

RUSHER LOSCAVIO FISHER

NONPROFIT EXECUTIVE SEARCH

CAREER PROSPECTUS

POSITION:

COMMUNITY MANAGER & CEO

**THE SEA RANCH ASSOCIATION
Sonoma, Northern California**

ORGANIZATION:



www.tsra.org

**ORGANIZATION
BACKGROUND:**

An Extraordinary Community. The Sea Ranch Association (TSRA) is the governing body of a unique and breathtakingly beautiful community of some 2,200 homes and lots above 10 miles of ocean bluffs in Sonoma County, near San Francisco, California. The Association seeks a Community Manager whose operating experience, environmental/architectural design sensibilities, and high-level interpersonal skills can support the complex operations, design aspirations, and diverse stakeholder involvement of this exceptional homeowner association.

The basic premise of The Sea Ranch is “to live lightly on the land.” Conceived in the 1960s as a place where homes and amenities are intended to complement nature and their environment, the signature understated driftwood-colored homes bounded by the ocean, maritime meadows, and coastal forests have attracted diverse homeowners and visitors inspired by utopian environmental and architectural design values. Not by any means a nature refuge, but formerly an over-grazed and over-logged ranch, whose

historic ranch features are an essential aesthetic, The Sea Ranch is nonetheless a very carefully designed built-environment in a managed-landscape. The leadership challenge of perpetuating the essential Sea Ranch community, and in enhancing its future, evolution, will be extremely attractive to the next Community Manager.

The Sea Ranch Association is a mutual-benefit not-for-profit organization governed by a 7-member Board elected by the homeowners. The Board is supported by three homeowner committees advisory to the Board: Finance, Planning, and Utilities, and by an autonomous Design Committee that ensures compliance with the stringent CC&R deed restrictions to which all homeowners subscribe. The aggregate annual budget of TSRA exceeds \$10 million. Overall, staff is about 60 FTE. The gap found in every HOA between financial resources and homeowner expectations is amplified at The Sea Ranch by numerous factors that will require the leadership abilities of a gifted Community Manager.

Because of its remoteness, The Sea Ranch presents a more complex management challenge than the typical large HOA. TSRA owns and operates a water company (regulated by the State Public Utilities Commission), sewage treatment plants (under contract with Sonoma County), and monitors septic systems and leach fields, with its own \$2.9 million budget; it provides high-speed internet to its residents through what is essentially its own telecom company, Sea Ranch Connect; it operates its own security service and regional public-private volunteer fire department; it interacts closely with the operator of an on-site lodge/golf links; it maintains complex collaborative relationships with a myriad of State, County, and local government agencies. TSRA also maintains over 50 miles of roads, another 50 miles of trails, about 2,300 acres of common lands of the overall 5,000 acres, and operates three recreation centers, pools, tennis courts, equestrian center, air strip, several picnic grounds, etc. Though not responsible for the public beaches and their access, TSRA must be very involved, as a result of the Bane Bill, with parking, public and private access, and traffic generated by the oceanfront location and its straddling of U.S. Hwy. 1. Historic

preservation of surviving ranch buildings and landscape features (e.g., hedgerows, grapestake fencing) is valued. Elsewhere on the Sea Ranch property there are considerable forest management responsibilities, including preservation and fire safety. TSRA is a hybrid of public and private management whose diverse administrative demands will be enjoyed by the exceptional Community Manager.

The next Community Manager will discover much to accomplish:

- Remote communities have been particularly impacted by the pandemic and The Sea Ranch is no exception. Recruiting qualified staff, many of whom live outside this expensive development, especially at a time when there has been considerable turnover and loss of staff, is a significant challenge. Maintaining levels of services during the pandemic when all services, including retail, social, educational, and health services are already limited because of the Ranch's rural location, has been difficult. Meeting the already-high expectations of homeowners during a time when the attractions of remote living have driven up housing prices, attracted an influx of upscale, remote-working, high-tech families, and amplified all demands on a relatively small staff and committees of volunteers has been very stressful.
- The pandemic has also increased tensions found in most homeowner associations among residents with different priorities -- long-timers vs. newcomers, fixed-income vs. currently employed, and, notable since the founding of The Sea Ranch, tension between most homeowners, who are environmental pragmatists, and vocal environmental idealists. With the Sea Ranch tradition encouraging volunteerism and involvement, sophisticated residents seek the extraordinary in Sea Ranch lifestyle but differ among themselves as to priorities, creating a somewhat cacophonous culture. The successful Community Manager will enjoy working with volunteers and be a gifted diplomat, peacemaker, conflict manager.

