

# A Place for Nature ...

**Year opened:** 1988      **Acres:** 277  
**Highlights:** Hiking, nature study, birdwatching.  
**Did you know?** Once an area known for dirt biking and loud partying, this regional preserve is now an open space in a very natural state, one of the quietest parklands in the East Bay and home to the rare Alameda manzanita.

**Fees:** there are no fees at Sobrante Ridge.

**HISTORY** 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.

Moving into the modern era, 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.

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 ridge-lands were preserved after developers agreed to limit an adjacent subdivision to the low-lying areas.

**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;

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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 Alameda manzanita chaparral plant. A miniature "forest" of manzanita clings to the hillsides where the most barren mineral soils occur. This remnant stand of the Alameda manzanita survives at this preserve in part due to the influence of 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 (manzanita means "little apple" in Spanish), prized in the past as a food source by California Native Americans.

Beware of poison oak, which can cause an itchy rash. To avoid contact with the plant, 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.

**To Reach Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve:**  
**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.

Cover photos – Top: manzanita in the preserve's manzanita grove area. Middle: variable checkerspot butterfly. Bottom: Coyote bush in open space off the Sobrante Ridge Trail.



# Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve

Richmond, Pinole, El Sobrante



Michael Warner



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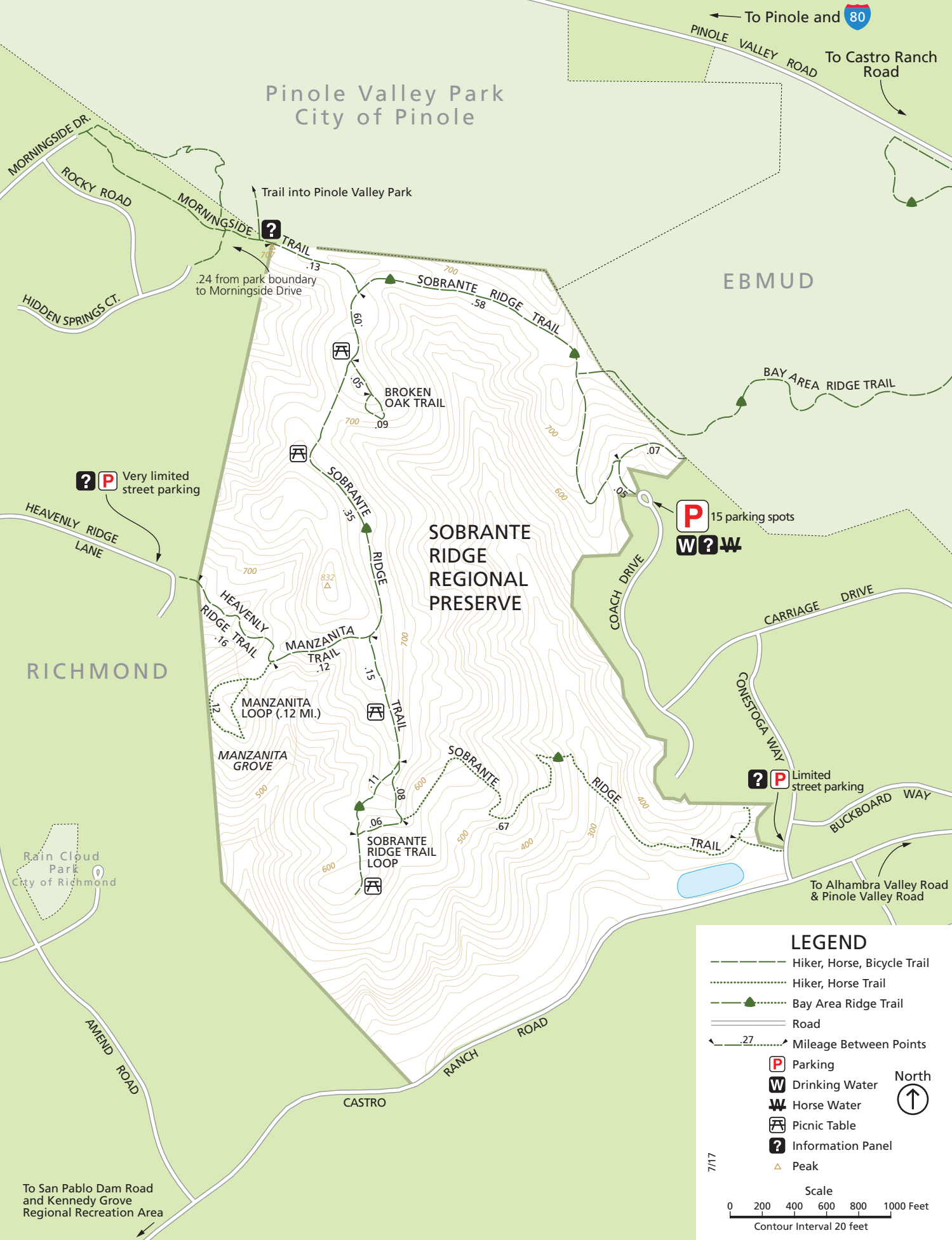


Nick Fullerton



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 Rev. 7/17

# Pinole Valley Park City of Pinole



## WELCOME!

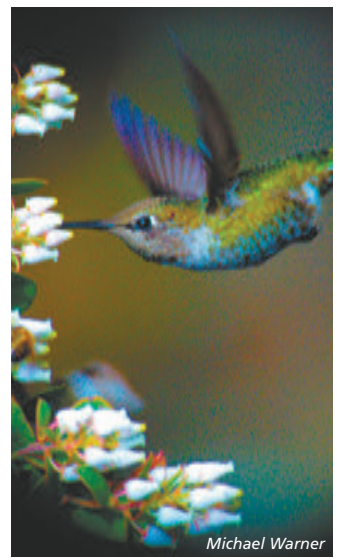
### SAFETY and ETIQUETTE

- Please enjoy our Regional Parks safely, and help us protect and preserve your parklands by complying with park rules and regulations.
- Stay on trails. Taking shortcuts can be dangerous and causes erosion.
- Wading and/or swimming in undesignated areas may be dangerous and may harm the watershed.
- Carry and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is a leading cause of injuries on the trail.
- Be prepared for sudden changes in weather conditions.
- Trails can be slippery, rocky and steep. Proceed carefully at your own risk.
- Wildlife may be present on the trails at any time. Feeding or approaching wildlife is dangerous and illegal.
- Bicycles are permitted on designated trails only. Horses have the right-of-way on trails.
- State law requires that all bicyclists under age 18 wear an approved helmet while riding on trails and roadways. All bicyclists and equestrians are strongly encouraged to wear helmets at all times.
- Keep the parks beautiful. Pack out what you pack in.
- Drones are prohibited.
- Smoking is prohibited, except in overnight campsites.

### RULES

Pets must be leashed 200 feet from any trail or park entrance. Pets must be leashed in parking lots, picnic areas, developed areas such as lawns and play fields, and on some trails. They must be under voice control at all times.

Visitors are responsible for knowing and complying with park rules. See [www.ebparks.org/rules](http://www.ebparks.org/rules).



Michael Warner

An Anna's hummingbird feasts on nectar from a manzanita flower.