



The following are the high priority issues identified to be addressed in the 2012 Master Plan Update. We encourage you to read the narrative below to better understand the issues and invite you to comment on any or all of these issues. Your input is most appreciated by the East Bay Regional Park District board and staff.

Issues:

Providing a variety of “Trails for all”

Trail use consistently shows up on surveys as the most preferred activity in the regional parks. Various user groups claim access to the trail system: bicyclists, hikers, equestrians, dog walkers persons with disabilities (people who use mechanical mobility assistance devices). There is also a demand to design and build easy loop-trails, accessible to staging areas, that can be used by older and less physically able people for shorter hikes. On increasingly popular trails, there is the potential for conflict among these different user groups. A challenge for the Park District is to provide a variety of trails for all.

Leading the movement for Healthy Parks Healthy People

As the largest regional park system in the nation, it is imperative that the East Bay Regional Park District take a leading role in promoting the international Healthy Parks/Healthy People movement. This will require partnering with other park, recreation and community organizations to provide opportunities for families to experience both traditional and non-traditional types of outdoor activities while reconnecting to the outdoors.

Affirming the role and identity of the Regional Parks

Politically defined as a Special District, the East Bay Regional Park District has a unique and special role to play. The East Bay Regional Park District essentially takes the place of a County park system for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, bridging the gap between the locally accessible and recreation-oriented City parks and the more remote State Park system. The Park District’s goal is to preserve and provide access to the best remaining natural open lands in the East Bay through a connected system of regional parklands that preserve water resources, wildlife habitat, traces of the history of human occupation and use of this area.

Balancing funding priorities, meeting expectations and sound fiscal practices

With its formation rooted in the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Park District has continued to maintain services and keep all of its parks open during the current economic contraction. Land acquisitions are one-time costs that have been funded by bond measures, passed by the

voters in both counties, but operational expenses are ongoing. The costs to manage wildfire fuels, invasive weeds, to maintain trails, culverts, creek banks, to provide adequate public safety and emergency response protection for park users are all funded from property tax revenue. The Park District will have to be especially cautious in planning for its long-term financial security and maintaining its responsibility for the best use of public funding.

Supporting the shift to Green communities

In the regional effort to foster sustainable/green communities, the Park District plays the important role of providing nearby open space that separates and buffers developed areas from each other

Developing productive partnerships

An important part of the District's success has always been the volunteer help it gets from its constituents and the partnerships it engages in with other organizations. Park users are eager to participate in caring for the places and resources they love; the feeling of ownership they receive from this service benefits both them and the parks.

Responding to changes in demographics

The 2010 U.S. Census revealed dramatic changes to the demographics of both California and the East Bay area: Our population is increasing. Development to accommodate this growth will impact natural resources, the availability of and need for open space and access to nature; and the growing urban population will also create increased need for outdoor recreation and parks. We are more diverse. Different ethnic groups have different values about the land and about "nature." They also share different recreational preferences

Income differences are greater: For many economically disadvantaged urban residents, especially youth, the elderly, and others who don't drive, transportation and access to parks can be an important issue.

We are high-tech. Most people, regardless of their demographic are now digitally 'connected' in some form. A challenge for the District is to continue to take advantage of technological innovation in communicating with park users and delivering services to them.

Creating conservation and management standards for cultural and historic resources

Natural resource protection plays a central and consistent role in all of the District's management activities. However, part of the District's mission also is to manage and protect the historic and prehistoric landscapes that are part of the East Bay's cultural heritage. The Park District desires to create conservation and management standards for cultural and historic resources