

## STAFF



### **Adrienne Mohan, Acting Executive Director**

Adrienne Mohan is the Acting Executive Director of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. She oversees the non-profit land trust annual budget of \$2.1 million, management and maintenance of 1600 acres of public land serving a populated region of southern Los Angeles County with 40 miles of multi-use trails, the operation of two nature centers, and the delivery of community programming; maintaining productive relationships with stakeholders, community members, government staff and officials; directing, supervising and evaluating the planning, organizing and operations of public service programs; providing detailed budgets and cost projections for programs and projects and monitors budget; preparing all board agendas, staff reports, financial statements and presentations.

#### Background and qualifications:

- Adrienne brings over 15+ years of experience in land conservation and ecosystem management, and non-profit board management
- Adrienne has earned Masters in Geography from California State University, Long Beach
- Before her current role, Adrienne served as the Conservancy's Conservation Director
- Adrienne joined the Land Conservancy staff in March 2010.

## ADMINISTRATION



### **Jill Wittman, Administrative Assistant**

Jill Wittman is responsible for managing the general office and administrative needs for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. Her responsibilities include support for the entire office. Jill is the primary telephone contact for incoming calls, handles general administrative responsibilities, maintains the PVPLC website, assists with maintenance of records and files, and keeps employee records.

#### Background and qualifications:

- Jill has a background in general office management and human resources.
- AA degree in Apparel Manufacturing Management from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising
- Jill spent the past 15 years working in the fashion industry in Los Angeles and the South Bay Area.
- She was born and raised in Torrance, where she currently resides.
- Jill joined the Land Conservancy staff in September 2009.

# LAND STEWARDSHIP



## **Cris Sarabia, Stewardship Manager**

Cris Sarabia is the Stewardship Manager for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. Cris is responsible for implementation of land stewardship activities on nature preserves on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Background and qualifications:

- Master of Science in Geographic Information Science and a B.A in Environmental Science and Policy from California State University, Long Beach
- Specialized in the management and restoration of coastal sage scrub habitat, coastal salt marshes, coastal dunes and marine habitats for over the past four years.
- Experience in developing naturalist education programs, California native plant propagation and community-based restorations within the non-profit sector.
- Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner by the Society for Ecological Restoration, Qualified Applicator Licensed, and Certified Wildlife Protector from The Wildlife Training Institute
- Cris joined the Land Conservancy staff in February 2009.



## **Josh Weinik, Stewardship Associate (Biologist)**

Josh Weinik is the Stewardship Associate (Biologist) for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. Josh performs biological monitoring, mapping, and reporting for stewardship activities. Josh also contributes to community outreach efforts.

Background and qualifications:

- M.S. in Environmental Studies from California State University Fullerton studying habitat associations of rare and listed species.
- B.A. in Business Administration from California State University Fullerton.
- Experience includes the management of biological monitoring and land stewardship programs for the City of Newport Beach and City of Santa Ana.
- Experience in the development and implementation of habitat restoration efforts of various plant communities including coastal sage scrub, coastal dune, perennial grassland, and southern oak woodland.
- Josh joined the Land Conservancy staff in February 2016.



## Johnny Perez, Field Operations Specialist

Johnny Perez is the Field Operations Specialist for the Land Conservancy. Johnny has been with the Land Conservancy seasonally as Stewardship Technician since 2013, and became a full-time staff in spring 2015, where he helped restore coastal sage scrub habitat by removing non-native plants and planted thousands of plants each year. During his work on the nature preserves, he has shared information about the restoration with hikers and trained volunteers during outdoor volunteer days. In January 2016, Johnny joined our naturalist team and worked on sharing knowledge about local nature and conservation with the community. In October 2017, Johnny became the Field Operations Specialist where he focuses on implementing trail management and rehabilitation projects, maintaining signs, kiosks and other property infrastructure, and ensuring safe enjoyment of visitors hiking within our managed lands.

Background and qualifications:

- In 2015, Johnny completed training to become a certified California Naturalist through the University of California Extension Program.
- Johnny is pursuing a degree focused on environmental biology and ecology.



## Hugo Morales, Stewardship Technician Lead

Hugo Morales is the Stewardship Technician Lead. He works on all PVPLC-managed properties.

Background and qualifications:

- Certified Irrigation Repair Technician
- Hugo is training in trail installation and maintenance for PVPLC preserves
- Skilled in the identification of Southern California native plants and habitat restoration techniques
- Hugo has been working with the PVPLC since spring 2008



## Humberto Calderon, Stewardship Technician

Humberto Calderon is a Stewardship Technician. He works on all PVPLC-managed properties.

Background and qualifications:

- Humberto helped with the initial installation and maintenance of White Point and the habitat areas of Oceanfront Estates
- Skilled in the identification of Southern California native plants
- Humberto joined the Land Conservancy in October 2006



## Jared Martin, Stewardship Technician

Jared Martin is a Stewardship Technician. He works on all PVPLC managed properties.

### Background and Qualifications

- B.S. Environmental Management and Protection from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
- Identification of California native plants and habitat restoration techniques.
- Qualified Applicator License (QAL) for the application and supervision of herbicides.
- Worked as a Museum and Education docent developing and implementing environmental education programs at the Dunes Center in Guadalupe, CA.



## Juan Sandoval, Stewardship Technician

Juan Sandoval is a Stewardship Technician. He works on all PVPLC managed properties.

### Background and qualifications:

- Has worked professionally in landscaping for several years
- Juan is skilled in identification of California native plants and habitat restoration techniques
- Is proficient with manual and powered landscaping tools and operating heavy equipment
- Juan is safety trained as an herbicide applicator.
- Juan joined the Land Conservancy in July 2017



## Neli Gonzalez, Lead Nursery Technician

Neli Gonzalez assists in the plant nursery, with plant propagation, seed preparation and general upkeep.

### Background and qualifications:

- Neli has acquired an extensive knowledge of native plant propagation, seed collection, and nursery maintenance during her time with the PVPLC.
- Neli is an aspiring graphic artist, attending college in pursuit of this goal.
- Neli has been working with the PVPLC for more than three years.

# VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS



## Brittany Goldsmith, Volunteer Program Manager

Brittany Goldsmith is the Volunteer Program Manager for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. At the Conservancy, Brittany is responsible for organizing and recruiting volunteers to help with planned land stewardship and outreach initiatives. Brittany also plans and executes events that recognize the volunteers' efforts.

### Background and qualifications:

- B.S. in Wildlife Biology with a concentration in Conservation Biology from Colorado State University.
- M.S. in Rangeland Ecology and Management from Montana State University. During this time Brittany was a graduate teaching assistant in soil science and GPS mapping courses.
- Served as an AmeriCorps member teaching watershed science and conservation in Knoxville Tennessee public schools.
- Worked as an Outdoor Science Instructor for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.
- Experience with non-profit land conservancies thru positions as Outreach Assistant and Conservation Easement Monitor for the Colorado Chapter of The Nature Conservancy as well as Community Stewardship Coordinator for the Irvine Ranch Conservancy.
- Brittany joined the Land Conservancy staff in April 2015.



## Megan Wolff, Volunteer Coordinator

Megan Roy is the Volunteer Coordinator of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. Megan organizes and leads outdoor volunteer programs including Saturday Volunteer Days, scout projects, and conservation-related special projects.

### Background and qualifications:

- B.S. in Environmental Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara
- Five years of experience in habitat restoration and program outreach including restoration projects in California coastal sage scrub, saltwater marsh, coastal dune and grassland habitats.
- Experience in program leadership and volunteer coordination for numerous nonprofits and agencies
- Experience in environmental consulting and land management
- Megan joined the Land Conservancy staff in March 2016

# DEVELOPMENT



## Susan Wilcox, Director of Development

Susan oversees the marketing and communications activities as well as the community outreach events and is directly involved in planning the fundraising activities while refining these to fit in the mission of the conservancy.

Background and qualifications:

- M.B.A. in Marketing from the University of Southern California
- B.A. in Literature from the University of California at Berkeley
- Over 30 years of experience working in the non-profit world including conference planning, student recruitment, program evaluation, marketing and development.
- Over 24 years of experience in fundraising including campaign planning, endowment and annual fund development
- Over ten years of experience in forming a small non-profit entity which presented cultural and educational events while focusing on audience development and community outreach at the historic Warner Grand Theatre in San Pedro
- Commendation from the City of Los Angeles - 2009
- Susan was born in France and lived in Fontainebleau as well as in Heidelberg, Germany before coming to California. Her interests include hiking, bicycling, gardening, reading and animals.



## Louise Olfarnes, Manager of Marketing Communications

Louise Olfarnes provides marketing support for the organization in the area of marketing communications, event planning, and database management. She is responsible for producing the newsletter and other publicity materials and supervises outreach activities.

Background and qualifications:

- M.A. in International Affairs from the American University (1989)
- B.A. in Political Science from the University of California at Santa Barbara (1986)
- Fifteen years professional experience in non-profit development, fundraising and communications most recently for the Executive Service Corps of Southern California.
- Louise was previously the development officer for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (affiliate of the IRC), Global Kids, Inc. and Doctors of the World-USA, in

New York. She was also a former foreign policy staff assistant in the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

- Louise grew up in San Pedro, CA and has lived and worked in Washington, D.C., New York City, Cambridge, Geneva, Oslo, Montevideo and, most recently, Mexico City, where she was Vice President of Communications for the Newcomers' Organization (2006-2007).
- Louise joined the Land Conservancy staff in January 2009.



## **Laura Lohnes, Development Associate**

Laura Lohnes is the Development Associate for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. She is responsible for providing support for the Development Staff. Her responsibilities include maintaining the membership database, processing donor correspondence, and assisting with special events.

