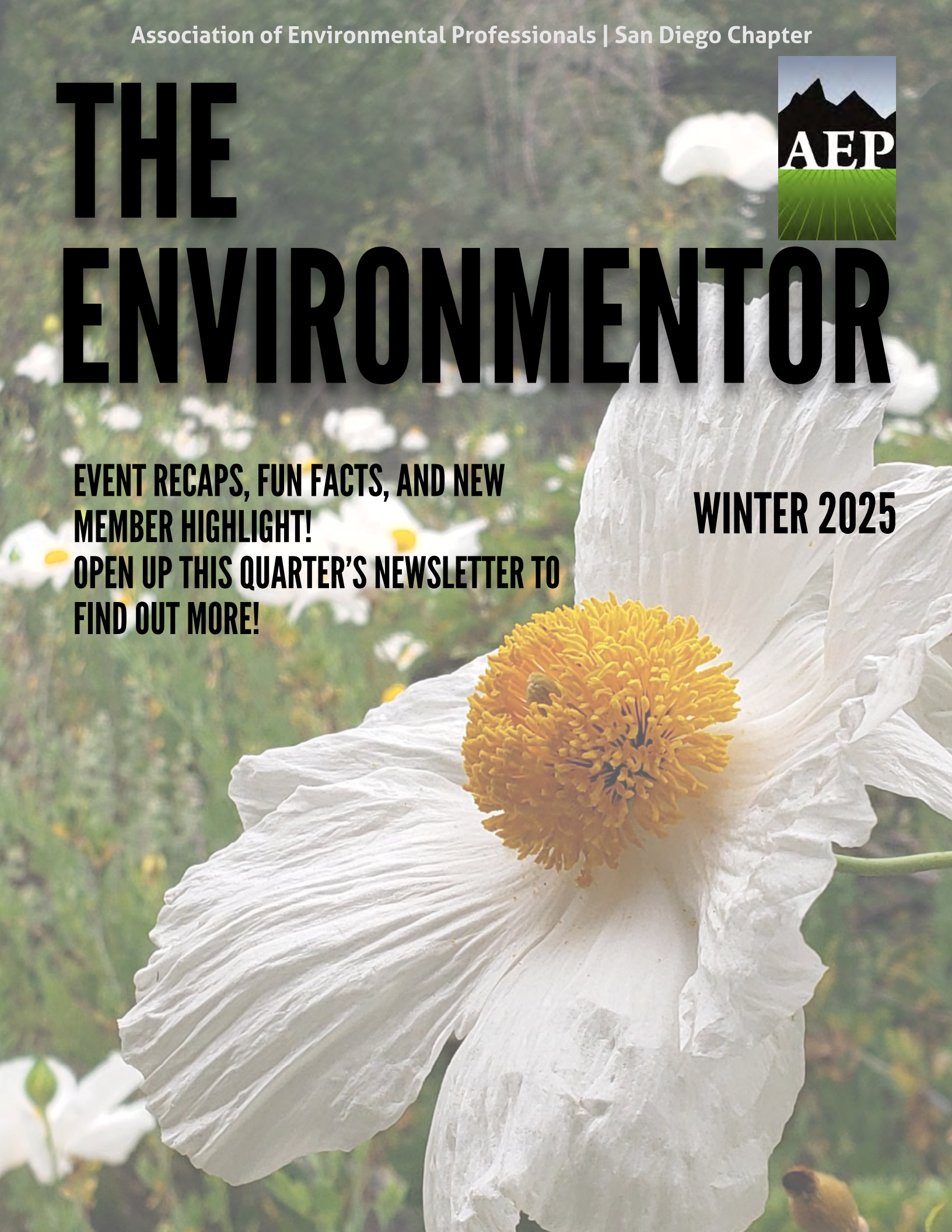


# THE ENVIRONMENTOR

**EVENT RECAPS, FUN FACTS, AND NEW MEMBER HIGHLIGHT!  
OPEN UP THIS QUARTER'S NEWSLETTER TO FIND OUT MORE!**

**WINTER 2025**





## **MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD**

**BY BRENT BURMEISTER, SAN DIEGO AEP PRESIDENT**

Happy New Year! As we embark on another year dedicated to enhancing, maintaining, and protecting our natural and human environments, we are excited to share updates and insights with our San Diego and Imperial Counties environmental professionals.

We started the year strong with the AEP/APA Holiday Party at Tom Ham's Lighthouse on Shelter Island. Our members really showed up—the place was packed, the setting was spectacular, and the conversations were engaging! Your financial contributions and support for these events go a long way in setting the tone for the year, so thank you to all who attended and planned the event.

The remainder of the quarter includes our CEQA Advanced Workshops, Professional and Student Speed Networking, and numerous other events led by our Programs board members.

The 2025 Conference is also not too far off, taking place at Zachari Dunes in Oxnard from April 6th-9th. This year's theme is "Seeds of Change, Waves of Progress," and the Conference schedule promises innovative, thought-provoking, and exciting presentations. We know how hard the AEP State Board, Channel Counties Chapter, and our membership work to put together the Conference, and we're excited to share in all environmental things this Spring.

Looking ahead, the 2026 Conference will be led by your San Diego and Imperial Counties Chapters and held in April 2026 at the Sheraton San Diego Resort. Your conference Co-Chairs, Brent Burmeister and Kelsey Hawkins, are hard at work making sure this will be a Conference to remember, and we look forward to your participation.

Cheers to a fantastic 2024—we truly have the best members in the State. Here's to 2025!



ESA is a 100% employee-owned environmental consulting firm.

We plan, design, permit, mitigate, and restore—for projects across our communities, infrastructure systems, open spaces, and wildlands. We are 50 years strong in 21 offices across California, the Pacific Northwest, and the Southeastern United States.

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Climate Change & Resilience
- Cultural & Historic Resources
- Environmental Permitting & Compliance
- Environmental Review & Documentation
- Fish and Aquatic Sciences
- Flood & Stormwater Management
- Landscape Architecture
- Planning
- Restoration
- Technology
- Water Resources

[esassoc.com](http://esassoc.com)





# AEP/APA HOLIDAY PARTY

Written by: Kelsey Hawkins

AEP and APA Members came together on January 23, 2025, to celebrate another wonderful year of successful projects and partnerships in the environmental field. This year's holiday party was hosted at Tom Ham's Lighthouse in Shelter Island with beautiful views overlooking the San Diego harbor and downtown skyline. There was great conversation, tasty appetizers, fun raffle prizes, and even a photobooth. We thoroughly enjoyed conversing with our fellow members and look forward to another great year together!



Expand your  
ecological horizons  
with **Great Ecology.**

Delivering innovative  
ecological solutions &  
sustainable landscape  
designs to clients in  
San Diego & beyond.

 **GREATECology**  
ENVIRONMENT • DESIGN

[greatecology.com](https://greatecology.com)



**PORT of  
SAN DIEGO**  
Waterfront of Opportunity

Proud to Support the

**San Diego AEP  
2024 Awards &  
Scholarship Banquet**

[portofsandiego.org](http://portofsandiego.org)

# MITIGATION BANK TOUR

Written by: Hannah Gbeh

On Saturday, December 7th, 2024, the San Diego Association of Environmental Professionals held a fieldtrip to visit the Otay River Restoration Program site. The group consisted of biologists, planners, architects, interns, land managers and individuals interested in restoration projects. The Otay River Restoration Project is in south San Diego County, in the Lower Otay River Watershed, downstream of Savage Dam and Otay Lakes. HomeFed is the mitigation bank sponsor, providing restoration for over 300 acres, restoring hydrology and fluvial processes to the river valley by reestablishing a low flow channel and floodplain terrace, seasonal ponds, as well as invasive species removal and enhancement of a large upland buffer. Enhancement and creation for a variety of sensitive species and habitats including least Bell's vireo, San Diego fairy shrimp, vernal pools, maritime succulent scrub, and native grassland are also provided in these restoration efforts. The group had a great time viewing the restoration site and seeing an active Bald Eagle onsite. San Diego AEP would like to thank SWCA's restoration team for hosting this exciting and educational event!



