

**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT  
NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE** Tuesday, February 13, 2024  
**TITLE** Approval of the Minutes for the NCRC Meeting November 29, 2023  
**DIVISION** Acquisition, Stewardship, and Development  
**FROM** Sabrina Pinell, Sr. Executive Assistant  
Ken Wysocki, Assistant General Manager of ASD  
**APPROVED**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommend to approve the minutes for the Board Natural & Cultural Resources Committee Meeting on November 29, 2023.

**COMMITTEE MINUTES**

A meeting of the Board Natural and Cultural Resources Committee was held on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, in a hybrid format in person and through the Park District's virtual platform, Zoom. Committee Chair Elizabeth Echols called the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m. The following is a summary of the items discussed:

I. Chinese Mining History at Black Diamond (Loft/Kauzer)

Supervising Naturalist Pia Loft and Naturalist Jessica Kauzer presented the history of the Chinese Miners in the Mount Diablo coalfield and surrounding areas. The presentation focused on their continuing work to uncover and share the often under told and tumultuous history of Chinese immigrants discriminated against in the 1800s. Staff discussed the efforts that the Interpretation and Recreation Department are making to interpret this uncomfortable history as they seek to be honest in the stories they tell and inclusive of the communities they serve. Interpretive & Recreation Services SE Unit Manager Kevin Damstra introduced Loft and Kauzer. Damstra informed the board of the effort made by his unit to learn under told stories since 2012.

Loft gave an overview of the diversity, equity and inclusion programs relevant to the East Bay diverse population. Loft represents the northeast sector located in Eastern Contra Costa County. This sector is also located on Bay Miwok land.

Kauzer spoke about the Chinese community experiences in the Mt. Diablo coalfield starting around the 1850s. Chinese miners were intentionally excluded from photos & pushed to the outskirts of town. By the 1870s, Chinese miners were fully excluded from the mines.

Moving forward the team is elevating untold stories for a more inclusive and honest history. The plan includes incorporating pictures and other pieces of Black Diamond Mines' history into community

programs.

Director Mercurio thanked Kauzer and Loft for the presentation and added his interest in transportation history. He also wanted to know how many Chinese Miners were working in the coal field.

Kauzer and Loft responded that they don't have a definitive number, but they are still reviewing census records.

Director Coffey asked about the details of the census records.

Loft said the issue is the census didn't label the workers as miners, but as laborers and dishwashers.

Director Echols asked if other ethnicities were listed as miners unlike the Chinese community.

Kauzer responded there were a plethora of records of other ethnicities listed as miners.

Director Mercurio asked are there more artifacts than the two displayed in the presentation slides.

Kauzer responded only two artifacts were found but they are actively looking.

Director Echols noted there will be a new chair and possibly new board members.

*No public comments*

## 2. 2024 Meeting Agenda Plan (Wysocki)

Annual meeting topics include: 1) IPM Annual Report; 2) Harmful Algal Blooms 3) Free Roaming Cat Policy. The last meeting of the year includes time to discuss agenda topic planning for the new year

Assistant General Manager Ken Wysocki informed the board we have four meetings for the year – 12 to 16 topics for the year. This number includes the mandatory items (Harmful Algal Blooms, Free Roaming Cat Policy, IPM Annual Report).

Wysocki spoke about the importance of not only speaking on the work but showing the progress.

Director Coffey asked about the Sunol gathering.

Wysocki responded the District reached out to the divisional partners to discuss ideas.

Damstra spoke about the Sunol gathering and how he advocated for to be at the top of the list for events. The Sunol gathering focused predominantly on early American history and California Americano history. Also bringing members of diverse communities to share cultural traditions and history.

Director Echols asked to hear more about the additional items list. The academic connection and history as well as the shoreline preparedness for sea level rise & fuel management plan. She also states she feels it's very important to expound on potential partnerships & updated curriculum.

