



East Bay Parks Manager Appointed to National Board

Jul 18, 2024

Lisa Goorjian, assistant general manager of operations for the East Bay Regional Park District, has been appointed to the board of directors for the Pennsylvania-based National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO), a nonprofit professional organization for promoting county and regional park recreation and conservation issues.

NACPRO is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties and the National Recreation and Park Association.

“I am honored by this prestigious appointment and thrilled to continue to represent East Bay Regional Park District’s perspectives and interests,” Goorjian said. “NACPRO is an important association that allows park officials to discuss the challenges and successes in managing parklands and share innovations and best practices for dealing with them.”

NACPRO represents 128 agencies across 35 states.

“Common challenges facing park managers at the local and regional level include stable funding, increased visitor demands and traffic control, and climate change impacts,” Goorjian said.

“NACPRO is a collective of likeminded park managers discussing solutions [in use] across the country that may be applied locally.”

NACPRO board members meet monthly.

S.F. Bay waterfront site once slated for 1,200 homes will be turned into park after yearslong fights

By Gregory Thomas, Travel & Outdoors Editor
July 17, 2024



The view of the Richmond Bridge from Point Molate Beach Park in Richmond.
Paul Chinn/The Chronicle

Point Molate in Richmond, a scenic but embattled stretch of shoreline once slated for a 1,260-unit housing development, will become a new regional park along San Francisco Bay.

On Tuesday, the East Bay Regional Park District announced it had signed a letter of intent with the city of Richmond and the Guidiville Rancheria of California tribe to acquire an 80-acre property there for \$40 million, which would secure it as a nature park indefinitely. The formal transfer is expected no later than Jan. 15, according to the park district.

“Point Molate has been called ‘the most beautiful part of San Francisco Bay no one’s ever heard of,’” Richmond Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin said in the announcement. “We are now at the point where everyone will come to know Richmond as home to an amazing world-class park at Point Molate.”

A stone's throw from the Richmond Bridge and a hill away from the Chevron refinery, Point Molate juts off of San Pablo Point like a thumb, a 1,400-foot-long pier extending from its tip. It

is home to a decommissioned naval fuel depot and a defunct century-old winery. South of the point, land wraps into a beachy cove and rises into a 500-foot-high ridge with panoramic views of the North and East bays.

The area had long been tagged for development. Twenty years ago, it was due to become the site for a tribe-owned casino and more recently for high-end housing that would have made adaptive use of historic worker cottages and Winehaven winery buildings.



A development plan to build homes at Point Molate fell through after being challenged in court.
Paul Chinn/The Chronicle

But a series of lawsuits derailed those plans.

Two years ago, after one development proposal fell through, the Guidiville Rancheria was able to purchase the relevant property at Point Molate for just \$400 — the result of a pre-existing settlement agreement, according to Richmondside.

Last year, a successful legal challenge filed by citizens groups and the Sierra Club found that the housing project proposal ran afoul of the California Environmental Quality Act, according to the Sierra Club.

Turning the land into a nature park stems from a “common vision” and partnership between the tribe and park district, according to Guidiville Tribal Chairman Donald Duncan. “A critical part of this transaction is the Park District’s commitment to advancing the Tribe’s legacy of conservation and responsible land management,” he said.

A 1.5-mile extension of the San Francisco Bay Trail is slated to be built along its shoreline, according to the park district.

“Few opportunities remain to create significant parkland in the Bay Area, especially in the Richmond region,” the park district wrote in its announcement.

Point Molate in Richmond to become park after lengthy battle over development

By John Ramos
July 17, 2024

On Tuesday, environmentalists in Richmond celebrated a long-sought victory when the East Bay Regional Park District voted unanimously to accept Point Molate as the newest addition to the park system.

The land will now be preserved as outdoor space for the public, despite years of struggles with developers.

With a million-dollar Bay view of the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge, Point Molate Beach often sits empty. It's sometimes referred to as the "most beautiful Bay Area spot that no one's ever heard of."

But that's about to change. It will soon be the East Bay's newest park.

"It's really rare to get a bayfront property to create a park that's something this size," said EBRPD Board President Elizabeth Echols. "And so, it is truly a unique opportunity. It is truly a cause for celebration."



Point Molate in Richmond, which is slated to become part of the East Bay Regional Parks.

To end the lawsuit, Mayor Tom Butt helped broker a closed-door settlement deal that would require a massive housing development on the land. And he warned the public what would happen if they did anything to invite another lawsuit.

"The city could lose the case, get hit with a judgement of \$50-100 million dollars--maybe more--bankrupt the city, and we could end up with a casino at the end of the day," the mayor said at the time.

"I think it was more a misrepresentation than a bluff. He was the architect of the sweetheart deal that was the settlement agreement," said Norman La Force, who represented the Sierra Club in the struggle over Point Molate. "And we never believed that that was 'it.' If we had believed that, truly, we would have gone away."

But they didn't go away. La Force joined other environmentalists and community activists in one legal challenge after another.

It comes at the end of a long fight. In 2018, Richmond was being sued by a developer and the Guidiville Rancheria tribe over the city agreeing and then reneging on an earlier deal to build a casino at Point Molate.

