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**PARKS, RECREATION, AND WATERFRONT COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting**

Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 7:00 P.M.  
Frances Albrier Community Center - auditorium  
2800 Park Street, Berkeley, CA 94702

**Minutes - Draft**

- The Commissions may discuss any items listed on the agenda, but may take action only on items identified as Action.
- Public Comment on agenda items shall be heard at each item (2 minutes per speaker).

1. **Call to Order** (Chair).
2. **Roll Call** (Secretary). Present: Cardile; Diehm; Hurtado; Kawczynska; Rybczynski; Absent: none.
3. **Land Acknowledgement**:
4. **Action: Approval of Agenda** (move item 12 to 11) (Kawczynska). (M/S/C: Diehm/ Cardile/ U) Ayes: Cardile; Diehm; Hurtado; Kawczynska; Rybczynski; Noes: none; Absent: none.
5. **Action: Approval of Minutes** (with corrections) for Thursday, May 14, 2025 (Kawczynska).\* (M/S/C: Rybczynski/Hurtado/ U) Ayes: Cardile; Diehm; Hurtado; Kawczynska; Rybczynski; Noes: none; Absent: none.
6. **Public Comment** (2 min each). a) Susan Schwartz, Aquatic Park; b) Martin Nicolaus, whale in North Basin; c) Jim McGrath, Parking Addendum; d) Kelly Hammargren, Aquatic Park; e) Jack Appleyard, Waterfront Swimming.
7. **Vice Chair's Report**. (Kawczynska). Commissioner Kawczynska volunteered to serve as the PRW Commission liaison on the Civic Arts Panel for MLK project mtg of Aug 5, 2025.
8. **Director's Report**: Update on special events, community engagement, capital and maintenance projects, forestry, recreation, and Measure FF and Y projects (Erickson). Update was provided.
9. **Discussion/Action**: New Restrictions at Cesar Chavez Park – impacts to users and projects (Erickson).\* Update was provided. Public Comment: a) Virginia Browning; b) Daniel Borgström; c) Ernest Isaac; d) Martin Nicolaus; e) Susan Schwartz; f) Jim McGrath.
10. **Discussion**: Update on status of Cesar Chavez Park ReVision Plan (Erickson). Update was provided.
11. **Discussion/Action**: Report on proposed FY2026 Waterfront User Parking Fees (Ferris/Kawczynska).\* Update was provided. Public Comment: a) Gordon Stout; b) Jim McGrath; c) Martin Nicolaus; d) Kelly Hammargren; e) Virginia Browning; f) Laurel H. (\*M/S/C to send the communication drafted by Commissioner Abshez (see handout) to Council, and authorize two commissioners to speak at Council: (Kawczynska/Cardile/U) Ayes: Cardile; Diehm; Hurtado; Kawczynska; Rybczynski; Noes: none; Absent: none.
12. **Discussion/Action**: Update from dog park subcommittee (Kawczynska).\* Update was provided. Public Comment: a) Mary.
13. **Information Reports**: Recent PRW Council Reports.\*
14. **Future Agenda Items**: Appointee to Civic Arts Commission; Update on Waterfront Specific Plan; Public Art in Aquatic Park (Lavvorn); Citywide Accessibility Plan; Locations for Dog Parks.
15. **Communications**. Re: marina parking fees: Jeff Malmuth, 5-30-25; Amy Thomson, 5-30-25; Deborah Scott, 5-31-25; Catharine A, 5/31/25; Edward Schlesinger, 6/1/25; Joyce Freedman, 6/1/25; Robert Ofsevit, 6/1/25; Gordon Stout, 6/1/25; Paul Kamen, 6/2/25; Irene Huang, 6/2/25; Sara Elzea, 6/2/25; Kathleen Gee, 6/2/25; Stefani Berger, 6/2/25; Wini Williams, 6/3/25; Siggy Zerweckh, 6/3/25; Dana Ludwig, 6/3/25; Camille Antinori, 6/6/25; Scott Ferris, 6/5/2025.
16. **Next PRW Commission meeting**: Wednesday, July 11, 2025.

**17. Adjournment.** 9pm.

\* document is attached to agenda packet and on the commission website.

\*\* document will be provided at the meeting.

- Commissioners in attendance: 5 of 5 appointed.
- Public in attendance: 12
- Public speakers: 17

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission

Date: June 11, 2025

Re: Communication: Proposed Waterfront Parking Fees

The Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission appreciates the City of Berkeley's unique challenges and responsibilities in the ownership and operation of the Marina and Waterfront, which is a recreational facility that serves a regional community of users.

Over the last 15 years, insufficient reserve planning, discounted berthing fees, and declining tenant revenue have combined with the Waterfront's aging infrastructure to create a condition of deteriorated—and frequently failing—infrastructure at the Waterfront which is estimated to require \$131 million of capital to address, as well as an approximately \$1.1 million operational deficit.

This past year, Berkeley's voters generously agreed to increase their parks tax responsibility through the approval of Measure Y, which had been expected to close the Marina Fund's Waterfront's operational deficit through its provision of approximately \$1.5 million annually to be applied toward Waterfront parks and landscaping costs.

In May, the Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission was informed that, unfortunately, this progress has been erased by further—and dramatic—declines in Waterfront tenant revenue and inflation; all against the backdrop of and the City's estimated \$27 million budget deficit, and Berkeley's resulting hiring freeze and cuts to public services.

The Commission is informed that the Waterfront now faces projected losses of approximately \$1.3 million annually, with consequent further capital improvement project reductions, reductions in maintenance, security reductions, cuts to all non-critical expenses, and workforce impacts to full-time and part-time staff. And while the Marina Fund does not need to be self-sustaining, it is often referred to in that manner.

In light of these challenges, the Commission understands that Staff is investigating alternative sources of revenue and therefore has recommended—and the Council is actively considering—a trial program of parking and user fees to provide an additional revenue source for the Waterfront. Since the proposed fees were announced to the public last month, the commission has heard from a wide range of Waterfront users and stakeholders. They have expressed their concerns that the proposed fees would have an insupportable impact on their and others' ability to visit and use the waterfront. For example, one of the stated goals of the Waterfront planning process is to attract a wider range of users. However, a parking fee could do just the opposite. Indeed, the Kittelson parking data found that 10% of waterfront visitors make less than \$25K/yr, and one-third make less than \$75K/yr (less than the Berkeley median).

In addition, a cost-benefit analysis has yet not been shared with the public and, as a result, it is unclear just how much a new program would cost (including setup and operation). Would the program result in a large enough net-positive revenue generation. And, importantly, could it

Re: Item 11 - Waterfront Parking Fees

have the unintended consequence of discouraging, and thus reducing, park visitations? Given the rapid unfolding of these recent events, the Commission has not had sufficient time and opportunity to study relevant issues, conduct public hearings and prepare a recommendation regarding Staff's proposal to the Council.

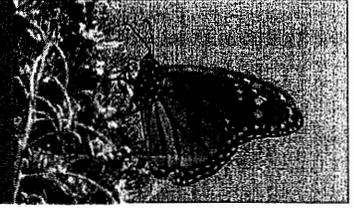
However, and to address the aforementioned concerns, at its May meeting, the Commission established a subcommittee to study Staff's proposal of trial parking and user fees at the Waterfront, and to work with Staff to develop a set of comprehensive recommendations to the Council with the benefit of full public hearings and input. Prior to the approval of a significant change to the Waterfront, the Commission believes it is important to hear from the public and to obtain additional information on the visitor-impacts, feasibility and profitability of waterfront parking fees.

The Commission respectfully requests that the Commission be fully integrated into the City's evaluation of any trial program of parking and/or user fees, and that the Commission be afforded the opportunity to advise the Council regarding consequent policies and measures.

# Chavez Park Conservancy

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit  
Run by Volunteers

*Dedicated to the whole 90 acres*



## Park News 6/6/2025

June 5, 2025

### City Loses Cool

A memo from Berkeley's City Manager today, followed by an email from the Parks Director, has shut down all scheduled park improvement projects and bars anyone, staff or volunteers, from pulling weeds, possibly for two years. The project cuts follow but don't relate to recent news that the Hilton Doubletree Hotel, neighbor to Chavez Park, is behind some \$700,000 in its rent payments to the city. The bar to weed pulling and other "soil disturbances" comes on the recommendations of the Geosyntec firm, another in the string of high-priced consultants for whom there always seems to be money, even when there's no money.

City Manager Paul Buddenhagen's June 5 memo, copy **available for download here**, briefly reviews the history of the park's relations with the air and water regulation agencies, and correctly points out that an expert survey of radioactivity at the park conducted last October found absolutely no radiation above normal background levels on the park surface. A later study found trace amounts of radon, a naturally occurring element, in liquids found from 6 to 30 feet under the park surface, inaccessible to park users. Nothing in these studies gives rise to concern about superficial soil disturbances.

But now comes **Geosyntec**, an international consulting firm with an office in Oakland, with a new "Health and Safety Plan" that, among other things, denounces "significant disturbance of the surface soils" because this "could breach the landfill cap." "Significant disturbance" according to Geosyntec includes pulling weeds, planting, driving stakes, dogs digging, and the like. They're going to take a hard look at Ground Squirrels and they're not sure about Burrowing Owls. If you need to pull a weed you need to hire a contractor with special health and safety equipment.



Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Being new to the park and probably not having done any homework, as is typical of our recent consultants, Geosyntec doesn't seem aware that the "cap" over the landfill is at least six feet thick, with hilly portions mor

Geosyntec people probably also haven't done much gardening, or they'd know that you can't pull six feet of weed root or plant a seedling more than about six inches deep.

Paul Buddenhagen, on the other hand, should be aware that Geosyntec is just a private contractor on the City payroll, and doesn't have the authority to force anybody to do squat. Their plan is just their opinion. Geosyntec can't levy fines on anybody and isn't going to have its staff try to enforce any of this nonsense. (Dogs digging is already illegal and doesn't need Geosyntec to stigmatize it.)

Fortunately for the Chavez Park Conservancy, we've finished our planting last November and won't think about more planting until this winter, by which time hopefully the City will have come to its senses. If we can't pull weeds we can certainly cut them. Our volunteer stewardship work in the **Native Plant Area** is unaffected.

Now to the project cuts. According to Buddenhagen, the Perimeter Pathway project and the Chavez Park restroom project are both dead because they would require soil disturbance. These moves come days after Berkeleyside reported that the Hilton is not paying rent to the city to the tune of \$700,00 and counting. However, the Hilton issue is unrelated. The funding for the perimeter path comes from the state, and the restroom funding is from T1, the Berkeley city measure. Buddenhagen says the restroom will be relocated south of Spinnaker Way, outside the park, to avoid digging — this despite a **recent soils analysis** giving the green light. It's astonishing to see how a manifestly uninformed private consulting firm can panic our city government.

As goes the City Manager, so the Parks Director. Scott Ferris sent out this email late this afternoon:

☞ Cesar Chavez Park Stakeholders;

☞ Please see the Off-Agenda memo from the City Manager to the Mayor and City Council at the following [link](#). To ensure environmental compliance at the closed landfill underneath Cesar Chavez Park, effective immediately, any disturbance of the surface soils at Cesar Chavez Park (e.g. planting, staking, dogs digging, etc.) is now prohibited until further notice. This applies to all City staff, park volunteers, and park users. Disturbances of the surface soils violate the current regulatory permits for the landfill underneath Cesar Chavez Park and could result in significant financial penalties for the City. City landscaping staff is currently permitted to conduct mowing and vegetation trimming that does not involve digging into the surface soils at Cesar Chavez Park. If digging is necessary for maintenance and public safety, the City will engage a qualified contractor with expertise in the maintenance of closed landfills, which requires additional safety measures.

☞ The City will be considering new fines for violations of this policy and adding associated signage in the upcoming weeks. In the meantime, please help us spread the word to all your constituents. Further details and reports about our environmental work at the former landfill can be found on our website at **Cesar Chavez Park Closed Landfill Improvement Project**.

66 Scott Ferris Director, Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department

Note that there are no "current regulatory permits" that prohibit planting, pulling weeds, or driving stakes; that's a fiction. It's just one consulting firm's overbearing opinion. (Dog digging is already illegal.) And we'll see how the city manages to add signage without driving stakes.

