

2024-2025 Sustainability Speaker Series Proposal

Prepared by the Sustainability Commission

April 2024

THEME AND TOPICS

Beyond the Shoreline

Occupying the narrow space between land and sea, our shoreline plays an outsized role in efforts to mitigate climate change and create a more sustainable world. Decades of misplaced priorities have damaged wetlands and led to the collapse of fisheries, including off the California coast. In contrast, healthy wetlands act as natural “sinks” that absorb more carbon than tropical rainforests, and our oceans, when managed correctly, can allow us to sustainably produce high-quality nutrition for people in the Bay Area and beyond. By emphasizing hands-on education and ensuring equitable access to our coastal areas, we can foster an ‘all-hands-on-deck’ mindset regarding both the opportunities and the responsibilities of living near the shore. And by understanding the importance of advocating for healthy ecosystems on land and in our oceans, we can look “beyond the shoreline” for nature-based solutions to our most pressing environmental problems.

The topics proposed in Table 1 below are relevant to residents and businesses in Sunnyvale and are meant to both educate and motivate action. The Sustainability Commission Subcommittee has proposed topics for ranking in the following table. The table also lists potential event titles, speakers, and a brief description of the topics to be covered.

COSTS

The first five years of the Sustainability Speaker Series were funded through a project’s budget, set up specifically for the series. From Fiscal Year (FY) 2021/22 forward, the Sustainability Speaker Series is funded through the operating budget for Environmental Sustainability Program in the Environmental Services Department. Costs for the series vary depending on whether the series is held virtually or in person. It remains to be determined if these events will be held in a virtual or in-person setting which could result in differences in how the budget is spent. Typical costs incurred for in-person events include fees for travel costs, refreshments and staff time for set up and take down of event space. Virtual events accrue costs from staff time, advertising and speaker fees. Budget availability for FY 2024/25 is not yet available as the FY 2024/25 recommended budget has not yet been released. Budget for this program in the past has ranged from \$16,000 to \$25,000.

Table 1: Proposed Topics and speakers

Commission Rank	Topic	Event Title	Speaker	Title / Affiliation	Description
	Wetlands and climate resilience	Why Wetlands Restoration Matters	Christina Toms	Ecological Engineer at the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board	Coastal and inland wetlands, with their ability to sequester more carbon than tropical forests, are crucial to mitigating the effects of climate change. The key to this ability, however, is the overall health of wetlands. Prioritizing wetlands restoration and managing them effectively are important strategies to reduce disaster risk and improve resiliency to a warming planet.
	Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture of the future	What fish is this? What fish is that?	Dr Ayana Elizabeth Johnson	Co-founder, Urban Ocean Lab	The fish in the grocery store might not be what you think they are—and the types of fish and their origins vary widely in terms of sustainability. The oceans also offer opportunities to more sustainably meet our future global food needs, by using vertical integration of different food types to simultaneously sequester carbon, clean the ocean, and promote resiliency while meeting humans' nutritional needs.
	Equity in coastal access	One Bay Area: equal access for all in our local natural spaces	Anya Diamond	Program Director, Bay Area Wilderness Training	While many of us love our state beaches and seashores for recreation and learning, these ostensibly public institutions are not always equitably accessible. This talk will discuss the current inequities in access to natural spaces, highlight the efforts of group(s) working to make it more just, and provide residents with resources to get involved.

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	Save the Bay: a history of advocacy and lessons learned	How the “Save the Bay” Movement Started	Charlie Onorati	Save the Bay	Did you know the “Save the Bay” movement we know today was started in the 60’s by three Bay Area women? The organization was founded in 1961 as the Save San Francisco Bay Association by Sylvia McLaughlin, Kay Kerr and Esther Gulick. This talk will highlight the 60+ years of efforts to save the San Francisco Bay from excessive pollution and how the lessons learned over the years will help prepare our waterways for the effects of climate change.
	Empowering youth to become ocean stewards	What Lives in the Bay?	Potential speakers from: Seymour Marine Discovery Center, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Marine Science Institute, or Kids for the Bay		A family-friendly community event where school-aged youth and their families can come together to learn about our interconnectedness with the oceans and the wildlife within them. This interactive in person event aims to inspire a sense of responsibility towards protecting our oceans and the marine life that call them home.
	Keeping pollution out of the bay	Trash Free Waters	Christy Kehoe	California Regional Coordinator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program	Explore the challenges and successes of keeping our rivers, bays and ocean free of marine debris. This event will include updates on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and the latest on microplastics. Attendees will learn actions they can take in their own community to help make a difference in this global problem.

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	Kelp forest resiliency	The history and future of California abalone	Kristin Aquilino	UC Davis Bodega Marine Lab	The California kelp forest is an ecosystem unlike any other, and its fate has been tied to California people and economics for generations. This talk will inspire our community with the importance of the kelp forest to land-based California, and restoration efforts to for its inhabitants (such as the endangered abalone, or the sea otters) and how we can help them to be more resilient in our changing climate.

SCHEDULING

Up to four events will be spaced approximately every two to three months, coordinated by staff in consideration of speaker availability, staff time, budget, and other City events.

