



The Branch

February 2026
Vol 76. Issue 5



An Overview and Preview of Marine Science on the North Coast.

**Saturday February 7
9:30 a.m.
Wharfinger Building Upstairs
Brunch**

Assorted muffins, fresh fruit, coffee or tea - \$14.00
Admission and coffee or tea - \$8.00

Speaker: Dr Eric Bjorkstedt will discuss upcoming developments that will affect our local fishing industry and our community as a whole.

IMPORTANT: RSVP deadline Friday, January 30



Eric Bjorkstedt, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor, Cal Poly Humboldt

As a fisheries oceanographer, I conduct research to understand how ocean dynamics and biological processes generate structure and variability in marine populations and ecosystems, with the goal of translating insights from this work into effective conservation and management of marine fisheries in a changing ocean. Much of my work focuses on oceanographic and ecological factors that influence ecosystem productivity in the California Current and recruitment (i.e., growth and survival of early life history stages) in rockfishes and salmon. My research program

integrates observations and samples from ship-based ocean surveys, laboratory analysis and experiments, remote sensing, fisheries data, and a variety of quantitative modeling approaches.

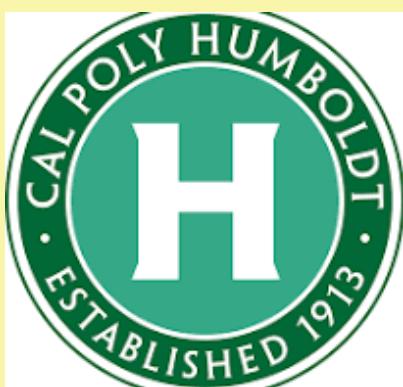


2025 Scholarship Recipients

Right: Re-Entry Scholarship Winners pictured at the AAUW-Humboldt Holiday Banquet, from left, Monica Strickler, Chara Boasso, and Delila Werner



Above: Scholarship winner Jenni Hedin on a field work trip in the Klamath Mountains.



by Gina Rogers and Rosemarie Weaver

The winners of our AAUW Humboldt annual Re-Entry Scholarships were announced at the December 6 Holiday Luncheon. Due to the generous donations of our members, we were able to award FOUR scholarships, for a total of \$10,000!! Luncheon attendees heard each of the students speak about their lives, their often non-linear paths back to academia, and then highlights of their current Cal Poly Humboldt studies, projects, and goals.

The Re-Entry Scholarship Committee (pictured below with the recipients) is so grateful to all members who made donations to allow for four awards this year. Our branch focuses on giving scholarships to women returning to school after a long break to provide an extra incentive for them to stay in school, even when facing significant financial, family, and work pressures. Every year, the applicant pool is so strong, it is always difficult to choose the winners. The diverse experiences of these returning students provide important contributions to the campus community.

Chara Boasso is attending CPH for the completion of her music degree, which she began over 30 years ago. She is double majoring in Music Teacher Preparation and Applied Music (piano performance), while also enrolled in an intensive summer Master's Music Education program at San Jose State. Her long-term goals include obtaining a teaching credential, becoming a K-12 music teacher, and also opening a piano studio. Her references describe her as a very good collaborator with the talent and commitment to teach younger students. Her vision is to expand access to music in schools. In her thank you, she told us she was absolutely overwhelmed by our generous scholarship award.

Monica Strickler will complete her undergraduate degree in Environmental Science and Management at CPH in the fall of 2026, eighteen years after she began as a freshman at Mills College. She has connections to AAUW that go back to middle school when she was a Tech Trek student. She is described by one professor as "highly motivated, deeply engaged, and unfailingly prepared." Monica's path to a degree has been complicated by personal and financial constraints. She works hard balancing the needs of her family with the demands of her education. Her goal is to help the environment through political and environmental advocacy. She thanked us for the scholarship award and said she was honored and humbled to receive it.

Jenni Hedin has a passion for understanding and protecting natural resources. She spent six years after college working in jobs that included restoring native vegetation in Glacier National Park and monitoring subalpine vegetation at Mt. Rainier National Park. Jenni came to CPH because she was inspired by the projects she gets to work on and the emphasis on natural resources education. Her reference says she models the spirit of collaboration and mentorship that strengthens the scientific community. She is now working towards her Masters, with her thesis project monitoring threats to endangered and endemic pine trees in the Klamath Mountains. Her goal is to conduct research that aids vegetation conservation and land management decisions.

