

# COMPASS

FALL 2024

  
REGIONAL PARKS  
Foundation  
Supporting East Bay Regional Parks

## CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

PARK VISITORS AND STAFF RECOGNIZE A MILESTONE  
ANNIVERSARY FOR THE EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

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## A LANDMARK MOMENT

This issue celebrates the 90th anniversary of the creation of the East Bay Regional Park District, a milestone we commemorated with a look back at major moments in the Park District's history (see page 6) and festivities throughout the year, including the Regional Parks Foundation's Lakeside Laps event at Lake Chabot in July (see page 12 for a look at more happenings).

The Foundation was established as a nonprofit in 1969 to accept a donation of land from Kaiser Sand and Gravel (property that is now Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area in Pleasanton). In the ensuing 55 years, the Foundation has supported the Park District, helping to provide universal access to its beautiful open spaces, as well as promoting environmental stewardship, recreational opportunities, acquisition of parklands and youth development programs. Last year alone, 11,529 children, young people and members of underserved communities enjoyed outdoor education and recreation thanks to Foundation support.



The Foundation's continued dedication to the health of parks and residents in the East Bay is aided by the generosity of our members and corporate and private donors. As we look forward to the future, we do so in collaboration with the Park District, community partners and our tremendous supporters. Cheers to the next 90 years!

*Lauren Bernstein*

**Lauren Bernstein**  
Executive Director  
Regional Parks Foundation



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## Did You Know

The East Bay Regional Park District's story began in the 1920s when surplus land became available in the East Bay hills and civic leaders placed a measure on the ballot to create the Park District. The measure passed with 71 percent approval in 1934. Today, the East Bay Regional Park District is the largest regional park district in the nation, with:



**30 million+ annual visits**



**73 parks, made up of  
126,000+ acres**



**55 miles of shoreline and  
1,330 miles of trails**



## WELCOME ADDITIONS

Meet two of the newest members of the Regional Parks Foundation board of directors

This past spring, the Regional Parks Foundation welcomed two new members to its board of directors, both of whom bring valuable professional experience and a commitment to equity work.

➤ Growing up in an under-resourced neighborhood in San Francisco, Terrence Riley—who now lives in Oakland with his wife and two children—didn't really know about the area's parks until he was a teenager. Opening up access to green spaces and natural resources for young people who come from the same sort of environment as he did in his youth is one of the priorities that drew Riley to the board.

"The Foundation is focused on uplifting the parks and making them available to everyone, as well as making sure that the parks represent the cultural diversity of the Bay Area," he says.

Riley has worked with several youth education nonprofits, including Aim High and Hack the Hood in Oakland, where he served as executive director.

In addition to equity initiatives, his board priorities are grant-making opportunities, community partnerships, and supporting access and education for young people in the regional parks.

Says Riley, "It's important to understand the value that the park systems bring to us, and what we can learn from them about topics such as climate change and preservation. ... The Foundation's focus on resources and opportunity for all people is incredible, and I am excited to be part of the continued transformation and growth."

➤ Matthew Irwin is head of the global real estate team at Gap Inc. and contributes his legal expertise—and a history of advising a variety of nonprofit organizations—to Foundation initiatives. Growing up in Oakland before living and working in Washington, D.C., for close to a decade, Irwin has a deep appreciation for the role that parks play in the well-being of East Bay communities.

"As a parent of three kids, one of whom is a toddler, we go to parks a lot," says Irwin. "I have always loved parks because you can foster social connections with diverse populations and spend quality time with family and others in our community. Parks really enhance our quality of life."

Among Irwin's favorite spots in the Park District are Temescal Regional Recreation Area, Roberts Regional Recreation Area and Tilden Regional Park. "We live down the street from Temescal and go there several times a week, jogging, walking the dog and taking our daughter to the play structure," he says.

In addition to sharing his legal expertise with the Foundation, Irwin looks forward to gaining new knowledge and collaborating with his fellow board members.

"We all have different professional skill sets and perspectives, and I am very excited to leverage those skill sets across our collective," Irwin says.

New board member Terrence Riley and his wife and children enjoy the parks.



Matthew Irwin, pictured with his family, brings legal expertise to the board.



From left:  
Archives Program  
Supervisor Brenda  
Montano and  
Exhibit Supervisor  
Jenn Webber  
honor the  
District's past.

## LIVING HISTORY

**Dedication to the Park District's storied past powers the  
Archives Department**

Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.—who, in 1866, inspired the idea of parklands in the East Bay hills—once noted, “A park is a living, breathing entity that reflects the changing seasons and the passage of time.”

The living, breathing spirit of the East Bay Regional Park District can be seen in every park, its dedicated employees and the thousands of people who have visited over the past 90 years. The Park District's changes and the passage of time, however, are also reflected in its archives—a massive collection of documents, artifacts and photos that preserves the District's history now and into the future.

