



SENIOR MAJOR GIFTS OFFICER
CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA



**CATALINA ISLAND
CONSERVANCY**

Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the Catalina Island Conservancy in the search for a Senior Major Gifts Officer.

The Senior Major Gifts Officer will play an integral role in fundraising activities that further the priority initiatives laid forth in the Catalina Island Conservancy's strategic plan, Catalina Island Restoration Project, and the overall mission of the Catalina Island Conservancy. The Senior Major Gifts Officer will develop and implement strategies that secure financial support from a portfolio of donor prospects with the capacity and inclination to make major gifts of \$100,000 and more, with increased emphasis and activity on cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding gifts of \$250,000 to \$1,000,000. The Senior Major Gifts Officer will have a dynamic and diverse portfolio of 100 to 125 individuals capable of contributing to the development department's FY24 goal of \$6M.

Founded in 1972, the Catalina Island Conservancy, one of California's oldest and largest private land trusts, opens its wildlands for the public to enjoy in many ways. Just off the densely populated Southern California coast, Catalina Island is home to approximately 4,000 year-round residents and more than 60 endemic species of plants and animals found nowhere else on Earth. The Catalina Island Conservancy protects 88 percent of Catalina Island's approximately 48,000 acres, including the region's longest publicly accessible undeveloped coastline. The Conservancy is a research and conservation leader, protecting and restoring vulnerable habitats and species in its Mediterranean climate. Conservancy staff guide Island ecosystem recovery with the goal of generating a resilient, self-sustaining ecosystem with no endangered forms of life. The Conservancy offers recreational experiences and educational programs for not only the 300,000 annual visitors who choose to spend time in the unique and special Conservancy "Wildlands Ecosystems" but also inspires nearly 1.4 million visitors to other parts of the Island. Recreation, educational engagement service opportunities, and partnerships connect the Island's unique resources to people's lives, inspiring environmental stewardship and action. The Catalina Island Conservancy believes in responsible recreation for the stewardship of natural resources. The Conservancy provides access to Catalina Island's wildlands with nearly 165 miles of recreational roads and trails, and 62 miles of unspoiled beaches and coves for camping, biking, hiking, touring, and more.

Conservation is a key component of the work of the Conservancy. It preserves and restores the environment on Catalina, promoting and modeling ecologically sustainable communities to create a healthier future for the Island and the Planet. The Conservancy's conservation programs focus on resiliency of the Island and its plant and wildlife populations, partnerships with researchers and implementation of long-term studies, preservation of historic cultural resources, and synergy of conservation efforts in balance with education and recreation programming.

Preserving habitat via landscape ecology restoration is one of the major initiatives of the Conservancy. Catalina is home to nine endemic plant species and over 60 rare plant species. The Wildlife Program supports resilient native animal populations where rare and endemic Island fauna are not at risk. The wildlife team is actively conserving over 50 endemic species. Catalina Island is a haven for biodiversity with 16 unique and rare plant communities and at least 60 known species of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. The Catalina Island Conservancy maintains active collaborations with partners in academia, research institutions, NGOs, and other land trusts to expand the knowledge and educational base for its own and society's management needs. Catalina Island is a living laboratory for the exploration of all manner of applied and theoretical questions. The Catalina Island Conservancy also hosts paid internships in collaboration with the American Conservation Experience ACE, USC, and CSULB. Students and young professionals spend time on Catalina Island, contributing to conservations efforts during a "learn-by-doing" experience.

The Conservancy provides formal classroom lessons and non-formal outdoor experiences designed to deliver nature-based engagement and experiential learning. Conservancy Education programs focus on dynamic educational experiences that engage and immerse learners in the science and culture of the Island and continue to deepen the public's relationship with the Conservancy and its work on Catalina. Adult learning programs offer opportunities to explore Catalina's wildlands through excursions and training as well as learning pathways accessible from home. These programs connect to current conservation research, promote opportunities for discourse and discussion, and empower learners to become active stewards of natural spaces on Catalina Island and beyond. Youth and family learning programs focus on connecting the youngest learners to the unique ecology and natural history of Catalina Island. School partnerships support educators and students from PreK to university. Special learning events and online materials allow families to connect to Catalina Island and learn about the work of the Conservancy.

A TIMELESS PLACE, AN ENDLESS PURPOSE: TURNING VISION INTO ACTION

The Conservancy's five-year strategic plan, [*A Timeless Place, an Endless Purpose: Turning Vision into Action*](#), details the visions, actions, and indicators of success that will fulfill its mission to be an exemplary steward of Island resources through a balance of conservation, education, and recreation. The Conservancy's vision is for a beautifully functioning Island ecosystem for all to enjoy. For more than 50 years, the Catalina Island Conservancy has embraced a mission set forth by its founders to maintain the integrity of one of the most important island ecosystems on Earth. Now is the time to execute the vision for Catalina Island and share with the world that successful ecosystem management can coexist with opportunities for nature recreation inclusive of people of all backgrounds and abilities.