## Add Pay-for-Parking and Other Fees

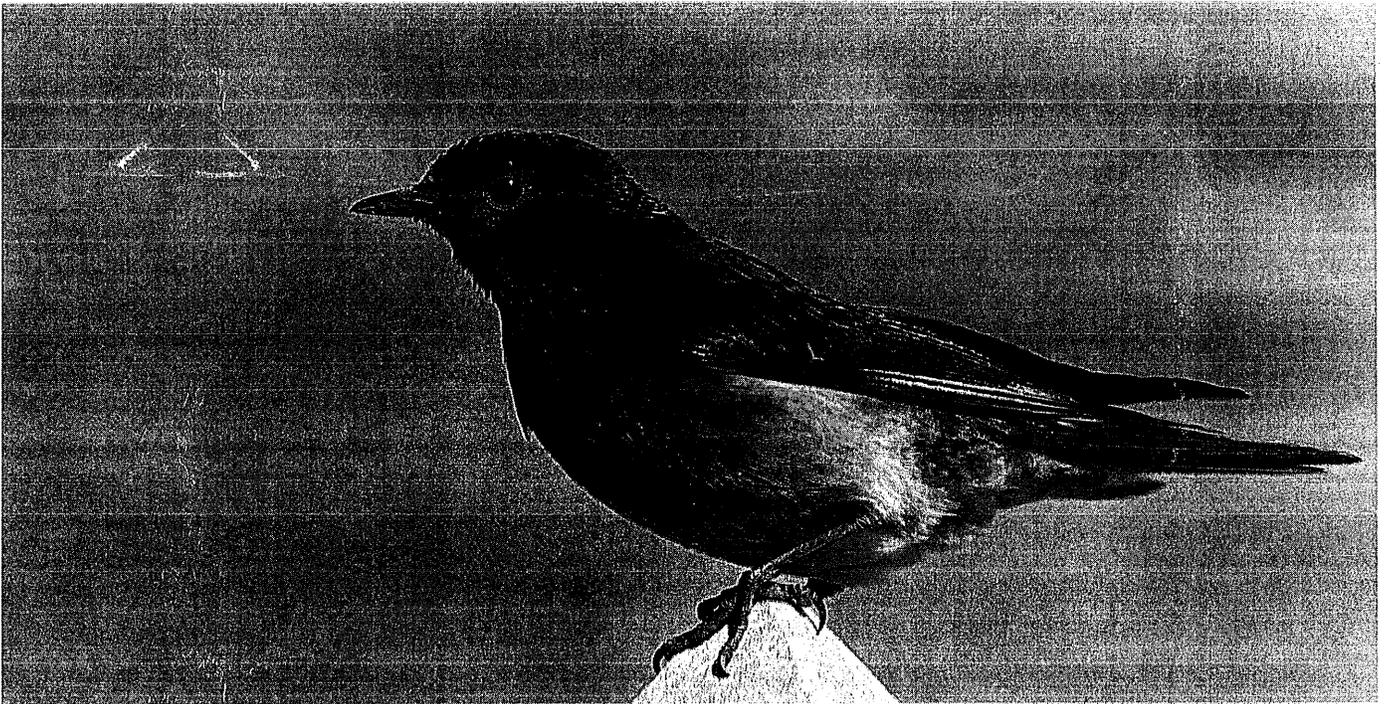
As if to copy the Trump administration's method of "flooding the zone," the city this week also issued a proposed new fee schedule for parking, event rentals, and other activities.

A highlight of the parking proposal is to let people pay \$500 for an annual parking pass. Those without the do-re-mi for the pass will pay \$1 an hour or \$6 per day. This early version of the plan doesn't spell out how the money will be collected and how violations will be enforced. It's a common observation that parking administration and enforcement cost more than the fees collected. As a result, initial parking fees, once established, tend to rise. At this point, the parking fees are projected only for the south side of the Marina, where the fantasy ferry would go. Once established there, it will spread to the north side and hit visitors to Chavez Park.

**Here is a link to download the City memo** on the parking and other fee proposals. The item is No. 37 on the City Council agenda for June 17.

## Just One Bird

Too much material and too little time for a wider survey of nature in the park these past few days. Just one bluebird photo as a sweetener.



Western Blue bird M. I hardly had to leave my car to see this and a few others at the corner of Marina Blvd and Spinnaker Way.

## Publishing Schedule



This blog drops whenever there's material and motivation, and not on a regular clockwork schedule. To avoid FOMO, **subscribe**.

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- [A Western Bluebird in the Park](#)
- [Loose Dog in Owl Area](#)
- [A Walk in the Meadow](#)
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# Chavez Park Conservancy

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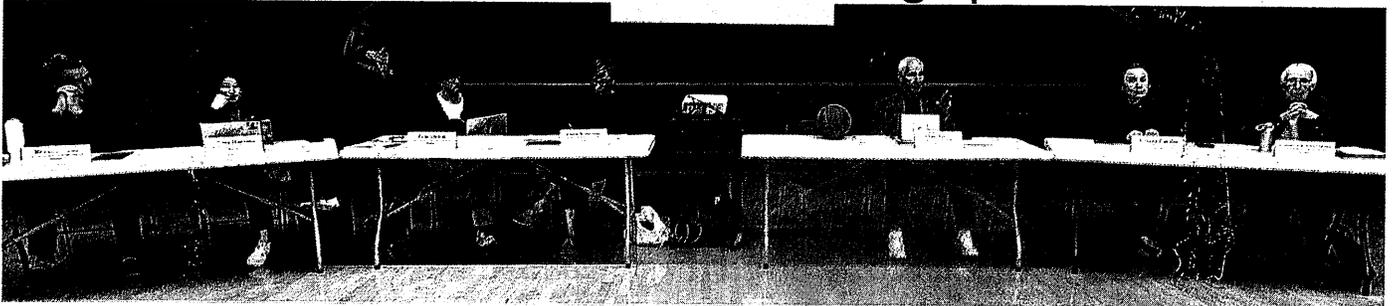
*Dedicated to the whole 90 acres*



## Park News 6/8/2025

June 8, 2025

### Loaded Meeting of Parks Commission Coming Up



Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission meeting Apr 9 2025

The city's Parks Recreation and Waterfront Commission will meet in person Wednesday June 11 at 7 pm at the **Frances Albrier center**. The **agenda** is loaded with topics that touch Cesar Chavez Park. There's the recent decree prohibiting weeding, planting, and other "ground disturbances" and killing the perimeter pathway repaving project and the new restroom project. **See this post for details**. There's discussion of the Waterfront Specific Plan and of new fees, including parking fees. And there's a new memo on what used to be called the Cesar Chavez Master Plan. People concerned may want to attend.

The recent "ground disturbance" rules are said to stem from a "Health and Safety Plan" prepared by the newly hired consulting firm Geosyntec. I have put in a city Public Records request for Geosyntec's output to see whether the firm is really as clueless about the park's infrastructure as the City Manager's memo makes it seem. It would be helpful for the City to release these documents voluntarily at or before the meeting. The recent methane survey by the Sniffer Robotics firm should also be made public promptly. And neither of these two newly hired firms shows up in city contract records. They must be subcontractors to other consultants. The public deserves to know how much the city is spending. And if any regulatory agency has released new rulings, those need to be aired as well. Right now the whole affair is murky and bizarre. Cynics are whispering that the "ground disturbance" scare is a smokescreen to let the city kill projects that it didn't want to do anyway.

The former Chavez Park Master Plan, morphed into Conceptual Plan, is the subject of a new memo from PRW commission chair Allan Abshez. **Download it here**. The memo sees the plan emerging from a Rube Goldberg process involving a ReVisioning Committee appointed by two city council members, a series of park tours, th

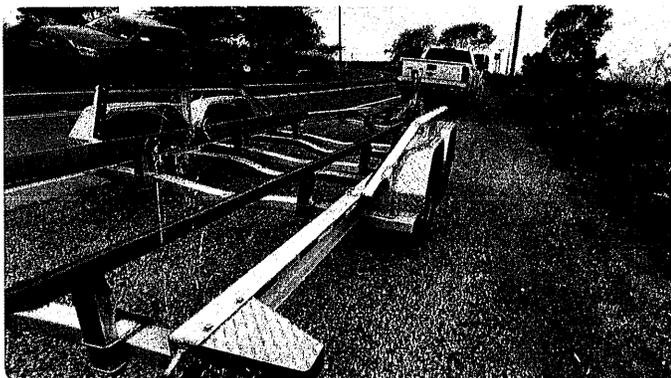
four community hearings, and then a vague remodeling and refashioning stage in the hands of the PF Translate » commission. City council members Rashi Kesarwani and Terri Taplin are charged with appointing an unspecified number of volunteers to the ReVisioning Team. Michael Boland, recently retired from collaborating with the Hargreaves Jones consulting firm as officer of the Presidio Trust in San Francisco, is to chair the committee. Out of the wash will come a "basis of design" document sent to City Council for review and action.

There is a long history of park plans worked up with froth, announced with trumpets, and then roundfiled. This one is in that line. It's tempting to ignore the whole thing, particularly considering the city's current budget situation, but that would be a mistake. The plan could be a Trojan horse to bring Hargreaves Jones' commercialization projects back into the park. A **strong movement of park visitors** stopped those plans in the summer of 2022, but this evil-spirited consulting firm is still on the city payroll and is bound to try again. In the coming weeks, we who love the park for its nature will gather and talk and outline our own vision of how the park should evolve.