The official Archives Department is just two years old, but Park District staff have been collecting field finds, photographs and records for much longer. “There has always been a group of people who were very passionate about the histories of the parklands,” says Archives Program Supervisor Brenda Montano. “There were years of recording history, but all the collections were kept in a bunch of boxes by whoever wanted to keep them. The archives were never part of anyone's job.”

Montano's enthusiasm for these collections, growing interest in the District's storied history and concern about protecting irreplaceable materials eventually led to the formalization of the Archives Department.

Today, Montano and her team, made up of one staff member and a small group of dedicated volunteers, help manage the archives—reviewing and cataloging

documents and digitizing old photos. The archives also serve as a repository for Park District artifacts and are used as a resource for outside researchers and writers, as well as staff working on mitigation or visitor engagement projects.

Archives volunteers are primarily retired Park District staff who spend one day a week reviewing old documents and photos.

“My volunteers have extraordinary institutional knowledge, so they are able to cull through the records and identify things of historical significance,” says Montano. “They may know the identities of the people pictured in photographs. They can look at a photo of a trail out in the middle of nowhere and know where it is. That is where their help is most valued.”

Paul Miller, an interpretive parkland unit manager who retired in 2015, has been an archives volunteer for seven years. He appreciates the opportunity to stay connected with the Park District and explore its history.

Miller worked in several parks during his 35-year tenure, including Roberts Regional Recreation Area in Oakland. Among his archives responsibilities is going through the park files for Roberts, a task that yielded a firsthand account from California Academy of Sciences founder/naturalist Dr. William Gibbons about his hike up to Redwood Peak. Gibbons would stop for lunch with his companions and sit inside the stump of a giant old-growth redwood tree. One of these companions was John Muir.

“The naturalist's hike occurred not long after most of the redwoods had been cut down [in the 1850s]. Knowing what the land looks like today, I read his descriptions and considered what it must have looked like at the time and how much the land has changed since then,” says Miller. “It's interesting to look at some of the old documents and photos, coming across things that you can really relate to as a former District employee.”

Montano compares the work to that of a family historian. “I've always loved stories and got really into my family's history,” she says. “The Park District archives are a family history; it's just a very big family.”



Archives volunteer  
Paul Miller brings years  
of District experience  
to the program.



La Clínica de La Raza patients find joy in the regional parks.



## THE NATURE PRESCRIPTION

A Park District collaboration with La Clínica de La Raza builds community and supports the health of local families

From birdsongs to sunlight coming through stands of redwoods, the sounds and sights in our parks have healing properties. Studies have shown that spending time in nature benefits mental and physical health, and more doctors are prescribing park outings as treatments for their patients.

The Park District and Regional Parks Foundation have recognized the connection between health and nature for years, supporting programs and partnerships that bring the East Bay's diverse communities into the parks for wellness activities.

One such collaboration is with health center La Clínica de La Raza in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood. Since 2022, the Park District and La Clínica have partnered on a program under the Park Rx umbrella to bring patients on nature outings four times a year.

"La Clínica is an intergenerational space, so there is a large variety of ages, abilities and needs," says Park District Community Outreach Coordinator Emilytricia Marchena. "We provide multiple types of activities—such as walks, arts and crafts, and nature journaling—and lunch. Food is such an important part of building community and bringing people together."

"Our patients love it," says La Clínica de La Raza family medicine physician Jessie Liu, M.D. "The participants tend to have chronic pain, anxiety, depression, diabetes and

other long-term health conditions. They get to connect with one another and realize that they are not the only ones dealing with these problems. I have personally felt the healing aspects of nature and love to share this with our patients, who bring their own wisdom and experience."

Funded by the Foundation, the program supplies transportation from the La Clínica site, along with food and activity materials. Participation can range from 30 to 60 patients, who are joined by Spanish-speaking Park District staff and La Clínica care providers on outings that typically last three hours. "It is a huge collaboration, and we're all bringing our own skills, passion and creativity to this magical program," says Marchena.

Excursions have taken place at a variety of parks including Roberts Regional Recreation Area, Lake Chabot Regional Park and Temescal Regional Recreation Area.

"We brought La Clínica to All Abilities Day at Crab Cove," says Marchena. "One of our patients uses a walker but never wants to miss out. We had a beach wheelchair so they could go all the way out at low tide."

The program also builds community. "We have some participants who might not have a lot of close family or friends," Marchena adds. "Along with the health benefits and providing needed access to our parks, staff and participants are cocreating a space for folks to connect with each other and build community."

"Knowing that they are welcome in the parks, with language-appropriate resources and communication, has helped people understand that the parks are there for them to explore," says Dr. Liu. "We are grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District and the Foundation for their collaboration and commitment to this partnership."



