

Chapter 3
THE RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THE SOUTH RICHMOND SHORELINE
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Introduction

On the shoreline of the San Francisco Bay cities, lines of feeding shorebirds probing in the mud replace the endless lines of automobiles. Here, even the air feels different. The warm, often smoggy, city air gives way to the brisk and refreshing onshore breeze. The intangible natural features of the Bay Area shoreline recharge the body and fuel curiosity about the natural world.

However, the natural amenities that the coast offers are being threatened by increased development and urbanization. The absence of developable land within metropolitan regions is forcing development along the margins of many Bay cities. New homes and offices now cover much of the shoreline. As a result, many natural features have been lost. Endangered species such as the clapper rail and salt-marsh harvest mouse have lost much of their former habitat to development.

The development of shoreline regions means that fewer areas exist for recreation. Yet, the demand for recreational lands will increase as the Bay Area population continues to climb. In fact, some believe that the demand for urban recreational facilities along the Bay will increase at a rate faster than population growth (BCDC, 1983). Thus, it is essential that local stretches of open space be identified and properly preserved. One such critical region is the South Richmond shoreline between Pt. Isabel and the U.C. Berkeley Field Station (Figure 1).

The goals of this study are to document the need for additional recreational facilities and to analyze the recreational potential of the South Richmond shoreline.

Past Studies

There have been two recent planning studies of the Richmond shoreline. The Special Area Plan (SAP) targets critical regions along the Richmond shoreline and provides policies to guide the future development and preservation efforts of Richmond officials (SAP, 1977). The most recent and comprehensive analysis of the Richmond shoreline, the Shoreline Conservation and Development Strategy (SCDS) (Hall *et al.*, 1986), provides an overview of the Richmond shoreline. This extensive study summarizes various components of Richmond including demographic trends and types of recreational facilities. Whereas the SAP provides guidelines for future governmental actions, the SCDS provides background information so that informed land use decisions can be made by Richmond public officials.

Other studies have focused on the general recreational needs of the public. Most have concluded that there is a real need for more recreational facilities near urban centers (BOR, 1977) and that

future governmental actions should enhance the accessibility of all recreational lands by reducing physical and social barriers to recreational participation (BOR, 1977; CDPR, February 1982; CDPR, December 1982).

Surveys have been used by Edelstone (1982) and Drexler (1985) to gauge public opinion and recreational needs along the East Bay shoreline. Edelstone (1982) sampled park users' present and potential recreational activities along the shoreline, including Pt. Isabel; Drexler (1985) surveyed recreational activities along the Berkeley waterfront.

Several studies have described the unique San Francisco Bay habitat and wildlife. Josselyn (1983) documented the intricate biological interactions which occur in the wetlands of the Bay. Reports by Oddi (1982) and Hay (1985) focused on the South Richmond shoreline. Their studies have shown the South Richmond shoreline to be a diverse habitat, home to many species of birds, plants, and marine invertebrates.

Current Supply of Recreational Land

Although all may agree that shoreline recreational lands are needed, what amount of land is adequate? Very little shoreline is now open to Richmond residents. The Richmond shoreline stretches over 30 miles, and only 9 miles are accessible to the public (Table 1). Currently, Richmond has approximately 2,530 acres of recreational land along the shoreline (Table 1) and an additional 200 acres of public recreational space within the city limits (Henning, 1987, pers. comm.). Over 80% of Richmond's 2,530 acres of shoreline recreational land exists at Pt. Pinole, a regional park in the northwest corner of Richmond.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG, 1972) has estimated the amount of recreational land that is needed both regionally and locally. The Regional Open Space Element (ABAG, 1969) suggest 100 acres per 1,000 people as the minimum amount of open space necessary for the "health, welfare, and well-being" of the public. Of this, 36 acres per 1,000 people should be available locally, and the remaining 64 acres per 1,000 people should be provided regionally.

With a projected population of 101,000 by 1995 (ABAG, 1985), Richmond would need at least 3,600 acres to satisfy its local open space needs. The current total of 2,730 acres falls short of the 3,600 acres needed. The establishment of a shoreline park at South Richmond would help reduce this deficit.

The demand for new recreational areas will be greatest in South Richmond. The new Marina Bay housing project, just northwest of Pt. Isabel, will consist of 3,370 dwellings (City of Richmond, May 1985). New recreational areas will be needed for this emerging community.

A shoreline park at South Richmond would solve a geographic imbalance. Most of the present recreation land is located at Pt. Pinole, an area far from the city's center. The proximity of the South Richmond shoreline to the center of the city might allow residents easier and more frequent access to the Bay's natural features.

Shoreline Area Recreation Sites	Acreege	Shoreline Perimeter	Public Transit	Wheelchair Access	Entrance Fee	Equestrian Trails	Running and Biking Paths	Interpretive Centers	Viewing Areas	Bird Watching	Fishing	Swimming	Picnic Areas	Playfields and Courts	Children's Playgrounds	Campgrounds
Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline (EBRPD)	2146	3.5	AC 78	△	△	△	△		△	△	△		△	△		
Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline (EBRPD)	21	.5	AC 435	△			△		△	△	△		△	△		
Brooks Island Regional Preserve (EBRPD, planned)	77	4														
Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline (EBRPD)	214	.5	AC L,72	△			△		△	△	△		△	△		
Keller's Beach (EBRPD)	1.3	.1	AC L,72						△	△	△	△	△			
Pt. Molate Beach Park (City of Richmond)	15	.3							△		△		△		△	
Pt. Richmond Community Center (City of Richmond)												△		△		
Parchester Park (City of Richmond)	3		AC 78										△	△	△	
Richmond Plunge (City of Richmond)												△		△		
Janice Playlot (City of Richmond)	.1													△	△	
Kenny Park (City of Richmond)	1.2													△	△	
Washington Park (City of Richmond)	2.5		AC 72													△
Eastshore Park (City of Richmond)	29												△	△		
Crescent Park (City of Richmond)	3.2															△
Richmond Marina Bay Park (City of Richmond)	17	.1	AC 10				△		△							
Redrock Marina (Other)	3				△				△		△					
Pt. Richmond Waterfront View Walk (Other)									△	△						
Totals	2533	9	acres mi.	3	2	1	4	0	8	5	6	3	7	9	6	0

Table 1. Shoreline Area Recreation Sites in Richmond, CA
 Sources: BCDC, 1981; Hall *et al.*, 1986; Richmond Recreation and Parks Department, 1986

Nearby recreational facilities for the large number of poor residents in South Richmond are needed. Only one-third of the housing units in this area are owner-occupied, making South Richmond the site of the highest concentration of renters in Richmond (U.S. Census, 1980). Such poverty could prevent access to park facilities that are far from this neighborhood. Difficulty of access might be one reason why low-income Californians participate in 40% fewer activities than the average Californian (CDPR, February 1982). Nearby recreational regions, accessible without the need of cars, could increase recreational participation. Although the South Richmond shoreline is near residential neighborhoods, it is accessible only by car. Other options are needed to provide access to the shoreline.

Recreational Facilities Needed

Not only are more lands needed for future open space and recreational needs, but new facilities also will be required. Existing facilities will not be able to handle the expected number of future recreational participants. Deficiencies exist in four categories: campgrounds, equestrian trails, running and biking paths, and interpretive centers (Table 1). Although only one equestrian trail exists, this should be sufficient. Projections do not expect the demand for additional horse trails to increase significantly (CDPR, September 1982). No shoreline campgrounds exist. Although there is certainly a demand for urban campgrounds, the establishment of sites on or adjacent to the marshes could pose serious problems to the fragile habitat. The South Richmond shoreline is not a suitable site for activities which could pose a threat to the marshes and mudflats.

Richmond also lacks adequate facilities for running and biking (Table 1). There are only four sites along the shoreline where paths exist for running and biking. Yet, jogging continues to be the most popular outdoor activity in California (CDPR, September 1982). Not only is jogging popular, but walking is common among people of all ages, ethnic groups, and economic classes. The recreational survey by Drexler (1985) found that walking was by far the most popular activity along the Berkeley waterfront.

BCDC's Bay Plan stated that "[shoreside] parks should emphasize hiking, bicycling, and riding trails" in order to "capitalize on the attractiveness of their Bayfront location" (BCDC, 1983, p. 22). The natural scenery of the South Richmond shoreline, coupled with the spectacular views of the San Francisco skyline, provide an excellent setting for paths.

The East Bay Regional Park District's Master Plan (1980) has designated the South Richmond shoreline as a potential trail site (Figure 2). This regional trail would link the Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline with Pt. Isabel. The inclusion of a regional trail at South Richmond would increase the amount of shoreline open to the public from 9 to about 10 miles. Currently, Richmond's Redevelopment Agency is the lead agency in charge of developing plans for the South Richmond shoreline.

Shoreline Interpretive Centers

Presently, much attention is being directed towards implementing a trail system along the South Richmond shoreline. However, the development of other options is certainly possible and desirable. Such a concept is supported by the recreational element of the Richmond general plan, which recommends that multipurpose and flexible recreation areas be provided whenever possible (Richmond Planning, October 1982).

One possibility is the use of the South Richmond shoreline as a site for an interpretive facility, one designed to explain ecological principles using the region's natural features as examples. Outdoor educational facilities can supplement classroom education. Children learn more about the natural world by participating in it. Successful educational programs such as the ones at the Crab Cove

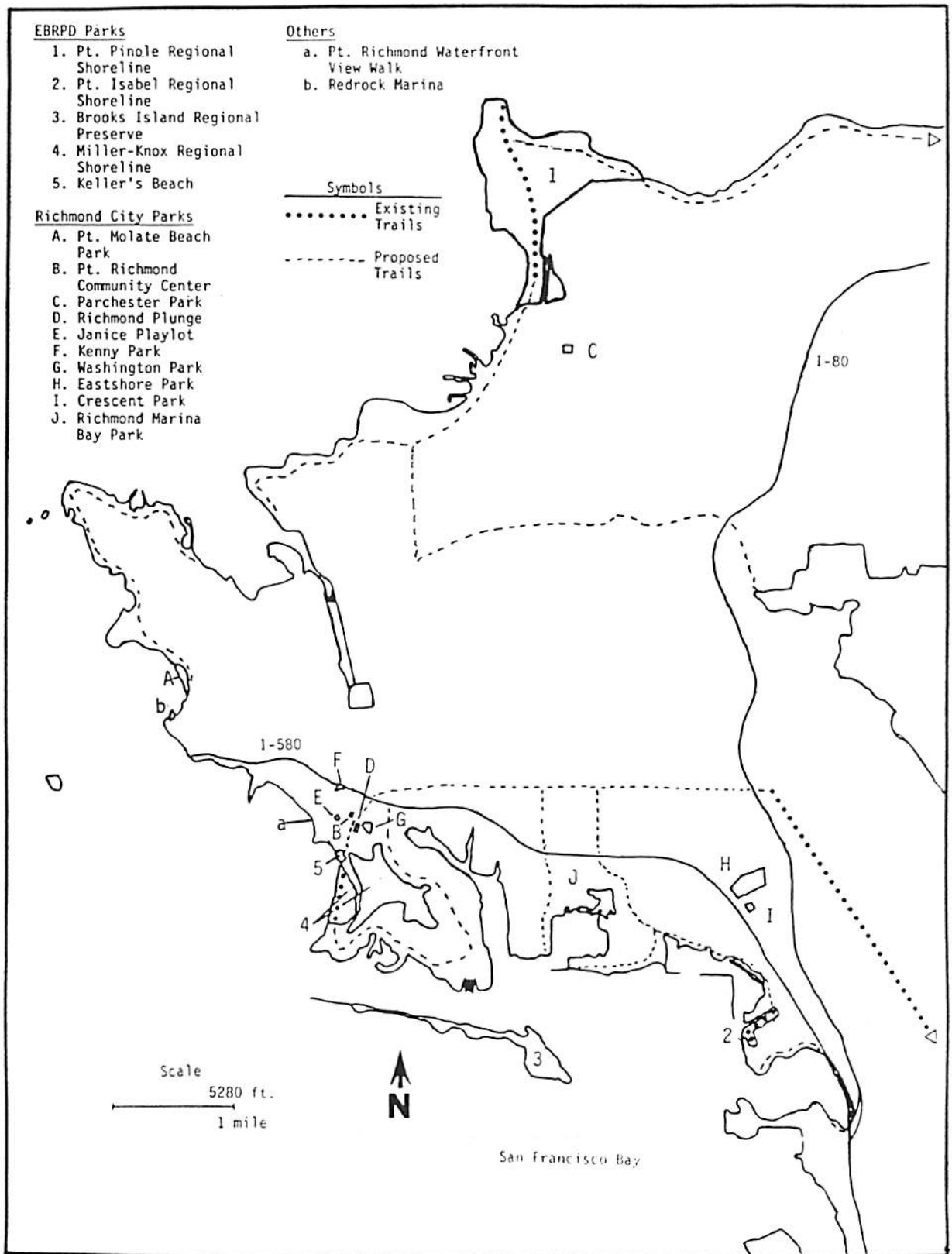


Figure 2. Shoreline Area Recreation Sites and Trails
 Sources: BCDC, 1981; Hall et al., 1986

Visitor Center in Alameda have numerous activities which allow children and adults to explore the creatures of the intertidal zone.

The establishment of an interpretive facility would fill a void. There are presently no such facilities along the northern East Bay shoreline (Table 1). The nearest marine interpretive service is at the Crab Cove Visitor Center. There has been discussion between city officials about a new interpretive center on the marshes near Marina Bay (Henning, 1987, pers. comm.). The EBRPD has no present plans for an interpretive center. The lack of sufficient funding has curtailed any plans for future interpretive facilities (Nelson, 1987, pers. comm.).

There is both public and political support for the establishment of an interpretive center along the South Richmond shoreline. A park user survey by Edelstone (1982) has shown that many would like an environmental center in this vicinity. The Open Space and Conservation element of the Richmond General Plan states that high priority should be given to acquiring unique natural areas near or adjacent to schools (Tri-Citizens Advisory Committee, 1973). Many schools, including Stege Elementary School, Cortez School, Gompers High School, and Granada Junior High, are situated near the South Richmond shoreline (Figure 1), and would benefit from an interpretive center.

Additional Recreation Possibilities

Trails and interpretive centers are not the only possibilities for the northern East Bay shoreline. Although several other areas provide bird viewing opportunities (Table 1), numerous features make the South Richmond marshes and mudflats the ideal location for bird watchers. In terms of shorebird numbers, the South Richmond marshes are surpassed only by the Emeryville Crescent and the Albany mudflats, just south of Point Isabel (Oddi, 1982). The Richmond shoreline is also part of an important Bay Area stop-over for migrating birds. It is estimated that 70% of the shorebirds traveling the Pacific flyway between Canada and Mexico depend upon the San Francisco Bay mudflats for survival (Josselyn, 1983).

The salt-tolerant plants which are common along the shoreline also have recreational and educational value. These specialized plants include cordgrass and pickleweed and are found only in tidal regions. The spatial arrangement of these plants vary according to different environmental requirements (Josselyn, 1983; see paper by K. Hoffman, this report). Cordgrass occupies substrates nearest the Bay; the saltier and drier soils of inland marshes contain mostly pickleweed. Walkways and signs can introduce or reacquaint human visitors to an important and complex plant community. Fortunately, walkways and bird viewing platforms are being considered as possibilities for the shoreline (Henning, 1987, pers. comm.; Walker, 1987, pers. comm.).

Improved fishing facilities would also be welcomed. The breakwater provides access for fishermen to the deeper waters of the Bay (SAP, 1977). Other plans by public officials include picnic and parking facilities (Walker, 1987, pers. comm.). However, much of the regional trail would probably remain unstructured (Pratt, 1986, pers. comm.).

