

COMPASS


REGIONAL PARKS
Foundation
Supporting East Bay Regional Parks

Thinking Outside the Box

INTRODUCING A GROUNDBREAKING,
ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY
TOOL FOR WILDFIRE PROTECTION



BETTER TOGETHER



As the East Bay Regional Park District commemorates its 90th anniversary in 2024, we honor our past, celebrate our present and plan for the District's second century.

We build on lasting collaborations, such as the dynamic partnership the Regional Parks Foundation has had with the District for the past 55 years, since the Foundation's

establishment in 1969. Together, we find innovative ways to address climate change, inspire the next generation of environmental stewards, protect wildlife and increase access for visitors, serving our parks for generations to come.

Wildfire prevention is a pressing issue facing the Park District and, to that end, the District launched the use of the "carbonator," a groundbreaking science-based innovation for processing dead or dying trees in our parklands. The resulting biochar can then be used to improve soil and crop productivity, among other benefits to the environment. Read more about the carbonator on page 6.

Innovation and collaboration are our strengths, and we wouldn't be where we are today without you: our members, community partners and visitors. Collaborating with community organizations, academic researchers and Indigenous people on programs to enhance life for East Bay residents and support biodiversity in our parks is another priority for the Park District and the Foundation. For a look at some recent efforts to bring creative minds and community-minded groups together, turn to page 12.

Finally, January marks the start of an exciting year. Look forward to events celebrating the District's 90th and the Foundation's 55th anniversaries, as well as our beloved annual Trails Challenge. We can't wait to explore this year's selection of trails (including ones that are accessible for all abilities), see our members enjoy our regional parks and celebrate with you. Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Lauren Bernstein

Lauren Bernstein
Executive Director
Regional Parks Foundation

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Supporting East Bay Regional Parks

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DID YOU KNOW

Fun facts about the East
Bay Regional Park District



12,000+

Regional Parks Foundation
members, a record number



523

The number of "Backpacks to
Parks" distributed through local
libraries and other programs



\$1.68M

Foundation commitment to the
East Bay Regional Park District
in 2023



Marcelle Taylor enjoyed spending time among the redwoods in parks throughout the Bay Area.

A LEGACY OF LOVE

Supporter Marcelle Taylor recognized her passion for the outdoors with a bequest to the Regional Parks Foundation

Shaded by stands of coastal redwoods, a hike through Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park in Oakland can feel like a world apart from the city—and on cool foggy mornings, when mist blankets the trees, it can even seem like a trip back in time.

For Marcelle Taylor, who passed away of ovarian cancer in June 2022, Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park was a favorite hiking destination throughout her many years living in Oakland, but especially during her cancer battle. She honored that love of the parks with a generous bequest to the Regional Parks Foundation, to be gifted after her death.

“The thing she loved the most was hiking and being outside, being in the woods,” says Kate Pittman, a friend of Taylor’s (who is also one of her estate trustees). “Whenever she had a health setback, her only goal was to go hiking again.”

Taylor and Pittman met on Facebook some 15 years ago, bonding over their love of healthy eating. “The first thing we ever did together was go hiking in Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park. It was her home park,” says Pittman.

Before Taylor was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer in 2021—“ovarian cancer is called a ‘silent killer’ because people often aren’t diagnosed until they are stage 3 or 4, and aren’t looking out for the subtle symptoms such as bloating, fatigue and digestive changes,” says Pittman—the friends had hiked and photographed their way through many Bay Area parks, especially

those with redwood trees. One year, they made a pilgrimage to all of the redwood state parks in Northern California.

“Marcelle loved hiking because you could be alone with your thoughts, and see wildlife and green things growing. We’d bring our cameras and take pictures. She liked seeing the beauty, getting away from daily life and staying healthy through outdoor exercise,” says Pittman.

Taylor, who worked as a product manager for Adobe for many years, also left bequests to Save the Redwoods League and various animal rescue groups. “She spent a lot of time in her last year thinking about where to leave her money,” recalls Pittman. “She was looking at causes she cared deeply about that had made the biggest impacts on her life. She also wanted to leave money to smaller organizations that would really make a difference with the funds.”



➤ **To learn more about donating to the Regional Parks Foundation, including information on estate planning seminars held on Zoom and scheduled throughout the year, please visit regionalparksfoundation.org/plannedgiving.**



Students at Thurgood Marshall Regional Park—Home of the Port Chicago 50.

