of your early memories of him and maybe even what you remember hearing around the dinner table about what his job was like?

01-00:03:38
Fateman: My parents actually both worked at Cal. My dad was a professor of computer science, my mother, Martha Fateman, was eventually director of information technology systems at Cal and so we were a computer-forward family, I should say. Actually, I asked my sister about this because I couldn't really believe that I was remembering this correctly, but I am. We had a big, giant teletype machine in our dining room; it was probably about three feet tall. Every so often it would like turn on and start chunking out material on this big, wide eleven-by-seven paper that had little perforated holes along the edge, so they could move in little sprockets. Computers were definitely part of our growing up.

01-00:04:29
We would spend time on campus; we'd certainly visit our parents at their offices on campus. I think actually we were both somehow convinced to be fairies in some Shakespeare play that some grad students were doing. I mean like we were sort of part of the campus world a little bit growing up. What else? I did grow up around the dinner table hearing the word *luddite* being used a lot, and I think it was because my parents were so computer forward, and it wasn't really even until grad school that I realized luddite didn't mean stupid person. I always just thought luddite meant a dumb person because that's how it was used in the context around the dinner table. But really I learned it was really someone who was more resistant to technology and change. I think that sort of summarizes my family, growing-up environment a little bit, but I misunderstood even that word.

01-00:05:32
Farrell: You have a younger sister, Johanna or Johanna?

01-00:05:35
Fateman: Johanna, Johanna.

01-00:05:36
Farrell: Johanna.

01-00:05:37
Fateman: Yeah.

01-00:05:38
Farrell: And what's the year difference between the two of you?

01-00:05:41
Fateman: We're three years apart and we're pretty different. I think we used to joke that she was city mouse and I was country mouse. My sister was in a post-punk feminist band and traveled the world as a rock star and is currently on extended hiatus/retirement from that adventure. She's a writer for the *New Yorker* and *Artforum* magazine and co-owner of the hair salon in Manhattan and lives in New York.

01-00:06:17
Farrell: What role did nature play when you were growing up? I think you might have gone to Tilden when you were growing up and I think you mentioned going to Yosemite, but can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with nature and your family's relationship with nature?

01-00:06:31
Fateman: Yeah. I don't know if it was as conscious of a thing, as you know, we are going to go spend in nature, but summer camp was at Camp Kee Tov, and much of Camp Kee Tov is centered around Tilden Park or the at least Regional Park District properties. They throw all the kids on the bus, and we go somewhere, I don't even know what we do anymore. All of it is spent mostly outside doing stuff. Our family vacations—[coughs] excuse me, I'm sorry I'm coughing so much. Usually our vacations were either like visiting family or doing something local in California. We definitely went to Yosemite quite a bit camping when we were kids, and that was back when you could camp right by the river in the Valley. Those campsites are all gone now, but camping, throwing rocks in the river, goofing around, going on hikes, pretending that you're stuck between giant boulders and taking pictures like that. Those were our vacations, at least the ones that I remember. I don't think there was really a conversation about the future or the environment or anything like that. It was just one of the activities that we did.

01-00:07:59
Farrell: There's something you had mentioned about *Roadside Geology*. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

01-00:08:07
Fateman: I also checked in with my sister about this to see if I was like was imagining this memory, but it wasn't. I think my mom had this idea that we go on these long road trips and back then you don't have like computers or things. Like you would read a book or stare out the window or play those games where like you know, I Spy or Punch Buggy or whatever. But I remember we'd be driving along or we'd stop at a scenic overlook and my mom would say, "Look at the seismic uplift or the glacial this and that." I don't actually remember any of those terms except for those and I called my sister to ask her about that. She said, "Oh, yeah, oh yeah." And then I looked at my bookshelf, and I actually have the *Roadside Geology* book on my bookshelf at home, and I was like, it must be one of those things that my mom threw in a box when I was moving out of the house twenty years ago, that is like, "Here take this."

So, yeah, geology was never really my thing. I think I appreciate it more now. Maybe it's an age thing, as you get older, you appreciate geology. But, yeah, we used to joke, "Look at the seismic uplift" as you drive past some vista.

01-00:09:17
Farrell: Your dad also built a greenhouse on your back porch. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

01-00:09:24
Fateman: Yeah. My parents are both from the East Coast, and my father's father, so my grandfather, one of his hobbies was growing bromeliads in New York City. He had a greenhouse he built in Brooklyn in the backyard and so that they would have something to do or so my grandfather would have something to do. My dad also built a greenhouse off of one of our—we had a back porch on our house, and he turned it into a greenhouse to grow bromeliads. It's still full of bromeliads to this day, bromeliads and some orchids. That as an activity for them to do together, and it was always like a goofy, weird thing we had in our house that other people didn't have in their house. My dad bought some kit. It wasn't off the internet because there wasn't an internet back then but built it, which is kind of nuts actually now that I think about it. I wouldn't want to build a greenhouse with all that glass, right?

01-00:10:28
Farrell: Yeah. What are some of your interests or hobbies?

01-00:10:38
Fateman: Yeah, it's interesting when I was thinking about that when I saw the questions, it's like I don't really know. I mean I was a good student. I was kind of a nerd. I played violin starting in kindergarten or first grade, I liked math, I played soccer but I don't think I had—I don't know. I didn't have like a special thing. I feel like I was just kind of a nerdy kid.

01-00:11:09
Farrell: When you were in school, what were some of your favorite subjects or some of the things that you gravitated towards?

01-00:11:17
Fateman: Definitely math and science. I was not a writer, that was not my forte in high school. I'm not sure it's really my forte now, but I'm certainly professional enough that I can write, impossible. As we discussed before, I was on the debate team in high school, and I enjoyed that. I enjoyed winning, and I think that's something that goes through everything I do. I mean some things I choose not to be invested in. I'm on a soccer team, I don't really care if I win or lose but I'd like to win but that doesn't really matter. But I like to win the battle of the wits, I like to get things right, I'd like to do it and not just for the sake of winning but usually I think I'm starting at the right place and so I want to win. Debates further enforces that because you have to win no matter what side you're assigned to argue, so I think you do that, further reinforce that but, yeah, winning is nice, being good at things is nice. It takes a lot of work and

so you don't always win and I think as you get older maybe you win less. It's easier to win when you're little, or maybe the battles that you're fighting are more significant and so the losses feel bigger but anyway. But, yeah, I think maybe debate brought that out perhaps in the whole group of us moving through high school together because we won a lot, we were a good team.

01-00:12:54
Farrell: And lots of skills that you're cultivating through debate too. Yeah.

01-00:13:00
Fateman: Yeah. Yeah, I think that's where public speaking really started for me in terms of the skill set. I don't think I appreciated that at the time. I mean you don't appreciate most things when you're a teenager, but in terms of skills that you use moving forward, there are lots of classes or things you have to do and so on, later you think like, oh, I'm really glad I got to do that. I don't really need to know calculus, but I do need to know how to speak in public.

01-00:13:25
Farrell: And also be able to argue a topic too and just understand and thinking through that too.

01-00:13:32
Fateman: Yeah, think through an argument, understand different sides, yeah, it's an important skill, and to be able to understand where other people are coming from.

01-00:13:40
Farrell: Yeah, definitely.

01-00:13:42
Fateman: Even if you don't agree with them.

01-00:13:43
Farrell: Yeah, and so you attended Wesleyan for college in American studies. Were there any particularly influential classes that you took during that period of time that influenced you or were memorable?

01-00:14:01
Fateman: No. [laughs] That's horrible to say. I mean college was just an interesting experience. I went to College Prep, which is a highly competitive high school, and it was a lot of work, and I think it was actually harder in college. I mean I think the skills and the academic rigor of that institution is more than what I had in college. I did take—and I actually did touch on this in the materials we were talking about—I did take my junior year off from college, and I did two different things. One semester I worked at Perkins School for the Blind in Boston. I was assigned to work with deaf-blind adolescents, so basically teenagers who are both deaf and blind. Everybody in the group I was working with was also developmentally delayed and it was a break from school, and it was also a way to learn about different ways of learning, just having a job, and also working with a different population that has different needs, so that was

an eye-opening experience. The second semester of my junior year, I did this program called the Audubon Expedition Institute, and I don't know if it's actually running, but basically it's a mobile semester. People are assigned to a renovated school bus in a region of other country, and together, you define your curriculum. You have the five different classes or whatever it is and you define your curriculum in the context of the region that you're in.

01-00:15:34

My bus was assigned to the southwest, and I showed up in I think it was Tucson. I got off the airplane with my backpacking backpack and whatever I needed to be camping for the next three months. There were three guides and there are twenty of us or twenty-five of us who are an intentional community. We decided where we're going to travel, who we're going to visit, how were we going to fulfill basic criteria or requirements for different classes, and that interesting. I actually think that was probably the most outdoor experience I had actually, that was camping and learning about a new region. And really the southwest was like an alien planet, like it's a totally different place. If the only place you've been is the West Coast and the East Coast like Arizona and New Mexico, it's bizarre, it's very bizarre and very different.

01-00:16:26

Farrell: At that point while you were having those experiences in college, what were your career aspirations?

