

California Greenin': Shaping America's Environment

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Announcer: This is Climate One, changing the conversation about energy, economy and the environment. California is a model for the nation in taking bold, broad steps to preserve the State's environment and provide a defense against climate change.

Davis Vogel: Energy efficiency for appliances began in California, it became national. Energy efficient building codes began in California and became national.

Announcer: But there's a lot more that California could be doing.

David Vogel: No state has dammed so many rivers, built so many reservoirs, created such an enormous infrastructure to meet its water needs. So water is one area where I think California has been a leader in the negative way.

Announcer: California Greening. Up next on Climate One.

Announcer: California has long held the title as champion of the environment. What's the state done to deserve this reputation? And is the rest of the country following in its footsteps?

Welcome to Climate One - changing the conversation about energy, economy and the environment. Climate One conversations - with oil companies and environmentalists, Republicans and Democrats - are recorded before a live audience and hosted by Greg Dalton.

I'm Claire Schoen. California. Land of sunshine and seashore. In an effort to protect the state's magnificent landscape, California has led the country in environmental action. It established strong automobile emission standards. It preserved fragile lands from development. But as climate change fuels megafires across the state and sea level rise threatens the coast, is California doing enough, fast enough?

Greg Dalton explores California's leadership and legacy with three distinguished guests. Huey

Johnson is founder of The Trust for Public Land and former California Secretary of Natural Resources. He currently runs the Resource Renewal Institute. Jason Mark is editor of Sierra Magazine and author of the book *Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man*. And David Vogel is author of the new book *California Greenin': How the Golden State Became an Environmental Leader*. He's professor emeritus of business and politics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Here's Greg.

Greg Dalton: David Vogel, California's been first in a lot of environmental efforts starting in 1947 with their first state air pollution law. Tell us some other important measures that California established that then went across the country.

David Vogel: Well, it's the first union of the United States to regulate automobile emissions, which began in California and then became national and spread to other states. Energy efficiency for appliances began in California, it became national. Energy efficient building codes began in California, it became national. The coastal initiative played a very important role in creating both national and local coastal management practices throughout the United States. So California from beginning in the 1860s by protecting Yosemite has long been on almost every dimension the environmental leader in the United States.

Greg Dalton: Great. And we'll drill down into some of those topics. Huey Johnson, you founded The Trust for Public Land an organization that then grew across United States. One day you were walking by a park in San Francisco, there were some elderly Chinese people exercising and that was an inspiration. Tell us that story.

Huey Johnson: Well, I had an early morning meeting and I was walking by Washington Square with a city official to go to the meeting. And a lot of people were out there exercising. He stopped and he said, "That's their living room." And we kept going and I remember that it really made an impact on me. So I started a thing called The Trust for Public Land and it would have urban emphasis. And my first office I opened was in Oakland, the next one was in Newark in a minority community and we went around and had great success. We went to the banks and savings and loans companies and said, "You got all these properties you foreclosed on in these areas. If you give them to us we can give you a tax credit, otherwise you'll never gonna get anything from them." So we had a whole bunch of properties and established community gardens, schools, housing, a lot of things. The first property we bought when I started Trust for Public Land was out at Point Reyes. The next one was a huge canyon in L.A. And they've now acquired 3 million acres in urban sectors around the country.

Greg Dalton: The Black Panthers were also involved in these early efforts to bring parks. So tell us how you were dealing with national officials in the Nixon Administration and the Black Panthers at the same time.

Huey Johnson: Oh yeah, sure. The head of the Zen Center, Richard Baker was working closely with the Black Panthers and he was a good friend of mine.

He said, "Why don't you come and meet Huey Newton?" And I said, "All right." And we go there and we go in an apartment. And there is Newton and a great big guy leaning against the wall with a pistol in his belt, protecting his boss. And Newton, we told him, I could train some people for you and they could acquire land. He said, "Let's do it." So they started coming to my office. And one day, there was a wall in two little conference rooms on each side. One side was Huey Newton and a bunch of other Black Panthers, in the other side was a group of vice presidents from the Bank of

America all getting the same lecture. And they were really a fine outfit. It was sad that society came down so hard on them. They had visions and I thought great hope and they were nice people. I didn't have any trouble with em.

Greg Dalton: Jason Mark, Huey Johnson talked about working with the Black Panthers and getting them involved in environmentalism. But overall the environmental groups have had a really difficult time engaging, you know, communities of color. Here we are four white men sitting up here talking about this, keenly aware of that. And so tell us about what the Sierra Club or other groups have done to try to reach out to communities of color because that iconic lone hiker, probably a man with a scraggly beard walking in the wilderness is a really strong image of what it means to be out in nature.

[00:17:37] **Jason Mark:** Well, I think first of all it's important to think about kind of riffing off of the thesis of David's book about things that have started here in California and then expanded. One I do think is the emerging people of color leadership within the environmental and the conservation movements. If you look at really the front-line communities and the grassroots leaders in places like Oakland and Richmond and Los Angeles, they're people of color. Again, it's sort of awkward to talk about four white guys on the stage but that is the truth. And I don't wanna like guild that too much because the truth is that the environmental movement is still heavily white-led at the executive level and at the board level and still you don't have that diverse of national staff.

That said, I do think the kind of emerging cutting edge of where the Sierra Club is and where other major conservation environmental groups are is ensuring that the 21st century environmental movement reflects the ethnic diversity of this country and doing that in number of ways. One is hacking that stereotype, right. So Sierra Club's inspiring connections outdoors is working with communities nationwide to make those connections. You don't need to go to the very remote wilderness. Like yes, it's fantastic you go to Yosemite, go to Kings Canyon or Death Valley. But there's a lot of virtue in the nearby nature, right, in these urban parks and places like the Golden Gate National Recreation Area or one of our newer national monuments the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles, right, where a plurality of people who recreate in the San Gabriel Mountains are Latino families. So I think it's important to recognize that, yeah, we hold that stereotype, but when I find myself going out backpacking and certainly day hiking and certainly in our state parks, a lot of the folks in the front country are people of color and are coming from different cultural backgrounds and different ethnicities. And you see, especially here in California, you know, folks bringing in their own cultural traditions, especially let's say Latino traditions of not going out like the solo white guy in the wilderness, but going out with your whole family having an asada, having a barbecue out there. That's a lot of what I see at the state parks these days and I do think some of that is being broken down organically and some of it because the Sierra Group, the Sierra Club and other groups are making a real deliberate effort and intention there.

Greg Dalton: We're talking about environmentalism in California and around the country with Jason Mark, editor of Sierra Magazine, Huey Johnson, head of the Resource Renewal Institute and David Vogel from the University of California at Berkeley. I'm Greg Dalton.

Greg Dalton: David Vogel, in writing the history of environmental leadership in California is it all white men, where were there people that, you know, people of color of other communities, you know, were they present? Were they part of it?

David Vogel: Well, women certainly had a very big presence. The initiative to protect the Bay came from four women who lived in the Berkeley hills who were appalled when they learned that the city of Berkeley planned to double its size by expanding into the Bay. And they started a major movement, an environmental movement to mobilize people throughout the Bay and eventually

Governor Reagan signed legislation that created the Bay Area Development Authority. The first Coastal Development Authority in the United States and one of the first in the world. And that's why the Bay has not continued to shrink and through its parks and its trails has become enormously successful and accessible to everyone who lives in the Bay Area. So this was extremely Democratic impulse to basically make sure that the Bay would not be filled in and only available to property owners.

Huey Johnson: One quick story, in the East Bay and these four women who saved the Bay, I had just gotten here accepting a job as a western regional director of The Nature Conservancy, I got to my office, a little lady came in and she said, "Can I talk?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I wanna save the Bay and we're gonna save the shoreline over there." And I said, "Oh, that's fine." The shoreline was owned by a railroad and there were rail cars parked along it. And I said, "Boy, she is -- no way that's ever gonna happen." Well, she persisted, it is now named after her.

David Vogel: And I think if you look at the coastal initiative that was a very Democratic impulse where, you know, most Californians live within 45 minutes of the coast, and by keeping the coast accessible which is unprecedented this means that all people of any ethnicity and of any income have access to what is a democratic part of California's heritage.

Greg Dalton: That coastal protection, which is very different on the West Coast than the East Coast, a lot of the East Coast is locked up, you can't, there's no public access. It's all privately owned. We sometimes take for granted this public access, and there's lot of very high profile lawsuits lately over particular billionaires in Silicon Valley trying to keep the surfers off their land.

Huey Johnson: And it is important for all of us to realize that the next challenge is that we have to save the places that have been saved.

Greg Dalton: So where some people would say there's new land to be saved, Huey Johnson, you're saying people need to protect what has been saved because they can be unsaved.

Huey Johnson: That's even more important. We pretty much save the places that need to be saved and there will be others. But places are being lost because there's no defense for them. Right now the state of California up at Lake Tahoe is going to let the state park become a golf course. And Diane Feinstein is behind it and she has Goldman Sachs golf course division out in front and you really got to fight the bastards. The battle is never over.

Greg Dalton: And is that increasing now with obviously the Trump Administration, Bears Ears, certain things being rolled back. Jason Mark, have you done reporting on that?

Jason Mark: Yeah, sure it's awful what the Trump Administration is doing to revoke national monuments that were established lawfully under the Antiquities Act.

Announcer: You're listening to a Climate One conversation about California's role in greening America. Coming up, Greg Dalton asks Huey Johnson to tell the tale of how he wrangled the Rockefellers to secure land for the Nature Conservancy.

Huey Johnson: Rockefeller said, "How are we gonna raise a million dollars?" I said, "Well, I know one way to do it." [Laughter]

Announcer: That's up next, when Climate One continues.

Announcer: We continue now with Climate One. Greg Dalton is talking about California's leadership in protecting and preserving the environment with Huey Johnson, founder of The Trust for Public

Land, Jason Mark, author of the book *Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man* and

David Vogel, author of the new book *California Greenin' How the Golden State Became an Environmental Leader*.

Here's your host, Greg Dalton.

Greg Dalton: Huey Johnson, back in the day you went to Hawaii and there is the Hana Seven Sacred Pools. And tell us the story that includes Laurence Rockefeller, Charles Lindbergh and Doris Duke.

Huey Johnson: I was doing some work in Hawaii and we were buying oasis down there. And this guy just looking all the time for these and he'd call me up and I'd go down and buy them when he get them located. And one day he called and he said, "Huey, you gotta go to Hawaii." Laurence Rockefeller wants to talk to you. And the Nature Conservancy was so feeble and practically bankrupt, you know, the possibility of having Rockefeller support cheered us up. And away I went. And there's a place at Hana, the Seven Sacred Pools so called. And it's a beautiful series of waterfalls that comes down to the ocean. Starts up in the mountains, the crater is 8000 feet and there's a canyon with just lush growth in it and nobody's ever been in there. There's a lot of fumaroles from volcanic action and nobody wanted to get caught in there. And Rockefeller had been to a cocktail party and a lovely young thing came up and said, "Oh Laurence, you know, that lovely area I told you about?" And he said, "Yes, my dear." And she said, "My company, she's a real estate agent, owns it and I fear it's gonna be developed." He said, "We can't let that happen. I'll call my bank in the morning." And he did and bought it, no further consideration. But then somebody checked the fine print and she only sold in half but charged him for the full bore, of course. And he was embarrassed and everybody, the staff is going nuts to keep that from leaking out. And so I went over and bought the other half. I got lucky and sat in a bar on a very posh hotel. The bartender, a Hawaiian woman asked what I was doing and I said, "I want to preserve this forever." She said, "I'll help you." And before long people were coming by and the owner of the additional parcel was there and I got a handshake deal and I called the attorney and said, "It's done." And I went back to San Francisco, the phone was ringing, "Laurence wants to have lunch with you." Gee, back I went and we met out under by a waterfall looking up in that canyon. And I had to pay a million dollars for the part that I got and Nature Conservancy had never raised a million dollars for any project. And I didn't dare ask their permission because I know they'd say, "No." And so I optioned it and that risked my job and so on but it was all worth it. And as I looked up at that canyon, just a green wall, Rockefeller said, "How are we gonna raise a million dollars?" I said, "Well, I know one way to do it."

[Laughter]

I said, "We'll do it. And he said, "The Nature Conservancy raised a million dollars?" I said, "Yeah, we'll do it." As I looked up there there'd been 23 rare birds called honeycreepers listed as extinct on Maui and there's a green wall, nobody's ever been there, and I thought, if there's any place in the world you're gonna rediscover an extinct bird, this is gonna be it.

And I hired a graduate student from Berkeley who is studying ornithology and we got a couple of cowboys and in they went with machetes. And they came out in a week or two and they had rediscovered several species. And so I had these pictures and I would show them to people, we had a cocktail party in Honolulu and one in San Francisco and so on. And we got -- we weren't raising much money and Charles Lindbergh had come out, it was the first speaking he'd done since he'd gone into retirement. I got him to get up and give a talk and it was interesting. The first speech he gave he got in front of the microphone and people, women with bouffants had been teenagers when

he flew and they were going crazy. Pulling his sleeves and finally he went like that and he knocked over the microphone. And he was with us all the way. We got to New York and Laurence Rockefeller invited me to lunch. I got to the lunch, there were five of us, he, his wife, Doris Duke, and the owner of the Reader's Digest. I gave him, showed him my slides and my rediscovered rare birds and Doris Duke turned to him and she said, "Laurence this is such a wonderful idea. I'll give us a quarter million dollars." And the lady on his other side said, "Yes Laurence, I agree. I'll give a quarter million dollars." It was halfway home at lunch.

[Laughter]

And that evening, the super affluent it turns out do each other favors. Somebody is sponsoring an opera, you donate to his opera and in turn you better donate to his next time. So boy, everybody was there that ever got money to donate from the Rockefellers and I said, "Okay I showed my slides and we got to raise this money." And he took off and we went by a million dollars so fast I couldn't write down. Joe Jones, I'll give 50,000, and so on. They were paying back the Rockefellers and we went way over a million dollars but he bought it. [Applause]

Greg Dalton: David Vogel, one of the keys to California leadership that spread around the country and around the world is the automobiles, 1950s. So tell us about that particular era where there is this postwar expansion. So much came out of that era of L.A. in the 50s, fast food, McDonald's came out of that yet there were some real tensions between smog and the automobile.

David Vogel: Well, L.A. began in the 1890s as a health resort because it had the best climate I've ever seen in the United States because it had no coal. And all these people would come to Los Angeles because it had beautiful air and you could be there during the summer without having to worry about -- because there was no air-conditioning it was pleasant. And then of course L.A. by the 1940s had the worst air pollution in the United States and no one could quite figure out why. And in 1949, there was a football game at Cal, Washington State playing the Cal Bears and during that day of the game people along the route of the cars began to experience the same kind of tearing and coughing that characterized smog alerts in Los Angeles. And that was the first inclination, the first idea that cars could be a major source of air pollution. And that started a trajectory that would, needed to be well researched et cetera, and by the early 60s California, understanding that cars uniquely were the major source of pollution in Los Angeles, that and California, enacted the country's first automobile emission standards.

Greg Dalton: At one point, the industry tried to argue that, well, it's not cars there's something about L.A. that causes the pollution, right. It's not our cars, it's L.A.'s problem.

David Vogel: Yeah, and then they argued this is only a California problem, so that was okay. Then it became national and when New York began to establish its own automobile emission standards, the industry panicked and they said, "Okay we want federal standards." And in 1967 they got Congress for the first time to enact federal standards. And then the question was, what happens to California standards? And the state was very worried that of course, the federal standards would be laxer than in California and California has a unique problem in that no other state has so much air pollution caused by cars. And it was a huge battle in Congress. It was very, very close because the industry wanted national standards. The federal government wanted national standards and a very famous story, Bobby Kennedy of New York went to the California Republican senators and said, "Look, you guys are gonna lose. You need to make this a state rights issue and get the southern racist Democrats to vote on California's side." And that was successful and that is why California since '67 has had an exemption which has gone on now over 100 exemptions which, for the very first time in American history the Trump Administration is now trying to take away.

Greg Dalton: And so the Trump Administration which nominally supports state's rights is trying to say California can't set more stringent air quality, actually fuel efficiency standards, which was one of the pillars of really the Paris Climate Accord because that really led the U.S. into Paris. So what's at stake there, is this gonna be drawn out in court for a long time because the Trump Administration is going --

David Vogel: Yeah, I mean it's very consequential because curbing automobile emissions is very critical to California's climate change goals, greenhouse gas emission goals and to air quality. We're driving more and more, and the only way to keep air quality and greenhouse emissions under control is to have better pollution controls, including electric cars. So this is a very serious issue. And we'll see how it plays out.

Greg Dalton: What is industry's position, does industry want this?

David Vogel: The industry's nightmare, of course, is that they relax federal standards which they can do and California keeps its exemption and thus we have a two-tier car market, California and 13 states one kind of cars, the rest another kind of federal standards. That's the nightmare for the industry. So there's a lot of drama going on.

Greg Dalton: Right.

Jason Mark: Just want to point out David said something really important. And it's not just Californian, it's California and 13 other states. And this gets back again to the thesis of David's book, which is that California being a leader and really leading from the front. So other states under that system in the Clean Air Act are able to also then move up to California standards.

And you've got other states, Colorado, others that are also making a lot of noise saying that they're gonna also use their attorneys general to fight this as well. So it's gonna be a year's long process. I think it's fair to say it would eventually go to the Supreme Court, perhaps. I mean it's a real federal tension issue.

David Vogel: Yeah, you're absolutely right. It has major consequences because in 1977 the federal government gave states the right to choose California or federal standards and so many of them have chosen to adopt them. But the current fuel economy standards are pretty much national standards a compromise worked out with the Obama Administration. And so having dual standards would be a big deal.

Jason Mark: You know, one industry we didn't mention, we got to mention this, is the organic agriculture industry. Which certainly I think is based here and born here out of California. You think about the new, the sort of good food movement sparked by Alice Waters and then folks like Michael Pollan. Michael Pollan's got East Coast roots and the good food movement came out of other places but --

Greg Dalton: Earthbound Farm.

Jason Mark: Yeah, our food and agriculture industry and the landscape of what that looks like and the sort of cultural player if not a huge market player but the cultural player and the cultural force of the organic movement that started here in California and it spread to the whole country.

Greg Dalton: Yeah. So culture out of Hollywood, culture out of Silicon Valley, food for sure.

Greg Dalton: If you're just joining us we're talking about California's leadership on climate and other environmental policies with David Vogel, professor emeritus from the University of California,

Berkeley, Jason Mark, editor of Sierra Magazine and Huey Johnson, head of the Resource Renewal Institute. I'm Greg Dalton.

Greg Dalton: Jason Mark, tell us there's been some suits lately where counties in California have tried to sue the oil companies saying you're at fault for selling oil that is causing our shores to erode and causing climate change.

Jason Mark: Yes, this is I think a probably right now among the sharpest point to the spear in terms of the kind of grassroots climate movement is now 13 different cities and counties across the U.S. And one state, Rhode Island, have now sued the major oil companies, coal and gas companies, you know big oil. And those suits started here in California. Now again that since spread, you've got lawsuits from three Colorado jurisdictions King County, Washington, City of Baltimore and state of Rhode Island.

Now some of those suits have gotten tossed out, the suit from San Francisco and Oakland that was in federal court was tossed out, the New York City suit also in federal court was tossed out. But you still have all these state suits. And I think these towns and counties are very much committed to push these as far as they can. And while it is sort of an issue of numbers it is important for I think more cities to sign on that these suits, will present more of a threat to the major carbon polluters. You only need one to actually get the green light and go into discovery and then things are gonna get very uncomfortable for the oil and gas companies. And the oil and gas companies as then litigators are able to go in and request their internal documents which present the threat of them sort of repeating the path of big tobacco and being really publicly revealed.

Greg Dalton: But the oil industry response was very interesting. What they said to these counties was, "When you issued municipal bonds for your sewer plant or your roads, you also underestimated and covered up the climate risk to their investors."

Jason Mark: Sure. A lot of people are hiding climate risk. The insurance industry is hiding climate risk, you know, every real estate agent in Miami Beach is hiding climate risk. I mean, these things are gonna come to a head when the horizon of the 30-year mortgage starts to run up against very serious flooding and sea level rise. And some of that property is here in California though I think the East Coast is probably in bigger trouble on that.

Greg Dalton: David Vogel, there are lot of examples in your book where business was pursuing self-interest or, you know, the railroads wanted forests to be preserved for one reason or another. What are some examples where business got out in front and saw something happening, and kind of, you know, rather than the sort of the rearguard defense but other examples where business got out in front of a change rather than waiting for it?

David Vogel: Yeah, the real fascinating part of the California story and I think a key to California's environmental leadership has been the support of business in so many places at so many stages. Yosemite, for example, was protected at the initiative of the steamship industry, which wanted to encourage tourists to come to California and visit Yosemite. The big supporter of protecting and expanding the national parks and the Sequoias and the Sierras, was the Southern Pacific Railway, which wanted people to come to California and visit the trees. The drive to curb automobile emissions in L.A. was driven by the Los Angeles real estate community, which feared that unless air quality improved people wouldn't continue to go to L.A. and their whole business model would end. The drive to get rid of oil drilling on the beaches of Southern California was driven by Southern California real estate tourist developers who wanted that to be a pleasant area. So throughout California's history you have businesses on both sides. And alliances between citizen groups and businesses have been central to California's environmental leadership. And you see this now of

course in climate change where you have Tesla, a huge clean tech sector or huge renewable industry sector, you have a whole segment of the business community which has a financial stake in moving California forward on climate change regulation.

Greg Dalton: Huey Johnson, have you seen that business support in trying to save lands? A lot of the lands, there's one particular story where some of the land you saved was owned by Gulf Oil I believe at one point, north of the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge, right. So your take on corporations, both sides of this have they been helpful in conserving land or it depends on the situation?

Huey Johnson: The only reason we are able to get private business to cooperate is the tax advantage and that's entirely legal and healthy. The IRS let you get a huge break if you donate, you as an individual or use a corporation. Piece of land is for sale for hundred dollars, I go in as a nonprofit and I say, "Well, maybe a 100 but tell you what, I'll give you 70 and the tax credits you end up with the same amount of money."

Greg Dalton: E.O. Wilson the famous naturalist at Harvard has the idea, Huey Johnson, of saving half of the land in the world. He says half of the land ought to be set aside. Some people say, well it's ambitious, it might be done. What do you think about that? Is it desirable or is that distracting from what you say is the people have to defend the lands that are already nominally protected.

Huey Johnson: He misses a very key point called population. And nobody wants to talk about it, but it's the elephant in the room. And I remember even a wonderful friend we had, a woman who was named Wangari Maathai. She was Kenyan, she became the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Greg Dalton: First environmental recipient.

Huey Johnson: Yeah, that's right. And I helped her start in the U.S. we had her first here in San Francisco. And she used to say, "I'm telling you somebody better wake up and see what's happening in Africa. Population is exploding and it's going sooner or later be a huge problem." And you see it right now in the Mediterranean, people trying to bail out of there. Not enough to eat.

Greg Dalton: Not enough to eat. Collapse of small-scale agriculture.

Jason Mark, population also a touchy issue in the Sierra Club's history to have zero population growth. Where is the Sierra Club now on population?

Jason Mark: I think the Sierra Club has committed to the idea that certainly if we wanna stabilize human population growth, the key to doing that is women's empowerment. You look at Paul Hawken's new book Drawdown which sort of has the list, you know, one of the most important tactics and strategies for arresting the amount of greenhouse gases we're putting into the atmosphere and drawing us down. And four of the top 10 strategies involve reproductive rights for women and education for girls. And so essentially we're never gonna be able to really wrap our arms around this issue of unsustainable population growth and to stabilize in a humane fashion the human population of this planet unless all women on this planet have got the rights to control how many children they wanna have.