"We were told, this is never going to happen," said La Force. "You're going to have to make a deal. You're going to lose. And, in the end...we won."

Eventually, the developers lost interest—or faith—in the project, leading to the current park deal. With help from state funding, the district will pay Guidiville \$40 million to end their claim...and the public gets a new bay front place to play.

"That's the beauty of it, right?" said Echols. "People may have slightly different interests, but in the end, everybody came together in a shared vision and a shared agreement to move forward with a world-class park out there at Point Molate."

"It's vindication of what we kept telling everybody from the beginning," said La Force. "This should be a park. We want it as a park and open space area, and it will be that. It won't be anything else. And let's figure out how to do that!"

There's still a lot to figure out. The district says there are no plans yet for what amenities will be included in the park. Those will be decided, not in closed-door meetings, but after an open public input process.

Official transfer of the property is expected to happen sometime this year. The funding for the purchase of Point Molate came with the help of State Sen. Nancy Skinner as part of Gov. Gavin Newsom's "30x30 Initiative," an effort to preserve 30% of state lands and coastal waters by the year 2030.



POLITICS

Navy exonerates 256 Black sailors unjustly punished in 1944 after a deadly California port explosion



1 of 7 | This image provided by Naval History and Heritage Command, shows African American Sailors of a naval ordnance battalion unloading aerial bombs from a railcar, circa 1943/44, in Port Chicago, Calif. The U.S. Navy has exonerated 256 Black sailors who were found to be unjustly punished in 1944 following a horrific port explosion that killed hundreds of service members and exposed racist double standards among the then-segregated ranks. (Naval History and Heritage Command/National Park Service via AP)

BY TARA COPP

Updated 9:40 AM PDT, July 17, 2024

WASHINGTON (AP) — The [U.S. Navy](#) has exonerated 256 Black sailors who were found to be unjustly punished in 1944 following a horrific port explosion that killed hundreds of service members and exposed [racist double standards](#) among the then-segregated ranks.

On July 17, 1944, munitions being loaded onto a cargo ship detonated, causing secondary blasts that ignited 5,000 tons (4,535 metric tonnes) of explosives at Port Chicago naval weapons station near San Francisco.

The explosion killed 320 sailors and civilians, nearly 75% of whom were Black, and injured another 400 personnel. Surviving Black sailors had to pick up the human remains and clear the blast site while white officers were granted leave to recuperate.

The pier was a critical ammunition supply site for forces in the Pacific during World War II, and the job of loading those ships was left primarily to Black enlisted sailors overseen by white officers.

Before the explosion, the Black sailors working the dock had expressed concerns about the loading operations. Shortly after the blast, they were ordered to return to loading ships even though no changes had been made to improve their safety.

The sailors refused, saying they needed training on how to more safely handle the bombs before they returned.

What followed affected the rest of their lives, including punishments that kept them from receiving honorable discharges even as the vast majority returned to work at the pier under immense pressure and served throughout the war. Fifty sailors who held fast to their demands for safety and training were tried as a group on charges of conspiracy to commit mutiny and were convicted and sent to prison.

The whole episode was unjust, and none of the sailors received the legal due process they were owed, Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said in an interview with The Associated Press.

It was “a horrific situation for those Black sailors that remained,” Del Toro said. The Navy’s office of general counsel reviewed the military judicial proceedings used to punish the sailors and found “there were so many inconsistencies and so many legal violations that came to the forefront,” he said.

Thurgood Marshall, who was then a defense attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, defended the 50 sailors who were convicted of mutiny. Marshall went on to become the first Black justice on the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, the 80th anniversary of the Port Chicago disaster, Del Toro signed paperwork officially clearing the sailors, who are now deceased. Del Toro handed the first pen to Thurgood Marshall Jr., the late justice’s son.

The exonerations “are deeply moving,” Marshall Jr. said. “They, of course, are all gone, and that’s a painful aspect of it. But so many fought for so long for that kind of fairness and recognition.”

The events have stung surviving family members for decades, but an earlier effort in the 1990s to pardon the sailors fell short. Two additional sailors were previously cleared — one was found mentally incompetent to stand trial, and one was cleared on insufficient evidence. Wednesday’s action goes beyond a pardon and vacates the military judicial proceedings carried out in 1944 against all of the men.

“This decision clears their names and restores their honor and acknowledges the courage that they displayed in the face of immense danger,” Del Toro said.

[The racism](#) that the Black sailors faced reflected the military's views at the time — ranks were segregated, and the Navy had only reluctantly opened some positions it considered less desirable to Black service members.

The official court of inquiry looking into why the explosion occurred cleared all the white officers and praised them for the “great effort” they had to exert to run the dock. It left open the suggestion that the Black sailors were to blame for the accident.

Del Toro's action converts the discharges to honorable unless there were other circumstances surrounding them. After the Navy upgrades the discharges, surviving family members can work with the Department of Veterans Affairs on past benefits that may be owed, the Navy said.

EAST BAY TIMES

World War II's Port Chicago disaster — and its role in civil rights — to be memorialized

Events on July 18-21 are planned in Concord, Vallejo, Pittsburg and Oakland



Cars parked near the dock, seen here July 18, 1944, were blown apart, and metal was found more than a mile away after the Port Chicago munitions explosion. (Bay Area News Group archive)

By KATIE LAUER

UPDATED: July 17, 2024 at 5:48 a.m.

CONCORD — During World War II, the Port Chicago Naval Magazine was a bustling hub where hundreds of African American sailors — segregated from their white counterparts — toiled as “stevedores,” loading cluster bombs, ammunitions, mines and other explosives onto Navy ships bound for the Pacific theater.

But tragedy struck shortly after 10 p.m. on July 17, 1944, when lax military safety protocols sparked a massive explosion that effectively vaporized nearby cargo ships and facilities on the base along the shores of Suisun Bay — instantly killing 320 sailors and civilians, who were predominantly young African American men in their late teens to early twenties, and injuring nearly 400 others. Only a few bodies were ever recovered.

The blast propelled a massive fireball into the night sky, sent a shock wave of flying shrapnel that flattened Port Chicago and measured 3.4 on the Richter scale in nearby Berkeley.

In honor of the 80th anniversary Wednesday, a four-day “Port Chicago Weekend” will meld education and entertainment July 18-21 to honor the catastrophe — the deadliest military disaster on mainland American soil during World War II.

Scores of events are planned in Concord, Pittsburg, Vallejo and Oakland, where attendees can enjoy live music, watch a theatrical performance of the “Port Chicago 50” play, and listen to firsthand accounts from relatives of the service members who perished eight decades ago.

While the National Park Service holds a commemoration ceremony every year at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial in Concord, Yulie Padmore, director of the Port Chicago Alliance, said she helped spearhead this year’s events with community organizers, historians and performers to increase engagement and broaden the appeal of this important Bay Area history.

“After all, the Bay Area’s role in advancing civil rights in our nation is something to celebrate, and we hope these events will be entertaining as well as educational,” said Padmore, who first learned about this history eight years ago from the East Bay Regional Park District’s efforts to spotlight the naval base. “In addition to racial integration, the Port Chicago explosion and its aftermath catalyzed reforms that have since influenced labor laws and practices, ensuring better protections for workers and fostering a culture of safety and fairness that continues to shape our society today.”

While the exact cause of the explosion was never determined, historical records pointed blame at Navy leaders for circumventing proper protocol while training the majority of African American sailors to load munitions at Port Chicago.

In the aftermath, 50 Black men refused to continue loading munitions. They were subsequently court-martialed at Yerba Buena Island in a mass trial and convicted of mutiny, sentenced to punishments that ranged from confinement to years of hard labor.



Sailors load explosives during World War II at the Port Chicago. A deadly explosion occurred on July 17, 1944, killing 320 sailors and civilians, who were predominantly young African American men in their late teens to early twenties, and injuring nearly 400 others. This year marks the 80th anniversary on Wednesday, July 17, 2024. A four-day “Port Chicago Weekend” will meld education and entertainment July 18-21 to honor the catastrophe. *U.S. Navy Photo. Courtesy of Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial*

By 1946, most of the convicted sailors were released and granted clemency, and the Navy became the first of the U.S. armed forces to desegregate. All branches of the U.S. armed forces followed suit by 1948.

However, the Port Chicago 50 were never fully exonerated for disobeying wartime orders. Several efforts by federal legislators since 1990 — including East Bay U.S. Representatives Mark DeSaulnier, John Garamendi and Barbara Lee — to reverse course have been unsuccessful.

Thurgood Marshall, a then-NAACP lawyer and future Supreme Court Justice, swiftly organized national petitions and protests. In October 1944, he said that the Navy should be tried, instead, for its “whole vicious policy toward Negroes. Negroes in the Navy don’t mind loading ammunition. They just want to know why they are the only ones doing the loading.”



Sailors work on the piers at Port Chicago Naval Magazine. U.S. Navy Photo. Courtesy of Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial

Starting in 2020, continued advocacy from several community organizations — such as the East Bay Black Employee Collective, Citizens for Historical Equity, Friends of Port Chicago National Memorial, East County NAACP, United Veterans Council, Contra Costa County Bar Association, and the Port Chicago Taskforce — helped facilitate the naming of the 2,500-acre Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50. Additionally, more than a dozen Bay Area cities and government agencies have passed resolutions calling for exoneration.

While survivors of the blast such as Ray Ross, TJ Hart, Morris Soublet, Freddie Meeks, Sammy Boykin and Percy Robinson have since passed, Padmore said this recent advocacy has already helped Port Chicago Alliance connect with additional relatives of the former service members.

She said organizers hope to use the 80th anniversary to draw attention to the legacy of the tragedy and the Bay Area's subsequent role in the national campaign for racial equality.

“The Port Chicago sailors’ non-violent civil disobedience — an act which would later become a hallmark of the civil rights movements of the 1950s and ’60s — directly resulted in the desegregation of our Armed Forces,” Padmore said, noting that the sailors’ protest occurred a full decade before Rosa Parks, the Greensboro sit-in and Brown v. Board of Education. “It’s truly hard to overstate its importance to the advancement of civil rights in our nation, and I’m so proud to know this happened right here in the Bay Area.”