01-00:16:37

Fateman: That's interesting. I think I was just focused on graduating really. I think I was pretty disenchanted with college when I took that year off. I came out of a really competitive high school, I had gone to this college that's supposed to be great, and was having a hard time getting into classes I want and didn't really know what I wanted to do and so I took time off. When I came back, my goal was to graduate. I did get credit for that time off, but I did take the semester that I worked at Perkins, I didn't get any academic credit for it and so I was in a situation where I needed to lean on all of my AP credits to graduate, and that was not really what I expected. I had been a super overachiever and so fortunately, I had AP credits to lean on, but to get them I had to take—like to get my calculus AP credits, I had to take linear algebra, and I hadn't done math for four years, so that was a challenge and stress. I think I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do in terms of a career. I wanted to graduated, and I wanted to go somewhere and change the world, I want to make things better. That was where my ethic and purpose was volunteering and making things better whether it's volunteering—it'd be nice to be paid.

01-00:18:00

Farrell: In what way did you want to change the world at that point? Was there a particular area that you were thinking about?

01-00:18:07
Fateman: Yeah, I was really thinking much more about education. When I was actually in high school, I volunteered at the summer program called the Partners Program, which was a summer learning program for kids from the Oakland schools who might not have the opportunity to experience what we experienced at College Prep. I volunteered there for two summers while I was in high school and then when I graduated from college, I wanted to move to DC to change the world like everybody else. I ended up getting an internship at the Children's Defense Fund, and the focus of the work that I did there was really advocating for Head Start funding for Head Start programs. That was really more about actually advocacy than it was the content. I wasn't developing content or legislative platforms; I was really like the intern that was helping draft letters and deliver things to congressional offices on the Hill and take calls and things like that. But that was a crazy time in DC or maybe it was just a crazy time in life right after you graduate, but it did feel like kind of electric time in Washington, DC, so that was fun for a bit.

01-00:19:23
Farrell: Yeah, yeah, and that was when it was the Clinton administration, Rock the Vote was happening, Hillary Clinton was a political figure. There were lots of things going on that I think suggested that young people have power and agency.

01-00:19:44
Fateman: Yeah. I mean George Stephanopoulos was like someone that you would bump into walking down the street, you know. It was just like, oh, this is someone who's in the news, and I just bumped into him. I went to a Rock the Vote party and I met Michael Stipe, like, oh, that's me. It just felt like there's opportunity to engage, and there was access, and I had friends who were interning in the White House or interning in Hillary's office. There were opportunities to see the helicopter take off from the back lawn of the White House. Those are neat and energizing things that make you feel like, wow, this is real, this isn't just something that happened somewhere else. I think fortunate that my group of high school friends and college friends were convening on DC and able to have these experiences. Not everybody can go intern in DC, but at that time, DC was filled with young people which also it made it hard because I was still with young people who wanted to work for free and not all of us could work for free. I mean I should do it for a few months so that was great.

01-00:20:49
Farrell: Mm-hmm. I know that you were born in Boston and spent the first few years of your life there, but what was it like for you to move to the East Coast as a young adult?

01-00:21:04
Fateman: Well, I guess, I moved there for college, but when you're in college, you're somewhat insulated from the world. I still had family on the East Coast. My grandparents were in Brooklyn at that time and a bunch of college friends who

were in the East Coast too. It was fun, it felt like an adventure, I enjoyed it. I'm not sure it ever felt like home for me having grown up in California. There's a different dialogue, there's a different climate, there's a different environment entirely and not just natural environment, just like space and culture. Having grown up in Berkeley, I think it's weird that I think lots of people who grew up in Berkeley end up back in the Bay Area because Berkeley is fairly unique or the Bay Area is really unique or the Bay Area is really unique in terms of politics and food and people and opportunities and being near a college or universities. I think a lot of them end up back here or in other college towns because that's the level of dialogue it has or engagement that we're used to. We're used to protests and whatever else, avocado toast, whatever.

01-00:22:23

Farrell: [laughs] So in DC, you ended up joining AmeriCorps for a year, and that took you to Juneau, Alaska. Can you tell me a little bit about what your experience was like in that capacity in Alaska?

01-00:22:39

Fateman: Yeah, most crazy. Yeah, so it was the first year of AmeriCorps. The thousand points of light I guess in Bush, but really AmeriCorps developed under the Clinton administration as the first real year. I was in DC, and I was having to earn money, so I was temping a lot and so I was doing random, pick-up admin jobs all over the city, which is fine. It was actually interesting, you get to end up in some random offices [where] neat things were happening, but it's like, what am I doing? This is nuts. I'd just come out looking for an adventure or something different and I think I just filled some form where you check off a bunch of things, and I got a call from this group in Alaska, the Southeast Alaska Guidance Association out of Juneau, and I was like, "Sure, let's go to Alaska, that's different."

01-00:23:35

I moved there in the fall, and it was their leadership training program. Most of the people who were joining were college educated, were either in college or had graduated from college, and were being trained as crew leaders or crew supervisors for the following spring, summer season. Honestly, I'm not sure I totally thought it through, but that was okay because I didn't have any obligations, right? I was going to be making some money, I was going to live somewhere that was an adventure. And I showed up in Alaska, and it just got darker and darker and darker, and the days are shorter and shorter and shorter, and I was like, oh my gosh, what did I do, why am I here? Some of my other friends who were in the same cohort were like, "I guess we're here, we're doing this, we made a commitment, we should set up bank accounts, we should go find somewhere to live other than the living room of the director."

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Actually at that time, there were also a lot of Jesuit volunteers in Juneau, which was a volunteer group that I just wasn't familiar with. But there were a

ton of people, young people in Juneau who were making minimum wage/volunteering/there for the adventure. There was a strong community of people—I mean every day is an adventure in Alaska, you never know what's going to happen. You end up living in houses, and you're renting a house, but you don't have a key to the house because nobody has had a key for the last ten years because it's Juneau. The mailman opens the door and puts the mail inside because there are bears and you don't want packages out front. I mean that was my first time being around guns. People had guns; people went hunting. I remember I was going to make cookies and I opened the cabinet and I pulled up out the flour, and there was part of a rifle. I went and asked somebody, I was like, "What's this?" She's like, "Oh, it's part of my hunting rifle." I was like, "Where's the rest?" He was like, "Oh, it's all over the house, it's all taken apart all over the house." I was like, "I guess that's what you do, and that makes sense," but I was just blown away. It was very, very far away from Berkeley for sure or Washington, DC, for that matter. But, yeah, it was a great adventure; it was nonstop.

01-00:25:56

Farrell: That experience gave you more of a sense of what you wanted to do or what direction you might head in?

01-00:26:08

Fateman: Yeah. I mean I think what it did was it gave me a career opening, right? It sounds weird because it's a jobs training program. I mean we were being trained to be crew supervisors, but there are conservation corps in every state and so when I moved back to the Bay Area at the end of my service in Alaska, it was an easy transition to the East Bay Conservation Corps. It's very different, but a lot of the work is different, but the basic concepts and the framework and a lot of the skills were the same. The chainsaw is the same in Alaska as it is in Oakland, and now, you didn't have to carry a gun, which was great. [laughter]

01-00:26:47

Farrell: Yeah, in terms of the East Bay Conservation Corps, that is also a job training program that's a blend of social work and environmental work. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what your role was when you were working? Was it hard to get a position there, what your role was like, and how that impacted your decision to go to grad school after?

01-00:27:11

Fateman: Yeah. I don't know if it was hard to get the job; I got the job, and I feel like probably walked into the job readier for it than many people since I had already worked in the conservation corps. What was challenging was that I was twenty-two, twenty-three at the time and so the people I was supervising were eighteen to twenty-four. I was a peer of this group, but I was not a peer. I was separated by socioeconomic class, opportunity, education, so I was in a position of supervising, advising, counseling a group of people that was my

age. Most of them did not know how old I was because that was not something that was discussed.

01-00:28:03

It was a hard job. I mean I think the conservation corps is similar to what I imagine parts of basic training in the military is like. Rules are very strict, they're very clear, there are consequences for actions, there's not a lot of gray area in terms of job training, like learning job skills. I think the hard part is that the people I was working with were in the program for a reason, right? They haven't finished high school and so there was a high school GED program that was part of the program. They were there to learn job skills, and there was a reason why they were twenty years old and didn't have their GED yet or didn't have job skills yet. All of those other factors created things that happened every day in their lives that I would have to help—if given the opportunity, would help counsel/guide them through. Whether it's helping showing up for court hearings or writing letters to probation officers or calling social workers or working with other staff to schedule other social services and their pensions. It's a lot. I mean you have a relationship with the people you work with, and you take your job seriously, and you want to do it right, and you're there to be a support for people. It was exhausting, it was really exhausting.

