

Science Leads the Way to a Healthy Bay

When Jon Rosenfield started at Baykeeper in 2019, he already had a long history of protecting the Bay. He was practically destined to join our team.

After graduating from Cornell, Jon landed his first job at Earthjustice in San Francisco (then called Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund), where he helped attorneys build cases against government agencies that weren't following environmental laws.

But what really captured Jon's interest was the Bay's unique wildlife. In particular, he was fascinated by how the Bay's salmon and smelt adapted to survive in a harsh environment. He drafted petitions to list several of the

Bay's native fishes as endangered species, including the longfin smelt.

In order to protect these fish and the Bay even better, Jon decided to go back to school. He earned a PhD from the University of New Mexico, studying the tiny but hardy Pecos pupfish. But he had not forgotten about the Bay's salmon and smelt.

Jon returned to the Bay Area as lead scientist with our partners at The Bay Institute. There he worked to protect the Bay's watershed, and renewed his efforts to list the longfin smelt as an endangered species.

When Baykeeper expanded our science team, Jon joined us to lead the program. He advocates for

water use policies that make sure enough fresh water flows into the Bay to support the fish and the people who depend on the Bay for their livelihoods.

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These native fishes that have survived in California for millennia may not survive us.”

Not surprisingly, longfin smelt would play a starring role. Inspired by Jon's research, which identified the link between smelt

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No Place for Greed

At Baykeeper, we often find ourselves fighting against greed. It was greed that once caused a shipping company to dredge and dump contaminated Bay mud illegally at night (we sent the owners to jail). Greed also led Chevron to poison the Bay and their neighbors rather than pay to upgrade their pollution controls (which they now must do). And greed runs amok in California's industrial agricultural sector.

One of my first lawsuits at Baykeeper twenty years ago challenged a legal loophole that allowed "Big Ag" to dump pesticides into Bay tributaries. They complained that it wasn't fair to make them pay for permits or monitor the poisons they were using. In the end, we succeeded and the State Water Board closed the loophole.



No California regulator should be surprised when the weather turns dry."

Now we're up against the same players—only this time, we have to dismantle 150 years of privilege.

While California is experiencing extreme water shortages, many Central Valley mega-farms just



Baykeeper drone footage of Keswick Dam on the Sacramento River

don't care. They have acquired senior water rights, some of which date back to the Gold Rush.

The Water Board usually takes the easy path and gives Big Ag everything it wants. This year, they put limits on the amount of water senior rights holders can use; but unfortunately, it was too little, too late. Sadly, nearly all of this year's winter-run Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River will die.

The Governor has a responsibility to direct the Water Board to prepare for the current climate and put in place policies that are fair for all of us and protect our wildlife. This will take hard work. That's why Baykeeper is applying pressure to bring about that change through legal action and science advocacy.

California can have enough water for cities, a healthy farm economy, and a thriving Bay, but there's no place for greed. Decades of protecting the Bay have taught me that you can't compromise one part of the ecosystem without causing harm throughout. And Baykeeper has taught me that by working with persistence, law, science—and supporters like you on our side—justice will prevail.

Sejal Choksi-Chugh,
Executive Director



California has a variable climate: Dry years come along regularly, so our state agencies ought to be prepared. We have to adapt to climate change, but no California regulator should be surprised when the weather turns dry.

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populations and the amount of fresh water entering the Bay, Baykeeper's attorneys sued the Biden administration to finally list the longfin smelt as endangered. Listing would require government agencies to consider the smelt's needs when they develop water use plans—and that will likely mean increasing river flow into the

Also, in this very dry year, Jon has been advocating for both state and federal agencies to reserve enough cool water in reservoirs to release slowly into Bay tributaries so the winter-run Chinook salmon can breed and not get cooked to death by overheated water.



A Chinook salmon (USFWS)

Bay, which will benefit the entire ecosystem.

Unfortunately, because of California's misguided water policies, most of the cool

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water is still going to unsustainable industrial agriculture. It looks as though almost all of this season's salmon will perish, but Baykeeper is determined to use science and the law to find solutions for future generations of this iconic fish.

“San Francisco Bay's native fishes are trying to tell us that we're not using our resources sustainably,” Jon observed. “If we don't tune in to that message soon, these native fishes that have survived in California for millennia may not survive us.” 🐟

Stand up to the biggest threats to the Bay—from polluting oil companies to lax government regulators to corporate water wasters.

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FALL/WINTER 2021 BAYKEEPER NEWS



Flooded Rice Fields, Central Valley

It's Not a Drought for Everyone

This summer our Field Investigator Cole Burchiel captured drone footage of water waste throughout the Bay's watershed—and its toxic aftermath in the Delta and beyond.

Not far from the stretches of drenched rice fields (*upper left*) and lush almond orchards, we documented drought-stricken landscapes and toxic algal blooms.



Toxic Algal Bloom, Discovery Bay

Toxic algae in places like Discovery Bay (*lower left*) thrive in the warm, low-water conditions caused by a combination of excessive water diversions, climate breakdown, and drought. That's why Baykeeper is working with our partners at Restore the Delta and the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment to track toxic algae and advocate for the State Water Board to stop wasteful water use. 