Delila Werner returned to CPH to obtain a degree in social work as a way to expand her reach as a teacher and resource person in her rural community. Her professor described her as "a natural caregiver and an intuitive listener – qualities that make her not only an exceptional social work student but also a genuine healer". Delila remembers being told that her dyslexia would prevent her from becoming anything of significance. A teacher's support changed her outlook completely and instilled in her a desire to do the same for others. Her Master of Social Work and personal qualities will make a huge difference to those who need services in her community. She says she feels honored to have been chosen by our organization.



Barbie Has Had 200 Careers Now new boots and a hairdo

Since 1959, Barbie has aimed to help girls imagine future voyages. As of September, they can step into the astronaut boots of Eileen Ochoa, who in 1993 became the first Latina in space, who holds both MS and PhD degrees from Stanford and logged nearly 1,000 NASA hours.



Ochoa's doll is the latest launch in Mattel's *Inspiring Women* series, which includes, of course, first woman in space Sally Ride, who also held MS and PhD degrees from Stanford.

Mattel assigns more than 100 designers, makeup artists and couturiers for *Inspiring Women*.

No stilettos in space!

Mattel sent Ochoa a selection of disembodied Barbie heads. Her mission was to pick the one that best matched her face shape and skin tone. She was surprised by Mattel's invitation, saying. "When you look at other people they have highlighted, of course Sally Ride, Katherine Johnson, also

Jane Goodall and Amelia Earhart – all kinds of amazing women ... it was really an honor to be considered among that group."

Thank you to Jean Guthrie for sharing this tidbit with us!

Our Women's History Tea

Please put it on your calendar and plan to register by February 25 as the total number of people coming will determine the cost for each person. Our estimate is seen below. The registration link will be in the next newsletter.

Date: March 7 2024

**Place: Wharfinger Building- THE Big Room
One Marina Way, Eureka**

Time: 1:00 pm

Cost: \$26.00 with food, \$8.00 Beverage only (estimations only- could be lower)

Menu: Catered by Cassaro's Catering (to be confirmed)

Assorted Quiche, Mini Appetizer Sandwiches, Scones with Clotted Cream, Fresh Fruit Platter, Coffee and Tea

Remember: Please plan to bring your place setting to help our hostesses set beautiful tables for our Tea. Please include a dessert or salad plate, cup and saucer, water glass, napkin, and cutlery.

LADIES! We need table hostesses! I volunteered to sign you up this year. Looking for 8-10. If you did it last year and had so much fun you wish to do it again, please let me know at the February meeting or call, text or email me! Thank you for all your support!

**Autumn Chapman
[760-419-0329; autleaf46@gmail.com](mailto:autleaf46@gmail.com)**



Lobby Days 2026 - A New Approach for Greater Impact

By Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko, Co-chairs AAUW California Public Policy

Calling all AAUW Advocates - get ready for Lobby Days 2026! Lobby Days offer an important opportunity for you to meet with legislative offices and advance our priority bills. We encourage all members to participate!

What kinds of bills will you be advocating for in 2026? In the fall of 2025, AAUW California was approached by Asm. Krell's office to sponsor two bills related to human trafficking education and enforcement. We are currently in the process of working with Asm. Krell and her staff to shape the language and direction of this legislation. In early March, the Public Policy Committee will work together to select at least one additional bill from our Legislative Agenda to prioritize. All of our top bills are carefully chosen based on their timeliness, likelihood of passage, and alignment with our core values and public policy priorities.

This year we're also introducing a new approach to Lobby Days that prioritizes in-district meetings. This shift was inspired, in part, by our recent trials and tribulations with Lobby Days meetings in Sacramento. Specifically over the past two years, it has become increasingly difficult to secure meetings with legislative offices in the capitol as they are routinely overbooked. Overbooking means that meetings tend to be confirmed at the last minute, short (most last no more than 15 minutes), and held with staffers rather than legislators (84 of 94 in 2025).

This proposed shift to in-district meetings for Lobby Days was also inspired, in part, by the experiences of the Redlands Branch, who took a different approach and saw remarkable results. By scheduling Lobby Days in-district, they were able to secure eight in-person meetings. These meetings were confirmed well in advance, were longer, and offered a much better chance of speaking directly with legislators. We highlighted their success in our November Public Policy survey, and members overwhelmingly indicated a preference for meeting with district offices.

For all of these reasons, **in-district meetings will be our primary strategy for Lobby Day 2026.** As we transition to this model, we will also keep a zoom meeting option for members who are unable to travel to in-district meetings.

To be involved in this year's Lobby Days, please complete and return this [Sign-up Form](#) and let us know whether you prefer to participate **in person in the district office or virtually via Zoom**. We are also seeking volunteers to serve as **Team Leaders** - a critical role responsible for scheduling district office meetings, coordinating team members, and ensuring everyone understands their tasks and logistics.

