



2020 Election EBRPD Ward 1 Candidate

Questionnaire Responses from

Elizabeth Echols

<https://elizabeth4parks.org/>





1. Outdoor recreation and trail use are growing rapidly among all user groups, especially since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Do you think public access on EBRPD managed lands is adequate?

Response: (yes/no)

No. I support expanding public access to EBRPD managed lands, including continuing to close gaps in the Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trails. I'm excited that after many years of collaboration and partnership with local community members and elected leaders, we were able to complete the Albany beach expansion and close the one-mile gap in the Bay Trail between Albany and Berkeley. People can now bike, walk or run along this beautiful shoreline all the way from Oakland to Richmond. This project significantly improves public access to the shoreline.

2. Do you think the current EBRPD narrow dirt trail network is adequate to meet the needs of responsible mountain bikers?

Response: (yes/no)

The Park District's Master Plan speaks to providing trails for all and Park District staff has worked to provide additional trails of various widths through their Land Use Plans. The Park District is also convening a group of trail users to explore opportunities to improve and expand the Park District's trail uses, including responsible mountain bikers.

3. If you answered "no" to either of the previous questions, if elected, what policies and projects will you pursue to address the situation?

Response: (yes/no)

In order to fulfill the vision of the Park District's Master Plan of trails for all, it is important to bring the various user groups together in a collaborative process to determine how the interests of different groups can best be addressed. This is the purpose of the staff led Trail User Working Group which I support. I also will continue to work with the Park District Planning, Trails, Stewardship, and Operations Departments to explore strategies to ensure the Park District is meeting the needs of all trail users.



4. Social trails exist in various parks and one driver is the lack of action by land managers to acknowledge and meet the desires of park users for narrow trails for bike paths. Would you be supportive of directing staff to evaluate social trails for adequacy for adoption into the park trail system?

Response: (yes/no) If not, why not?

Park District staff is pursuing an inventory of trails throughout District parklands, including social trails. I support completion of this inventory and allow Planning, Trails, Stewardship, and Operations staff to identify what trails should be incorporated into the parks trail network, what trails need to be rerouted, and what trails should be closed.

5. Many EBRPD managed trails have exceeded their carrying capacity, leading to increased environmental damage and/or a diminished experience for trail users. How would you look to increase the carrying capacity of our trail networks utilizing the input from groups like BTCEB?

Response: (please elaborate)

We are always looking to expand our trail network and welcome input from groups like BTCEB. Our ongoing assessment of the Park District trail network and the implementation of the Park District adopted Land Use Plans also helps to address capacity issues.

6. Would you vote in favor of authorizing EBRPD staff to retain professional consultants to engage with relevant interest groups to undertake a comprehensive multi-use trail plan?

Response: (yes/no)

Park District staff is convening a Trail User Working Group composed of a wide variety of park user interest group representatives to evaluate strategies to improve the District's trail network for all as envisioned by our Master Plan. The Park District hired a professional facilitator to guide the discussion. One possible outcome of this process may be to pursue a comprehensive multi-use trail plan. This would be an extensive effort requiring a significant investment on the part of the Park District, but may facilitate expansion of the District's trail network and restoration of areas impacted by unsustainable trails and roads in the future.



7. Would you vote in favor of authorizing EBRPD staff to make recommendations regarding specific existing trails that should be opened to bikes and/or proposals for building entirely new trails?

Response: (yes/no and please feel free to elaborate)

Through the Ordinance 38 process, the Board considers trail use on specific trails based on input from Park District Planning, Trails, Stewardship, Operations, and Public Safety staff.

8. Would you vote in support of creating an agreement/memorandum of understanding whereby the EBRPD provides authorization for groups like BTCEB to undertake maintenance of trails?

Response: (yes/no)

The Park District welcomes volunteers from groups like BTCEB to assist with trail maintenance.

9. Would you vote in support of the Bay Area Ridge Trail's proposal to upgrade several trails along their trail alignment across and between EBRPD/EBMUD lands to provide a safer and more enjoyable trail loop for adaptive mountain bikers, families & children, novice riders, hikers, trail runners, & dog walkers?

Response: (yes/no)

Park District staff work closely with Bay Area Ridge Trail staff to identify trails appropriate for multi-use in furtherance of our trails for all objective. I have not seen the proposal mentioned in this question, and would need to review it before commenting.

