



# MORRO BAY

## NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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### **Poets Ponder the Morro Bay Estuary: Contest Winners Chosen**

Every year, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program's poetry contest asks people to capture the essence of the Morro Bay estuary in haiku and free verse poems. Poems are judged anonymously and receive points for form, creativity, imagery, and adherence to theme. This April, **a record 101 poets from across San Luis Obispo county and beyond submitted 128 poems.**

**Guest judges Karen Kirby, Marnie Parker, and Kevin Patrick Sullivan carefully considered each poem.** Kirby, who moved to the Central Coast a year ago said, "I was so touched by the love, respect, and appreciation for the estuary by the local poets. As a newcomer, I'm amazed every single day by the beauty of Morro Bay, and it was lovely to see that lifelong residents feel the same and don't take this incredibly special place for granted."

Returning judge Sullivan agreed, saying that he was proud to serve on the selection committee again and that reading all of the entries gave him, "firsthand knowledge that people care about and want to protect the estuary and its beauty and diversity of life."

**The New Perspectives category asked writers to compose free verse poems inspired by the Estuary Program's new Virtual Nature Center at [learn.mbnep.org](http://learn.mbnep.org).** The Virtual Nature Center includes an underwater tour of eelgrass beds, a time-lapse video of the tide cycle, interactive climate change and water quality maps, a water usage calculator, and a steelhead trout video game that was created by Cal Poly computer engineering students. The Virtual Nature Center was funded in large part by a grant from the [Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust](#).

**The winner for this category is Morro Bay local Tom Harrington** with his poem "Haibun for Morro Bay." Tom enjoys using the Haibun form, which calls for a combination of haiku and free verse poetry because it is often used to describe a place. **The second place award for this category is Joanne K. Hand of Morro Bay, with her poem, "Nourishment."** Joanne's poem is full of imagery that features native birds.

**Gavin Hughes of Paso Robles won the Youth New Perspectives division with his poem "The Osprey."** He was inspired by childhood memories of visiting Sweet Springs Nature Preserve and birdwatching with his grandparents. Gavin will be attend UCLA in the fall. **Emily Duclos won second place with her poem, "Sunrise Sunset"** Emily attends Los Osos Middle School.

Haiku—three-line poems consisting of 17 syllables in a 5/7/5 pattern—traditionally focus on nature. **Richard Immel took first place in the Haiku category in 2016 and accomplished the same feat this year with his poem, "Surf Dancing."** Richard is a retired Wall Street Journal reporter and

magazine journalist. He and his wife live in Moraga, California, but visit Morro Bay often to explore, bird, and hike. **Second place went to Norma Wightman with, “Eel Grass.”** Norma has traveled widely, but has called Morro Bay home for many years. Living here fulfills her long-time dream to live by the sea.

**Peyton S. is our Youth Haiku winner.** Her untitled haiku focuses on the abundance created when saltwater meets freshwater to form an estuary. **Zeke T. won second place for his haiku “Tide.”** Both Peyton and Zeke attend Los Osos Middle School.

**Next week, the contest winners and judges will read their work in Coalesce Bookstore’s Garden Chapel.** To read the winning poems, visit [mbnep.org/poetry2018](http://mbnep.org/poetry2018).

The guest judges panel included Karen Kirby, Marnie Parker, and Kevin Patrick Sullivan.

Karen Kirby joined the staff at Coalesce Bookstore just over a year ago and is thrilled to call Morro Bay home. She was born and raised in Louisiana and spent her professional life in independent bookstores and libraries. As part of the library Youth Department she oversaw the arts program which included poetry writing and frequent poetry slams.

Marnie Parker received a Bachelor of Arts in English and TESL at Cal Polytechnic University. A variety of her fiction, nonfiction, and poetry has been published in the Central Coast and Virginia publications. Parker’s *Blue Sanctuary (2015)* placed first in adult free form and her poem *Meandering through the Zostera (2017)* placed second in the same category for The Morro Bay Estuary contest. Recently, she was nominated and selected to read for the third annual Tanta International Poetry Festival in Egypt October 2017. She read some of her selected poems which included her award winning poem *Breaking of Coral* translated into Arabic and included in an international anthology. Currently, she is sending off her manuscript *Brush Strokes* about the relationship between poetry and painting.

Kevin Patrick Sullivan’s books include, *First Sight, The Space Between Things , Under Such Brilliance* and *UNIMPAIRED*. His poems are in SOLO, ASKEW, LUMMOX, MIRAMAR and several anthologies. He is co-editor of *Corners of the Mouth A Celebration of Thirty Years at the Annual San Luis Obispo Poetry Festival*. He is a Poet Laureate Emeritus for the city of San Luis Obispo and the Co-founder and Co-Curator of the Annual San Luis Obispo Poetry Festival which will celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> rendition this November.

Morro Bay National Estuary Program is a non-regulatory, nonprofit organization that brings together citizens, local government, other nonprofits, agencies, and landowners to protect and restore the Morro Bay Estuary for people and wildlife. The Estuary Program has been conducting monitoring and research, restoring natural habitats, and educating residents and visitors on how to keep Morro Bay clean and healthy since 1995. Find out more about the Morro Bay National Estuary Program at [www.mbnep.org](http://www.mbnep.org).