

21st American Trails International Trails Symposium NATIONAL TRAILS AWARDS

April 16, 2013

On the Path of Excellence

American Trails' 21st National Trails Awards Program honors people and programs at the 21st American Trails International Trails Symposium. The awards celebration was held at Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Arizona, April 16, 2013.

▶ See winners of the 2013 National Trails Awards sponsored by American Trails

▶ See the previous Award Winners from [2010](#) - [2008](#) - [2006](#) - [2004](#) - [2002](#), and [2000](#).

2013 Hulet Hornbeck Award

This award is for an individual that, like Hulet Hornbeck, exemplifies long-standing vision and wisdom in support of trails.

Pat O'Brien

From East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors

Mr. Pat O'Brien has been a steward of sound leadership in the parks and recreation industry for over forty years. Since his early beginnings as a young paid lifeguard to his role as General Manager of two large regional park districts in California, Pat has long been a respected leader, a valuable contributor and creative collaborator within the parks and recreation field nationally as well as internationally.

His distinguishing career as both a chief executive and long-time advocate for the planning and preservation of regional trails, open space and the environment has led to numerous awards, recognitions and legislative acclaim. During Pat's tenure in his current position as General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), public access to parkland and trails have significantly grown by over 30% to over 102,000 acres of parklands, 65 parks and over 1,100 miles of regional trails.

The East Bay Regional Park District is the nation's largest local park agency providing recreation and enjoyment to the more than 2.5 million residents of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in Northern California and beyond. In 2008, under Mr. O'Brien's leadership EBRPD successfully passed by a 71% vote a \$500 million bond measure providing acquisition and development funding for parks and regional trails as well as per capita allocations for all city parks and recreation departments as well as special park districts in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. This ballot measure, Measure WW, was the largest local park bond measure passed in the United States to date. Its benefit for not only East Bay Regional Park District but also local park agencies in the East Bay will be felt for the next twenty years.

Mr. O'Brien's legislative advocacy on behalf of parks and recreation agencies and issues is demonstrated by his years of leadership to both the California Parks and Recreation Society and the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts' legislative committees. He chaired both committees for over a decade and was recognized by CPRS in 1988 through the renaming of their annual legislative award as the "Pat O'Brien Legislative Professional Award". He's also been at the forefront chairing statewide park bond and senior facilities efforts, including successful state park bond acts in 1999, 1986, and 1984, and a successful statewide senior center bond act in 1984. Additionally, Pat continues to actively advocate for the passage of a permanent funding source for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, particularly the stateside component, by regularly meeting with California congressional leaders in Washington, D.C., as well as designating this issue a top priority for the Park District's federal lobbyists.

Always seeking ways for EBRPD to be on the cutting edge of addressing critical issues of importance to the community, Pat has uniquely positioned EBRPD as a leader in the development of "Green Transportation" by connecting commuters, students, and shoppers to employment centers, school, and transit facilities through the use of interconnecting regional multi-use trails. Pat's legislative leadership to support and secure funding for this visionary plan has made it possible to again showcase EBRPD as an industry innovator and collaborator in the reduction of gas emissions and focus on improved public health. Within ten years, EBRPD hopes to complete its regional trail transportation network within its two-county jurisdiction by linking 1,100 miles of non-motorized transportation creating a seamless, integrated fossil fuel-free transportation network. The benefits will also allow nearly three million residents spread out over 1,600 square miles to enjoy improved air quality, and health benefits, as well as fully accessible mobility - thanks in part to Pat's vision of EBRPD master regional trail planning.

Mr. O'Brien is truly a leader for the future, championing development of partnerships and collaborations with corporate, non-profit organizations, prominent universities, community college districts, and other public agencies. Trail focused partnerships under Pat's direction include Kaiser Permanente to annually underwrite EBRPD's signature health and wellness program called "Trails Challenge" to get people outdoors on the regional trails for relaxation and exercise - 7,500 people participated in 2009. Other recent partners include energy bar maker Clif Bar Company, who shut down its corporate offices for a full day in 2009 to allow all employees to assist in the construction of a new single track bicycle trail at Crockett Hills Regional Park, offering stunning views and vistas of the entire San Francisco Bay Area from its peak.

A quiet and modest native Irish San Franciscan, Pat O'Brien's fortitude to improve the quality of life in the San Francisco Bay Area through the development of regional trails and acquisition of open spaces will be a significant legacy for others to model and for many generations to appreciate for decades to come.

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PAT O'BRIEN, LEADER OF THE EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT