



ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

Information Packet for Prospective Board Members

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Contact Information

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March 4, 2020

Dear Prospective Board Member,

Thank you for expressing interest in volunteering on the ECOSLO Board of Directors. We are excited about getting to know you better and talking with you about the Board's projects and needs. Perhaps you already know about ECOSLO and what we've accomplished in the community in the past 50 years, or maybe you just know the name and have yet to discover our role in the community. In any case, ECOSLO is active in several areas of environmental protection, preservation, and enhancement. We are active in beach cleanups, docent-led hikes, urban and park tree planting, working alongside fellow environmental organizations on advocacy actions, and helping to bring community awareness to environmental issues. ECOSLO relies on donor support, fundraisers, service contracts, and grants to make the cost of our programs and work possible.

ECOSLO currently relies on three full-time paid staff (Executive Director, Sustainability Coordinator, and Community Organizer), two part-time staff (Office & Event Coordinator, Program Assistant), one full-time AmeriCorps Volunteer Services Member, several dedicated volunteers who give their time on an on-going basis, and about 2,000 project/event-based volunteers. Currently our Executive Director oversees the organization as a whole, including but not limited to: administration, programming, development, marketing, and volunteer management. The ECOSLO Board Members focus on strategic planning, financial oversight, organizational assessment, advocacy, and fundraising. We are currently seeking new board members who can expand our capabilities in those areas plus strengthen our connections within the San Luis Obispo County community.

ECOSLO Board members are active in representing the organization, strategic planning & oversight, reviewing financials, fundraising individually & through events, and researching advocacy issues in their committee work. The Board of Directors and our committees meet monthly, and we communicate frequently using e-mail, web based file systems, and phone-and computer-based meeting tools. Board members are custodians of the public's trust to fulfill ECOSLO's mission. In doing so, Board members enjoy great satisfaction when they see their efforts culminate in raising awareness for an environmental cause, raising funds for the organization to support our growth and thus our impact in the community, and educating the public about being the best stewards of the earth.

The attached materials will tell you much more about the organization and the Board. Please contact me or any member of the Board with questions and comments. A Board member or I will contact you to discuss next steps. Many thanks for your interest in aligning with and supporting ECOSLO.

With best regards,

Mary A. Ciesinski,
ECOSLO Executive Director



VISION

ECOSLO envisions a conscious community that understands and values the essential interdependencies of natural systems, human health, and the local community and which actively takes responsibility for a healthy environment focused on quality of all life in San Luis Obispo County.

MISSION

Protect and preserve the natural resources of San Luis Obispo County through **education**, **advocacy**, and **action**.

GOALS

1. Improve the organization's function to be more efficient and transparent.
2. Build the organization's effectiveness through increased donors, volunteer strength, and actively supporting board and staff development.
3. Promote and provide an information-sharing network for environmental issues and organizations.
4. Identify and develop financial resources to grow the organization and assure long term financial sustainability.

ABOUT ECOSLO

History

The Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (ECOSLO) was founded in 1971 and is a local 501(c)(3) not-for-profit. Our Federal Tax ID number is 23-7213237.

During the 1960s, environmental concerns had risen to such a level throughout the United States that government agencies were formed and grassroots community organizations sprung up across the country to protect the environment. This gave rise to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and in 1970 the first Earth Days took place.

Shortly after, in 1971, citizens in San Luis Obispo came together to solve the flooding and pollution problems from San Luis Obispo Creek. From community efforts, a creek preservation and flood control plan was adopted and beautification of the Mission Plaza, the community's cultural and social center, was inspired.

This activity brought a group of like-minded folks together and the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo County (ECOSLO) was formed. In 1972, we received our nonprofit status and immediately created the first recycling program in San Luis Obispo County. It was the second recycling center in the state of California and for 25 years it served the County's recycling needs.