We look forward to your participation!

A Few Important Notes About The New Lobby Days Model

- In-district meetings will be longer, will be with your own representative's office, and are more likely to be directly with the legislator - although they may still be referred to staff, depending upon the legislator's schedule demands.**
- Some in-district meetings may include AAUW members from multiple branches. Each team will need to identify 4-5 speakers. Even if not everyone presents, members are encouraged to demonstrate strong support, and legislative offices will appreciate meeting such an engaged group of constituents.**
- Team Leaders, volunteers from your branch or district, will take on a new role. They will not only be responsible for meeting with team members, dividing up speaking responsibilities, and leading the actual meetings--now they will also be responsible for scheduling the in-district meetings.**
- Zoom meetings will remain brief - only 15-20 minutes in length. They are likely to be with staff, and may be with a legislative office which is not your own. This is because in-person meetings will be prioritized. Zoom meetings will be scheduled by the Public Policy Committee.**
- Flexibility is essential for everyone. Schedules shift, offices change availability, and things happen outside of our control.**
- Most of all - enjoy the experience. Lobby Day is a wonderful opportunity to connect with lawmakers, share our values, and advocate for AAUW California's priority bills - legislation that will make a real difference in the lives of women and girls as well as those impacted by social and racial injustices.**

Key Dates:

- January 6, 2026 - Lobby Day Interest Survey will be sent**
- January 16, 2026 - Survey responses due**
- January 30, 2026 - Team Rosters, including Team Leaders, will be published**

- **February 9, 2026 - Team Leaders begin scheduling in-district meetings (Recommended lead time is minimum 45 days)**
 - **March 27-April 17, 2026 - Recommended meeting window for in-district meetings**
 - Spring recess: March 26-April 6 (some legislators take district meetings during this time)
 - During session, legislators are often available for Thursday afternoon, Friday and occasionally Saturday in-district meetings
 - Alternatively, instead of a meeting in the district office, you may want to invite your legislator to join your branch meeting. They will be happy to share their work as well as hear about our priority bills. This is a terrific way to foster your relationships with legislators.
- **March 16, 2026 - Bill packets (bill language + talking points) available**
- **March 23, 2026 - Lobby Day Training Webinar**
- **March 26-April 6, 2026 - Legislature's Spring Recess**
- **March 27-April 17, 2026 - Meeting window for in-district meetings**
- **April 8-10, 2026 - Meeting window for Zoom meetings**

Lobby Days 2026 FAQ

In-District Meetings

Zoom Meetings

How long are meetings with legislators?

In-district meetings will be longer, depending on the legislator's availability.

Zoom meetings will remain brief - only 15-20 minutes in length.

Am I meeting with my own legislators?

In-district meetings will be with your own representative's office, and are more likely to be directly with the legislator - although they may still be referred to staff, depending upon the legislator's schedule demands.

Zoom meetings may be with a legislative office that is not your own and are likely to be with staff.

What am I talking to legislators about?

You will be telling them about our priority legislation. We'll give you information about this, and about how to present this legislation, in March 2026.

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Who is on my meeting team?

AAUW Public Policy will create your team. It will be made up of a team leader and team members. Some in-district meetings may include AAUW members from multiple branches. We will notify you of the details on January 30, 2026.

AAUW Public Policy will create your team, made up of a team leader and team members from all over the state. We will notify you of the details on January 30, 2026.

Tell me more about the team leader role?

Team Leaders are volunteers from your **branch or district**. They are responsible for meeting with all team members, making sure that all team members have information about priority bills, dividing up speaking responsibilities, and leading the actual meetings. **For in-district meetings, they are also responsible for coordinating with local offices to schedule the meetings and conveying that information to all team members.**

Team Leaders are volunteers from all over the state. They are responsible for meeting with all team members, making sure that all team members have information about priority bills, dividing up speaking responsibilities, and leading the actual meetings.

Will I get a chance to speak during the meeting?

The team leader will coordinate speaking roles. Because some in-district meetings may include AAUW members from multiple branches, the team leader will need to identify 4-5 people to speak. Even if not everyone presents, members are encouraged to demonstrate strong support, and legislative offices will appreciate meeting such an engaged group of constituents.

The team leader will coordinate speaking roles. Everyone on the team should have a chance to speak briefly during the meeting.

Who will schedule the meetings with legislators?

The Team Leader will schedule the meeting(s).

The AAUW Public Policy Team will schedule the meeting(s).

The Branch is published eight times a year by the Humboldt Branch of AAUW. Submissions of articles, news items and photos from members are welcome. Submit them by the 20th of each month to shelleydmitchell@gmail.com.

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