EAST BAY TIMES

Sunol's newest hiking trails offer scenic vistas and challenging terrain

Tyler Ranch Staging Area opens access to Sunol Ridge



Cows graze near the completed trails at Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park accessible from the Tyler Ranch Staging Area in Sunol. (Kate Bradshaw/Bay Area News Group)

By KATE BRADSHAW

UPDATED: July 17, 2024 at 7:46 a.m.

After years of planning and trail work, an entirely new network of trails at Sunol's Tyler Ranch Staging Area opened this winter. The move expanded Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park by 2,844 acres and added roughly 18 new miles of trails for use by outdoor lovers on foot, bike or horseback or with leashed dogs.

A recent hike provided ample evidence that these particular paths are not built for the faint of heart — major uphill stretches, but they lead to rewarding views.

Start at the spacious parking lot near downtown Sunol, a tiny town east of Fremont. You'll find newly minted restrooms next to a vintage barn once used for cattle ranching — a legacy you'll see in action when you hike past clusters of happy grazing cows near the trails. Take the

trailhead to the left of the barn and up along either the Tyler Ranch Trail or the Sunol Ridge Trail, following it up to Sunol Peak.

Make it a lollipop route by coming back along the Woodside Spring Trail before returning down Sunol Ridge Trail for a roughly 8-mile excursion. (Trail visitors warn about thistles and cow pies along the way, so remember to bring adequate protective gear and watch where you step.)



The top of Sunol Peak is fenced off to pedestrians, but the views are still scenic. (Kate Bradshaw/Bay Area News Group)

The actual top of Sunol Peak is fenced off to pedestrians, but you can get pretty close, and the views from the ridge of the East Bay are stunning.

Amid the trail expansion, the East Bay Parks system has made efforts to preserve the pastoral atmosphere, which manifests in the tall grasses, now brown, that shimmer on the hills, replacing the wildflowers that bloomed just a few weeks earlier.

The project to expand Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park began years ago, when the East Bay Parks District acquired the 1,476-acre Tyler Ranch in 2009, followed by the 1,368-acre Robertson Ranch property in 2012. Work to build the trails and parking area began in 2021.

Coming downhill, you'll notice the trail's verticality in your knee joints, but overall, it's a pleasant descent with scenic vistas the whole way down to the barn. Make sure to bring water; much of the trail is exposed to the sun.



The old barn at Tyler Ranch Staging Area in Sunol was once used for cattle ranching. It's now the starting point for new trails leading hikers, horses and more up to Sunol Ridge. (Kate Bradshaw/Bay Area News Group)

Fortunately, JjLand Sunol, a new gift and snack shop around the corner from the trailhead, has cool drinks and ice cream available and ready to quench your thirst (plus a fun sock collection).

Want to make a day of it? The Niles Canyon Railway hosts two-hour round-trip weekend train tours through Niles Canyon that depart from Sunol. Keep an eye out for their upcoming "Beer on the Rails" events on Aug. 4 and Sept. 1, which include beer tastings from three Bay Area breweries plus lunch during the train tour.

If you go:

JjLand Sunol is open from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday-Friday and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. weekends at 11853 Main St, Sunol; 925)-264-9707.

Niles Canyon Railway runs on select summer weekends with departures from the Sunol station. Check schedules and buy tickets at ncry.org.

Access an interactive trail guide and map for Sunol Peak at AllTrails at alltrails.com/trail/us/california/sunol-peak.



CANDIDATE FILING PERIOD BEGINS FOR NOV. 5 GENERAL ELECTION

Press Release

written by CC News July 15, 2024

On Monday, July 15th, 2024, the Candidate Filing Period for the November 5th General Election will begin and nomination papers will be available for candidates running for office. The nomination period runs through 5:00 pm Friday, August 9, 2024.

A list of offices currently up for election can be found here: www.contracostavote.gov/wp-content/uploads/24Nov5_PositionsUpForElection.pdf

Papers for offices that are up for election will be available at the Contra Costa Elections Office, 555 Escobar Street, Martinez.

For further information on the General Election and key dates, go to www.contracostavote.gov

“The 2024 General Election has officially begun,” said Kristin B. Connelly, Contra Costa Registrar of Voters. “Candidate Filing begins Monday July 15, and our Candidate Services team is ready to help our residents who are looking to serve their communities in an elected position.”

If an incumbent does not file to run for office by the deadline on August 9th, the filing period for that office will extend until 5:00 pm on Wednesday, August 14, 2024.

Interested candidates can schedule an appointment through email at candidate.services@vote.cccounty.us or by calling 925-335-7800. Walk-ins are accepted, but service is subject to the availability of staff. Appointments are available on weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Filing documents and information will be provided to interested constituents at their appointment. The process takes 20 minutes.

