

Conservationist Donn Campion on Renewable Energy and Land Conservation in California

Conservationist Dr. Donn Campion recently shared his passion for land conservation in support of renewable energy projects in California.

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, USA, August 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- If Dr. Donn Campion were to order business cards today, they might read "Donn Campion, CC"—the "CC" standing for "Conservation Champion." Though informal, those who know Donn would agree it's fitting. His lifelong commitment to conservation is evident in his efforts to protect large tracts of land.

At 83, Donn is working to ensure that two large properties he owns receive permanent conservation protection. This would be a lasting legacy not only for his two sons but for all who benefit from the ongoing natural processes on these undisturbed lands. Donn views these conservation efforts as his way of giving back to the natural environment that has inspired him throughout his life.

Early Life and Inspiration

Born in Chicago in 1940, Donn's family moved to Glenview, Illinois, when he was ten years old. He developed a deep appreciation for nature through Boy Scouts of America activities, participating in summer camps in northern Wisconsin, and floating canoes on the Des Plaines River with his brothers. These early experiences fostered a passion for the natural world, especially wild birds, and laid the groundwork for his future conservation efforts.

Career and Navy Service

Donn graduated from Marquette University in 1965 and served two years in the Navy, including a 13-month tour in Vietnam. Upon returning to the U.S., he established a dental practice in Santa Clara, California, where he raised a family. His dental career spanned over five decades until his retirement a few years ago.



Agua Fria Ranch in West Merced County, California, offers well-suited species mitigation opportunities supporting California's renewable energy development program.



Sun and wind, wind and sun. Our sailboat was driven by renewable energy! Without sunlight, there would be no wind. Without those persistent winds we could not have sailed 2,600 miles in record time."

Donn Campion

Passion for Sailing

An ardent sailor, Donn's early experiences sailing on Lake Michigan with his father led to his participation in the prestigious Transpacific Yacht Race between Los Angeles and Hawaii years later. As the owner of the racing sailboat Merlin, he made innovations to improve its speed, including the installation of a canting keel, which gave him a competitive edge in long-distance races.

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there would be no wind. Without persistent winds, we could not have sailed the 2,600 miles in record time."

While open ocean yacht racing didn't allow time for contemplating nature, Donn's experience as a cruising sailor along the California coast did. He enjoyed interactions with a wide variety of sea mammals as well as camping on Santa Cruz Island, where he learned about the endangered Santa Cruz Island fox and its six subspecies, along with various endangered plant species including the Torrey pine. These experiences deepened his understanding of the delicate balance of nature and the importance of protecting it.

Hawaiian Conservation Efforts

During the 1970s, Donn discovered the Kalanipuu' Headlands on Kauai, Hawaii. Captivated by its wild, pristine character he purchased the 1400 acres. The property is home to rare species such as the Newell's shearwater, monk seal, and Hawaiian hoary bat, immediately turning Donn's attention to the importance of land conservation. The property has been studied as a potential National Park and has even contributed to well-known movies such as "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "The Descendants." The land is now for sale and Donn hopes that a conservation-minded individual or group will continue his legacy.

Conservation in California

During the 1990s, Donn established one of the first compensatory mitigation banks in the state: the [Agua Fria Multi-Species Conservation Bank](#) In West Merced County, California,. This 3,000-acre landscape is home to the rare San Joaquin kit fox, Western burrowing owl, and Swainson's hawk. The landscape also supports Tule elk, loggerhead shrike, American kestrel falcon, golden eagle, and American badger. The area has been compared to a miniature African Serengeti for its rich biodiversity, making it a unique and important conservation site.

Future Plans

Donn wants the remaining 2,700 acres at Agua Fria to be conserved. He plans a phased approach to mitigation banking that will ensure permanent protection of the landscape and its

wild residents. This year the state's [Public Utilities Commission](#)'s ordered the construction of another 38 gigawatts of renewable solar and battery energy storage facilities by 2035. This will require tens of thousands of acres of compensatory mitigation across the state including Merced County. Donn's property is ideally suited for this purpose and will certainly solidify his conservation legacy.

Donn Champion
Agua Fria Multi-Species Conservation Bank
+1 408-505-6065
donncampion@yahoo.com

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