The Conservancy's values not only reflect the importance of Catalina Island's ecosystems as natural wonders, but also of the people who enjoy and steward the incredible island. The Conservancy will invest in the organization, its team, audiences, and beautiful Catalina Island to bring five major visions into reality. The first of these is the completion of a major [Catalina Island Restoration Project](#) that will protect native plants and animals from extinction and enhance people's engagement and understanding of the Island.

Catalina Island Conservancy will come together as an organization-wide-cross-functional team to complete the gateway projects critical to conservation, education, and recreation success on Catalina Island—from managing the introduced mule deer herd and building out capacity and infrastructure to managing flora and fauna at a landscape level.

A mission-focused portfolio in which all Conservancy facilities, programs, and partnerships belong and clearly benefit the Conservancy's mission and goals is the second vision. The Conservancy plans to conduct a thorough audit of every Conservancy facility, partnership, business, and program and ensure that, taking nothing for granted, each is set up in the short- and long-term best interests of the Conservancy.

A third vision is for the residents of Catalina Island, Los Angeles County, Southern California, and beyond to see the Conservancy as a premier recreation and learning destination, a model for balanced land conservation solutions, and an example of how to build successful cultural partnerships. The Conservancy will study who its key audiences are now, resolve who they want them to be, build clearly defined and messaged offerings to attract and satisfy those audiences, and engage in a long-term evaluation of how their needs are met, while prioritizing solutions that benefit the residents of Catalina Island as a whole.

The Conservancy also aims to be an action-oriented, collaborative, and successful team of leaders, staff, board, volunteers, and auxiliary groups where individuals feel supported and respected. This will be accomplished by investing in a healthy team, all-around staff recruitment and housing solutions, implementing clear decision-making procedures, enacting the Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) plan, and evolving the membership of board, volunteers, and auxiliary groups to meet current needs and be representative of the Conservancy's audience.

A strong reputation for delivering on its mission and a popular investment option for philanthropists and partners interested in achieving large-scale conservation solutions is the final vision of the Conservancy's strategic plan. To achieve this, the Conservancy will increase the number of times key decision-makers see its name, understand its mission, hear of its conservation, recreation, and educational accomplishments, and learn of major philanthropic investments.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Senior Major Gifts Officer will report to the Director of Development.

FROM THE CHIEF OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

With nearly 30 years of experience in fundraising and campaigns, my role at the Conservancy has reignited my passion for mission and the delight in creative storytelling to advance strategic priorities with philanthropy. Growing up in Lake Tahoe, I came to embrace nature and the great outdoors—recreating and protecting in equal measure. The arc of my career has been in environmental preservation, cultural heritage and museums, art and design, and conservation, working nationally and internationally for great causes and movements. I now have the opportunity to work on the ground—up close and in person—with amazing colleagues, generous donors, collaborative stakeholders, visiting scholars, scientists, and volunteers to restore Catalina Island for future generations. I am honored and humbled to be a part of the Catalina Island Conservancy at this dynamic moment in its long, distinguished history, in my native state of California, and working at the intersections of conservation, education, and recreation.

Catalina Island Conservancy is making it possible for the Island's plant and animal habitat be conserved and return to a thriving ecosystem. We're also improving the recreational experience through trail and campground enhancements. We are proud to make it possible for increased access and affordability to the Island for underserved children and families. It's an exciting and important time to join the organization. As Teddy Roosevelt said so well, "It is hard work, worth doing." I invite you to join me in this hard but meaningful and rewarding work.

—Kirsten Peterson Johansen, Chief of External Affairs

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Senior Major Gifts Officer will

- be responsible for individual fundraising goals and contributing to collective development department fundraising efforts ranging \$4M to \$7M annually;
- participate in all aspects of the gift cycle for an assigned portfolio;
- initiate contact with potential major gift and leadership level donors and develop appropriate cultivation strategies;
- move potential donors in an appropriate and timely fashion toward solicitation and closure;
- draft and present gift proposal strategies;
- conduct solicitation conversations and meetings and collaborate with additional staff and the Executive Team as needed;
- maintain stewardship contacts with donors, demonstrate empathetic disposition and perseverance, reflect optimistic and a positive attitude, and convey sensitivity to the needs of donors and prospects;
- manage all prospect activities for a portfolio of 100 to 125 individuals;
- document all prospect contacts in a timely manner to ensure positive and purposeful prospect and donor relations as conducted by the Major Gifts team and the development department;
- focus on securing support for a set of organization-wide priorities outlined in the strategic plan that include unrestricted annual support, special projects, capital improvements, and endowment;
- work collaboratively with and in support of volunteers, other Major Gifts Officers, gift planning, the development department, and other Conservancy employees as needed to cultivate and solicit donors for organizational priorities;
- offer prospect strategy counsel to staff; and
- be a resource for other development staff, including identifying potential volunteer connections, as appropriate.

LEADERSHIP

Wendy Latorre President and CEO

With a passion for telling stories that matter, Whitney Latorre has brought unique experience as an internationally recognized storyteller and educator, and as a dynamic innovator and leader to her role as President and CEO of Catalina Island Conservancy.

