

# Bay Point Marsh

Bay Point Regional Shoreline provides access to undeveloped open space and marsh habitat in an area surrounded by residential, military, and industrial development. The public can enjoy views of Suisun Bay and opportunities for hiking, birdwatching, shoreline fishing, nature study, and other recreational pastimes. The nearly 150-acre parkland is at the approximate midpoint of the San Francisco Bay Estuary and the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta. These saltwater and freshwater systems converge at Suisun Bay and have historically been a major influence on the lives and natural surroundings of the Bay Point community.

The East Bay Regional Park District acquired this property in 1996 to preserve and restore the marshland and to provide public access to the bay shoreline. A portion of the purchase price came from the Shell Oil Spill Litigation Settlement Trustee Committee and will be used for wetland restoration.

**HISTORY** Prior to the early 1800s the lands along the Suisun Bay shoreline were occupied by Native American tribes. The last tribe living near the Bay Point area was the Chupcan tribe, which occupied the southern shore of Suisun Bay between Port Chicago and the mouth of Marsh Creek in the Oakley area.

From the 1850s on, the site of Bay Point Regional Shoreline was located between two Mexican land grants—the Los Medanos grant to the east and the Monte del Diablo grant to the south and west. The area remained largely untouched by history until the 1950s through the 1980s, when the then-owners diked the southern section for settling ponds and a sand-dredging operation. In 1978, a California District Court decree required that the J-shaped channel now present along the park's eastern edge be dug to open the area to tidal action as mitigation for the sand-dredging operation.

**PLANTS AND WILDLIFE** Non-native grasses dominate the southern upland portion of Bay Point Regional Shoreline. The few native species include creeping wildrye, willow-herb, telegraph weed, gumweed, spikeweed, toyon, and coyote brush. The brackish seasonal wetlands are man-made ponds, with slightly brackish to strongly saline soil conditions that promote

dominant species such as alkali bulrush, pickleweed, salt-grass, Italian ryegrass, rush, rabbits foot grass, and lamb's quarters. Intermixed with these species are Mexican rush, heliotrope, umbrella sedge, and others. The tidal marshlands support brackish, tidal marsh species such as bulrush, alkali bulrush, broadleaf cattail, and narrow-leaf cattail. Other less dominant species include Mexican rush and annual saltmarsh aster.

The upland areas provide habitat for a wide variety of animal life, such as the mourning dove, Anna's hummingbird, northern flicker, Savannah sparrow, western meadowlark, coyote, and black-tailed jackrabbit. Dredge tailings located in the marsh interior and along the J-shaped channel form high points valuable as bird nest sites isolated from predators. The white-tailed kite and the northern harrier forage throughout the area and nest on the interior islands. Other predatory birds, including the loggerhead shrike, American kestrel, and red-tailed hawk, perch and hunt in the area. The upland islands also provide high-tide refuges for the California black rail, which forages in the tidal marsh.

The brackish seasonal wetlands provide habitat for the salt marsh harvest mouse and other rodents. The tall, dense stands of cattails and bulrushes in the brackish tidal marsh support Pacific tree frogs, egrets, herons, American bitterns, soras, marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, and raccoons. The salt marsh common yellowthroat and Suisun song sparrow are year-round residents that forage and nest in the tidal marshes.

At low tide, the Western pond turtle may be observed basking in the sun in small areas of exposed mudflat. The open mudflats are also important habitat for a variety of shorebirds, which forage on marine invertebrates between tides. The open waters of the marsh channels provide foraging and resting habitat for grebes, cormorants, dabbling and diving ducks, and river otters.

**AQUATIC WILDLIFE** Bay Point Regional Shoreline lies within a region designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as critical habitat for delta smelt, winter-run chinook salmon, and steelhead, and for general fisheries improvement. The public shoreline access at McAvoy Harbor leads to a point at the mouth of the J-shaped channel, which is a favorite local fishing spot and one of the few public fishing spots in the area. The most abundant fish in Suisun Bay are striped bass, Sacramento splittail, inland silversides, chameleon goby, and Chinook salmon. In addition to these species, catfish and largemouth bass may be found in the channel.



To reach Bay Point Regional Shoreline: From Highway 4 in Bay Point, exit at the Bay Point/San Marco Boulevard exit and turn left onto San Marco Boulevard, towards the river. San Marco Boulevard becomes Willow Pass Road. After about 1 mile, turn left onto Port Chicago Highway. Proceed for about 1.25 miles and turn right onto McAvoy Road. The parking area is ahead, on the left.

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East Bay Regional Park District



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## East Bay Regional Park District

2950 Peralta Oaks Court,  
P.O. Box 5381  
Oakland, CA 94605-0381  
1-888-EBPARKS ebparks.org