



Transcript of Video Interview with Brad Lundberg, recorded August 2012.

This interview is part of Earth Alert's Heroes of the Coast video archive, featuring interviews with leading California coastal activists, past and present California Coastal Commissioners and Coastal Commission staff. For more information, visit www.earthalert.org.

JB: These are the personal stories of people that have helped protect the California coast for all of us to enjoy. I'm very pleased to have as our guest today Dr. Bradford Lundberg. Doctor, I thank you for coming.

BL: Thank you.

JB: So, right off the bat, I'm curious. You're a Harvard-trained internist, correct?

BL: Yeah, essentially. I went to Harvard Medical School and then trained elsewhere.

JB: So how did you become involved in coastal issues?

BL: Well, actually about the time I was appointed to the regional coastal commission after the passage of Prop. 20, I already had sort of a reputation for being an environmental jack-of-all-trades. So I had been involved in the Jenner Gravel fight and the Warm Springs Dam Water Storage fight, and the Anondale Park fight. And partly on the basis of those things, Barry Keene, who was a young recently-elected Assemblyman from this area, and I had become good friends. And he had recommended to Bob Moretti that although I hadn't been involved really in strictly coastal issues, that I would somehow be a safe and fit appointee to the regional commission. And one of my problems I have to admit: most of these years I don't say, "No" very easily. So I ended up with more things on my plate than I probably had any business having.

JB: So the question, How did you find time for this?

BL: I was also milking goats, doing other silly things.

JB: But you told me earlier that you had previously been on the Water Quality Control Board.

BL: I was on the Regional Water Quality Control Board; the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, which ran Sonoma, Humboldt, Del Norte counties. And I was doing, at the time, for the first time the State Water Quality structure and its regional boards had taken on logging as a water quality issue. They had not addressed those non-point discharges, so called. And they appointed me because I had been involved in these other issues, but I found myself in the middle of some real fights over the Water Quality's right to take on the timber industry in the support of water quality, which it had not done before.

JB: How would you compare the work of the Water Quality Control Board with the work of the Coastal Commission?

BL: They were quite different. The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act that I think, if I remember correctly, created the Water Quality structure, as it existed when I was there, specified

that the regional boards would be made up predominantly of representatives of the water users; of the people that were regulated by the Water Quality Control Board.

So we had a timber industry representative and we had a farming representative and a municipal water discharge representative. Fortunately most of them were people with real integrity and I think we were able to do a reasonably good job. But there was still the expectation that those established water users were going to be carefully protected by their representatives on the board. And clearly the Coastal Act did not envision anything quite like that. The fact that most of the region commissions had representatives of local government on them was an issue in some cases, particularly in Sonoma County interestingly.

But still they were a minority and they were a helpful voice for the most part. But in the Water Quality Boards, it was very slow to get things through that would force even badly needed change on the timber industry or on agriculture or on municipal wastewater discharge.

JB: The structure though with the State Water Quality Control Board with the regional commissions became part of the first phase after Prop 20.

BL: That's right. And that was a good model actually in that respect. Its shortcoming was the representation by the regulated...it put them in a very awkward positions, where things that they knew perfectly well, that the law required and that science required would be awkward for their own industry locally, so that got people into some very awkward situations.

JB: This is in the regional coastal commissions?

BL: No, well I'm speaking of the Water Quality Control Boards. In the Coastal Commissions, because in Sonoma County, for example, our first regional commission had the West County Supervisor as one of its members, but he was only one out of a fairly large regional commission, so even though, and he, by his basic preferences, was not an enthusiastic supporter of the act. He tried very hard to do an honest job, but he also was able to sort of lay off responsibility on the rest of us, who were simply not in that position.

JB: Well you've kind of gotten into a question I was going to ask about after the passage of Prop 20 in November of 1972, the Coastal Commission had to begin functioning very rapidly, because they had to serve the needs of people who were looking for development.

So what do you remember about what went well? What didn't go well? The spirit of the Commission? Was everybody trying very hard to make it work?

BL: I think everybody truly wanted it to work and tried to make it work, but right off the bat, we were dealing with things that people hadn't had to deal with before. We were fortunate, I think, among many respects, in the fact that BCDC had preceded us by a few years.

JB: Those initials stand for?

BL: Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the product of three or four UC faculty wives who decided that the Bay really should not be destroyed. They did a real job; managed to get people used to thinking in terms that, for many people, I think, got translated into the coastal issues and of course, the State Coastal Commission Exec came from BCDC, Joe Bodovitz, as did the Chair, Mel Lane.

So in that respect, we sort of were able to get off to a running start, but still basically there was just too much going on on the coast at that point that was going to have to change under even the provisions of the initiative for people to accept it easily. The prime example of that for us and this regional commission was Sea Ranch. Sea Ranch was already underway. It had sold quite a few lots. The Olson Ranch had been bought by a subsidiary of Castle and Cook in Hawaii. It had been set up specifically to develop land.

