

Discover the Nature of Your Parkland

Welcome to Oyster Bay Regional Shoreline, a former landfill in the process of being converted to a fully accessible Regional Park. You are about to walk into “recycling in action.” You’ll see land building itself up, “hear” plant material breaking down, smell plants turning to soil, and walk on land that’s healing and returning to nature. Look for the marked signposts along the trail for each station. **As in all Regional Parklands, please remember to take only pictures and leave only footprints.**

1. Salt Marsh

As you walked from the street to the bulletin board, you crossed a channel bringing surface water runoff from San Leandro city streets to the Bay. Soil particles washed down through the city have, over time, built up the marshland south of the pathway.

Once, lush marshlands existed east of Doolittle Drive. The restorative value of the marshes was not well known in the past, so these lands were frequently diked and used for grazing, farming, and as landfills for cities nearby. This marsh provides a rich feeding ground for shorebirds, as well as a natural filter to cleanse runoff before it enters the Bay.

Below the trail, between the marsh and the path, notice the unique habitat for native grasses, shrubs, and marsh plants. These plants help protect the sensitive wetlands area by filtering the water as it flows into the Bay, and provide a special place for animals. Because this area is so unique, the Park District has designated it as natural uplands habitat. Here, predators (raccoons, foxes, and Northern harriers) seek shelter and food. Other animals including the endangered clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse might also find shelter here from the high tides.

2. Monitoring Wells

This small bay became a community landfill and was filled with garbage over a period of 37 years. Once the site reached its holding capacity in 1977, it was covered with clay to seal it. Soil has been added so plants will grow and help this new landscape recycle itself once again. As you climb the hill, you’re virtually ascending a mound of garbage!

The structures on the ground around you and throughout the park are monitoring wells. In the park, two by-products of an old landfill, leachate and methane gas, are piped to facilities for processing. Leachate, water generated from decomposing refuse, is sent to a wastewater treatment facility. Methane gas is transferred to a facility which you’ll see at the end of the trail.

3. Oyster Bay History

Many years ago, there were water beds of shellfish many yards below your feet. Oysters were abundant in these mudflats. They were fed by incoming tides, preyed upon by bat rays and shorebirds, and gathered by the local Jalquin and Yrgin tribes. By 1890, oyster farming in California was a one million dollar industry with the bulk of the farming done here in the East Bay and on the Bay’s San Mateo coast. With increasing population and industrial use along the shoreline, raw sewage and polluting chemicals were dumped into bay waters. This, combined with the practice of filling in marshland and wetland areas for grazing and development led to dramatically reduced oxygen levels in the Bay. By 1939, the 60-year old Bay oyster industry had collapsed. Local entrepreneurs turned to a new profit venture after the demise of the oyster industry—a community dump in the Bay.

Straight ahead is a portion of the Bay Trail, a planned recreational corridor that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a continuous 400-mile network of bicycling and hiking trails.

4. Native Plants

Most of the plants that have been planted in this area are “native:” they originated in California and are adapted to our Mediterranean climate. Many of them conserve water through different mechanisms. Some have small, hairy or waxy coated leaves to prevent water loss during dry summers. Others lose their leaves altogether and may appear dead in the summer, only to sprout anew with the fall and winter rains. Can you find some of these different kinds of leaves on the plants at this stop? Also, look for evidence of insect activity.

Many species of butterflies can be found in the park. They have an “interdependent” relationship with plants. Butterfly larvae (caterpillars) depend on the plants as a food source. Adult butterflies feed on plant nectar, while plants depend on the butterflies and other insects to pollinate them.

As you leave for the next station watch the “Rising Wave” sculpture, created by Roger Berry, change as you approach it. Notice the changing angles of each pipe. Does it remind you of the waves of the Bay below?

5. Local Indians and Conservation

You made it to the top of the hill and can see quite a distance from here. Within view are the homelands of several tribes, including the Jalquin and Yrgin of the places now called San Leandro and Hayward. Their villages occurred every three to five miles along the bayshore and inland waterways. Most of the natural materials they used in their day-to-day lives decayed or were burned, forming nutrient-rich mounds at their village sites. We can enjoy this view thanks to citizens who in 1960 were alarmed that the Bay had been filled in an average of four square miles per year since 1850. With a growing population in the area, more space was needed for houses, buildings, and garbage dumps! Finding a place for our trash continues to be a challenge in

the Bay Area. How can we reduce our garbage? Practice the “4 R’s”—reduce our packaging, reuse what we can, recycle, and rot or compost our food and yard waste. What are you doing to practice the “4 R’s?” Look for the recycling containers in the park.

NOTE: It’s very important to keep dogs on a leash in all developed areas within the park. Dogs often disturb or harass wildlife, especially during nesting season when many animals nest on the ground (burrowing owls, Northern harriers, jackrabbits, etc.)

