

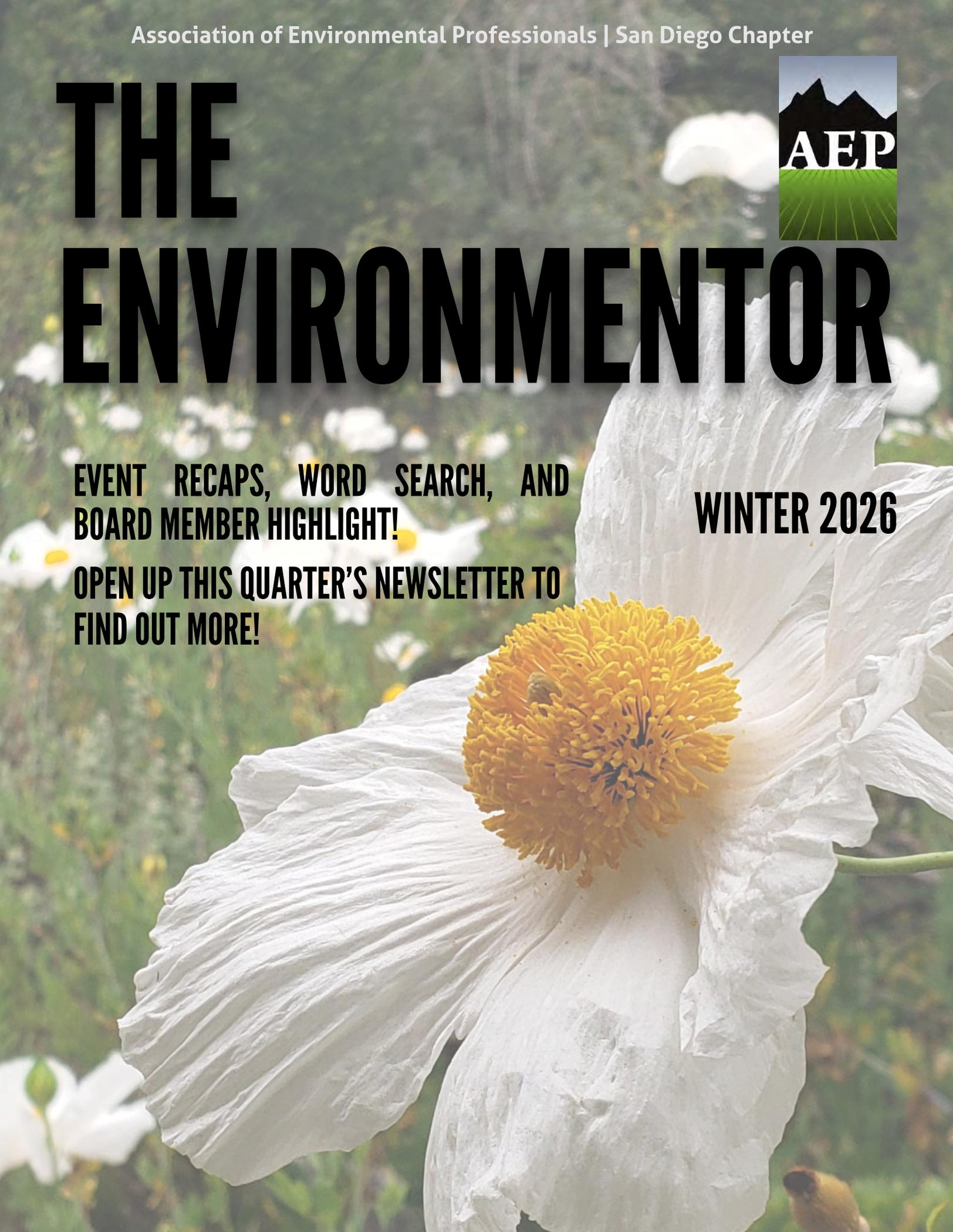


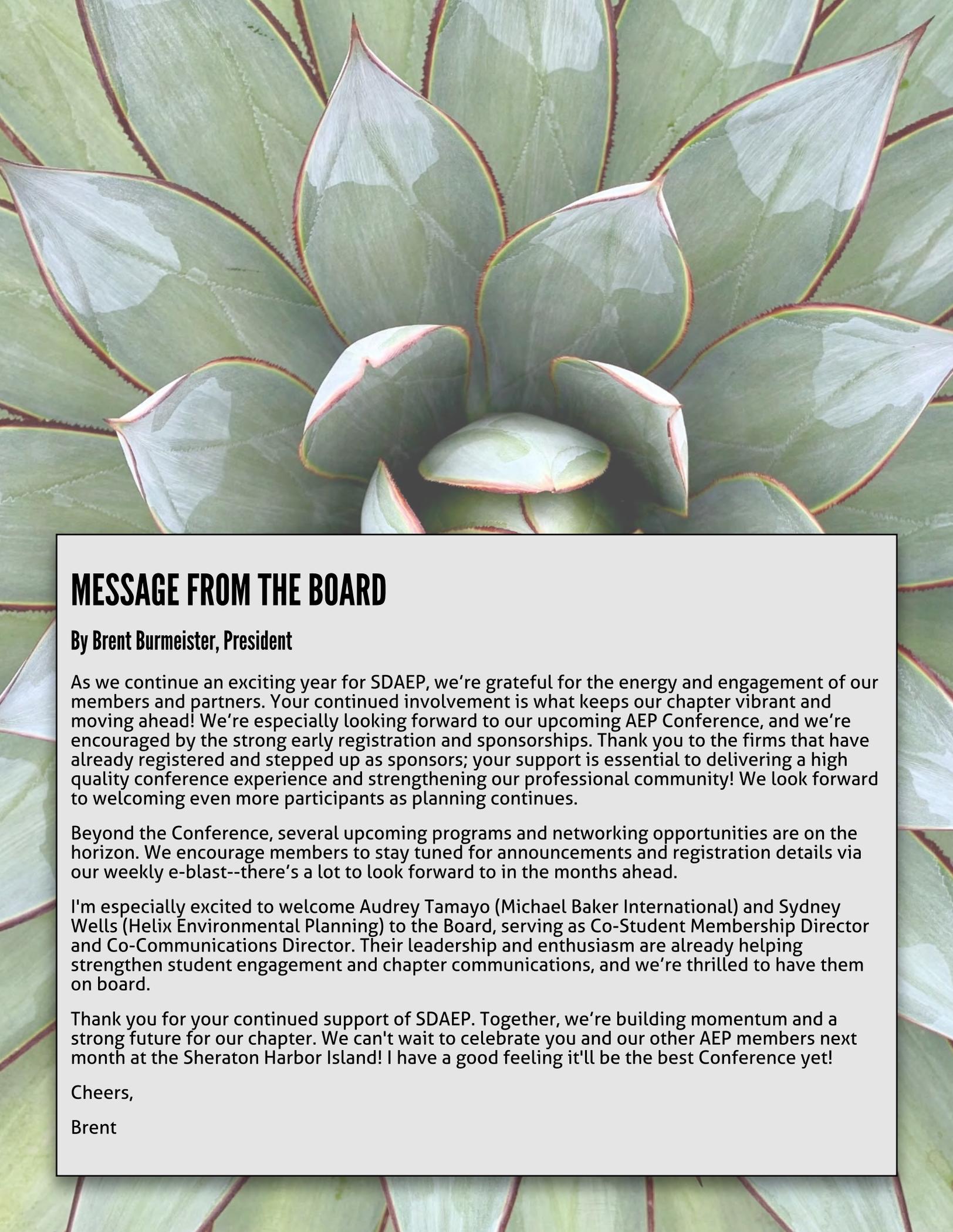
# THE ENVIRONMENTOR

**EVENT RECAPS, WORD SEARCH, AND BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT!**

**WINTER 2026**

**OPEN UP THIS QUARTER'S NEWSLETTER TO FIND OUT MORE!**





## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

**By Brent Burmeister, President**

As we continue an exciting year for SDAEP, we're grateful for the energy and engagement of our members and partners. Your continued involvement is what keeps our chapter vibrant and moving ahead! We're especially looking forward to our upcoming AEP Conference, and we're encouraged by the strong early registration and sponsorships. Thank you to the firms that have already registered and stepped up as sponsors; your support is essential to delivering a high quality conference experience and strengthening our professional community! We look forward to welcoming even more participants as planning continues.

Beyond the Conference, several upcoming programs and networking opportunities are on the horizon. We encourage members to stay tuned for announcements and registration details via our weekly e-blast--there's a lot to look forward to in the months ahead.

I'm especially excited to welcome Audrey Tamayo (Michael Baker International) and Sydney Wells (Helix Environmental Planning) to the Board, serving as Co-Student Membership Director and Co-Communications Director. Their leadership and enthusiasm are already helping strengthen student engagement and chapter communications, and we're thrilled to have them on board.

Thank you for your continued support of SDAEP. Together, we're building momentum and a strong future for our chapter. We can't wait to celebrate you and our other AEP members next month at the Sheraton Harbor Island! I have a good feeling it'll be the best Conference yet!

Cheers,

Brent

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# CEQA PRACTICUM

Written by: Audrey Tamayo

On a sunny Saturday, on February 21, 2026, AEP San Diego proudly hosted its 13th annual CEQA Practicum — a dynamic, five-hour, in-person interactive workshop at UCSD designed to introduce 16 college students to the world of CEQA and the Initial Study Environmental Checklist. Students from across San Diego dove into the fundamentals of CEQA, guided by AEP Co-Directors of Outreach and Student Membership Shelby Bocks and Audrey Tamayo. Participants explored five topics from the CEQA Guidelines Checklist through engaging presentations delivered by passionate environmental professionals:

- Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources – Paige Kohler, MA, RPA, Michael Baker International
- Noise – Jason Runyan, HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc.
- Transportation – Rachel Fabian, HDR
- Biological Resources – Travis Whitney, Michael Baker International

After an energizing crash course on CEQA, students teamed up with the professional volunteers for a virtual site visit of a mock mixed-use development project. Together, they brainstormed, analyzed, and discussed how to thoughtfully and accurately address the Appendix G Checklist questions for each of the featured topics — transforming CEQA concepts into real-world application.

A huge THANK YOU to our amazing professional volunteers! We would not be able to host such valuable student events without the support of our dedicated AEP members!



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# AEP/APA HOLIDAY PARTY

Written by: Shelby Bocks

On January 26, 2026, AEP and APA members came together to celebrate the past year and kick off 2026 with our annual joint holiday party. The event was hosted on a beautiful night at Bali Hai on Shelter Island, providing great views across San Diego Bay alongside lots of tropical drinks and delicious appetizers. We collected cans to donate to the San Diego Food Bank and raffled off great prizes from local businesses. Thank you again to all of our sponsors for making this event possible and to all the AEP and APA members who gathered together for such a wonderful evening!



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# MEET A BOARD MEMBER: AUDREY TAMAYO



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

Hi everyone! I was born and raised in Paradise Hills in San Diego, and my journey has taken me up and down the California coast. I started out at UC Santa Barbara, where I double majored in Political Science and Latin American & Iberian Studies. After graduating, I came back home and served as an AmeriCorps fellow at Balboa Park, eventually stepping into a project specialist role. My curiosity and love for environmental work led me to UC Irvine, where I earned my Master's in Conservation and Restoration Sciences. Now, I'm back in San Diego working as an environmental planner at Michael Baker International, helping support projects that protect and shape our natural and built environments. Outside of work I love dancing 'Ori Tahiti (a traditional Polynesian dance) and playing the cello!

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

I wanted to step into the role of Student Membership and Outreach Co-Director because I want to build a strong supportive network where students can explore career paths, gain practical experience, and build lasting relationships with colleagues and leaders in this field. I recently had different roles at Michael Baker as an

arborist, biologist, GIS analyst, and now environmental planner, so I want to help students navigate their career paths and find their place in the environmental profession.