A program attendee has an encounter with the chickens at Tilden Nature Area's Little Farm.

# PARKS FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE

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**Celebrating 90 years of the  
East Bay Regional Park District**



Grass Valley Regional  
Park (pictured here  
circa 1952) was  
renamed Anthony  
Chabot Regional  
Park in 1965.

**Below:** This map was included in the “Proposed Park Reservations for East Bay Cities” report by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and National Park Service Chief Naturalist Ansel Hall, and indicated surplus watershed lands for parks (circa 1930). **Right:** The original seal for the East Bay Regional Park District. **Bottom:** A flyer for the 1934 campaign for the creation of the regional parks.



**W**hen the East Bay Regional Park District was founded in 1934, it introduced an invaluable natural resource to the community. Today, the Park District is the largest regional park district of its kind in the nation and welcomes millions of visitors every year to its parks.

“Whether it’s taking a first hike, catching a first fish or riding the steam train at Tilden, many of us have lasting memories and a deep appreciation of the Park District’s beautiful parks, shorelines and trails,” says Park District General Manager Sabrina Landreth. “This year is the Park District’s 90th anniversary—a remarkable milestone and a reason to celebrate.”

Explore the rich history of the Park District with this timeline of major moments from the past 90 years.

## 1930-1959

### » A VITAL NEED

The origin story of the East Bay Regional Park District is an inspirational one, in which a group of community leaders, during the toughest of economic times, grasped an opportunity. In the late 1920s, thousands of acres of surplus watershed land from the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) became available following the construction of the Pardee Reservoir and Mokelumne River Aqueduct. Conservation- and community-minded individuals saw the vital need to preserve the natural landscape as open spaces and provide respite and recreation for a fast-growing population. Their vision was to establish one of the most beautiful chains of parklands in the country.

### » GETTING OUT THE VOTE

The 1934 campaign for the regional parks symbolized hope in the throes of a nationwide Great Depression, when many thousands of people were jobless in the East Bay alone. At the same time, sporadic and dense industrial urban growth was leaving families with few options for playgrounds. Community members negotiated with EBMUD for their surplus watershed lands to be transferred for park management, emphasizing opening these already natural areas to free recreation and job opportunities. This strategy garnered support, resulting in 71 percent approval from Alameda County voters for a 5-cent property tax to create the East Bay Regional Park District.

## »» CREATING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

After the 1934 vote, the Park District, with the help of federal New Deal programs, established early infrastructure and administration. The National Park Service stepped in to assist with the development of the parks with the aid of the federal Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) programs. Local East Bay CCC camps built the first trails, roadways, picnic areas, restrooms and drinking fountains. With this initial park infrastructure established, the Park District celebrated its grand opening in 1936, announcing the first three parks: Tilden Regional Park (named for first Park District Board President Major Charles Lee Tilden), Temescal Regional Recreation Area and Round Top—later renamed (Robert) Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve. Redwood Regional Park followed in 1938 and has since been renamed to honor Dr. Aurelia Reinhardt, who also served on the Park District's first board. Major Tilden, Mr. Sibley and Dr. Reinhardt also served important roles in the campaign for the regional parks.

## »» ESTABLISHING VISITORSHIP

A postwar Park District responded to the need to provide parks for family recreation. Attractions such as Tilden's steam train, merry-go-round and pony ride became popular destinations, as well as Tilden Nature Area's Little Farm. The first naturalist programs invited schoolchildren from all nearby communities and provided transportation. The 1950s saw the addition of Roberts Regional Recreation Area's swimming pool, archery range, baseball fields and picnic areas, and Grass Valley Regional Park (later renamed Anthony Chabot) brought equestrian facilities and campgrounds. Don Castro and Cull Canyon regional recreation areas opened in 1956, bringing additional swimming and picnic areas in the growing outlying suburbs of southern Alameda County.



Bathers at a waterfall near the Beach House in Temescal Regional Recreation Area in the 1940s.

## 1960–1999

### »» AN INVIGORATED GROWTH

The East Bay Regional Park District's invigorating growth during this period was led by three visionary leaders: William Penn Mott, Jr., Richard Trudeau and Hulet Hornbeck. Mott was the Park District's general manager from 1962–1967. Trudeau was Mott's chief of public information and succeeded Mott as general manager. One of Trudeau's lasting legacies was the creation of the Regional Parks Foundation in 1969, originally to accept a donation of land from Kaiser Sand and Gravel; both the Park District and the Foundation flourished over the subsequent decades. Hornbeck was the longtime chief of land acquisition. Mott, Trudeau and Hornbeck led 30 years of the Park District's remarkable growth, from eight parks to 52 parks by 1990.