ECOSLO Today

Since those early days, ECOSLO has evolved to include organizing county-wide events and programs and working closely with the County and City. It has remained committed to its mission to preserve and protect the natural resources of San Luis Obispo County as an advocate and through our environmental programs. Here's a list of some of our current programs and events:

- **Adopt-A-Spot & Monthly Cleanups:** Keep our parks, beaches, creeks, and neighborhoods clean! Seasonal and monthly cleanups bring our community together to collect waste and track data that we use to build public support for better policies.
- **Advocacy Efforts:** Protect our natural resources! Leading and supporting local efforts to reduce waste like single-use plastics, focus on sustainability, minimize urban sprawl, protect natural open space, and work toward local climate solutions.
- **Creeks to Coast Cleanup:** During the last two weeks in September we host Creeks to Coast Cleanup, as part of International Coastal Cleanup Day. This annual, data-driven cleanup is held at over 40 cleanup sites across local parks, beaches, creeks, and neighborhoods.
- **Eco-Networking:** Provides local environmental leaders an opportunity to network, share ideas, collaborate, and unite to be more powerful together.
- **Eco-Talks:** A casual networking social hour to hear about important environmental topics both virtually and in-person.
- **Green Business:** A local certification program as part of CA Green Business Network. This free technical assistance program helps businesses save money and reduce their environmental footprint.

- **Outdoor Projects:** Take care of nature! Join monthly volunteer projects for tree plantings, native garden projects, and trail maintenance.
- **Docent Led Hikes:** Come out and take a hike with a local expert to learn about the plants, animals, and history of the open space natural reserves throughout the city of San Luis Obispo.
- **Urban Trees:** Tree planting and ongoing care of newly planted trees in the urban environment to create habitat, enhance communities, and actively work toward natural climate solutions.

Through education, advocacy, and community building, ECOSLO acts to protect the natural environment and environmental health of San Luis Obispo County. We support renewable energy, energy conservation and efficiency, sustainable agriculture, green building and the local economy to promote sustainable economic development, protection of agricultural lands and open space, social equity, environmental justice, and protection of our natural environment.

BOARD MEMBER

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Together with other members of the board, you will be responsible for all activities of the organization.

Board Operations

The board's collective responsibility is to determine what kind of information is needed i.e. financial and program reports, to make pertinent decisions and create appropriate accountability systems in the following areas:

- 1) activities related to ECOSLO's mission
- 2) fundraising
- 3) human resources
- 4) community relations & marketing,
- 5) administrative board operations; and
- 6) organizational and legal requirements.

If you have interest in joining as a board member, we ask you to agree to the following:

1. **Terms.** Board members serve a two-year term. Board members currently may serve any number of consecutive terms. Board elections are typically held at each January and July board meeting. Our focus is to stagger board positions so turnover in board members does not happen all at once. We ask for a two-year commitment as it is in the best interest of the organization to ensure there is not only adequate support, but growth.
2. **Mission-Driven.** Board members are required to be loyal to the mission of ECOSLO. Board members serve as ambassadors to the community to educate others and promote ECOSLO's important work. All program evaluation, fundraising, etc. must tie back into the mission of ECOSLO. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure the organization stays true to its mission.

