

2020 Executive Committee Candidate Statements



Elizabeth Neat: I am a candidate for an at-large seat on the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee. I got involved with the Sierra Club through Inspiring Connections Outdoors, more than 25 years ago when I was teaching in Title I schools with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Since I joined ICO, I have served three 2-year terms as Chair of the group and led over 500 outings—both day hikes and overnight trips—for young people aged five to 18.

Although ICO is my initial connection to the Club and is still my passion, I think that an at-large member of the Executive Committee should work to stay informed about the priorities and concerns of all of the Chapter's groups and sections. I am prepared to make myself accessible to all groups, sections, and members; I will represent their views even if different from my own.

An ExCom member should assist the Angeles Chapter Sierra Club to meet the needs of its constituencies and to forge connections with other groups working on environmental issues. I believe that my experience in developing partnerships among a broad range of local environmental groups, will assist in these endeavors.

In looking at the Club's priority of equity, inclusion and justice within the organization, I feel there are ways Sierra Club could partner with former ICO students and their parents around environmental issues to address the Club's priority. Second, the partnership agencies with which ICO works, including schools, could be approached to broaden our reach.

I think that three important challenges which the Angeles Chapter and the Sierra Club as a whole are facing are as follows: serving a diverse constituency--both Club members and the community at large--in a way that is relevant at the local level, while respecting and advancing the national vision; distributing the work and the leadership of the organization in a way that honors the grassroots, volunteer nature of the Club; and promoting inclusion, that is, engaging current members and recruiting new ones. These are all difficult issues, with no easy solutions.

My suggestions include the following: conducting outreach to identify local concerns and environmental hazards; considering ways to break down responsibilities or tasks in order to make them more manageable and to engage more people; reaching out to various community groups and organizations; and promoting specific projects, such as Coastal Clean-up Day, in order to attract new participants.



Marcia Hanscom: I have been a Sierra Club leader since 1993, first coming to the Club for two reasons: 1) I'd read Al Gore's book: *Earth in the Balance*, and the information he presented about various threats to the Earth were so compelling I decided I needed a complete change in focus for my work and my extracurricular activities; and 2) I'd learned about threats to a beautiful place near the bicycle trail I'd frequented: the Bolsa Chica Wetlands in Huntington Beach.

Since I became involved, serving as chair of the Club's Preserve Bolsa Chica Task Force, I've gone on to serving on the national Board of Directors, Angeles Chapter's Political, Conservation, Fundraising and Executive Committees. At the activist level I've led Sierra Club campaigns to collaborate in coalition with dozens of organizations for the successful protection of 880 acres of wild coast at the Bolsa Chica Wetlands in Orange County and 640 acres of coastal habitats at the Ballona Wetlands on the Los Angeles coast. I've received the Chapter's highest conservation award – the Weldon Heald Award – twice, for these accomplishments.

Also leading successful statewide coastal and wetlands protection efforts, I've organized and collaborated with other activists, and I've facilitated environmental litigation for the Club through service as legal liaison on nearly a dozen lawsuits aimed at enforcing the California Coastal Act, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Endangered Species Act.

My experience will help strategically engage, motivate and organize thousands of new chapter members, inspired to become involved because of unprecedented threats from Washington DC, while supporting grassroots advocates; outings, trips & hike leaders; and political endorsement teams to further our mission: to explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

I will lead the Sierra Club – and, specifically, the Angeles Chapter – in implementing a positive, bold vision for protection of our precious Mother Earth; one where public lands and wildlife preservation, environmental justice, fossil fuel reduction in furtherance of climate change relief and urban nature protection are our highest priorities.

My professional background in marketing, public relations, community organizing, fundraising and organization administration are assets that will benefit the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee.

For strong protection of wildness – for rivers, wetlands, forests, urban parks and wildlife – as well as fierce efforts for fossil fuel reduction and environmental justice, please vote for me for Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Executive Committee.

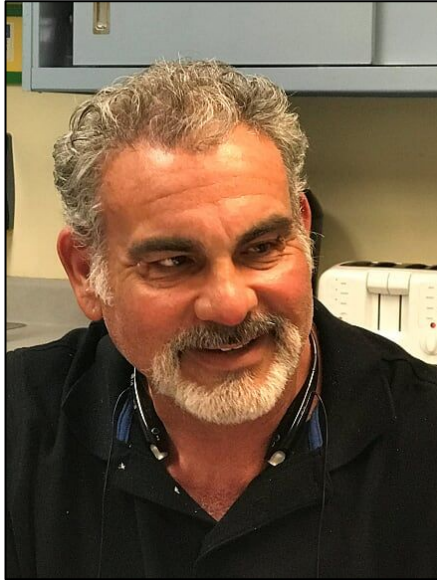


John Nilsson: I am a resident and homeowner in downtown Los Angeles, having moved to LA in 2014 after 68 years living in the mountains west of Denver, CO where I was an active participant in summer and winter activities as well as Conservation and Outdoor Education organizations including the Colorado Rocky Mountain Club which was primarily responsible for the creation of the Rocky Mountain Trail.