### »» WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The workforce during the Park District's first 30 years remained relatively constant and small. Park staff were expected to know how to build trail fences, fight fires and provide public safety. Administration operated out of the Temescal Beach House with just a few offices. Mott's era brought change that both reflected and influenced the times. Women, who had been limited to administrative positions, began entering the parks' field positions, known as "park workers." Demand for equal opportunity and AFSCME Local 2428, the employee union, helped change the face of the Park District and expanded opportunities not just for women, but for people of color as well. Mary Lee Jefferds, the first woman to be president of the Park District's board, symbolized change in strong leadership. Mott's legacy, continuing through Trudeau's leadership, also helped the Park District create its own fire department and police department, including a mounted patrol unit and helicopter unit. Naturalists, planners and architects were also hired. By 1982, there were 350 permanent employees and 210 temporary/seasonal workers.

### »» 1970S ENVIRONMENTALISM AND DEMANDS FOR THE FUTURE

The Park District's first comprehensive plan was developed by the Overview Consulting firm, led by Stewart Udall, former secretary of the interior; an 83-member Citizens Advisory Committee; and a 63-member Public Agency Committee—a collaboration that strongly symbolized a transformation in public involvement for the parks. One of the most important principles of the 1973 Master Plan was creating a balance of access across the two counties to existing parks, as well as locating new parkland acquisitions. A new generation of environmental activists and conservationists was gaining attention in the East Bay and held the Park District to these principles. They led the charge to preserve San Francisco Bay—to make it more accessible, cleaner and healthier. Trail use grew rapidly with walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling

**Right:** The first East Bay Regional Park District board of directors, along with federal and regional park leaders.

**Below:** Young visitors enjoy education programs at Tilden Nature Area, circa 1949.



**Below:** A dedication ceremony for the East Bay Regional Park District at Redwood Bowl in Oakland (now part of Roberts Regional Recreation Area) recognizes the opening of the first three parks.



**Below:** Park District Police Sargent Claude Earle patrols the parks as part of the motorcycle unit, pictured here circa 1974.



**Above:** Park District General Manager Richard Trudeau began his career with the agency in 1964, working in public relations under then-General Manager William Penn Mott, Jr.



**Above:** Park worker Annie Kenny (pictured here circa 1975) began her tenure at the Park District in 1974, along with the first wave of women who worked in the field. She retired from the Park District after 28 years of service.



**Left:** Chief of Land Acquisition Hulet Hornbeck speaks at a press conference in Briones Regional Park, circa 1970.

**Right:** A massive column of smoke builds above the Caldecott Tunnel and Highway 24 during the 1991 Oakland firestorm. Park District firefighters and others were deployed across the Oakland and Berkeley hills to prevent the fire from spreading.



**Below:** Robert Doyle began his career at the Park District as a park ranger in the early 1970s, and subsequently led efforts to acquire regional trails and parklands into the 21st century. He retired in 2020 after serving as general manager for 10 years.



**Above:** Park District firefighters Janet Gomes, Michael Avalos, Annie Kenny, Sue Ferrera, Don Goodenow, Bea Soria, Eduardo Guillen and Sharon Corkin just days after the 1991 firestorm.



**Above:** The recently dedicated Dumbarton Quarry Campground on the Bay, located next to Coyote Hills Regional Park in Fremont, is the first bay-side campground in the East Bay Regional Park District.

**Below:** Park staff help improve lake conditions at Temescal Regional Recreation Area.



**Above:** Participants at a public meeting for Coyote Hills Regional Park access improvements and restoration projects in 2017. The Park District encourages public input on many projects.



**Left:** Equestrians, bicyclists and hikers participate in the trails management process during a Briones Pilot Project public input meeting in 2023.

and mountain biking for the “exercise-for-health” generation. Residents throughout the two counties began to demand that nearby ridgelines and important open space areas be protected by zoning, or in many cases purchased by the Park District. The Park District also began to acquire former industrial sites and filled lands that could be rehabilitated to create several new regional parks along the bay shoreline, close to urban residents.

## 2000 to Present

### »» THE LARGEST REGIONAL PARK AGENCY IN THE COUNTRY

By the early 2000s, at 70 years old, the East Bay Regional Park District was well established as the largest regional park agency in the country. The parks served one of the most expansive, growing populations in the state. The workforce neared 700 full-time employees, and administrative offices were bursting at the seams. The Park District was broadly loved by its users and had strengthened partnerships with land conservation agencies as well as legislative representatives.

