

Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility in Regional Parks

ADA and the District

East Bay Regional Park District recently celebrated its 85th anniversary. As stewards of over 125,000 acres and 1,250 miles of trails, the District plays a key role in connecting East Bay residents to nature. The District recognizes the need to provide accessible amenities at parklands and open spaces for all residents, regardless of differing physical abilities. The District invests annually to upgrade park facilities for accessibility, but additional funds are needed as both the District and the East Bay population grow. The District is especially prioritizing these efforts in 2020 for the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



Above: Puma Point at Anthony Chabot Regional Park was re-imagined and reconstructed for access by all. For example, surfaces were “hardened” while remaining permeable, and high/low water fountains were installed.

The History of the ADA

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s gave rise to other civil rights movements, most notably the Women's Rights Movement, the Environmental Movement and the Disability Rights Movement. Minorities and women were protected by civil rights legislation passed by the U.S. Congress during the 1960s. Environmental protection legislation was largely enacted in the 1970s. However, the rights of people with disabilities were not protected by federal legislation until much later. Passed by Congress in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was the nation's first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities. The act prohibits discrimination in employment, public services, and telecommunications. In addition, unlike the Civil Rights Act, the ADA also imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations.



Above: An ADA ramp at Temescal Regional Recreation Area Fishing Pier. The ramp was done in conjunction with a new ADA picnic site to provide better access to fishers and park visitors.

District ADA Priorities for 2020

Some of the District's key performance objectives as stated by the adopted 2020 budget are:

- Complete ten high priority ADA projects District-wide that enhance or improve access to popular Park District facilities and amenities.
- Update three visitor centers for ADA compliance.
- Continue to update chemical toilets to ADA compliant vault toilets.
- Installation of four ADA accessible restrooms at Anthony Chabot and Tilden Regional Parks.

Healthy Parks, Healthy People

Health care providers are increasingly prescribing time in nature to improve overall health and well-being. With some improvements and upgrades, the District's parklands and open spaces will be more accessible for all East Bay residents and visitors.



Above: A recently re-constructed accessible restroom and parking lot at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline.

The District is asking elected officials to assist in securing funding for necessary ADA upgrades.

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Climate Resources Bond

East Bay Regional Park District Priorities

Bond Proposals

SB 45 (Allen), AB 352 (Garcia) and AB 1298 (Mullin) were introduced in the 2019 legislative session to provide for critical investments in climate change adaptation, and community and resource resilience. All three proposals contain important programs for the East Bay Regional Park District. The District respectfully offers the following priorities for consideration.

1. Wildfire and Vegetation Management

Ask: At least \$200 million

Why: Since 2004, the Park District has devoted over \$1 million of local, state and federal investments



annually to manage and diminish hazardous vegetation in the East Bay hills. As a result, the risk of catastrophic fire has been greatly reduced.

2. State Coastal Conservancy

Ask: At least \$500 million and \$100 million for the Bay Area Program

Why: There is an increasing backlog of unmet needs that have traditionally been supported through more flexible funds such as the Coastal Conservancy's Bay Area Program. This program has supported a wide range of important habitat restoration and public access projects in every county of the Bay Area.

3. Urban Stream Parkway Projects

Ask: At least \$400 million

Why: Urban creeks, streams, upper watersheds and their surrounding lands must be protected and managed to improve water quality, drinking water and natural habitat for the Bay Area.



4. Nature-based Infrastructure

Ask: Prioritize projects with natural / nature-based infrastructure solutions

Why: As stewards of over 55 miles of Bay-Delta shoreline, the District provides the first line of defense



against sea level rise for millions of people in the East Bay region. District shoreline and restoration efforts prioritize natural habitat.

5. Active Transportation

Ask: At least \$75 million

Why: The District manages nearly 150 miles of paved active transportation trails, which provide over 9 million trips a year.



Improving active transportation options will reduce driving trips and associated greenhouse gas emissions, while providing healthier, more active options to access open space.

6. Community Access

Ask: 5% of funds administered by state agencies should be available for community access projects

Why: Existing barriers to meaningful and equitable outdoor access for Bay Area residents need to be reduced. Community access funding ensures low-income and marginalized communities benefit from, and are inspired by, parks and open spaces.



7. Disadvantaged Communities

Ask: Use definition of Under-Resourced Communities (PRC 71130(g))

Why: Using the current definition based on the State Median Household Income (MHI) does not account for local cost of living. Many populations that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are left out of this important designation.

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Plastic Waste Reduction

Plastic Pollution

The accumulation of plastic pieces and particles adversely affects the environment. Plastic never fully breaks down; it only breaks into smaller pieces. Recycling can greatly reduce the amount of waste impacting wildlife, wildlife habitat and humans. Previously, plastic waste in the U.S. was sent to China for recycling. However, in 2018, China significantly reduced the amount of plastic waste they were willing to amass. The U.S. needs greater recycling infrastructure to accommodate the growing amount of plastic waste generated by consumers. Investments made proactively can increase the use of recycled materials in production as opposed to producing new plastic.