Cities Offices (Nomination Papers issued by City Clerks)

Antioch

City Clerk

Treasurer

Mayor

District 2 – 1 Councilmember

District 3 – 1 Councilmember

Brentwood Mayor

District 1 – 1 Councilmember

District 3 – 1 Councilmember

Clayton

3 Councilmembers

Concord

District 2 – 1 Councilmember

District 4 – 1 Councilmember

Danville

3 Councilmembers

El Cerrito

3 Councilmembers

Hercules

3 Councilmembers

Lafayette

3 Councilmembers

1 Councilmember (2-year term)

Martinez

Treasurer

District 2 – 1 Councilmember

District 3 – 1 Councilmember

Moraga

3 Councilmembers

Oakley

District 1 – 1 Councilmember

District 3 – 1 Councilmember

District 5 – 1 Councilmember

Orinda

2 Councilmembers

Pinole

Treasurer

2 Councilmembers

Pittsburg

2 Councilmembers

Pleasant Hill

District 1 – 1 Councilmember

District 2 – 1 Councilmember

District 5 – 1 Councilmember

Richmond

District 1 – 1 Councilmember

District 5 – 1 Councilmember

District 6 – 1 Councilmember

San Pablo

3 Councilmembers

San Ramon

Mayor

District 1 – 1 Councilmember

District 3 – 1 Councilmember

Walnut Creek

3 Councilmembers

SCHOOLS (Nomination Papers issued by County Elections Division)**Acalanes Union High School District**

2 Governing Board Members

Antioch Unified School District

Area 1 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 3 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 4 – 1 Governing Board Member

Brentwood Union School District

2 Governing Board Members

Byron Union School District

2 Governing Board Members

1 Governing Board Member (2-year term)

Canyon Elementary School

District 2 Governing Board Members

Chabot-Las Positas Community College

Ward 7, 1 Governing Board Member (Shared with Alameda which is county of jurisdiction)

Contra Costa County Board of Education

Area 1, 1 Governing Board Member

Area 3, 1 Governing Board Member

Contra Costa Community College District

Ward 2, 1 Governing Board Member

Ward 5, 1 Governing Board Member

John Swett Unified School District

3 Governing Board Members

Knightsen Elementary School District

3 Governing Board Members

Lafayette School District

2 Governing Board Members

Liberty Union High School District

Area 1 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 2 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 4 – 1 Governing Board Member (2-year term)

Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (Shared with Alameda which is county of jurisdiction)

2 Governing Board Members

Martinez Unified School District

Area 1 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 2 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 4 – 1 Governing Board Member

Moraga School District

2 Governing Board Members

Mt. Diablo Unified School District

Area 3 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 5 – 1 Governing Board Member

Oakley Union Elementary School District

Area 1 – 1 Governing Board Member

Area 2 – 1 Governing Board Member

Orinda Union School District

2 Governing Board Members

Pittsburg Unified School District

2 Governing Board Members

San Ramon Valley Unified School District

Area 2, 1 Governing Board Member

Area 3, 1 Governing Board Member

Walnut Creek School District

2 Governing Board Members

1 Governing Board Member (2-year term)

West Contra Costa Unified School District

District 1 – 1 Governing Board Member

District 2 – 1 Governing Board Member

District 3 – 1 Governing Board Member

SPECIAL DISTRICTS (Nomination Papers issued by County Elections Division)**Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District**

Ward 1, 1 Director (Shared with Alameda which is the county of jurisdiction)

Ambrose Recreation & Park District

2 Directors

Bethel Island Municipal Improvement District

3 Directors

Byron-Bethany Irrigation District

Division 2, 1 Director

Byron Sanitary District

3 Directors

Castle Rock County Water District

3 Directors

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District

Division 1, 1 Director

Division 3, 1 Director (2-year term)

Division 4, 1 Director

Division 5, 1 Director

Contra Costa Water District

Division 3, 1 Director

Division 4, 1 Director

Division 5, 1 Director

Crockett Community Services District

2 Directors

1 Director (2-year term)

Diablo Community Services District

2 Directors

Diablo Water District

Ward 1, 1 Director

Ward 5, 1 Director

Town of Discovery Bay Community Services District

2 Directors

Dublin San Ramon Services District

Division 1, 1 Director

East Bay Municipal Utility

District Ward 1, 1 Director

Ward 2, 1 Director (2-year term)

East Bay Regional Park District

Ward 1, 1 Director (Shared with Alameda which is county of jurisdiction)

Ward 2, 1 Director (Shared with Alameda which is county of jurisdiction)

East Contra Costa Irrigation District

Division 2, 1 Director

Division 3, 1 Director

Division 5, 1 Director

Green Valley Recreation & Park District

2 Directors

Ironhouse Sanitary District

3 Directors

Kensington Fire Protection District

2 Directors

Kensington Police Protection & Community Services District

2 Directors

Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District

Division 2, 1 Director

Division 5, 1 Director

Mt. View Sanitary District

Area 1, 1 Director (2-year term)

Area 3, 1 Director

Area 4, 1 Director

Area 5, 1 Director

Pleasant Hill Recreation & Park

District 2 Directors

Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection

District 2 Directors

Rodeo Sanitary District

3 Directors

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District

District 1, 1 Director

District 3, 1 Director (Shared with Alameda which is county of jurisdiction)

District 5, 1 Director (Shared with Alameda which is county of jurisdiction)