She joined the organization in July 2023 from National Geographic, part of The Walt Disney Company, where she led the charge to illuminate the wonder of the world as Vice President and Executive Director of Visuals. Latorre directed the organization's award-winning visual content, twice recognized as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; collaborated on initiatives to increase the organization's digital audience and engagement; spearheaded innovative projects in new media; and championed collaborations with For Freedoms, NASA, Rolex, and other stakeholders.

Earlier in her career, Latorre was the Director of Photography at *The New Yorker*, where she led initiatives with various stakeholders, including documenting more than 100 heads of state at the United Nations and earning a Peabody in collaboration with Human Rights Watch. She also played a pivotal role in advancing the public profile of *The New Yorker* across digital and social platforms.

Latorre began her career working in advocacy and communications at the Open Society Foundations. She has industry leadership experience as an adjunct professor at Columbia Journalism School and New York University's Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute; as inaugural Chair, Environment of the World Press Photo Contest in 2018 and as Global Chair of the World Press Photo Contest in 2019; and through her continued service on the advisory board of The Alexia at Syracuse University Newhouse School of Public Communications. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Barnard College and continued with graduate work in American Studies at Columbia University.

Kirsten Peterson Johansen

Chief of External Affairs

Kirsten Peterson Johansen joined the Catalina Island Conservancy as Chief of External Affairs, October 10, 2023. In this role, Johansen is responsible for leading development, membership, marketing, communications, campaigns, and special events. Working closely with President and CEO Whitney Latorre and the Executive Team, Johansen leads and inspires an integrated team, engages with devoted, generous board members, and partners with scientists and educators. Johansen's fundraising track record and experience working with notable conservation, cultural and educational institutions, and nonprofits are tremendous assets for the Conservancy. Her leadership, collaborative spirit, and development expertise will serve the Conservancy well as it enters a new, important phase of increasing visibility, reaching new audiences, and expanding its public and private financial support.

Johansen brings nearly 30 years of experience to her role at Catalina Island Conservancy. She most recently served as Assistant Dean of the USC School of Architecture, for Advancement, where from February 2018 to October 2023 she strategically led a team, stewarded two dynamic voluntary boards, and engaged thousands of alumni, donors, prospects, partners, parents, corporate and foundation funders, locally, nationally, and globally. Prior, Johansen held leadership roles at the Phoenix Art Museum, National Park Foundation (philanthropic arm of the National Park Service), Smithsonian Institution, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Originally from Lake Tahoe, Johansen received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Pepperdine University and her Master's Degree in Public Policy from the Sol Price School of Public Administration at the University of Southern California, and a Certificate of Nonprofit Management from Georgetown University.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Catalina Island Conservancy seeks a Senior Major Gifts Officer with

- a commitment to the mission of Catalina Island Conservancy—to be an exemplary steward of Island resources through a balance of conservation, education, and recreation;
- a history of consistently meeting fundraising goals and performance objectives and an ability to plan and implement successful fundraising solicitations;
- an ability to manage a diverse portfolio and steward donors through the moves management cycle;
- an impeccable work ethic;
- success raising gifts with significant institutional impact;
- knowledge and understanding of the principles of fundraising;
- an ability to understand the aspirations and interests of patrons, develop relationships between them and the Conservancy, and adhere to a donor-centric model of best practice fundraising;
- experience developing cultivation and solicitation strategies for varying gift levels;
- an ability to partner with a broad range of external and internal stakeholders to achieve success in stewarding donor relationships;

- interest in and dedication to promoting the Conservancy’s priorities through excellent relationships with staff, board members, volunteers, and the development department;
- an ability to complete assignments, including timely documentation of donor contacts in the development database;
- excellent oral, written, and interpersonal skills;
- strong problem solving, research, and analytical skills;
- strong organizational and strategic planning skills;
- a team-oriented approach with respect for colleagues and volunteers;
- self-motivation, creativity, and attention to detail;
- unimpeachable integrity and a commitment to the highest standards of professionalism;
- comfort and proficiency with technology including Microsoft Office Suite, internet-based collaborative applications, social media, and RaisersEdge software;
- experience and knowledge of Tessitura (desirable); and
- an ability to maintain confidentiality and accuracy with respect to all donor and prospect information.

A bachelor’s degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience and at least six years of experience in major gift fundraising, preferably in conservation, environment, higher education/academia, or the arts is preferred. A background in annual and planned giving is a plus. Catalina Island Conservancy will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to the Conservancy, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$125,000 to \$140,000 annually. Catalina Island Conservancy offers a comprehensive package of benefits.

LOCATION

This is a hybrid position based on the Catalina Island Conservancy's Long Beach, California campus. As a campus-based institution, the Conservancy places a high value on the in-person experience, cross-team collaboration, and strong community building to create a vibrant campus for its staff and stakeholders. The Senior Major Gifts Officer should expect to work in-person, on-campus a minimum of three days per week.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Catalina Island Conservancy as well as the responsibilities and qualifications presented in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit: [Senior Major Gifts Officer, Catalina Island Conservancy](#).

To nominate a candidate, please contact Clare McCully, claremccully@aspenleadershipgroup.com.

All inquiries will be held in confidence.