



2024 Annual Review: Implementation of the Updated Free-roaming Cat Management Policy

**Natural and Cultural Resources Committee
July 31, 2024**



American avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)
Joe Didonato

Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy Annual Review

- Purpose
 - Sensitive species protection
 - Cat welfare
 - Park user experience
- How it works
 - Education and coordination
 - Proactive deterrence
 - Trap and transfer
 - Reporting, review, and improvement
- Successes and Opportunities

Timeline

NCRC orders update
of existing policy

NCRC meeting, February 25



2021

Progress update

NCRC meeting, December 8



2021

1st Annual
Review

NCRC June 8

2022

2nd Annual
Review

NCRC August 16

2023

3rd Annual
Review

NCRC July 31

2024

Lethal
Control
Moratorium
December 10

2020



2021



2022



Updated policy adopted

Board of Directors Meeting June 15

USDA contract renewed

Board of Directors Meeting February 15

Purpose – Wildlife, Cats, and People



Wildlife at Risk of Extinction



California Least Tern



Western Snowy Plover
Jerry Ting, flickr.com



Western Burrowing Owl
Mary Malec



Ridgway's Rail
Jerry Ting, flickr.com



Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse



Black Skimmer

Protecting Species at Risk of Extinction



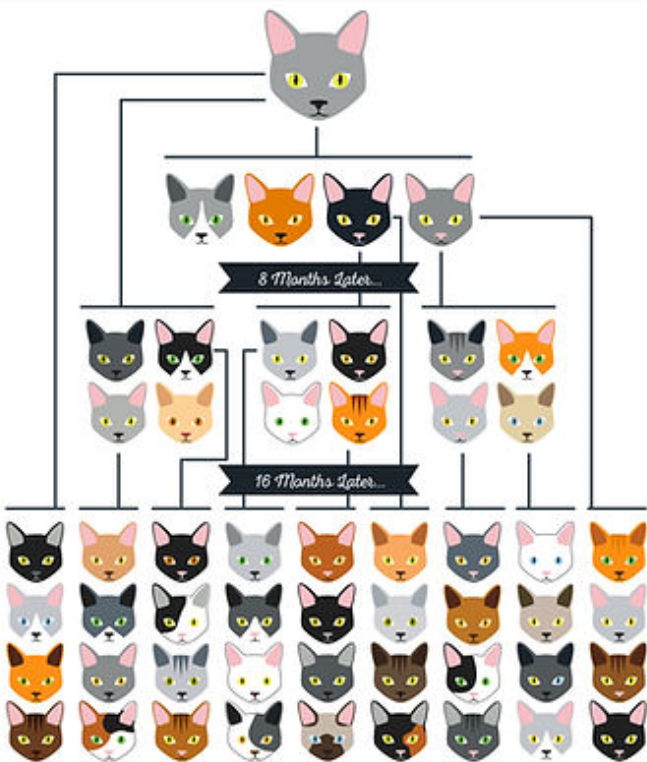
“preserve a rich heritage of natural
and cultural resources”

-EBRPD Mission Statement, Master Plan 2013

- Required by regulatory permits
- Legal obligation under Federal and State law
- Protect unique species and healthy biodiverse ecosystems
- Add resiliency to species threatened by climate change
- Protect public investments into habitat restoration

Cat Welfare and Park User Experience

ONE UNSPAVED FEMALE CAT CAN HAVE UP TO THREE LITTERS OF KITTENS EVERY YEAR, STARTING WHEN SHE IS JUST FOUR MONTHS OLD. THE AVERAGE LITTER SIZE IS FOUR KITTENS, BUT CAN BE AS MANY AS EIGHT.



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- Shortened lifespan
- Exposure to injury and illness
- Early and often pregnancy
- Can be upsetting to park users



How it Works – Education and Prevention

- Improved signage
- Brochures
- Updated website



Next steps: signs for additional parks, external education, website updates, 2nd brochure

Education and Prevention

- With OAS, identified MLK as frequent rabbit dumping area
- Installed new signs and trapped/rescued rabbits



Infrastructure Improvements and Deterrence

- Maintenance of fencing
- 60 new animal proof trash cans planned throughout District + overall phase in
- Initiated waste management review to secure dumpsters

Next steps : Continue fence maintenance, upgrades to infrastructure and monitoring of predators



California Gull (*Larus californicus*)
Michael Kern



Transparency and Reporting



Photo: Tony Iwane, flickr.com
Ridgway's rail, MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline

Annual Report

- Progress has been made on all Policy components
- Trap and transfer of 178 free-roaming cats since the beginning of this collaboration in early 2021
- No lethal removal of cats

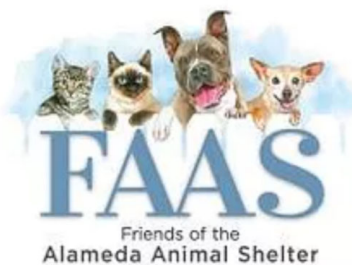
Policy review:

- Board to review policy at least every five years, in 2026

Coordination with Animal Services Agencies

- Bimonthly meetings with Animal Services Agencies
- Biweekly internal meetings
- Weekly meetings with Community Cat Coordinator
- Developing long-term cooperative agreement
- Financial support

Next steps: finalize cooperative agreement



CONTRA COSTA
ANIMAL SERVICES



Successes and Opportunities



Western Burrowing Owl
Albany Bulb

Education and Prevention – Internal

- Trapping Training

- Led by EBRPD, OAS, and Feral Change on 2/28/24
- Voluntary for interested staff
- 42 staff trained how to safely trap

- Video Training

- Required for all public-facing staff
- Completed by over 500 staff

Next steps: provide trapping training annually or biannually



Community Relations and Buy In

- Community Cat Coordinator, Tiffany Ashbaker, builds relationships with colony caretakers and fosters buy-in and cooperation
- Park staff work to educate park users
- Feeding and abandonment of domestic animals and wildlife is prohibited under Ordinance 38



Trap and *Transfer*



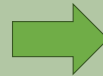
- 178 cats humanely trapped and transferred from parks since 2021
 - 29 through June 2024
- Animal Services Agencies assessed and placed cats in a working cat program or pet adoption
- No cats were lethally removed
- No TNR is allowed

Working Cat and Pet Adoption

- Pet Adoptions – socialized cat or kittens



Kevin on rescue day



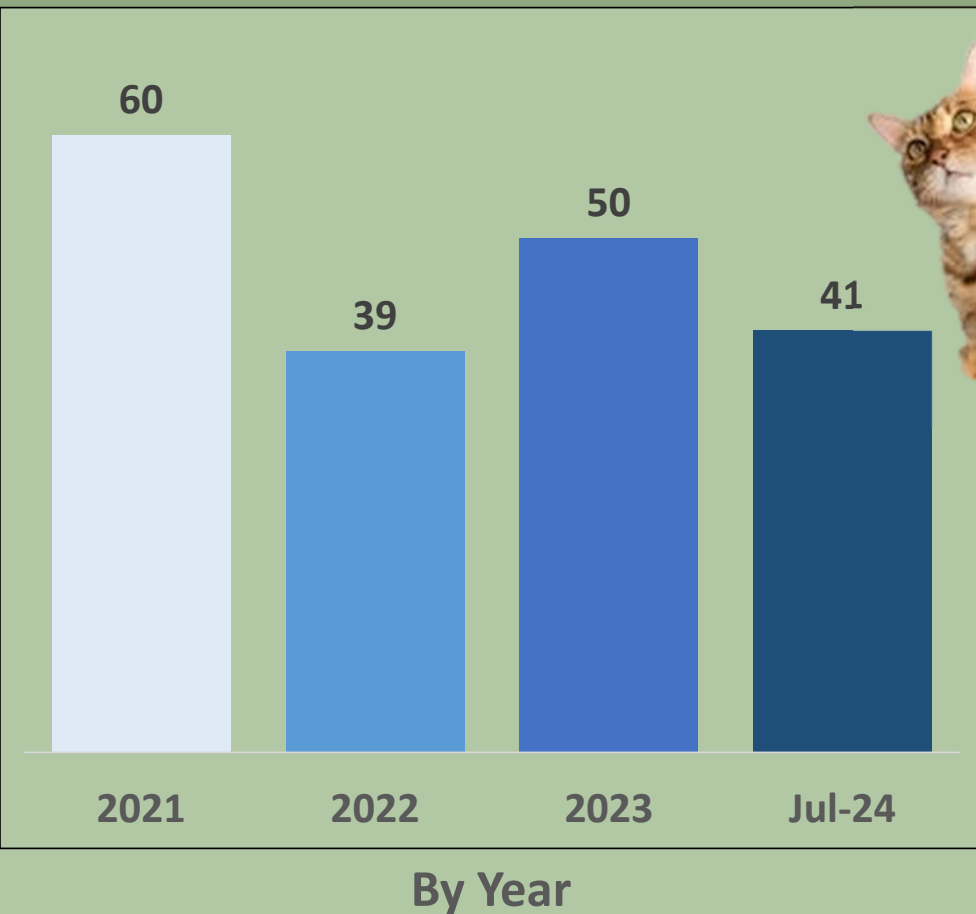
Kevin in his new home!