### »» A UNIFIED GAME PLAN

When the Park District celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2009, it was revving up for some of its highest achievements to date. Voters had just approved a new regional parks bond, Measure WW, for \$500 million. Land for new parks was still being pursued and acquired—most significantly, the lands now known as Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park and Thurgood Marshall Regional Park—Home of the Port Chicago 50 (the former site of the Concord Naval Weapons Station). With this additional funding, the Park District could also focus on urban creeks and shoreline restoration, regional trail expansion, fuels management, extending wildlife habitat corridors and improving infrastructure in existing parklands. The Regional Parks Foundation was a fully operational nonprofit partner to the Park District, engaging corporate interests with an active board and managing a membership program for families and individuals. These efforts were in support of the Park District’s “Access for All” programming that included day camps; swimming programs; volunteer and environmental protection projects; and investment in new playgrounds, picnic areas and group campsites. The Park District also engaged in the global Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative that brought health and access to the forefront.

### »» SHIFTING PERSPECTIVE TO MEET CURRENT NEEDS

The populations of Alameda and Contra Costa counties were exploding and enriched with diverse cultures. Nationwide movements such as Black Lives Matter and enactment of diversity, equity and inclusion policies called on public agencies like the Park District to recruit and maintain a workforce that represents and responds to the communities they served. Climate change demanded action, globally and at

Sabrina Landreth is the Park District’s first female general manager.



the Park District. Much of California experienced extreme drought conditions, and within the parks, “brown is the new green” signs began being posted on once-watered and green lawns. The new generation of park biologists, planners, architects and field staff routinely addressed blue-green algae, unparalleled wildfire dangers, massive tree die-off, and disappearing habitats and natural resources. Floods followed droughts, bringing “climate whiplash” and joining the challenges of rising sea levels on the shorelines. Starting in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated radical changes in park operations and administration. Park District staff responded by proclaiming “parks are essential” and providing access, safety and modified trail etiquette to meet the needs of the 30 million annual park visits.

### »» PREPARING FOR THE NEXT 90 YEARS

The strategy of the 1973 Master Plan to engage ever-evolving public input and interests has spurred the creation of great parks close to home, protected natural and cultural environments, and recreation for communities in the East Bay and beyond. So, what do the next 90 years hold for the East Bay, and that timeless 1934 vision and mission of natural preserves for people? Just in the last year, the Park District has piloted a trail management project in Briones Regional Park to test strategies to enhance the visitor experience, improve trail safety and protect habitat. The Park District is innovating bold new vegetation management practices and engaging in partnerships to secure climate-resilient lands and access for future generations of park visitors. The Park District is beginning to craft the Second Century District Plan, which will set goals and focus resources and employee efforts toward shared priorities and strengthen the Park District for the communities it serves. With that plan in place, the District will move into its next 100 years preserving a rich heritage of natural and cultural resources and providing open space, parks, trails, safe and healthful recreation, and environmental education for all.

# CELEBRATION TIME

**PARK VISITORS AND STAFF HONORED THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT WITH FESTIVE EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**



ParkFest brought community members together to recognize the District's 90th anniversary.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the East Bay Regional Park District, which, since its founding in 1934, has grown into the nation's largest regional park district. With 73 parks in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, over 126,000 acres of open space, 55 miles of shoreline and more than 1,330 miles of trails, the Park District provides convenient access to nature for three million residents, drawing around 30 million visits annually. From its beginnings during the Great Depression, the Park District has developed into a vital community resource.

Throughout the year, the Park District and Regional Parks Foundation hosted several events that recognized the anniversary, showcasing the diversity and beauty of the parks. These happenings provided residents with opportunities to engage with nature and learn about history in the East Bay. Highlights included the Community Science Bioblitz at Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve in January, the Celebrating Black History Walk at Thurgood Marshall Regional Park in February, an inclusive All Abilities Day at Big Break Regional Shoreline in March and Sheep Shearing Day at Ardenwood Historic Farm in April.

Visitors and staff came together to enjoy and honor their local parks, reflecting the strong community spirit that defines the East Bay Regional Park District.

➡ For more information about 90th anniversary activities, visit [ebparks.org/celebrating-90-years](http://ebparks.org/celebrating-90-years).

**Below:** Earth Day participants perform invasive plant removal at Coyote Hills Regional Park, supporting the growth of native plants and habitat restoration efforts.



**Above:** Volunteers pick up trash and take part in other projects to help beautify Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

## CLEANING UP FOR EARTH DAY

On April 20, more than 1,000 volunteers participated in Earth Day events at locations throughout the Park District. Among the projects were cleanups at Hayward Regional Shoreline, Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach and Point Pinole Regional Shoreline; sand dune restoration at Big Break Regional Shoreline; invasive plant removal at Coyote Hills Regional Park; habitat restoration at Wildcat Canyon Regional Park; and trail and garden maintenance at Don Castro Regional Recreation Area.

**Below:** Families work together on cleanup endeavors at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline's Arrowhead Marsh.



**Above:** Earth Day helpers support habitat restoration at Wildcat Canyon Regional Park, including maintenance and hand-weeding projects.



**Below:** A variety of performers, including BlackCat Zydeco, get ParkFest attendees dancing and grooving to the music.



**Above:** Park District staff provide hands-on activities, as well as snacks, stickers and other goodies.

## PARTYING AT PARKFEST

A diverse crowd gathered on May 11 at Lake Chabot Regional Park for ParkFest. The birthday party for the Park District drew between 5,500 to 6,000 people—everyone from frequent parkgoers to brand-new visitors—who enjoyed live music, performances, a kids' zone and hands-on nature exhibits and displays. Food trucks were on-site to provide tasty treats, while Regional Parks Foundation board members and Drake's Brewing Co. staff served up pints of Drake's exclusive ParkFest Pils in the beer garden, with proceeds benefiting Foundation work. ParkFest attendees also had the chance to purchase T-shirts designed by Oaklandish, with a portion of proceeds going to the Foundation. "I saw a lot of smiles and people having a good time," says Park District General Manager Sabrina Landreth. "Here's to us and the next 90 years!"



**Above:** Bubble fun and eco-friendly games thrill celebrants of all ages.



**Below:** Nature exhibits and other interpretive programs supply learning opportunities that both engage and educate.



**Right:** Hundreds of runners and walkers participate in the Foundation fundraiser for the regional parks; Lakeside Laps highlights include open-air exercise at Lake Chabot, a Finish Line Festival and fun for everyone.



## GETTING A MOVE ON AT LAKESIDE LAPS

More than 750 nature enthusiasts worked up a sweat during Lakeside Laps at Lake Chabot Regional Park on July 20, walking or running a half-marathon, 10K or 5K in support of the Regional Parks Foundation. “We were proud to partner with Brazen Racing, a long-standing supporter of our work and regional parks,” says Lauren Bernstein, executive director of the Regional Parks Foundation. “Our missions are aligned in providing access and wellness opportunities outdoors, and we were thrilled to celebrate the Park District’s 90th anniversary with this special running and walking event for the community.”



**Above:** Foundation Executive Director Lauren Bernstein (left) with Park District Ward 3 board member Dennis Waespi.

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- Brazen Racing
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**Above:** Youth participants from Lincoln Square Recreation Center in Oakland get into the spirit of the day.



## BUILDING SKILLS AND STEWARDSHIP

The Watershed Restoration Apprenticeship Program supports job training and restoration projects in the Park District

The Watershed Restoration Apprenticeship Program has restored a monarch butterfly habitat at Point Pinole, among other projects.



The East Bay Regional Park District and Richmond-based nonprofit Urban Tilth share a common goal—connecting local communities with their natural spaces—so it only makes sense that they are collaborating on a unique program that benefits both parklands and Richmond residents.

The Park District began partnering with Urban Tilth on the Watershed Restoration Apprenticeship Program in 2015. The paid job-training initiative for Richmond youth ages 18 to 25 is a semester-long program involving a small cohort of participants who get hands-on experience working on watershed restoration projects in the region. The young people also take part in classroom instruction, field work days and lectures from local professionals, including Park District staff. In 2018, Urban Tilth added a Watershed Restoration Field Crew to employ graduating trainees to work on stewardship projects with partners in the Richmond area.

Members of the training program and field crew have worked with Park District rangers on much-needed restoration projects at sites such as Wildcat Canyon Regional Park and Point Pinole Regional Shoreline, says Kristen Van Dam, the Park District's ecological services coordinator for Wildland Vegetation Management.

"We have creeks and vegetation that are damaged, and rangers don't have enough time to restore them with their daily workload," says Van Dam, who helped establish the Urban Tilth partnership. "The rangers love this program because it gives them extra hands to do a resource project."

Such projects include a habitat-restoration project at Point Pinole for monarch butterflies; fencing and signage to help keep hikers and dogs out of Wildcat Creek, home to endangered rainbow trout; and trail building and stabilization.

"Participants get experience working on trail rerouting and stone masonry or building fences. A lot of those skills can translate to other work," says Nathan Bickart, director of watershed restoration programs for Urban Tilth. "Getting perspective about how different parks and ecosystems function is very valuable, as is skill building and establishing professional connections with people working in the field."

Funding comes from grants and donors, including critical support from the Regional Parks Foundation.

"Every year I scramble to find funding for this amazing program," says Van Dam. "Just this year, the program ran out of money, and the Foundation gave us the funds. We are so grateful for the Foundation saving us at the last hour."

Adds Bickart, "The Foundation really recognized the benefits of this collaboration, both for the parks and the amazing young people who are growing their skills. It wouldn't be possible without that support."

Among Van Dam's hopes for the program's future are increased employment opportunities in the Park District and expansion to other communities.

"It's so important for young people to feel a connection to their world," says Van Dam. "The program participants turn into these incredible naturalists with a real appreciation for restoring nature."