San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District

3 Directors

Stege Sanitary District

2 Directors

West County Wastewater District

Division 2, 1 Director

Division 4, 1 Director

CONTRA COSTA HERALD

NEWS OF BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Point Molate in Richmond on track to become an East Bay Regional Park

JULY 12, 2024



Point Molate taken from the SF Bay Trail alignment near Castro Point looking north. *Photo: EBRPD*

\$36 million in state funds will be used for acquisition and clean-up

By Jen Vanya Public Information Specialist, East Bay Regional Park District

The East Bay Regional Park District is poised to acquire the 80-acre Point Molate property located on the Point San Pablo Peninsula in the City of Richmond. The acquisition will ensure that this historic land will be preserved forever as open space and will add it to the Park District's portfolio. The acquisition supports the Park District's mission of habitat preservation and providing recreation and public access for all.

Today, Friday, July 12, 2024, the City of Richmond (City) held a Special Council meeting to consider approval of a Letter of Intent (LOI), a three-party agreement between the City, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), and the Guidiville Rancheria of California.

"This step is worthy of heralding and there are many partners to thank who have backed our goal to make this an East Bay Regional Park," said Park District General Manager Sabrina Landreth. "This Letter of Intent is a major step in the process to secure Point Molate as public open space for the community for decades to come."

The LOI will be before the EBRPD Board of Directors for approval at its regular board meeting on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. This LOI is a precursor to the Purchase and Sale Agreement which

will transfer the property into the hands of the Park District no later than January 15, 2025. The LOI includes a purchase price of \$40 million, supported by an independent appraised valuation. Additional details can be found in the Board's meeting agenda. (See Item III B.)

"This important step toward creating a regional park at Point Molate will preserve stunning bay front land with a rich cultural history for all to enjoy," said Park District Board President Elizabeth Echols. "It promotes our shared goal of creating equitable access to parks and recreation. I thank the many partners, elected leaders, and community members who have long shared our vision for a regional park at Point Molate."



Source: EBRPD

Combined with the extension of the San Francisco Bay Trail already scheduled for construction along this shoreline, this historic land is now on track toward public ownership and to provide the type of open, outdoor space the community has come to expect from the Park District.

“Point Molate has been called ‘the most beautiful part of San Francisco Bay no one’s ever heard of,’” said Richmond Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin. “We are now at the point where everyone will come to know Richmond as home to an amazing world-class park at Point Molate.”

The Park District’s 2013 Master Plan and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s San Francisco Bay Plan both have called for a regional park at Point Molate. It has been a long-standing vision to have a regional park for all of Richmond and Bay Area residents and to ensure the East Bay shoreline is preserved as open space for all to enjoy. Few opportunities remain to create significant parkland in the Bay Area, especially in the Richmond region.



Rendering of Bay Trail through Winehaven Historic District. *Source: EBRPD*

Point Molate is located on the San Pablo Peninsula within the City of Richmond, in Contra Costa County. The San Francisco Bay lies to the west, open space parcels to the north and south, and the Chevron Richmond refinery to the east.

Underscoring the support this acquisition has received over the years, State Senator Nancy Skinner championed \$36 million in the 2022-23 California budget for acquisition and clean-up of Point Molate.

“This is truly a great day for the East Bay and all of California,” Senator Skinner said. “I am thrilled that Point Molate’s 80 acres will now and forever be preserved as parkland and open space. The acquisition of Point Molate, with its breathtaking views along San Francisco Bay, continues the East Bay’s decades-long mission to protect our bay shoreline. Securing Point Molate within the East Bay Regional Park District is not only an incredible environmental victory, it will also reawaken the area’s significant cultural history, which includes Native sacred sites, a historic Chinese fishing camp, a historic wine port and America’s last whaling station. I was proud to lead the state budget effort to help in the purchase of this property and thank the

Guidiville Rancheria of California, the City of Richmond, and the East Bay Regional Park District for their role in securing Point Molate for all to enjoy.”



Looking west from the proposed SF Bay Trail alignment and just south of Point Molate Beach Park. Photo: EBRPD

The East Bay Regional Park District is the largest regional park system in the nation, comprising 73 parks, 55 miles of shoreline, and over 1,330 miles of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and environmental education. The Park District receives an estimated 30 million visits annually throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties in the San Francisco Bay Area.

EAST BAY TIMES

Richmond's Point Molate on track to becoming parkland thanks to \$40 million deal

East Bay Regional Park District plans to purchase the land from local tribe largely with state grant

By SIERRA LOPEZ

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RICHMOND – After years of failed planning and legal fights, some of which are ongoing, Richmond's Point Molate could soon become part of the East Bay Regional Park District following a \$40 million deal negotiated between the city, parks district and Guidiville Tribe.

The Richmond City Council on Friday voted 5-0, with Vice Mayor Claudia Jimenez and Councilmember Soheila Bana both absent, to approve the deal during a special meeting. If all hurdles are cleared, the parks district will take ownership of 81.6 acres of Point Molate, a former U.S. Navy fuel storage and transfer site located on the San Pablo Peninsula not far from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

"We all together are going to develop a world-class crown jewel of shoreline parks in the Bay Area, I have no doubt of that," EPRPD Board Member Colin Coffey said. "The fun starts when we get to design, all of us, everyone in this room, a world-class park with our planners."

