

Executive Advisory Board

RaiseLakeHodges.org



Paul Bernstein MD

Dr. Paul Bernstein is a nationally recognized physician leader and innovator known for driving transformative change in healthcare and community well-being. As Medical Director of one of California's largest medical groups, he led a multi-billion-dollar organization to national recognition with the Malcolm Baldrige Best Practice Award for leadership and innovation. A visionary in telehealth and virtual medicine, Dr. Bernstein has been at the forefront of improving patient access and experience through technology. Equally committed to community health and prevention, he served for over two decades on the Board of Directors of the American Cancer Society, where he led the Head and Neck division and championed cancer prevention and early detection. Beyond medicine, he is a celebrated novelist whose award-winning books reflect his passion for excellence and impact. Through visionary leadership, community engagement, and a deep commitment to innovation, Dr. Bernstein continues to inspire progress across both health and literary landscapes.

Robert Dudley

Robert Dudley is a seasoned public policy strategist and community leader with decades of legislative, business, and nonprofit experience. He began his career on Capitol Hill as a Congressional Legislative Aide to Senator William E. Brock and Congressman Robin Beard, also completing internships in the U.S. House of Representatives and managing multiple successful federal campaigns for U.S. House candidates. This legislative foundation gave Dudley deep insight into policy development, constituent relations, and the inner workings of government—skills he has since applied across both the private and nonprofit sectors. As founder and president of Rexcom Inc. and later Amerisat Inc., he led innovative satellite communications ventures, including a successful acquisition by Norsat Inc. Beyond business, Dudley has made a lasting impact through civic engagement, serving on the boards of Big Brothers of North County, the San Dieguito River Park Conservancy, The Child's Primary School, the California Center for the Arts Escondido Foundation, and CCAE Theatricals. His lifelong commitment to effective

public policy, economic innovation, and community service makes him a trusted voice in both legislative circles and local initiatives.

John Anshus, MD

Dr. John Stuart Anshus, MD, is a veteran emergency medicine physician with over 30 years of front-line experience, including critical response during San Diego's most devastating wildfires. Since 1984, he has served in the emergency departments of Palomar Medical Center and Pomerado Hospital, where he played a key role in managing patient surges, coordinating disaster response, and delivering urgent care under crisis conditions. Board-certified in emergency medicine with a subspecialty in undersea and hyperbaric medicine, Dr. Anshus has trained in high-acuity environments in Dallas and Los Angeles and contributed to medical literature on emergency department operations and security. His leadership includes directing quality improvement, chairing hospital committees, and mentoring the next generation of emergency physicians through appointments at UCLA and UCSD. In addition to his clinical and academic work, Dr. Anshus has provided telemedicine and medical-legal services, earning a reputation for decisive, compassionate care in the face of public health emergencies—particularly during California's wildfire seasons.

Daniel J Smith

Dr. Daniel J. Smith, PhD, MBA, is a proven executive leader with a talent for cutting through bureaucracy and weighing risk versus reward in high-stakes decisions—making him uniquely suited to help navigate complex public projects like raising the level of Lake Hodges. With over 15 years of experience leading large organizations, including as Director of Analytics at Bon Secours Mercy Health, he managed multimillion-dollar budgets and spearheaded initiatives that saved over \$20 million through data-driven strategy and efficient resource allocation. As President & CEO of a consulting firm and a university professor, Dr. Smith brings a rare blend of financial expertise, systems thinking, and clear communication. His background in the insurance industry sharpens his ability to assess risk accurately, while his academic and corporate leadership roles reflect his skill in building consensus across government, business, and community stakeholders. He excels at identifying actionable solutions and aligning them with public benefit—ensuring that smart investments, like wildfire prevention through reservoir management, rise above red tape and deliver real results.

William Proffer

William "Bill" Proffer is a seasoned physical scientist and engineer with deep expertise in applied mechanics, structural analysis, and engineering systems critical to public safety—including dam infrastructure. A graduate of UC San Diego's Jacobs School of Engineering with both a Bachelor's and Master's in Engineering Science and Applied Mechanics, Proffer brings a rigorous academic foundation to real-world engineering challenges. His early Ph.D. research in structural dynamics informs his professional work at Leidos, where he contributes to advanced

technology and engineering initiatives with a focus on evaluation, safety, and systems integrity. With decades of experience, Proffer is well-qualified to assess dam safety, interpret structural vulnerabilities, and recommend mitigation strategies grounded in sound engineering principles. In addition to his technical work, he mentors engineering students at UCSD, serves on the Technology Committee of the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair, and is a recognized “True Triton” for his ongoing contributions to scientific excellence and public service.