► To help support youth development programs and other Foundation projects, visit [regionalparksfoundation.org](http://regionalparksfoundation.org).

URBAN TILTH



The program provides job skills and connections with the great outdoors.



(1) In February, the Regional Parks Foundation was named Outstanding Non-Profit by the California Parks & Recreation Society-District 3. The Foundation was recognized in the innovation/new program development category, highlighting the Park District's XPLORE—Parks to People virtual reality program, which is supported by Foundation grant funding.

## Parks for the People

The Foundation earns awards, while park visitors and staff celebrate access for all

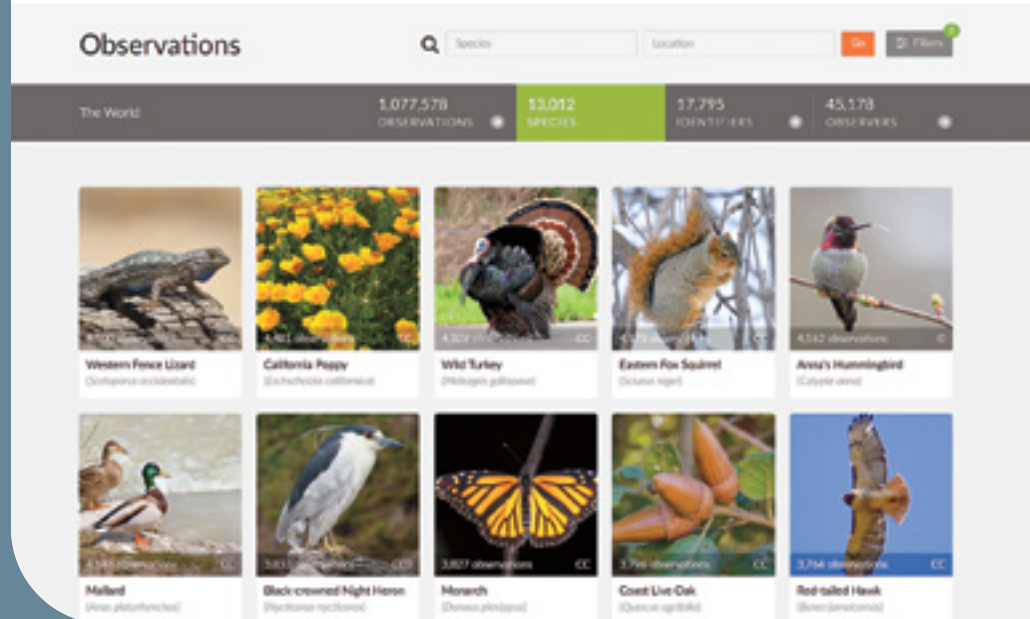


(2) On April 27, the Park District held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the reopening of Roberts Pool at Roberts Regional Recreation Area, with an increased pool size and improved access. The project was made possible in part through the generous support of the Sutter family, represented at the event by Susan Hultgren, daughter of the late Judge John and Elouise Sutter. (3) More than 400 community members enjoyed All Abilities Day at Big Break Regional Shoreline in March. The Foundation enthusiastically supports the Park District's efforts to lessen barriers to parks and increase access for all, investing in programs and events that expand access and help ensure all visitors have a sense of welcome, safety and belonging in parks. (4) The Foundation was awarded the 2024 Partnership Award in the Outstanding Public Engagement category for its collaboration with the Park District and Kaiser Permanente on the annual Trails Challenge program. This award, presented by the Public Lands Alliance, recognizes exemplary programs created in partnership that advance meaningful and sustainable connections with public lands. (5) On June 2, families and community members celebrated Pride in the Park at Tilden Nature Area. The event included a special 90th anniversary presentation, arts and activities, a goat parade, hand-churned ice cream and drag story hour.





Collectively, more than one million observations documenting over 13,000 species are part of the East Bay Regional Park District's project on iNaturalist.



## CULTIVATING COMMUNITY SCIENTISTS

How Park District staff are helping visitors connect with biodiversity using iNaturalist

With 126,809 acres of land in the Park District, monitoring and studying the vast species that call these spaces home is a tremendous task—one that is helped by over a million observations recorded from the iNaturalist community in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Using the iNaturalist app or uploading digital photos at [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org), park visitors can identify species and create research-grade observations that inform the work of Park District staff.

"I use iNaturalist every day," says Tammy Lim, a resource analyst and ecologist in the Stewardship Department. "Some of the queries we have run on iNaturalist data include using observations of peak rattlesnake activity in the spring, identifying flowering times of plants, and pinpointing locations for pollinator species such as butterflies and bumblebees. These data can have direct implications for the way we run parks."

iNaturalist observations also added data to NatureCheck, an ecological health assessment produced in 2022; an ongoing California ground squirrel census (see box for other Park District iNaturalist projects); and bioblitzes held at parks throughout the year.

