

**From:** [Brad Olson](#)  
**To:** [Suzyanna@earthlink.net](mailto:Suzyanna@earthlink.net); [larkst@earthlink.net](mailto:larkst@earthlink.net); [Albany@patch.com](mailto:Albany@patch.com); [Todd@toddjerseyarchitecture.com](mailto:Todd@toddjerseyarchitecture.com); [SusanSchwartz@aol.com](mailto:SusanSchwartz@aol.com); [vonwoelfen@gmail.com](mailto:vonwoelfen@gmail.com); [samaratullia@yahoo.com](mailto:samaratullia@yahoo.com); [marybarnsdale@att.net](mailto:marybarnsdale@att.net); [emilier@patch.com](mailto:emilier@patch.com); [pk@well.com](mailto:pk@well.com)  
**Cc:** [Whitney Dotson](#); [Robert E. Doyle](#); [Allen Pulido](#); [Carol Severin](#); [Jeff Bond](#)  
**Subject:** Management of the Albany Plateau Burrowing Owl Mitigation Area at Eastshore State Park  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 19, 2012 11:31:10 AM

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Thank you for your interest in the management of the Albany Plateau Burrowing Owl Mitigation Area at Eastshore State Park. In response to recent email correspondence and articles in the "Albany Patch," the East Bay Regional Park District wishes to provide additional information regarding the management and development of the Burrowing Owl mitigation area on the Albany Plateau at Eastshore State Park. The park is jointly owned by State Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Park District; the District has been maintaining this property for fourteen years under an agreement with DPR.

First, there seems to be confusion about the ultimate fate of the burrowing owl mitigation area. Some have suggested that it could be put to some other use after five years if owls don't use the habitat. This is incorrect. It is permanent mitigation for the loss of Burrowing Owl habitat associated with development of the Tom Bates Regional Sports Complex in Berkeley, as required by the California Department of Fish and Game and the environmental document for the Sports Complex.

Five years of supplemental management funding for the Burrowing Owl mitigation area has been provided by a five-city joint powers agency, including the City of Albany. Albany constructed the improvements and has been monitoring the site for four years through an agreement with the Park District, which retains management responsibility for the park. Habitat management at Albany Plateau includes mowing and line-trimming of grasses and shrubs, and other methods to control noxious weeds such as fennel. Maintenance is usually conducted twice a year to minimize wildlife disturbance and to maintain the open grassland habitat which Burrowing Owls require. Occasionally dead jack rabbits have been observed in this area; however, the cause of death was more likely predation or disease rather than mowers, which live rabbits can easily avoid. The Park District's equipment operators are trained to watch out for wildlife and know the terrain well.

Future mowing at the Plateau will be conducted with the mower set to a higher ground clearance in order to minimize impacts to wildlife, provide suitable Burrowing Owl habitat and reduce the risk of wildfire. This is especially important given the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> of July firework celebrations and the large number of people who will be visiting the Albany Plateau to observe the fireworks.

While the Burrowing Owl mitigation area may have not yet been used by Burrowing Owls, the monitoring reports for the project have demonstrated its significant value to other wildlife species dependent upon coastal grasslands. More than thirty bird species, including the special-status White-tailed Kite and Peregrine Falcon, utilize this habitat. Regardless of whether the mitigation area is used by Burrowing Owls, it still provides significant habitat for other declining wildlife species and will continue to be protected and managed for their benefit.



