

2026 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.

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Please record your full name below: *

Rebecca Lewington

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. As a result many trails are badly eroded and even dangerous.

What are your thoughts on regular institutionalized EBRPD collaboration with volunteer organizations that have expertise and are eager to assist with such maintenance on narrow natural surface trails (singletrack) that are open to bicycles?

I strongly support regular, institutionalized collaboration between EBRPD and volunteer organizations that bring expertise, enthusiasm, and a long-term commitment to trail stewardship. Organizations such as BTCEB can be valuable partners in maintaining sustainable, safe, and environmentally responsible singletrack trails that are open to bicycles.

At the same time, I believe volunteer efforts should complement, not replace, the work of EBRPD's professional staff. Park District employees provide essential expertise, oversight, and continuity, while volunteer groups can contribute specialized knowledge, additional capacity, and thousands of hours of stewardship that help stretch limited public resources.

I would support clear processes for training, coordination, project identification, and ongoing communication so that volunteers, staff, and trail users can work together effectively. Building a strong partnership between EBRPD and volunteer trail organizations can improve trail conditions, strengthen community stewardship, and help ensure that our trail system remains sustainable and enjoyable for future generations.

Historically EBRPD trails suffer from explosive vegetation growth during spring. As a result some of those trails are nearly impassable for weeks if not months until mechanized crews are able to clear the tall grasses and weeds directly impacting the trails. The volume of work is impractical and has safety concerns making volunteer hand work unreasonable. We understand the union MOU issues would need to be worked through. There are stewardship volunteers that would also like the authorization to operate line trimmers to do more effective work.

Do you support finding ways for volunteer groups such as BTCEB to operate powered tools for the exclusive purpose of trail brushing? Would you make this a priority objective? Why or why not? If not, do you support the park district making it a priority to clear vegetation impacted trails in a much more timely manner?

Yes, I support finding ways for qualified volunteer organizations such as BTCEB to use powered tools for the limited and specific purpose of trail brushing, provided there are appropriate training, safety, environmental review, and supervision protocols in place. Effective vegetation management is essential for maintaining safe access, preserving sight lines, reducing user conflicts, and protecting the trail corridor.

I believe this should be a priority because overgrown trails can quickly become less safe, less enjoyable, and more expensive to restore if maintenance is deferred. The Park District benefits when knowledgeable community volunteers are empowered to contribute their time and expertise in partnership with staff.

At the same time, as I said above, volunteer efforts should complement, not replace, the work of EBRPD's professional employees. My goal would be to establish a durable framework that allows trained volunteers to assist where appropriate while maintaining the District's responsibility for oversight, environmental stewardship, and long-term trail management.

If legal, regulatory, or operational barriers prevent expanded volunteer use of powered tools, then I would absolutely support making more timely vegetation clearance a higher priority for the Park District. Trail users should not have to wait extended periods for basic brushing and corridor maintenance that are necessary to keep designated trails open, accessible, and safe.

Narrow Trails - Demand & Access Issues

Since 1995, EBRPD park acreage has nearly doubled while less than 25 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 (singletrack) 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 nearly 100% access. Ordinance 38 allows broad pedestrian off trail access. All this has resulted in user conflicts - real and perceived. 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.

There has been minimal addition of singletrack trails over the last several decades in part due to the high resource load for planning, environmental review for new trails, and funding. Change in Use is an option to address some of the access issues in a much shorter time frame.

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

East Bay's parks are one of our greatest public assets, and we need to ensure that recreational opportunities grow responsibly alongside the communities we serve. As more people discover our parks, including growing numbers of youth and families participating in mountain biking, it is important that the Park District proactively address increased demand for high-quality narrow trail experiences while remaining committed to habitat protection and environmental stewardship.

I believe we should use a combination of strategies. First, we should identify opportunities for carefully evaluated Change in Use projects on existing trails where environmental impacts are minimal and where doing so can improve access and reduce pressure on other trail corridors. Second, we should continue to pursue new trail connections and trail improvements where appropriate, using sound science and environmental review to guide decisions. Third, we should invest in maintenance, brushing, and stewardship so that existing trails remain safe, sustainable, and enjoyable for all users.

Volunteer organizations can play an important role. Groups that contribute trail expertise, stewardship, and thousands of volunteer hours should be viewed as partners in helping the District maintain a sustainable trail system. Empowering community stewardship can improve trail conditions while building greater respect for our parks and natural resources.

Finally, I think the best way to reduce conflicts is through thoughtful trail design, clear expectations, education, and providing enough opportunities for different types of users. When people feel they have reasonable access to quality trail experiences, user conflicts tend to decrease. My goal would be to support data-driven decisions that expand appropriate recreational opportunities while protecting sensitive habitats and preserving the natural character that makes our regional parks so special.

Do you support consideration of Change In Use for existing trails to alleviate some of the lack of bike access? Why or why not?

Yes, see my answer to the previous question.

With the *Briones Pilot Program*, EBRPD took a significant step toward recognizing and addressing issues of trail conflict, non-system trail impact on habitat, and equitable access for bikes. The Pilot was a pragmatic approach to today's reality, the resulting impacts, and not a reward to rogue trail building.

What are your thoughts on the results from the pilot and how learnings & outcomes could be applied at other parks? What are your thoughts regarding further evaluation of non-system trails in other parks, adoption of those that can be sustainable and make sense in the trail system, along with closure and habitat rehabilitation of unsustainable non-system trails?

I support adopting sustainable unsanctioned trails and removing unsustainable ones — with the obvious caveats that such trails form part of a coordinated District-wide plan, aren't causing environmental damage, and can be made sustainable.

The District's pilot project at Briones demonstrates this can work: properly built bike trails adapt or replace bootleg trails, actually restore habitat, and reduce the potential for conflict.

The Wildcat Bike Trail Project

The Wildcat Bike Trail Project is proposed to add 1.4 miles of downhill directional bike only trail. The public process for this trail has been extraordinary given the very limited project scope. There has been some vocal opposition to the project while several thousand members of the public support the project. The project is currently working on an EIR. Staff brought the project back to the board for a second time requesting approval to proceed with an EIR. A majority of board members supported moving forward with the EIR and issuing the contract for the EIR.

If a vote to continue the EIR were to come before you today would you vote to support continuing or would you vote to stop the project and why?

When different user groups have separate trails, conflicts are eliminated — and that's obviously a good thing. If suitable places are available to build such trails using environmentally friendly, sustainable techniques, why not? This model has been used successfully all over the world.

The Wildcat Canyon project is a model example of how to approach it: the field surveys performed so far indicate the environmental impact is less than significant, a full CEQA review will happen before ground is broken, and by removing bike access from the nearby Leonards Trail, the project also provides a win for hikers, runners, and equestrians.

So yes, I would vote to continue if the EIR.

One candidate has publicly opposed the Wildcat Project and and stated 'I don't see how recreational trails of this nature fit in the ethos of a park district', ' Briones was just expanded ... before that it was Crockett. What park is next after we do this one? ... Where does it end?'

Do you agree that recreational trails of this nature don't fit the park district ethos? Why or why not?

I disagree. The District works because protecting nature and connecting people to it reinforce one another. I'll keep that balance — conservation and recreation as partners, not opponents.

All user groups should have facilities - including trails - that give them satisfying and enjoyable experiences. For mountain bicycling, that means winding trails with challenging sections for different skill levels. As a benefit, such trails automatically ensure lower speeds, reducing the potential for conflicts between different user types.

The Next Century District Plan and Future Bike Access

The park district is in the process of developing it's next century plan or district plan. The 2013 District Plan included Trails for All and envisioned both multi-use and single use trails. It did not provide a clear vision for a magnitude of trail expansion or additional bike access. BTCEB has proposed that the district set a vision of all residents in the park district having access to a park with 10 miles of bike legal singletrack within a 20-25 minute drive from their home. The lack of bike access is leading to increased unauthorized

trail creation by park users which often may result in increased natural resource impacts. We ask that the district target reaching 75% of the district having this available to them in the next 20 years.

What is your vision for Singletrack bike access from a volume and timing perspective and why?

Do you support the above proposed level of bike access and trails? Why or why not?

Every East Bay resident should have reasonable access to high-quality, sustainable, recreation facilities close to home. For cyclists, that means bike-legal singletrack close to home. As participation in mountain biking continues to grow, especially among youth and families, the Park District should ensure that our trail system evolves to meet that demand while protecting the natural resources that make our parks special.

I appreciate BTCEB's goal of expanding access so that more residents can reach a meaningful network of bike-legal singletrack, but I would prioritize facilities that can be accessed without using a car at all, either by public transit or simply by riding to the trails.

While I would want future District Plan goals to be informed by environmental science, public engagement, and site-specific analysis, I support establishing measurable access targets and timelines rather than relying on vague aspirations.

In the near term, I believe the greatest opportunities may come from carefully evaluating Change in Use projects, improving connectivity between existing trails, and accelerating maintenance and stewardship efforts. These approaches can often expand access more quickly and cost-effectively than creating entirely new trails.

Over the next 20 years, I would like to see substantial growth in bike-legal singletrack opportunities across the District, with a focus on geographic equity so that families throughout the East Bay, not just in a few locations, have access to quality trail experiences. Expanding legitimate access can help reduce user conflicts, encourage stewardship, support youth recreation, and reduce pressure for unauthorized trail creation, while ensuring that habitat protection remains a central consideration in every decision.

Ultimately, my goal is a trail system that reflects the needs of today's diverse park users: one that provides more opportunities for mountain biking, hiking, equestrian use, and nature enjoyment while maintaining the environmental values that the Park District was created to protect.

The Roles of Access, Education, and Enforcement

Singletrack bike access is limited in the East Bay Regional Park District. The addition of sanctioned access at Crockett Hills and the adoption of unsanctioned trails at Briones have shown a positive impact on unsanctioned trail activity. Those increases in access are significant yet much of the district has very limited opportunity to biking singletrack trails. Some members of the community call for increased enforcement and also self policing by the mountain bike community. Self policing is challenging in light

of decades of access advocacy with EBRPD while other land managers demonstrate significantly more expansion in access. Meanwhile the net impact to habitat is much worse than additional well planned trails.

Where do you see the roles of increased access, education, and enforcement in the overall situation related to mountain bikes in EBRPD?

I believe increased access, education, and enforcement all have a role to play, but they are not equally effective when used in isolation. The most durable solution is to align recreation opportunities with actual community demand while maintaining strong environmental stewardship.

As participation in mountain biking continues to grow, especially among youth and families, the Park District should expand access to sustainable, bike-legal singletrack where appropriate. The experiences at Crockett Hills and Briones suggest that providing legitimate opportunities can help channel use onto sustainable, well-managed trails and strengthen the relationship between riders and the Park District. When people feel heard and see a pathway toward expanded access, they are more likely to become partners in stewardship.

Education is equally important. The mountain biking community has a strong tradition of volunteerism, trail stewardship, and peer-to-peer outreach. I would like to see continued investment in rider education, trail etiquette, habitat protection, volunteer trail work, and collaboration with organizations such as BTCEB, local NICA teams, and other user groups. Building a culture of stewardship helps protect resources and reduce conflicts among trail users.

Enforcement has a role, particularly where sensitive habitats are being damaged or where there are significant public safety concerns. However, enforcement alone is unlikely to solve a problem that is partly driven by unmet recreational demand. I believe enforcement is most effective when paired with a clear strategy for expanding appropriate access, maintaining trails, and educating users about why certain areas should remain protected.

Ultimately, I see access, education, and enforcement as complementary tools. My priority would be to create more opportunities for people to enjoy our parks responsibly while protecting natural resources, reducing unauthorized trail creation, and fostering a stronger partnership between the Park District and the communities that care deeply about these lands.

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. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views. I appreciate the Bicycle Trails Council of the East Bay's commitment to educating voters and fostering thoughtful discussion about the future of our parks.

The East Bay Regional Park District is truly one of our region's greatest treasures, and this may be one of the most consequential elections in its history. The decisions made in the coming years will help shape how we balance conservation, access, recreation, stewardship, and public investment for generations to come. I am grateful for BTCEB's efforts to engage the community in that conversation and for the work it does to promote responsible trail stewardship and outdoor recreation throughout the East Bay.

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

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