VENUE

The events held since January 2020 have been held in a virtual online environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Experience gained in hosting these events will allow flexibility for future events if, for whatever reason, an in-person event is not feasible. Online events allow more people to attend since seating capacity is not limited. If and when the events return to an in-person format, the Bay Conference Room (Room 145) at City Hall, is a first choice of venues because it allows for live broadcast on K-SUN TV as well as recording for later viewing. Other venues including the Sunnyvale Community Theater (capacity 200) and the Community Center Ballroom (capacity 300) are considered when a larger audience is expected. Refreshments will be provided at in-person events with a zero-waste goal.

PUBLICITY

The promotion and marketing of events will be similar to past series. It will include social media, email blasts, Sunnyvale Sun ads, and flyers posted at community businesses. With longer advance notice, the event notices could be printed in *Horizon*. Additional avenues for outreach to local schools, colleges and universities as well as the business/tech community should also be used.

VIDEO RECORDINGS

Each event will be videotaped and made available on the Community TV channel as well as on the City's Sustainability website. If the venue is other than online or City Hall, some funding and coordination is needed for video recording services. If a particular speaker does not allow recording/posting of their talk, a summary of the key points will be written and posted online.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Evaluation surveys will be administered, as done in past series, to collect feedback from attendees on the event experience, identify improvements, and gather suggestions for future topics and speakers.

HISTORY

For context, Table 2. below summarizes the history of prior Sustainability Speaker's Series events. The 2018-2019 series marks the shift between calendar year and fiscal year planning to align with Sunnyvale's budgeting fiscal year.

Table 2: Sustainability Speaker Series Event History since inception

Series Year	Title	Speaker	Date	General Topic
2017	Electrifying! Beyond Fossil Fuels in Homes and Businesses	Pierre Delforge	May 31, 2017	Buildings
	Electrifying Our Transportation System	Rod Diridon, Sr.	Aug. 2, 2017	Transportation
	Zero Waste Home	Bea Johnson	Aug. 30, 2017	Waste
2018	Drawdown: 100 Substantive Solutions to Global Warming	Chad Frischmann	Jan. 31, 2018	Climate Solutions
	Hidden in Plain Bite	Katie Cantrell	May 16, 2018	Food
	The Power of Stuff	Annie Leonard	Sept. 26. 2018	Consumption of Resources
	Home Energy: Taking Charge! Panel Discussion	Tom Kabat, Doug Kunz, Dave Edwards, Steve Schmidt, Marianna Grossman	Oct. 25, 2018	Home Energy
2019 (added to 2018 series)	Climate, Energy & Food: A Recipe for Action	Dr. Eugene Cordero	May 22, 2019	Carbon Footprint
FY 2019-2020	Electric Cars Demystified	Jane Rosten, Marc Geller, Jim Barbera	Nov. 9, 2019	EV Transportation
	California's Rise to Water Resilience: What will it take?	Felicia Marcus	Jan. 29, 2020	Water
	Less Traffic, Better Places: How do we get there?	Patrick Siegman	Mar. 11, 2020	Transportation
FY 2020-2021	California's Equitable Carbon Neutral Future	Jarod Blumenfeld Secretary of California EPA	Dec. 3, 2020	Adaptation and CA Climate Policy
	Sustainability goes to School	Nik Kaestner, Director of Sustainability at San Francisco	Jan. 30, 2021	Decarbonizing Buildings

		Unified School District		
	What Moves You - Active, Shared and Electric Transportation	Terra Curtis & Meghan Weir Principals at Nelson/Nygaard	March 17, 2021	Decarbonizing Transportation
	Recycling – Beyond the Triangle	Mark Bowers Former Sunnyvale Solid Waste Programs Division Manager	May 19, 2021	Managing Resources Sustainably
FY 2021-2022	This Old Zero-Emission House: Climate Retrofits on a Limited Budget	Sean Armstrong, Zero Net Energy Designer and Managing Principal, Redwood Energy	February 2, 2022	Decarbonizing Buildings
	The Emissions that You Purchase: Reducing Your Carbon Footprint	Chris Jones, Director of CoolClimate Network, UC Berkeley	March 16, 2022	Consumption-based emissions
	A Changing Climate: Through the Lens of Equity and Resiliency	Violet Saena, Founder & Executive Director, Climate Resilient Communities	June 8, 2022	Climate Change and Health
FY 2022-2023	Sustainable Food Gardening in Our Own Backyards	Trinity Tomsic	December 14, 2022	Food
	Farm to Table: Busting the Myths of our Food System	Dr. Sarah Taber	January 25, 2023	Food
	An Electric Dinner Party: Induction Cooking	Chef Rachelle Boucher	May 30, 2023	Decarbonizing Buildings
FY 2023-2024	Drought, Atmospheric Rivers and Floods, Oh My!	Christine Shields Erik Porse	January 24, 2024	Water
	Microplastics? Macro Problems	Dr. Imari Walker-Franklin	February 7, 2024	Water
	Make Every Drop Count: Grey Water Reuse	Shreya Ramachandran	April 17, 2024	Water