*No public comments*

## 3. First Successful Nesting of Black Oystercatchers Among Endangered California Least Terns Along the West Coast of North America (Riensch)

Certified Wildlife Biologist David "Doc Quack" Riensch presented on Black Oystercatchers

(*Haematopus bachmani*) establishing nests at “Tern Town”, an island located in Hayward, California, along the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay. This is the first documented occurrence of oystercatchers successfully nesting and fledgling young in association with California Least Terns. The island provides nesting habitat for three special status species. Since 2015, and for a total of eight breeding seasons, the endangered California Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*), the threatened Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) and species-of-special-concern Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*), have all nested successfully. This new report on breeding Black Oystercatchers indicates that managing habitat for California Least Tern, Western Snowy Plover, and Black Skimmer can also benefit the Black Oystercatcher. This site-specific information on breeding Black Oystercatchers supports recovery plan tasks that are consistent with managing habitat for the California Least Tern, Western Snowy Plover and Black Skimmer.

Rienschke acknowledged the co-authors H.T. Harvey & Associates Ecological Consultant Ben G. Pearl and Park District Naturalist Susan E. Ramos. He also stated the importance of public work and volunteering. This project has fostered over 7,000 volunteers and almost 41,000 hours of volunteer service. This project had a collaborative effort with over 16 different partners.

Rienschke continued about the Black Oystercatcher species. There are only 10,000 to 12,000 of the red billed shorebirds in the world. This species is uncommon in the west coast of North America. The species is typically limited to the rocky intertidal. Also, the black oystercatcher is dependent on the rocky intertidal shoreline which can be affected by human interaction and climate change. Black Oystercatchers typically eat Sea and Bay mussels and nest in gradual sandy slopes.

Rienschke informed the board about the California Least Tern, which is the smallest tern in North America.

Listed as a federally endangered species since 1970 and state endangered species since 1971. This tern is a migratory bird nesting along the Pacific Ocean beaches down to Baja California.

Rienschke discussed the Western Snowy Plover which is federally listed as threatened (2012) and is a California Species of Special Concern (2019). The Pacific Coast population of the Western Snowy Plover range extends from Damon Point, Washington, USA to Bahia Magdalena, Baja California, Mexico.

Rienschke also noted that the Black Skimmer has very long dark wings with a colored bill. This species breeds along the coast of San Francisco Bay down to San Diego Bay in the interior of the Salton Sea.

Rienschke explained the methods of the study to the board. Nesting and reproductive success data (nest chronology, clutch size, hatching success) were collected using the Type I Colony Survey Method. In this method, permitted biologists entered the colonies twice a week to mark nests using numbered 5-cm diameter washers vertically cemented into a small plaster of Paris base. This type of intensive, in-colony monitoring yields data on clutch size, hatching and fledging success, and evidence of any predation. The oystercatcher diet data were gathered by collecting, identifying, and measuring dropped bivalves and mussels at their nest site to determine the percentage of prey fed to their offspring.

Rienschke methods yielded great data. The Black Oystercatcher established a nest on June 6, 2022, on the eastern edge of the “Tern Town” island (37.629739 N Lat., 122.146039 W Long.), located at the Hayward Regional Shoreline, and ultimately produced one fledgling. The diet data that were gathered by collecting dropped bivalves and mussels at their island nest site showed that the percentage of prey fed to their offspring was composed of, in decreasing order of abundance, Japanese Little necked Clam (*Ruditapes philippinarum*), Ribbed Mussel (*Geukensia demissa*), Bent-nose Clam (*Macoma nasuta*), Limpet sp. (*Patellogastropoda* sp.), and Bay Mussel (*Mytilus edulis*). This information is going to be used to help inform the federal & state recovery plans for these special status species.

Director Coffey inquired about accommodation for the endangered species with the major sea level rise at Hayward Shoreline Park.

Riensché said there is a collaborate work group looking at the hydrology of the water and levels at the levees. The work group is coming up with needed modifications to the islands and succession plans for surrounding locations.

Director Mecurio expressed that he learned a lot and thanked Riensché for the presentation.

Director Echols is excited about the reproductive studies and asked for a copy of the slides.

*No public comments*

The meeting adjourned at 2:14 p.m.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None.