Greg Dalton: I had a privilege and opportunity one time to speak very briefly with Malala and I said to her with my 10-year-old daughter at my side saying, "Malala, what you're doing is really important for the climate." And she kind of look startled like, climate, she didn't think of herself as a climate advocate. But, you know, empowering, educating girls is the number one thing, you know,

to affect fertility rates. And she's like, she kind of thought like, oh, okay I guess I am a climate person. She's not thought of that way, but she most certainly is.

Announcer: This is Climate One. You're listening to a conversation about the greening of California. Coming up, Greg Dalton asks just how militant the environmental movement is today.

Jason Mark: Some people are gonna be on the radical anti-capitalist fringe and some people are like The Nature Conservancy of today working very close with Dow Chemical.

Announcer: That's up next, when Climate One continues.

Announcer: You're listening to Climate One. Greg Dalton is talking about California's impact on the nation's move towards sustainability, with Huey Johnson former California Secretary of Natural Resources, Jason Mark, editor of Sierra Magazine and David Vogel, professor emeritus of business and politics at the University of California, Berkeley. Here's Greg:

Greg Dalton: Jason Mark, the Los Angeles River is being brought back to life. I went to college in Los Angeles and never really knew that that big cement trench was a river. I just thought it was a place where they shot, you know, television commercials and --

Jason Mark: Right. Terminator films.

Greg Dalton: Yeah Terminator films and maybe skateboarders. That's coming back, it's really kind of an urban success story, but it's also pushing some gentrification.

Jason Mark: Yeah, I mean I think this is kind of to Huey's work. When you create more green space in cities it makes it more livable and therefore more valuable. And so the tension is, how do you increase that quality of life without pushing out the communities and the families that have long called that place home. I mean, in our story about the Los Angeles River, I think Mayor Eric Garcetti, who we interviewed for the piece, makes a pretty good case that listen, we need to both have affordable housing and green space.

These should not be in tension with each other. And in fact, the market forces that are making places like Los Angeles or the Bay Area unaffordable and inaccessible that will happen anyway regardless or not if we have green space. So the question is how do you create more green space and not have it be a driver of those unfortunate increases in making places unaffordable. But I don't think they necessarily need to be in tension, and in fact I mean if we wanna have green for all, if we wanna have equity in the environmental and conservation movements to ensure that everybody, regardless of race, ethnicity, income has got the same access to open space, green space and wild space, we have to make sure that we can continue to push that goal without again sort of having this other market effect.

Greg Dalton: Huey Johnson, you spent a lot of time with David Brower. Tell us about him, you know, one of the radical really environmentalist leaders of the Sierra Club.

Huey Johnson: He was such a remarkable human being and we miss him desperately. When he ran the Sierra Club, boy it was going. You talk about population he just nailed or whatever. And these tough institutions grow and leaders are rare. Abraham Lincoln was one, David Brower was another.

Greg Dalton: Do you think that the Sierra Club has gotten soft since his time and for reasons because of its business model, because it needs to raise so much money?

Huey Johnson: Well, that's got to be one reason I think for headquarters to be in San Francisco. These environmental organizations, my own organization is a case in point, real estate is so expensive --

Jason Mark: We're in Oakland now.

[Laughter]

For that reason. For that reason, we will gonna have literally one million dollar, nearly one million dollar annual rent increase.

Greg Dalton: Yeah, so an icon moved out to Oakland. But do you think that the need for money softens activism?

Huey Johnson: Well, I think that the loss, the decline of passion is bigger. When you got somebody like Brower who's leading the charge, I mentioned Wangari Maathai in Kenya when there was a problem she went right up, dictator ordered the women to be taken out of a park, she went right up to a gun barrel, poked the kid who was holding it in uniform and said, "You go home to your mother."

David Vogel: I don't get the sense that the environmental movement in California has lost its pizzazz, its impact, its militancy. See I think it plays, it continues to play a very important role in shaping state policy. It's legacy back, you know, from 1892, founded by John Muir, I think it remains a very important presence, as do many other environmental organizations in the state of California.

Jason Mark: Last time I checked we just took out the EPA administrator. So I think we're doing pretty good.

[Laughter]

Greg Dalton: Although his number two is not that different.

Jason Mark: Sure.

Greg Dalton: Some would say the environmental movement, Jason Mark, is radical and antibusiness and holding California back.