Upon my retirement from the real estate and winter recreation industry, I moved to Southern California with my wife, Enid. Through my interest in the outdoors and in photography, I joined the Angeles Chapter Camera Committee and became a lifetime member of the Sierra Club. I am currently the Chairman of Angeles Chapter Camera Committee and Assistant Chair of the West Los

Angeles Group of the Angeles Sierra Club and enjoy being an Outings Leader for both groups. In addition, I am the Editor and Publisher of Focal Points Magazine, a monthly on-line publication featuring premium nature photography and articles related to Sierra Club conservation causes. I have been very active in Sierra Club activities over the last 5 years and am excited about becoming involved with ExCom while using my passion of photography of the natural world as a prime tool in the achievement the goals of the Angeles Chapter.

The Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter is the managing entity that organizes and directs the activities of the Chapter in Los Angeles and Orange County. As a Member-at-Large of ExCom I would charge myself with helping to create, organize and maintain programs in the Angeles Chapter that enhance the experiences of Chapter Members and to the attainment of the Chapter's Conservation, Political, and Outings Goals. In this process I will always promote and support the practices of Inclusiveness and Fairness to all. Finally, I recognize and accept the challenge of bridging and promoting the relationship between the Angeles Chapter and the local field office of the National Sierra Club.



Dennis (Bear) Loya: I am Dennis (Bear) Loya, and am running for the position of member at large, on the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee. I am currently Chapter Vice Chairman, and I ask for your support and vote.

In 2013 I became a Sierra Club member when I signed up to take the Sierra Club's Wilderness Travel Course (WTC). After graduation, I was invited to join the staff as an instructor, and soon after was elected to serve on the WTC management committee as the Orange County Area Representative in 2016. I became a Sierra Club leader, and have earned the O rating followed by the "I" rating for the Angeles Chapter.

In 2016, I was elected to serve on the Sierra Club Orange County Executive Committee as Secretary and appointed as the Membership Chair for Orange County. In this role, I often organize and participate in various events in the Orange County area to help recruit new members to the Sierra Club. My experience in WTC inspired me to become active in the environmental movement. As a Mexican-American I can serve as a role model to bring the Latin and other underserved communities in the Sierra Club as well as the great outdoors.

One of the many issues is the issue of climate change, and changing minds of those who are skeptical. I have personally worked on an individual basis and have had great success speaking to those that are skeptical of climate change and finding common ground ultimately turning them around. We are at a critical stage, and quickly running out of time on Climate Change. It is extremely unfortunate that the US has pulled out of the Paris agreement (for no good reason), we need a ground swell of support to turn this around quickly.

I have served as Treasurer of the Costa Mesa High School Theater Boosters, I attended committee meetings, deal with financial and budget issues, and work to help ensure the fiscal viability of the organization, serving the families and students of Costa Mesa High School I have served from a union shop steward to being PTA President. I have motivated volunteers, worked with nonprofit budgets, chaired events, raised money, increased membership, and continued to represent each organization. Most of all being a husband, and father to six children qualifies me as a great negotiator and management of a budget.



Derek Berlin: As an ExCom member my main priority will be recruitment and mentorship. I would like to support and, where appropriate, further establish systems of outreach to new members and communities and help ensure mentorship systems support the skills and empowerment of new members. I have been an advocate in the Central Group for nearly 3 years. My advocacy has included interviewing candidates for public office, engaging elected officials to further Group priorities, participating in neighborhood GOTV drives, representing the group at numerous volunteer activities, and recruiting new members. In addition, I was a member of the 2020 Sierra Club Wilderness Travel Course. I have found my experience with the Central Group to be extraordinarily welcoming and fulfilling and have been inspired by the way the broad talents of new members have been embraced.

I have spent my entire career in policy engagement, largely focused on multilateral engagement in efforts to find commonality and shared interests among different countries. I started my career in diplomacy with the United States Department of State at the United Nations and then onward to the Council on Foreign Relations. The bulk of my years were in global finance and trade policy for JPMorgan, where I established the firm's Asia Pacific Government Relations practice based in Hong Kong. During that time my work often focused on how the various governments and economic systems of Asia can work together for common purpose.