I never actually saw the ads to prove it, but I was assured by a number of the purchasers of land that they had been assured by the sales force and they had seen advertisements that made clear that all of the beaches and the tidelands along the ten miles of Sea Ranch would be accessible only to Sea Ranch property owners. And it was things like that, that made it very appealing. To suddenly be told that that was illegal and that if they were going to apply for building permits, or if Castle and Cook was going to apply for further subdivision permits, a condition of it would have to be public access to the beaches, was just dynamite right from the get-go.

JB: You mentioned what those lots were selling for at the time?

BL: Well, I was talking about just a random lot and the rest of the coast. My secretary had a cousin who had a couple hundred acres toward Anchor Bay, as I remember. And he was selling an acre right on the bluff front, looking right down on the beach for \$1000...and nobody was buying it. There was not much of a history of second homes at that point in time in the late '60s and early '70's and certainly coastal development had really not occurred very much. So I think Castle and Cook Oceanic Properties took some fair chances of investing what they did and hoping that they would have the demand and the sales. It's not easy to get to that section of the coast. They were hoping that the State was going to buy the Kelly Road (127), which comes over from Cloverdale to Stewart's Point and that would allow people to circumvent the little windy road that to this date, they still take. The State was in no position to do any such thing. Well, the whole thing was confusing and contentious, but certainly the fact that now suddenly you weren't going to be able to build a house at Sea Ranch without having a coastal permit as well as local building permits and the local C & R's of the Sea Ranch Association, just introduced a lot of resentment and anger which, unfortunately, the nice guy who became the chair of the regional commission at the onset was aware that I was a good friend and a fraternity brother of the president of Oceanic Properties and my parents were living up there. So obviously I should take on Sea Ranch as my private little project beginning on the regional commission, which ended up probably changing my life more than ANYTHING else that happened to me in the Coastal Commission. It was a very difficult time. I ultimately went on the State Commission; became its chair for a period, having vowed that I would remain on the commission until Sea Ranch was settled and people really finally understood it and learn how to work with it and everybody could get on with their lives. That finally seemed to have happened in 1978 and I made plans to leave and notified everybody and shortly thereafter the Sea Ranch Association made a deal with one of

the legislators to introduce new legislation that took everything that we had all agreed and turned it on its head. And it was another three to four years, as I remember, before Sea Ranchers could finally build and understand what the rules were. I didn't stay; I left.

JB: So when did you leave?

BL: Yeah, I was milking goats every day and running a medical practice, and I needed to get on with my life. I was one of, I'm sure, a whole army of people for whom our involvement with the commission, involvement with the initiative with those who were involved with it, were important parts of their lives. But on the other hand, they were also heavily involved, some of them in environmental things, some of them in social issues. It was an interesting group of people; very varied people...bright, dedicated.

You know, I've heard you mention earlier that one of your hopes was to encourage young people to look at models like this, of public involvement. I can't imagine a better one than the commission history to point out to kids that it really doesn't matter what else your interests might be, if your interests include the public benefit through political action or volunteering or serving under any circumstances on boards or commissions, there's no limit to what your other interests or skills or talents might be. God knows the Coastal Commission demonstrated that.

JB: Well I do know that young people, perhaps, have the idea that if you don't have advanced degrees or vast experience that you're not valued in these efforts. And that's absolutely false because everybody is important. And every bit of time that people can devote is valued and important. But then also, the joy is that you meet such wonderful people.

BL: Interesting people, certainly!

JB: Very interesting people. Well Sea Ranch certainly was...maybe the major headache you were dealing with. What other issues stand out?

BL: I found that the challenge that weighed most heavily on me was to do anything I could to help insure that the commissions functioned well and legitimately in such a way that their deliberations and their decisions were trusted and respected. And it was controversial enough, there were enough special interests involved, the commissioners themselves came from enough different angles. I myself was personally sufficiently aware of and subjected to the tug and haul of various interests to know that that was not something that was going to happen automatically. And I worked pretty hard to try to...when I ultimately became chair, to try and still see through some very legitimate understandable allegiances of staff and commission members or people that we were close to, but to still remember that we had a very important complex job to do, and a set of laws and precedents that needed to be honored. I'm not a lawyer obviously, but we fortunately had an excellent legal staff and an excellent planning staff. So respecting all of that and helping the commission deal in a critical, trustworthy way with all of the issues was probably the thing that was the biggest challenge to me.

There was one large property down in the Santa Barbara area that was comparable to Sea Ranch that had somehow escaped some of what Sea Ranch was exposed to which we needed to sort of

bring under the system and that was painful. There were some unhappy folks, but as long as what we did was consistent in dealing with those things, we managed to get most of it done, otherwise, it was a stack like that, but I don't dream about them anymore.

