

Visiting a California Grassland: Point Pinole Regional Shoreline

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Point Pinole occupies a 2,315-acre peninsular parkland surrounded by San Pablo Bay to the north, west, and south and the city of Richmond to the east. Its geographic position in the San Francisco Bay affords stunning views of the bay waters and the coastal hills across the bay, including Mount Tamalpais. To reach Point Pinole Regional Shoreline, visitors can park at the trailhead, cross a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks near the entrance, and from there access the park's 12 miles of trails. A popular trail loop starts at the Bay View Trail just below the bridge, follows the southwestern shoreline of the point, and then loops around to the paved Pinole Point Trail through the middle of the park back to the bridge. The Bay View Trail traverses grassland meadows that sit between tidal marshes and eucalyptus groves (Fig. 1). Even in late fall when the grasses are mostly golden, the grasslands offer a sense of spaciousness and beauty against the expansive backdrop of the bay.

Owned by the East Bay Regional Park District, the park opened in 1973 and has a rich cultural history in addition to its distinctive ecological setting. Prior to European settlement, Native American residents of the Ohlone tribe built camps near the point where they would gather crabs, mussels, oysters, clams, and fish. By the late 1700s, Spanish settlers occupied the land and grazed longhorn cattle and sheep. From 1880 to 1960, the current parkland was used for industrial purposes; dynamite and gunpowder manufacturers existed here and produced 2 billion pounds of dynamite during this time (EBRPD 2013). These products were shipped from a pier extending from Point Pinole, and remnants of this historic pier still exist today, sitting alongside a new pier that visitors can access.

Despite the park's history, native grasslands can still be found on the property, composed of such species as purple needlegrass (*Stipa*



Figure 1. Bay View Trail at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline Park, November 2013

pulchra) and California oat grass (*Danthonia californica*), both bunchgrasses. The native perennial grass creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*) is also present. These grasslands begin just above the tidal marshes and flank the hillsides of the point. Eucalyptus trees were historically planted in parts of the existing park to help provide a barrier from potential explosions from the dynamite manufacturers that once occurred on the property (EBRPD 2013).

Just south of Point Pinole Regional Shoreline exists Breuner Marsh, where plans are underway by the East Bay Regional Park District to restore historically filled tidal marshes and coastal prairie on the property. An extension of the San Francisco Bay Trail will also be built through Breuner Marsh, connecting the southern end of Point Pinole to Goodrick Avenue in Richmond. Construction of this project is slated to begin in 2014. Upon completion of the Breuner Marsh restoration project, visitors to Point Pinole will have access to more trails, vistas, and coastal grasslands near the bay.



Reference

EBRPD. 2013. *Point Pinole Regional Shoreline*. Oakland: East Bay Regional Park District.



The mission of the California Native Grasslands Association is to promote, preserve, and restore the diversity of California's native grasses and grassland ecosystems through education, advocacy, research, and stewardship.

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