LIVING HISTORY

East Bay high schoolers connect with the parks and find inspiration in real-life events through the Park District's Thurgood Marshall Youth Development Program

On July 17, 1944, an explosion rocked the munitions pier at Port Chicago, a naval magazine located on Suisun Bay. The SS *E. A. Bryan*, a cargo ship being loaded with anti-aircraft ammunition, bombs and explosives, also detonated; nearby watercraft went up in flames. The blasts killed 320 people and injured 390 more, two-thirds of whom were Black sailors.

The tragedy sparked a protest over the naval magazine's unsafe conditions, during which hundreds of workers refused to load munitions. Fifty of those men, dubbed the "Port Chicago 50," were convicted of mutiny and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Thurgood Marshall, an NAACP Legal Defense Fund special counsel—and later the first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice—unsuccessfully appealed their case, although subsequent efforts eventually led to the release of the convicted men.

Some 79 years later, a Park District project under development at the former Concord Naval Weapons Station has been named Thurgood Marshall Regional Park—Home of the Port Chicago 50 in honor of these men. (The Park District has also partnered with the National Park Service to establish a joint visitor center at the park.)

Recognizing this event and inspiring young people in the East Bay to learn about local history are at the core of a new Park District effort, in partnership with the community group People Who Care. The first Thurgood Marshall Youth Development Program was held this past summer, with a cohort of 10 high school students from Pittsburg and Antioch. The goals of the three-week program are to engage young people with the regional parks, create and share content around social justice and the history of Thurgood Marshall Regional Park—Home of the Port Chicago 50 and spotlight employment opportunities in the Park District.

"A lot of the participants really felt ownership of Thurgood Marshall Park, and can't wait to bring their families when it opens," says naturalist Jessica Kauzer. "They were so proud when they shared what they learned. They felt more connected to the parks, more connected to the history of their community and more connected to the Park District."

Participants learned how to share information about the regional parks; heard from career speakers; explored various parks; and created multiple posts on Facebook and Instagram related to the Port Chicago 50 story, with a focus on social justice. One innovative aspect of the latter effort was using social media to connect the students with nature and the park's history—using screentime (often a concern for youth) for a positive purpose. The participants earned stipends funded by a grant from the Regional Parks Foundation.

"It was incredible to not only be able to offer them the stipend, but then hear their reactions to getting the [money]," says Kauzer. "Many said they were going to get a new backpack or shoes. One said, 'I am going to contribute to my mom's rent.'"

In 2024, the Park District will also partner with People Who Care on Adventure Crew 3, a youth stewardship program that builds a love for the outdoors.

"The impact of the Thurgood Marshall Youth Development Program was even wider and deeper than we anticipated," says Pia Loft, supervising naturalist at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. "There's money going back into the community, helping pay for rent and helping kids get to school. Then there is the impact of people feeling so connected to that story and wanting to share that story with their community. I am really proud of what our team accomplished."



ACCESS FOR ALL ABILITIES

Park District programs and events open up opportunities for everyone to explore the natural world

This past October, Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley hosted a bustling event, during which more than 450 children and adults explored several interpretive stations focused on various elements of nature. They listened to bird sounds, touched fur pelts, followed a naturalist down a trail and painted their views of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. It would have looked like any other busy day at the park except for one thing: Most of the participants were using wheelchairs, walkers or other assistive devices. These visitors were taking part in All Abilities Day events, twice-yearly happenings that promote opportunities for everyone—particularly people with disabilities—to engage with nature in the East Bay Regional Park District.

The Regional Parks Foundation (RPF) has been a supporter of All Abilities Days since the event's inception in 2017. In 2023, the RPF awarded grants to fund American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and language translation for the Big Break event, as well as an All Abilities Halloween program. In 2024, the Foundation continues to support All Abilities programming across the District.

"Without RPF, we wouldn't have it in our budget to provide those service," says Wyatt Moore, supervising naturalist at Big Break Visitor Center.

Yet All Abilities Days are only part of a larger effort to improve accessibility in the Park District. During recent renovations to visitor centers at Big Break and Livermore's Del Valle Regional Park, exhibits were lowered to be easily accessible by people in wheelchairs and strollers. Naturalists helped create large-print materials for low-vision visitors and made audio recordings of exhibit text, translated into multiple languages. Accessibility features were also added to the visitor center at Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve.

Programming at the parks is also breaking fresh ground. A Mobile Visitor Center provides hands-on educational programs to schools and community organizations throughout Contra Costa and Alameda counties, and the Xplore East Bay Parks app takes users on virtual tours of selected parks—right from their mobile devices. In 2024, an RPF grant will help the District expand the app's content.

"Sometimes just getting to a place can create barriers to accessibility, so we bring the park to the people," says Moore.

Erica Stephens, a naturalist at Sunol, has led a night exploration tour, a paint night and a wildflower walk supported by ASL interpreters. She cites a favorite quote from disabilities advocate Virginia Rose: "No one can predict what an individual with an accessibility challenge can or cannot do."

Says Stephens, "What we *can* do is provide more services to give everyone the ability to enjoy their park."



Park visitors enjoy All Abilities Day events.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Leading the way on wildfire protection

“There was no time to sit back. We had to take action to mitigate the wildfire risk.”

—SABRINA B. LANDRETH, PARK DISTRICT
GENERAL MANAGER

In the fall of 2020, while conducting ongoing vegetation management work, East Bay Regional Park District staff noticed significantly more dead and dying trees than they had seen in past years. In some areas, half of the trees were either dead or showing signs that they would die within a year.

In response, the Park District reached out to experts at UC Berkeley, the U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and others for information about the scope and cause of the die-off, which was also affecting trees regionally and statewide.



The carbonator burns organic matter at about 1,300°F, producing biochar.



The fire department clears vegetation.



Traditional methods of removing dead or dying vegetation can be costly and disruptive.

Further investigation identified more than 1,500 acres of dead and dying trees within the regional parks, with approximately 865 affected trees per acre—mostly eucalyptus, but also bay and pine. While there are many contributing factors, the overarching cause is believed to be drought stress due to climate change.

With roughly 1.3 million dead standing trees, immediate action was required of the Park District. As a local wildfire prevention leader since the 1991 East Bay Hills fire and a founding member of the Hills Emergency Forum fire-safety consortium, the Park District is taking the lead to address the dangers caused by tree die-off. “There was no time to sit back. We had to take action to mitigate the wildfire risk,” says Park District General Manager Sabrina B. Landreth.

Much of the identified die-off was already within the District’s fully permitted Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan, which meant plans to reduce vegetation were already in place. However, more funding was needed.

In 2021, the Park District’s General Manager’s Office and fire chief communicated the urgency of this situation to California legislators. The state responded with a \$10 million direct appropriation from the legislature, through Senator Nancy Skinner, D-Berkeley, and then-Senator Bob Wieckowski, D-Fremont.

The crucial support is helping the District address this public safety/drought emergency, though more funding is needed as the total costs are estimated to be three to four times the allocated amount.

INNOVATIVE ANSWERS TO A COMPLEX PROBLEM

As efforts to secure funding continued, estimates for removal costs soared as did the amount of organic material (biomass) in need of disposal. Complicating matters was that removing so much dead and dying vegetation required hauling it in trucks to facilities that would burn it for fuel.

This traditional way of transporting dead trees was cost-prohibitive, disruptive to the residential areas and potentially dangerous. Additionally, this method would create greenhouse gases and pollution, causing some of the same environmental factors leading to increasing wildfires and perhaps even tree die-off itself.

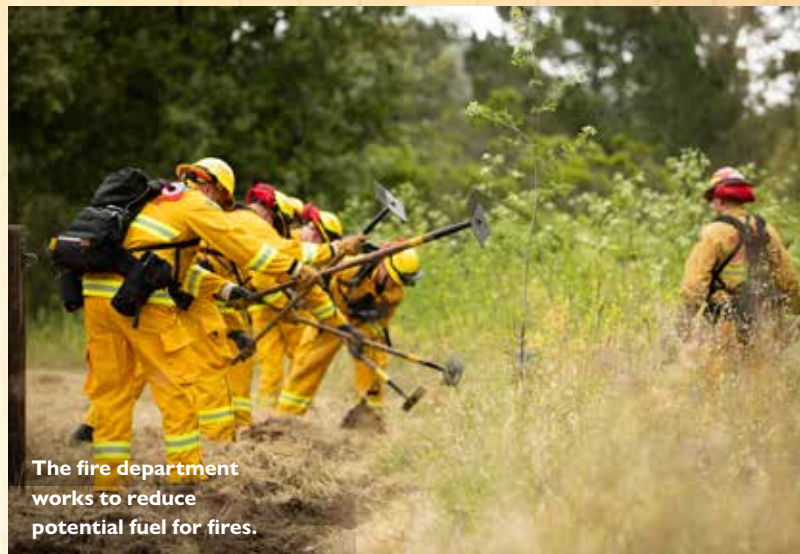
“Current methods place hundreds of logging trucks with diesel exhaust on long drives to cogeneration plants in Woodland or Stockton,” says Park District Fire Chief Aileen Theile. “We are driven by an environmental ethic. We had to find a better way.”

MEET THE CARBONATOR

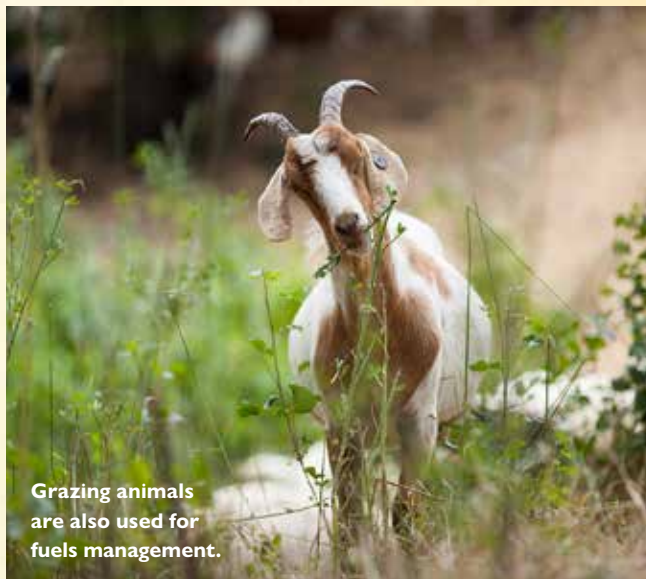
The innovative solution the Park District found for processing large amounts of biomass is called a carbonator. The carbonator machine, a Tigercat 6050, resembles a trucking container with a boxlike metal chamber. The device burns organic matter with very little oxygen and at extremely high temperatures (about 1,300°F), which breaks down the molecules of organic matter into a smaller material called “biochar.” The process creates very low emissions. The resulting biochar—essentially elemental carbon—provides benefits such as enriching soil by improving its water retention or pH, accelerating composting of green waste and filtering toxins from water. (See sidebar for more applications for biochar.)

The carbonator, never before used in a metropolitan area for biomass disposal at this scale, was first tested as part of a pilot project at Oakland’s Anthony Chabot Regional Park, with funds from a \$1 million California State Coastal Conservancy grant and an additional \$1 million from the Park District’s general fund.

“As a park district in a major metropolitan area, with a lot of wildland urban interface, the fact that we were going to be using this technology at a significant scale was groundbreaking,” says Fire Chief Theile. “We wanted to be thoughtful in that process.”



The fire department works to reduce potential fuel for fires.



Grazing animals are also used for fuels management.

“The Park District is a force of nature when it comes to fuels management, environmental stewardship and climate resilience.” —WADE CROWFOOT, CALIFORNIA

SECRETARY FOR NATURAL RESOURCES



Putting Biochar to Work

Biochar produced by a carbonator in the East Bay Regional Park District has already gone to a wide range of uses, including as a very effective boost to composting, according to Patrick McIntyre, a fire captain for the Park District.

As the District continues its major state-funded carbonator project to treat combustible dead vegetation, much of the resulting carbon-capturing biochar will go to crops on agricultural lands within the parks, such as Ardenwood Historic Farm and a parcel of land in eastern Contra Costa County known as Delta Access.

“Ardenwood has already asked for more biochar than we have produced,” McIntyre says, adding that the benefits of biochar as a soil amendment in agriculture have been proved through extensive research.

Meanwhile, the Park District will use biochar in “restoration plantings,” taking advantage of the substance’s ability to retain water, nutrients and beneficial microbes, which will help saplings become more drought-tolerant and get established faster. The revegetation of disused roads or bootleg trails will also be supported. Park lawns will be treated with biochar to lessen their water consumption.

McIntyre says the District is working hard to find the best ways to get as much benefit as possible from the biochar.

“We’re diving into every bit of research we can find,” he says.

Data gleaned during the pilot project would indicate whether the carbonator was a feasible tool to address tree die-off. “We have a huge responsibility to our community and to other jurisdictions,” says Landreth. “The lessons learned are being shared with the state and with all of our agency partners.”

“We are proud to work in partnership with the Park District as they take proactive steps to mitigate wildfire risks,” says CAL FIRE Chief Joe Tyler. “These actions are absolutely essential for the health and safety of communities.”



Tree die-off has impacted more than 1,500 acres of parklands.

CALI GODLEY (2), EBRPD

A MODEL FOR THE NATION

On Sept. 15, 2022, the carbonator pilot project launched at Anthony Chabot, removing accumulated flammable plant material within an 80-acre area. Healthy native trees such as oaks, bays and madrone were preserved, while dead and dying trees and overcrowded non-natives were cut down.

The actual onsite biomass-to-biochar process began at the end of January. When work ended on March 12, 2023, more than 2,000 tons of biomass had been processed into 88 tons of biochar, which could be used at locations throughout the Park District.

"It's a really exciting opportunity to better manage our lands where we have to do fuels-management activities, because we can reduce the overall carbon footprint of these projects," says Park District Chief of Stewardship Matt Graul. "The carbonator is a useful tool to help us accelerate our work to improve forest health in the parks and to enhance and improve habitat."

All in all, the pilot proved to be net positive, with only a tiny fraction of the emissions of open burning or hauling off-site. Going forward, up to half of the biomass removed from the parks could be converted into biochar, and the Park District's innovative approaches to securing funding, implementing a large-scale project and using carbonator technology are now recognized as a statewide and national model.

Work is currently under way on another project at Anthony Chabot, this time involving 365 acres and using \$7.5 million of the \$10 million direct appropriation from the state, plus federal funds secured through Senator Alex Padilla, D-California.

"The Park District is a force of nature when it comes to fuels management, environmental stewardship and climate resilience," says California Secretary for Natural Resources Wade Crowfoot, who leads the state's efforts to find sustainable solutions to the growing wildfire crisis. "Their approach to fuels reduction, especially using a carbonator, is cutting edge and helps push the entire state forward in finding climate-resilient solutions to improve forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire."



The carbonator burns biomass without high emissions.



Park District Fire Chief Aileen Theile, second from left, and her crew.

"We are proud to work in partnership with the Park District as they take proactive steps to mitigate wildfire risks. These actions are absolutely essential for the health and safety of communities." —JOE TYLER, CAL FIRE CHIEF

THE POWER *OF* I

Park District collaborations support conservation, cultural



Dancers from the Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe wearing traditional regalia, at the Gathering of the Ohlone Peoples at Coyote Hills Regional Park.

PARTNERSHIPS

communication and youth development in our community



MICHAEL O'CALLAHAN

Successful collaborations are more than the sum of their parts. The alchemy of blending resources, areas of expertise and diverse perspectives yields powerful benefits. The Regional Parks Foundation has seen that alchemy during its 55 years of supporting the East Bay Regional Park District—a partnership that is now more aligned than ever. Similarly, by joining forces with other groups that share a common goal, the Park District is able to accomplish far more than it could achieve on its own. Here are some recent examples of partnerships that are proving invaluable in furthering the District’s goals of preservation, education and community involvement.

Embracing the Indigenous Community

“Coyote Hills Regional Park has a long-standing relationship with Indigenous communities,” says Chris Sulots, supervising naturalist at that park. Throughout the year, tribal members visit Coyote Hills to gather material for cultural and ceremonial purposes—from acorns to tule reeds and willow to manzanita. Park District staff work together to provide Bay Area Indigenous Peoples access to their ancestral lands. Some tribal events or ceremonies are private; however, there are events and gatherings during which tribes welcome the public to share aspects of their culture.

Coyote Hills also offers school programs for over 5,000 students a year, educating them about the Ohlone Peoples. Ohlone speakers encompass numerous autonomous tribes, each with its distinct history, culture and practices. And, in collaboration with local Indigenous tribes, the park has installed trail signs translated into Chochenyo (a dialect of Ohlone).

But the biggest event at Coyote Hills is the annual Gathering of Ohlone Peoples, held on the first Sunday of October. Founded by Beverly Ortiz 30 years ago, when she was a naturalist for the Park District, the gathering is free and open to the public. Ohlone people from the Bay Area and

beyond share music, history, song, crafts and stories. Sulots is pleased that in addition to longtime participants who return year after year, many young people have joined as well. “It’s been so wonderful to see Indigenous communities grow, expand and continue to share their culture with new generations,” he says.

Protecting Wildlife and Habitat

Two multipartner collaborations are enhancing research into the parks’ many ponds and the creatures that depend on them. “The District manages well over 500 ponds, a few naturally occurring, most originally built for cattle,” says Tammy Lim, a Park District resource analyst and ecologist. The network of ponds has created habitat for endangered species or species of special concern such as the California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog and western pond turtle.

The Park District is working with Dr. Pieter Johnson at University of Colorado, Boulder; Dr. Cherie Briggs of UC Santa Barbara; East Bay Municipal Utility District and Blue Oak Ranch Reserve. Together, they’ve received grant money to look at how ponds create habitat and to track diseases that affect amphibians. The aim of the project is to gather data on how to better manage the ponds as a group, rather than individually. “A lot of this collaboration is built upon relationships we formed when we worked together on NatureCheck [an ecological assessment of wildlife in the East Bay with funding from

“We’re looking at how to prepare the species for a climate that’s very dynamic, with swings between super wet and super dry years.”

—Tammy Lim, resource analyst and ecologist

The Park District is collaborating with academics and conservationists to study the western pond turtle.



Members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe share the art and practices of Indigenous culture.

the Foundation that was released in 2022]. That opened up opportunities to continue working with land managers throughout the East Bay,” says Lim.

The District is also part of a partnership with Dr. Max Lambert, Aquatic Research Section Manager, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife; Dr. Obed Hernández-Gómez at Dominican University of California and Jessie Bushell, director of conservation at the San Francisco Zoo. “It’s a cool interdisciplinary group of people that came together as a result of Max Lambert wanting to study western pond turtles on parklands,” says Lim. The turtles were federally listed recently as a threatened species. Each year, teams trap and assess the health of animals living in ponds at four locations—Briones Regional Park, Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve, Morgan Territory Regional Preserve and Jewel Lake in Tilden Regional Park—before releasing them back into the ponds. Of particular concern is a new fungal disease that causes pitting in the turtles’ shells. “That makes them more susceptible to predation,” says Lim. “We’re looking at how to prepare the species for a climate that’s very dynamic, with swings between super wet and super dry years.”

Inspiring and Educating Youth

The Park District also works with a community partner on its Agents of Change arts education program (an initiative that connects underserved communities with nature)—collaborating with Hip Hop for Change, a national organization based in Oakland that engages young people with social issues such as environmental justice.

Teens apply for the weeklong Foundation-supported program, which takes place during the summer. Those chosen receive an artist-in-residence stipend, funded jointly by Hip Hop for Change and the Park District. Before the program begins, the participants’ families are invited to an orientation. “We tell the families how they can support their teen during the week, and we share our own expertise,” explains Felicia Walker, supervising naturalist at the Doug Siden Visitor Center at Crab Cove.

What follows is five days of environmental education. This year, the program took place at Crab Cove and included two field trips. Students used seine nets to scoop up water and



The Park District works with Hip Hop For Change on its youth program Agents of Change.



Participants in Agents of Change explore social issues through art.

observe the plant and animal organisms that live there. They also traveled to the Oyster Bay Regional Shoreline and learned about ecosystems, how they change over time and some of the components that go into restoration.

At the end of the session, each person presented a work of art that expressed something about ecology or environmental justice and prepared an artist statement explaining the inspiration for the work. Students read their statement aloud before presenting their art. The participants’ families were invited to attend this culmination of the program. (Go to youtu.be/67yAAv0aMIY to see a video of the presentations.)

“We’re building community, not just with the students, but with their whole families. As naturalists, our job is to connect people to our parks,” says Walker. “People of color often do not feel welcome in outdoor spaces. We’re working hard to change that narrative.”

To find out more about supporting stewardship efforts and community programs in the Park District, visit regionalparksfoundation.org.



NESTING INSTINCTS

The Restore Hayward Marsh Project will protect high-value nesting islands and wildlife habitat, now and in the future

Providing a safe home for wildlife, preserving habitats and offering park visitors recreational opportunities are important priorities for the East Bay Regional Park District. The Restore Hayward Marsh Project is a perfect confluence of all three goals and will benefit its inhabitants today and for years to come.

This particular area of the Hayward Regional Shoreline (the former site of wastewater treatment ponds) offers highly successful nesting grounds for three sensitive bird species: the California least tern, western snowy plover and black skimmer. The Hayward Marsh restoration—a multiyear Park District effort that kicked off in 2020—will preserve and expand this nesting space, accommodating for sea-level rise and increasing the resiliency of the shoreline.

“The development along the bay has significantly isolated and marginalized many of our sensitive species,” says Matt Graul, chief of stewardship. “Creating more resiliency and protection of these habitats is critically important for the biological richness and health of the estuary.”

There are several planned levee-protected islands that will serve as new nesting spots once rising seas flood the current location.

Other species impacted by the marsh restoration include the federally listed salt marsh harvest mouse and the California Ridgway’s rail. “We will connect several adjacent marshes and create more habitat connectivity in the region, allowing species to move between sites and expanding the overall habitat and function,” says Graul.

The complex project, which is currently in the design-and-permitting phase, will widen and repair existing levees, add to marsh habitat elevations, decrease sedimentation and improve a segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail.

“The marsh in front of the Bay Trail has been severely eroded from wind, waves and higher water levels,” says Chris Barton, restoration projects manager. “At some point, we know we are going to lose that part of the Bay Trail. With this project, we have a comprehensive plan that envisions retreating and connecting the Bay Trail in the year 2070 or 2080.”

Adds Barton, “We are being really proactive with this project ... and making a meaningful contribution to species protection and biodiversity.”



EYE ON WILDLIFE

A few years ago, the Park District set up a grid of 100 cameras in several parks including Del Valle Regional Park, Ohlone Wilderness Regional Preserve and Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park. The cameras monitored bobcats, coyotes, mountain lions and other wildlife in a three-year effort to gather information for NatureCheck, an ecological health assessment. (Part of the funding for the cameras was provided by the Regional Parks Foundation.) All but 40 of those cameras are now being redistributed to NatureCheck partner agencies to collect wildlife data in other parts of the study area. “We are using this data to measure biodiversity and climate resiliency,” says Becky Tuden, Park District ecological services manager. “It is also helping us adaptively manage our parklands because we can see where we have breeding populations of animals and protect those areas.” The remaining 40 cameras will continue to monitor wildlife activity on Park District lands for the foreseeable future, with support from research partners such as UC Berkeley.



Hayward Regional Shoreline is home to several species of special concern.



Parks for the People

Park District events celebrated the International Day of Peace, as well as Sunol's heritage and the renovated pool at Roberts Regional Recreation Area



1 **2** Lake Chabot Regional Park in Castro Valley hosted the UN International Day of Peace event on September 16. Regional Parks Foundation board member Keith White helped organize the uplifting program of music and addressed the guests at the event, before everyone enjoyed messages of peace and a lakeside walk. **3** The Park District's fire and police departments hosted their first-ever National Night Out event on August 1 at Lake Chabot Regional Park. **4** Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve celebrated the diverse heritage of its wilderness at the annual Sunol Heritage Festival on October 21. History came alive with games, activities and music throughout the day.



5 Visitors were invited to a community preview of the newly renovated Roberts Pool on September 30 and October 1. The project was made possible in part through a generous donation from the Sutter family, represented at the event by Susan and Robert Hultgren. **6** Over 1,500 volunteers helped clean 22 miles of shoreline, removing 8,253 pounds of trash from Park District waterways on California Coastal Cleanup Day, held September 23.

The community can view the McCosker Creek Restoration in 2024.

OPEN WATERS

A massive creek restoration project at Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve restores habitats in the park

Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve in Oakland is a unique destination in the East Bay, home to volcanic geologic formations, a spiral labyrinth and now the East Bay Regional Park District's biggest-ever riparian restoration project.

"Sibley has a very special landscape," says Carmen Erasmus, Park District landscape architect and project manager for the restoration effort. "You come over the hills from Oakland and you are in a different world."

The McCosker Creek Restoration and Public Access Project has been in the works for four years; it "daylights" (exposes) 3,000 linear feet of creek and provides a natural habitat for several protected or special-status species. The restored creek, and new nearby trails (including interpretive panels detailing the project), opens to the public in spring 2024.

The Park District initially received the land as part of property-development mitigation in 2010. The 250-acre parcel had previously been owned by the McCosker family, who buried the creek in a culvert system to make use of the space for a rock-crushing operation in the 1960s and '70s.

