

HISTORY The lands of Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve were dedicated to the East Bay Regional Park District by a local construction company in 1985. The scenic ridgeland was preserved after developers agreed to limit an adjacent subdivision to the low-lying areas.

The area was formerly known as the Cutter Ranch, and belonged to Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley through the 1970s. The lab raised horses and cattle there, using blood from the animals to produce tetanus and diphtheria vaccines.

Today's Preserve was once part of the vast Rancho Sobrante land grant, given by the Mexican government to Juan Jose Castro in 1841. Great herds of Spanish longhorn cattle freely roamed the hills at that time, and were valued by the rancheros for their hides and tallow. The name *Sobrante* in Spanish means "excess" or "leftover," and reflects the late date of the land grant: the lands were leftover lands, not included in previous grants.

AN ISLAND PRESERVE The Sobrante Ridge parklands form a unique "island" preserve. The 277 acres of rolling hills and wooded ravines are an important link with the adjacent East Bay Municipal Utility District watershed lands and the rest of the region's open spaces. Many animals depend on this land as an important wildlife corridor.

Wildlife abounds in the Preserve's varied habitats of oak/bay woodland, coyote brush scrub, manzanita chaparral, and open grassland. Coyotes stalk gophers in the tall grass; deer bed down by day in the tall thickets; salamanders sleep all summer buried in the woods; and golden eagles soar high above the ridge, scanning the ground for prey. The wildlife refuge pond at the southeastern end of the Sobrante Ridge Trail, near the intersection of Conestoga Way and Castro Ranch Road, is home to a variety of birdlife, including many red-winged blackbirds.

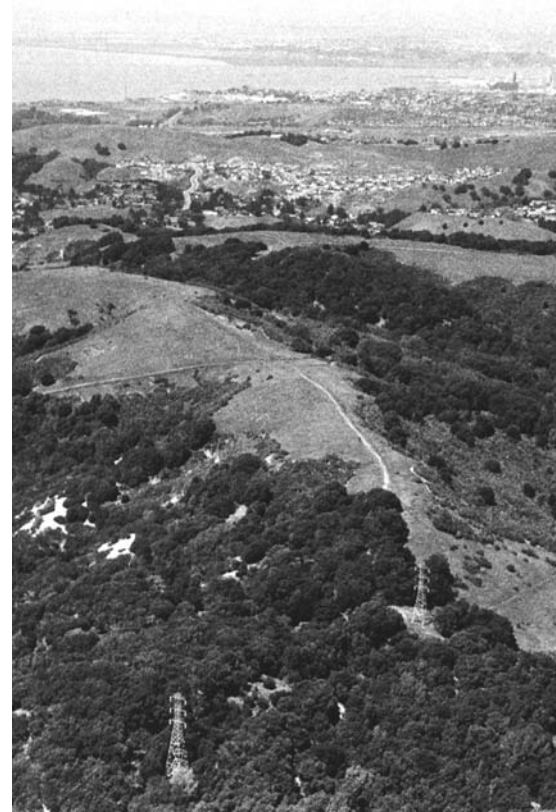
The Preserve is also home to one of the last stands of the rare and endangered chaparral plant, Alameda manzanita. A miniature "forest" of manzanita clings to the hillsides where the most barren, mineral soils occur. This remnant stand of Alameda manzanita survives here in part because of the fog that spills over the hills and tempers the heat of summer. The gnarled, red-barked shrubs flower soon after the first winter rains. Sprays of delicate, urn-shaped blossoms eventually give way to clusters of red berries, prized as a food source by California Indians (*manzanita* means "little apple" in Spanish).

Beware of poison oak. To avoid contact with the plant, which can cause an itchy rash, stay on the trails, especially in the shaded hillsides of the southern end of the Preserve. *Remember: leaves of three, leave it be!*

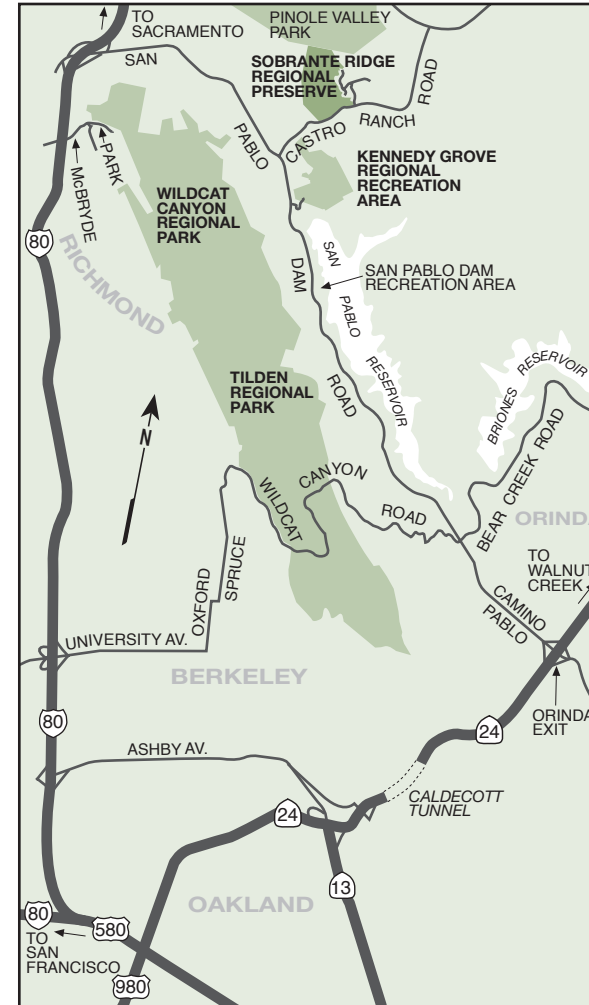
As you explore these peaceful hills, look for signs of wildlife, examine the botanical marvels, and ponder the rich events of the past played out upon this landscape. On a clear day you may also enjoy majestic views of distant ridges, valleys, and bays.

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Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve's manzanita forest and Sobrante Ridge Trail are visible at left and center. In the distance are the towns of Hercules and Rodeo.



TO REACH SOBRANTE RIDGE:

From the Richmond/Oakland area: take I-80 to the San Pablo Dam Road exit in Richmond. Turn south on San Pablo Dam Road and proceed through El Sobrante to Castro Ranch Road. Turn left on Castro Ranch Road, left on Conestoga Way, left on Carriage Drive, and right on Coach Drive. The entrance is at the end of Coach Drive.

From the Diablo Valley area: from Taylor Boulevard in Pleasant Hill turn right (west) onto Grayson Road. Turn right onto Reliez Valley Road. Go straight (west) on Alhambra Valley Road at its intersection with Reliez Valley Road. Turn left onto Castro Ranch Road, right onto Conestoga Way and follow directions above.

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Printed on recycled paper Rev. 8/05 Cost: 50 cents

SOBRANTE RIDGE REGIONAL PRESERVE



EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT