



July 2, 2012

Contact: Janet Bridgers, 805 487 2999  
[info@earthalert.org](mailto:info@earthalert.org)

## **Historic Interviews with California Coastal Activists Go Online**

### Series Dramatizes Prop. 20's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Establishment of Coastal Commission With 10 Hours of In-Depth Q&A on History of Coastal Protection

Earth Alert and the California Coastal Commission jointly announce a series of 17 interviews with California coastal activists, Coastal Commissioners and executive directors to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1972 passage of Proposition 20, which created the California Coastal Commission. The interviews can all be viewed online at [www.heroesofthecoast.com](http://www.heroesofthecoast.com) as well as on YouTube

The series, called *Heroes of the Coast*, was recorded between 2004 and 2011. It includes over two hours of interviews with Peter Douglas, who served as the controversial executive director of the Coastal Commission between 1985 and 2011. Douglas died April 1 of this year after a long bout with cancer.

"*Heroes of the Coast* began in 2004 with my interview with Ellen Stern Harris—"the Mother of the Coastal Act"—in Adelphia's Santa Monica public access studio," said Janet Bridgers, Earth Alert co-founder and president. "It evolved over seven years to include 35 interviews, 17 of which are now being posted to YouTube in full-length."

"Ellen was one of my mentors. I knew at the time of the interview that her breast cancer had returned, so there was a poignancy about it," Bridgers explained. "I already knew the interview would have historic value, and it motivated me to continue to produce these oral histories," she said.

The interviews include:

- Ellen Stern Harris** – former Coastal Commission vice chair credited with the initial idea of protecting the coast the length of California;
- Peter Douglas** – two half-hour interviews taped in 2006 that cover the history of Prop. 20, the early days of the Commission, and his numerous battles to protect the Commission and his position as its executive director, plus over an hour recorded in July 2011, two weeks before Douglas announced his retirement;
- Don May**- coastal activist mentored by the Sierra Club's David Brower on his own history, his reminiscences of Brower plus two half-hours on the extraordinary work of



marine scientist Rimmon C. Fay, Ph.D., who served on the Coastal Commission and whose data and testimonies helped improve coastal quality throughout California;

**Bob Sollen** – the *Santa Barbara News Press* reporter who spent 17 years covering oil operations in the Channel, beginning before the 1969 oil blowout;

**Bill Kortum** – the Petaluma veterinarian who chaired the Coastal Alliance, which successfully campaigned for voters’ approval of Prop. 20;

**Silvia McLaughlin** – one of three Berkeley women who launched Save the Bay and Conservation and Development Commission, which provided the model for the Coastal Commission;

**Howard Bennett** – the Culver City High School teacher whose bold media tactics helped reverse the City of Los Angeles’ waiver allowing only partial secondary treatment of its sewage effluent;

**Dorothy Green** – who took over Bennett’s fledgling organization, renamed it Heal the Bay, and helped it grow into a major organization concerned with protection of Santa Monica Bay, and creator of the beach report cards;

**Alan Sieroty** – the State Assemblyman who introduced coastal protection legislation and who hired Peter Douglas as his aide to draft the legislation;

**Joe Bodovitz** – the first executive director of both BCDC and the California Coastal Commission;

**Naomi Schwartz** – the recently-deceased Santa Barbara housewife who became chair of the Coastal Commission, inspired to involvement after the 1969 oil blowout; and

**Mel Nutter** – another former chair of the Commission who presided over establishment of the Coastal Zone boundaries, protection of Bolsa Chica wetlands and numerous other major issues before the Commission.

An additional interview with Josh Ashenmiller, Ph.D., associate professor of social science at California State University at Fullerton, provides historic perspective on the passage of federal environmental legislation in the early 70s, plus his thoughts on climate change and energy issues currently facing the United States.

“Ellen, Rim, Peter, Dorothy and Naomi have now passed away,” Bridgers said. “It has been an honor to know them and the other ‘heroes’ and record their insights into California’s golden age of coastal activism. I sincerely trust that the effort will not only be useful to future historians, but will also inspire younger people to become involved,” she added.

Preparation of the interviews for uploading to the Internet is possible through a grant from the California Coastal Commission’s Whale Tail license plate funds. The 18 interviews have also been distributed on archival quality DVDs to 10 California coastal university libraries.



Earth Alert is a 501c3 nonprofit, educating via media since 1984 on a wide variety of issues with concentrations on California coastal issues and renewable energy.

The California Coastal Commission was established by voter initiative in 1972 and made permanent by the Legislature in 1976 (the Coastal Act) in order to provide long-term protection for California's 1,100-mile coastline.

# # #