The outdoors has long been a passion of mine. I am trained in Wilderness First Aid by NOLS (now lapsed due to COVID-cancelled classes), spend a great deal of time in the Angeles National Forest, including running weekly Burro Pack teams to deliver freight from Chantry Flat (pre-COVID). I am currently enrolled in the two-year Wilderness Management Graduate Program jointly administered by the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and the University of Montana College of Forestry and Conservation. I am a University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Certified Naturalist. I am a member of the California Native Grass Association, Wilderness Society, California Society for Ecological Restoration, California Native Plant Society, Pacific Crest Trail Association, LAC Arboretum, and LAANE, among others. I am learning to play the banjo and my 1-year old son is named for my family's favorite State Park. I live in LA with my son, wife, and our Golden Retriever, Ahab.



Jason Islas: I am running for re-election to the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee to continue my work as an advocate for a sustainable and equitable future for our cities. I champion policies aimed at creating healthy, family-friendly cities, and that allow communities to grow while protecting the environment by stopping sprawl, reducing energy use, and preserving our precious open spaces. I was first elected the Executive Committee in 2018 after serving the remainder of a term vacated when another member stepped down. I also serve as secretary of the Club's L.A. County Political Committee.

An activist and former journalist, I specialize in climate change, low-carbon transportation networks, and how local policies can encourage -- or impede -- inclusive cities.

I live car-free in Santa Monica where I work for safer streets, investment in public transportation, and affordable housing. I am a fierce advocate for creating walkable, bikeable, diverse communities around major transit hubs in our region to help people reduce their dependence on cars. I am passionate about not only strengthening the tools we have to preserve invaluable resources like the Santa Monica Mountains, the San Gabriel Mountains, and the Santa Monica Bay, but also to improve access to these places by public transportation.

As someone who grew up in a working-class Latino family on the relatively affluent Westside, I experienced firsthand the sorts of choices lower income families are forced to make to stay close to their jobs -- my parents relied on biking and public transportation to get to work to save money -- and to keep their children in quality schools. I have seen how families like mine are increasingly pushed out of communities like Santa Monica, where I grew up, and West Los Angeles.

We live in a diverse region with a range of environmental issues on which the Sierra Club leads: whether we are preserving our natural environment, protecting our drinking water, holding polluters like Exide accountable, fighting against toxic natural gas spills in neighborhoods, or stopping ill-advised highway expansions, the Sierra Club's local role is indispensable and I am enthusiastic to continue in a leadership position.

My whole life I have lived at the intersection of economic and environmental justice and I ask for your support to return to the Executive Committee so I can continue to fight for a more inclusive and just future. For more information about my work, visit jasonislas.com.



Lynne Plambeck: As a Club member and activist for over thirty years, I have held many positions at all levels of the Sierra Club, including group and Chapter Conservation Chair, Chapter Treasurer, ExCom member, Regional Delegate and member of the State Executive Committee, giving me a unique perspective on how the Club functions and a vision for new avenues to accomplish the Chapter's goals. I am currently the co-vice chair of the Chapter Political Committee and Southern Vice Chair of the California Conservation Committee.

I have focused my local activism on saving Los Angeles County's last free-flowing river, the Santa Clara, along with native oaks and fighting urban sprawl, especially the 21,000-unit Newhall Ranch mega development. I have also worked to ensure a healthy and clean water supply for my community. Through my conservation work, I have organized tours of the river, rallies, information booths, and written comment letters, turned out people for hearings, designed brochures and run for office to raise awareness. These activities provide experience that I want to share in my efforts to enhance the Chapter's visibility and viability. In 2007, I received a National Sierra Club award for my work to protect the Santa Clara River. I was also honored to receive the Chapter's highest Conservation award for my work and a Chapter Service award year in 2012, as well as recognitions from other organizations.

My background as former owner of a recycling business for many years, has given me the practical accounting and financial experience needed to make the many fiscal decisions required for this position.

The current political situation has brought an influx of new activists concerned about the environment and social justice. We must encourage these new "feet on the ground" and provide the best possible support for these activists that are willing to give their time and money to speak up on behalf of the environment and keep their neighborhoods clean and healthy. I believe our vision must include actions for these new members by supporting a strong conservation and social justice ethic and support for our local conservation and political activists. These actions will help retain the new members we need to keep the Club vital and preserve the places that our outings groups and leaders so dearly love to access and enjoy.

As a Chapter ExCom member, my goals will be to retain new activists through highlighting and support of local conservation efforts and actions throughout Orange and Los Angeles Counties. I ask for your vote.