

## Introduction

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is the nation's largest urban regional park district - spanning 125,000 acres across 73 parks throughout Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

The Regional Parks host a wide variety of fish and wildlife that rely on the water and surrounding landscapes for food and shelter. The parks serve as sanctuaries for many plant and animal species - ecological treasures amid highly urbanized areas. They are among the few remaining places where sensitive and endangered wildlife can take refuge. From a conservation standpoint, the Bay Area is an ecological treasure, with many precious habitats that need protection, restoration, and management to continue to thrive.

The EBRPD manages several shoreline habitats and is in a key position to aid federal, state, and private agencies in their efforts to revitalize wetlands. The tidal marshes of Martin Luther King Jr Regional Shoreline (MLK), in Oakland, are very productive feeding and resting places for thousands of migratory birds traveling the Pacific Flyway and is recognized as part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The endangered and threatened species that reside or have the potential to use the New Marsh at MLK Shoreline include the following: Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, California/Ridgeway's Clapper Rail, California Black Rail, California Least Tern, Western Snowy Plover, and Black Skimmer.

Wildlife biologist David Riensche, fondly known as Doc Quack to many, is committed to restoring nesting habitat for resident and migratory shorebirds like the threatened Western Snowy Plover. The Pacific Coast population of the Western Snowy Plover was federally listed as a threatened species in 1993 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2012) and is currently listed as a California Species of Special Concern (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2015). Western Snowy Plover numbers have decreased due to habitat loss, increased predation, and human disturbance (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007). The Western Snowy Plover Recovery Plan calls for the creation, management and enhancement of breeding habitat and the maintenance of an average of 500 breeding adults in the San Francisco Bay, California for a 10-year period (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007-2012). Science based research is guiding the island restoration ("Shorebird Sanctuary") in the New Marsh.

The goal of the multiyear project is to restore some of California's precious remaining wetlands, create a shorebird sanctuary, and support the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Plan for the Western Snowy Plover by enhancing and creating new nesting habitat within the SF Bay region. At the beginning of 2022, the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission awarded the Regional Parks Foundation \$10,000 to support the restoration efforts at this shoreline park. This funding has helped move the project forward in many ways.



The sanctuary at MLK Jr provides new nesting habitat for birds like this Western Snowy Plover.

## Project Highlights

- ✓ **Vegetation Removal** – In the project’s first year, workers and volunteers removed overgrown vegetation from the island and developed maintenance protocols to discourage regrowth. Annually since then, volunteers and staff have maintained this area before the spring breeding season. This year, Civicorp crews spent four days clearing more than 1.545 feet (or 471 m) of vegetation on both sides of the New Marsh fence, to remove concealment cover and prevent predator access to the island.
- ✓ **Monitoring Spring Breeding Season** – Staff monitor the island for nesting shorebirds during the spring. From 2020 - 2022, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts and Killdeers have successfully established nests on the island. In April of 2021, a male Western Snowy Plover was observed nest prospecting on the island. 25 shorebird pairs have made nesting attempts on this newly crafted island since 2020.
- ✓ **Movement of bulk materials** – Funds from the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission were used to move bulk materials. Crews moved over 36 cubic yards of sand and oyster shells out to the island site which is 75 yards from land. The total sand/shells moved weighed 48 tons or 96,000 pounds.
- ✓ **Spread bulk materials** – Working with project staff, more than 800 volunteers of all ages donated a total of 4,000 hours to spread out a mixture of sand and crushed/whole oyster shells over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre, or 32,670 total square feet, to create the ideal nesting conditions for the Western Snowy Plover and other shorebirds.
- ✓ **Site has ideal breeding conditions for Western Snowy Plovers, American Avocets, Black Necked Stilts, and other shorebird species.** Birds that prefer open flats or the sparsely vegetated edges of shallow marshes.



One of the new nesting residents at the MLK Jr Regional Shoreline – American Avocet on new sand/shell matrix

To support this effort, funds from the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission were used to cover the cost of working with CiviCorps to reduce vegetation and move bulk materials to the island. The group was very energetic and enthusiastic, and in Doc Quack’s words, “did an amazing job pruning, cutting, and clearing vegetation on both sides of the fence. Once volunteer events resumed in 2022, several events were held to complete the work of spreading the bulk materials throughout the year.

DATE	SUPPLIER	ITEMS	TOTAL	GRANT FUNDS	MATCHING FUNDS
5/1/2022	Civicorps	64 Gallon Cart (May)	252.00	158.72	
9/1/2022	Civicorps	Recycling fees MLK (June)	200.00	200.00	
9/1/2022	Civicorps	Recycling fees MLK (July)	200.00	200.00	
10/5/2022	Civicorps	Recycling fees MLK (August)	200.00	200.00	
10/27/2022	Civicorps	Recycling fees MLK (September)	200.00	200.00	
10/31/2022	Civicorps	Brush/Vegetation removal MLK	8,841.28	8,841.28	
11/10/2022	Civicorps	Recycling fees MLK	100.00	100.00	
11/30/2022	Civicorps	Recycling fees MLK (October)	100.00	100.00	
		<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>	

### Next Steps

Project activities will continue cyclically to reach the ideal nesting ground matrix. Doc Quack's team removed invasive plants the first year, and regular maintenance will continue to prevent the return of the invasive plants.

Cyclical activities include:

- Controlling the spread of invasive plants
- Monitoring spring breeding season
- Purchasing additional bulk materials and stage for spreading as needed
- Spreading materials
- Engaging volunteers