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## John Sutter



**Year Awarded:** 2016

The Honorable John Sutter has been a persistent, dedicated champion for open space, public access and environmental initiatives for his entire adult life, which he has spent advocating for the preservation of the environment and environmental justice for the public's access to valuable open spaces and San Francisco Bay shoreline. His 60 years of public service, leadership, and contributions to Oakland and to the East Bay in particular have benefited generations who enjoy the recreational amenities and beautiful parkland advocated for by Mr. Sutter.

As Robert Doyle, General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District, said, "In a lifetime career of public service and advocacy, John Sutter has successfully championed open space, public access, and environmental initiatives with a persistence and dedication I have only rarely witnessed."

Mr. Sutter was first elected to the East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors in 1996. In his role as EBRPD Board member he represents most of Oakland, Piedmont, Canyon, Moraga, Orinda, Orinda Village, Rheem Valley, Lafayette, Rossmoor, and part of Walnut Creek.

Parks in his ward include a portion of Briones, Anthony Chabot (north of Keller Ave if extended east), Claremont Canyon, Huckleberry, Leona Open Space, a small portion of Las Trampas, Redwood, Roberts, Sibley, and Temescal.

Mr. Sutter has served for 20 years on the East Bay Regional Park District's Board of Directors with three terms as the Board President. His many accomplishments at EBRPD include:

- Working with the General Manager and Board to ensure the Park District's Measure CC included funding for Oakland-based projects, especially the previously-delayed Tidewater Boating Center, located in Oakland at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline park. Mr. Sutter was a strong advocate for the facility which was completed and opened to the public in 2011.
- Supporting public land and trail acquisitions throughout the East Bay

Regional Park District, an increase of more than 35,000 acres.

- As a strong advocate for the Oakland waterfront, vigilantly ensuring that a tidal marsh near the Oakland Coliseum was protected from new development plans.

Moreover, long before he served on the EBRPD Board, Mr. Sutter had made his mark as a local leader – beginning his public career in 1954 as an Alameda County Deputy District Attorney, spending 14 years as an Alameda County Superior Court Judge and serving as an Oakland City Council member (elected three terms) and Oakland Vice Mayor. Mr. Sutter was an early adopter of environmental advocacy, even in the 1950s, before the surge of the environmental movement. He has worked diligently over the decades to institute the related concepts of protecting the bay and bay shoreline, and providing access for residents to the bay and open space. Due to the scope and magnitude of his efforts, Mr. Sutter was appointed by Gov. Edmund G. “Pat” Brown to the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) at its inception in 1965. He served on the founding Board of Citizens for Regional Recreation and Parks (CRRP), known today as Greenbelt Alliance, and for seven years as its president. He has also served on the boards of the local sub-chapter of the Sierra Club, Metropolitan YMCA, Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal (OCCUR), Oakland Shoreline Committee, BART Trails Committee, Oakland Arts Council, Oakland Cultural Affairs Commission Alameda County Solid Waste Management Authority, Oakland Charter Revision Committee, Chabot Space and Science Center, Save the Bay, Alameda County Bar Association, and the California Democratic Council.

Under his leaderships, CRRP was part of broader efforts to preserve open space throughout the San Francisco Bay Area; work that included prevention of zoning that would have allowed Napa vineyards to become subdivisions, and creation of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The group developed a study called “The Case for Open Space,” to encourage implementation of the Association of Bay Area Governments’ plan for open space. Concepts developed by the group have also guided current efforts to expand the regional trail system and connect it with the region’s light rail stations.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sutter has worked tirelessly to protect and preserve the San Leandro Bay. After years of community work to fight against the filling of the San Leandro Bay, once elected to the Oakland City Council he was able to forge alliances which protected the Bay and created today’s 741-acre Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline park on the shores of East Oakland – with restored wetlands, picnic areas, and critical habitat for migratory birds.

Some of Mr. Sutter’s other accomplishments include:

- A successful election campaign in 1961 to save Snow Park, adjacent to Lake Merritt, blocking city efforts to develop it for commercial use.
- Chairing a successful committee to prevent commercial trucks on the MacArthur Freeway in Oakland, helping to protect schools, parks, and residential areas from freeway noise, as well as making it a much safer road

to travel on.

- Serving as a leader in the successful campaign to protect the land around San Pablo Reservoir, near Orinda, in the 1950s.
- As an Oakland City Council member, being a leader in defeating a proposal to create a freeway through Oakland's wooded Shepherd Canyon to the neighboring town of Moraga, ensuring much of the area remained as open space for the community.
- As an EBRPD Director, working as a key leader in campaigns to fund open space, park, and San Francisco Bay Restorations, including Park District ballot measures CC and WW, and San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority ballot measure AA.

Today, his work continues to ensure that a significant destination public park is highlighted as an important part of the reuse plans for the military base at the eastern landing of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. He currently serves on the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, a nine-county agency charged with restoring wetlands on the Bay Shoreline.

Mr. Sutter was born in San Francisco and raised in Oakland, California attending public schools. He is a graduate of Oakland High School, Harvard, and Stanford Law School. Mr. Sutter served in the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Mr. Sutter and his wife, Ellie Sutter, live in Oakland and have three children. [current as of 10/2016]

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