"Since that time, the culvert system has been failing," says Kim Thai, senior planner of the Park District's Planning, Trails and GIS Department. "There has been a lot of deterioration. There were sinkholes, and it was unsafe for public access."

Safety for park visitors and staff was one of the top motivations for restoring the culverts. Another is that their erosion contributes to downstream sediment deposits in San Leandro Creek, which empties into San Leandro Bay. The restored creek will also present new habitats for rainbow trout and endangered species such as the Alameda whipsnake and California red-legged frog. Phase 2 of the project includes a group campground with trails connecting to the creek and adjoining Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve.

Funding for the project came from multiple sources, including \$3.8 million secured from the state budget by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan. "In total, it was over \$7.8 million in grants, plus \$2.2 million from Caltrans. Our grants department and our legislative affairs team worked really hard to secure those funds," says Thai.

Adds Erasmus, "It's been so satisfying working on a project like this; what you are giving back to the environment is such a big change."



➤ **Environmental stewardship is one of the priorities of the Regional Parks Foundation. Your donations help preserve parklands and protect wildlife. Visit regionalparksfoundation.org to support these efforts.**



Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve is home to a rich diversity of wildflowers.

CELEBRATE WITH US

2024 marks the East Bay Regional Park District's 90th anniversary and the Foundation's 55th anniversary. Celebrate with us all year! Bring your family and friends to these highlighted programs and activities.

➤ SPECIAL EVENTS

Black History Month Hikes at Thurgood Marshall Regional Park—Home of the Port Chicago 50

Every Sunday in February, visitors can enjoy a public tour of the new Thurgood Marshall Regional Park—Home of the Port Chicago 50 (site of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station). On this mostly paved two-mile hike with views of Mount Diablo, hear about the history of this land, stories of resistance and bravery, and the events here that played a vital role in the desegregation of the armed forces.

Celebrate World Water Day at Del Valle

In observation of World Water Day (March 22), stop by the visitor center at Livermore's Del Valle Regional Park on **March 23** for a day celebrating water. Enjoy Day by the Water and learn about water conservation while taking part in one of the water-themed activities, heading out on a guided shoreline walk and much more.

All Abilities Day at Big Break Visitor Center

Explore nature at your own pace at Big Break Regional Shoreline's All Abilities Day on **March 26**. Drop in to the free event and join naturalists for nature exploration and activities. The program is inclusive for all abilities, and American Sign Language and Spanish-language interpreters will be on-site. There will be indoor

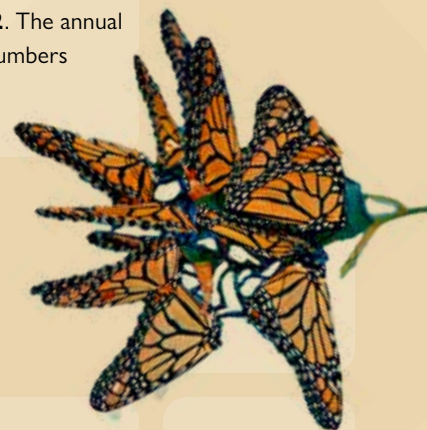
and outdoor activity options, and wheelchair-accessible drinking fountains and a wheelchair-friendly restroom are adjacent to the trail. No registration is required.

Wildflower Season at Sunol

Each year from the **end of March to the beginning of May**, a wealth of wildflowers bloom in Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve and Ohlone Wilderness. Remember when you're out on the trails to take only photos—leave the flowers for others to enjoy. You can also experience the season through videos, printable activities and guides, and naturalist-guided programs.

Butterfly and Bird Festival at Coyote Hills

Join us for a fun time at the Butterfly and Bird Festival at Coyote Hills Regional Park on **June 2**. The annual event is dedicated to increasing the numbers and species of butterflies and birds in our region. Spend a day of adventure and learning, with garden tours, hands-on family activities, educational speakers, presentations and music. Learn to bring your backyard to life by creating wildlife-friendly habitats.



Visit ebparks.org/calendar

Regional Parks Foundation
PO Box 2527
Castro Valley, CA 94546
www.RegionalParksFoundation.org

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INVEST IN EAST BAY PARKS

As we celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the East Bay Regional Park District, join the Regional Parks Foundation in making an investment in the future. Your support is critical to protecting parklands and serving communities. You can help ensure that 90 years from now, East Bay parks continue to provide enjoyment for all.



Make a difference today! Donate at regionalparksfoundation.org/donate or scan the QR code to the right.

