




**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

DATE	June 6, 2024
TITLE	Debriefing and Discussion of Outcomes from Board of Directors 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference
DIVISION	General Manager's Office
FROM	Erich Pfuehler, Chief of Government and Legislative Affairs Dr. Ana M. Alvarez, Deputy General Manager
APPROVED	Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

RECOMMENDATION

This is an information item.

BACKGROUND

On behalf of General Manager Sabrina Landreth, the East Bay Regional Park District (Park District) Government and Legislative Affairs team will present to the Board Legislative Committee an update about the 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference, which was held from May 13 through May 16. The Park District Board of Directors, General Manager and Deputy General Manager annually participate in the Park District's Federal Advocacy Conference, staffed by the Government and Legislative Affairs team and hosted in the nation's capital of Washington, D.C. During this year's conference, members of the Board of Directors and staff leadership connected directly and in person with the East Bay's Federal delegation to discuss the Park District's priorities and challenges. During this event, the Board and staff engaged with the agency's full Federal delegation, as well as relevant Federal agencies such as the National Park Service (NPS) and United States Forest Service (USFS), on issue-specific and programmatic topics. Meetings also occurred with AmeriCorps and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Coalition.

ANALYSIS

The 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference served as an opportunity to engage on the Federal objectives outlined in the East Bay Regional Park District's 2024 Legislative Program. The 2024 Legislative Program is strategically designed to address key issues and priorities of the Park District, emphasizing strategic engagement, funding opportunities, and legislative initiatives. The following paragraphs provide an overview of how specific issues discussed during the Conference align with Federal objectives and delegation member priorities.

Advocacy Goal: Community Health

In support of the Park District's advocacy goal of community health, the delegation meetings during the conference spotlighted the Park District's efforts to secure full and increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

Land and Water Conservation Fund Competitive Grant Program: The Park District has been a steadfast supporter of the LWCF since its establishment in 1964, advocating for outdoor recreation and the protection of natural resources. Despite successful grant investments in various projects,

challenges arise as initial-phase LWCF-funded projects are unable to secure additional funding through the program until at least seven years have passed. The Park District aims to address the program's underfunding in coordination with the LWCF Coalition. Together, steps will be explored to expand funding and eligibility. During the Conference, the Park District echoed the Coalition's support for an additional \$450 million annually in discretionary funds to supplement the LWCF program. This funding is critical for realizing ready-to-go projects and achieving conservation goals while preserving invaluable natural resources.

Advocacy Goal: Green Jobs

Senator Butler and Representative Lee, as well as AmeriCorps, were engaged on the Park District's efforts to support climate corps investments in California.

Support for Coordination on Climate Corps in California: The White House's interest in expanding National Service Programs, particularly the creation of a climate corps, aligns with the Park District's advocacy goal of green jobs. The legislative effort should include directing Federal investments in corps programs to existing state crews, such as the California Conservation Corps and Civ Corps, to ensure efficient implementation and maximize the impact on environmental initiatives and youth development.

Advocacy Goal: Welcoming Visitor Use Facilities

Senators Butler and Padilla, along with Representatives Garamendi and Lee, were engaged on the importance of expediting the land transfer at Judge John Sutter Regional Shoreline.

Judge John Sutter Regional Shoreline Land Transfer Update: Building on 2023 efforts, the 2024 legislative goal is to champion language within Federal legislation guiding entities to expedite the cleanup and transfer of the upland property of the Oakland Army Base to the Park District. The aim is to enhance and broaden public access to Judge John Sutter Regional Shoreline by integrating the 14-acre upland property, a vital component of the publicly owned regional shoreline.

Advocacy Goals: Ecosystem Stewardship, Wildfire Resilience, and Sea Level Rise Preparedness

Senator Padilla, Representative DeSaulnier, and Representative Swalwell were engaged on the importance of proactive investments in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for climate mitigation work.

FEMA Investment Prioritization: Through working actively with FEMA on disaster recovery projects, the Park District has recognized the need to streamline restoration project processes for conservation agencies. It should be a priority to mitigate impact before storm surges and other natural disasters. It is important for legislators and their staff to understand and recognize the differences in work by public resource agencies from private developers. During the Conference, the Park District advocated for additional resources to expedite restoration and mitigation projects, contributing to resilient urban-adjacent open space and reducing the need for post-disaster recovery efforts.

Advocacy Goal: Wildfire Resilience

Representatives DeSaulnier, Harder, Khanna and Swalwell, as well as the U.S. Forest Service, were engaged on the need to invest wildfire mitigation funding into grassland infrastructure and efforts.

Grassland Legislation: The Park District's commitment to preserving and managing 80,000 acres of grassland involves a multifaceted approach, including conservation grazing. The 2024 legislative objective aims to broaden understanding of conservation grazing within the Federal delegation, encouraging comprehensive discussions about grassland wildfire mitigation. The goal is to explore the introduction of Federal legislation supporting these conservation efforts, reinforcing the commitment to preserving ecologically significant landscapes.

Advocacy Goal: Climate-Friendly Transportation

Representative Garamendi was engaged on the importance of guiding funding to advance the Richmond Bay Trail Gap Closure Project.

Richmond Bay Trail Gap Closure Project: Aligning with the East Bay delegation's interest in enhancing access to parks and promoting active transportation, the Park District seeks Federal funding for the Richmond Bay Trail Gap Closure Project. The project aims to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail, connecting key locations and providing regional transportation benefits. The Representative expressed strong interest in these types of initiatives and agreed to advance a funding request for this project.

The East Bay Regional Park District is committed to advancing these Federal objectives, recognizing the significance of collaboration and advocacy in addressing crucial issues and priorities. The 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference serves as an important platform for fostering engagement and ensuring the success of the Park District's legislative program.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact with this informational item.

ATTACHMENTS

PowerPoint Presentation.