10. If elected, how do you propose to address the need for trail access and connectivity between properties managed by various agencies?

Response: (please elaborate)

The Park District has well established interagency relationships with counties, cities, and relevant agencies such as EBMUD, SFPUC, the Alameda County Water District, and the Contra Costa Water District. These relationships help us



coordinate trail access and connectivity among the agencies that manage these properties.

11. Do you believe increased bike access can be created while ensuring adequate environmental resource protection?

Response: (yes/no and please elaborate if you like)

Yes, particularly in some of our newer land acquisitions.

12. What do you see as the most significant threats/challenges facing the district for which you hope to be a board member?

Response: (please elaborate)

Climate Change: The Park District is on the front lines of addressing climate change and must find solutions that protect Park District infrastructure, public parklands, and the communities with which we border. With 55 miles of shoreline, Sea Level Rise presents a significant threat to habitats, accessible shorelines, and the Bay Trail. Adaptive restoration projects, such as the recently completed Albany Beach public access project and Bay Trail gap closure that account for sea level rise are critical to protect public investments on the Bay shoreline and protect neighboring private properties.

The Park District manages parklands that form the Wildland-Urban Interface for many communities throughout the East Bay. Coordination between the Park District's Stewardship and Fire Department is critical in implementing projects like the Wildfire Reduction and Resource Management Plan in the East Bay hills from Richmond to Castro Valley. The Park District is also responsible for protecting special status species and habitats throughout the East Bay. Adaptive land management programs and restoration projects, like those implemented in partnership with the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy, are critical to addressing climate impacts such as increased flooding and drought on protected natural habitats.

13. Are you supportive of considering the creation of new overnight camping sites on District managed lands?



Response: (yes/no and please elaborate if you have any specific ideas for how to you propose to pursue this effort)

Yes. As a child, I camped overnight in Tilden and at Camp Ohlone in the Sunol Regional Wilderness so I have a deep appreciation for the benefits of overnight camping on EBRPD lands. The Park District plans to to have two overnight camps at McCosker. Sibley also added an overnight camp within the last five years.

14. Do you believe there are natural surface trails on EBRPD lands where Class 1 electric mountain bikes can be safely allowed? Note: Class 1 electric bikes are those that are pedal-assist only, with no throttle, and have a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph.

Response: (yes/no)

Park District staff is currently evaluating the use of electric bikes starting with a pilot of electric bikes on paved trails. The popularity of electric bikes will likely increase, especially with an aging population. While I believe that Class 1 electric bikes can be safely operated on natural surface trails, as with conventional bikes, safe operation will depend on the driver. Both safety and potential environmental impact issues should be evaluated and addressed with input from user groups.

15. If you answered “no” to the previous question, how do you recommend e-bikes be managed?

Response: (please elaborate)

16. Do you believe EBRPD has an obligation to provide new recreation and visitation opportunities for East Bay residents from historically underserved communities?

Response: (yes/no and please elaborate if you have any specific ideas for how to you propose to pursue this effort)

Yes, increasing access for underserved communities to East Bay Parks is a top priority of mine. I believe it is critical to hear directly from underserved community members regarding their interests and how we can best address them. As a starting point, here are some ideas:



- Expand opportunities for underserved youth by providing additional scholarships for camp and other recreational opportunities;
- Increase free bus transportation provided by the Park District to make parks more accessible;
- Expand parkland in close proximity to underserved communities by continuing to convert industrial land to parkland, especially along the North Richmond shoreline;
- Create bridges over busy highways to allow safe pedestrian and bike access to parks; and
- Increase summer and year round job opportunities for youth



**2020 Election Candidate Outreach &
Education Responses from
Norman La Force**

<https://www.laforceofcourse.org/>





EBRPD Candidate Questions

1. Outdoor recreation and trail use are growing rapidly among all user groups, especially since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Do you think public access on EBRPD managed lands is adequate?

Response: No

2. Do you think the current EBRPD narrow dirt trail network is adequate to meet the needs of responsible mountain bikers?

Response: Not

3. If you answered “no” to either of the previous questions, if elected, what policies and projects will you pursue to address the situation?

Response:

≡ This organization and some of its members have a very mistaken view of my positions on mountain bike use in parks. I am, frankly, very disturbed by the misrepresentation of my views. I would hope to use this questionnaire as a vehicle for explaining my views. But if people have their minds made up, then whatever I write or say, will, from where I grew up, “Make no never mind.”

Mountain bike use in East Bay Regional Parks is certainly an appropriate use and an important recreational value. As with any activity it must be evaluated with other values. This is no different from evaluating hiking or equestrian activity. For example, the Park District’s Round Valley Regional Park contains valuable and fragile First Nation (“Indian”) sacred sites. Yet, the Park District does not allow hikers to enter the park willy-nilly to hike around those sites.

In regard to mountain bikes on trails, this organization and its members need to be informed that I advocated for an open workshop process with an outside facilitator that would facilitate a series of workshops on trails and trail users access and concerns. I am ON RECORD as demanding that the Park District include as many mountain bike groups as it can find. Just as I advocated for other user groups like hikers, off leash dog advocates, equestrians, etc.).

Initially the Park District REFUSED to include more groups. I have kept pressing them on this issue. In contrast, the Park Board members have said NOTHING on this issue. I attended via Zoom the Board meeting where they could have provided direction to staff but no direction was given.



The Trails Workshop process is where this issue can and should be worked out. I think we can reach a consensus just as we did with EBMUD on access to trails in EBMUD lands. As I recollect, this organization and others were part of that process. (NOTE: For that process I also advocated for maximum participation of groups.) I think we can reach a similar consensus regarding mountain bike access in the East Bay Regional Park District.

Finally, if elected, I will meet with this organization and any others on this issue.

4. Social trails exist in various parks and one driver is the lack of action by land managers to acknowledge and meet the desires of park users for narrow trails for bike paths. Would you be supportive of directing staff to evaluate social trails for adequacy for adoption into the park trail system?

Response: Yes, see prior answer.

5. Many EBRPD managed trails have exceeded their carrying capacity, leading to increased environmental damage and/or a diminished experience for trail users. How would you look to increase the carrying capacity of our trail networks utilizing the input from groups like BTCEB?

Response:

Carrying capacity issues require science based analysis. I am not going to accept a Donald Trump approach that because I believe something to be true, it is true. Sorry. I have always advocated that the Park District analyze impacts on trails and use of trails based on factual information and scientific analysis. This requires proper studies by properly credentialed staff. I have consistently advocated for more staff resources for this kind of work. Candidly, I have met with resistance from the Board and Management to devote the resources for this work. That has to be changed. If you want factual, science based information, you need to have the proper staff and resources to do it.

6. Would you vote in favor of authorizing EBRPD staff to retain professional consultants to engage with relevant interest groups to undertake a comprehensive multi-use trail plan?

Response: Yes.

I advocated this approach over 2 years ago!!! We finally got a process going this year. We could have been working on this a LONG time ago.



7. Would you vote in favor of authorizing EBRPD staff to make recommendations regarding specific existing trails that should be opened to bikes and/or proposals for building entirely new trails?

Response: Yes, so long as it is consistent with Ordinance 38, which is the legal basis for doing so, and so long as the proper environmental assessment is done.

8. Would you vote in support of creating an agreement/memorandum of understanding whereby the EBRPD provides authorization for groups like BTCEB to undertake maintenance of trails?

Response: Yes, BUT you would need to consult with the Park District unions on this issue and obtain their support. Union buy-in would be absolutely essential.

9. Would you vote in support of the Bay Area Ridge Trail's proposal to upgrade several trails along their trail alignment across and between EBRPD/EBMUD lands to provide a safer and more enjoyable trail loop for adaptive mountain bikers, families & children, novice riders, hikers, trail runners, & dog walkers?

Response: Yes, so long as the proper environmental review was conducted.

10. If elected, how do you propose to address the need for trail access and connectivity between properties managed by various agencies?

Response: First, the Park District needs to work through the Trails workshop process. Second, we have the Trails Workshop process that, hopefully, will reach consensus on this issue

11. Do you believe increased bike access can be created while ensuring adequate environmental resource protection?

Response: Yes.



12. What do you see as the most significant threats/challenges facing the district for which you hope to be a board member?

