



Keeping an Eye on the Bay by Land, Sea & Air



Cole Burchiel came to Baykeeper after spending time as a park ranger in Vermont; he was hiking the Appalachian trail when he got the call to interview. Now Cole manages Baykeeper’s signature Bay patrols, as well as our volunteer programs, scientific support for our legal team, and our Pollution Hotline—and he’s also a licensed drone pilot.

Baykeeper’s patrols have expanded considerably since the organization’s early days. In addition to the boat, Cole maintains our partnerships with the aviation conservation organization Lighthawk and with Autonomous Imagery Drones, which give us the ability to keep an eye on the Bay from above.

By plane, you can see the whole Bay at once, and it’s really the only way to see the full extent of an oil spill or an algae bloom. As Cole observed, “Because the Bay has

so many diverse microclimates and ecosystems, you’re being transported into many different worlds at one glance. It’s especially amazing to look down and see whales, dolphins, seals, and all the other life the Bay supports, but you also see the residual effects of careless polluters and the harm they cause to the Bay.”



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Cole Burchiel
Baykeeper Field Investigator

With the drone, we can see over the visual barrier walls that some companies have put up to keep us

from seeing what’s going on from ground level, like at the Levin coal terminal in Richmond. Baykeeper can now see if individual storm drains are blocked, which could cause dangerous runoff during a heavy rain, or if tire tracks from Levin’s coal piles are carrying coal dust dangerously close to the Bay.

The boat lets us see the effects of pollution close up, and it’s the best way for Baykeeper’s scientists to take pollution samples from remote spots on the Bay.

During the pandemic shutdown, Baykeeper has dramatically increased drone patrols. Our partners at Autonomous Imagery didn’t want anything to stop Baykeeper from finding sources of pollution, so they gifted us a drone of our own—and we’ve named the drone Osprey, because she has a bird’s eye view of the Bay.

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Seeing the Bay in a New Light

When we mailed our spring newsletter six months ago, we were in the early days of the pandemic, and Bay Area businesses were just shutting down. I had visions of being back in our Oakland office in a matter of months, resuming lunch meetings at local restaurants, and reinstating our regular pollution patrols on the boat. There was

environment and supporting the people who live in it—a person's race and economic status remain the greatest indicators of whether one lives near toxic pollution. The nation's reckoning has allowed me to find new meaning in Baykeeper's work with frontline communities stopping coal pollution in Oakland, Richmond, and Vallejo.



Regardless of how difficult times have become, the Bay keeps flowing as a steadfast companion throughout everything that's been happening.

no question in my mind that the school year would begin as normal, or that Baykeeper would hold its summer Bay Parade and organize its public Coastal Cleanup Day event in September.

But here we are in October with no end in sight. And if possible, the future seems even dimmer with our nation struggling for racial justice and fair elections, and California's climate-fueled fires displacing thousands of people and polluting our air.

Surprisingly, though, this dark moment has provided some glimmers of hope.

The momentum for social justice reinforced my personal lived experience that there's no line between protecting the

More quality time with my young kids has given me the opportunity to navigate the current uncertainties with them together. We're learning from the Bay itself: regardless of how difficult times have become, the Bay keeps flowing as a steadfast companion throughout everything that's been happening.



There's also the hope that when we finally wake from our smoky seclusion, we might emerge into a new normal. Bay Area communities will have more in common because we'll have endured the same isolation and anxieties—we'll have worked towards a united goal of protecting each other through it all. Maybe this shared experience will help us see the Bay in a new light, as a living symbol of our common bond. We're all living around this beautiful Bay together, and together we can make it better.

As I hope you'll read in these pages, Baykeeper is up to the task—if anything, the challenges of the last six months have only made us stronger. And I'm so thankful for your ongoing support through it all.

Sejal Choksi-Chugh,
Executive Director

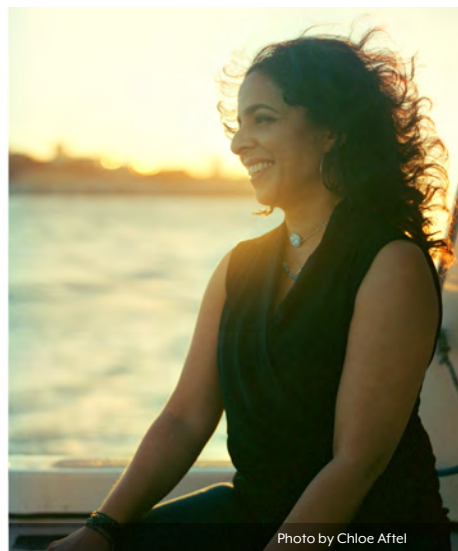


Photo by Chloe Aflet

The Dark Side of Coal in the Bay Area

Coal is a dirty, carbon-dense fuel that's fueling climate change and causing significant health problems for people exposed to the dust. This toxic product also pollutes the Bay's waters.

The Levin terminal in Richmond already ships more than 1 million tons of coal on the Bay every year. In Oakland, a developer financed by out-of-state fossil fuel interests is trying to build a new coal export terminal that would bring 9 million more tons of coal through the Bay Area.

We don't want the Bay Area to become coal country.

We don't want the Bay Area to become coal country. That's why we're taking a stand on the front lines with partners against coal. The City of Richmond passed a ban on the storage and handling

of this toxic substance to protect the health and safety of its residents—and immediately faced legal backlash from the fossil fuel industry. Baykeeper's lawyers are helping to defend the city's ban in a new legal case filed this summer.

The proposed Oakland terminal would sit at the foot of the Bay Bridge in an area where—similar to Richmond—communities are already afflicted with some of the highest rates of pollution-related illnesses in the region. Baykeeper has been in and out of court fighting that project, too.

But there is hope at the end of the tunnel. For the coal industry around the world, the outlook is dark. Coal companies are going bankrupt because it's a costly business, and clean energy is more dependable and cost effective. Those factors, along with the work of our legal team, will help keep Richmond communities and the Bay safe.

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Osprey is equipped with a high resolution camera that takes overlapping aerial images and pieces them together into a map. It's like what you see on Google Earth, only more detailed. With this technology, it's even possible to identify the conditions that cause toxic algal blooms before they happen, which can take Baykeeper into new realms of pollution prevention.



Photo by Erin Conger

Now, Baykeeper is using cutting edge technology both to stop polluters and to help the Bay Area prepare for climate-driven sea level rise.

Baykeeper has all the right tools for the job. And for the good of the Bay and its surrounding communities, they're always at hand.

Pictured, above: Field Investigator Cole Burchiel with the Baykeeper patrol boat.

You can count on Baykeeper to defend the Bay.

Help keep us on patrol and on the job by making a gift today. Together, we'll fight for a healthy future for our home, beautiful San Francisco Bay.

Use the attached envelope or visit baykeeper.org/donate to make your gift.


Photo by Robb Most, thanks to Lighthouse Conservation Flying

FALL/WINTER 2020 BAYKEEPER NEWS



REPORT POLLUTION IN THE BAY
1-800-KEEP-BAY
hotline@baykeeper.org



The key to holding polluters accountable is to catch them in the act. At Baykeeper, our scientists regularly keep an eye on thousands of polluting companies around the Bay. We test for heavy metals like mercury and lead, harmful bacteria and pathogens, petroleum products, nitrogen, and other pollutants. And if we find evidence of a bad actor, then our lawyers kick into action. It all adds up to a healthier, safer San Francisco Bay. 



Photos, clockwise from upper left, by: Andrew Ho, Robb Most, Baykeeper & Robb Most