**ROCKS**  
BIOLOGICAL CONSULTING



A reputable team with high-quality standards, attention to detail, and excellent customer service.

### We Can Help.

- Protocol Surveys
- Biological Studies/Reporting
- Environmental Compliance
- Permitting Support
- Habitat Management/Monitoring

Expertise.  
Experience.  
Partnership.

[www.rocksbio.com](http://www.rocksbio.com)



## Sophia Mitchell & Associates

**CEQA Documentation | Project Management**

A California-based WBE, DBE and Small/Micro Business

[www.mitchellplanning.net](http://www.mitchellplanning.net) | 858.243.0843




**Harris & Associates**



# ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING + COMPLIANCE SERVICES

- CEQA + NEPA Compliance
- Community + Master Planning
- CEQA Training
- Air Quality + Climate Change
- Biological Resources
- Cultural + Tribal Cultural Resources
- Noise
- Climate Adaptation + Resiliency Planning
- Permitting + Regulatory Compliance
- Municipal + District Financing



## We're hiring!

[www.WeAreHarris.com/careers](http://www.WeAreHarris.com/careers)

Concord / Salinas / Sacramento / Irvine / San Diego

[www.WeAreHarris.com](http://www.WeAreHarris.com)

Diane.Sandman@WeAreHarris.com | Ryan.Binns@WeAreHarris.com | Kelsey.Hawkins@WeAreHarris.com  
Donna.Beddow@WeAreHarris.com | Emily.Mastrelli@WeAreHarris.com

# MEET A BOARD MEMBER: SYDNE MARGALLO



## 1. Please share your background, education, current employer, hobbies, etc.

I earned a bachelor's in Environmental Management and Protection with a focus on Environmental Policy from Cal Poly SLO, plus a minor in City and Regional Planning. I interned at the City of SLO, contributing to the first progress report on its 2012 Climate Action Plan. I started as an environmental planner at Amec Foster Wheeler (now WSP), working on CEQA and NEPA documents. Now, as an environmental/sustainability planner and deputy project manager at Harris & Associates, I prepare CEQA documents and sustainability plans. Outside work, I enjoy yoga, outdoor activities, and cooking.

## 2. What made you want to get more involved and take a leadership position with AEP?

I joined AEP as a college student (I was Vice President of the Cal Poly SLO Student Chapter my senior year) and have been involved in AEP ever since. My role as Vice President of Membership on the SDAEP Board basically fell into my lap since I was friends with the previous person in this position. I'm so glad it worked out that way because I love getting to know other AEP members through leadership and being involved with the "behind the scenes" of AEP events and planning.

## 3. What advice would you give a recent graduate or young professional in the environmental industry?

Networking is key to expanding career opportunities. The more people you know, the more you can learn and hear about job openings. There are many clubs and associations in San Diego—explore those that interest you! I got my job at Harris & Associates through a connection from AEP.

## 4. What have you enjoyed most about working in the environmental field?

I love knowing that my work in the environmental field makes a positive impact, whether by reducing flood or fire risks or improving access to transportation and programs. I also enjoy collaborating with like-minded people who care about others and the planet!

## 5. Share your favorite fun fact with us!

I recently learned that pine nuts are edible seeds from pine cones. While all pine species produce seeds, only 18 have large enough nuts to harvest. Their high cost is due to the long, labor-intensive cultivation and harvesting process, not rarity.

We create, restore and steward our urban and natural environments.

