

**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

DATE	April 16, 2024
TITLE	Informational Update on the 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference
DIVISION	General Manager's Office
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APPROVED	Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational presentation.

BACKGROUND

The East Bay Regional Park District (Park District) Government and Legislative Affairs team will provide an overview to the Board of Directors on the upcoming 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference. The goal is to ensure a productive, fruitful and memorable experience where members of the Board of Directors will be connecting directly in person with the agency's Federal delegation to discuss the Park District's priorities.

Hosted in the nation's capital of Washington, D.C., the Board of Directors annually participate in the Park District's Federal Advocacy Conference staffed by the Government and Legislative Affairs in the General Manager's Office. As part of this annual event to take place on May 13 through May 17, 2024, Board and staff will engage 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. This presentation will provide an update on focus topics for all meetings to occur during the Park District's 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference, as well as the week-of conference logistics.

ANALYSIS

The 2024 Federal Advocacy Conference serves as an opportunity to highlight 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 which will be discussed during the Conference align with Federal objectives and delegation of member priorities.

Advocacy Goal: Community Health

In support of the Park District's advocacy goal of community health, the delegation meetings during the conference will spotlight 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 has passed. The Park District aims to address the program's underfunding in coordination with the LWCF Coalition to explore steps for expanding funding and eligibility. During the Conference, the Park District will echo 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 will be 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 legislators will be asked to support directing Federal investments in corps programs to existing state programs, such as the California Conservation Corps and Civicorps, 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, will be 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 initiatives, the 2024 legislative goal is to champion language within the National Defense Authorization Act guiding entities to expedite the cleanup and transfer of the upland property 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 as 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 will be 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. Mitigating impact before storm surges and other natural disasters occur should be prioritized. It is important through this work that legislators understand and recognize the differences in work by public resource agencies from private developers. During the Conference, the Park District will advocate for additional resources to expedite restoration and mitigation projects, contributing to more resilient, urban adjacent open space and reducing the need for post-disaster recovery efforts.

Advocacy Goal: Wildfire Resilience

Representatives DeSaulnier, Swalwell, Harder and Khanna will be 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 over 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 will be 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, 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 East Bay Regional Park District is committed to advancing these Federal objectives, recognizing the significance of collaboration and advocacy in addressing priority issues. 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

No fiscal impact associated with this report. The expenditures associated with the event are included in the 2024 Operating Budget.

ATTACHMENTS

Presentation.