3. **Board Meetings.** The board meets 12 times per year, plus an annual full-day retreat. Board members are asked to punctually attend meetings, with the understanding that each ECOSLO board member is permitted to miss 2 meetings without prior notice or a total of 3 absences during any one calendar year prior to being asked to resign from the board. Board members must communicate to the Board Chair or Vice Chair in a timely manner if they are not able to attend meetings.
4. **Personal Donation.** Board members are required to make a personal financial contribution at a level that is meaningful to them, on an annual basis. The amount of this truly is whatever amount would be meaningful for you to contribute. This is required as the board will be engaging in fundraising activities throughout their term and in order to ask for funds, board members should all be familiar with the process and be able to share that they donate to ECOSLO.
5. **Fundraising.** Board members are asked to help with fundraising (including help with donation letters, phone calls, events, donor visits, and grant writing) and are required to support ECOSLO's fundraising as the need arises. The Board's first and foremost responsibility is securing adequate resources. The effectiveness of the organization is predicated on the Board's leadership and its ability to open doors, influence potentially large donors, and otherwise monitor and guide fundraising initiatives. Board members' two key responsibilities here are: 1) raising funds and/or ensuring that adequate funds are raised to support the organization's policies and programs; and 2) creating and monitoring the development (fundraising) plan.
6. **Financial Oversight.** Board members are required to accept fiduciary responsibility for ECOSLO and oversee its financial health and integrity. Board members' two key responsibilities here are: 1) ensuring the financial accountability of the organization; and 2) overseeing an ongoing process of budget development, approval and review.
7. **Program Planning.** Board members provide oversight to ensure ECOSLO programs run effectively. Additionally, board members engage in short-term and long-term planning for ECOSLO and shape the vision and work of the organization. The board approves program plans annually, ensures that programs are consistent with the Mission and monitors and evaluates program accomplishments. The board must make decisions among competing program priorities and ensure that financial and programmatic decisions are made in conjunction with and in support of each other. This involves deciding, planning and monitoring policies with regards to services and programs and evaluating the organization's programs and services on a regular basis. The board's fundamental responsibility is to ensure that everyone connected directly or indirectly with the organization understands its reasons for existing and precisely what it strives to accomplish. The board is responsible for the organization's appropriate and relevant written mission statement and the periodic review of the Mission statement for adequacy, accuracy and validity.
8. **Conflicts of interest.** Board members are required to act in the best interests of the organization, and excuse themselves from discussion and votes where they have a conflict of interest.

9. **Demonstrating interest.** Board members are required to stay informed about what is going on with the organization and ask questions or request information as needed. They support decisions of the Board once a decision is made. The board serves as a link between the organization's staff and its members, constituents and the community at large. It is the board's responsibility to ensure that the organization's programs and services appropriately address community and local environmental needs, market the organization's services/programs, and participate in public relations and cooperative community actions.
10. **Time Commitment.** I understand that the average time commitment for board service is 12 hours per month (2 hours for board meetings, 10 hours for committee meetings and follow up tasks).
11. **Board Committees.** I will be an active participant in ECOSLO Board and committee meetings. I commit to participate actively in at least one committee.

Human Resources

- *Board membership:* Recruiting and orienting new board members and recognizing and nurturing existing board members.
- *Executive Director accountability:* Hiring, firing, supporting, and annual evaluation.
- *Personnel policies:* Providing policy guidance about salaries, benefits, and grievance procedures.
- *Volunteer involvement:* Setting policy regarding how volunteers should be involved; and generally how the organization should treat, recognize, and celebrate its volunteers.

QUALIFICATIONS

Each board member is expected to play an active role in ECOSLO activities by:

- Demonstrating interest and knowledge in the mission and service goals.
- Exhibiting specific experience or knowledge in at least one element: organizational planning, financial management and fund development, program review and evaluation, human resources, community relations, marketing and board operations.
- Representing a constituency of the population in the community.
- Demonstrating knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of a board of directors of a non profit organization.
- Being available and willing to help.
- Being a team player.
- Participating in training and skill building and applying it to the board and ECOSLO.
- Displaying a sense of spirit, vision, and humor in the board's deliberations.

By signing I acknowledge that I have read the Board Member Job Description & Requirements and agree to abide by its terms during my Board service.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____



BOARD OF DIRECTORS - July 2021 Roster

Nicole Sisneros, Chair

Andrea Biniskiewicz, Vice-Chair

Ayla-Louise Mateo, Secretary

Melissa Danehey, Treasurer

Lynn Torbert

BOARD COMMITTEES

- Advocacy
- Fundraising
- Data-driven Cleanups
- Urban Tree Planting
- Green Business Program
- Executive (with Finance review)

STAFF

Mary Ciesinski
Executive Director

Jamie Robbins
Office & Event Coordinator

Grant Helete
Community Organizer

Emma Rillero (through September 30, 2020)
Volunteer Services

Evelyn Barajas-Perez
Sustainability Coordinator

Hannah Romano (Sept 2020 - August 2021)
AmeriCorps Member, Volunteer Services - Community Forester

Lauren Peachey (part time)
Program Assistant

Please refer to the ECOSLO website for biographies on our Board members and staff: www.ecoslo.org/staff