Jason Mark: I think the environmental movement is a big tent, and I think it includes a lot of people who identify or come do environmentalism or conservation from many different doors and that's what you want. And so yes, some people are gonna be on the radical anti-capitalist fringe and some people are like the, you know, The Nature Conservancy of today working very close with Dow Chemical. And the question is how do you kind of hold that space for people of common vision, common values to work toward a more or less shared goal and recognize that it requires many different tactics and strategies and many different approaches. And so I think that's the challenge right now and including I think for a big, what would be called the big green group like the Sierra Club, you know, where it certainly is significant I think force within the movement. And at the same time we've continued I think to hold onto our grassroots edge because we are a democratic organization where the members elect the Board of Directors --

Greg Dalton: Rare among environmental groups.

Jason Mark: And we really are member led, I mean, all of our chapters nationwide, and our multiple chapters here in California have a high degree of autonomy and influence. Michael Brune,

executive director of the Sierra Club cannot tell the Bay chapter necessarily what to do. The Bay chapter has a huge amount of autonomy in deciding what its priorities are, what it's gonna push after. And I think that grassroots element still gives us a lot of force and passion.

David Vogel: Can I just make one comment. Business elites have been an important part of the environmental story in the state. And, you know, my favorite example is William Kent who donated the land which would've been seized by a water company to the federal government to protect it. And Roosevelt accepted it and he said we want to name these woods after you and your wife with this incredibly generous gift which had no tax benefit because there was not income tax then. And Kent said, "No, I want it named after the president of the Sierra Club, John Muir." And we have Muir Woods. And we have Muir Woods because a rich Californian cared about the environment and we all benefit from that.

Huey Johnson: There are wonderful examples in every place. You've got Rockefeller family gave Jackson Hole the National Park for instance and took no credit. In the Nature Conservancy's case they got a new president he was from Goldman Sachs. And he was on the national board of the Petroleum Institute when he took the job. Hardly a candidate for environmental credits.

Greg Dalton: Let's go to our questions. Welcome to Climate One.

Female Participant: Thank you. My name is Lila Holzman. My question is something I have a hard time wrapping my head around sometimes. Is proving that it can be done and hoping that other states follow suit an effective way to think about this or should we be trying to, you know, bring other states along with us, and to that extent, like a proposal that's being debated right now on regionalizing our grid and whether or not that's actually going to be a good thing. But do we need to bring others with us? How do you guys think about that?

Greg Dalton: Thank you. Who'd like to tackle that? David Vogel.

David Vogel: California has had a hard time bringing other states within the original cap and trade system. It was supposed to be a regional system and fell apart, everyone left it other than California.

I think the major way in which California influences and affects other states is by getting it right, by being innovative and showing that climate change initiatives and protecting the environment can be done in a way that's consistent with economic growth. And I think it's leading by example which is very critical, I mean, California has all these incredibly ambitious goals on climate change. Everyone is watching to see how it plays out. If it collapses the economy or if these goals are simply unachievable without sacrificing economic growth that will set back climate change initiatives. If these goals are successfully met in an economically efficient manner, other states and governments around the world will then have the incentive to follow. So everyone's watching California very carefully and to see how well it does.

Jason Mark: I was going to say that it seems to me if the president of the United States has given up on American exceptionalism, then we need California exceptionalism. And that essentially I think is -- I think that's what the state leaders are trying to do as best they can.

Greg Dalton: We're talking with Dave Vogel, Jason Mark and Huey Johnson at Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton.

Greg Dalton: Let's go to our next question. Welcome to Climate One.

Male Participant: One thing we haven't talked too much about tonight is renewable energy and it's a simple question with a very broad way of approaching it. But quite simply, what has been

California's history with renewable energy either as a leader or kind of following along with the lines of other states. I honestly don't know too much about California's history with renewable energy. So, whether from a government imposed perspective or from the private sector, what is California's history with that sort of thing and then what is California's future with renewable energy?

Greg Dalton: David Vogel.

David Vogel: Well, California has been on the cutting edge of renewable energy. It has the most strict renewable energy mandates. Half of all household solar installations in the United States are in the state of California. It has very ambitious goals. It's promoted electric cars, for example, in Tesla, et cetera. So California has one of the largest wind plants in United States, largest renewable energy in terms of solar. So California has been pushing the envelope very, very much on renewable energy. It remains to be seen how successful it can be and how renewable it can become while retaining its high level of economic and population growth. But California has certainly played a leadership role on renewable energy. Though interesting enough, it began not because of the environmental climate change, but as a concern that California was too vulnerable to oil and natural gas prices and would be a way of stabilizing the California energy system.

Greg Dalton: David Vogel, sometimes I hear the argument that California is only what, 1% of global emissions, California could go to zero, it doesn't really matter. So why are we bothering with all this because California can't solve it, so why bother.

David Vogel: Yeah, you know, I think that's an important question and it's a big mystery. Why does California do all these things knowing in fact that even if it disappeared off the face of the earth, the rate of climate change, you know, would not be --

Greg Dalton: Accelerating.

David Vogel: I think the key is that California has linked its climate change initiatives to other concrete benefits. So if you think about the promotion of electric cars or more energy-efficient cars, those cars are also less polluting. So they deliver health benefits to Californians. Renewable energy is a major source of employment in California.