Working Cat and Pet Adoption

- Working Cats – unsocialized cats



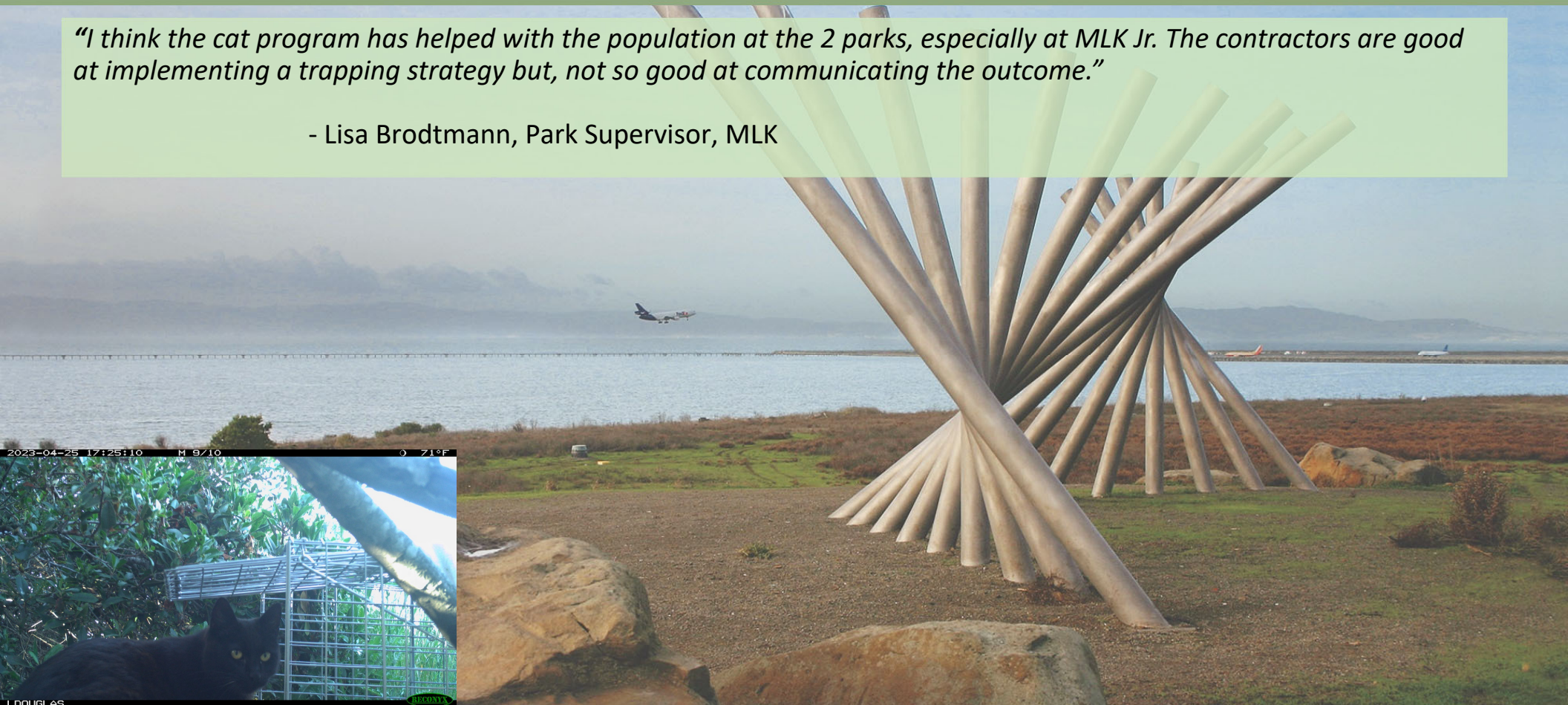
Cats Trapped and Transferred from Parks



Park Staff Perspectives

"I think the cat program has helped with the population at the 2 parks, especially at MLK Jr. The contractors are good at implementing a trapping strategy but, not so good at communicating the outcome."

- Lisa Brodtmann, Park Supervisor, MLK



Park Staff Perspectives

"You provided excellent communication with staff both explaining the process and assisting us along the way. Your follow up telling us about the environment the kitty was placed in was reassuring."

- Rose Schwarz, Sr. Admin Specialist, Based in Redwood

"We have not had more than our one cat, but the program did what it was supposed to do and our sweet kitty friend is hopefully loving their new home. Getting the cat out of the park where she may have had an adverse effect on habitat and wildlife was helpful to all involved."

- Jessica Sloan, Volunteer Program Supervisor, Based in Redwood



Park Staff Perspectives

Before – *“There were high levels of cat activity and feeding in the park. There was a lot of fear around the policy due to the perception of how the public would react. I felt helpless in reducing the overall cat population in parks.”*

After – *“The process is easy and streamlined. Working with Tiffany and Contra Costa Animal Shelter has been great. Once I explain the process to most community members, they are very positive and enthusiastic about trapping. Overall, we are seeing less cat activity.”*

- Wyatt Moore, Supervising Naturalist, Big Break, #1 cat trapper of 2024!



Questions?

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