

COMPASS

Healthy Parks Healthy People



MAKING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE REGIONAL
PARKS FOUNDATION, VISITORS OF ALL
AGES AND CULTURES COME TOGETHER
IN THE EAST BAY PARKS





COMMUNITY BUILDING



Community is at the heart of the East Bay Regional Park District and the Regional Parks Foundation. Creating a sense of connection to our amazing natural resources and among the diverse community of park visitors is one of the core initiatives of the Foundation, and it's an endeavor we celebrate in this issue.

The Foundation has a long-standing commitment to backing a wide variety of Park District programs, from youth development to environmental stewardship to health and safety efforts. Promoting access for all through creative programs such as the Multicultural Wellness Walks, the Mobile Fish Exhibit and outdoor excursions for seniors allows the District to introduce the parks to groups of often underserved people, and foster a love of nature that continues to grow and thrive for decades to come.

Support from Donors and Members enables the Foundation, which is now in its fifth consecutive year of financial growth, to foster these key enterprises. Our latest fundraising effort, the 1 in a Million campaign—which asks 4,000 people to contribute just \$21 a month with the final goal of \$1 million a year—hopes to bring in even more unrestricted funds to support and expand vital Park District programs.

In other Foundation news, we've updated our membership program and our website. Visit us at www.RegionalParksFoundation.org, and don't forget to take part in the 2017 Trails Challenge. See you out there!

Carol Johnson
Executive Director
Regional Parks Foundation

Robert Doyle
General Manager
East Bay Regional Park District



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**REGIONAL PARKS
Foundation**

Supporting East Bay Regional Parks

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On the cover: Multicultural Wellness Walk participants

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun facts about the
East Bay Regional
Park District



800+

The approximate number of varieties of wildflowers in our parks



5,829

The number of special needs children who caught their first fish at a District Kids Fishing Derby in the past 10 years



870,393

The average number of visitors on the Iron Horse Trail each year



Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT!

Route With a View

Test your limits with these demanding yet scenic hikes featured in the 2017 Trails Challenge



As former president and noted conservationist Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Nothing worth having comes easy."

Take the 24th annual Trails Challenge—which kicks off in January 2017—and push yourself on some rugged terrain that will reward your effort with stunning views. Sara Fetterly, supervising naturalist at Tilden Nature Area, recommends a few trails for intrepid hikers. Make sure to pick up the Trails Challenge e-guidebook (see sidebar) for further details and directions.

- **GOLDEN SPIKE/FRENCH/REDWOOD PEAK TRAIL:** According to Fetterly, this challenging trail beneath the towering trees in Redwood Regional Park "transports you to another world." Although the hilly 8-mile hike will make you work for your scenery, the valleys, vistas, streams and, of course, majestic trees are worth the effort. "It's great on a sunny day," Fetterly says. "It's cool under the redwoods."
- **OAK TREE TRAIL/RIDGELINE TRAIL/PLEASANTON RIDGE REGIONAL PARK:** This challenging 6.03-mile hike overlooking Pleasanton and the Livermore Valley heads up and away from the world. "It takes a lot to get to the top, but once you're there, it's breathtaking. You can see for miles," Fetterly says of the 360-degree view.
- **LAUGHLIN RANCH STAGING AREA TO LAUGHLIN RANCH LOOP/TAMCAN/BRUSHY PEAK LOOP/WEST SIDE LOOP:** A moderate to challenging trek, this 6-mile loop in Livermore's Brushy Peak Regional Preserve offers a gradual uphill climb, though you might want to keep your eyes on the sky as well as the trail. "There are great views but also lots of birds of prey," Fetterly says.
- **FIVE CANYONS OPEN SPACE:** For a more leisurely route, try this grasslands hike set between Don Castro and Garin regional parks in Hayward. "There are lots of deer, ponds, oaks and canyons," Fetterly says of the easy to moderate 4-mile trail.

2017 TRAILS CHALLENGE

Thanks to a partnership between the East Bay Regional Park District, Kaiser Permanente and the Regional Parks Foundation, the Trails Challenge is free for all. Download the e-guidebook at www.ebparcs.org or pick up a hard copy with detailed descriptions of the 20 trails included in the challenge at visitor centers in 2017. If you complete either five hikes or 26.2 miles of trails before the end of the year, you will receive a commemorative pin. All participants can pick up a free T-shirt at select visitor centers (while supplies last).