**Brad Olson**

**Environmental Programs Manager** | Environmental Programs

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**From:** [Eileen Harrington](mailto:Eileen.Harrington@cityofalbany.org)  
**To:** [Anne Hersch](mailto:Anne.Hersch@cityofalbany.org); [Anne Hsu](mailto:Anne.Hsu@cityofalbany.org); [Jeff Bond](mailto:Jeff.Bond@cityofalbany.org); [Beth Pollard](mailto:Beth.Pollard@cityofalbany.org); [Craig Labadie](mailto:Craig.Labadie@cityofalbany.org); [Nicole Almaguer](mailto:Nicole.Almaguer@cityofalbany.org); [Councilmember Joanne Wile \(jwile46@gmail.com\)](mailto:Councilmember.Joanne.Wile@cityofalbany.org); [fjavandel@ci.berkeley.ca.us](mailto:fjavandel@ci.berkeley.ca.us); [marge.atkinson@mac.com](mailto:marge.atkinson@mac.com); [peggy.thomsen@gmail.com](mailto:peggy.thomsen@gmail.com); [peggy.thomsen@heald.edu](mailto:peggy.thomsen@heald.edu); [Robert Lieber \(Hon.Lieber@comcast.net\)](mailto:Robert.Lieber@comcast.net)  
**Subject:** FW: mowing the owl habitat  
**Date:** Monday, June 18, 2012 9:35:04 AM

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*Eileen A. Harrington*

Secretary to the City Manager

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**From:** lark [mailto:larkst@earthlink.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 18, 2012 9:19 AM  
**To:** City General Email Box  
**Subject:** mowing the owl habitat

Hi there,

I am an Albany resident and am extremely concerned about the owl habitat being mowed completely. Please consider rotating the areas to be mowed and leave large portions untouched to protect the animals who live there at this time.

lark stratton

"There may be no owls, but other animals rely on the enclosure area. These include jackrabbits, squirrels, snakes, lizards and birds that forage, nest and sing in the tall brush. One day they are there and after the mow they're often gone, returning gradually only to be decimated again. Some bird populations, including the native Red-winged Blackbird, appear to have dropped overall since 2008.

The jackrabbits are particularly pathetic as they race around the field in panic while the mower chews through the brush. Some have been killed; the rest are left with zero cover. And predators abound, according to Avocet—including feral cats, the White-tailed Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Great Horned Owl and Common Raven. Avocet found no disturbance to the burrow areas by dogs or humans.

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), which manages the Plateau, has said that a second reason for mowing is fire hazard. Mowing smaller areas more frequently might actually reduce fire hazard. Besides, the enclosure is bounded on two sides by the Albany Mudflats, [Golden Gate Fields](#)' parking lot to the south, and an open meadow to the west. The nearest structures and encampments are hundreds of feet away, and access is easy for fire trucks."

complete article here:

[http://albany.patch.com/articles/column-slow-the-mow-on-albany-plateau?  
ncid=newsltuspatc00000001](http://albany.patch.com/articles/column-slow-the-mow-on-albany-plateau?ncid=newsltuspatc00000001)

**From:** [Eileen Harrington](#)  
**To:** [Jeff Bond](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Mowing the Albany Plateau???  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 19, 2012 2:00:09 PM

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**From:** Mary McAllister [mailto:marymcallister@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 19, 2012 1:30 PM  
**To:** spossin@ebparks.org  
**Cc:** cseverin@ebparks.org; wdotson@ebparks.org; ltong@ebparks.org; City General Email Box  
**Subject:** Mowing the Albany Plateau???

Dear Mr. Possin,

According to an article in the Albany Patch, the East Bay Regional Park District is planning to mow the 8-acre fenced enclosure on the Albany Plateau based on an assumption that it will somehow benefit the burrowing owl.

Since the burrowing owl has not been seen there in the four years that this fenced enclosure has existed, it seems safe to assume that any benefit to the burrowing owl is entirely theoretical.

However, the existence of many other animals on the Albany Plateau is not theoretical. Rabbits, ground squirrels, lizards, mice, etc. all live in this fenced enclosure and they will obviously not benefit from having mowers running over them and their homes. They will not benefit from the loss of cover that enables a complex community of plants and animals to co-exist.

The claim that mowing this fenced enclosure will reduce fire hazard is obviously a cover story for this misguided project. Grass fires do not start themselves. They are ignited by the activities of man in the Bay Area where we do not have lightning storms, even in the winter, let alone in the summer. Since people are entirely excluded from this fenced enclosure, we can safely assume that no one will be in a position to start a fire there.