01-00:29:32

I'm perfectly adequately equipped to navigate a system, but there are people who have problems that never really came up in my world, in my personal life, so there was a lot of social work or seeking out resources and trying to figure out how to navigate systems. There were staff also that helped with all that at the conservation corps, but really there were two elements of the job: One is like how do you help take care of people and help people take care of themselves so that they can succeed? And then how do you teach skills whether it's how to show up for work every day or how to use a chainsaw or how to communicate appropriately with a colleague or a supervisor. There's a whole range of skills and so I think for me that ultimate decision was like, well, where do I go from here, right? Do I spend more time refining my skills as a social worker and how do I interact with that, or do I feel focus more on the environmental conservation work, which we were doing as a crew. We're out in the field doing stuff all day, so cutting down trees, clearing fire breaks, repairing fence lines, doing creek restoration work, planting trees, all sorts of things that we were doing. I decided for me that that's where I wanted to move, so eventually, I moved in that direction.

01-00:31:07

Farrell: Yeah, what made you decide to go in that direction?

01-00:31:13

Fateman: I think it was an emotional thing. I think I felt so drained and exhausted by things that I really couldn't solve. Actually, the same thing applies not to the environmental movement, but at the time for me, I felt like there's no way I

can help all these people. I don't see the victory in this. I can help people, I can help people, and it was great, but because I still live in the Bay Area. I remember one time I was pumping gas in Oakland, and some guy kept looking at me, and he kept peeking around the other side of the pump. I was like, oh, what's going on, I'm feeling a little uncomfortable, somebody is clearly trying to look at me, and you could see other people at the gas station like, what's going on over there. And then finally this guy says, "Abby Fateman!" and I looked at him, I was like, "Oh my God, I know you," and it was ten years later. Like we're grown-ups, we're grown-ups. There are people I worked with who now work for East Bay MUD or East Bay Regional Park District or, but there are also people who are in jail, there are people who have dropped off. I Google people from time to time to see if they pop up, and not everybody has an online presence. I don't know, I think I just felt like it was so emotionally draining and consuming of my own personal energy—it was really hard for me to be happy through that I think. Even though there were absolutely happy times and great, we had great times, but I think for me, I wanted to just pursue science and other things.

01-00:32:55

Farrell: Yeah, it makes a lot of sense. I know in the between, you moved to Boston and were a high school counselor in West Roxbury High while you were applying to grad school and then ended up getting your MS from the University of Michigan in 2002 from the school of natural resources. What was your master's work focused on?

01-00:33:22

Fateman: My master's work was focused on—we called it citizen science at the time—I think there's probably another name for it now—but basically public-resourced science. My friend Tina and I, we met in grad school, and we did our master's project together, Tina Yin and we are both really interested in creeks and urban streams and the urban stream movement. The urban stream movement has both a social aspect, sociopolitical aspect to it as well as a science, environmental conservation aspect to it, and they've really blended two things. There is an opportunity in the early 2000s when GPS technology was new, handheld devices were new, like learning to use these things was a way to engage more people in creek work. I think really up to that point, the way to community is involved in creek work is having to do creek cleanups. Frankly, you get tired of going, pulling shopping carts out of creeks and garbage out of creeks. That's not funny. You lose people, right, if that's all you're going to do. You lose people if it's that and removing invasive plants. It's great, and people should do it, and I'm all in support of it, but I totally get there's a whole population that is never going to engage in that. Having this new technology and being people able to connect science and science that decision makers can use to make decisions to take care of the waterways and improve water quality, that's huge.

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That was our focus was designing a program that can do that, and we ended up being hired by John Kopchik at Contra Costa County to do that for the summer between our first and second years of grad school. We were here for just a few months but worked nonstop to develop a program, meet volunteers, engage volunteers, and it was a really busy summer. But, yeah, I mean it really combined how do people engage with science and data and improving their local environment. This isn't donating money to the Sierra Club so they can go do something; this was how do you do something in your neighborhood. So that was our grad work; that was fun.

01-00:35:47

Farrell: How did you know John Kopchik or how did he know about you while you were in grad school?

01-00:35:54

Fateman: Yeah, funny, we did not know each other. At the East Bay Conservation Corps, I worked with someone named Chris Sommers. Chris Sommers left before I did and went to grad school and had come back and was working for the Contra Costa County Clean Water Program. When I was in grad school, I reached out to him saying, "Hey, this is the type of thing we're interested in, do you know anybody who might be wanting to do this?" and he connected us to John Kopchik. It was through a connection with the East Bay Conservation Corps.

01-00:36:26

Farrell: What were some of your first impressions of John?

01-00:36:31

Fateman: He was tall. [laughs] He was our age, so he felt like a friend, but he was still a boss, and I was amazed that he was hiring us. He actually paid us, which I think we were surprised. We thought we were volunteering but then he offered us like, I don't know, ten bucks or fifteen bucks an hour, and we're like, "Yes." We were housesitting for some grad student or a professor at Cal that my dad knew who was gone and so we stayed at that house. We weren't living large, but we were scraping by and so we were excited to make ten or fifteen bucks an hour—I forget what it was, but we were excited about it. I felt that was generous. I thought that was kind of crazy that he's hiring us. It felt sort of like we're a totally unknown entity and we were going to produce something that he has no idea if it is what it's going to be, so I don't know. I was amazed that we have this opportunity and grateful that he hired us. He basically did the introductions and got us started and then got out of our way and then showed up at events as a volunteer. I don't know; it was great.

01-00:38:02

Farrell: You graduated in 2002 and then moved back to the Bay Area and started right—was it right away that you started working with Contra Costa County and the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy?

01-00:38:20
Fateman: Yes, so it's interesting, yeah. I moved back in fall. Actually, I finished my degree in the fall of 2002. I was riding my bike and got hit by a car in February and so lost some time due to a head injury related to that. But then we finished up all our work and graduated and so we moved back here in the fall, and, yeah, I started working pretty much right away. I was looking for other work, but I started working with Contra Costa County. The Habitat Conservancy didn't exist at that point, so I was working at the county, and one of the things I was helping out with was the development of the Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan. But it wasn't until that Plan was adopted by all the agencies that the Habitat Conservancy formed. That formation happened in 2007 or 2008.

01-00:39:15
Farrell: Yeah, you were then technical working as a planner for Contra Costa County. As you just mentioned, the Conservancy didn't form until around 2006 maybe, so it was a few-year planning process and John Kopchik had initiated that in the late ‘90s, early 2000s. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what your role as a planner especially in the early days or, I guess, the formation of the conservancy?

01-00:40:00
Fateman: Yeah, I'm sorry. I need to turn off my phone.

01-00:40:03
Farrell: Yeah, no problem. If you need to pause.

01-00:40:06
Fateman: No, I'm sensing that there's other things that happening that are not urgent, but there is a lot of chatter about. It's interesting, well it's interesting to me I guess, I don't know if it's interesting to anybody else. I was doing a lot of work with Contra Costa Watershed Forum. That was one of the things I was working on, which was super interesting to me and then I was being pulled into the planning process for the HCP/NCCP. I'll be honest, I didn't really understand what it was. I understood that John was working on it, and he helped with these things and so I was doing various things. But the Plan is really—it's a development plan. It's a plan that streamlines permitting for economic development and infrastructure projects in our area. It is also a comprehensive conservation plan. The Plan basically says everything inside the urban limit line, go for it; everything outside, we're going to try to buy it and conserve it and manage it forever.

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I didn't really get it at first actually, and I had an aha moment, and I remember calling John and being like, "Wait, I suddenly get it." He's like, "Oh, you're having that moment?" I said, "Yes." I was like, "This is the big compromise?" He's like, "Well, is it a compromise?" I said, "Oh." I said, "Well, you know, some people would feel like it's a compromise, right, that you're basically giving up the fight over some things. Like the things that are inside the urban

limit line you're saying, we're not going to fight over that development, and we're going to take care of stuff over here." He said, "Right, but is that really a compromise or is that making a decision about what's a reasonable way to have the community develop? That you have local agencies to open the urban limit line, they control the local land use planning. You have a science-based project, you have plan to do conservation based on what's best of species, what's best for the acreages, what's the best for the view sheds, what's best for the water. Is it really a compromise, or is it really just saying this is a way I'm comfortable with things happening because I know there needs to be more housing, I know there needs to be improved infrastructure. If we spend all of our time battling every single thing, what's really the benefit? You lose some, you win some, right? But all that energy and all that money could be spent into doing conservation work rather than fighting every single development and losing some and winning some." I remember having that aha moment and him sort of, "Ah, yes, now you get it." I buy into it, but I think at first, it hadn't all clicked right away for me.

01-00:43:02

Farrell: Yeah, that's really interesting thinking about like, okay, here are the things that we can control and here's where we do have the most agency in a situation and how do we work with what we have? But in terms of that thinking about taking the compromise idea maybe a step further, were there other organizations that were on the scene or that you were working with that were thinking about the things that ended up being the Conservancy? And didn't really have the ability to interact with? Were there other stakeholders in the larger picture of things at that time?

01-00:43:44

Fateman: Yeah, there absolutely were. I mean Save Mount Diablo fights certain development projects that they think are bad, and just because we have an HCP and just because they are our stakeholder doesn't mean that they don't fight those. We still provide permits for projects that they don't agree with, and that's okay, they don't give that up, there are people fighting that fight. What we're saying is we're removing this one place, which is ESA compliance, compliance with the Endangered Species Act and how people mitigate for that from that battle. So there's that.