We Heard You

Thanks to your suggestions, we're adding new benefits and streamlining membership categories—and we're still one of the best bargains around

Results are in from our recent survey: Members of the Regional Parks Foundation are pleased with the benefits and services they receive and they're proud to support the East Bay Regional Park District. "We have a 98 percent satisfaction rating," says Juliana Schirmer, RPF development director. "People see their membership as a way to support the parks; it's also a great investment for family activities and a way to stay fit."

Based on Member feedback, the Foundation has restructured the membership program and made it easier to sign up. For example, permits for dogs and horse/boat trailers are now included in the standard membership, and family memberships now include all kids in the household. Discounted memberships for the disabled, seniors and students are now called Special Access Passes and include veterans. A modest \$10 increase in annual fees—the first in 12 years—applies across all categories, except Special Access Passes, which increase a nominal \$5.

No matter what category membership you choose, be assured that the funds support a great cause. "Revenue from memberships is our biggest source of unrestricted funds and is used for our vital programs, from camperships to Parks Express [transportation for the underserved] and health programs," says Schirmer. "Memberships are extremely important."

Our goal is to reach 20,000 Members or more. Help us spread the word and consider giving a gift of membership for the holidays! To find out more, visit www.regionalparksfoundation.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun facts about the East Bay Regional Foundation

9,700

That's the current total of RPF Members, up 9 percent over last year

NEARLY \$700,000

That's the total amount raised by annual memberships, which support RPF's many programs and services

FOR YOU: UPGRADED BENEFITS

CATEGORIES	ANNUAL FEE*
Individual	\$60
Family	\$105
Special Access Individual	\$45
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior • Disabled • Student • Veterans—new to Special Access 	
Special Access Family	\$85
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior • Disabled • Student • Veterans—new to Special Access 	
Regular Angler	\$300
Special Access Angler	\$180
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior • Disabled • Student • Veterans—new to Special Access 	
Donor Circle**	
• Tilden	\$250
• Reinhardt	\$500
• Mott	\$750
• '34 Club	\$1,200

*Renewing Members only. As a customer appreciation bonus, current Members will not see the new rates on their renewals until 2018. All new Members will begin paying the new fees effective 2017.

**Includes one family membership for up to two named individuals and four children, special invitations to events, and the opportunity to fund programs/services that protect our parks and provide access for underprivileged individuals.



BASIC BENEFITS

- Personalized membership card(s)
- Free day-use parking for cardholder
- Annual dog pass (increase from 1 to 3 dogs)
- Free swimming during swim season
- Free admission to Ardenwood Historic Farm on nonevent days
- Black Diamond Mines underground tours (7 years of age+, August–September)⁺
- Free one-year subscription to *Compass* magazine and *Regional in Nature*
- Camping discounts⁺
- Discounts from Urban Park Concessionaires⁺

⁺Certain restrictions apply

NEW ADDITIONS TO BASIC BENEFITS

- Include horse/boat trailer permit
- Allow additional children
- Expanded dog pass allows up to 3 dogs
- Family Membership = 2 Key Cards (up from one) and gives full membership access to swim facilities

COME ONE

★ COME

ALL

FUNDING FROM THE
REGIONAL PARKS
FOUNDATION SUPPORTS
EBRPD'S OUTREACH
PROGRAMS, OPENING
DOORS TO NATURE FOR
PEOPLE OF ALL AGES
AND CULTURES





On a recent Saturday morning, some 100 people gathered by Tilden Park's Jewel Lake and threw their cares away. (Well, kind of.)

"What's bothering you these days?" asked Mona Koh, community relations manager for the East Bay Regional Park District. "My credit cards!" said a middle-aged Latina mother. "My homework!" shouted a 7-year-old Korean boy.

"OK," Koh said, "then let's throw our worries into the water." The all-ages, multiethnic group then whooshed their hands in the direction of the lake, laughing and sighing with relief.

