

# 2024 EBRPD Board Candidate Questionnaire

Your answers will not be saved until you submit the form at the end. If you don't feel you can answer these questions in one sitting, you may want to [download the questions](#) and draft your answers externally, then paste them into this form.

Please record your full name below: \*

Casey Alyson Farmer

**When you visit the East Bay Regional Parks, how often do you enjoy the following activities?**

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

Hiking

Cycling on dirt trails  
or natural surface  
roads (mountain  
biking, gravel riding,  
fire roads, etc.)

Cycling on paved  
trails and roads within  
the park

Running/Jogging

Dog walking

Horseback riding

Picnicking or other  
gatherings

Visiting park  
amenities (lakes,  
visitor centers,  
gardens, etc.)

Narrow Trail Maintenance

**Historically, basic ongoing or scheduled maintenance of existing natural surface narrow trails has been a low-priority activity for the EBRPD.**

What are your thoughts on institutionalized EBRPD collaboration with volunteer organizations that have expertise and are eager to assist with such maintenance on trails that are open to bicycles?

Yes I support volunteer service to support maintenance of our trails, where it does not violate the union contract and where it fulfills works staff are unable to complete. (I also support increasing staffing levels too better support visitor experience as our parks have become more popular and as our population increases.) I appreciate the work of our many volunteers throughout the Park District who devote their time to protecting wildlife, maintaining trails, and providing safety to folks by monitoring the trails.

Do you see value in collaborating with such volunteer organizations to lobby for state and federal funding to support trail maintenance? Please explain why or why not.

Yes partner organizations and more stakeholder organization should be invited to join the park district's lobbying work on legislation or grant funding. As a member of the PAC, I am asked to write letters to various agencies regarding funding and this should be made available to aligned partners who can offer a community perspective as to why the resources will improve our communities.

#### Narrow Trails - Demand & Access Issues

**Since 1995, EBRPD park acreage has nearly doubled while only 15 miles of narrow trails have been added. Demand for access to these parks and its trail system is now at an all-time high. In the last few years much of this demand has been driven by the increase in popularity of mountain biking, especially among youth. High school and middle school teams have sprung up all over the Bay Area with many hundreds of young riders joining.**

**The imbalance of demand and supply of the Park's existing narrow trails has been magnified by historical inequity regarding access for bikes. Equestrians (a small and decreasing user group) have access to roughly 55% of the narrow trail system while cyclists (a much larger and growing group) have access to less than 25%. Pedestrians have 100% access. All this has resulted in user conflicts - real, perceived, or both. In addition, the Park has seen an increase in the creation of unofficial, unsanctioned trails due to the absence of EBRPD trail additions and actions on access.**

What strategies do you have in mind to balance increased recreational demand overall for narrow trail experiences, with the preservation of natural habitats?

EBRPD should take a balanced approach to ensuring preservation and providing access. I support studying wildlife to assess risks of public access but would also learn from staff biologists and outside research on adaptability of wildlife when habitat changes (for example, due to new trails). Each park can be home to many types of wildlife. EBRPD's analysis, which should be made publicly accessible, should assess the particular ecological dynamics and threats to sensitive species/habitats (e.g., human disturbance, erosion, noxious weeds). When possible, ensure enough trails to reduce crowding and to prevent rogue trails from being constructed or utilized. EBRPD should keep large undisturbed blocks of habitat preserved so they can serve as a refuge for a variety of wildlife species. One way to create this balance could be to keep trails in closer proximity to one another (essentially "parallel") in order to keep habitat preserved. This response is not especially specific but I hope it shares my overall thought process as I would review trail planning from staff or how to propose new trails.

What strategies do you have in mind to bring into balance the historical inequities of access privilege among trail users?

Many of our parks and trails were designed many years ago and they were designed for equestrians and hikers. I recognize that the evolution of our parks has not followed the recreational desires of our visitors. While hikers are still a vast majority of our users (and my personal form of recreation at EBRPD), I definitely support making changes to our trails and recreational offerings. To do so, I believe the park district should be thoughtful, should engage the public, and should conduct proper analysis so it can show the public justification for such changes. I approach policy change first and foremost by listening to the needs of our constituents, which should be done through surveys and outreach on an individual park level as well as District-wide. I understand that some bikers turn off the exercise apps when they are in parks to avoid being tracked - so the district should consider other ways to collect data that is more accurate.

Additionally, I believe that the lack of access to parks is an environmental injustice. I believe in expanding access to our parks through bus lines, bike lanes, and creating more community based field trip programs where the EBRPD foundation can work with trusted community members (via afterschool programs, faith based communities, preschools, and other organizations serving those who have never been to a Regional Park) to ensure more families can benefit from nature and recreation. I also want to expand our field trip programs and naturalist programming. There are incalculable benefits to spending time in nature – for wellness, for consciousness of the need to protect and preserve nature, for education and learning. Expanding access to our parks also can also ensure greater support for future ballot measures EBRPD may bring before voters, which rely upon for funding to maintain our parks and invest in their infrastructure.

Briones Pilot Program

**With the *Briones Pilot Program*, EBRPD has taken a small but significant step toward recognizing and addressing issues of trail conflict, non-system trail impact on habitat, and equitable access for bikes.**

What do you see working and not working with the pilot? What are your thoughts on the results (to date) from the pilot and how learning outcomes could be applied to post-pilot actions at Briones and to other parks?

I am pleased to see reductions in user conflict and rogue trails. I think the pilot has also broken down silos amongst EBRPD departments. I believe the switch gates at the end of the trail are important infrastructural improvements which has reduced trail conflict at the convergence of the trails.

I believe signage needs to improve. I recently hiked Pleasanton Ridge and in coming across a rogue trail, I saw a small sign reading "protected area" covered by tall grass. This is not a deterrent and it may not be clear to people less familiar with the trails. Our signage needs to be larger and more engaging/a call to action: "Closed Area - Help us protect this vulnerable habitat" (or something to this effect)

I believe one of the greatest successes is the investment from partners like the SOB's who have developed important messaging and social media posts for their many mountain bike followers. These messages (such as "Too Wet to Ride") are stronger and more impactful when they come from the advocacy groups themselves – as they are the "trusted messenger" to the mountain bike community, over the EBRPD as a governmental agency. This level of investment and engagement from an advocacy organization is powerful and should continue to be supported. (I led the Alameda County Census 2020 effort and we used this exact model: we knew our bureaucracy didn't have the trust or the reach to message to our historically undercounted communities, but by granting to, training, and supporting the "trusted messengers" serving low-income families, young children, people with disabilities, and immigrants – we were highly successful in our response rate. (Ranked 7th highest performing county in the state, despite 25% of our population considered "hard-to-count")

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Other Comments

**If you have any other comments on the topics discussed here or any related topics, please leave them below. Press Submit when you are done.**

Throughout my career, I've had a track record of building coalitions, breaking down barriers and expanding access, and working with diverse communities.

From 2010-2017, I led an all-Latina Girl Scout Troop in the Fruitvale neighborhood. Most of our girls had never been past Dimond park and thus have never enjoyed any of our East Bay Regional Parks. We spent most of our meetings exploring our parks: learning to read a trail map in Redwood Regional, and camping at Briones and Anthony Chabot. I saw the power of our parks through the eyes of these girls. My drive to run for the EBRPD Board is to expand access and opportunity for families of all backgrounds. I will champion "park prescriptions" which some clinics give to their patients to help improve their physical wellbeing. As our youth endure a mental health crisis, I will lead efforts to expand partnerships with school, public health, and community programs whom EBRPD can support to bring youth to our parks for mindfulness, meditation, yoga, forest bathing, and other wellness programming in addition to our fantastic recreational offerings.

As a staffer to multiple elected officials, I have been responsible for addressing complex community issues. In one instance, I re-created public information about lead jewelry exposure in a low-income community because the State agency's outreach was vastly insufficient and not culturally accessible. Another example was about the lack of access to outdoor spaces: where some residents of an affordable housing building lacked outdoor space so they gathered on sidewalks and the neighboring condo owners saw their neighbors "use" of outdoor space as loitering. I met with all parties and listened to their concerns. In addition to working with the property owner to improve their site, I initiated a community event to bring everyone to get to know one another as people. (A well-attended community barbecue with music and games). In working for policy makers, I not only mastered the skills of policy and budget development but I am adept crafting policy through user design – ensuring that the process thinks through how the program or policy will impact people and how it will be successfully carried out to meet the intended goals. I get into the weeds so we get the policy right!

I'm proud to have earned over 150 endorsements – ranging from California Attorney General Rob Bonta to Rue Mapp, the Founder of Outdoor Afro. I am endorsed by the Alameda County Democratic Party, the EBRPD park workers union (AFSCME 2428) and EBRPD Board Members Olivia Sanwong and John Mercurio. I am also endorsed by elected officials at the local level who recognize my commitment to partnership and collaboration as very important our mutual benefits: great parks for all residents and fire protection, including: the entire City Councils of Orinda, Moraga, and Walnut Creek, EBMUD Director Marguerite Young, Ken Carlson and Candace Andersen of the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, and all of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. One of my proudest endorsements is Lynn Hiden, who as a mom of young children 50 years ago co-led the effort to create the EBPRD Lafayette Moraga Trail. (what a heroine!)

My full list of endorsements is on my website: [www.farmer4parks.vote](http://www.farmer4parks.vote)

This form was created inside of The Bicycle Trails Council of the East Bay.

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