01-00:44:20

I think one of the other stakeholders that was very vocal was a guy named Jim Gwerder—his family or extended family owned a fair amount of land in East County. He led a group called the Citizens Land Alliance, and they are a private property rights group, and basically, their mission was you can't make policies about how I can use my land. If you want to control how I use my land, you should buy it. He is one of the greatest supporters of the plan; he really delivered. This plan is right. We're saying local agencies say you can develop inside the urban limit line; outside the urban limit line, we're going to show up with a whole lot of money and we're going to buy our land if you're willing to sell it to us, and he said, "Great." He was the first customer in terms

of selling land to us. We probably bought 3000 acres of land from that family pretty early on in the process. Because it's true, you know, as a private property owner, there was this concern that people are going to come and steal and take their land or make rules so that they couldn't use their land, and we said, "No, you absolutely can use your land, and we're going to offer you a fair price for it." We've had close to fifty transactions in the last fourteen years, all including land sellers all selling us their land in fee. I think it's true, people are willing to sell—if people are going to sell you their land, you should be able to buy it, you shouldn't just tell them what they can and can't do.

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Farrell: How big was your team at that time?

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Fateman: It was me and John. In terms of staff, it was me and John. It's the two of us and then we had a consultant team that we worked with. We had a whole bunch of consultants. But it was really John full time and, yeah, some of my time but not all of my time.

01-00:46:31
Farrell: Who, at that point, was responsible for the land acquisitions, or was that something you're both working on together?

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Fateman: Oh, so once the Conservancy formed, yeah, it was the two of us and a bunch of consultants. We were partnering with the East Bay Regional Park District, so really, we were working with the East Bay Regional Park District's land acquisition team to really close the deals. For most of the land we bought, they're actually the fee title owners of the land.

01-00:47:03
Farrell: Okay, thank you.

01-00:47:04
Fateman: We contribute money, they own it and there are rules about how it has to be managed because it's bought to with our money, and it's supposed to be mitigation for development and supposed to contribute to recovery of the species.

01-00:47:18
Farrell: Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. Before we get to specifically the Conservancy, in terms of your role in the time leading up to that, you had studied creek management in grad school and had worked on this project that went on for ten years. When you started working for Contra Costa County, you were involved with the Watershed Forum there. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about the role that the watershed plays in protecting endangered species in Contra Costa County?

01-00:48:01
Fateman: Well, Contra Costa County is interesting. It has—I forget now—twenty-something different watersheds and major watersheds. Most of them are sort of city-sized, so if you think of the cities, they are along the coastlines, each one has a watershed that goes up to whatever hills are in the distance. Those make them easy organizational groups in terms of like working with communities, right, community groups to get engaged in various activities.

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In terms of species, what we see is that the open space or habitat lands are generally the upper watersheds and we people live generally in the lower part of the watersheds closer to the coast. That's how our area has developed. That's not how all areas developed, but it is somewhat orderly in being able to look at where people are and where people aren't. Watersheds are an easy organizational unit to think about in terms of habitat or how we look at an ecosystem. We can look at triggers in the upper watershed that affect whatever happens downstream, or we can look at something that's happening downstream and try to figure out why is that happening, and we can trace it back upstream. They are the first place to look at how do we answer questions about what we're seeing. If there's a pond that's gone dry, it's no longer providing habitat or it's no longer available for cattle to use, the question is, okay, well, what happened upstream, what do we look at up watershed from it to help figure this out? The answer isn't always there, the answer could be to the side or down below the ground, but it is one of the places where we start looking to find the answer to the questions.

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Farrell: As you're working on this stuff, did you start to interact with Save Mount Diablo at all during this period of time? If you did, to what extent were you working with them?

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Fateman: Yeah, well, I mean the stakeholder groups, so both in the Watershed Forum as well as a stakeholder group in the development of the HCP/NCCP, both Seth Adams and Ron Brown were very active. Ron is the previous Executive Director, and Seth was more of the bulldog advocate I guess in the stakeholder groups when people would go head to head in our public advisory committee meetings. Ron was the Executive Director, and he also had a bulldog tendency too. But I guess I always thought of him as the older, more calming influence, and I don't know if that actually is the reality in how the world played out, but from my perspective, from where I was, that's what I saw, which of course is like fifteen, twenty years ago, so.

01-00:51:09
Farrell: The Plan was officially adopted in 2008 and so then you and John split the job roles, and John became the Executive Director and you managed the restoration and land program. Now, the Conservancy has officially formed coming out of this plan process, this planning process. Part of your work

included collaborating with the state, the regional, the local stakeholders to protect and restore the land. Can you tell me about what some of the species that you were trying to protect, maybe what some of the challenges were like in trying to protect them from various forces?

01-00:52:01

Fateman: Yeah. The plan has a conservation strategy, which is our science-based approach to mitigation, and we're looking at it as a region. Impacts may happen any given place, but within the region, we're mitigating, we're conserving land, we're looking at species, we're everywhere. We did have some keystone species that were I guess umbrella species really that we look at. If we save habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox, we're also taking care of habitat for badgers and coyotes and mountain lions and bobcats. By protecting, you know, focusing on one species, you really take into account a whole range of species. Similarly if you protect habitat for—I'm trying to think—for red-legged frogs, you're also taking care of habitat often for tiger salamanders and western pond turtles and potentially tricolored blackbirds that nest in emergent vegetation in those areas. We tried to identify what those species are and how do we get the most benefit for all the species by protecting and focusing on one species.

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With the San Joaquin kit fox, we really looked at corridors, things that connect from one place to the other. Contra Costa County is really the northern range of the San Joaquin kit fox, and it hasn't been seen here for quite a long time, but that doesn't mean we abandon the habitat protection for it because it could repopulate this range or maybe it's here and we just haven't detected it. Especially with climate change and various other factors that are happening all throughout the state, they may be pushed to different areas of their range, so this might become at some point in the future their core range as opposed to just the northern extent of the range. I don't know if I actually answered your question, I forget now what it was, but we focus on all these species, we focus on mammals, we focus on amphibians and crustaceans, like fairy shrimp and crusty little plants and beautiful flowers. You really try to focus and the habitat that supports all of these different species in the hopes that we don't spend our time counting frogs, but we spend our time counting ponds, which is much easier and more effective. We make sure that there are frogs in the ponds, but we're not counting how many frogs are in this pond versus some other pond; we're really looking at how many ponds have we saved or preserved or restored. That whole conversation happened when the plan was developed, and that happened with the state and the feds as we chose, which species we're going to focus on in developing the plan.

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Farrell: Okay, that makes sense. How often do you reassess the inventory of ponds animals you saved?

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Fateman: Well, we're constantly counting acreage, acreages of everything, right? We have about 14,000 acres of land that we've acquired and conserved, and somebody, not me right now, but could say, "We have x number of areas of wetlands or x number of acres of ponds over fifty different ponds that total x number of acres." We annually report on this, and every time we buy a property, we report on this. Whenever we buy a property, we actually send people out, and I'm jealous of them, I think they have a fun job, which is that their job is to go out and like, what did we get? We know we bought this property, we haven't really been able to do all the biological inventory, go on the treasure hunt, go find the plants, go find the critters, tell us what we have. And so those folks win I think. They're biologists that are doing conservation, and they're getting to go explore. The first biologists to set foot on some of these lands to document stuff and so it's exciting.

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We find nest sites of golden eagles or Swainson's hawks. We find fairy shrimp. We find that what we thought was a dried up creek is actually full of? springs all through the bottom and provides habitat year round. There are all sorts of things that we find that we can't tell from an aerial photo or Google Earth, and we didn't have Google Earth when we started this thing. Google Earth has been amazing for us, but also, you don't see that when you go on the tour with the landowner or the realtor. Every time we buy a property, we inventory it and map it, and we report annually on where we are with all of our conservation goals.

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Farrell: I know that Save Mount Diablo does BioBlitz where they take inventory of maybe this particular parcel of land. Do you work with them at all on that or use whatever they're collecting?

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Fateman: Yeah, somewhat, yeah. All data is data, right? I mean it's all good. It's hard when data is collected at different scales, but absolutely, they do BioBlitzes. They've done a bunch on their Curry Canyon properties, they've done them on properties that we and in the East Bay Regional Park District own together, and it's amazing. It's an amazing the experience to go and be a nerd with all these nerds out there. I mean the people who show up, I was like, I didn't know people studied this. I went on a BioBlitz I think it was at Curry Canyon with them, and there are these guys who study moths—I mean everybody has their thing right —moths. and it was at night, and it was dark, and they had a sheet tied up between two trees. They were shining a light on the sheet and there was a bucket at the bottom, and moths were flying into the sheet and then falling into the bucket, and they were ID-ing them and I mean, it's fascinating. I don't get exposed to that kind of science all the time, and that's super fun. I think you probably interviewed Malcolm Sproul or will. He's a past board president. He's an amazing birder, and he's a biologist, and he goes

out in the ponds and frogs and salamanders and everything. He's like the person that you want with you on the hike if you're kind of nerdy.