This make-believe exercise was one of many activities that took place during the Multicultural Wellness Walk, a regular outing organized by EBRPD to expose people from all backgrounds

to the parks. On this particular day, the group included African-Americans, Latinos, Koreans, Chinese, Lithuanians, Middle Easterners and Europeans, among others. While there were language barriers and varied fitness levels, the walks are designed to transcend differences, with stops along the way to make bird calls, practice qi gong and, yes, laugh a lot via "laughter yoga"—all things that can be shared in a universal language.

With the generous support of Kaiser Permanente and the Regional Parks Foundation, the Multicultural Wellness Walk is just one of many innovative ways that EBRPD reaches out to different communities and demographics. Read on to learn how EBRPD helps to make lasting connections between people and nature—and between people and people.



Participants at a Multicultural Wellness Walk in September



THE LITTLEST STEWARDS

"IT'S A GREAT WAY TO SEND AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO OUR NEXT GENERATION OF PARK STEWARDS, AND THE KIDS JUST LOVE IT."

-JAMES FRANK, SUPERVISING NATURALIST AT THE PARK DISTRICT

Supervising Naturalist James Frank is a self-described "fish nerd." So it's only fitting that he shares his passion with kids, inspiring them to appreciate the magnificence—as well as the threatened habitats—of these aquatic creatures.

Last year, he invited elementary schools to start their own Fish Friend Club, a program he developed with EBRPD and funding from Regional Parks Foundation to promote environmental stewardship among children. When 10 schools throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties accepted the challenge, Frank arranged to make a presentation at each one, with his 26-foot-long Mobile Fish Exhibit in tow.

"It's an enormous aquarium on wheels," he says, "and it helps jump-start conversations about protecting our natural resources." The 1,500-gallon exhibit features both native and nonnative creatures that can all be found in EBRPD's waters. Frank explains to the students how litter gets into the food chain and how people can get sick from chemicals they ingest as a result of pollution. He inducts the kids into the Fish Friend Club and has them pledge to pick up litter and be mindful of our environment. The kids are then given buckets, trash grabbers and scales to weigh the garbage they find.

"We want to train our children to recycle, reuse and protect our environment," says Lynda Ramos, a fifth-grade teacher at Kimball Elementary School in Antioch, which participated in the program. "We had a competition to see who could collect the most litter, and at the end of the school year, we gave the winners a popcorn party in their honor."

Elena Ball, assistant principal at Frederiksen Elementary School in Dublin, notes that the Fish Friend Club also inspires kids to motivate others. "The Mobile Fish Exhibit is a great kickoff to the program," she says. "Two of my second-graders were co-presidents of the club, which was a wonderful leadership opportunity for them."

The program includes an EBRPD-sponsored field trip to places like Crown Memorial State Beach in Alameda and Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area in Pleasanton, with Frank serving as the guide. "It's a great way to send an important message to our next generation of park stewards," Frank explains, "and the kids just love it."

YOUR DONATIONS SUPPORT... YOUTH PROGRAMS

The Park District offers a wealth of youth-focused programs, with opportunities for learning, skill building and outdoor fun. Among the highlights:

- › Bow and arrow lovers ages 8 and up can take **introduction to archery lessons** at Roberts Recreation Area's Redwood Bowmen Archery Club.
- › EBRPD's popular **Day Camps** are held in the summer, with weeklong sessions at several parks for youth of varying ages.
- › Young anglers will learn the fine art of **fishing** in beginning classes for kids 12 and up at various locations.
- › **Horseback riding lessons** are offered at the Chabot and Skyline Ranch Equestrian Centers in Anthony Chabot Regional Park; Las Trampas Stables at Las Trampas Regional Wilderness; and Piedmont Stables at Redwood Regional Park.
- › Big Break Regional Shoreline hosts **introductory kayaking programs** for participants 8 years and older.
- › **Model train** lovers can explore the Golden State Model Railroad Museum at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline and the Railroad Museum at Ardenwood Historic Farm. Miniature train rides are available at Golden Gate Live Steamers and Redwood Valley Railway in Tilden Regional Park.
- › **Naturalist programs** vary by park and time of year. Most are available for all ages.
- › **Swim classes** are offered in the summer at Roberts Regional Recreation Center and Contra Loma Swim Lagoon for children 6 months to 13 years old. Adaptive swim lessons for participants with disabilities and private lessons are also available.
- › The **Junior Lifeguard program** is geared toward experienced swimmers. There are three levels: Junior Lifeguard (ages 8-12), Aide (ages 13-15) and Junior Cadet (ages 14-17). Sessions are held in the summer at Contra Loma Regional Park, Tilden Regional Park, Temescal Regional Recreation Area, Cull Canyon Regional Recreation Area, Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area and Crown Memorial State Beach.

› To learn more about youth-oriented Park District activities, visit www.ebpd.org/activities/kids.



Opposite page (left to right): Children with special needs take part in the Park District's Fishing Derby; Supervising Naturalist James Frank presents the Mobile Fish Exhibit. This page (top to bottom): Day campers enjoy fresh air; kayakers at Big Break Regional Shoreline; the Park District offers swim lessons to students of all ages.



A group from the
Martinez Senior Center
at Tilden Park

XXXXXX

MATURE IN NATURE



“We have a real active and fearless group,” says Gina Lombardi Gravert, supervisor of the Martinez Senior Center. “They love going to the parks, and EBRPD creates very user-friendly experiences for us.”

Gravert recently collaborated with Jaimee Rizzotti, EBRPD’s community outreach coordinator, to send some 20 Martinez seniors on field trips to Tilden Park and Big Break. “Many of our seniors were surprised to learn that these parks were so close to home,” Gravert says. “They were in awe that this natural beauty is right in their backyard. Now they’ve got the bug, the fever! They keep asking when the next trip is.”

Rizzotti, who works with senior centers throughout the area on similar outings, makes these trips seamless experiences. She coordinates bus transportation to and from the parks and arranges for a naturalist to guide the group on the trails. She also helps adapt the excursions to meet seniors’ needs, which often means choosing parks where there are flatter or paved paths, to better accommodate people in wheelchairs or ones who use walkers or canes.

“Seniors have been so excited about this program,” Rizzotti says. “They often form their own hiking groups afterward and come back independently, if they are able. It’s great to see them feel so comfortable in the parks and reap the health benefits of being active in nature.”

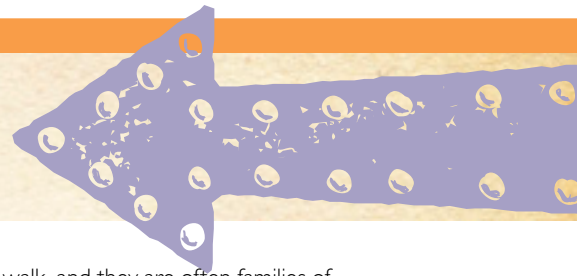
SENIOR ACTIVITIES

From birding to golfing to fly fishing, visitors of all ages have the opportunity to take part in the variety of programs offered by EBRPD. Among those geared toward older parkgoers are:

- › **Kayaking for Folks 50+:** Seniors can learn kayaking skills at their own pace at Shadow Cliffs Marina View Picnic Site.
- › **The Over the Hills Gang:** Hikers 55 and over will enjoy this series of monthly excursions exploring various parks.
- › **Pole walking classes:** While pole walking is open to participants 18 and up, these classes are an ideal way for older people to improve balance, agility and strength; offered in a variety of locations.

▶ For more information, visit ebparks.org/activities or apm.activecommunities.com/ebparks.

DIVERSITY IN ACTION



Mona Koh started organizing Multicultural Wellness Walks in 2014. She had heard from community leaders—who represented a range of ethnic, socioeconomic and faith-based groups—that they would welcome activities that brought a variety of people together. So she partnered with groups like the Latina Center in Richmond; Sound of Hope, a local nonprofit Chinese-language radio station; the Korean Alpine Club; and several African-American churches to create an experience that focuses on people's shared interests and celebrates their varied cultural heritages.

The walks, along with many other Park District activities, are part of Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPPH), a global campaign that strives to "embed the connections between human health, environmental health and ecological health within the mission and purpose of public parks." In 2011, EBRPD collaborated with the National Park Service and the Institute at the Golden Gate to create a regional initiative, HPPH: Bay Area. The Multicultural Wellness Walks—which include nature education, exercises, games and a healthy lunch that spans ethnic cuisines—are one of the initiative's most successful efforts.

Cathy Zhang, an on-air host and vice president of Sound of Hope, uses her radio platform to highlight the walks for listeners. "I make a bridge for them, connecting the Chinese community with the parks," she says. "I usually get between

10 and 40 listeners on each walk, and they are often families of three generations. I see them laughing with people from other communities, even though their communication is nonverbal."

As with the programs for seniors and kids, the Multicultural Wellness Walks allow EBRPD to deliver on its mission of inclusiveness. "We envision all people feeling welcomed to our regional parks," Koh says. "And when we see them returning, exploring parks on their own or volunteering in park activities, we know we have succeeded."

FOUNDATION FUNDING AIDS COMMUNITY BUILDING

EBRPD works with many local organizations and agencies—including veterans groups, centers for people with disabilities, women's shelters and libraries—to bring community members to the parks.

"I feel excited to see the same community members again and again and build relationships with them," says naturalist Morgan Dill, who leads walks for women and their children from a local residential treatment center. "I am lucky to be sharing nature with them."



Participants in the Multicultural Wellness Walk feel the energy at Coyote Hills.

Become **1** in a **MILLION**



TARGETING MONTHLY SMALLER DONATIONS, A NEW FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN HOPES TO RAISE A MILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO SUPPORT VITAL PARK INITIATIVES

A little can go a long way, especially when it comes to protecting our natural resources. The Regional Parks Foundation has worked to preserve and provide access to the East Bay Regional Parks for nearly five decades, and with its new “1 in a Million” fundraising effort, the Foundation hopes to continue that service for decades to come.

“Our goal is to raise a million dollars a year by having 4,000 people contribute \$21 a month or \$250 a year,” says Juliana Schirmer, RPF development director. “This is a new campaign to help raise unrestricted revenue to support parks and the programs we offer throughout the Park District.”



BACKGROUND: BOB WALKER; EBRPF



AT THE CORE

> While gifts from the Foundation's 9,700 Members and nearly 1,000 Donors have long helped protect the 120,536 acres of open space in the Park District, unrestricted donations also fund core program initiatives that enable "access for all." Among those initiatives are environmental stewardship; youth development; health, wellness and safety; and community engagement.

"Environmental stewardship is taking care of the parks, the environment and its resources so they will be here for our children and grandchildren to enjoy," says Schirmer. As part of that stewardship, RPF promotes conservation efforts and provides funding for environmental education and habitat preservation/restoration.

Young people are another priority for Donors, Schirmer says. Projects such as the campership program (which gives scholarships to EBRPD summer camps and swim lessons for low-income children), classes that teach safety and life skills, and even career development activities for teenagers receive RPF support.

"We fund District programs that benefit approximately 10,000 young people each year, and we would love to see that doubled," says Schirmer.

EBRPD estimates 22 million visits occur in the District's 65 parks each year, with many people jogging, biking and walking the 1,250 miles of trails spanning Alameda and Contra Costa counties. As part of its wellness and safety initiative, the RPF works with the Park District on a variety of projects—from supplying cyclists with warning bells to providing transportation for chronically ill children and families referred by their doctors.

The final initiative is encouraging community contributions to the parks. "We want to provide more services to the community, but we need to increase financial support to help us in this effort," says Schirmer.

DOING GREAT THINGS TOGETHER

> The 1 in a Million fundraising effort aspires to engage a number of new Donors. "We're hoping people will feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves and want to invite their friends and family to join them," says Schirmer. "Together, we can do great things."

▶ To make a donation, contact Juliana Schirmer at 510-544-2212 or visit www.RegionalParksFoundation.org/Mil.

Get With the Programs

FROM BIKE BELLS TO SWIM LESSONS, THE NUMEROUS PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE RPF MAKE THE PARKS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND SAFER FOR ALL. FOLLOWING ARE JUST A FEW OF THE PROGRAMS FUNDED BY DONATIONS TO THE FOUNDATION.



3,741 students participated in KHOC in the 2015-2016 school year

THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

> The Kids Healthy Outdoors Challenge (KHOC) turns third-grade educators into naturalists, providing them the tools to teach their students about the parks themselves. “The demand for our naturalist-led services is high, so rather than turning classes away, we wanted to give teachers the skills and the materials so they can take their students out in the parks,” says Ira Bletz, regional interpretive and recreation services manager.

The program, which started in 2012 with 33 teachers, recently had 123 educators from districts throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties; 3,741 students took part in KHOC during the 2015-2016 school year.

Satisfaction with KHOC is high for both educators and students. Says Bletz: “The outdoors is a foreign place to some of the kids. Being able to go out there with their classmates and realize that it is an exciting place to learn about the world around them is really valuable.”

Plus, learning outdoors is good for children—both in mind and body.



400 children enjoy the Park’n It Day Camp every summer

DAY CAMPS FOR KIDS

> Park’n It Day Camp is one of the largest programs in EBRPD’s Outdoor Recreation department, serving 400 children ages 5 to 12 each year.

The camp runs for eight weeks every summer, with one-week sessions in different parks, including Temescal, Don Castro, Contra Loma, Miller/Knox and Ardenwood Historic Farm. Two additional sessions are provided for free in partnership with area nonprofit organizations or schools. Financial aid is available to campers through the generous support of the RPF.

“For a lot of kids, Day Camps are their first experience in the regional parks,” says Philip Coffin, acting recreation supervisor.

Park’n It, which is accredited by the American Camp Association, offers activities such as arts and crafts, field games, hiking, fishing, archery, storytelling, and swimming.

“We want to give kids a chance to disconnect from their screens—to go home sweaty, dirty, exhausted and inspired,” says Coffin.



1,800 bike bells
have been installed to date
by Share Our Trail

PROMOTING TRAIL SAFETY

> With an average of 30,000 people a month on paths such as the Iron Horse trail, routes can get crowded, even treacherous. The Share Our Trail events—which occur several times a year on EBRPD’s major paved trails—encourage all users to be aware of their surroundings and each other.

“We’re trying to get the different types of trail users to share this wonderful place,” says Eric Stormer, parks supervisor for Contra Costa trails.

Share Our Trail promotes safety by giving away bike bells—the program has installed 1,800 to date—and reflective blinkers (along with other goodies) and offering etiquette suggestions such as sounding a bell when passing and slowing down in congested areas.

“I can measure the success of the program less by what I see, than what I hear: the dinging of bike bells and calling out on the trails,” Stormer says. “It’s empowering to watch people learn.”



Teen Eco Action
received a 2016 Excellence
award from the California
Park & Recreation Society

ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING TEENS

> The Park District works to create a love of nature in youth of all ages. Teen Eco Action focuses on kids 13 to 17 years old, providing an intensive program with one-week summer sessions in Richmond, Oakland and Bay Point; there are plans to expand into Fremont/Union City next year.

Teen Eco Action is both a natural history and outdoor recreation program, with career skills thrown in for good measure. “We help local teens learn about nature so they can become lifelong regional park users and supporters,” says Philip Coffin. Along with engaging in activities such as biking or hiking, the teens work with rangers on service projects, learn how to get to the parks on public transit and hear from park employees about different kinds of jobs within the District.

It’s the latter aspect that Coffin finds most rewarding: “We want these youth to get jobs in the parks, wear a uniform and join our family.”



More than
500 young people
went through the Junior
Lifeguard program in 2016

TEACHING WATER SAFETY

> Jezreel Bigornia was introduced to EBRPD’s water safety classes at age 10, when he took swim lessons as part of an RPF-funded camper-ship at Roberts Pool before moving on to the Junior Lifeguard program.

“The water class taught me the basics of lifeguarding, CPR, first aid,” says Bigornia, who is now 18 and works seasonally as a lifeguard for the Park District. He plans to continue as an EBRPD lifeguard next summer, maybe even becoming an instructor for the Junior Lifeguard program.

According to Aquatics Manager Pete DeQuincy, more than 500 young people went through the Junior Lifeguard program this year—gaining leadership skills along with lifesaving techniques.

Water safety is a priority for the parks and the RPF, which funds everything from swim scholarships to loaner life jackets at EBRPD swim facilities. “We always emphasize water safety, no matter your age,” says DeQuincy.

Coming Attractions

East Bay Regional Park District is working to transform onetime landfill site Oyster Bay Regional Shoreline into a recreational paradise

With views of the bay and nearby Oakland Airport, a diverse array of birds, and a dog-friendly reputation, Oyster Bay Regional Shoreline is a popular destination for hikers, picnickers and pet owners. Visitors will soon enjoy a new range of recreational opportunities at the park, thanks to an ambitious face-lift that is currently underway.

The plan for Oyster Bay includes a separate entrance and parking lot off of Davis Street, new picnic areas, a dedicated dog space, trails throughout the park, revegetation with native species, and a special events area. It will also mark the introduction of two activities completely new to EBRPD—a bicycle skills area and a disc golf course.

“People in this community have been asking for these specific activities for a while,” explains Sean Dougan, trails development program manager. “We had a unique opportunity [here].”

Ironically, it is the park’s history as a former landfill that makes that opportunity possible. While there are certain restrictions for development—for example, the District is not allowed to remove soil from the base layer that separates the park from the landfill underneath—it also means there are fewer environmental factors to worry about, explains Michelle Julene, senior park planner. “It’s a great way to recover the land and turn it into something the public will want to use,” she says.

The District launched the project in 2013 after conducting a series of public forums, which resulted in the decision to include an 18-hole disc golf course and devote nearly 15 acres to a bicycle skills area. The course is scheduled for completion in early 2017, while the bicycle skills area is tentatively set to open by 2019.



“People in this community have been asking for these specific activities for a while.”

—Sean Dougan, trails development program manager at the Park District

Ultimately, the hope is to transform the park into a recreational hub for the East Bay. “We want to make a park that is respectful to the land, even though it’s a former landfill,” Julene says, “and we want it to be a gathering place for the public.”

“There are a lot of challenges with the landfill but a lot of opportunities as well,” adds Dougan. “It’s a new endeavor, and it’s exciting for all of us.”

Many Regional Parks Foundation members have expressed the desire for more diverse recreational activities, and they are thrilled to see a disc golf and bike skills course developed for members of the community. After all, what better way to truly transform a landfill site than to fill it with young people? The Foundation is working with the District to raise funds for this very important project.





Before



After

“East Bay Regional Park District saw an opportunity to improve the habitat design and public access, and provide long-term benefits. We could have easily acquired the land and just built a trail, but we took on a lot more than that.”

—Chris Barton, environmental programs manager at the Park District

Restoring for the Present— and the Future

The restoration of Dotson Family Marsh (formerly Breuner Marsh) will protect public access to the park and vital shoreline habitat for the next century



In the early 1970s, while much of the East Bay shoreline had been or was undergoing development that destroyed tidal and seasonal wetlands, Breuner Marsh was under threat from a similar fate. Gerald Breuner, after whom the park was named, had purchased the 150-acre parcel of shoreline just south of Point Pinole with the intention of building housing, a business park and a small airport on top of the marshland. That is, until a group of Richmond residents banded together to protect the area and successfully blocked the plan.

Fast-forward to today, when the park is undergoing the finishing touches of an ambitious restoration project. The effort, which will cost a total of \$14 million, began soon after the East Bay Regional Park District bought the plot in 2011 and seeks to not only restore the vital marshland but also prepare it for the century to come.

“East Bay Regional Park District saw an opportunity to improve the habitat design and public access, and provide long-term benefits,” explains Environmental Programs Manager Chris Barton, who leads the restoration project and has worked on it since 2012. “We could have easily acquired the land and just built a trail, but we took on a lot more than that.”

This includes the development of picnic facilities, public parking and interpretive exhibits; the addition of trails and the connection of a segment of the Bay Trail; and, most importantly,

major wetland and coastal prairie restoration that involved removing 120,000 cubic yards of fill that had been added to the bay and disrupted habitats.

In November 2016, the Breuner Marsh name was changed by EBRPD board of directors to the Dotson Family Marsh, in recognition of the continued open space advocacy for the marsh by Whitney Dotson, Sr. and his son, Whitney Dotson, current EBRPD board member. The Dotsons have steadfastly advocated for preservation and public access to this Richmond waterfront.

The restoration has both immediate and long-lasting benefits: The park was designed to accommodate rising sea levels resulting from climate change through 2080. That will ensure public access to the park as well as maintain key habitats for endangered species such as the ridge-way rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse. And whereas many wetland projects in the bay rely on tide gates, Barton adds, Dotson Family Marsh requires minimal “human assistance.”

“The wetland is designed as a natural system, so it’s self-sustaining,” he says. “It just looks better, more natural. It doesn’t look engineered at all.”

As for Barton himself, he’s thrilled to see the completed project after years—and for some dedicated community activists, decades—of hard work.

“We’re working on the last leg of a long relay race,” he says. “To take this to the finish line—that’s going to be the most satisfying part.”

FUN AND FESTIVITIES

Celebrating milestones and summer outings in the East Bay Regional Parks



1



2



3



5



4

1 Craft beer lovers attend a Parks fundraiser at Drake's Brewing Company. 2 The Concerts at the Cove inspire dancers. 3 Partygoers recognize 75 years of the Brazilian Room at Tilden Regional Park. 4 Kaiser Permanente partners with EBRPD for the annual Trails Challenge. 5 Anglers enjoy the Fishing Derby at Lake Chabot's 50th anniversary event. 6 Park staff and supporters celebrate the shared legacy of the National Park Service and EBRPD at the Environmental Education Center, Tilden Nature Area.



6

1: AMANDA COWLES, DRAKE'S BREWING; 2: YUNG CHEN; 3: NEED CREDIT; 4: EBRPD; 5: ALLAN MENDEZ; 6: EBRPD



MARK YOUR CALENDAR



Bring family and friends to these highlighted EBRPD programs and activities—perfect for nature- and fun-lovers of all ages. To view complete listings of EBRPD events, visit www.ebparks.org/activities.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Ardenwood Monarch Programs

Discover the amazing life cycle of these tiny creatures and how they survive the winter in the Bay Area. Interpretive programs are offered on weekends throughout January and into mid-February at Ardenwood Historic Farm in Fremont. Check dates at www.ebparks.org.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Join Park District staff and community members on January 17 in recognizing the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Oakland shoreline park named in his honor. We will spend the morning removing invasive plants, planting trees at the Memorial Grove and cleaning out debris from the watershed. 8:30 a.m.–noon. Register for yourself or a group at www.ebparks.org.

Vasco Caves Regional Preserve Tours

Hike through this windswept land which is sacred to local Native American communities and a seasonal refuge for golden eagles, fairy shrimp and tiger salamanders. The Preserve is only accessible through guided tours. For participants 10 years and older. Tours will be offered on February 5, 12, 18 and 26, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Fee: \$30 (nonresident: \$34). Reservations required. Call 1-888 EBPARKS and hit Option 2.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Join thousands of bird watchers of all ages across the globe to get a real-time snapshot of where birds are. All levels are welcome, great for beginning birders. #greatbackyardbirdcount. The event will be held on Saturday, February 18, from 8–10:30 a.m. Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area, Pleasanton. Registration is required. Call 510-544-3249 for more information.

Learn the Basics of Estate Planning

Attend a free estate planning seminar presented by the Planned Giving Committee of the Regional Parks Foundation. Topics include: wills, revocable trusts, powers of attorney, health care directives, irrevocable trusts, life insurance/retirement plans, charitable trusts and estate trusts. The next seminar will be held Friday, March 10, from 3–5 p.m.; another one will be held on Friday, April 21, from 3–5 p.m. Visit www.RegionalParksFoundation.org/events for more information and to register.

Sheep Shearing Day

Spring has sprung and it is time for the sheep at Ardenwood Historic Farm in Fremont to get their annual “haircut.” Come to the farm on Saturday, March 18! Watch as the farm’s sheep get sheared, then try your hand at wool carding and see the transformation from fiber to yarn at the spinning wheel. You can even make your own woolly lamb to take home. This is a special event; check entry fees and hours online at www.ebparks.org or by calling the park at 510-544-2797.

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Sign up today: RegionalParksFoundation.org or call 510-544-2220.

Briones Regional Park, Martinez