**Valarie Yruretagoyena**  
SoCal Environmental Planning Leader  
619.954.5578  
valarie.yruretagoyena@aecom.com





# HELIX

## Environmental Planning

*Proud supporter of the AEP Diversity in the Environmental Profession Student Scholarship*



- CEQA/NEPA Compliance
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Historical Resources
- Landscape Architecture
- Habitat Restoration
- Regulatory Permitting
- Compliance Monitoring
- Acoustics/Noise
- Air Quality/GHG

Learn more about life at HELIX and our exciting career opportunities!

[www.helixepi.com/careers](http://www.helixepi.com/careers)

---

SAN DIEGO | LOS ANGELES | ORANGE | RIVERSIDE | SACRAMENTO | PLACER

# RECON

# WE ARE HIRING

Join Our Team!

TOP  
WORK  
PLACES  
2023

San Diego  
Union-Tribune

reconenvironmental.com



At our company, work-life balance includes the fun times we share outside of work.

*Come join our team!*



Transportation  
Engineers &  
Planners

LINSCOTT, LAW & GREENSPAN, ENGINEERS

**LLGENGINEERS.COM**

SAN DIEGO | IRVINE | PASADENA



PROUD SPONSOR OF  
THE ASSOCIATION OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROFESSIONALS,  
SAN DIEGO CHAPTER

## Michael Baker

# INTERNATIONAL

*We Make a Difference*



# STUDENT MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

## ELISABETH ROTSCHEDL

### Background

I grew up camping with a deep appreciation of nature but didn't quite understand or get passionate about science education until I began community college in 2018. I have three associates degrees (A.S. Biology, A.S. Liberal Arts with Emphasis in Math and Science, and A.A. Liberal Arts with Emphasis in Arts, Humanities, and Communication), and a credential in Renewable Energy Innovation and Sustainability from Iceland School of Energy. I am currently pursuing a B.S. in Environmental Science with a minor in Economics and will be graduating in May 2025. I'm an Environmental Scientist in the Environmental Management and Infrastructure (EMI) Division at Tetra Tech. I collect books that are over 100 years old on science and history. One of the most valuable books in my collection is a second edition print of *Naturalist's Voyage Around the World* by Charles Darwin published in 1889. I also enjoy bug and rock/shell collecting.

### AEP Involvement

I joined AEP as a student member in March 2023. I have gained an awesome and kind network of people with a wealth of knowledge. I have learned so much from the CEQA / NEPA trainings and have enjoyed them thoroughly. I also love our community events including the hikes, mini-golf tournaments, and more. I always have so much fun attending them and get excited when another planned event hits my inbox.

### Advice to College Undergraduates

If you're looking for where to start, start with volunteering. I volunteered for the first time doing riparian habitat restoration with OC Habitats in

2021, then volunteered in a permaculture food forest that same year. The volunteering led to my first environmental internship and things took off.

### College Graduation Celebration

I plan to waste no time in jumping into a full-time role in the workforce. I'm ready to move into a new apartment in San Diego and get to work. I may end up traveling to Ireland, Scotland, and England for a few weeks but I'm only in the discussion phase; nothing has been booked yet.

### Enjoyment in the Environmental Field

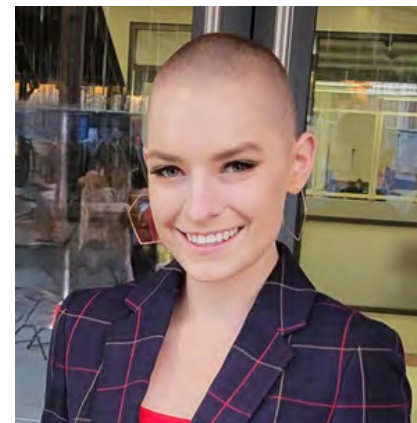
I love how diverse the work is. Our work ranges from geophysical services to environmental / biological services and almost all of it comes with some sort of field experience. I also really enjoy being on our team. It is truly an amazing group of people that work well together and foster a healthy and supportive work environment. I feel very grateful to be in the office I'm currently in. I would be remiss to not include how incredible professional organizations like AEP are.