Sal Garcia MBA

Salvador Garcia, MBA, is a veteran fire-and-aviation leader who has blended 25 years of frontline wildland-fire operations with high-level management consulting. Since 2017 he has supported the U.S. Forest Service South Zone Geographic Area Command Center and CAL FIRE—gathering helicopter intelligence, running daily briefings, and coordinating resources for active incidents—drawing on the interagency expertise he honed as Deputy Fire Chief of the Viejas Fire Department Reservist Program (2009-2016), where he oversaw deployments, records, and policy compliance with the Forest Service, CAL FIRE, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As Senior Consultant and Project Manager for Sierra Nevada Consulting and President of Garcia’s Management Consultants, he has led Fire & Aviation Management initiatives for utilities, tribal governments, and private enterprises, crafting strategic and tactical wildfire-mitigation plans, aviation-safety protocols, and emergency-infrastructure projects. A state-certified Instructor 1A/1B in intermediate and advanced air-and-fire operations, aviation safety, and risk management, Garcia couples operational fireground savvy with stewardship of multimillion-dollar budgets—making him a proven asset whenever lives, land, and critical assets are on the line.

Brian Caldwell

Brian Caldwell is a lifelong environmental advocate and leading expert on the wildlife and ecosystem of Lake Hodges, where he has lived in Del Dios for over 30 years. As a founding board member of the Friends of Lake Hodges and a graduate of the San Diego County Water Authority’s Citizens Water Academy, Brian combines hands-on ecological knowledge with community engagement and water policy insight. He previously operated the Lake Hodges Aquatic Center for a decade, managing recreational access while protecting the lake’s natural habitat. As owner of Lake Hodges Photo Tours and an award-winning photographer featured in PBS’s *San Diego: America’s Wildest City*, he has documented and educated the public on the lake’s diverse ecosystem. He spearheaded collaborative efforts with eight environmental groups, the City of San Diego Water Utilities Department, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to protect sensitive Clark’s and Western Grebe nesting colonies—championing innovative solutions like floating nesting platforms. Brian brings a rare, deeply rooted understanding of the lake’s seasonal patterns, wildlife behavior, water levels, and ecological health, making him an essential voice in any discussion about preserving Lake Hodges through smart, sustainable actions like raising the water level.

Kevin Kidd

Kevin Kidd brings unmatched firsthand expertise in the safety and structural integrity of Lake Hodges Dam, having spent decades as a commercial diver with the City of San Diego, where he conducted underwater inspections critical to dam evaluation and public safety. From 1979 to 2018, his work spanned law enforcement, watershed protection, habitat conservation, and emergency response—earning certifications in 16 diving disciplines, 12 emergency response specialties, and 11 law enforcement fields. He collaborated closely with city, county, state, and national agencies, including engineers tasked with dam safety inspections, giving him a uniquely informed perspective on the challenges and realities of maintaining Lake Hodges. Now serving as President of the Del Dios Town Council and actively involved in the Del Dios Mutual Water Company, multiple advisory boards, and public safety research groups, Kevin continues to lead efforts in community preparedness and environmental stewardship. His rare combination of technical diving experience and grassroots civic leadership makes him a critical voice in weighing the risks and benefits of raising the lake level to protect both people and the ecosystem.

PJ Lynch

PJ Lynch is an energized leader with strong performance results in diverse markets. He has lived and worked around the world and has experience in the military where he developed missiles & fighter jets. PJ also has experience in streaming video, television retail, homeland defense, law enforcement products and services, international telecom, consulting, and financial services. He is a collaborative leader with a strong ability to quickly immerse into new industries. PJ is a Distinguished Graduate from the United States Air Force Academy (BS Engineering Sciences), a Hertz Fellow from MIT (MS Aeronautics and Astronautics) and a Palmer Scholar from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (MBA). PJ now lives in the greater San Diego area in the Del Dios community surrounding Lake Hodges, and is active in supporting public safety & community initiatives. Whether working in the Pentagon, or in the local community, PJ brings the same passion, insight, & energy to both opportunities & challenges.

