

Our Neighbors: 2010 will be big year for Bay Trail in Richmond

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Richmond already has been a trailblazer when it comes to turning its share of Bay shoreline into a recreational resource, and some of the best is yet to come, the chairman of the Trails for Richmond Action Committee says.

Segments of the Bay Trail in Richmond have been falling into place piece by piece. If all goes as envisioned, there will be 31 miles of waterfront in the city by the end of 2010, and planning will commence to add several crucial links.

"This year, completing at least five miles of trail is fantastic, representing one-third of the 15 to be built," said TRAC's Bruce Beyaert.

A full list of accomplishments in 2009 and what's in the pipeline for 2010 are contained in TRAC's New Year Report, available online at www.pointrichmond.com/baytrail.

Last year's highlights include the opening of the wharf and trail link at Ford Point and the heralded donation by Chevron of 1.5 miles of easements on its refinery property to the East Bay Regional Park District for a segment of trail between Interstate 580 and Point San Pablo.

"We still have a challenge building the trail to Point San Pablo," Beyaert said. "Chevron donating the easement is really critical."

There is also the ongoing challenge of designing, funding and building a link across I-580 that provides access to the refinery easement from Point Richmond.

A total of \$1.6 million is in hand for the construction design for that link, but trail backers must come up with another \$13 million to build the link and the new portion of trail. "That's the biggest and most expensive challenge," Beyaert said.

Projects during the new year include the Shipyard 3 segment through the Port of Richmond, a link from Shipyard 3 to Ferry Point in Point Richmond, and completion of work that will turn the current trail spur at the former West County Landfill into a full three-mile loop.

"For the first time, people will be able to get out there and see the drop-dead views," Beyaert said of the landfill site, which is bordered by San Pablo Creek on one side and Wildcat Creek on the other.

The existing trail in Richmond, already the largest portion of the planned pathway circling San Francisco Bay, has become a regional destination, Beyaert said.

"It's amazing how many bicyclists we're seeing along the Bay Trail, coming from as far away as Berkeley, Oakland and Emeryville," he said, noting that many stop at local eateries before their return trip. "It's really been discovered by the Bay Area as a place to come recreate and spend money."

The can also look forward to more to come. "This will be the biggest year for the Bay Trail in Richmond in terms of miles built," Beyaert said. "That's no accident, it's the result of a lot of work and planning that's been done the last three years."

Those who want to be part of the effort can join the Richmond Bay Trail Network at no cost by sending an e-mail to totracbaytrail@earthlink.net.

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