

Regional in Nature

# Activity Guide

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2021

East Bay   
Regional Park District  
*Healthy Parks Healthy People*

Check our website [ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)  
for up-to-date information  
on parks and activities.



King Tide at Big Break Regional Shoreline.  
Protecting Parks from Climate Change,  
Extreme Weather. See page 2.



Park District General Manager Robert  
Doyle Retires After 47-Year Career.  
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# General Manager Robert Doyle Retiring After 47-Year Career with Park District

## LEAVES LASTING LEGACY OF LAND PRESERVATION AND ACCESS FOR ALL



**R**obert Doyle started at the East Bay Regional Park District in 1973 as a part-time park ranger cutting fire breaks at Tilden Regional Park in Berkeley. Doyle held many positions at the Park District before moving to its headquarters in 1979 where he worked to create a network of regional trails to connect people to parks – the first of its kind in the nation. Doyle has received significant state and national recognition for his contributions and leadership as a park champion.

Doyle is extraordinarily rare in park management having transcended from front-line park ranger to general manager. Thanks in part to his work as chief of trail planning and assistant general manager overseeing acquisitions, the East Bay Regional Park District is now the largest of its kind in the nation comprising over 125,000 acres of land, 73 parks, 55 miles of shoreline, and over 1,300 miles of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and environmental education. The Park District's Regional

Trails System also now serves as part of the region's green transportation network that helps take cars off the road and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Doyle's remarkable accomplishments during his tenure at the Park District include:

- More than doubling the number of permanently protected parklands from 59,689 acres in 1985 to 125,186 acres in 2020
- Opening 20 new Regional Parks
- Creating the country's largest urban regional trail network with over 200 miles of regional trails
- Expanding urban shoreline parks, covering 55 miles along the bay
- Helping to secure over \$1 billion for improvements and programs through grants, bond measures, and state funding

At his core, Doyle has embodied the Park District's mission and vision of balancing land preservation with public access for recreation, advocating that

everyone deserves the opportunity to experience nature.

Doyle also successfully bridged the gap, bringing people together from opposing sides in support of parks. From developers to environmentalists, and ranchers to recreationalists, Doyle has united disparate groups to create practical policies and securing additional funding for parks or land preservation.

Doyle leaves a lasting legacy at the Park District that encourages everyone to work together, no matter how divergent the position, to advance the common goal of protecting land into perpetuity for habitat preservation and public access for recreation.

Doyle is retiring on December 31, 2020. His final months at the Park District required his strongest leadership, guiding it through one of the most challenging times in its history, and working against nearly insurmountable obstacles to keep parks open and safe during the pandemic.

## Protecting Parks from Climate Change, Extreme Weather

For Regional Parks, the effects of climate change are here now and only getting worse, with extreme weather, drought, and sea level rise impacting public access to parks and facilities, trails, and natural habitat. The Park District is working to create climate-resilient parks with recreational amenities and natural habitat designed to withstand the impacts from climate change, as well as implementing fuel reduction programs to protect against wildfires.

The most urgent impacts are coastal flooding caused by sea level rise and increased wildfire occurrence and intensity. The 2020 wildfire season was California's largest on record with 4,177,855 acres burned (and active wildfires still burning in December). Fifteen of the most destructive fires in California history have occurred in the past five years.

In the East Bay this year, the SCU Complex Fire, started by lightning in mid-August, included fires in Mission Peak, Morgan Territory, Ohlone Wilderness, Round Valley, and Sunol Wilderness regional parks. The fire burned 396,624 acres and was active for 44 days. It is currently the third-largest fire on record in California.

Annual King Tides are giving us a preview along the shoreline, showing us that parks, trails, and nearby communities are at risk. Several projects that underscore the Park District's proactive measures include the restoration of marsh habitat, increased public access, and new San Francisco Bay Trail segment at Dotson Family Marsh in Point Pinole Regional Shoreline; recent restoration and public access improvements at Bay Point

*Continued on page 3.*

## Bay Point Regional Shoreline Reopens with Improved Public Access, Restored Habitat

Bay Point Regional Shoreline has reopened to the public after being closed for restoration of habitat and construction of public access improvements, including additional parking, bathrooms, picnic areas, drinking fountains, elevated walking and hiking trails, and a kayak launch.

The nearly 150-acre park is at the approximate midpoint of the San Francisco Bay Estuary and the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta and provides access to open space and marsh habitat in an area surrounded by residential, military, and industrial development.

The Park District celebrated the reopening of Bay Point Regional Shoreline with a live virtual program on Friday, November 20 including a naturalist-lead virtual tour, behind-the-scenes video, and featured speakers.

“Parks like Bay Point Regional Shoreline are essential for the community’s physical and mental health, now more than ever. COVID has shown us just how important parks are for recreation, respite, and rejuvenation,” said Park District General Manager Robert Doyle at the virtual reopening.

“More than 4,000 residents, who have historically had limited access to parks and open space, live within a half-mile of the improved shoreline park,” added Doyle.

The project also restored tidal emergent marshes and transitional uplands, preserving natural habitat for endangered species like the California black rail and salt marsh harvest mouse.

Climate change impacts were also taken into account by the project. New trails, visitor improvements, and interpretive signage were all elevated to withstand future sea levels and environmental restoration designed to provide quality habitat even at anticipated 2080 sea levels.

Bay Point Regional Shoreline highlights the Park District’s climate-resiliency efforts with recreational amenities and restored habitat designed and built to withstand impacts of climate change.

Bay Point Regional Shoreline is open to the public from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. For more information, visit [ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org).



*The new kayak launch at Bay Point Regional Shoreline*

*“Protecting Parks” continued from page 2.*

Regional Shoreline; planned upgrades to public access and habitat at Hayward Regional Shoreline; and planned access and San Francisco Bay Trail improvements at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline. In all cases, visitor facilities and trails have been or will be built above anticipated 2080 sea levels with habitat that will provide a mix of quality natural habitat while sea levels rise over time. Currently, the Park District is also assessing vulnerabilities within shoreline parks and along more than 40 miles of SF Bay Trail it manages. A report should be available in spring, 2021.

