

# BULLETIN

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**DON'T FORGET,  
THE DEADLINE FOR  
PAPER & POSTER  
SUBMISSIONS IS  
APRIL 4TH!**



The historic tower at SJSU and site of the CGS Banquet

## CGS President’s Column

*By Jodi Titus, Irvine Valley College*

I have El Niño on my mind. Well, more like searching for El Niño. As someone who loves the weather and enjoys teaching freshmen Intro to Weather and Climate, I had built up much anticipation on the impending Godzilla weather event. So, now we are nearing the end of the rainy season and still no soaking, torrential rains in southern California that I recall from the 1982-83 and 1997-98 events. The modeling and forecast for this event have shown all the elements needed for a strong El Niño have been in place for months. Large areas of above average SST, depressed thermocline and diminishing Trade Winds along

the Equatorial Pacific indicated an almost certain major weather event for California, and southern California in particular. After years of record breaking drought, a good soaking seemed like a nice change in the weather, even though we know it will not end the long-term drought for the state.

But after the strangest February I can recall, with record high temperatures 20° to 30° above average and less than an inch of rain, I wasn't sure what was going on. An article in the Los Angeles Times showed a graph of the average daily high temperatures for February and what stood out was

every day in February was above the average with many days between 80° and 90°, except for the first couple of days. I know we love our year-round beach weather, but this just felt weird! As I have been trying to figure out why this El Niño is so different, I have been focusing on Alaska and the Arctic for answers. When I looked at the average temperatures and snowfall in Alaska, the numbers were off the charts! Once again, the Iditarod had to ship in snow for the start of the race, because Alaska has only received one-third of its average snowfall. They also had to shorten the first leg of the race to three miles, rather than the normal eleven mile

# 2015 - 2016: Officers, Board Members & Associates

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start. Could this be the beginning of the end of the Iditarod?

When we meet at the end of April for our annual conference, I am sure we will have lots to discuss regarding this year's strange El Niño. I am hoping we will have perfect weather for our conference and no more surprises, but that's the nature of weather! I love the impossible predictability of it. And if the forecasters are correct, we'll be heading right back to La Niña in the fall. Enjoy the rain while we can.

One final note, I am very excited about the plans for the 70th CGS Conference at San Jose State this year! I want to commend Tiffany Seeley and everyone at SJSU for their efforts in organizing a great event. Our traditional Friday night Barbeque has been reimagined to fit this year's theme "Pacific Rim Connections" and

we will be hosting our first ever luau! There will not only be traditional luau food, but entertainment by the SJSU Pacific Dance troupe.

If you have not registered yet, please check out the field trip opportunities. There will be trips to Mountain View's Computer History Museum and Googleplex, East Bay Breweries, South Bay Salt Ponds restoration project and a walking tour of downtown San Jose, just to name a few. And don't forget to submit your abstracts and apply for scholarships!

We are also looking for new board members to run for election at the conference. Applications will be posted on our website. It's a great group of people to work with, so I encourage you to join us! I look forward to seeing all of you in San Jose. Safe travels.

## Student Spotlight

Submitted by: Chelsea Teale,  
Humboldt State University

Erik Kenas joined the Humboldt State University Geography Department in the fall of 2012 following a 16-year career in the armed forces. During his time in US Navy Erik gained experience with mapping and remote sensing by utilizing military communication suites, radar, side-scan sonar, drones, and GPS. Erik used these technologies in a variety of roles as a Hospital Corpsman supporting US Navy and US Marine Corps diving units, ranging from combat arms to the Marine Mammal Program where he trained bottlenose dolphins to use their own remote sensing system (echolocation) for mine detection and clearance. After beginning his Bachelor's coursework at San Diego City College he continued honoring

Eric Kenas out on  
the field!



the nautical tradition as a seasonal commercial salmon fisherman out of Wrangell, Alaska.

Given his background in various mapping and remote sensing procedures and products, Erik naturally gravitated toward Geography and Geospatial Studies as programs of study at Humboldt. He was first interested in Geography's consideration of both human and natural factors in natural resource management and conservation but began to focus on topics in physical geography where he believed his technical skills and experience would be most applicable. Through connections in the Geospatial Studies program he began working independently on the applications of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) in conservation. Erik's initial interests, inspired by volunteer work with the local Friends of the Dunes organization, were the geomorphology of fluvial and coastal dune systems—two rapidly changing environments where conservationists would benefit from technology able to rapidly deliver accurate digital elevation models (DEMs).

His research continued through the Student UAS Group ([www.thestudentuasgroup.com](http://www.thestudentuasgroup.com)) and led to the design and building of a custom rotary wing unit that he describes as a "giant flying lawnmower." The difficulty in producing a suitable UAS for research made Erik realize that there is a real need for UAS within applied academic contexts; there is a general lack of affordable, off-the-shelf units for use by student and faculty researchers working in conservation and resource management. These units need to be inexpensive, simple to use, and able to produce high-quality data for use in academic research. If

such units were available, UAS could become an indispensable component of many academic degree programs as well as applied fields. The benefits of UAS, Erik argues, are its relatively low cost but high spatial and temporal resolution for use in changing and remote/rugged environments. With design and building of custom units on hold for the time being, Erik has continued expanding his interests outside the classroom to include salmonid habitat conservation and restoration in northern California rivers. He is currently involved in PG&E's Potter Valley Project, a hydroelectric endeavor involving dams and a diversion tunnel connecting the Eel and Russian rivers. The growing concern for salmonids has increased the need for high-resolution DEMs of the upper Eel River and its tributaries to assess their potential for habitat restoration after dam removal. Erik believes that UAS can provide sub-meter resolution DEMs to replace the current 10-meter models and hopes to present a pilot study in June following graduation.

In the meantime, Erik continues coursework in Geography and has taken positions as an herbarium assistant and teaching assistant for Mobile Mapping in the Geospatial Studies program. His skillset has grown to encompass ArcGIS, Structure from Motion, LiDAR processing, and field-based surveying. When he is not busy studying the Humboldt landscape through the lenses of imagery and datasets, however, he takes full recreational advantage of the area's beaches, mountains, and rivers. A far cry from his native rural Wisconsin and adopted hometown of San Diego, Humboldt has nevertheless become this geographer's new professional and personal interest—he may even invest in a boat.

## The Bulletin welcomes submissions on what California's geographers are doing around the world and in the classroom!

If you have a research  
project, novel teaching  
ideas, or anything else  
you think would be  
great to include in the  
Bulletin, please contact  
Tiffany Seeley at  
[tiffany.seeley@sjsu.edu](mailto:tiffany.seeley@sjsu.edu).



## Encouraging community college student participation at conferences

By Tiffany Seeley

One of the best parts of the California Geographical Society annual meetings is the robust student participation and exceptional research presented by students from around the state. More recently we have even had a lot of community college students present at the conference and winning awards. Here's a tip from Maureen Smith at Saddleback College on encouraging community college students to participate in academic conferences:

"Each semester that I teach an honors section of geography, their semester project is a research paper presented in the form of a poster session that is then held at the end of the semester. The honors program chair absolutely loves that I do this because then students already have the poster done and can try and convince them to enter their poster into the multiple honors conferences that go on in the state each year."

## REGISTER FOR FIELD TRIPS BEFORE THEY FILL UP!

**Anchoring the Technopolis: Mountain View s Computer History Museum & Googleplex** - Computer History Museum Docent and Google Maps Team

**The "Fermented Landscapes" of East Bay Breweries** - Joe Hasty

**Waste Not Want Not: Strategies for Recycling Sewage and Trash in Silicon Valley** - Zanker Recycling and Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Plant

**San Francisco Day Trip: Visit Historic Map Store, Lunch, and Walking Tour of Historic North Beach Neighborhood** - Dr. Rick Kos & SF Walks

**Maps and More: Tours at Stanford University and U.S. Geological Survey** - Eileen Peña

**South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Field Trip** - Dr. Lynn Trulio, San Jose State University

**A Walk Through Hakone Gardens** - Hakone Gardens Docent

**A point of origin. Hiking Mt. Diablo** - CSU East Bay GIS Club

**Quicksilver—More Valuable Than Gold: A Guided Tour of the Historic New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum and Town** - Docent Led

... and more! Details and descriptions for these can be found on our website.

# Publish in the California Geographer!

The California Geographer is a **peer-reviewed** journal of the California Geographical Society, now fully online. Our journal provides the opportunity to share your work with other California geographers.

While we love submissions about our great state, the topic doesn't have to be about California. We are also open to considering articles outside the typical research piece, in addition to research papers.

Our journal has not had enough articles in the past couple of years and I can't build it back up without your help! We are open to work by established scholars, new scholars, independent researchers, and students.

Please email me if you have any questions or ideas.

Kate Davis, Editor  
kathryn.davis@sjsu.edu

## Meet new members of the CGS board!

Matthew Derrick is the newest board member of the California Geographical Society, elected to the position last spring while he and his colleagues at Humboldt State University in Arcata hosted—for the first time—the Society's annual meeting. Faculty in HSU's Department of Geography since the fall of 2011, Matthew holds a doctorate in Geography (2012) as well as two master's degrees, one in Geography (2005) and the other in Russian Studies (2005), from the University of Oregon. He specializes in cultural-political geography, has conducted several years of field research in various Russian cities, and publishes widely on geopolitics, nationalism, and religious identity in Muslim-majority regions of the post-Soviet realm.

While raised and educated in Oregon, Matthew has quickly transformed into a proud California geographer. He feels especially fortunate to have landed in Humboldt, home to an active geography program (built in large part by another Oregon alumnus, Dr. Joe Leeper, whose efforts additionally contributed to a more robust CGS) that emphasizes the importance of field experience and original undergraduate research. In his relatively short time at HSU, Matt has expanded his teaching and research interests to include forays in more local geographies of California's North Coast and the State of Jefferson, a rebel, largely rural region that encompasses swaths of the dramatic southern Oregon and northern California landscape.



Matthew has attended the CGS annual meeting, accompanying his undergraduate geographers while modeling the presentation of his own research, every spring since moving to Humboldt five years ago. These meetings early on instilled in him a recognition of the fundamental importance of the organization, in particular in its role of encouraging original undergraduate research and cultivating excitement for California geography. In addition to assuming duties as a CGS board member, Matthew has teamed up with his HSU colleague Rosemary Sherriff to co-edit future editions of *The California Geographer*.

**The California Geographical Society is always looking for new people to serve as board members. If you're interested in joining us, please don't hesitate to let us know!**