


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

DATE	November 13, 2024
TITLE	Recommendation to Support the 2025 - 2026 Legislative Program
DIVISION	General Manager's Office
FROM	Erich Pfuehler, Chief of Government and Legislative Affairs
APPROVED	Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

RECOMMENDATION

The General Manager recommends the Board Legislative Committee advance the 2025-2026 Legislative Program for adoption by the Board of Directors.

BACKGROUND

The Government and Legislative Affairs program of the East Bay Regional Park District (Park District) works with elected officials and agency partners at the local, state and Federal levels to promote and advance agency initiatives. The program efforts focus on securing funding and advocating for policies which align with identified project needs and priorities. Led by the Park District's mission, Board of Directors, and General Manager, the Government and Legislative Affairs team engages actively with local, state and Federal authorities to advocate for relevant funding and policies. They maintain strategic relationships through regular meetings, site visits, and events with elected officials and external agency partners. The team conducts analytical research and surveys to support the agency's advocacy goals.

Guided by the Board Legislative Committee, the Legislative Program sets multi-year goals and objectives in alignment with the state and Federal legislative sessions. These goals enable the Park District to respond effectively to emerging opportunities across local, state, and Federal levels. Concurrently, the objectives facilitate proactive engagement with elected officials and agency leadership to advance priorities established by the Board of Directors and General Manager. The Park District's identified advocacy goals are as follows:

- **Climate - Friendly Transportation:** To expand accessible active and public transportation to and within East Bay parks and trails.
- **Equitable Park Access:** To ensure equitable access to parks so all East Bay communities can enjoy the physical and psychological benefits of nature.
- **Ecosystem Stewardship:** To support ecosystem health through restoration, acquisition and habitat enhancement, and improved efficiencies in regulatory approvals.
- **Green Jobs:** To guide the development of career pathways for all in the parks, recreation, outdoor and environmental fields.
- **Sea Level Rise Preparedness:** To address sea level rise with nature-based infrastructure and initiate mitigation strategies regarding climate change.
- **Welcoming Visitor Use Facilities:** To be sure all visitors are welcomed to the East Bay parks and trails by providing facilities which are safe, accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

- **Wildfire Resilience:** To minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the East Bay by using proactive vegetation management which is ecologically sound.

In alignment with the Park District's Mission, overarching principles of the Legislative Program include equitable service delivery, advancing climate resiliency adaptation and mitigation, guiding work with an environmental ethic, supporting inclusive interpretation and educational opportunities, increasing conservation through land acquisition, and ensuring the fiscal health of the Park District.

ANALYSIS

In 2024, the Park District's Legislative Program focused on several key objectives across local, state, and Federal levels. Locally, efforts included engaging in regional transportation discussions to advocate for expanded active transportation and maintenance funding. Additionally, the Park District worked to elevate local workforce development partnerships through partnership site visits with Civicorps. In April, the agency coordinated a successful site visit for the Tidewater project to highlight the importance of equitable park access. At the state level, the Park District sought direct funding for various projects, including the Richmond Bay Trail Expansion Project, Oyster Bay Public Access Project and permanent staff facilities for the California Conservation Corps, though budget constraints limited funding advances. Significant achievements included supporting the extension of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects and securing categories in the statewide Climate Bond for key environmental programs. Additionally, the Park District sponsored legislation, AB 2091 (Grayson D-Concord) Existing Trails for Nature Access which advanced through the legislature unanimously and was signed into law by the Governor. Federally, the Park District focused on improving FEMA disaster recovery processes and advocating for federal legislation related to national service programs and wildfire mitigation. Through Congressional Direct Funding allocations, the Park District was able to advance \$2 million for Tidewater at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline by Senator Butler and Representative Lee, as well as \$1.5 million for the Richmond Bay Trail Expansion Project by Representative Garamendi. Additionally, thanks to the efforts of Senator Padilla and Representative Garamendi, language was advanced in the National Defense Authorization Act to codify the land transfer at Judge John Sutter Regional Shoreline from the Army to the Park District. Despite some challenges, the Park District's advocacy efforts resulted in notable progress and strategic advancements in their legislative goals.

The Park District's 2025-2026 Legislative Program objectives aim to support a comprehensive strategy for advancing equitable park access and environmental stewardship through multi-level advocacy. Locally, the Park District aims to enhance relationships with elected officials to promote active and public transportation improvements, enhance equitable park access and improve wildfire resilience. These efforts include supporting tax measures and local policies which fund these priorities. At the state level, the Park District seeks to advance collaboration with agencies such as Department of Natural Resources, California Office of Emergency Services, California Environmental Protection Agency and state legislators to secure funding for wildfire mitigation and infrastructure improvements, bolster equitable access through state grants and legislation and streamline regulatory processes for ecosystem stewardship. Additionally, the Park District is focused on advancing green job training programs. The Legislative Program will continue to advocate for funding to enhance park facilities and increase resilience of parks and trails as extreme weather events become more frequent. Federally, the Park District plans to engage in national funding initiatives and legislative advocacy to secure support for green transportation projects, habitat restoration, equitable park access and wildfire management. Overall, the proposed objectives aim to represent a holistic approach to enhancing park access, ecological health and community resilience by leveraging relationships and support across local, state, and Federal levels. Specifically, the proposed objectives in support of the legislative program goals are:

Climate - Friendly Transportation

Goal: To expand accessible active and public transportation to and within East Bay parks and trails.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Strengthen relationships with local elected officials to advocate for expanded active and public transportation to East Bay parks and engage on tax measures funding active transportation infrastructure improvements.
- **State:** Collaborate with Caltrans and state legislators to secure additional funding for enhancing park transportation infrastructure, including active transportation routes and public transit connections.
- **Federal:** Advocate for including East Bay parks in national transportation funding initiatives, like Federal Transition Administration (FTA) grants for improving access to outdoor recreation, and support legislation which promotes Federal investment in green transportation projects for parks and trails.

Equitable Park Access

Goal: To ensure equitable access to parks so all East Bay communities can enjoy the physical and psychological benefits of nature.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Engage with local elected officials to promote initiatives which improve equitable park access for under resourced communities and explore ways local tax measures can be leveraged to fund park improvements and accessibility projects in these areas.
- **State:** In alignment with *Outdoors for All*, seek state funding to improve park access and infrastructure in under resourced areas, support legislation which expands equitable park access, and work with California State Parks and Parks California on the Outdoor Equity Grants Program for consistent park programming funding.
- **Federal:** Support funding for Federal grant programs advancing Justice40 to improve parks in under invested in areas, and advocate for national policies which promote equitable access to green spaces.

Ecosystem Stewardship

Goal: To support ecosystem health through restoration, acquisition and habitat enhancement, and improved efficiencies in regulatory approvals.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Work with local and regional agencies and organizations to simplify regulatory approvals for habitat restoration and land acquisition projects.
- **State:** Advocate for state legislation to simplify the regulatory process for habitat restoration and land acquisition while maintaining environmental protection. Advance legislation to clarify the role of a Public Resources Code (PRC) 5500 independent special park district.
- **Federal:** Support Federal initiatives to efficiently advance regulatory approval for conservation projects. Advocate for increased funding for habitat restoration and enhancement programs.

Extreme Weather Preparedness

Goal: To address sea level rise, lake health and other climate-related challenges with nature-based infrastructure and proactive mitigation strategies.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Advocate with local and regional agencies to advance policies which address extreme weather including, but not limited to sea level rise, water quality and watershed health.

- **State:** Explore opportunities to advance state funding and legislative support for comprehensive climate adaptation plans which include nature-based infrastructure to address extreme weather, sea level rise and lake health.
- **Federal:** Advance Federal support through agencies like FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers for sea level rise adaptation projects, and support legislation which funds research and implementation of nature-based solutions for coastal resilience and erosion control, as well as creeks, lakes and streams.

Green Jobs

Goal: To guide the development of career pathways for all in the parks, recreation, outdoor and environmental fields.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Build upon relationships with local elected officials and workforce development organizations, like Civicorps, to develop and promote green job training programs for parks and environmental careers, and champion local policies which support green job creation and career pathways.
- **State:** Advocate stable funding for state-level programs, like California Conservation Corps, which support green job training and career pathways in parks and environmental fields.
- **Federal:** Support federal policies and funding from the U.S. Department of Labor to develop and enhance green job training programs, like AmeriCorps, and advocate for including parks and environmental careers in national workforce development initiatives.

Welcoming Visitor Use Facilities

Goal: To be sure all visitors are welcomed to the East Bay parks and trails by providing facilities which are safe, accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Through the Local Government Engagement Strategy (LGES), partner with local elected officials to explore how the Park District can enhance the accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability of visitor facilities in East Bay parks.
- **State:** Advocate for state funding and policy support to advance the Park District's prioritized capital projects.
- **Federal:** Engage with Federal elected officials and agencies to ensure funding is maintained for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and support legislation which promotes best practices for inclusive and sustainable visitor facilities.

Wildfire Resilience

Goal: To minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the East Bay by using proactive vegetation management which is ecologically sound.

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Objectives:

- **Local:** Collaborate on local initiatives to improve wildfire resilience and support funding measures for wildfire management, including vegetation management and community preparedness programs and share the best practices of the Park District.
- **State:** Advocate for state legislation and funding for wildfire resilience projects, including grants for vegetation management to enhance safe, healthy forests and grasslands.

- **Federal:** Support Federal policies and funding opportunities, such as those from the U.S. Forest Service, aimed at biomass utilization. Advocate for national legislation which prioritizes investment in ecological fire management and resilience strategies.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENTS

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program Presentation

Proposed 2025 – 2026 Legislative Program