Recreational Development Concerns

Numerous concerns, including habitat fragility, human safety and transportation, constrain the immediate transformation of the South Richmond shoreline into a viable recreational unit.

Many animals cannot tolerate human presence. Fish-eating birds such as herons and egrets are easily disturbed by human activities (Josselyn, 1983). Dogs can also hamper the normal lifestyle of birds by their constant barking and tireless pursuit.

Treading by humans or machinery on the salt marsh or mudflats can cause major damage. Salt marsh plants, especially the succulent pickleweed, are easily broken and damaged when tread upon. Similar problems also affect the inhabitants of the mudflats. Compaction of mudflats lessens the rate of water infiltration and prevents filter-feeders such as clams from extending their siphons to the surface for food (Godfrey *et al.*, 1980). Reduction in the numbers of mudflat mollusks could curtail the number of shorebirds, especially those that subsist exclusively on marine invertebrates.

Public access should be restricted to areas where potential impacts to the habitat can be minimized (BCDC, 1978). Environmental damage can be prevented by restricting staging areas to the uplands and by permitting access only along marked paths.

Not only must the health and safety of the salt marshes and mudflats be considered, but also the health of the park users. Until recently, the lands owned by Santa Fe Land Improvement Co. just north of the Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline contained large numbers of shattered automobile cases (Thomas, 1982). Soil sediments around this area had lead concentrations above the maximum allowable level (Thomas, 1982). This poses a danger to curious children who often ingest anything within their reach. Fortunately, this particular region has recently been cleaned up and the wastes buried (Ferrell, 1986). Further studies are needed to analyze the success of this clean-up operation and to check for the presence of other hazardous elements (see papers by Sutton and Chase-Dunn, this report). Proposed recreational development can occur only when public hazards have been eliminated.

Recommendations

The numerous natural opportunities of the South Richmond shoreline can satisfy many of the shortcomings in the current recreation facilities. The eventual facilities along the shoreline should not degrade the resources. Facilities which pose a threat to the marshes and mudflats should not be built. Needed urban campgrounds or playing fields could be provided for in more appropriate and less ecologically sensitive regions. Activities such as jogging, biking, and environmental education minimally impact the environment and should be encouraged.

Future recreational facilities along the shoreline should reflect the needs of the local inhabitants. Reasonable suggestions from local community groups should be encouraged and implemented when possible. Efforts aimed at making the shoreline more accessible to the poor, ethnic minorities, handicapped, and elderly should also be encouraged. This especially concerns transportation to and from shoreline regions. The poor and elderly often do not have access to cars. Yet, currently the

only access is by car. I-580 and the railroad tracks (Figure 1) separate the shoreline from residential neighborhoods. Efforts should be made to provide alternatives. AC Transit's 43S line, which operates only during commute times, could have extended hours, especially during the summer months. However, this probably would require additional funds.

The East Bay Regional Park District has started a successful bus program called "Parks Express" (EBRPD, October 1986). Through this program, inner city residents, especially the elderly and youths from low income families, visit regional parks that are otherwise inaccessible. Perhaps this bus program could also be expanded to bring inner city residents to the South Richmond shoreline.

Future recreational developments could have a positive effect on Richmond by improving the city's economic climate and public image. The visual and natural amenities of the South Richmond shoreline can be used as tools to combat urban decay. Several cities, including Portland, Oregon, reversed the onset of urban blight by developing a balanced outlook towards the water's edge. In Portland public funds built bike routes, restored a marina, and cleaned the shoreline (McNulty and Hunter, 1985). This attractive setting lured needed developers and contributed much to revitalizing the local economy. Most importantly, such projects underlined the local governments' commitment towards improving the quality of life. Such success stories can also happen in Richmond.

Proper recreational development of the South Richmond shoreline benefits all. Future recreational needs of a growing population can be satisfied. Preservation of natural amenities such as marshes and mudflats will help forestall future habitat losses. Such natural surroundings can also provide the basis for increased economic prosperity and civic pride.

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