The park district's board of directors plan to vote on the deal on Tuesday, Coffey said. The California Coastal Conservancy is then expected to weigh in this September, with escrow closing sometime in November or early December, depending on the agency's decision, Richmond City Attorney David Aleshire said.

A \$36 million state grant will be used to purchase the property for \$40 million. Under a previous agreement, the sale revenue would've been split evenly between the city and tribe. But the council agreed to give up the city's \$20 million share after the tribe's negotiating team said the land was worth more than \$50 million and argued the entities could get more from a developer, Aleshire said.

Ultimately, Aleshire said, relinquishing the city's cut enabled the deal to go through, bringing to fruition a long-held dream of the council and some community members for the land to be preserved as public open space. The deal also puts an end to various maintenance and security costs and a litigious relationship with the Ukiah-based tribe, Aleshire added.

The tribe sued the city in 2012 after plans to develop a mega-casino complex were rejected both by Richmond voters and the City Council. A federal judge formally nixed the casino plan in

a 2018 court ruling. But a settlement agreement allowed the Guidiville Tribe of Pomo Indians and its developer, Upstream Point Molate LLC, to purchase the land for \$400.

Under the agreement, the tribe had a total of five years to find a developer to purchase the land before it returned to city ownership. Three years remain before that time elapses, but Aleshire said another development proposal could mean more legal battles for the city and it's unclear whether a deal like the one put before the council would still be available down the road.

"It's remarkable that in two years we've been able to accomplish this but it has been, certainly, a challenge," Aleshire said Friday.

Before the vote, former Richmond Mayor Tom Butt criticized the deal, saying the City Council was "depriving" the city of \$20 million and that "Point Molate remains off limits indefinitely to the public except for the beach park."

There is "no plan, schedule or funding for improvements required to open up Point Molate as a park," Butt wrote Thursday in his emailed newsletter.

The city's legal troubles over the land are not over. A lawsuit filed against the city by Winehaven Legacy LLC., a Delaware-based development company that sought to build 1,450 homes and 400,000 square feet of commercial space in the area, drags on. The company's 2020 proposal also called for rehabilitating historic structures in the the 47-acre Winehaven Historic District, recognized at the state and federal level as the largest winery in the U.S. before Prohibition.

Winehaven Legacy claims they were unable to obtain necessary financing because the city stalled the project, according to legal filings. Aleshire said the developer failed to provide updated financial plans requested by the council that proved the project wouldn't have had a negative impact on the city's general fund, giving the council grounds for denying the project. Winehaven Legacy attempted to stall the most recent deal with the park district by seeking an injunction but were unsuccessful in court, Aleshire said.

They were also dealt an earlier legal blow. The City Council's 2020 approval of the environmental review was successfully challenged in court, meaning Winehaven Legacy would have had to go through the rigorous process all over again, even before Friday's vote to eventually turn Point Molate into parkland.

Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin, a longtime supporter of retaining Point Molate as public open space, lauded those who "fought long and hard" to bring that dream to life. The deal, she said, will save the city millions in the future while providing the community with educational and recreational opportunities, and improving and preserving the local environment.

"We can now put all the chaos behind us as we usher in a new era," McLaughlin said.

With a Little Help, Western Bluebirds Are Nesting in Alameda

Michael Charnofsky
July 10, 2024



Left: Females do most of the nest building, which entails lining the bottom of a nest box or tree cavity with soft vegetation. Both the mother and father feed the babies equally. **Right:** The adult, male Western bluebird has intense blue feathers with complimenting bronze. The female is also beautiful, with more subtle colors. Photos Rick Lewis.

Western bluebirds are among the most beautiful birds in Alameda. The male is intensely blue with bronze highlights and the female is equally beautiful, with more subtle coloration. Western bluebirds are now quite common in open-space areas of the city, but that was not always the case. Before 2010 they were rarely seen here, and for a few years after that they were seen only in winter around Crown Beach, traveling elsewhere to nest during spring.

Bluebirds often live in suburban environments, and their populations have been fairly steady overall in the Western United States for decades. So why has their population exploded in recent years in Alameda? To answer that mystery, it is important to understand their habitat needs, how humans caused their demise in Alameda and elsewhere, usually not on purpose, and how humans have helped bring them back.

Bluebirds need open space like grasslands to hunt invertebrates, and they also need trees or open forest for nesting, roosting, and hunting. The Crab Cove area of Crown Beach is prime bluebird habitat for food, but not for nesting. Bluebirds nest in holes in trees, called cavities. They do not make the holes—woodpeckers usually do. Sometimes the holes form when

branches fall out of trees. If the woodpeckers make more cavities than they need, if they abandon them, or if they die, the nests become available for other species. Although woodpeckers will build cavities in many kinds of trees, they almost always use dead wood because it is much easier to excavate than living wood.



Bluebirds nest in cavities (holes) in trees, usually excavated by woodpeckers who no longer use them. Here, a male Nuttall's woodpecker at Crab Cove arrives at his nest with food. Photo Rick Lewis.

In Alameda and other cities, park staff and homeowners usually cut down dead trees and large, dead branches so that they will not fall on buildings or endanger humans. By protecting people and property, we also take away potential nesting habitat for bluebirds.

Despite this general lack of dead wood in Alameda, in Spring 2013, a pair of bluebirds nested in a hole in a tree in Washington Park, the first known nest in the city since records have been kept. Unfortunately, the nest was not successful, but it inspired Francis Mendoza, a former naturalist with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), to improve nesting habitat for bluebirds at Crown Beach.

Mendoza teamed up with teachers and middle school students at Nea Community Learning Center to research where the bluebirds were hunting in the Crab Cove area, and to help decide the best locations to install bluebird nest boxes. The students then built six wood nesting boxes, some covered with creative paint jobs. In the winter of 2013/2014, the boxes were installed.



Left: Middle school students and their teachers from NEA Community Learning Center celebrate after building and then helping install a bluebird nest box at Crab Cove in early 2014. **Right:** Four middle school students are proud of the bluebird nest box they built and helped to install at Crab Cove in early 2014. Photos courtesy of EBRPD.

In the spring of 2014, bluebirds successfully nested in one of the boxes. One year later, four of the six boxes had successful bluebird nests. Bluebirds were here year-round and, for many years since then, most of the nest boxes have had nests. Bluebirds, now on the search for more opportunities, have successfully nested in a few tree cavities and even in an abandoned utility pole in less developed parts of Alameda, further increasing the population.

Connor Nitsos is a Park Ranger at Crown Memorial State Beach, which is managed by EBRPD. He loves bluebirds. In the winter of 2022/23, he built and installed four nest boxes in the Crab Cove area. Inspired that they were used that spring, he built and installed eight more in the winter of 2023/2024. In mid-June of this year, at least 10 out of 18 nest boxes in the Crab Cove area were being used by bluebirds, and two by tree swallows. It is possible that others had been used earlier in the spring. This is a high rate of occupancy and a huge success! If bluebirds could thank both Francis and Connor, they certainly would.

Bluebirds are easy to see as they hunt, which makes them fun to watch. Sometimes they hover in the air above potential prey, and often they pounce onto the ground to catch their meal. Sometimes they catch insects in the air or pick caterpillars off shrubs and trees. In the spring and summer, they eat mostly insects, spiders, and other invertebrates. In the fall and winter, they switch over to eating mostly berries and seeds. In the fall, a large toyon bush outside of the Doug Siden Visitor Center at Crab Cove brings much joy to human observers as beautiful bluebirds eat the bright red toyon berries.



In spring and summer, Western bluebirds eat mostly insects, spiders, and other kinds of invertebrates. In fall and winter, they eat mostly berries and seeds. Photo Rick Lewis.

Now that bluebirds are so plentiful in Alameda, they help control populations of some insects. Tree swallows that have used some of the nest boxes are insectivores, and they help control mosquitoes.

Bluebirds nest April through July. When the babies are small, the mother or father bluebird goes all the way into the box or cavity to feed their noisy chicks. When the babies are bigger and can reach up to the entrance hole, the parent can quickly deliver a meal without going inside. Between the Crown Beach main parking lot and the Glory of the Seas Building at Crab Cove, there are currently 18 nest boxes, and more may be added. If you come to watch bluebirds and the nesting season has finished, you can still find them hunting all over the area. Ask a park ranger, naturalist, or interpretive student aide where to look.



The baby bluebird's wide, bright mouth is an easy feeding target for the mother bluebird. Photo Rick Lewis.

Remember, we humans cut down dead trees for safety, but that is bad for birds that are cavity nesters. Would you like to do something to improve nesting habitat? Consider installing nest boxes around your home, school, or community center.

If you want to help a particular kind of bird, first research the location to find out if it's the right habitat, and make sure you have the right-sized box with the right-sized hole. Bluebirds may sometimes come into the middle of neighborhoods, but they tend to nest only near open space. There are many places in Alameda that are appropriate for installing bluebird boxes. Other cavity-nesting birds like chickadees, Bewick's wrens, nuthatches, and oak titmice will nest in the middle of neighborhoods if there is enough food nearby. You can increase healthy food for birds by planting a garden of California native plants and growing that garden organically.



When building or buying bluebird boxes, it's important to have the correct hole size. If the hole is too large, predators can enter, like this crow at a nest box at Crab Cove. Photo Rick Lewis.

We invite you to come to Crab Cove to watch Western bluebirds.

For more information about bluebirds, including directions on how to build nest boxes, visit the following websites: [California Bluebird Recovery Program](#), [North American Bluebird Society](#), and the [Golden Gate Bird Alliance](#). You can also easily find nest boxes for bluebirds and other cavity nesters for purchase online.

Michael Charnofsky is a Naturalist with the East Bay Regional Park District, based at the Doug Siden Visitor Center at Crab Cove, Crown Memorial State Beach in Alameda. This article is part of a series from the [Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Reserve](#) (FAWR), a Conservation Committee of the [Golden Gate Bird Alliance](#) (GGBA, formerly Audubon). Learn more about FAWR at www.goldengatebirds.org.