Community Report
2020-2021

Parks Are Essential
In July 2020, we commissioned a scientific survey to understand how our community members are coping during the pandemic. The 2020 survey results showed overwhelming support for our efforts to keep parks open and safe.

During the pandemic, visitation increased exponentially. Simultaneously, the SCU Lightning Complex Fire in August burned severely damaged five Regional Parks which required substantial firefighting resources, trail repairs, and long-term restoration.

In 2020, we faced significant financial challenges with the loss of revenue from user fees for facility rentals and the additional costs for COVID-19 safety training, personal protective equipment, utility rates, and public services. However, strong fiscal management, our 2020 budget remained balanced.

2020 accomplishments:
- Continued to generate nearly $300 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 $214.4 million in economic benefits for the region.
- Received the Distinguished Budget Award and Certificate of Achievement for Financial Reporting for the 19th consecutive year.

Unparalleled Fire Season

California’s 2020 fire season was the longest on record, with nearly 10,600 fires and over 4.1 million acres burned. In the East Bay, the SCU Lightning Complex Fire in August burned five of the Regional Parks (Sunol Regional Wilderness, Round Valley, and Sisol). wildfires also burned 974,443 acres over 44 days.

At the Park District, wildfire protection is a 365-day-per-year activity and includes ongoing fire hazard reduction, grazing, weather monitoring, and special wildfire firefighting training. In 2020, our staff responded to 91 fires incidents and our Fire and Policing conducted 322 water drops totaling 42,126 gallons. During the SCU Fire, Eagle helped at the ‘eye in the sky’ detecting fires and providing technical support.

Our perennial fuels management, grazing programs, and wildfire management work have proven highly effective in wildfire mitigation. In many cases, the wildfires declared in graze zones and stopped at well-maintained trails and fire roads.

Preserving Land Forever

Land preservation continued in 2020, with 450 acres—some of the last few remaining unreserved places in the East Bay—protected for perpetuity. Key acquisitions include the Chouinard Winery at Garin, the Regional Study Videos. These programs were conducted 223 water drops totaling 24,238 gallons. The District also secured purchase options and other agreements to acquire 626 additional acres of parkland.

Connecting People with Nature

In 2020, our tournaments were busy connecting people to parks virtually. With in-person programs prohibited, we expanded our digital offerings to include virtual programs and fair trios, virtual and augmented reality programs, virtual nature study videos. These programs were offered at our website and as social media, Zoom, and YouTube. Over 770,000 people were served during more than 1,300 virtual programs.

Our Regional in Nature Activity Guide, with a reach of 448,000, was redesigned to include virtual natural history and wildlife videos at park history and environmental education.

Keeping People and Parks Safe

Keeping people and parks safe is our topmost priority. In 2020, our police and fire services staff responded to a record 23,924 calls for services, including medical emergencies, fires, and park Ordinance violations. Our staff adhered strictly to COVID-19 safety requirements. Utilizing public service announcements, social media, and park signage, we provided critical education to park visitors on safety protocols which included wearing face masks and staying 6 feet apart.

To mitigate wildlife risks in parks, our ongoing efforts include:
- Thinning and removing overgrown brush and plants
- FEMA, CalFire, and California Coastal Conservancy projects
- An eight-person year-round fire reduction crew
- Maintenance of fuel breaks
- Vegetative maintenance and tree trimming
- Mechanical and nanobubble technology to reduce the nutrients that support cyanobacteria
- Webinars of the latest in scientific research conducted from our water treatment facility, as well as a report to the bottom of the bay to reduce nutrient runoff.

To protect parks and trails from climate change, we are building resilience amenities and wildlife habitat to better tolerate the weather-related extreme weather, sea-level rise, and wildfires. Planning and assessments are underway including a scientific study to assess the effects of sea-level rise on the San Francisco Bay. At all of our parks, we are monitoring and taking action to prevent the impacts of sea-level rise (as 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 canopied 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-converted creek and re-establishing natural habitat for 10 special-status species. Completion expected in 2023.

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**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

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**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, 22 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.

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**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 Camps!-virtual programs, and distributing 7,500 face coverings that were handed out to park visitors.

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**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.

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**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.