### Favorite CEQA Topic

I am greatly interested in the biological aspect of CEQA that addresses significant impacts, mitigation, analysis of sensitive species and habitats, etc. because I am deeply passionate about nature and value any opportunity to work outside of the human scope of services.

*Elisabeth was one of the San Diego Chapter's scholarship recipients in 2024!*

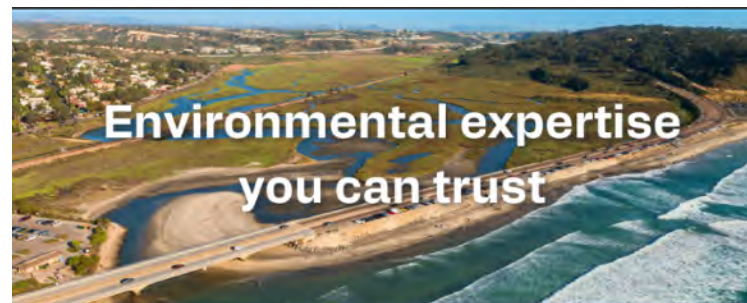
*Congratulations!*



# SAN DIEGO FUN FACTS

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Most of San Diego's rivers are dammed.
- San Diego County shelters approximately 200 imperiled plants and animals which is more than any other county in the nation.
- 40% of all plastic littered or dumped ends up in the ocean each year. Surfrider collected 174,000 pieces of waste at a 2018 county clean up.
- 40% of edible food in San Diego County goes uneaten while 1 in 7 San Diegans face food insecurity. In California, 6 million tons of food is thrown away--that accounts for 18% of materials in the landfill while nearly 5 million Californians remain "food insecure."
- San Diego has more biodiversity than any county in the continental U.S.
- While people have been part of this landscape for 12,000 years, in just the last century and a half, our numbers have grown 500-fold.



### Industry Leaders in Environmental Planning & Compliance

- Preparing legally defensible CEQA and NEPA documents
- Integrating Environmental and Sustainable strategies into planning programs
- Feasibility studies, alternatives analysis, public scoping
- Management and preparation of Environmental Regulatory Permits

### In-house and Seamless Integration of Design, Planning, & Environmental Solutions

RICK brings six decades of multidisciplinary experience with in-house expertise in urban planning, environmental planning, landscape architecture, civil engineering, transportation, water resource management, and infrastructure development for public and private clients.



Sources:  
<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/about-san-diego-americas-wildest-city/3156>

<https://shorturl.at/qGUNT>

<https://shorturl.at/2HUeN>

# CHAPTER CONTACTS

## 2025 CHAPTER BOARD

[SDAEPBoard@califaep.org](mailto:SDAEPBoard@califaep.org)

### **PRESIDENT**

Brent Burmeister  
ASM Affiliates

### **CHAPTER DIRECTOR**

Kelsey Hawkins  
Harris & Associates

### **CO-VICE PRESIDENTS OF PROGRAMS**

Jordan Werkmeister  
PSOMAS

Hannah Gbeh  
Resolution Environmental

### **VICE PRESIDENT OF MEMBERSHIP**

Sydney Margallo  
Harris & Associates

### **TREASURER**

Nicole Wang  
Ascent Environmental

### **COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**

Patrick Macpherson  
City of La Mesa

### **STUDENT MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH**

#### **CO-DIRECTORS**

Melissa Whittemore  
Michael Baker International

Shelby Bocks  
HELIX Environmental Planning

### **NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Jasmine Osman  
PlaceWorks



[sd.califaep.org](http://sd.califaep.org)

Contact the Newsletter Editor at: [sdaepnews@gmail.com](mailto:sdaepnews@gmail.com)