"Any time people make an iNaturalist observation, they are taking a step to be a community scientist," says Lim.

Chris Sulots, a supervising naturalist at Coyote Hills Regional Park in Fremont, says iNaturalist is a great resource in his interpretive programming. "One of my jobs as an educator is to help people use these tools and share the proper way to document observations," says Sulots. "I understand the aversion to phones in nature, but this is a unique tool to help observe a space."

Sulots and Lim are part of a working group that seeks to better utilize the information provided through the platform and to encourage more park visitors to use iNaturalist to explore their environment.

"We want park users to be aware of the amazing biodiversity around them and to

join us in protecting these valuable species and habitats," says Sulots.

For Betty Villalta, a naturalist at the Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve Visitor Center, making observations for iNaturalist is all about connecting with the great outdoors.

"It helps everyone slow down and take the time to meet all of the different plants, animals and insects in our parks—grounding people in nature," explains Villalta. "As naturalists, we want to connect people to the parks and the natural world. I really want to empower people, especially youth, to see themselves as biologists or scientists, spark an interest in those fields and foster a love of nature. This is a great tool to help make that happen."

### BECOME AN INATURALIST

There are several iNaturalist projects that can benefit from your input, including a collective of observations made in Alameda and Contra Costa counties (scan the QR code to access the project), the ground squirrel census and an aggregate of observations specific to Coyote Hills. Providing research-grade data, such as quality, in-focus photos taken from several angles; noting specific dates and locations; and supplying sound recordings (if applicable) support such projects. Visit the help page at [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) for more tips.



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Park District hosts special events throughout the year, including cleanup projects and cultural celebrations  
[ebparks.org/calendar](http://ebparks.org/calendar)

## ► California Coastal Cleanup Day September 21

This year marks the 40th anniversary of this impactful volunteer effort in partnership with the California Coastal Commission. Join over 70,000 volunteers statewide from 9 a.m. to noon. Help clear debris and remove trash from waterways, including lakes, creeks, rivers and shorelines. Lend a hand and earn a Coastal Cleanup patch or sticker. Choose from any of the Park District's shoreline and lake cleanup sites listed. Pre-registration is welcome, but walk-ups are accepted.

## ► Gathering of the Ohlone Peoples at Coyote Hills October 6

Visitors at the annual Gathering of the

Ohlone Peoples at Coyote Hills Regional Park in Fremont can connect with and gain a deeper understanding of the local Indigenous People's past, present and future. Join Ohlone Peoples from diverse tribal communities as they share their living history through music, song, dance and stories. Together, we'll learn, celebrate and honor the first stewards of this land.

## ► All Abilities Day at Big Break Regional Shoreline October 8

Explore nature at your own pace and in your own way at All Abilities Day hosted by Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley. This program is inclusive for all abilities, offering experiences for everyone. Travel along paved trails to visit stations where you can

listen to birds, draw wildlife, sit on benches to scan the water or paint the view. There will be hands-on experiences, American Sign Language and Spanish interpreters on-site, and indoor and outdoor options; the event is wheelchair accessible.

## ► Sunol Heritage Festival October 19

Celebrate the diverse heritage of the Sunol wilderness at this fun, free festival for all ages. History comes alive with games, activities and music throughout the day. Enjoy a welcome by members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, live music by the Polka Cowboys and a special performance of *Life of Juana Briones*, which talks about life in Alta California. Food will not be available, so bring a picnic to eat in the park.

MICHAEL O'CALLAHAN



**Left:** Park visitors get hands-on experiences at the Sunol Heritage Festival. **Above:** Gathering of the Ohlone Peoples at Coyote Hills honors the living history of local Indigenous Peoples.

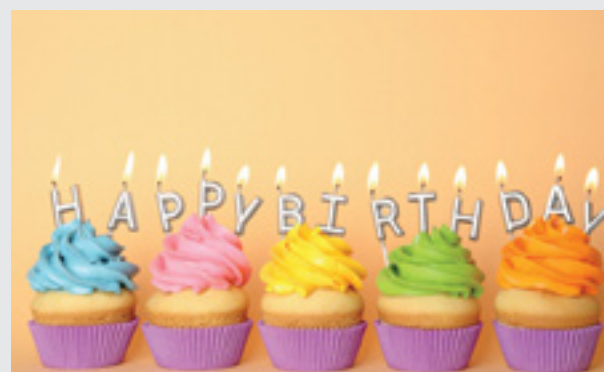
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We are honored to celebrate 90 years of milestones  
and history of environmental conservation and positive  
experiences in nature with you!

*Regional Parks Foundation*



**Make a difference today!** Donate at  
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or scan the QR code to the left.