This fenced enclosure was a ridiculous waste of the public's money. Please don't add insult to injury by needlessly killing harmless animals to justify this silly project.

Mary McAllister

**From:** [Eileen Harrington](#)  
**To:** [Anne Hersch](#); [Anne Hsu](#); [Jeff Bond](#); [Beth Pollard](#); [Craig Labadie](#); [Nicole Almaguer](#); [Councilmember Joanne Wile \(jwile46@gmail.com\)](#); [fjavandel@ci.berkeley.ca.us](#); [marge.atkinson@mac.com](#); [peggy.thomsen@gmail.com](#); [peggy\\_thomsen@heald.edu](#); [Robert Lieber \(Hon.Lieber@comcast.net\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Albany Plateau mowing: Be humane!  
**Date:** Friday, June 22, 2012 11:54:44 AM

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-----Original Message-----

From: Marilyn Saarni [<mailto:saarni@mac.com>]  
Sent: Friday, June 22, 2012 11:47 AM  
To: City General Email Box; [spossin@ebparks.org](mailto:spossin@ebparks.org); [ltong@ebparks.org](mailto:ltong@ebparks.org); [wdotson@ebparks.org](mailto:wdotson@ebparks.org); [cseverin@ebparks.org](mailto:cseverin@ebparks.org)  
Subject: Albany Plateau mowing: Be humane!

Dear All -

Please take action to change the mowing practices at the No-Burrowing-Owl Preserve at the Albany Plateau.

Current practice of mowing all at once at great speed ends up stressing and killing animals.

Mowing smaller areas -- never the entire enclosure -- would surely diminish harm.

Using a smaller mower would make a difference as well -- stress is due not only to the obvious death threat, but also to noise, blasting dust and debris, and loss of cover.

We've witnessed dismembered jack rabbits and gopher/ring-neck/garter snakes. The dominant animal population of ground squirrels, of course, take advantage of the burrows--but it must stress them as well.

I also want to point out that the type of mower used has caused substantial compression of the soils. It's changing the nature of the substrate and of course the ecosystem above. The vernal pools are now long gone, after 4 years of this compression-and-levelling.

I realize that nobody seems to care about these "small details," but it would not have been included in the Avocet report since there was no initial all-season assessment (at least that I was aware of) before the owl preserve was installed. So there's no monitoring of any sort for these sorts of impacts.

In hope that you can help the wildlife,

- Marilyn Saarni

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Albany Landfill hiker since 1994  
4416 Fieldcrest Dr, Richmond CA 94803

**From:** [Eileen Harrington](#)  
**To:** [Jeff Bond](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Slow the Mow on Albany Plateau!  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 19, 2012 9:17:15 AM

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**From:** Samara Love [mailto:[samaratullia@yahoo.com](mailto:samaratullia@yahoo.com)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 19, 2012 9:12 AM  
**To:** City General Email Box  
**Cc:** [ltong@ebparks.org](mailto:ltong@ebparks.org); [spossin@ebparks.org](mailto:spossin@ebparks.org); [wdotson@ebparks.org](mailto:wdotson@ebparks.org); [cseverin@ebparks.org](mailto:cseverin@ebparks.org)  
**Subject:** Slow the Mow on Albany Plateau!

**Greetings All,**

**Please slow the mow!**

Whenever that entire field is mowed on the twice year schedule the creatures( include jackrabbits, squirrels, snakes, lizards and birds that forage, nest and sing in the tall brush) that actually do live there are distressed, displaced and sometimes dismembered. After four years of this(without the owls) couldn't we cut the real-life animals some slack?! It would be so easy: Just mow a third or half of the enclosure at a time instead of clear-cutting. Leave a little habitat for the creatures that do live there!

Thank you,  
Samara

**Samara Love**  
**510-508-0079**  
**laughingdogs.net**