

Championing Sustainability



Photo: Michael Shorr

*Hayward Regional
Shoreline*

COMMUNITY REPORT

2021-2022

Public Safety a Top Priority

Keeping Parks Safe

Keeping people and parks safe is one of our top priorities. In 2021, our police, fire, and lifeguard services staff responded to a record 18,154 calls for services, including medical emergencies, fires, and park Ordinance 38 violations. We partnered with neighboring communities and public agencies such as CAL FIRE, East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), and businesses including Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). We also provided mutual aid, including the use of District helicopters. In 2021 our Fire Department OES Engine spent 73 consecutive days assisting with major fires throughout the state (52 days – Dixie Fire, 15 days – River Complex, 6 days – Fawn Fire).



Wildfire Protection

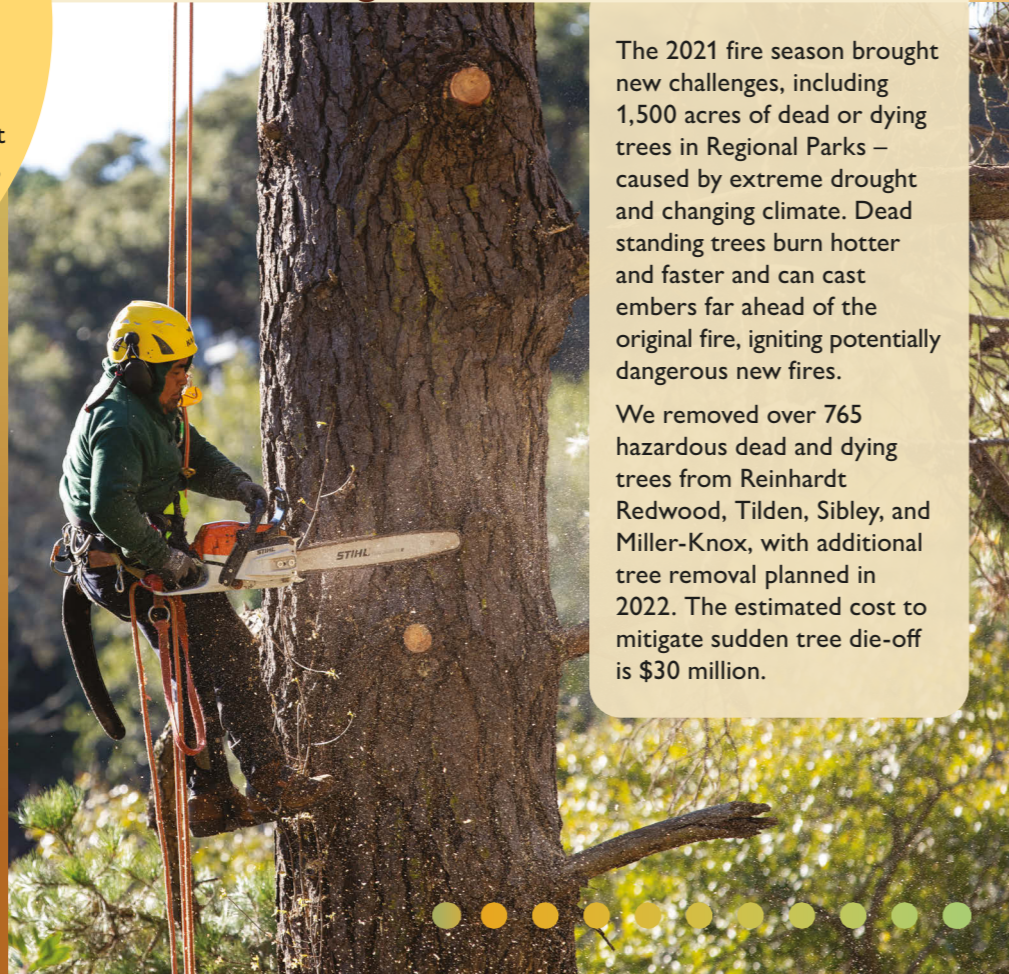
365-Days-A-Year-Effort

Wildfire protection requires year-round vigilance, preparedness, and effort. We maintain a full-service Fire Department with 48 professionally trained full-time and on-call wildland firefighters, a full-time 14-member Fuels Reduction Crew, and four remote automatic weather stations to monitor wildfire risks. Our two Park District helicopters assist by dropping water on fires, and our district-wide grazing program uses goats and cattle to reduce flammable vegetation.

Investing in Wildfire Prevention

In 2021, we secured \$13.5 million in the California State Budget for wildfire protection. Specifically, \$10 million was secured by Senators Nancy Skinner and Bob Wieckowski for removal of dead and dying trees in our parkland, and \$3.5 was secured by Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan for firefighting equipment, including replacement of our aging helicopter. We thank Governor Newsom for approving these funds in the 2022 state budget.

