Unparalleled Fire Season
California’s 2020 fire season was the largest on record, with nearly 6,100 fires and over 4.6 million acres burned. In the East Bay, the SCE Lighting Complex Fire in August included fires in the Regional Parks – Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, Morgan Territory, Mohave Wilderness, Round Valley, and Sereno Wilderness – and burned over 2.5 million acres over 41 days.

As the Park District, wildfire protection is a 365-day-a-year activity and includes ongoing fire hazard reduction, grazing, weather monitoring, and special wildfire mitigation training. In 2020, our staff responded to 119 fire incidents and our eight 450-foot condors monitored 233 water drops totaling 24,128 gallons. During the SCE Fire, eight of our Condors took flight at the “tip of the sky” dropping fire retardant.

Our preparedness, management, grazing, and monitoring work has proven highly effective in wildfire mitigation. In 2020, the wildfire cooled in grassland and stopped at well-maintained roads and fire breaks.

In 2020, we commissioned a scientific survey to understand how our community benefits from the parks and the role parks play in their lives. The survey was a follow-up to our 2019 online survey on park usage, services, and features priorities. The survey results showed overwhelming support for our efforts to keep parks open and accessible during the pandemic (99%) and that the community greatly values our parks for physical and mental health benefits (94%).

The pandemic underscored the efficacy of our decade-long Healthy Parks Healthy People program, which partners with healthcare providers prescribing nature to their patients to build health benefits in the Regional Parks. Our extensive network of parks and trails, which provide parks and places to relax and strenuously exercise, conserve, access 320 million acres towards nationwide health care savings, according to a CDC/Health Impact Analysis.

In June 2020, the Park District Board of Directors unanimously approved a resolution denouncing racism and systemic racial injustice and directed staff to develop a plan for addressing social justice issues in the Park District and its parks. The Park District also committed to reviewing park policies and implementing additional employee training on implicit bias and microaggressions.

In 2020, we noted that we are very busy connecting people to parks virtually. With in-person programs prohibited, we expanded our Digital Learning program to include live virtual programs and field trips, virtual and augmented reality park experiences, and field study notes. These programs were accessible to all ages and offered for free via social media, Zoom, and YouTube. Over 700,000 people were served more than 1,300 virtual programs.

Our Regional in Nature Activity Guide, with a reach of over 400,000, was renewed to include self-directed activities and articles on park history and environmental education.

In 2020, we continued to keep parks open and safe in 2020 and 2021. Let’s continue to keep active, healthy, and safe in the Regional Parks!

Keeping People Open
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Strong Fiscal Management
In 2020, we faced significant financial challenges with the loss of revenue from our fees for facility rentals and the additional costs for COVID-19 safety training, personal protective equipment, and signage on public restrooms. However, through strong fiscal management, our 2020 budget remained balanced.

2020 accomplishments:
• Continued to generate nearly $530 million in regional economic benefits.
• Continued to receive AAA ratings from Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s Investors Service.
• Commissioned an economic report that showed planned construction projects will generate $214 million in economic benefits for the region.
• Received the Distinctive Budget Award and Certificate of Achievement for Financial Reporting for the 18th consecutive year.

Climate Action
We expended several environmental and habitat restoration projects, including water quality improvements to combat green algae (cyanobacteria). At Lake Temescal, we used mechanical and salinity technology to reduce the nutrients that support cyanobactria. At Lake Merritt, we installed an anoxic zone and planted a constructed wetland on the bottom of the lake to reduce nutrient levels.

To protect parks and prepare for climate change, we are building resilient ecosystems and wildlife habitat that can withstand extreme weather, heat, and wildfires. Planning and conservation are underway, including a regional study to assess the effects of sea-level rise on the San Francisco Bay Trail, which 40 miles of which is managed by the Park District in the joint Hayward Shoreline Plan with the City of Hayward and Albany. By 2025, the Plan should reduce the impacts of sea-rise along the Hayward shoreline.
Key Milestones

During the pandemic, we forged ahead completing and advancing several major projects, including:

**Judge John Sutter Regional Shoreline and Bay Observation Pier**
Opened a new gateway park in Oakland featuring a 600-foot-long public observation pier built atop six remaining piles from the old Bay Bridge. Includes connection to the Bay Bridge Bicycle-Pedestrian Trail.

**Albany Beach Improvements and SF Bay Trail Extension**
Completed a one-mile SF Bay Trail extension, including cable-stayed bridge structures, from Gilman Street to Albany Beach — creating 18 miles of continuous Bay Trail running from Oakland to Richmond. The $18.9 million project also included public access improvements and habitat restoration.

**Bay Point Regional Shoreline Trail Improvements and Habitat Restoration**
Reopened Bay Point after an 18-month closure for habitat restoration and construction of visitor amenities, including new picnic areas, trails, restrooms, a drinking fountain, and a kayak launch — all elevated to withstand projected sea level rise.

**McCosker Creek Restoration and Public Access Project**
Broke ground on the largest creek restoration project in the Park District’s history at Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve in Oakland — daylighting 3,000 feet of currently-clogged creek and re-establishing natural habitat for 10 special-status species. Completion expected in 2023.

**Awards**
In 2020, we received national and statewide awards and recognition, including:

- Three awards for Park District 85th Anniversary/Regional Parks Foundation 50th Anniversary:
  - Outstanding Public Engagement Award from Public Lands Alliance
  - Excellence in Public Information and Communications (EPIC) Award from California Association of Public Information Officials
  - Outstanding Community Outreach Campaign Award from California Association of Recreation and Park Districts (CARPD)
- Outstanding Community Organization/Partner Award from CARPD for Regional Parks Foundation
- Innovation in Green Community Planning, Award of Merit from American Planning Association for Judge John Sutter Regional Shoreline (EBRPD and Caltrans)
- Frank Cabot Public Rock Garden Award from North American Rock Garden Society for Regional Parks Botanic Garden
- Advanced Law Enforcement Reaccreditation from Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) for EBRPD Police Department

**New General Manager Sabrina B. Landreth**
In March 2021, the Park District’s Board of Directors appointed Sabrina Landreth as General Manager. Ms. Landreth has held top executive leadership positions managing the cities of Oakland and Emeryville. Most recently, she served as City Administrator in Oakland from 2015-2020 where she was credited with strong fiscal management and developing a capital improvement program that included community equity goals.

**General Manager Robert E. Doyle Retires**
General Manager Emeritus Robert Doyle retired in 2020 after an illustrious 47-year career with the Park District — ten as General Manager. His legacy includes 65,000 additional acres protected, 20 new Regional Parks, 200 miles of Regional Trails, and $1 billion raised for public access improvements and land preservation through grants, bond measures, and state and federal funding.

**Regional Parks Foundation**
The Regional Parks Foundation continues to support the Park District and raise funds for universal access, environmental stewardship, education and recreation programs, and acquisition of new parklands. In 2020, the Foundation continued its leadership, launching an initiative to provide 750 free memberships to underserved Black, indigenous, and people of color, shifting funding to provide 500 educational toolkits and over 17,914 youth Campershirt virtual programs, and distributing 7,500 face coverings that were handed out to park visitors.

**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.