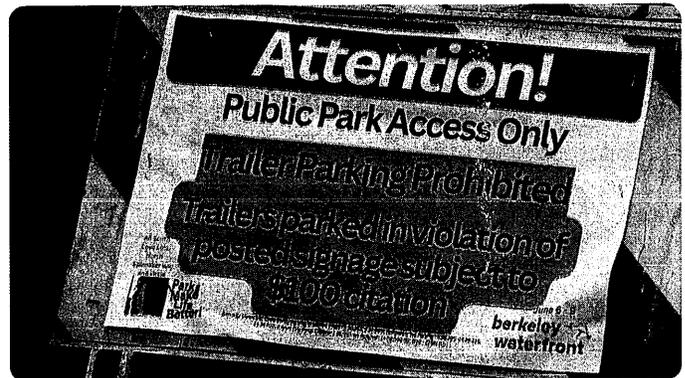
Speaking of nature, the Parks Commission has long had a "Dog Park Subcommittee" which just issued another memo advocating for more dog parks. Fine, but where is the Nature Subcommittee? There are serious ongoing issues with nature in the park, and there is no body to take them up. Nature is under deadly attack, and needs more champions. It's high time that the commission accepted its responsibilities to nature.

## Kudos to Waterfront Management

Waterfront management has a lot of problems, but it deserves applause for squelching the theft of park visitors' parking spaces by fishers' truck-and-trailer rigs. It's the start of salmon season, and the anglers come in from all over the region with their boats in tow, lining up from 4 am to slide them into the water at the boat launch area across from the park. In past years, they then parked their empty equipment along Spinnaker Way, each hogging the space for two or three cars. Here's what it looked like in 2023 (below left). This year, the threat of a \$100 fine kept this strip available for park visitors. Thank you, waterfront management.



In 2023

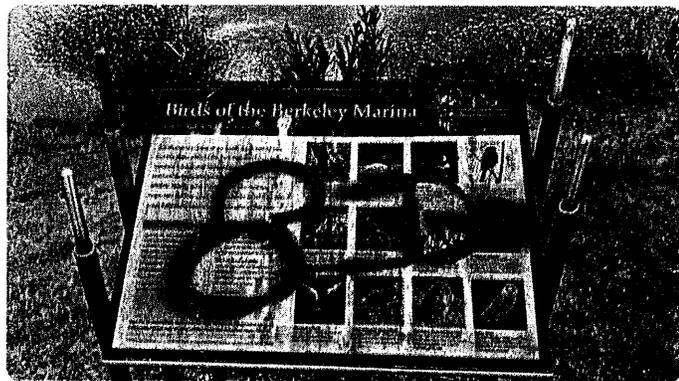


This year

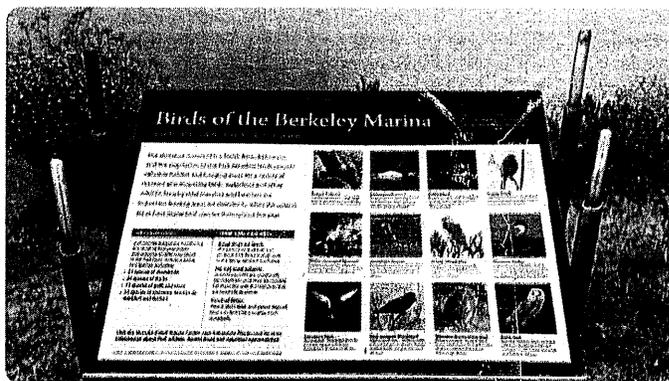
## Bird Sign Cleaned Up

More than two weeks ago, someone vandalized the bird sign near the **Open Circle Viewpoint** ("the Spiral") on the northeast edge of the park. Thick gray spray paint made the tag "8-D," whatever that means (or maybe it was supposed to be a penis). I'm sure that parks staff was planning to clean it up soon, but I got impatient and

did it myself this Sunday morning. A spray-on graffiti remover, "Goof Off," softened the paint, and a steel scrubber pad rubbed it off, finished with a sponge. The sign isn't new, but its face is clean again. Translate »



Before



After

## Blackbird Males Earn Their Keep

Red-winged Blackbird males are vain creatures. They show off their red shoulders, sing short repetitive songs, and puff themselves up. All they want is to get laid. It's the females that do all the work of building the nest, laying the eggs, keeping them warm, and feeding the hatchlings. The males are useless in all that. But then American Crows come raiding the nesting area in the northwest quarter of the park. They'll snatch up eggs and hatchlings alike if not stopped. This is where the Red-wing males earn their keep. Fearlessly they rise and attack the much larger raider. They not only harass, they seek impact. Their sharp, steel-hard beaks are formidable weapons. In this video, a male repeatedly attacks the crow and ultimately drives the bigger bird off. Victory, for now.

RWBL v Crow 20250606



A Moment in the Meadow