Addressing Sudden Tree Die-Off

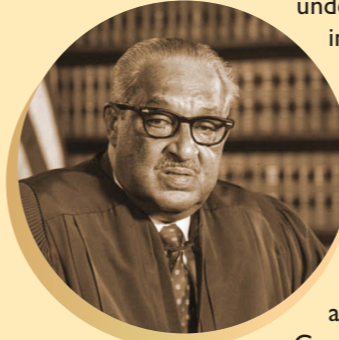


The 2021 fire season brought new challenges, including 1,500 acres of dead or dying trees in Regional Parks – caused by extreme drought and changing climate. Dead standing trees burn hotter and faster and can cast embers far ahead of the original fire, igniting potentially dangerous new fires.

We removed over 765 hazardous dead and dying trees from Reinhardt Redwood, Tilden, Sibley, and Miller-Knox, with additional tree removal planned in 2022. The estimated cost to mitigate sudden tree die-off is \$30 million.

Supporting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We continued our work to ensure that Regional Parks are an inclusive and welcoming place for all to enjoy and improve accessibility for underserved communities and people with disabilities. In 2021, we provided 550 free memberships to underserved Black, indigenous, and people of color, in partnership with the Regional Parks Foundation.



We also named our new park at the former Concord Naval Weapons Station in Concord, “Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50”, in recognition of the deadly Port Chicago explosion on July 17, 1944, that killed 320 enlisted men, mostly African American, and Thurgood Marshall who defended the 50 black sailors who were accused of mutiny for protesting against the discriminatory policies of the segregated Navy and refused to return to work under unsafe and unjust working conditions. Additionally, we renamed the Crab Cove Visitor Center in Alameda the “Doug Siden Visitor Center at Crab Cove” in honor of

our former board member who advocated tenaciously to make parks accessible for all.

Other actions supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion include:

- Making Juneteenth a Free Park Day and official Park District staff holiday.
- Holding an internal DEI summit with 85 staff and volunteers.
- Conducting Tools for Inclusive Spaces training with over 95 employees participating.
- Partnering with East Oakland Collective on three in-person events at MLK Shoreline, including one that provided a forum for African American seniors to share untold stories in the community.
- Establishing a Peace Pole at Lake Chabot on U.N. International Day of Peace that features the word “Peace” in 31-languages.
- Approving a resolution officially denouncing xenophobia, racism, and violence against Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders and reaffirming the District’s commitment to a safe, welcoming, and inclusive workplace and park system.
- Designating June as Pride Month to celebrate and support all LGBTQ+ employees and members of the public.

Maintaining Fiscal Sustainability

In 2021, like many other agencies, we faced significant financial costs due to COVID-19 safety requirements and increased park visitation. Our Park District maintained a balanced budget through strong financial management and planning. Additionally, we:

- Received \$11.7 million in grants and matching funds for park improvement projects;

- Received our seventeenth consecutive Distinguished Budget Award and Certificate of Achievement for Financial Reporting; and
- Maintained AAA bond rating from Standard & Poor’s (S&P Global Ratings) and Aaa from Moody’s Investors Service, the highest rating possible.

Achieving Excellence

- Global Citizen Award from United Nations Association East Bay and Silicon Valley Chapters
- Award of Distinction for Outstanding Innovation from California Association of Recreation and Park Districts (CARPD) for Digital Learning

Two awards for shoreline projects at Judge John Sutter Regional Park, Albany Beach–SF Bay Trail, and Bay Point Regional Shoreline:

- Award of Excellence in Design and Park Planning from the California Parks & Recreation Society (CPRS)
- Excellence in Park and Recreation Facility from the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO)



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Mission

Preserve a rich heritage of natural and cultural resources and provide open space, parks, trails, safe and healthful recreation, and environmental education. An environmental ethic guides the District in all of its activities.

Vision

The District envisions an extraordinary and well-managed system of open space parkland in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, which will forever provide the opportunity for a growing and diverse community to experience nature nearby.

Championing Sustainability



2020 was a whirlwind year as we navigated the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, increased park visitation, and tackled the climate crisis. I am so proud of our staff, who worked diligently to keep parks open and safe, providing physical and mental health relief to our community.

In 2021, we continued our commitment to sustainability in our policies and actions. We even received the Global Citizen Award from the United Nations for our contributions to their 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These global goals, supported by 193 countries in 2015, provide a road map to build a world that is more equitable, inclusive, safe, and sustainable for all peoples, including protecting the environment and wildlife. Since the Park District's founding in 1934, we have been steadfast stewards – preserving the natural and cultural resources of the parklands; providing healthful recreation and environmental education; expanding networks of trails for green transportation; and contributing to the economic growth in the region.

We have developed strong partnerships – with cities, fire-protection agencies, water districts, businesses, and community organizations – to establish an integrated approach to identify and implement climate adaptation strategies to protect our communities, open spaces, and wildlife. Together we are stronger to meet the climate challenges of extreme weather, severe drought, sea level rise, and wildfires.

We appreciate your ongoing support and investment in this beautiful regional park system. The pandemic has shown us how essential parks are to our life, health, and well being. We must continue to work together to ensure parks and open space are protected and accessible for present and future generations.



Installation of a 12-foot Peace Pole at Lake Chabot inscribed with "Peace" in 31 languages including Chochoyeno, Nahuatl, American Sign Language and Braille.

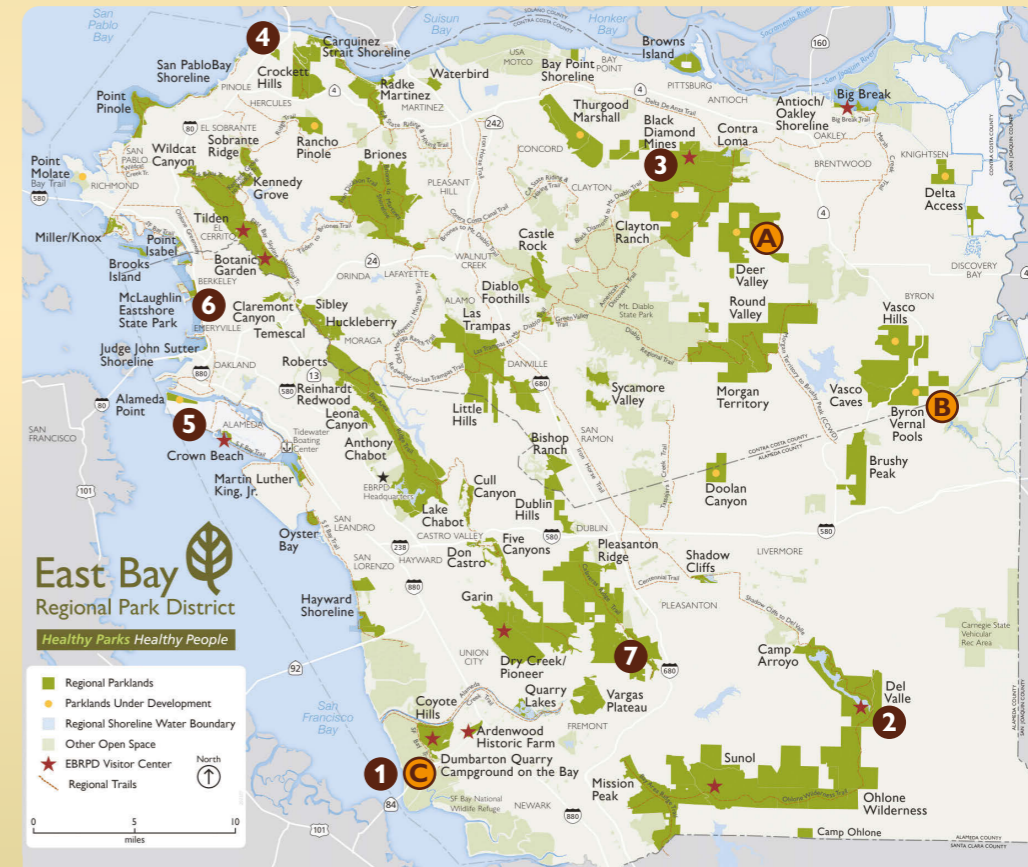
Milestones

2021 marked two key anniversaries: Tilden Regional Park's 85th Anniversary and the Tilden Brazilian Room's 80th Anniversary. Both anniversaries were celebrated with family-friendly public events with historical narratives and displays....

Nature Heals During COVID-19

Over the past two years, COVID-19 has shown us just how important parks are to public health and wellness. During the pandemic, visitation increased over 30 percent district wide and up to 400 percent at some parks, trails, and staging areas. While the increased visitation does place large demands on our parks, we understand the essential role that parks play in maintaining the physical and mental health of the community.

In 2021, we continued to partner with local health providers through our Healthy Parks Healthy People and Parks Rx programs that offer healthy outdoor activities to help prevent chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. These programs included Multicultural Wellness Walks, virtual fitness programs, and SHINE (Stay Healthy In Nature Every day) program in partnership with UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland.



Preserving Land Forever

In 2021, we acquired or leased an additional 190.77 acres of open space, trail easements, and parklands, continuing the commitment to protect significant natural and cultural resources, expand recreational opportunities, and provide public access and trail connections throughout the Park District. We now manage 125,476 acres of land. Notable 2021 acquisitions included the **A** 80-acre Civic Rancho Meadows property as part of the future Deer Valley Regional Park, **B** 80-acre Owens-Maness (formerly Pugh) property as part of Byron Vernal Pools Regional Preserve, and **C** 38-acre Dumbarton Quarry property as part of Dumbarton Quarry Campground.

Connecting People with Nature

In 2021, lower COVID-19 infection rates and broad availability of vaccines allowed in-person programs to return. Our naturalists and recreation staff served 52,073 people through programs and an additional 200,127 people in visitor centers and on trails. Our award-winning Digital Learning Program included live virtual teach-ins and field trips, augmented reality park experiences, and field study videos. We served 1,638,415 through 2,263 virtual programs.

Protecting Parks and Wildlife from the Changing Climate

Our parklands are comprised primarily of undeveloped, natural, open space that offers a variety of environments for animals and plants. These precious lands require habitat restoration, preservation, and protection – especially given the growing impacts of climate change, including extreme weather, drought, sea level rise, and increased wildfire risks.

Some of our 2021 projects included:

- **HAYWARD REGIONAL SHORELINE ADAPTATION MASTER PLAN** – Approved an Adaptation Master Plan for Hayward Shoreline, in cooperation with the City of Hayward and Hayward Area Recreation and Park District (HARD), that addresses the impacts of sea level rise on existing infrastructure and natural habitat.
- **RISK ASSESSMENT AND ADAPTATION PRIORITIZATION PLAN (RAAPP)** – Completed study of future climate change challenges to the San Francisco Bay Trail, including vulnerabilities and possible solutions.
- **RESTORE HAYWARD MARSH PROJECT** – Began planning for restoration of 260 acres of tidal marsh area at Hayward Regional Shoreline to improve wildlife habitat and enhance public access.
- **JEWEL LAKE STUDY** – Assessed strategies to maintain Jewel Lake in Tilden, Berkeley, for public enjoyment and protect and enhance habitat for wildlife, such as the threatened California red legged frog.
- **ECOLOGICAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT** – Created a framework for assessing the ongoing environmental health of our parklands, using indicators such as wildlife species and vegetation communities. The assessment is especially important given stressors such as climate change, invasive species, and urbanization.
- **MCCOSKER CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT** – Began construction to daylight 3,000 feet of culverted creek in Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve, Oakland, and provide visitor facilities, including parking, restrooms, water fountains, trails, and a group campsite.



New Park Openings and Amenities

We continue to improve public access and recreational opportunities for our communities, while also balancing the need to protect sensitive habitats and the natural environment. Here are some 2021 achievements:



1 DUMBARTON QUARRY CAMPGROUND ON THE BAY – Opened in August 2021, this urban campground in Fremont is our first along the San Francisco Bay. The campground includes 63 family campsites (60 with full recreational vehicle (RV) hookups), a camp store, two shower buildings, a day use area with a playground, reservable picnic sites, and trail access to scenic waterfront trails in Coyote Hills Regional Park and Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge. Future plans include convenience cabins, additional family campsites, and two large group camping areas.



3 BLACK DIAMOND COAL MINE EXPERIENCE – This new interactive and immersive experience in Antioch transports visitors back in time with the sights and sounds of an active 1870s-era coal mine.



2 DEL VALLE VISITOR CENTER – This fully renovated seasonal Visitor Center in Livermore, open June through September, has been upgraded with interactive and bilingual (English and Spanish) educational exhibits about local wildlife and the role Lake Del Valle plays in providing water storage, flood control, and recreation.



4 LONE TREE POINT BAY TRAIL – A new half-mile extension of the San Francisco Bay Trail opened at Lone Tree Point in Rodeo, including a large 200-foot bridge rising over protected riparian habitat. The adjacent staging area was upgraded with additional parking, restrooms, and picnic area improvements.



5 ENCINAL BEACH – Tucked away behind Encinal High School, this little-known shoreline gem in Alameda was upgraded in 2021 with dune restoration, shoreline stabilization, and public access amenities, including trails, beach restoration, and ADA beach access. It provides water access for kayaking, fishing, and other water sports and is part of the San Francisco Bay Water Trail.



6 BRICKYARD COVE PROJECT – Opening in early 2022, the new Brickyard staging area in Berkeley includes parking, restrooms, picnic tables, walking paths, and connection to the San Francisco Bay Trail along the shoreline. The Brickyard Cove is part of McLaughlin Eastshore State Park, managed by the Park District.



7 TYLER RANCH STAGING AREA (OPENING 2022) – A new staging area is under construction at Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park, with parking, restrooms, and picnic tables. It will provide improved access to the southern end of Pleasanton Ridge for hiking, biking, and horseback riding.