In the East Bay hills and inland grassland parks, the Park District continues its fuel reduction

efforts, including managing FEMA and CalFire fuel reduction projects, operating a year-round eight-person fire reduction crew, and a district-wide grazing program utilizing cattle, goats, and sheep to reduce fire fuel loads.

These efforts are all part of the Park District’s commitment to plan, prepare, and implement for climate change in collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies. This strategic and unified approach will ensure facilities and parks are protected and the public, along with wildlife, continues to have access to natural parks, trails, and open space.

## Support Your Parks! Bring on the Perks!



**BECOME A REGIONAL  
PARKS FOUNDATION MEMBER TODAY**

While the past year has been incredibly hard on us all, one message has shined brightly – Parks are Essential! With limited recreational options, the public relied on parks to provide opportunities for fresh air, exercise, and stress relief. During the pandemic, the Park District kept parks open as much as possible and has seen record visitorship, placing huge demands and parks, park facilities, and park staff. Parks have not been collecting fees for much of this year to provide time to develop protocols for staff and visitor safety. However, the District will begin collecting fees again beginning January 4, 2021.

“When we needed Regional Parks most, they were there for us,” said Regional Parks Foundation Board President Jess Brown. “We have one of the most beautiful regional park systems in the United States literally at our doorsteps and must not take it for granted.”

One of the best ways to thank your Regional Parks is by becoming a member of the Regional Parks Foundation, which also comes with numerous perks and benefits. It’s also a great gift idea for friends and family.

Regional Parks Foundation membership supports great programs, including:

- Award-winning nature programs (online and virtual during COVID-19)
- Grants for natural habitat restoration
- Expansion of trails for recreation and green transportation
- Environmental education

The benefits of membership, among others, include:

- Free parking
- Free swimming
- Camping discounts
- Annual dog pass (for up to 3 dogs)

Regional Parks need your help now more than ever! For more information regarding the value and benefits of being a Regional Parks Foundation member, visit [RegionalParksFoundation.org/Join](http://RegionalParksFoundation.org/Join).

# 2020 Community Survey Results

## Keeping Parks Open During COVID-19 PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL – NOW MORE THAN EVER

It has been clear during COVID-19 that parks are essential as people swarmed parks as a safe place to recreate and get fresh air during the early stages of the state and local Shelter In Place orders. The demands on parks were enormous and staffing was limited as many staff members were sheltering at home like the general public.

It has not been easy, but with proper emergency management, planning, and safety protocols, the Park District was able to keep over 99 percent of the District's 125,000 acres of parklands, 55 miles of shoreline, and 1,300 miles of recreational trails open and accessible to the public.

The District is proud that, when the public needed us most, we answered the call to keep parks open. Many other park agencies in the Bay Area closed fully in the early stages of the pandemic.

In July 2020, the Park District commissioned a scientific survey to obtain public views on the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of parks. The District has a long history of conducting surveys to gather community feedback regarding park services, use, and funding priorities. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish via text (with online option), cell phones, and landlines.

The survey was a follow up to the Park District's 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary community survey in 2019 that solicited feedback online over five months. The survey, while not scientific, gathered a remarkable total of 8,268 responses. In that survey, an overwhelming 98 percent said they viewed the Park District as a valuable public resource.

The July 2020 scientific survey sought to confirm the information found in the 2019 survey and

expand with questions related to the current global health crisis.

The survey also showed that the public values the Park District as an economic engine that supports jobs, with a strong majority agreeing that "because of the Park District's on-going support of many maintenance, construction, and restoration jobs in the East Bay, including many private sector contractors, the Park District helps our local economy.

The public also strongly supports the job opportunities that the Park District provides to local youth, with 89 percent saying they support expanding opportunities for youth at the District, including student aids, wildfire crews, lifeguards, trail crews, and online park programs.



Temescal Regional Recreation Area,  
Oakland



Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline,  
Martinez



Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach,  
Alameda



Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area,  
Pleasanton

# 2020 Community Survey Results

## 2020 Survey Results – District Views:

- **92%** of respondents were aware of the East Bay Regional Park District
- **97%** rate their experiences with Regional Parks as good or excellent
- **68%** of respondents said they visit Regional Parks at least once a month
- Physical health, stress relief, and time with family or friends were the top three reason people said they visited Regional Parks
- Hiking and walking are the most frequent activities of park user



**92%**

Agreed it to be very or somewhat important for regional parks and trails to **stay open** during the Coronavirus pandemic

East Bay Regional Park District was identified to be an **essential service** during the COVID-19 pandemic response

**81%**



## 2020 Survey Results – COVID-19 Views:

- **99%** of respondents supported Park District's efforts to continue cleaning restrooms, maintain park facilities, and manage vegetation to mitigate wildfire during the pandemic.
- **92%** support keeping parks open during COVID-19
- **96%** supported keeping parks open so people could get outside for physical exercise.
- **6%** viewed parks as important to maintaining mental health.
- **81%** of respondents viewed Regional Parks as an essential service during COVID-19
- Hand washing stations, additional bathrooms, and COVID-19 safety information and signage were viewed as the most important services and amenities during COVID-19



**96%**

Said the accessibility of parks and trails plays an important role in maintaining the **mental health** of our community



**96%**

Agreed that now, more than ever, parks and trails must remain open and accessible to be outside and get **physical exercise** in a safe, socially distant manner

**89%**

Acknowledged the importance of expanding training and **job opportunities** for youth, including student aids, wildfire crews, lifeguards, trail crews, and online park programs



Overall, the 2020 survey shows the Park District's approach to COVID-19 – keeping parks open with safety precautions and signage – was the right decision and strongly supported by the public. The District is pleased that the results validate its efforts.