Response:

I see a number of issues, all of equal importance, that I believe can and must be addressed:

- First, the Park District must continue to acquire new lands and waters to be developed as parks. The key challenge is that cost of land is skyrocketing in the Bay Area. We need to identify ways to stretch our remaining dollars from 2008's Measure WW, reach new agreements with landowners over prospective donations, and also see if there are new ways to raise funds. Acquisition remains a key element for the future of the Park District. The Park District has a unique opportunity to create a new regional park at Point Molate and to expand sports fields and other recreational access to the youth and adults in the District.
- Second, with climate change and development, the Park District faces major challenges in stewardship. We need to increase the focus and funds for preserving habitat and wildlife in the parklands that we have acquired and identifying cost effective ways to restore and enhance habitat and wildlife where threatened. My advocacy for Measure FF provided additional funding for the kind of new employees with expertise to meet the challenge facing habitat and wildlife. Climate change will amplify this problem as the ecology changes with that change. The Park District has expertise on this issue but it must take a more proactive approach based on that expertise.
- Third, access issues remain a major challenge. We must allow for different types of access, and simultaneously deal with the issue of over capacity of favorited parks. There are park areas that face a similar problem as the John Muir National Park unit does with overcapacity. We must also address how we make our parks more accessible to people of color, especially programs for youth and families. As the largest park and open space agency in the East Bay the Park District must take the initiative with cities and other agencies to create the programs to make the parks more accessible.
- Fourth, we need to find ways to deal with rising sea or Bay water levels because of the impact that will have on shoreline parks that are some of the most popular and used parks. There must a coordinated State and National approach to creating resilient shorelines. The Park District must lead the way on the regional approach as a regional agency with one of the longest shorelines at risk in San Francisco Bay.
- Fifth, with the last two years of fire storm events in Northern California and the current drought, the Park District must re-evaluate its vegetation management plan, approved some 15 years ago, and identify what needs to be changed or improved to better respond to and protect from another fire event within a regional context of a regional authority.
- Sixth, the pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement, following the murders of African-Americans, has opened up a long festering wound of racism and the need to create a new national culture. Parks and open space can play a vital role in creation of that new culture and in responding to what has occurred because the vast majority of



people find solace and rejuvenation of their soul in our parks. The new technologies for bringing people together like Zoom must be adapted to bringing the Park District to the people in ways that then foster a desire to have a real life park experience.

- Seventh, the crisis with persons experiencing homelessness must also be addressed in innovative and responsibly humane ways. Our parks were not intended or designed for sheltering people on a long term basis and they are often far removed from the services that persons experiencing homelessness need. Yet, the Park District cannot afford to simply passively respond to this issue. We must find ways for how the Park District can work within the regional context on this issue.
- Eighth, the Park District must make its meetings and decision making more available to the public and thus improve public access to its decision making. For years, I have advocated for evening meetings so working people and Park District employees could more easily attend meetings. For years, I have called for the Park District to televise its meetings like virtually every governmental agency does. More and better accessibility to meetings is necessary for the Park District to increase public participation in the Board's decisions. As a Board member, I will have a platform for this advocacy.

We can only solve the problems we face in this new environmental and fiscal climate with proven leadership. We must be willing to find new ways for the Park District to use its expertise to find regional approaches that meet these new challenges

13. Are you supportive of considering the creation of new overnight camping sites on District managed lands?

Response: Yes. I supported the camping. I advocated for a large group camp at the McCosker property. I support camping at all levels at the appropriate location.

14. Do you believe there are natural surface trails on EBRPD lands where Class 1 electric mountain bikes can be safely allowed? Note: Class 1 electric bikes are those that are pedal-assist only, with no throttle, and have a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph.

Response: Yes, with the caveat that any such use must be properly evaluation for is social and energy related concerns and any location must be evaluated for its environmental impacts as required under CEQA.



15. If you answered “no” to the previous question, how do you recommend e-bikes be managed?

Response: They should be licensed and proper enforcement needs to be created to regulate their use, speed, and access..

16. Do you believe EBRPD has an obligation to provide new recreation and visitation opportunities for East Bay residents from historically underserved communities?

Response: Of course, what do you think I have done for the past 38 years! For example, I demanded funding for programs that would bring West Oakland young people down to the Martin Luther King Regional Preserve so they could experience, explore, and enjoy the natural wildlife and habitat. I also engineered the deal that got us the land for the Tom Bates Sportsfields that provided playing fields for disadvantaged youth. I am currently trying to save Point Molate as a regional park for Richmond youth.