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

Never stop networking! People hire people, and connecting face-to-face gives potential employers a chance to see how you communicate, engage, and carry yourself—long before an interview ever happens. Networking can also lead you to mentors who help guide your path. You truly never know what opportunity might appear simply because you showed up and said hello!

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

What I've enjoyed most about working in the environmental field is the shared sense of purpose. Everyone is incredibly dedicated to protecting our natural resources and making sure the decisions we make today support a healthier, more resilient future. Being surrounded by people who genuinely care—and who put that care into action every day—makes this work both inspiring and deeply rewarding.

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

Did you know a blue whale's tongue alone can weigh approximately 2.7 to 4 tons (5,400 - 8,000 pounds) which is comparable to the weight of a full-grown female African elephant or a mid-sized Indian elephant?

# CEQA ADVANCED WORKSHOP

Written by: Kelsey Hawkins

This year's San Diego CEQA Advanced Workshop was held on February 26, 2026, at the beautiful Marina Village Conference Center in Mission Bay. We had about 95 environmental professionals from all over the County gather together to attend this workshop. We had a fantastic panel led by workshop veterans Bob Stark from Michael Baker International, Suzanne Varco with Environmental Law Group, and Andrea Contreras with San Diego Dirt Law. Becky Malone from the City of San Diego joined us to round out our agency participation. They delved into the latest CEQA case law, legislative bills, the evolving NEPA/CEQA interface, and discussed the latest in CEQA streamlining. Bob also led an interesting session on AI in CEQA and the "dos and donts" for our work. We also had some special topics speakers join us for specific sessions to give presentations on their expert area. Spencer Reed from Fehr & Peers led a thought-provoking session on VMT and new potential mitigation programs being implemented across the State. Finally, Arthur Popp from Michael Baker International, and Wayne Rosenbaum from Environmental Law Group, rounded out the day by speaking on California Endangered Species Act candidate species. Afterwards, a handful of professionals gathered over at nearby Coronado Brewing to enjoy some appetizers and brews to celebrate a full day of CEQA-learning!



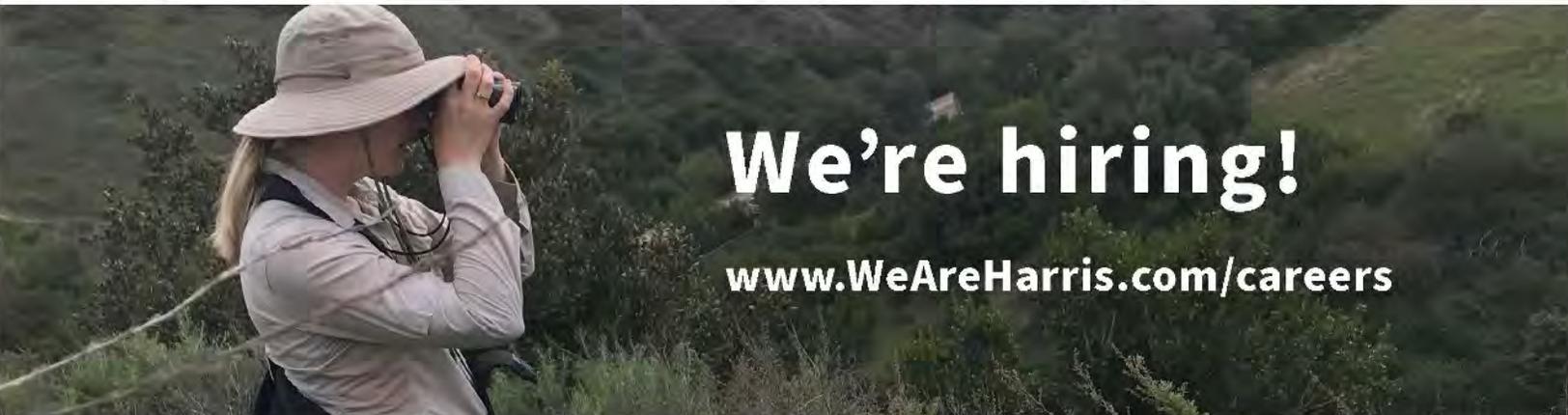


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# CHAPTER CONTACTS

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

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