Plastic Waste Reduction Legislation and Ballot Initiative

In 2019, AB 1080 and SB 54 were introduced as companion bills to resolve the growing problem of plastic waste. These two bills develop a comprehensive framework for reducing plastic pollution and reforming product packaging. The bills require significant reductions in the use of disposable products and require manufacturers to make packaging exclusively out of recyclable materials to drive market development. A ballot initiative is also approved for signature gathering which aligns with the goals of this legislation. The initiative is sponsored by Recology. If the initiative moves forward, it will appear on the November 2020 ballot.



The Park District and Plastic

The recent District Park and Public Interest Community Engagement Project Survey found the number one requested amenity in parks was additional drinking water bottle filling stations, indicating a shift in public interest from pre-filled disposable plastic bottles to reusable ones. The second most requested amenity was increased recycling and composting stations, indicating public interest in proper waste disposal. The legislation and ballot initiative are consistent with the District's Sustainability Policy and Mission to incorporate an environmental ethic in all of its activities.



The District is asking elected officials to support plastic waste reduction initiatives legislatively and on the ballot.

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Public Safety

Protecting East Bay Parks and Communities

Public Safety Department

To manage the largest regional park system in the United States, East Bay Regional Park District has its own Public Safety Division. The Public Safety Division includes a Police Department and Fire Department. At peak summer season, this division is staffed by approximately 500 personnel. This includes 161 full-time equivalent employees, 195 seasonal lifeguards, 200 members in Volunteer Safety Patrols and 40 on-call firefighters.

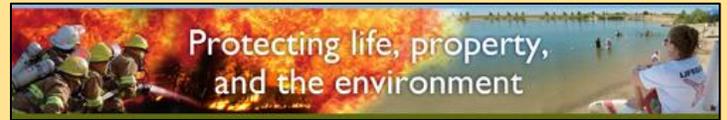


District Fire Department

The District's Fire Department is essential for vegetation management and firefighting in the wildland-urban interface. The District is uniquely situated to fight fires with wildfire scale equipment and infrastructure

– including a helicopter. Since 2011, the District has completed 530 firefighting mission flights both within and outside Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. In 2019 alone, the District completed 110 drops providing 13,234 gallons of water to help extinguish wildfires. Additionally, the District's Air Support Unit entered a Call When Needed contract with CAL-FIRE in 2018 to further address firefighting needs within the entire Bay Area. Firefighting infrastructure, such as the helicopter, has the potential to save lives, protect property and decrease the damage of wildfire.

The District is interested in increasing helicopter weight carrying capacity to better serve the firefighting needs of the Bay Area.



District Police Department

The District's Police Department serves over 25 million annual visitors. It patrols the 73 parks and over 1,250 miles of trails. When facing a new "normal" of extreme wildfire and Public Safety Power Shutoffs, it is of the utmost importance that public safety agencies can communicate regardless of external factors. The District is a part of East Bay Regional Communications System Authority (EBRCSA), which is a Joint Powers Authority of agencies in Alameda and Contra Costa counties created to address the need for interoperability between allied agencies. The District's current radio system allows for communication regardless of cellular service and electrical power, but the manufacturer recently announced the end of product support. This communication is critical for organization and collaboration to protect property and save lives.

The District is interested in purchasing and implementing a new radio system.



The District is asking elected officials to assist in securing funding for necessary public safety infrastructure upgrades.

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Wildfire Protection

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Funding
Including Grasslands



Above: Oakland Hills after the 1991 fire

The East Bay Hills and EBRPD

In 1991, the tragic Oakland hills fire – then the most destructive fire in California history – resulted in \$1.5 billion in initial damages, many lives lost and over 3,000 homes destroyed. Since then, wildfires have only continued to increase in their frequency and intensity. Investing in the best available science for vegetation management now will allow for long term cost savings and potentially fewer lives lost and communities displaced in the future. This investment will also protect habitat, water supply and water quality. Minimizing the risk of wildfire on its 125,000 acres of urban-adjacent wildlands is a high priority of the East Bay Regional Park District. Since 2004, the District has devoted over \$1 million of local, state and federal investments annually toward managing and diminishing hazardous vegetation in the East Bay hills. As a result of this work, the risk of catastrophic fire has been greatly reduced. For example, a 2017 fire event near Grizzly Peak in Berkeley, CA, burned into a managed forest on Park District property. Crews were able to quickly respond, put the fire out and avoid any serious damages. This was possible because of previous vegetation treatment directed by the District's Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan.



Above: Goat grazing on Park District grasslands

Grassland Management

The District also manages over 80,000 acres of grasslands. Many open space agencies have similar conditions, but funding for this type of fire hazard reduction is less available. Common grassland management techniques include grazing, prescribed burns and manual treatments. Grazing is one of the most effective means of vegetation management for wildfire suppression. Goats can graze in terrain that is difficult for mowers and even cattle to reach. However, goat grazing is costly at \$3,000-\$5,000 per acre. Additionally, grazing with cattle, goats and sheep requires more cistern water systems in remote areas.



Above: Conservation Corps members remove potentially flammable vegetation

Other Wildfire Protection Constraints

- It took regulatory agencies eight years to approve the Park District's Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan. Because of a highly specified and intense process, no other agency has received the permits to conduct vegetation management in the East Bay hills. Cutting the "green tape" should be a state priority.
- Managing for natural resources and endangered and threatened species can create challenges as to where and when fire hazard reduction can take place.

The District is asking elected officials to support at least \$200 million allocated for projects supporting wildfire resilience and vegetation management.

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