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Local Impact of Bond Measure WW - Parks Bond

By Cathy Tyson



Local voters will have more on the ballot than Presidential candidates and City Council members this November 4th. Contra Costa and Alameda county residents will have an opportunity to decide on Measure WW, which extends an existing East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) bond.

It's a \$500 million measure that would extend the expiring twenty-year-old Measure AA park bond at the same level as before, a property tax of \$10 for every \$100,000 of assessed value. The money would go toward acquiring and improving regional parks, trails and recreation facilities and purchasing and restoring open space and wildlife corridors and to provide funds to cities and local park and recreation districts for acquisition and development of local parklands. The measure needs a two-thirds majority to pass.

Where would all of this money go, if approved? According to smart voter.org, a nonpartisan election information website, of the \$500 million raised by Measure WW, \$375 million or 75% will fund regional park acquisitions, open space preservation, new parks and trails for walking, hiking and biking, environmental maintenance, the rehabilitation of aging park facilities and wildlife habitat restoration. In addition, and perhaps more important to Lamorinda voters, is that 25% of the revenue will fund city parks and recreation departments.

That translates to \$1,095,000 to Lafayette, \$737,000 to Moraga and \$801,000 to Orinda based on the populations of these towns.

"Supporting Measure WW is a natural for Orindans. So many of our youth camp with the Boy and Girl Scouts in Tilden Park, as well as attend summer and swim programs at Lake Anza. We have the district's trails in our own backyard, literally, and those outdoor trails will be expanded over the next few years with the addition of over 1000 acres of open space in Wilder, some of which will be managed by the EBRPD. Orindans love to connect with nature, and we are very supportive of the excellent recreational opportunities the district provides in the East Bay hills," said the Mayor of Orinda, Victoria Smith.

"Both the Town and the Parks and Rec approve of WW," says Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, "we have benefited from its predecessor to equip our parks and manage our trails, the new measure will make available \$737,000 for recreation in the town." The Director insists that the new measure will not add to the tax burden of residents since it's a continuation of the previous bond measure.

Lafayette's Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell is equally supportive, "AA (the original measure passed in 1988) was wonderful for Lafayette - EBRPD does an excellent job - especially buying up land - because once it's gone it's gone forever."

Arguments against the measure include that in these economically difficult times, WW would perpetuate a tax that would otherwise expire. Opponents say the EBRPD already controls 153 square miles of parkland, and that additional land, if purchased, would no longer generate tax revenue. They also allege that EBRPD wants the land of family farmers, and that further land set-asides make housing even more unaffordable. For more information, go to www.ebparks.org or www.smartvoter.org.

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