The cap and trade system, a lot of its wealth has been distributed to low income communities to improve energy efficiency. So if you think about California's appliance standards, refrigerators, these affect climate change but also save people enormous amount of money. California is the only state which has grown significantly while energy efficiency per capita has not changed. So there are a lot of secondary benefits that come from California's climate change initiatives that would make sense even if climate change was a hoax.

Greg Dalton: Right. And TVs use a lot less energy --

David Vogel: Yeah, now the computers and cell phones, et cetera, right.

Greg Dalton: Right. David Vogel, where is an example where California has not been a leader? We've been here congratulating ourselves as Californians happily, but I think of groundwater management. California was the last state in the West to put meters and require farmers to know how much water they're sucking out of the ground and pumping. You know, we say we're a leader, but that California, you know, after the red states of Arizona, purple state of Colorado, the red state of Nevada, et cetera, so where are other places where California is not a leader.

David Vogel: Certainly, water management is a clear example. I mean, no state has dammed so many rivers, built so many reservoirs, created such an enormous infrastructure to meet its water

needs. So water is one area where I think California has been a leader in the negative way. No state has transformed its natural environment to make water accessible as California has. And then I think one of its most serious shortcomings, and it comes out very democratic which is people who live in California want access to water, and companies want access to water, everyone is on one side. And as a result, you have this enormously transformed aquatic environment. I think part of that is a function of the fact that God did not bless California when it came to water resources.

We have a Mediterranean climate which means it doesn't rain for most of the year, we have store water. And all the water is up in the western part of the -- northern part of the state, and everyone lives on the coast and in Southern California. We've got to transport it. So that's been a real problem. And I think cars are also the Achilles' heel of California, you know, we drive more, we have more and more cars. You know, they're a serious problem and no one has quite figured out any way of substituting our enormous dependence on automobile transportation. And by the way, the other area where California I think has lacked is its low rate of taxation on oil drilling in California. We have incredibly low taxes. We get almost no revenue from all the oil produced in California for some bizarre reason. That could be a big source of revenue and I think it's another major shortcoming of California particularly affecting climate change.

Greg Dalton: No wellhead tax in California. Huey Johnson?

Huey Johnson: The idea that we shut down nuclear is a huge impact in the world and it was done in state government. I was in state government at the time overseeing the Energy Commission. And when you wonder why does the oil industry has such clout, they kind of run government. Special interests and the fact that we were able to shut down nuclear is an unbelievable accomplishment.

Greg Dalton: Though some people would say that's carbon free energy and say that that was a mistake. Huey Johnson, we're getting toward the end. You've been in this a long time, you've, since the 60s, are we making progress? Are you hopeful or you have some dark moments where you think we're not doing it fast enough?

Huey Johnson: Well, things have to change if we're going to make it. And I have been around a long time at this stuff 50 years and we've made some excellent progress, but we still haven't solved a big problem like water for instance or energy.

But nonetheless, we've got beautiful big windmills whirling around up there. Again, a signal to the world and if we could do something about controlling population, I would say we've got a huge bright future. Ignoring it is a disaster.

Greg Dalton: Jason Mark, I believe you've made some personal choices along that line. Population, you decide. You only got one child.

Jason Mark: Oh, thanks Greg, yeah.

So I hope my partner's listening. I personally would prefer to stay with one and done. I would say that's an open conversation in my family, but I think for reasons of sustainability and I love my daughter and she is a gift and a blessing in my life, but I'm happy with one.

Greg Dalton: David Vogel, are we making enough progress? Are we getting a hopeful note here?

David Vogel: I don't think we're making enough progress, but I think we should be pleased and impressed and gratified with how far we've come. I mean, this is the fifth largest economy in the world, okay, growing more rapidly than almost any other state and the quality of its environment, the trees, the coast, the air, this is incredibly precious and impressive. And given the level of

economic and population growth of this state, the extent to which it looks and is such an attractive environment, nowadays in 2018, is I think a miracle. I can't speak for the future, but through the present it's a very impressive accomplishment.

Announcer: Greg Dalton has been talking about the push to protect the environment in California and beyond with Huey Johnson, founder of The Trust for Public Land, and former California Secretary of Natural Resources. He currently runs the Resource Renewal Institute. Jason Mark is editor of Sierra Magazine and author of the book Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man. David Vogel is Author of the new book California Greenin' How the Golden State Became an Environmental Leader. He's a professor emeritus of business and politics at the University of California, Berkeley

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Greg Dalton: Climate One is a special project of The Commonwealth Club of California. Kelli Pennington directs our audience engagement. Carlos Manuel and Tyler Reed are the producers. The audio engineer is Mark Kirschner. Anny Celsi and Devon Strolovitch edit the show The Commonwealth Club CEO is Dr. Gloria Duffy.

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