

Date of Hearing: July 2, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Juan Carrillo, Chair

SB 392 (Grayson) – As Amended June 13, 2025

**SENATE VOTE:** 34-0

**SUBJECT:** Regional park districts: East Bay Regional Park District: East Bay Hills Conservation Program.

**SUMMARY:** Allows the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) to establish the East Bay Hills Conservation Program (Program). Specifically, **this bill:**

1) Defines the following terms:

- a) “California Tribe” to mean any federally recognized California Native American tribe or a nonfederally recognized Native American tribe listed on the California Tribal Consultation List maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission.
- b) “East Bay Hills” refers to the area defined by the ridgeline extending from the northern edge of Wildcat Canyon Regional Park to the southern edge of Lake Chabot Regional Park. “East Bay Hills” includes all adjacent natural lands within the control of the district, including the Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve, Kennedy Grove Regional Recreation Area, Charles Lee Tilden Regional Park, Tilden Nature Area, Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve, Temescal Regional Recreation Area, Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve, Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve, Dr. Aurelia Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park, Roberts Regional Recreation Area, Leona Canyon Open Space Regional Preserve, and Anthony Chabot Regional Park.
- c) “Natural lands” to mean lands consisting of forests, grasslands, deserts, freshwater and riparian systems, wetlands, coastal and estuarine areas, watersheds, wildlands, or wildlife habitat, or lands used for recreational purposes such as parks, urban and community forests, trails, greenbelts, and other similar open-space land. For purposes of this paragraph, “parks” includes, but is not limited to, areas that provide public green space.

2) Authorizes EBRPD to establish and administer the Program to address the resource and recreational goals of the East Bay Hills.

3) Provides that EBRPD may collaborate with the California tribes, and state, regional, and local partners to help achieve both of the following goals of the Program:

- a) To restore, enhance, and preserve wildlife habitat, provide and enhance recreational opportunities, restore and preserve natural ecosystems, increase nature-based resilience to extreme weather events, and develop and maintain trails for public access.
- b) To ensure the protection and preservation of land and natural resources, including addressing water quality, erosion, and carbon sequestration from natural lands, while promoting educational experiences for the community.

- 4) Specifies that in carrying out the purposes of this bill, EBRPD shall have all necessary rights and powers to achieve the goals under 2), above, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
  - a) Acquiring and disposing of interests in real property.
  - b) Undertaking, maintaining, and funding projects to enhance public access, restore natural habitats, and improve and construct new facilities for outdoor recreation.
  - c) Providing technical assistance to landowners on best practices to enhance conservation and climate resilience on natural lands.
  - d) Implementing wildlife connectivity measures across major roadways and urban barriers.
- 5) Provides that the East Bay Hills shall be acknowledged as an area of statewide significance in local land use policy documents, such as general and specific plans, developed or updated on or after January 1, 2026, affecting land use within the East Bay Hills.
- 6) Specifies that this bill shall not be construed as an expansion of EBRPD's rights or powers as they relate to local land use authority on lands in the East Bay Hills.
- 7) Finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable because of the unique need to address resource and recreational goals of the East Bay Hills by authorizing EBRPD to establish and administer the Program.
- 8) Contains additional findings and declarations to support its purposes.
- 9) Specifies that if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Bill Summary.** This bill authorizes EBRPD to establish and administer the Program to address the resource and recreational goals of the East Bay Hills. This bill also allows EBRPD to collaborate with California Tribes, and state, regional, and local partners to achieve specified goals of the Program and provides that EBRPD shall have all necessary rights and powers to achieve the goals of the Program. Lastly, this bill requires that the East Bay Hills be acknowledged as an area of statewide significant in local land use policy documents, such as general and specific plans, and provides that it shall not be construed as an expansion of EBRPDs rights or powers as they relate to local land use authority in the East Bay Hills. EBRPD is the sponsor of this bill.
- 2) **Author's Statement.** According to the author, "The East Bay Hills span across 30,000 acres in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and help provide essential wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and ecological benefits. The areas encompassed by the East Bay Hills are managed by the East Bay Regional Parks District, who seek to protect the natural and cultural resources of the area, while providing recreational and educational opportunities