- In every homeowner association there is a tension between assessments charged to each property and the levels of service that an aggregate budget can provide. The Sea Ranch is no different in this regard. However, because of the socioeconomic demographic of the residents, the gap between moderate levels of assessment and elevated expectations of service is especially problematic. Compensation levels of staff, staff workload, replacement of experienced staff, demands created by changes in services – all require deft management of resources, wise priority-setting, and effective management of expectations. The Community Manager must be able to work well with Board, volunteers, staff, and residents to build support in navigating this tension.

Any experienced candidate who considers the Community Manager position will appreciate that with every dream job comes both opportunity and challenge. The impacts of the pandemic are in evidence everywhere, but The Sea Ranch is now recovering from this especially stressful time. The next Community Manager of TSRA will look back with pride at her/his many accomplishments. Nowhere in the world is there another Sea Ranch; nor, is there another comparable opportunity for leadership achievement.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Community Manager & CEO embodies the values and environmental/design sensibilities of The Sea Ranch, promotes the highest and best level of service to individual residents and the community at large, inspiring with enthusiasm, energy, and vision the Board, advisory groups, staff, community partners, and all others who influence or are influenced by Sea Ranch's quality of life. The CM radiates those qualities of character and style that inspire trust and invite warm, frank, caring relationships. The CM will understand that as a community leader in partnership with a governing board, outreach, accessibility, attention to individual needs, and the ability to sustain empathetic relationships throughout the complex Sea Ranch community is a *sine qua non* of his/her role.

The CM is responsible for implementing all policy decisions of the Board, and for the management and operation of all programs and services provided by The Sea Ranch Association. S/he builds trusting relationships throughout the Sea Ranch community and with others in the region with whom Sea Ranch interacts. S/he oversees the administrative and fiduciary functions and is solely responsible for employing and organizing staff to achieve TSRA goals. S/he represents TSRA to The Sea Ranch community, to Sonoma County and other public and private partners.

Specifically, the Community Manager:

- Embodies a passion for the environmental, architectural design, and historic preservation ideals undergirding The Sea Ranch and to making The Sea Ranch an exceptional place in which to live.
- Helps determine and ensure, in partnership with the governing Board and other volunteer leaders, that the vision and values of The Sea Ranch are carried out, and that TSRA operates effectively in every respect. Understands and is guided by the trust relationship between the TSRA and homeowners.
- Anticipates changing community needs with understanding and imagination, is sensitive to the different, occasionally competing, priorities of different residents, is collaborative, collegial, and strategic in the provision of services, and is responsible and accountable for execution of all such plans, demonstrating the ability to implement decisions.
- Excels as an advocate and consensus-builder for all constituencies served by TSRA, is forthright, candid, and transparent in reaching out to individuals and interest groups, is bold as well as durable in the exposure that attends effective leadership. Adept in relationships with volunteers, works closely with Board members, advisory groups, and the community to identify needs and solutions to problems experienced by residents. Has the expertise, credibility, and gravitas to

be a trusted leader.

- Demonstrates a high level of business acumen, ensuring excellent financial management, stewardship, accountability, compliance, timely and accurate reporting, and capable staffing. Has the ability to stretch limited resources with a no-job-too-small attitude that encourages hard and dedicated work, inventiveness in execution of program, frugal priority-setting, efficient effectiveness. Oversees the development and management of budget, oversees revenues and expenditures, monitors cash flow, is sophisticated in the management of debt, maintains internal controls and financial discipline, and works closely with the Board to ensure the financial wellbeing of The Sea Ranch, appreciating at all times that financial management must balance the needs of Sea Ranch residents of varying means while evaluating the cost benefits of service provision.
- Demonstrates an ability to recruit, mentor, nurture, and support able staff, is a skillful and efficient delegator, is able to avoid micromanagement whenever the limitations of staffing or the demands of a task do not require use of executive time, believes in and effectuates periodic staff performance evaluations, is dedicated to the professional growth of staff members but at the same time is able to make difficult personnel decisions as the executive responsible for high productivity and performance from all staff.
- Is prepared to become embedded in the Sea Ranch and Sonoma County/Mendocino County community, appreciating the critical connections between The Sea Ranch, County government, State agencies like the California Coastal Commission and Public Utilities Commission, and other organizations and interests that intersect with TSRA's security, health, educational, and environmental responsibilities.
- Transparently and with confidence, collaborates closely with the governing Board in addressing policy

questions and establishing clear parameters of responsibility between Board and executive. Informs, analyzes, and makes recommendations for Board action, always remaining sensitive to the complementary roles of CM and governing board. Takes executive responsibility for compliance with all applicable laws (e.g., the Davis-Stirling Act), contractual obligations, and restrictions, and maintains appropriate internal policies and procedures to ensure such compliance.

**PROFESSIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS:**

The ideal candidate will have:

- Environmental and aesthetic sensibilities resonant with the foundational values of The Sea Ranch and appreciation of the lifestyle that Sea Ranch homeowners cherish.
- Extensive experience in the management of residential communities, ideally with communities incorporating a full range of quasi-municipal services plus recreational and social facilities, plus natural and improved open spaces. Qualified candidates might have hospitality industry experience on a large scale, or be associated with complex owner-occupied real estate developments, and should be able to demonstrate the transferability of experience to a Sea Ranch-like community. Other qualified candidates might have extensive experience in public management or have high-level transferable business skills with a history of rapid mastery of new fields.
- Success in working directly and effectively with homeowners, volunteers, all those to whom service is being provided, with openness, accessibility, empathy, commitment to quality service, promptness and responsiveness, and ability to satisfy reasonable expectations. Success in modeling the same direct-service culture for all staff. Success in resisting unreasonable demands with grace and diplomacy, protecting his/her leadership and staff from unfair criticism.

- A history of and reputation for uncompromising integrity.
- A career history as a visionary who embraces change as a friend and manages change deliberately and with patience, taking the long view, with the ability strategically to integrate organizational history, custom, stability, and continuity with imperatives of adaptation.
- Profit and loss experience, a strategic financial perspective, entrepreneurial ability, and proven management leadership of complex organizations, with a broad array of administrative skills transferable to leadership of a complex hybrid organization, to partnership with an active governing board, to oversight of a large and varied staff.
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills, with a highly evolved capacity for listening, synthesizing information, and promoting interactive processes. Exceptional meeting planning, group facilitation and leadership, consensus development and conflict management skills. Understanding and ease with technologies that enhance internal and external communication, social media, information management, and the metrics by which success or shortfall can be measured, communicated, and used as management aides.
- Familiarity with and commitment to technologies that can improve quality of life, enhance communication, facilitate administration, and to technologies that conserve energy, water, and other resources, reduce costs, reflect the sensitivities and needs of homeowners.
- Ability to identify, recruit, and engage able staff, and to motivate and mentor colleagues in a natural collaborative style. Commitment to encouraging internal communications and to the elimination of structural barriers to a unified, integrated staff, avoiding siloing of function. Ability to delegate and avoid the inefficiency of micromanagement, except where required. Ability to mentor staff, to maintain a culture of reasonable expectation and accountability,

and a readiness to make difficult personnel decisions when necessary. Understand the value to staff of a sustainable work-life balance. The ability to heal a staff dispirited by the stress of work in isolation and limited support during the pandemic. The ability and self-confidence to lead from in front or behind, to share credit. The humility to inspire respect.

- Professionalism in deportment that sets an example for all within the organization and inspires professional pride and self-confidence among staff.
- Authenticity, persistence, sensitivity, grace under pressure.
- High energy, resilience, durability, a healthy perspective on the human condition, a good sense of humor.

EDUCATION:

Lifelong learning and educational achievement appropriate to the complexity of the position. Advanced degrees in business, public administration, law, or their equivalents, a plus. Ten years or more in a chief executive and/or chief operating position a plus.

COMPENSATION:

Competitive, based on experience, probably in the range of +/- \$200,000, plus excellent benefits.

For a sense of mission, see YouTube.com for “[The Sea Ranch: Architecture, Environment, and Idealism](#)”

Robert M. Fisher of Rusher Loscavio Fisher Nonprofit Executive Search (see www.rll.com) is privileged to provide transition management and search counsel to the Board of The Sea Ranch Association. All discussions with prospects for this position will be treated *with utmost discretion*. We would be grateful to receive inquiries, expressions of interest, nominations, and applications (brief transmittal and resume) at the following address:

rmfisher@earthlink.net

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The Sea Ranch Association is dedicated to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and will welcome applications from all qualified candidates.