JB: Well I never understood how members of the State Commission could possibly read through all of the documents you would have to read through and actually retain the information and consider it, not to flip through it.

BL: Once the new act was passed in '76 and once I went on the State Commission, I realized that much of the work that the staff did on the regional commission and the issues that we were dealing with were far simpler and the responsibilities of the commissioners were far simpler. Carrying on a medical practice and chairing the State Commission and doing all of the homework and the study, which was a couple days of the week spent just studying the staff material that we would get, it was a very, very different undertaking, but again if you wanted the proceedings and the decisions to be credible, obviously you had to do that. And I'm sure that today they're doing the same thing. I'm pretty sure.

JB: But you had a sense of ethics about it. We've heard stories over the years about some of the appointees who were clearly not either intellectually qualified or they were not ethical. Do any of those people stand out in your mind? Did you encounter any of those types?

BL: Yeah, sure. (Laughter from both) But fortunately only a few. Frankly they seemed like perfectly...honest representative human beings. If you went through the community and picked people out, you would get some of those. They were in a minority. Once in a while, they would move an issue in a direction that we all really had to work to correct. I had personally some very uncomfortable relationships with some of the appointing authorities. That, I think, for whatever reason, you either wanted to be on it, or at least you weren't smart enough to say no, then that's what you got. And I think, for the most part, as far as I'm aware even up through today, I haven't stayed that closely attached to it. So obviously what I'm saying isn't necessarily totally valid, but I think still by and large, despite all of those potential flaws, it's continued to be a very ethical, responsible public benefit structure and process.

JB: When we spoke to Michael Fischer, the second executive director of the Coastal Commission, he mentioned that one of his problems working with the regional commissions was that you had such different ethos from one end of California to the other. And he reminded us that the coast of California, if you flipped it over onto the East coast, would go from Boston to Savannah, Georgia. Well obviously, those are very different regions, so did they ever get all of you together? Did you ever...all of the people who were on different regional commissions?

BL: We had a couple of statewide meetings just to get together and discuss what our experiences had been and address a few issues and administration of the the overall process. But mostly, we functioned separately and of course the applicants and the people on all sides had the State Commission to turn to for appeal. So the State Commission ended up having to deal with some of these aberrations that both the makeup of the regional commissions and the difference of the North Coast Commission was come to the different society essentially. They were answering to a

somewhat different culture certainly than the South Coast Commission or the South Central. It's an interesting process.

JB: Tell us about some of the personalities; some of the people who stand out in your mind that you remember in your days of working with the commission.

BL: Oh my!

JB: Naomi Schwartz. Tell us about Naomi Schwartz.

BL: Just a nice, nice lady! Very bright! Very dedicated! Gosh...I heard you talking earlier about Phyllis Faber. Phyllis and I were, of course, on the regional commission together and she was such a joy to work with!

JB: Mel Lane. What kind of a person was he?

BL: Mel Lane interestingly married a junior high school classmate of mine. Joan, his wife, and I, we ran for Student Body office together in junior high school. Mel was a very interesting guy. The comments earlier of him being somewhat more of a Republican than certainly many of the Commission people. He was quite a conservative guy. He and Joe Bodovitz were obviously very fond and very respectful of each other. And neither of them would do anything to cross or hurt the other, but it was obvious that some of the choices and decisions and policies that we had to work with were not totally comfortable for Mel, I think, because he was still a relatively conservative person, but he spent all of the time he did on the Bay Conservation Development Corporation, having done an excellent job with Joe. I think he was a wonderful example of people of a certainly different philosophy and environmental and social ethic than I. But I still respected a lot and did a good job having to follow him as the chair. It was a little awkward.

JB: We should go back and mention that Mel's family published *Sunset* magazine.

BL: Right. Mel published the books and his older brother was responsible for the magazine.

JB: And those were successful operations and still are apparently.

BL: Yeah.

JB: I remember reading that Mel lived very modestly and drove an old car. That was true?

BL: Yep. Essentially. Yep, they were very straight on, very hard working, very ethical people...which I think was generally true of most of the Commission. And how all of that came about, how people of that ilk that became that interested in it and were willing to devote that much to it. They were not necessarily coastal people. I would say that Mel and Joan were not primarily interested in the coast. I think that they were primarily interested in responsible government and responsible resource use; that sort of thing...which I guess I am too really.

JB: Thank you very, very much for this insight into the workings of the regional commission and the early days.

BL: Thank you for the work you're doing! It's lovely!

JB: Viewers, thank you for joining us! We hope you'll join us for another episode of *Heroes of the Coast* next week.

[end of interview]