to the public. The East Bay Hills face numerous challenges in their current management, which threaten their long-term sustainability. Due to development, wildfire threats, and other challenges, these areas face increased fragmentation, which threaten protection of resources and habitats. To help manage these challenges, a more coordinated conservation strategy is needed. SB 392 would help achieve this goal by establishing the East Bay Hills Conservation Program, which would be administered by the East Bay Regional Parks District. The East Bay Hills Conservation Program would provide a more unified framework to help achieve the goals of ecosystem restoration, enhancing wildfire resilience, and protecting public access – ensuring that these lands can continue to benefit the East Bay community for years to come.”

- 3) **Regional Park and Open Space Districts (RPOSDs).** The Legislature first authorized the creation of regional park districts in 1933 for the purpose of acquiring, improving, and maintaining parks, playgrounds, beaches, parkways, scenic drives, boulevards, and other facilities for public recreation. [AB 1114 (Roland), Chapter 1043, Statutes of 1933]. To provide these services, RPOSDs can use special taxes, benefit assessments, and general obligation bonds to acquire property by purchase or eminent domain.

Some RPOSDs are classified as independent and have their own directly-elected boards of directors with fixed terms. Independent special districts are a separate, autonomous form of government not controlled by a city or county. Other special districts are defined as dependent and act more comparable to a county or city department. For dependent RPOSDs, the relevant board of supervisors serves as the district’s board of directors.

RPOSDs have broad authority to develop, improve, and control their property for the purposes of parks, playgrounds, golf courses, trails, and open space preserves, among others. RPOSDs may also select, designate, and acquire land and conduct programs and classes. The Public Resources Code authorizes RPSODs to do all other things necessary or convenient to carry out the purposes for which they were created.

- 4) **East Bay Regional Park District.** EBRPD was established in 1934 as an independent special district. EBRPD was formed to acquire and maintain regional parkland first in Alameda County and then, subsequently, in Contra Costa County. The EBRPD is a system of parklands in Alameda and Contra Costa counties which comprises 73 parks spanning across 126,809 acres; 1,330 miles of trails; and 55 miles of shoreline. EBRPD is governed by a board of directors with seven members elected to serve four-year terms.

Like other RPOSDs, EBRPD has broad authority to develop, improve, and control their property for the purposes of parks, playgrounds, golf courses, trails, and open space preserves, among others. EBRPD may also select, designate, and acquire land and conduct programs and classes. The Public Resources Code authorizes EBRPD to do all other things necessary or convenient to carry out the purposes for which it was created.

EBRPD is funded from multiple sources including property taxes, parcel taxes, assessments, and fees. In 2004, voters, its community facilities district (Mello-Roos District) passed Measure CC, which taxed single-family residential parcels (\$12 per year) and multi-family units (\$8.28 per year) in western Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Voters extended that same tax in 2018 until 2040 with Measure FF. Measure FF provides approximately \$3.5

million of annual funding for regional park services including wildfire protection, public safety, public access, and the restoration of natural habitat, urban creeks and shorelines.

- 5) **Arguments in Support.** According to the sponsor, EBRPD, “SB 392 authorizes the Park District to collaborate with state, tribe, regional, and local partners to achieve the program’s conservation, wildlife habitat, climate resilience and recreational goals. Additionally, this bill aligns with the state’s 30x30 initiative, established under Executive Order N-82-20, which prioritizes land conservation for biodiversity, equitable access to nature and climate resilience. If California is to meet its ambitious 30x30 goals, expanding access to nature must be a priority throughout the state.”

- 6) **Arguments in Opposition.** None on file.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

East Bay Regional Park District [SPONSOR]  
California Association of Recreation and Park Districts  
California Special Districts Association  
Civicorps  
Contra Costa County  
Midpensinsula Regional Open Space District

##### **Opposition**

None on file

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