A Call to Protect North County and Rancho Santa Fe—Raise Lake Hodges to 293 Feet for Fire Prevention, Water Security, and Ecological Protection

Submitted to the Tierrasanta Town Council – September 2025

The Threat Is Real—and Preventable

Our Executive Board is writing with an urgent request on behalf of residents across North County—from Ramona to Escondido, Tierrasanta, Scripps Ranch, Rancho Bernardo to Rancho Santa Fe, Whispering Palms to Del Mar—who face a growing and preventable wildfire threat. We need your support to raise the **minimum water level at Lake Hodges from the current 280 feet to 293 feet above sea level**—still over 20 feet below the dam’s original design capacity.

This single policy shift—costing nothing, requiring no new infrastructure, and drawing on existing hydrology—will dramatically reduce wildfire risk, conserve critical water supplies, and restore ecological balance to one of our region’s most important natural corridors.

Lake Hodges: Our Natural Firebreak

When full, Lake Hodges spans over **1,234 acres**, forming a wide water barrier between highly flammable wildlands and thousands of homes. But today, due to artificially low levels, **over 500 acres of exposed, dry lakebed are covered in highly flammable non-native grasses and invasive species like salt cedar**, with moisture content below 5%—far below the critical fire danger threshold of 15%. Cal Fire vegetation mapping and the **San Diego County Fire Authority’s 2023 Risk Assessment** classify this zone as “*Very High Fire Hazard Severity*”.

The **Witch Creek Fire (2007)** and **Cocos Fire (2014)** both demonstrated how rapidly wildfires spread through this exact topography, particularly when fueled by Santa Ana winds that can exceed **60 mph**, turning the lakebed into a **fire runway** aimed directly at Del Dios, Rancho Santa Fe, and beyond.

Engineering assessments confirm that **wildfire risk in this area exceeds dam failure risk by a factor of 500**. The decision to keep water levels low has unintentionally amplified fire danger.

A Zero-Cost, High-Impact Solution

Raising Lake Hodges from 280 to **293 feet** would:

- **Submerge 500 acres of combustible vegetation**, reducing fuel loads by up to 40%
- **Expand aerial firefighting water-pickup areas**
- **Cool the microclimate** and slow advancing fires

- **Reinstate a vital \$208 million hydroelectric and water transfer system**
- **Provide “free” sustainable hydroelectric power to 26,000 homes**
- **Store 2.8 billion more gallons of water, enough for 17,000 households annually**
- **Prevent estimated wildfire-related emissions of 45,000 metric tons of carbon**
- **Lower Santa Fe Irrigation and Rancho Santa Fe Water rates by allowing Lake Hodges water to connect again to the irrigation district (only possible at 293 feet)**

And importantly: **this action requires no new construction or state funding.** It simply allows rainfall to accumulate to safe, historically normal levels.

Structural Safety Is Not the Obstacle

The Hodges Dam was engineered to withstand up to **315 feet of water**. Its current maximum elevation—280 feet—is an extreme measure adopted without comprehensive structural review. A **2022 Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD)** assessment confirms the dam’s integrity at **293 feet**, a level historically maintained for decades without incident.

Even in worst-case earthquake or structural scenarios, failure of a **single dam arch**—the most likely event—would release far less water than the studied 3- or 7-arch failure models and cause **localized, not regional, flooding**. No toxic runoff. No toxic fire emissions. Limited impact. Restoration measured in *months*, not *decades*.

The Cost of Inaction

Let’s be clear about what’s at risk:

- **5,300+ homes** lie within primary wildfire evacuation zones
- **\$3.2 billion in assessed property value** in the fire corridor
- **27 endangered species** in the San Dieguito River Valley Preserve
- **\$312 million/year** average wildfire suppression costs in San Diego County

According to a **2023 UC San Diego wildfire mitigation study**, Lake Hodges was identified as a “*critical intervention point*” for fire prevention. Economic modeling shows that raising water levels could save **\$720 million to \$1.2 billion** in avoided fire losses and emergency response.

What We’re Asking the Tierrasanta Town Council to Do

We respectfully urge the Tierrasanta Town Council to support:

- **Raising Lake Hodges' minimum water level to 293 feet.**
- **Advocate for fire prevention, water security, and ecological protection across North County with our state representatives (Assembly and Senate).**

This is a rare case where the **science, the economics, the environment, and the public safety argument all point in the same direction.** The cost is nothing. The benefit could be everything.

Let's not wait until another firestorm like Palisades and Malibu makes us wish we had acted.

Respectfully submitted,
www.raiselakehodes.org