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But, yeah, I mean I think the BioBlitzes are great, and they collect good information. We just can't have a BioBlitz on every single property all the time and so we rely on paid consultants to go out and do a lot of that work for us. But BioBlitzes are great, they're fun, and they're a ton of work too for Save Mount Diablo, but I think it's worth it because it engages a lot of people who wouldn't always get to go out on these properties. It's special to be able to go out on a property before it's open to the public. I mean it is a magical time to be able to go explore and see stuff.

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Farrell: Yeah, definitely. I'm also really curious about the various stakeholders that you work with to accomplish all of these goals and to carry out the plan. You mentioned state, local, and federal, and I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what your experience is or to what degree maybe state, local, or federal, stakeholders play in the Conservancy?

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Fateman: Yeah. You okay?

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Farrell: Yeah, I live in an apartment building and there's stuff happening upstairs, so I'm just making sure that my ceiling is still intact. [laughs]

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Fateman: My dog just started snoring, so [laughs] I guess I'm not that engaging right now. Sure, so ultimately, we are implementing state and federal policy. Our permits are from US Fish and Wildlife and California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and they've handed over these permits and this responsibility to us as a local agency and the cities as local agencies. They are the people who we are responsible to; we report to them. They want to make sure we're in compliance with what we're supposed to be doing in terms of the permit. My team meets regularly with them. We have a monthly meeting, and there's lots of things, little triggers along the way that you have to check in on various things. You have to get things approved, signed off on and so we work with them very closely. I think we're still always working out that relationship, right, because we're not their only thing that they're working on, but each—implementing the Conservancy's goals and the Plan is the only thing we're working. There's a lot to it, but when we say, "We need something in two weeks," and they're like, "Sure, everybody needs something in two weeks." We're like, "No, no, I need it, I need it in two weeks." I think that's a natural tension when you have someone who's still looking over your shoulder, making sure you're doing something right, but that is ultimately their job. I think there's some frustrations with that and there are also some huge benefits because when you get to the finish line, you know that you've already brought

everybody along the whole way. We work very closely with US Fish and Wildlife and CDFW and with East Bay Regional Park District also and the cities and developers and also random landowners who are like, "Hey, maybe you want to buy my property." "Maybe."

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Farrell: What's it like for you to balance all of those pieces of that puzzle especially because some of them have competing interests, like the land trust and the developers?

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Fateman: Yeah. Well, I think one thing that's good is that the Plan is very clear on many things, but that I'm implementing a Plan, it's not a discretionary decision that I'm making. Ultimately, I need to be able to look back and say, I'm making this decision because *x*, *y*, and *z*. I'm buying this piece of land because it meets *x*, *y*, and *z* criteria. We're providing permits for this development because it meets, *x*, *y*, and *z*, that it's identified in the Plan. It's not easy always, and there are relationships, and then I also have my own personal on what I would like to see happen, but that's different from what my job is. I almost feel like I'm in a fortunate situation where I can almost always look back and say, I'm making this decision because this is what's prescribed in the Plan. That isn't always the answer that everybody likes, and certainly we provide permits for projects that our partners are not excited about. None of it is a surprise, you know, but it might not make it easier for them to do what they want to do, which is block a development, but that's the HCP, that's the trade-off, right, that's the compromise. We're getting $80 million of land conservation money coming to our region that would never come here otherwise. We've acquired 14,000 acres of land, which is a huge amount of land for our region, and the deal is that there is going to be permits for projects that are within the urban limit line. Everybody knew that going into it. Save Mount Diablo, East Bay Regional Park District, Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance, Native Plant Society, all those people knew going into this that it just meant they can still fight those developments, they're not giving away that ability, but they're not fighting them on this issue, they're not fighting them on ESA compliance. They can fight them on everything else, and the developers know that.

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Farrell: The transparency and the clear directives from the beginning have been an asset essentially? Yeah.

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Fateman: Absolutely.

01-01:04:23
Farrell: Yeah.

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Fateman: I'm not making a decision because I like or don't like something or somebody. I'm making it because it is what's prescribed. I'm not a robot, I mean it's not so

prescriptive that I have no discretion. But really in these hard decisions where you're looking at what's happening regionally, there's guidance that's provided, and it's provided for a reason because in advance of getting to the point where we are right now, we thought about this fifteen years ago. We knew that these developments were going to be coming online, and those conversations started before the HCP was adopted.

01-01:04:58
Farrell: Okay, yeah. In the 2002 to 2008 and then those few years after, during the time that John Kopchik was executive director, what were some of the things that you learned from him and how did he influence the way that you—in addition to the compromise idea—how did he influence your thinking?

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Fateman: It's not really a compromise. [laughs]

01-01:05:24
Farrell: Well the—

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Fateman: Pre-negotiated understanding of where we're going as a region. How about that? It's easier to say compromise, but in my mind when I was the green environmentalist, I was going to fight for—and I still am that person, but I was like, "What, we're giving it away?" but we're not, we're not giving it away, somebody else is giving that away.

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Farrell: But, how he helped you understand how that could be balanced. What are some of the other things you learned from him?

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Fateman: Mm-hmm. John, I think one of the reasons why the HCP worked or was adopted was really because he was able to build trust with all these different groups. He had relationships with the private landowners, with the developers, with Save Mount Diablo, and other groups, and they were genuine. It wasn't sort of like just playing the game, it was like we really need to all get on the same program here, otherwise we're going to spend all of our time fighting and getting nothing done. That was genuine, and I think people realized that. He spent the extra time to have those conversations, to go on drives with people, to look at land, to talk about what their visions were for what's going to happen in the region. He put in that work more than just being a bureaucrat. Absolutely, I mean this was something that is about an area where he lives, where we all live that we want to see develop whether it's a green infrastructure like open space and parks or homes or other economic development activities. We want to see it happen in a way that we're proud of and that we like, and I think he was genuine, very genuine about that. I think his personality and his ability to develop those relationships and communicate made it happen.

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We look at other plans that don't work or that take twenty years to get to the finish line, and that's the difference. The difference is having someone who's been able to be a leader and build trust and bring people together and to do it with integrity to really get to the finish line as the goal. John did that and not every plan has that person, or when they get to the finish line, not everybody is feeling good about it. I think John sets a really high standard of work and being honest and having integrity about the relationships or what you're saying or promising to the public and really what's in the public benefit. I think I've learned a lot from him about what it means to be a public servant and how to build relationships to keep relationships. I mean we're different people, we have different personalities, different communication styles and I think we balance each other out. We don't work together as closely as a team anymore, but we used to share a cubicle wall and throw stuff across the wall at each other. Now, he has a door that he can close, [laughs] so I can't do that. But we had a very good rapport, and we're able to manage all these different stakeholders. But he lived a way I think of the example of like how do you bring people together and how do you do the hard work. A lot of it was him doing the hard work, and that builds trust. What I learned from him? I don't know, all of it I hope, I hope I absorbed a lot of it.

01-01:09:10

Farrell: How do you feel like there's a plan, you have clear goals under the HCP, but in terms of how you managed things whether that's your priorities that you've identified or even your leadership style if you want to take it more broadly, how do your priorities differ from John's?

01-01:09:34

Fateman: Hmm. Yeah, I don't know, interesting. I don't know if they do differ that much from when he was in this role. I think there's only so much time you can do the same job without getting bogged down a little bit in it. When I took the reins I was like, okay, we're going to get these things crossed off the list and so I'm not sure that that's different or a different leadership style or anything, but I don't know, I feel like I should have a better answer for this. I feel like I'm going to come back to this question. But, yeah, I mean we're definitely different people in terms of how we work with people and communicate with our consultant teams or what we prioritize. He had a closer relationship, I think, with politicians than I did coming in and so he came from that perspective of working at the county and engaging with county supervisors and I just showed up is like a goofy biologist that was learning to be a bureaucrat. I think maybe I just have a different perspective on some of the biology or the conservation efforts, but I don't think we're actually that different when we go to implement the Plan. I mean ultimately, we have a very similar understanding of where the Plan is, where we need to go, and what we need to achieve. Just at different points in implementation, you're working on different things and so when he changed positions and I took over, it was time to work on different things, you know? He would probably be doing them if he was still here. [laughs]

01-01:11:26
Farrell: You went from being a two-person organization to now I think, what, six, or is it fewer than that?

01-01:11:34
Fateman: I wish we were six. We did two and then we hired another person, so there were three of us and then we have a part-time admin, so three and a half of us, and there's still just three and a half of us. There's myself, Joanne Chiu, Allie Cloney who is out on leave, she just had twins, and we have half an admin. Actually, there are other groups that have grown much faster in terms of their staff capacity than we have, and I think part of that is that our workflow—I mean we're down a staff person, we really should have another staff person, but it's always hard to hire people I think. But a lot of our work is done on an as-needed basis. We don't have a staff biologist for example, I don't have a frog expert or an eagle expert on staff, I have consultants who do that. I don't have an economist on staff; I have a consultant who helps us figure out our endowment, our funding strategies, our fee levels, how we invest our money. A lot of those things are farmed out to other people that are consultants because we can't afford to have them on full time nor do they need to work full time for us.

01-01:13:00
Farrell: Does that kind of ebb and flow with the consultant stuff, ebb and flow with where you are with certain projects and things?

01-01:13:06
Fateman: Absolutely, like when we're doing a lot of land acquisition, there's a lot more treasure hunts happening. We're working on developing some large restoration projects and so there are consultant teams that are landscape designers, engineers that are working on those things. When we are doing construction, we have construction folks. We have people on call, if in case something happens, they can go out and move dirt but we're not out there moving dirt all the time, building ponds and wetlands. It comes and goes. There are some things that happen every year. We'll report every year, we ask for the bird consultant teams to crunch all the numbers in our database to produce the first draft of it. There are a lot of things that happen regularly, but it does ebb and flow a lot with our activities. We have a legal team that ebbs and flows depending on if we're being sued or not.

01-01:14:02
Farrell: Yeah. [laughter] I do want to talk a bit about land acquisitions, and I'm curious about how you identify pieces of land that obviously fall in the qualifications of what you can and can't purchase, but how do you identify pieces of land of interest?

01-01:14:21
Fateman: Yeah, that's a great question. In the plan, there are lots of maps and there are lots of conversations about maps. People are sensitive about maps, and maps are very powerful, and a lot of time was spent on how do you display

information or communicate using maps. Because lots of people don't read the words, they just look at the pictures, so maps are really important in terms of how we communicate or display information. We did look at the region for its biological benefits, habitat benefits, species benefits, and developed maps, and through that we developed additional analyses. What did we expect to be impacted or lost inside the urban limit line, and what would we have to do to truly mitigate that, and then above and beyond that, what would we have to do to contribute to the recovery of species beyond just mitigating for a project?

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We developed visuals and map, how much chaparral do think we're going to need, how much grassland do we think we need, how many acres of ponds or wetlands do we think we're going to need. Where are they on the landscape, where did they exist, how do we check those boxes? How does that come together as a cohesive preserve that's connected? We don't want just little patches here and there; we want something that makes sense. If you're a critter moving through the landscape, how do you move through it? Or if you're a critter that's being affected by climate change, how do you go upgradient or downgradient from there? Like there are connections that we had to look at in forming these maps.

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We did develop these maps, and they have high, medium, and low acquisition priorities and those are in the plan, and those are guiding documents. They're divided up into subzones and subzones, and they're described, and we're supposed to buy 70 percent of the chaparral subzone 5b or whatever it is, and it's very, very explicit. One thing that is on those maps though is that none of the lines are solid lines, they're all blurred. It was a big conversation with landowners, with private property rights owners, private property rights advocates and landowners that we don't want you to put a target on my property. We want it to be a little bit difficult to interpret from a map and so when you look at that, things are smudged. Technology is very different now, but we would have to like make maps in our GIS, we have to turn into PDFs, and then we'd have put in in Illustrator, and there's a little smudge tool that looks like a little finger that you'd have to go over every line and smudge them and you'd mess up. There are these maps that are in there that show our acquisition priorities that are our guiding goals.

01-01:17:29

But really, you can have all of the guidance on the desktop exercise, but that does necessarily reflect the reality of what becomes available. You're not going to sit around and wait and wait and wait. I mean you're going to wait a little bit, but ultimately if something becomes available and it's a medium gray and not a dark gray zone, you're going to go for it. Properties become available once a generation, and if somebody wants to sell it to you, if you have a willing seller or you're able to compete for it, then you should go for it. Save Mount Diablo plays a huge role in actually executing on those things, making land acquisition happen as is the East Bay Regional Park District.

Without those two agencies—and they move very differently. You know Save Mount Diablo is a nonprofit organization that can move very quickly and they're much more nimble than my agency or East Bay Regional Park District. We might have more money available in the longer term, but we can't show up at a land auction and bid on something. We can't, there's no way that that could happen, but Save Mount Diablo can. They have no guarantee that we're going to buy it from them or that we'll want to incorporate into our preserve. But there are maps in our plans that show where our interests are and so people who can work around those maps and their little smudgy lines.

01-01:19:03

Farrell: Yeah, so again being transparent about what the goals are for the future. You mentioned the East Bay Regional Park District and Save Mount Diablo in that the differences between you and the Park District versus Save Mount Diablo who is more nimble. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what role stakeholders like Save Mount Diablo plays in coming up with the priorities map and also the smudge lines too because I think it's really interesting.

01-01:19:39

Fateman: Excellent question.

01-01:19:39

Farrell: I think you make a very good point about that species or critters move through land differently. Maps are often political, but animals don't know that or species don't know that and so it's like two maps graphed on to one, right? I'm curious to hear more about working with the stakeholders like Save Mount Diablo to come up with something like that.

01-01:20:06

Fateman: Yeah. I'd be interested to hear how John talks about it or Seth talks about it. But, yeah, maps are important, and they're very sensitive. At the core of it is the biology, right? At the core of it is where is the habitat, what do we need to meet our goals to save the species? We need to prevent species from going extinct, and we need to not just prevent them from going extinct, but we need to help recover them so that they're less likely to go extinct in some other event that we may foresee or not see—in a giant wildfire, in a giant drought year, in climate change scenarios, in—who knows what things that we haven't predicted yet. At the core of it is the biology, and you can't argue with that. I mean there is no straying from that. There are places where there's wiggle room, right? We had to start looking at connections.

01-01:20:06

We were fortunate that in our region there really was a framework already of open space in conserved lands between what the East Bay Regional Park District has done and the State Parks have done and what Contra Costa Water District has done, and what we're really doing is helping make those more functional, right? It's not just that, but that's one element of it is that,

connecting Los Vaqueros Reservoir to Round Valley to Black Diamond Mines and Mount Diablo State Park, that's important. That's important to do not just for what's on specifically in the scape of those parcels but in how they function as part of a corridor. We see that when we look at areas around Roddy Ranch that connect areas of East County all the way to Black Diamond Mines there and into Save Mount Diablo State Park is that there are three long valleys that are movement corridor for species. Whether it is for critters that walk, fly, hop, or blow in the wind, whatever it is, there needs to be a way for critters to move upgradient and downgradient as well just from east to west or north to south.

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It's sensitive, people were uncomfortable having their property shown on a map. It does go the other way as well. There are certainly people who want to get ahead of what we're doing and try to buy a land up from underneath us, and we'll look at those maps and say, "The conservancy's really going to want that land," I could buy it, I could buy it for more, and maybe they'll have to come ask me for it later. Or I know that land is really important, so when I have this development somewhere else outside of the land area, the wildlife agencies are going to want me to use that for mitigation because it's important to this other region. The maps go both ways. I think for us, the transparency has been important but not without challenges, but not everybody looks at maps, not everybody does the deep, deep dig to go find those maps also, so I don't know. How it all evolved I think is really probably more of a John Kopchik question. That would be a good conversation to have with him. I do know that I was very involved with smudging. [laughs] That was my role twenty years ago, smudging maps.

01-01:23:41

Farrell: Well, thanks for outlining that as well. When I talked to Seth, he was talking about one of their plans, their priorities now are looking at how to expand the entire range. I do think you make a really good point about the corridors and how important they are and how those can be bridges between all the different organizations with the different landowners for things to move through the environment naturally. On that note, I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about preserving land in and out of the Diablo Range to work towards achieving your goals but why that area is so important?

01-01:24:27

Fateman: Yeah. You know, it's interesting. I think just because of the way our brains work, we like to bite things off in smaller pieces and understand them and work on them and then that's an achievable goal. When that's handled, then we can expand our understanding or our goals. I think that's really what we're seeing is that we started and Save Mount Diablo started really with the mapping, right, and that was an organizing and a rallying point for this community. It was something that you could see from multiple counties from all over the greater Bay Area. Save Mount Diablo as a slogan was something that people could relate to. They could see the mountain, they could see

development, the could see people trying to develop on the mountain, and they could rally around that. I think from there, we've been successful.

01-01:25:20

We haven't finished that goal of saving Mount Diablo, of saving the mountain, but gosh, we're so much closer than we were fifty years ago when all this started, it's kind of amazing. I mean it's just not just kind of amazing, it actually is amazing how close we are to realizing things that I'm not sure people ever thought was possible. Having gotten to that point, it makes sense to look a little further. Okay, we've gotten this almost handled, like we're in a good place, how do we look to achieve something more? Because we're not an island, Mount Diablo is not an island, Contra Costa is not an island, how do we connect out? We have species that move from other counties into our county, we have species that move along the whole range, how do we protect them?

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My area of interest is very specific, there's a line around it, it's defined, but what happens just across that line, absolutely impacts what happens in the area. What happens in San Joaquin County, what happens in other parts of Contra Costa County, what happens in Santa Clara County, you know, that all affects what happens here. Those are the same golden eagles that fly through those areas, are the same mountain lions that try to move through gaps underneath 580, those are our critters too, you know? We share them; we share them with other people. Some of our critters might not go quite that far, I don't think our frogs or salamanders go that far, but over time, they could. But we share that habitat, and we share the species, and absolutely what happens in those other areas is critical for what happens here.