The Park District hopes the public will continue to do their part to keep parks open by following all safety precautions and restrictions while in Regional Parks, including:

- **Wear a Mask When Around Others**
- **Maintain 6-Foot Social Distance from Others**
- **No Groups or Gatherings** (only established social bubbles of 12 or fewer).
- **Bring Hand Sanitizer** (Be aware of high-touch points such as trail access gates, benches, etc.)
- **Bring Water** (Water fountains may be unavailable)



**90%**

Of respondents agreed or concurred the Park District **helps our local economy** with on-going support of maintenance, construction, and restoration jobs in the East Bay

**94%**

Respondents agreed parks and trails are needed to **provide a place for children** in our community to be outside, play, and stay active



In response to COVID-19, respondents identified the **top amenities** important to stay safe while visiting parks and trails to be:



Hand washing stations  
**32%**



Additional restrooms  
**18%**



Signs and information  
**14%**

Thank you for doing your part to keep parks safe and clean for park visitors, park employees, and wildlife.



# Ardenwood

## HISTORIC FARM

### Groundhog Day



Many of the traditions and holidays we celebrate today have tangled ties to different times and cultures. One such holiday is Groundhog Day. The beginning of February is the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Many ancient cultures, such as the Celts and Romans, celebrated the first signs of spring, the return of the sun, and the beginning of the agricultural year with festivals of light, rebirth, and fertility. At the time, the main celebrations were the Gaelic Imbolc and Roman Lupercalia, but these were replaced with Candlemas as pagan holidays became Christianized.

During Candlemas, Germans would look to the hedgehog to divine the coming weather. For German families emigrating to North American farms in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the most common cousin of the hedgehog (at least by looks) they could find was, you guessed it ... the groundhog! So Groundhog Day began.

We may wonder what place ancient traditions hold in our modern world, but as people face what seem like unparalleled times, celebrating life and the earth around us through ritual is as relevant as ever. Being part of something bigger can help us bridge our differences and build community.



Here at Ardenwood, we don't have hedgehogs or groundhogs, but we have plenty of California ground squirrels! Like groundhogs, they live in burrows ... perhaps they can predict the weather as well? Regardless, these common rodents are a great food source for birds of prey; even bald eagles, who typically prefer fish, are known to eat them, and we suspect the bald eagle "Majestic" (see story below) might enjoy squirrel from time to time.



Photo: Daniel J. Riensche

### The Eagles Have Landed!

**L**ast winter, for the first time in park history, a pair of bald eagles nested at the farm. Park staff noticed the pair carrying sticks, and bird-watchers soon discovered their massive nest, anchored near the top of a large eucalyptus tree. Once ravaged by the effects of the pesticide DDT, bald eagles have made a dramatic recovery, and

were taken off the endangered species list in 2007. Even so, because human disturbance can cause eagle parents to abandon their nest, we closed trails in the area and started weekly monitoring of the nest. In April, Park District Wildlife Biologist David Riensche confirmed the presence of one chick, and by July, the young eagle, named

"Majestic" by local bird-watchers, had taken its first flight. Bald eagles reuse successful nests for many years, so our hopes are high for a repeat this year from our Ardenwood eagles.

# Big Break

## REGIONAL SHORELINE



### Word Search

Can you find all 17 words in this Word Search? They may be horizontal, diagonal, or backwards!

B I S U M O H H S D O D I G O  
 B E F E A A S Z E S L O U G H  
 W I A K E I D L D Y E N T U N  
 X I L V F V T M I E G D E R D  
 E E L W E A E X T O J N T Y C  
 Y M A L S R K L G T E O G A C  
 H R E N O U S Z N T T M R A F  
 C A O E L W G G I E Y L A Z Q  
 B A R N O W L A K R J A J N W  
 T E V N N N X J R H Q S Q F E  
 T K D J L G B N K A D G S A T  
 Z U B F D L A T I X P A Z O L  
 U V P S L U Z V L Y K S E W A  
 L H T N I C A Y H R E T A W N  
 S E I F I T R B F Z O U J Y D

ASPARAGUS	BARNOWL	BEAVERS
CRAWFISH	DAM	DELTA
DREDGE	FARM	KINGTIDES
LEVEES	OAKLEY	OTTER
SALMON	SLOUGH	WATERHYACINTH
WETLAND	WILLOW	

### Write to a Naturalist: Nature Letters

Got a nature related question? How about an epic nature adventure story? Or, perhaps you took some beautiful photos along the Delta. We want to hear about it! Share and write to your friendly Big Break interpretive staff. Send your letters to Big Break Visitor Center via snail mail (our favorite!), or email, we'll respond within two weeks:

**Big Break Naturalist**  
 69 Big Break Road  
 Oakley, CA 94561

or [bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org)

### Fur – California's First "Rush"

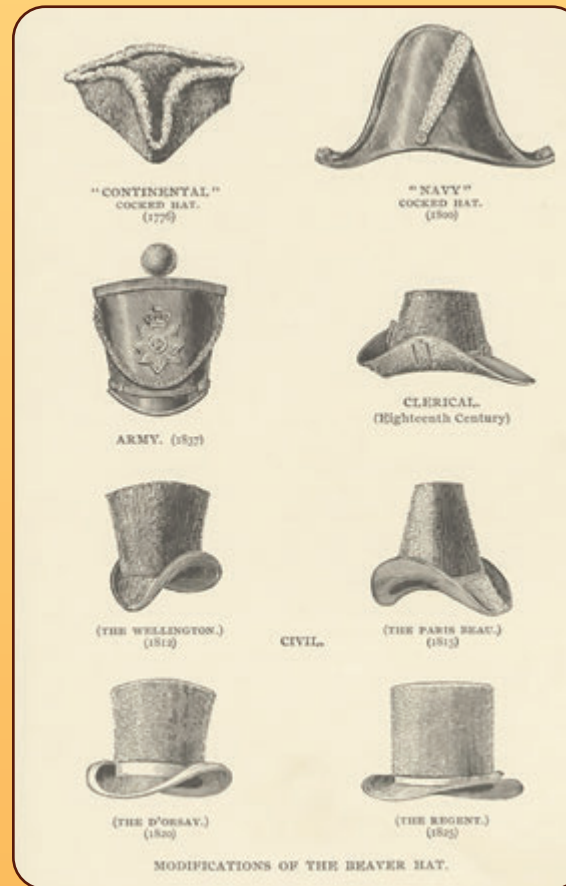
January 24 marks the anniversary of James Marshall's 1848 discovery of gold while working at John Sutter's mill on the American River in Coloma. A very different "rush" downstream, however, brought international attention to the

Delta decades before.

In the 1780s, long before California's Gold Rush, French, American, British, and Russian ships began plying California's coast lured by different treasure: fur. Sea otter and fur seal pelts were coveted from Europe to China. By the 1820s, hunters had decimated California's once-plentiful populations. The search for fur moved inland.

In 1827, mountain guide and explorer Jedediah Smith first camped in the Delta, trapping prized, and plentiful, beavers. For the next 15 years, trappers rushed here to hunt beavers, river otters, mink, and other mammals, selling pelts around the world.

The boom, however, went bust. While



### Word Search Answers



severe over-harvesting caused the trade's demise (many mammal populations have since recovered), confusing tides, floods, and local resistance from Mexican and Indigenous Peoples all contributed to bring an end to the "golden days" of the Delta fur trade.

Although it was quickly overshadowed by the 1849 Gold Rush, California's Fur Rush opened the Delta, and California, to much of the world. Yesterday's fur expeditions gave rise to the trucks, trains, and freighters hauling countless Delta goods today.



# Black Diamond Mines

REGIONAL PRESERVE

## Duck! Duck!! Duck!!!

**H**ere they come. Hear those whirring, whizzing, whistling wings. They come in fast, like missiles, pumping like crazy, and settle with a splash in the water. These are some folks we haven't seen all year! Fall and winter are the seasons where these ducks visit all the great hangouts in the East Bay Regional Parks. You might see ducks out in the bay, on the bay shores, or in ponds and creeks throughout the Park District. We are lucky to see the males after they have cast off their drab summer outfits and come out in their flashiest apparel to put on their best displays. Both males and females need to look fine and act right to find good partners. If people could coordinate colors the way ducks do, it might make us more attractive to each other! (The Park District's shiny badge is pretty flashy, though.) Once they find their special someone, they stick close together through the time when they fly back north to nest. Try looking for display and bonding behavior among the ducks.

Visit: [allaboutbirds.org/news/what-to-watch-for-duck-courtship-video/](http://allaboutbirds.org/news/what-to-watch-for-duck-courtship-video/)

If you spend some time watching the ducks, you'll notice that some stay closer to shore, in the shallow water, and find food by plunging their heads

underwater and tipping their tails up, or by sifting the surface of the water and mud. Other ducks might swim farther offshore, and disappear from time to time under the water.

Check out all the different shapes of the ducks' bills, too. They can, for example, be very broad and flat, as in the northern shoveler (more like what we usually think of as a duck's bill), or narrow and sharp, as in the red-breasted merganser. Variations on the edges of their bills also enable different feeding styles. For example, red-breasted mergansers dive for fish, and so have sharp serrations to hold their prey, while northern shovelers filter tiny invertebrates and seeds from the water with comb-like structures lining the edges of their beaks.

All of the ducks we see belong to the same family of birds, the Anatidae, which includes geese. They are part of the order Anseriformes, one of the most ancient groups of birds,

who were paddling around on earth when all those other dinosaurs still roamed.

Whirring by, diving, running across the water, preening, and dabbling, ducks provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the beauty and wonder of the creatures we share our East Bay home with. If we want to see ducks out here at Black Diamond Mines, we usually head out to Contra Loma Reservoir, just over the hill. See you there.

For some duck humor, check out: [reekoscience.com/science-news/animal-kingdom/fuegian-steamer-duck-mean-aggressive-duck-attacks-any-bird-that-looks-at-it-wrong](http://reekoscience.com/science-news/animal-kingdom/fuegian-steamer-duck-mean-aggressive-duck-attacks-any-bird-that-looks-at-it-wrong)

### DUCK! A Self-Guided, Socially Distant, Day at the Park

#### Contra Loma Reservoir

Sunday, January 10, anytime between 10 a.m. to noon, take a walk around Contra Loma Reservoir. Stop by the boat launch to meet a naturalist and talk about ducks, or any other birds, for that matter!

Please wear a mask and remain socially distant from staff and people outside of your family group.



### Calennig!

## Happy New Year!

Many Welsh immigrants migrated to the Mount Diablo Coal Field in the late 1800s to excavate the rock that powered our young state, bringing over their traditions, language, and customs. The old-time Welsh tradition of Calennig (pronounced *ka'lenig*) which translates to "First of the Year" is when children would go from door to door while singing traditional songs, carrying a decorated apple in exchange for treats and coins. These Calennig apples were believed to bring good luck for the year ahead. Make one at home, we could all use a little luck!

### What you need

- An apple
- 3 twigs/sticks for the legs
- Traditional decorations to stick in the fruit: cloves, nuts, dried fruits, evergreen leaves

*Ducks from left to right: northern shoveler, red-breasted merganser, and a green-winged teal.*



Duck photos: Kevin Dixon





## MEET TOKKA

Our Teenage Non-Mutant  
Peaceful Turtle

**T**okka came to us by way of nearby Quarry Lakes when staff at the parking lot kiosk noticed a clutch of a dozen or so baby turtles were being eaten by gulls who had found their nest. Tokka was the last remaining turtle and was rescued, given a home in the kiosk and eventually transferred to the visitor center at Coyote Hills.

They join the menagerie at the visitor center which include a gopher snake named Fluffy and a California kingsnake named Solomon, both of whom are California natives. Tokka, on the other hand, is a red-eared slider and is listed as one of the world's 100 worst invasive species by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This is primarily due to people who buy them as pets and decide to let them go in parks once they've grown tired of them. Red-eared sliders live about 20 years in the wild and 40 in captivity. If you are considering having a turtle as a pet, be prepared to take care of them for most of your life.

Although not native to California, we use Tokka as an animal ambassador to educate people on the dangers of releasing non-native pets into the environment. Red-eared sliders could introduce disease to populations of the native western pond turtles and directly compete with them for resources. So please do not release your pets into our parks as it will disrupt the ecological balance between organisms and negatively impact the environment our beloved native species depend on.

## The Bird Formerly Known as *the Sparrowhawk*

**A**merican Kestrels are the smallest bird of prey in North America, and some might argue, the best. Because of their diminutive size, bird aficionados have called them sparrowhawks in the past. They are neither sparrow nor hawk, but rather a falcon. They are not only beautiful, but also fantastic hunters; they eat invertebrates primarily, but also rodents, lizards, and larger prey, including squirrels and medium-sized birds. They are highly adaptable, often seen around areas with human activity, but are declining in large part due to a lack of breeding sites. Kestrels rely on pre-fabricated nesting sites. According to [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org), they rely on old woodpecker holes, natural tree hollows, rock crevices, and nooks in buildings and other human-built structures. The male searches for possible nest cavities. When he finds suitable candidates, he shows them to the female, who makes the final choice. Typically, nest sites are in trees along wood edges or in the middle of open ground. American Kestrels take readily to nest boxes.

We're hoping that they take to our recently-installed nesting box here at Coyote Hills! Thank you to Doc Quack (Dave Riensche, from our Stewardship Department) for locating a suitable site and Tlaloc Medina, our park crafts specialist, for making the nesting box happen! If they make a nest there, we can look forward to three to seven eggs next spring, and the possibility of the same mated pair returning to the nesting site for multiple years. Either way, we will likely continue to see kestrels at the park, so keep your eyes out for these little beauties!





# Crab Cove

## VISITOR CENTER AND AQUARIUM

Photo: Richard Bangert



### Harbor Seals

One of the best places in the San Francisco Bay to see harbor seals is in Alameda at a floating platform built just for them near Encinal Beach! Unlike their loud cousins the sea lions which visit Pier 39 in San Francisco, harbor seals are quiet, lack ear flaps, and can't put their back flippers underneath their bodies. They are adept swimmers, but out of the water they move like giant inchworm sausages.

Harbor seals need to come ashore to thermoregulate. "Hauling out" helps them warm up between swims in the cold water. They chase and eat fish like anchovies, as well as midshipman and other bottom dwellers. Large numbers of seals are attracted to schools of spawning herring during the winter. At the haul-out platform in Alameda, up to 80 seals have been seen squeezed-together in one day! In the spring, mother seals can be seen nursing their baby pups.

When the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) was planning to move their maintenance facilities to Alameda, they planned to destroy an old dilapidated dock where a few seals hung out. After public outcry from

local citizen wildlife advocates, WETA financed the building of a floating platform for the seals to haul-out on. The platform is 20 by 25 feet, with one side sloped to allow seals easy access from the water, this is the only known floating platform in the world built specifically for seals. The platform is constructed of reinforced concrete with a Styrofoam core. Designed by marine mammal expert Dr. Jim Harvey, the director of San José State University's Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, it is always available to the seals and is not subject to tidal fluctuations or sea level rise.

Harbor seals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and their disturbance is a big concern being so close to an urban area. Boaters and paddlers are encouraged to watch from a distance. If the seals raise their heads, that signals that they feel threatened. With binoculars they can be easily seen from shore along the Bay Trail.

For more information visit: [facebook.com/alamedaseals1](https://facebook.com/alamedaseals1). To volunteer and report observations and numbers of seals contact: [alamedaharborseals@gmail.com](mailto:alamedaharborseals@gmail.com)



### Make a Seal Craft

Make a cute seal with simple supplies!

#### Materials Needed:

- A small kids size sock
- Rubber band
- Batting/stuffing
- Two googly eyes
- Scissors
- Felt
- Black pom-pom
- Brown string
- Tacky craft glue

#### First step:

Stuff sock with stuffing. Tie a rubber band at the last 2 inches to form back flippers.

#### Second step:

Cut out front flippers from felt and glue to sides. Glue on eyes, brown string cut into short pieces for whiskers, and pom-pom nose.

#### All done!

Have fun with your seal.



**Murietta Falls is located in the Ohlone Wilderness accessed from Del Valle Regional Park.**

## Marvelous Murietta Falls\*

Timed after the right amount of winter rains, you may be one of the lucky few to observe this winter wonder. You never know if you'll find a rushing fall, a thread-like trickle, or no water at all after a 4,500 foot climb, 6-mile one-way trip. Whatever you do, don't forget to bring your sense of humor.

\*As of the printing of this activity guide, the Ohlone Wilderness remains closed. Please check the Park District's web page ([ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)) for updates.

## Snow Way?!

**Is that snow?** Every few years, the hills atop Lake Del Valle get a dusting of snow. Visitors are delighted by a spectacular view from the top of the road and an amazing photo opportunity to capture rare Bay Area snow.



**Snow covered hills of Del Valle from December 2009.**

# Del Valle REGIONAL PARK

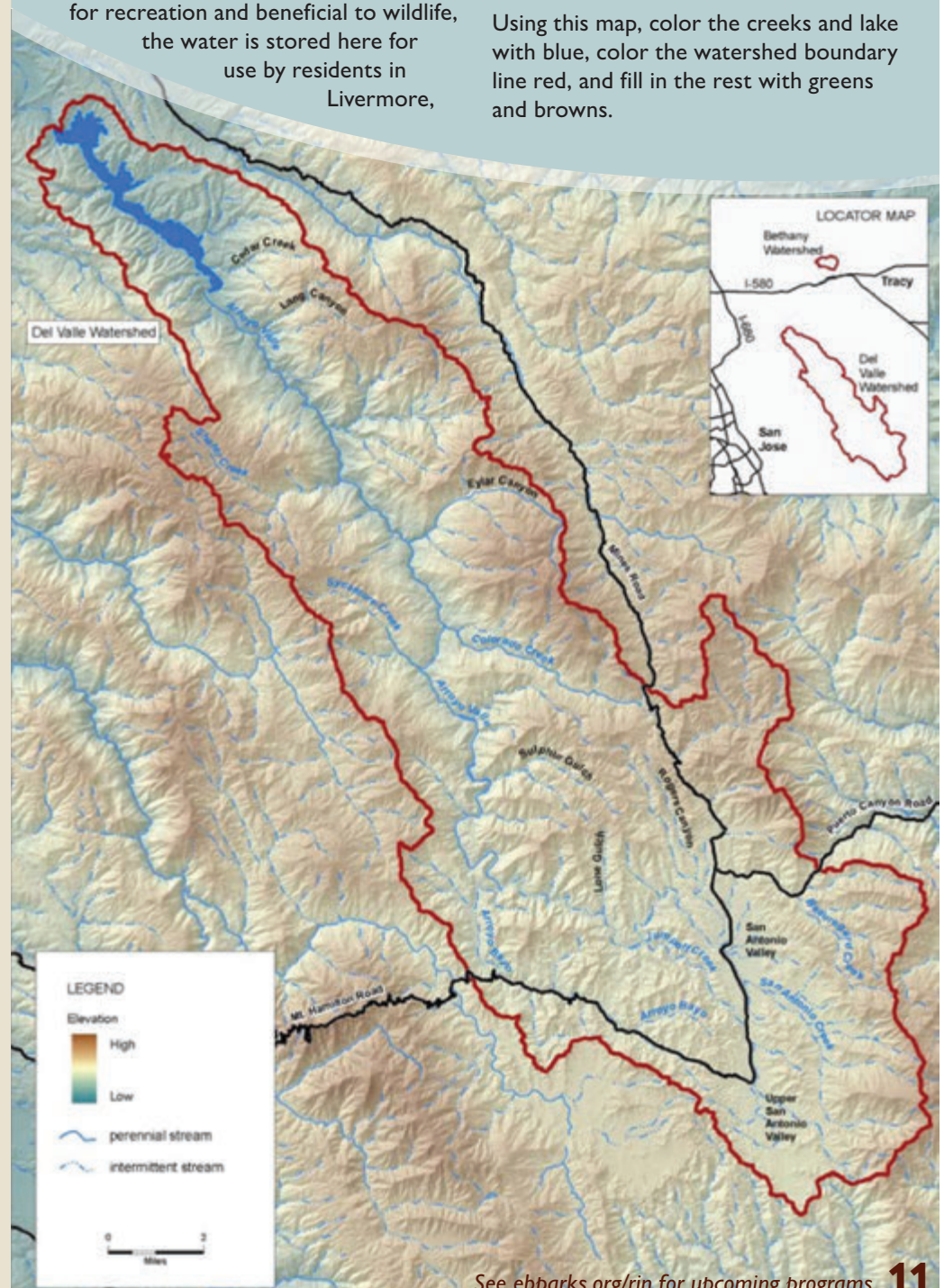


## Del Valle Watershed

**A watershed** is the land over which water flows into a common body of water. Here, the common body of water is Lake Del Valle. The lake is not only fun for recreation and beneficial to wildlife, the water is stored here for use by residents in Livermore,

Fremont, and Santa Clara. We can thank the rains and creeks that flow through this watershed for providing an important resource.

Using this map, color the creeks and lake with blue, color the watershed boundary line red, and fill in the rest with greens and browns.



# Mobile Education



## Animal Updates

Find out what our ambassador animals have been up to since March.



“ I arranged my home just the way I like it with my food dish in one corner and sleeping nook in the other. In my free time I take naps and nibble on the finest mealworms and crickets. Consequently, I’m getting a little plump (you can tell by my tail where I store fat). I miss field trips and visiting children at school, but now I get to see everyone in the virtual world.”

– **Mr. Snappy the Alligator Lizard**



“ In April, one of my human coworkers kindly took me to her house for some much-needed rest and relaxation. My days are spent sunbathing, eating dandelions, and playing in the backyard. I recently even had my portrait painted. Plus, I laid nine unfertilized eggs – three times my yearly average!”

– **Esmeralda the Three-Toed Box Turtle**



“ I have taken the opportunity to explore new cuisines. I do not consider myself a foodie, but now I am trying new things like fish and tomato hornworms. Apart from that, you can generally find me taking a nice long soak in my water bowl.”

– **Jeremiah the Bullfrog**

“ Every morning I use my humidifier to unwind with a nice facial. Just a few days ago I was feeling adventurous, so I slipped out of my cage to explore some new sights and smells. A short time later my human coworker found me on her desk and showered me with attention.”

– **Clementine the Rubber Boa Snake**



## Did You Know?

The EBRPD houses the most diverse collection of freshwater fish in all of California! Over 75 representatives of species within the regional parks lakes, ponds, and estuaries live in our aquariums.

“ Shelter-in-place has been rough. At the beginning of March, I was enjoying my shared tank with the sticklebacks, perch, and grumpy red rock crab. Mr. Crab and I had a miscommunication and he suddenly tried to eat me, removing all but one of my arms! Our biologist found me just in time. I’ve been in respite these last six months and thankfully my strong little body is growing new arms. I am hopeful for better times and you should be too!”

– **Digit the Ocher Sea Star**



# Outdoor Recreation



## Outdoor Winter Activities Preparedness 101!

Successful winter outdoor recreation is achievable with some forethought and planning. Below is a brief list of things to keep in mind before you venture out into your favorite East Bay Regional Park this season.

1. Wear proper clothes for the weather. A layering system is best for ultimate comfort. **Pro Tip:** Wool stays warm even when wet!
2. Invest in some waterproof footwear. Prepare for the trails to be muddy. **Pro Tip:** Bring a spare pair of shoes to change into when you get back to your car!
3. Stay hydrated. Even when the weather is cool, one can easily become dehydrated. **Pro Tip:** Bring a thermos with a hot beverage for your pit stops.
4. Stay properly fueled as well. Exercising in cold temps burns more calories than in warmer weather. **Pro Tip:** Look for snacks that contain healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, and salt for replenishing your electrolytes.
5. Check the Weather before you venture out. While rain should not necessarily deter you, make sure you have the proper gear to handle whatever Mother Nature has in store for the day. **Pro Tip:** Download a weather app to your phone for quick reference.
6. Research your trail ahead of time. The Park District has 1,330 miles of trails and conditions vary widely. **Pro Tip:** Paved trails such as Nimitz Way in Tilden Park, Alameda Creek Trail in Fremont and Marsh Creek Trail in Contra Costa County are great options in wet/muddy weather.
  - Trekking poles are great for added stability on loose/slippery terrain. **Pro Tip:** Wet wood is slick! Use caution when stepping on it.
  - Have Fun! Winter recreating has many advantages such as fewer mosquitoes, cooler temps and often more solitude. Remember to bring your mask and maintain 6' of distance from any other brave souls out there!



### Cartoon Matching Game

Can you match the numbered "Outdoor Activities" (on the right) to the cartoons?



Answers: 1-c and h; 2-a; 3-g; 4-f; 5-e; 6-d



# Sunol Wilderness

REGIONAL PRESERVE

## A Predator's Territory

**A**s our largest park predator, mountain lions rely on the expansive open space of our interconnected park lands from Mission Peak to Del Valle.

With a combined population of 2.8 million people, Alameda and Contra Costa counties may not be the first place you think of when it comes to mountain lions. But for almost a decade, the East Bay Regional Park District has been conducting a carnivore study using remote cameras. Based on the footage, these big

### Be a Wilderness Protector

**Do your part to be a steward of park lands, after all, they belong to all of us.**

Here are some ways to leave no trace of your visit:

- Pack out all of your trash and recycle certain items if possible.
- Keep your distance from wildlife.
- Make sure your food is not left unattended.
- Choose reusable items to reduce your impact on the environment.

cats definitely call the East Bay home, and their presence creates a healthier ecosystem.

mile home range for a male mountain lion. But if you add adjacent water district lands and mountainous terrain, there's more than enough wilderness to

go around. Cameras within our district lands have caught images of mountain lions all across this region, both solitary males and females with cubs. And when mountain lions are present, the whole ecosystem benefits: Their kills provide a food source for birds, insects, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. As the mostly deer carcasses decompose, the nutrients feed the soil and mycelium. Mountain lions in the Sunol-Ohlone area prove that wilderness can prevail near cities. Our awareness and understanding of

these elusive cats can go a long way to ensure a positive future for the mountain lions in our midst.

### Share with Us!

**Tell us about your experiences in the wilderness and what it means to you.**

Use #SUNOLWILD and follow us on Facebook @Sunol Regional Wilderness.

## Whose Track is That?

Tracks on the trail provide evidence of the wildlife inhabitants who call the wilderness home. Hitting the trails after recent rains, especially in the morning, is one of the best ways to discover which wildlife species have been passing by.

**Bobcat:** Look for the absence of claw marks and "m-shaped" foot pad. Stealthy animals, the track made by the bobcat's front paw while walking is often replaced with their hind paw in the following step. (*Front foot: 1-5/8" to 2-1/2" long by 1-3/8" to 2-5/8" wide; Hind foot: 1-9/16" to 2-1/2" long by 1-3/16" to 2-5/8" wide.*)

**Coyote:** Coyotes can commonly be seen trotting in the hills of Sunol. When doing so, their hind foot will be planted in front of the track made by their front foot in the previous step. Look for an impression made by their claws and more triangular foot pad to distinguish between the bobcat. (*Front foot: 2-1/8" to 3-1/16" long by 1-5/8" to 2-1/2" wide; Hind foot: 1-3/4" to 2-15/16" long by 1-3/8" to 2-1/8" wide.*)



Photo: iStock, Gattito33



cats definitely call the East Bay home, and their presence creates a healthier ecosystem.

At 38 square miles, the combined area of Mission Peak, Sunol-Ohlone and Del Valle parks is less than half the typical 100-square-

## What Does Wilderness Mean to You?

Wilderness means many different things to each individual. It is a concept as wide as the open space lands extending into the Ohlone Wilderness. For some, just knowing the wilderness exists and is preserved is enough. Within the hills and valleys of Sunol lies an interconnected ecosystem of creeks and creatures that provide life to the land.

“Wilderness: A place on the planet that engenders a powerful sense of the marvel and magnificence of nature, mystery, excitement, adventure.”

– Anushka

“For me, wilderness is a place where the calming babble of a brook or the song of a bird speaks louder than the drone of an airplane. Wilderness can act as storyteller, educator and counselor all at once. For all these reasons, I hold it near and dear to my heart.”

– Jaclyn

“Our lives wouldn't be as interesting without wilderness. If we didn't have it, we wouldn't have owls, leaf bugs, bobcats and mountain lions. Wilderness gives me time to relax, appreciate nature and see more stars.”

– Djuna, 9 years old

# Tilden

## NATURE AREA



## The Northern Saw-Whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) in the Tilden Nature Area

I know you breed here, but it's so hard to see you! Is it because you are tiny and secretive? And what of your odd name? When leaving work in the dark, it is sometimes possible to hear your advertising call, gently rising from the dense creek-side trees: a series of rhythmically spaced, high-pitched toots. Once upon a time, your incessant tones reminded someone of the ringing sound of a saw being sharpened with a whetstone. Thus, your common name. What would you be named today? When was the last time anyone around here heard a saw being sharpened? Never?

Well, there's one mystery solved! But what about your other name? Your scientific name is *Aegolius acadicus*. Let's dissect. Aegolius, from Greek, through Latin, with the meaning of, a kind of owl. Acadicus means, of Acadia. Acadia was a French colonial territory in what is now the Northeastern United States and Canada. That takes care of the "northern" part of your name. But why do I only see you in winter?



Photo: Anthony Fisher

I know that some populations of saw-whet owls are migratory, moving south or down in elevation for the winter. Perhaps there are more of you here in fall and winter, so you are more visible. That could be it.

Whatever the reason, I look forward to the yearly happy accident of spying your beautiful little puffy self, tucked quietly into a tree, eyes closed, resting just so. Sometimes, with a white-footed mouse clutched in your fearsome talons. A breakfast to be devoured when you awake in a cool pool of silvery moonlight.

## Candy Cap Mushroom Ice Cream ... in a Bag!

Enjoy this seasonal fruited body in an old fashioned treat! Candy cap mushrooms are delicious in ice cream as they have a sweet maple flavor. Dried candy cap mushrooms can be purchased online through Etsy, eBay, or GoodEggs.com.

### Ingredients

Makes 2 servings

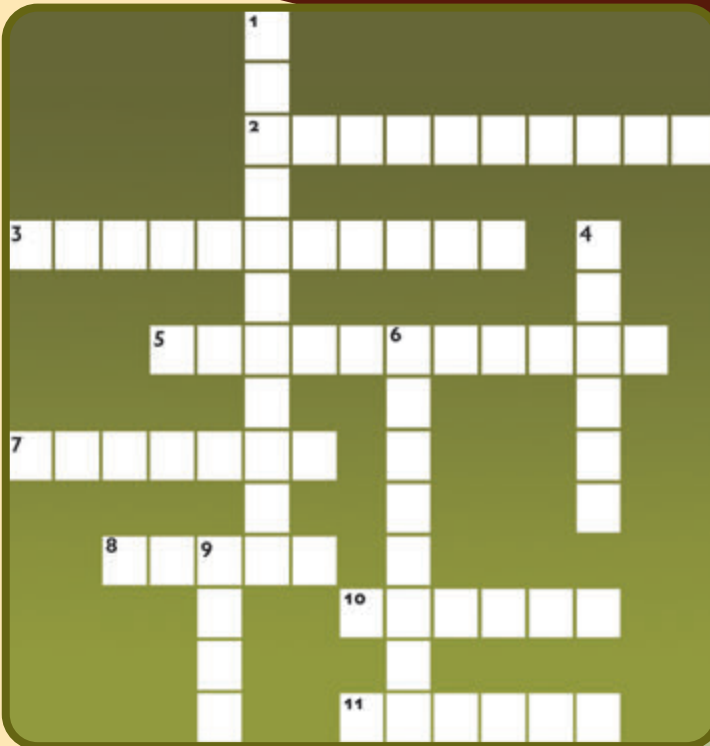
- 2 teaspoons finely ground, dried, candy cap mushrooms (use a coffee grinder, blender, or mortar and pestle)
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons sugar

### Equipment

- 1 quart-sized Ziploc Freezer Bag
- 1 gallon-sized Ziploc Freezer Bag
- 1 cup rock salt
- Lots of ice
- Oven mitts or gloves  
(it's going to get cold!)

### Steps

- Step 1:** In a bowl, mix together the heavy whipping cream, finely ground candy cap mushrooms, and sugar.
- Step 2:** Pour the mixture into the quart sized Ziploc bag and seal it.
- Step 3:** In the gallon sized Ziploc bag, add ice cubes (filling the bag halfway), rock salt AND the sealed quart sized bag of ice cream mixture.
- Step 4:** Using gloves or oven mitts shake the bag until the mixture hardens to your liking – it usually takes about 20 minutes. Grab a sibling or your parents to help out and take turns tossing and mixing the bag!



## A TNA Winter Crossword

### Across

2. Our most famous land mollusk in Coastal California; yellow.
3. Fungi that form an association with a host plant's roots, typically trees.
5. A well-known edible orange mushroom with ridges instead of gills.
7. The term for ridge trees capturing the incoming marine layer and dropping it to their roots.
8. The plural of fungus; commonly misused.
10. Riparian shrub/tree that loses its leaves in winter, famous for containing salicylic acid in its bark.
11. Name of the creek that flows down from Wildcat Peak, draining most of the Tilden Nature Area.

### Down

1. What the pond turtles are doing during the cold winter months.
4. A group of large mushrooms that have a pore layer instead of gills.
6. The newt's non-toxic lookalike salamander relative.
9. The animal that travels across South Park Drive each winter, facilitating its closure.

**Answers:** Across 2. Banana Slug, 3. Mycorrhizal, 5. Chanterelle, 7. Fog Drip, 8. Fungi, 10. Willow, 11. Laurel  
Down 1. Hibernating, 4. Bolete, 6. Ensatina, 9. Newt.



# Volunteer PROGRAM

East Bay   
Regional Park District

Healthy Parks Healthy People

2950 Peralta Oaks Court  
Oakland, CA 94605-0381  
ebparks.org

## Martin Luther King Day Inspires Service!

**A**ll over the nation, the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service inspires Americans to come together and serve their communities. While federal legislation to create a holiday honoring Dr. King was signed in 1983, the first official holiday was observed in 1986. Since 1994, the third Monday in January has been federally recognized as a national day of service – “A day on, not a day off.” Every year, on the Dr. King holiday, citizens engage in service to help to empower and strengthen our communities and bring us closer to his vision of a “Beloved Community”.

Here in the East Bay Regional Park District, honoring Dr. King in 1987, East Oakland community leader Ira Jinkins planted a magnolia tree in Oakland’s San Leandro Bay Regional Shoreline Park. In 1991, The Martin Luther King, Jr. March and Rally Committee – a broad-based organization of government agencies including the Park District, churches, and community groups – led the first annual March and Rally, culminating in the park’s Arrowhead Marsh.

In the summer of 1992, the Park District renamed the shoreline park as the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional

Shoreline. Entrance signs were changed, and a formal dedication ceremony took place on the Dr. King holiday, January 18, 1993. The Park District helped develop Jinkins’ memorial tree into a grove of trees and garden. The Memorial Grove dedication was held on August 28, 1993 – on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

Soon after, Jinkins, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Park District Director Doug Siden and others in the East Oakland community came together to discuss the creation of a regional center dedicated to Dr. King’s ideals of non-violence, social change, racial and economic justice, and a peaceful world. The Center was first housed at the Shoreline Center building in the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline park, and has since moved to Merritt College. An innovative program was developed centered on youth engagement – helping young people develop skills, understand the principles of Dr. King’s legacy, and participate in the democratic process.

On January 21, 2008, the Park District began its formal annual observance of “Day of Service” that continues today. The goal is to uphold Dr. King’s vision to improve lives, bridge social barriers, move our nation closer together, and remember and honor Dr. King. Annually on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday and Day of Service,

volunteers assist staff in restoration work and invasive plant removal to support and care for wildlife and their natural habitat.

Dr. King recognized the power of service. He famously said, “Everyone can be great because everybody can serve.” Honoring Dr. King through service is an excellent way to begin each year with a commitment to making our communities better.

### Take action January 18!

We are encouraging a safe MLK Day of Service this year, please check our website for further details: [ebparks.org/about/getinvolved](http://ebparks.org/about/getinvolved)

*Martin Luther King, Jr. shakes hands with former EBRPD Director Doug Siden, while William Turner looks on – 1965.*