Background and qualifications:

- Bachelor of Arts from University of California at Los Angeles
- Over 20 years of administrative experience working in local South Bay cities including Torrance, Carson, El Segundo, and Inglewood.
- Laura has lived in the South Bay for over 25 years and enjoys hiking, cycling and tennis.
- Laura joined the Conservancy staff in December 2015.

## **EDUCATION**



## **Connie Smith, Education Director**

Connie is the Education Director for the Land Conservancy. She oversees the operation and staffing of two nature centers; one at White Point in San Pedro and another at George F Canyon in Rolling Hills Estates, and the educational programming offered at each, including Boy Scout/Girl Scout Badge Programs, Family Science and Storytime Activities, Family Nature Walks, Family Volunteer Activities, and adult education Workshops. Additionally, she manages our Junior Naturalist and fieldtrip programs, which bring 3,000 children annually to study the natural history, geology, and ecology of the Peninsula. She also writes and manages the education grants that support these programs. Connie creates partnerships with educational leaders throughout Los Angeles, and continually seeks to improve our educational programs to optimize alignment with school science objectives and Next Generation Science Standards.

Background and qualifications:

- 25 years experience as a teacher, educational administrator and nonprofit leader in the Palos Verdes area and surrounding communities.

- Honored four times as Teacher of the Year by PVPUSD, Los Angeles County (twice), and as a finalist for the State of California.
- Education Administration experience in Special Education, Childcare Programming, Adult Education and Middle School
- Advocate, activist, and fundraiser promoting the development and expansion of green play spaces and playgrounds for inner-city schools, along with expansion of recess and free-time in nature for at risk youth.
- Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from BYU
- Masters of Education Administration from UCLA
- Connie and her family are longtime supporters of the Conservancy, the trail systems of Palos Verdes, and the restoration of the native plants on open spaces in her neighborhood.



## Holly Gray, Education Program Manager

Holly Gray is the Education Program Manager for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. She is responsible for a variety of tasks focused on implementing school-based education programs at various locations throughout the Peninsula and surrounding cities, and additional operations at PVPLC nature centers. Holly spent her childhood exploring the open spaces of the Palos Verdes Peninsula and is now dedicated to sharing the importance of our unique local habitats with others.

### Background and qualifications:

- B.A. in Environmental Studies & Biology and Postgraduate Certificate in Science Communication from University of California, Santa Cruz.
- M.S. in Biology from University of Nebraska studying anthropogenic impacts on seabird diets
- Designed and implements an online science education program for Algalita Marine Research Institute.
- Over 11 years of experience teaching and supervising volunteers at Cabrillo Marine Aquarium.
- 3 years of experience as the Lead Educator and Program Co-Director of a wetland ecology education program for the Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society.
- Native plant propagation and restoration experience working for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy's Native Plant Nursery, Natural Landscapes, and Cabrillo Marine Aquarium's Native Plant Demonstration Garden.
- 6 years of experience as the Program Leader for Youth Hosteling International's "Discover Your World" education program.



# NATURE CENTERS



## Ariel Dela Cruz, Naturalist

Ariel Dela Cruz is a Naturalist for the Land Conservancy. She started off as an intern and now works at both George F Canyon and White Point Nature Education Center. Her interests include conservation and sustainability. She hopes that with the use of the lands of the Conservancy, visitors will have a greater appreciation for nature and open space.

Background and qualifications:

- B.S. in Biology/Physiology from CSU Long Beach
- Native Garden Intern for White Point
- Intern under the Volunteer Program Manager at PVPLC



## Cristal Guzman, Naturalist

Cristal Guzman is a Naturalist for the Land Conservancy. She began as a volunteer for many years, and she now works at George F Canyon Nature Center and White Point Nature Center. Her main interests include California geology, helping endangered species, and natural-science literature. Although the natural history of California is her favorite, Cristal loves to travel so that she may study and experience different ecosystems.

Background and qualifications:

- B.A. in English (focus on Ecocriticism) from CSU Long Beach
- A.S. in Astronomy from El Camino College
- Extensive coursework in Geology
- Five years as a volunteer with the PVPLC
- Former Native Garden Director at Tree Musketeers
- Experience in education with students K – 12 in one-on-one and small-group settings



## Neil Uelman, Naturalist (Per diem)

Neil Uelman is a Naturalist for the Land Conservancy. He works at both George F Canyon Nature Center and White Point Nature Education Center. He is especially interested in botany and likes to share his enthusiasm about the local flora with visitors.

Background and qualifications:

- B.A. in Environmental Studies from Cal State Dominguez Hills.
- Currently completing a Field Botany Certificate with the University of Riverside Extension.
- On the Board of Directors for the California Native Plant Society South Coast Chapter.
- 3 years experience working with native plant restoration as a Habitat Steward for the El Dorado Nature Center.
- Aquatic Bird Rehabilitation Technician and Volunteer Coordinator for International Bird Rescue.
- 2 years experience with wetland habitat restoration as a Bolsa Chica Wetlands Steward.
- Holds a program certificate in Introduction to Riparian/Wetland Plants from the California Native Plant Society.
- Experience with outdoor education with Youth Hosteling International as a program leader.