



REGIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

July 2003

RPA Board Members

President: Amelia Wilson, Vice-president: Joe Engbeck, Treasurer: Pete Wilson, Secretary: Greg Schneider
Judi Bank, Tim Gordon, Hulet Hornbeck, Harlan Kessel, Helen Klebanoff, Kathleen Nimr

COMMERCIAL CATTLE GRAZING CONTINUES ON EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK LAND

Some 8,000 privately owned cattle will be turned loose again this year to graze on about 50,000 acres of East Bay Regional Park District land. That's more cattle than graze on all other publicly owned land in the Bay Area combined. RPA continues its concern that the District's grazing program is out of control and is resulting in serious damage. We expressed concern about excessive cattle grazing in a letter to EBRPD's Board of Directors in August 2002. In March 2003, we appeared before the Board and formally presented each member with a copy of the hard-hitting, beautifully illustrated book Welfare Ranching, the Subsidized Destruction of the American West. Each book included a handsome RPA bookplate with the name of the board member to whom the book was presented.

RPA's annual membership meeting March 30 featured Richard Rayburn, Chief of the Resource Management Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. He discussed the whole issue of cattle in parks pointing out that commercial grazing has been almost entirely eliminated from both national parks and California state parks.

In June 2003, Friends of Sycamore Valley held a public meeting to protest damage done by commercial cattle grazing in Sycamore Valley Regional Open Space. On July 13, 2003, the Oakland Tribune carried a front-page article about cattle grazing in the regional parks, pointing out some of the damage that has occurred.

RPA believes that EBRPD's grazing program should not be based on commercial considerations, politics, nor

anything less than the best available science. If this issue interests you, please let us know. We're looking for ways to improve this serious situation.

COYOTE HILLS PLANNING TO CONTEND WITH MAJOR ISSUES

The East Bay Regional Park District recently kicked off a year-long study which will produce the land use planning document for Coyote Hills Regional Park. In this wonderful area on Fremont's Bay shoreline, rich wetlands are preserved, along with partially excavated Ohlone Indian shellmound sites, where over 1000 artifacts have been found. The park is bordered west and south by the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Coyote Hills Visitor Center contains Possum's Pocket Nature Store (how can anyone resist THAT!) and exhibits portraying the Ohlone way of life. Walking destinations include an Ohlone village site occupied for over 2000 years, and the salt evaporating ponds in the Bay.

But there's trouble in paradise: the Pattersons (Ardenwood Farm) quarried and farmed the land. The Army Corps of Engineers built a flood control channel for Alameda Creek cutting off the tidal flow. Flooding and urban discharge changed the area to a fresh water marsh, and now cattails have taken over. As a
(see page 3)

RPA'S ARCHIVAL TREASURES!

RPA is the proud owner of a treasure trove of historic records, correspondence, environmental battle accounts, rare original brochures for the East Bay Regional

Park District, and much, much more. Over the years these archives (currently about ten banker's boxes of files and folders) have been passed along from RPA President to President and protected with care.

These files are in excellent condition and will be an important resource for future research into the environmental history of the East Bay. RPA would like to find a safe, permanent home for these records and we welcome any suggestions our members might have in this regard.

The records need to be sorted and catalogued in some fashion. Here again, members with this kind of talent or expertise would be enthusiastically welcomed. Currently the records are housed in the basement of an apartment house in Berkeley, but they deserve better!

Prominent names abound throughout these files: Dan Luten, Mary Lee Jefferds, Paul Grunland, Margo Gwinn, Marilyn Sarni, William Penn Mott, Jr., Paul Covell, Roger and Marion Reeve, David Brower, Winton McKibben, Alice Howard, Katherine Caldwell, Ed Wayburn, and on and on. Additionally, there are numerous old fliers and broadsides of historical interest.

There is even a newly-discovered cache of RPA's 1984 reissue of the landmark publication "Proposed Park Reservations for East Bay Cities (California)" originally published in 1930 and has served as the basis for EBRPD's Master Plan ever since.

Joe Engbeck and Harlan Kessel will be working on organizing these materials for easy access and safekeeping but they could use some help. If you have an interest in

working on this project, please give Amelia Wilson a call at 925-376-6925.

Remember, RPA was originally formed in 1947. We are the oldest EBRPD support (and "watchdog") organization and we have held non-profit status for years. Some years ago we granted EBRPD the right to use our name for its own non-profit, the Regional Parks Foundation. Here are a few timely words from one of our early statements of origin and purpose: "The battle for the accomplishment of our objectives is never completely won. A large membership from the Bay Area communities can better spread information about parks and park problems and can help to draw communities together for unified effort in developing a well-balanced system of parks in the region."

What was true 50 years ago is still true today!

EXCEPT THAT THE PLAYERS CHANGE....

The RPA Board has a new member, Tim Gordon, elected at the annual meeting this spring. Tim is a naturalist and brings a wealth of knowledge to RPA Board discussions.

Kathryn Petersen has become an ex officio Board member, able to continue her participation in Board discussion, but without a vote.

Amelia Wilson was elected President, Joe Engbeck as Vice-President; Greg Schneider and Pete Wilson will continue their positions respectively as Secretary and as Treasurer. (Amelia and Pete each have ½ vote on the Board.

ENVIRONMENTALIST CONCERNS ON LOS VAQUEROS RESERVOIR IGNORED BY CONTRA COSTA WATER DISTRICT

The Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) Board of Directors has authorized an advisory election in March 2004 for expansion of the Los Vaqueros Reservoir from 100,000 to 500,000 acre feet. This, in spite of a parade of environmentalists, EBRPD and rate payers urging CCWD to prepare an EIR to provide more information before a vote. Although this is called an advisory vote, the CCWD Board has publicly stated if the rate payers turn down the proposal, it will not be pursued.

This plan will demolish the current Los Vaqueros Reservoir south of Brentwood, built with \$450 million in bonds authorized in 1988. CCWD constructed extensive habitat for species which were destroyed during construction. That new habitat and recreational amenities will themselves be destroyed along with the existing reservoir if expansion happens. An additional 2000 acres of important habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox and other protected wildlife species would be flooded.

Why should RPA members who do *not* live in the CCWD be concerned? Because EBRPD owns and operates four major regional preserves and two recreation areas

(13,000 acres) directly adjacent to or impacted by the proposed expansion.

The Sierra Club, Save the Bay and other environmental groups as well as rate payer's citizen groups have already pledged to oppose this ballot measure. The RPA Board will study and weigh in on the issues in September.. Your comments are welcomed.

- - - - -

(Coyote Hills continued)

final straw, a large housing development has been proposed adjacent to the park.

So RPA will be closely following the land use plan process, and the water issues it raises, as it works its way through EBRPD; we hope you will too.

<p><i>Don't know much about Coyote Hills? Haven't been there? RPA can change that. We're planning a Saturday outing there in September. Details in the RPA's fall newsletter..</i></p>
--

WIN SOME.....

An Alameda Superior Court judge ruled June 3 that sections of a City of Oakland Leona Quarry environmental impact report were flawed and that Oakland must re-do it.. The same judge also ruled the Blue Rock (Walpert Ridge) housing-golf course proposal EIR inadequate. Congratulations to those citizens who protest EIR's that gloss over impacts to wildlife and waters.

LOSE SOME.....

On the down side, a Federal judge threw out Alameda whipsnake habitat protection; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared that tiger salamander protection is "not applicable to ranchers."