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Save Mount Diablo really extends their vision to the Diablo Range, I think it's really important work. I think it also helps create connections. I think people become very insulated and maybe even more so during COVID as we're all stuck inside looking at our own immediate environment and being able to realize what happens fifty or sixty miles away or a hundred miles away and how similar it is to what's happening right here in our backyard, that's a connection. It's a human connection too, it's not just a biological or ecological connection, and I think that's important, I really do. Fire affects certain areas and Henry Coe State Park responds to fire might be very similar to what happens if we have a catastrophic fire on Mount Diablo, and there lessons to be learned. Or there might be lessons that they are learning from when we had catastrophic fires a number or years ago. But it's a similar ecosystem, and it's a connection, and it's important for what we're doing here locally to expand a little further out.

01-01:28:19

Farrell: Yeah, I think that's a great illustration about how these things work in concert together and nobody can really be an island because of all these different

factors, including migration patterns of species and climate change and things like that. That's a great example of that. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about who some of the key people that you've worked with at Save Mount Diablo have been over the years? I know Meredith Hendricks was somebody who works for Save Mount Diablo and was really good with their external relationships. But, if you could talk about some of the key people in addition of Seth?

01-01:29:02

Fateman: Yeah. Yeah, well Seth and Ted are, I guess, right now the biggest players over there, and Juan Pablo Galvan Martinez is there. He does a lot of their political, local agency, advocacy work. But I think looking back a little further, Ron Brown was the executive director when all this was starting, and I have great affection for Ron. I actually feel like Ron might have been one of the first people in my professional career at the county that really made me feel like I was on equal footing, that I wasn't just the sidekick or the helper or whatever. I think he was one of the first people who was like "You need to get up here and say something," and I was like, "Oh." I forget what it was, I think it was when the HCP was being adopted or something, and I was like, "Oh yeah, you're right, yeah, I am part of this and I don't know, nose to the grindstone doing something." I have great affection for Ron and the time I spent working with him. I didn't spend a huge amount of time working with him, but he and Seth worked together at Save Mount Diablo for a long time.

01-01:30:22

Meredith, I can't remember exactly when she joined Save Mount Diablo, maybe seven or eight years ago. I loved working with Meredith, and I thought Meredith was a breath of fresh air. She was the first person I think that came into Save Mount Diablo that was an outsider that said, "We need systems, it's been the Ron and Seth show for so long, and you guys are doing a great job, but this organization is big now. You have a lot more staff, you have a bigger board, you have more money, you have more donors, we need to get systems in place." I think there were definitely growing pains during that period, and she was brought in to help with those growing pains and bring structure to that. She's great, she's great. I am bummed that we lost her. I think she was a huge force for so much good. She was great, but she's in Santa Barbara running another land trust, and they're lucky to have her. Meredith was definitely a formative factor in this transition that Save Mount Diablo really grew and before Ron left. I think that is a hard time for any organization, so she did that with grace I thought. I didn't work with too many other staff over there at least as we were developing the plan.

01-01:31:58

Farrell: Do you work with Ted Clement now at all, and what do you feel like he's brought to the organization?

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Fateman: Yeah, Ted brings a different perspective, which I think is both good and a little challenging for people because Save Mount Diablo is such an established agency with the Seth and Ron show. Ted brings in a different perspective. He's worked at other land trusts in different regions, which is great. He has been very good at building donor relationships and working with people to secure fund at an alarming rate. It's kind of amazing to me; I don't know what the magic is. I wasn't really as involved with it when Ron was there, but just in looking at land acquisition and fundraising, Ted's really been able to deliver on huge fund-raising campaigns which is amazing. I think he's also brought this other element of education and outreach that's a new program working with high school kids. I don't know too much about it, but I think that's been a new initiative, I think.

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One thing Meredith worked on before she left, I think this was after Ron—my time line maybe is all confused, but Save Mount Diablo is an accredited land trust now, and that's a huge step in their development and their ability to have standing in some conversations around mitigation and conservation and how lands are managed. I think it probably started when Ron was still there, but I think it wrapped up when Ted was there. It was a huge accomplishment for the organization to really be able to move into the role of being accredited and being allowed by state and federal agencies to hold mitigation lands and manage those for both species and for people. I think Ted is a huge asset to the organization and for a lot of people it's like, whoa, things are changing, and changes are always a little uncomfortable.

01-01:34:28

Farrell: Speaking of leadership changes and priority shifting and things like that, so we alluded to it but didn't actually explicitly say in the interview. You took over as executive director in 2014. Because the conservancy's priorities are pretty much unchanged because they're so tied to the plan. But there are new things that are becoming reality like drought, climate change, that kind of thing. I'm wondering about how that has impacted your work, some of the decisions that you have to make, and even some of your relationship with stakeholders like Save Mount Diablo?

01-01:35:12

Fateman: Yeah, interesting. We need to adapt, right? We're committed to managing lands in perpetuity for the species, and I don't think we have all the answers on how we do that as climate continues to change. I don't really know what the endpoint is with climate change or if we're just in a drought or if this is the new normal. I think it's challenging. Trying to figure out how to manage the lands with any immediate emergency versus what is our long-range plan for what's really going to happen. We have properties that haven't been grazed for two years, and we need to graze them for some of our species, the grass that's shorter than taller, and we don't have water to get cattle on land, so what does that mean? Does that mean that we need to start digging wells everywhere or

is that even a possibility? How do we get water, do we start trucking water, and is that something that we're doing for one year or two years or is that something that we're doing forever? Is that really sustainable conservation—is that sustainable? Is that even conservation anymore, what is that? Does that mean that we're building like a farm for cows that's going to help the frogs, where it's a frog farm? We're importing water, we're watering them, that's not really where we're going with it. That's not where really where we want to be at our endpoint.

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I think we're still learning how do we get from where we are, what are we really doing with, and what's our endpoint, or do we even know what that is? I think it's challenging. One of the things that I spend more time doing and I think all of our stakeholders or Save Mount Diablo and regional parks are probably doing is we're spending more time advocating for funding for research on climate change. We are advocating for money on how do we respond to drought, how do we respond to fire, how do we manage our lands so that we're at the urban-wildland interface, we have an obligation to keep communities safe as well as species safe. How do we manage the lands to meet with all those goals? Part of it is looking for more funding for research, supporting research, looking for money so that we can do emergency actions while we figure out what the long-term solution is. Do we not allow cattle to graze somewhere so they don't drink the water out of the pond, so, because the frogs need the water in the pond to finish their breeding cycle? I don't know. Is that the right decision to make? I don't know. I don't think anybody knows.

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I think it's a new climate reality that we're not even sure what it is, and that's really challenging, and we are working to try to understand what it is and prepare ourselves for that, but what does being resilient to climate change mean? Does it mean that we're going to abandon some areas because they're not going to support the species anymore or do we keep trying to modify them to support species? I don't know what the answer is. But at certain point, you run out of land, right? There's only a finite amount of resources. I think we're just going to do the best that we can with what we have and keep trying to adapt to it and try to understand where we're going with it, but it's hard. We're drilling more wells, we need wells for cows for water, but we need the cows for species. I mean I got in an argument with a funder that he said, "I'm not going to give you money to drill a well so that you can raise cows. That's not what the purpose of these funds are." I said, "Nor is it the purpose of what I'm doing, but I need water for cows, so the cows can eat the grass so that the amphibians can move through the grass from the pond to the burrows where they spend most of the year. If the grass is too tall, we're not going to get any frogs and salamanders."

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Water is absolutely critical to what we're looking at, and it's being affected by drought—it's not just drought, it's the timing of the rain. If we get all of our

rain right at the beginning of the year and then it doesn't rain for the rest of the season—if we get it all in November and then it doesn't rain until maybe a little bit in April, that's a problem. Or if it doesn't rain until March and rains for like a month and a half, that's a problem. It's not just how much rain, it's when it arrives that we're struggling with. I don't know what the answers are.

01-01:40:09

Farrell: How often are you having these conversations with different stakeholders like Save Mount Diablo about these challenges or existential crises? [laughter]

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Fateman: We have our therapy sessions, environmental conservation therapy session. I have them much more frequently with the grazing managers at East Bay Regional Park District and the park rangers at the East Bay Regional Park District. When they're the ones who are having to tell grazing tenants that they can't put cows on or they have to take the cows off the property sooner than expected, I mean that's a challenge for the local economy and the local grazing tenant. They have to put their cows somewhere. It's not like you can just move fifty cows into your backyard and store them or in a storage unit. It's a challenge. We're definitely having those conversations at the state and national level in terms of what the Biden administration's priorities are for the department of interior and in terms of what the Newsom administration's priorities are when they look at land conservation and biodiversity goals. That's different from having to deal with it at the local level when you're trying to figure out if you put cows on a property or not. Those conversations are absolutely happening, but it also feels like you are dealing with crisis after crisis. Because if it isn't a drought, it's fire and if it isn't fire, it's rain, but it's rain all at once and so ponds well out so then you have no water of the next season. I mean it's 2016, 2017, we had a whole bunch of ponds basically fall part. The rains were so hard and so fast and so cold that they just broke, and we didn't have water in certain places even though we had so much water fall from the sky. It's a challenge.

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I wish I had an answer, but I think the answer really is that we need to keep figuring it out, we just need to keep trying. It's hard, but yes, we have these conversations, it's not just the existential conversation I have in my head or just with you, these conversations are happening at all different levels. But I think the difference from having at the state and federal legislative level is that we're actually making decisions based on this. Like am I even going to spend $40,000 figuring out where to put a well and trying to install it and then having it come up dry? That's that? That's like throwing money away, right, but you have to try. We usually find water, the question is, is that water good enough for cows or not, or is there water in the ponds for all the critters? It's a challenge. I'm hopeful because there are a lot of really good people trying to figure it out, I hope that's enough though I'm not sure.

01-01:43:08
Farrell: Yeah, and on the note, like the hopeful note, what are your hopes for the future of the Conservancy? I know you've got the plan to stick to, but in terms of beyond that a little bit, yeah, how do you hope things roll out for the organization in the future?

01-01:43:28
Fateman: Yeah. I hope we achieve all our goals. I think we will, we're on that trajectory, we're staying on our path. I think the challenges are going to come more when we look at what's the long-term management of these properties and how do we measure our success. Even if we stick with our plan, how do we know if have we really conserved red-legged frogs, have we saved Swainson's hawks? I don't think we're going to know that for a very long time. How important are these lands that we are conserving and managing?

01-01:44:08
I hope the answer is yes. I mean there are plans like ours all over California. They connect Tahoe to the Bay. Basically, it's connected with HCPs, and hopefully these as well as ones that go south into Santa Clara Valley and there are people in Monterey working on these types of plans. Hopefully, there's a network of lands that's really prioritizes species management that are successful. But I think it is an environmental crisis, species going extinct. I think it's real; it's not an imagined or hysterical warning. We might have local populations that are strong. We have burrowing owls all over Contra Costa County but Santa Clara has like four. When I talk to my colleagues in Santa Clara, it's a very different situation, and we joke about swapping species. I'll give them some burrowing owls if they give me some other stuff, so.

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But, yeah, I mean I hope when we get to the end of all this, I don't know exactly when it is, we'll be able to look back and say it worked. Like we made a plan, we executed on this plan, and it actually worked. That it didn't work just for a short time; it worked for the long term. Because that's the goal, the goal is that this is forever and we're planning for it, we're protecting for forever, so that these species don't go extinct.

01-01:45:43
Farrell: Yeah and then thinking of the future and because this is forever, what are your hopes for the future environmental activist, the future of the environmental movement, the future of conservation?

01-01:46:02
Fateman: Yeah, I hope they're still there. I hope there are still environmental activists. I mean we're thinking about how things seem so dire sometimes. I hope that—sorry, excuse me. [Fateman talks to her dog: Can you sit? Can you sit, thank you. Can you go lie down? Okay.] Yeah. I worry that we're not bringing up the next generation, and it's weird because I don't feel that old, but I wonder who is the next Seth, right, who's going to step into that role? Who's the next person who's going to take over various important roles all around the region,

and not just here locally but in other places that are looking at science and biology and species? Who are those people, and are we really fostering that group of people to come up and take over? I worry about that. I worry about having a more inclusive environmental movement. There's a lot of work being done around that, but that's not something that you snap your fingers and it happens. It is something that needs to happen and be integrated into all of our lives. Every action we take has an effect, and I don't think we're making that connection or that people have the bandwidth to make that connection to everything. There's just so much going on in the world and stress and crises real and existential.

01-01:47:54

One of my concerns is who is the next group of people, and it always surprises me who it is, right? Like somebody moved into a position, I'm like, wow, I never knew that they could do that or I didn't know that person existed, that's great. But I worry about that when I look at our statewide coalitions and our national coalitions doing conservation and like who are these people, is it a more inclusive environment? I mean I go to meetings and I'm the only woman in the room still. I go to meetings, I'm the youngest person in the room and I'm not that young, so. I don't know. But I wonder about that, and I worry about it, and I think everybody feels challenged by what the next step is and what to do about that. But I think as a region, I look around and say what are we doing as a region to make sure that when we all retire and I know Seth is never going to retire, but some of us want to retire, but there are people to move into those roles.

01-01:49:06

Farrell: Yeah, that's always also an existential question, is who's going to take over this work. I know that you're mid-career, but just given that you're not retired and not close to retirement either, what have been some of your proudest moments so far in your career?

01-01:49:41

Fateman: Wow, interesting. There are times when you are just working on stuff by yourself and you're trying to figure out how do I communicate something. I pulled together, this sounds a good feed, but a PowerPoint slide, and it showed what this looked like, what our region looked like when we started. In 2006, 2007, what did conservation look like and what does it look like now? We talked about, oh, we've conserved 14,000 acres, and isn't that great, but actually seeing it on the map and seeing it flip from one screen to the next, I had one of those moments like I was part of that, you know? I was part of turning this map green, and when I drive through this county, I know about every hillside up there that I'm seeing. I know about the land that I'm seeing, and just knowing that I've been part of permanently causing an effect on the land that is for the good, I feel really good about making a lasting impact in the region. I feel like it's nice to have something tangible to look at, right? Like I can go on a drive from point a to point b and be like, I helped conserve that or I know something crazy about that site up there that nobody else knows

about yet, but they will one day, and that's special. I'm proud of being part of something that's actually physically conserving and helping shape the community I grew up in.

01-01:51:24
Farrell: Given your aspirations when you were younger were to change the world, do you feel like you're doing that at least on a regional level?

01-01:51:34
Fateman: Yeah I guess so. I don't know what I actually thought I would do to change the world. I think I was thinking something more on a national politics level because I packed up my bags and went to Washington, DC. Actually John Kopchik and I have talked about this like what is the right scale to work at to affect change. Is the city big enough, is the state too big? We've had these conversations that we actually think working at a county level, that's about the right size to actually be able to affect change and see change and impact populations. So, yeah, I think all of my activities whether they're volunteer or professional have been trying to make the world a better place, and I think absolutely what I'm doing now is part of that.

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Farrell: Yeah, definitely, yeah.

01-01:52:32
Fateman: I don't think I say it quite the same way. I think when I was just out of college, I was like I'm going to go change the world and make it better and all you old people don't know what you're doing, watch out, here I come. I think now, I'm one of the old people, and think like, yeah, we're making it better. Many people don't think we are, but we are.

01-01:52:48
Farrell: All goes back to that saying, right, like think global, act local kind of thing. Yeah. Yeah.

01-01:52:54
Fateman: Yeah, but not so local that nobody knows.

01-01:52:56
Farrell: That's true, think regional I guess. [laughter]

01-01:52:59
Fateman: Think regional, yeah. You know what I mean but, yes, absolutely.

01-01:53:04
Farrell: Yeah.

01-01:53:05
Fateman: Think global, act local or regional.

01-01:53:07
Farrell: Yeah, yeah.

01-01:53:09
Fateman: We'll add to the bumper sticker.

01-01:53:10
Farrell: I like it, I like it, I like it. [laughs] Well, I know that we've covered a broad range of things, but is there anything that we left out that you want to make sure to cover?

01-01:53:27
Fateman: No, I think I touched on this, right? I did want to touch on that. I do think we have this interesting and special dynamic in Contra Costa County, which is that we have a successful, active, engaged nonprofit like Save Mount Diablo that is well funded and positioned, and we have this larger, regional agency East Bay Regional Park District and then the Habitat Conservancy. I think these three agencies, we have managed to be able to work together in a way where we really thrive on each other's strengths. We've been able to really identify those things and mobilize on those things and that's really made us so much more powerful coalition to the extent that we're a coalition of actors in this region to affect positive change and to affect conservation. We don't coordinate on every single action or movement we make for sure, but we know when we can tap each other's superpower and use it, and I think that separates us from other regions, it really does. That's why see so much conservation happening in Contra Costa County versus other regions is that we have it dialed in. It's not perfect, but it's way better than not having each other to work with.

01-01:54:59
Farrell: It's a great model to provide for other regions around the country, around the world, working collaboratively and again knowing what your superpowers are and how to harness those for good, yeah. Yeah.

01-01:55:13
Fateman: Anyway, so I don't know if I have much more to say, but a lot of it has to do with personalities, and I think John was really the person for the conservancy, and Seth has certainly been the bulldog for Save Mount Diablo. I think you've talked to Doyle and Doyle has been at East Bay Regional Park District for a bazillion years, and he started out in the field. Similar, like I started out doing fieldwork too, and you get a different perspective when you start doing the grunt work. Seth and Doyle have worked together for a really, really long time, and I am the newcomer on the scene even though I'm not that new on the scene. A lot of it has to do with personalities and commitment to what really the big picture is.

01-01:56:08
Farrell: Yeah. Well, thank you so much for all of this. I'm really, really happy that we're able to include your perspective and story and how this fits into the larger puzzle as well. I think it's really important, so thank you so much for taking the time, really appreciate it.

01-01:56:28

Fateman: Sure thing. This is an interesting experience, so thanks, I'm glad I was included. I'm curious to see how it all plays out.

[End of Interview]