



A former shop and warehouse building will be reused as a visitor center for the East Bay Regional Park District and Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial.

## The Future Park

The transformation of approximately 2,500 acres of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station will include:

- Open space that is accessible to urban populations.
- A critical linkage for regional open space and trails.
- A platform for constructive and creative reuse.
- A historic and ecological landscape that resonates with local communities.
- A sustainable park.



The visitor center and interpretive features throughout the park will tell the history of the site and the people who lived, worked, and were impacted by actions there.



Some existing weapons magazines will be retained at the park for interpretive and recreational uses.

## Nature's Resilience

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Chupcan people were stewards of the grasslands and oak savannahs found across these hills. Farming practices from the late 1800s through the 1940s dramatically altered the landscape, resulting in the loss of many native species. The development and management of the regional park will offer the opportunity to revive the native landscape, monitoring its transformation as well as the potential impacts of climate change.

Grazing will continue as a land management practice at the park. Many miles of existing roadway and development will be restored to grassland.



## Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50

Located in Concord, CA  
**Information:** [ebparks.org/tm](http://ebparks.org/tm)

### East Bay Regional Park District

2950 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, CA 94605  
 1-888-EBPARKS or 1-888-327-2757 (TRS 711)  
[ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)



**Regional Parks Membership**  
 RECEIVE FREE DAY-USE PARKING, SWIMMING,  
 DOG PASS, AND MORE. 510-544-2220  
**REGIONALPARKSFUNDATION.ORG**

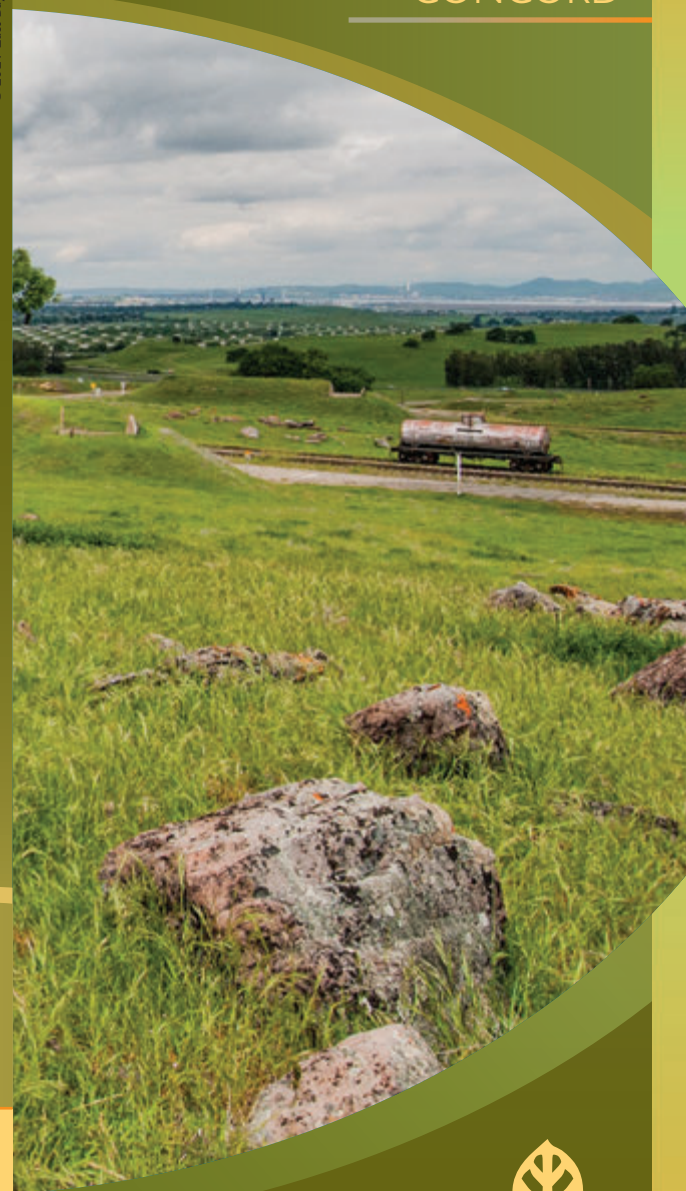
Cover photo: Stephen Joseph



# Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50

CONCORD

© 2021 East Bay Regional Park District. 2024-02



**East Bay**  
 Regional Park District





# Thurgood Marshall Regional Park –

## HOME OF THE PORT CHICAGO 50

Since time immemorial, the land that is now Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50, has been home to the Chupcan, a Bay Miwok speaking people. The indigenous people of California are the first people connected to this land to have suffered social injustices, including the forced removal from their ancestral lands. This removal fundamentally changed these hills as well as the people. This area — the former Concord Naval Weapons Station and Port Chicago Naval Magazine, which played a critical role in protecting freedom abroad — also served as a catalyst for civil rights and social justice protests. Now, as a regional park this site provides us with the opportunity to reflect on our collective past as we look towards a future inclusive of all people.

**Although not yet open to the public, the park is currently in the process of being designed and permitted.** We look forward to welcoming people for programs and events over the coming years. Once open, this park will comprise over 2,500 acres of open space, providing many opportunities for education, recreation and reflection.

### The Port Chicago Disaster

On July 17, 1944, 320 men lost their lives and 390 more were injured in an enormous munitions explosion at Port Chicago Naval Magazine during World War II. At Port Chicago, only African American sailors loaded munitions onto the ships;



US Navy sailors loading munitions.

all facilities and duties were racially segregated, reflecting the Navy's discriminatory practices of the time. The men received little or no training in their duties, while their white officers pushed them to work at unreasonably fast rates. It was only a matter of time before the inevitable happened: that night, while two ships were being loaded simultaneously, an unknown event caused two explosions. Both ships were destroyed and many of the men were vaporized without a trace. It was the largest Home Front disaster of World War II.



Sailors building munitions.

### The Port Chicago 50

Following the explosion, the surviving African American sailors did not receive any of the bereavement leave given to the white officers. Instead, within three weeks, they were ordered back to work loading munitions at the Mare Island Munitions Depot in Vallejo. There had been no change in work safety conditions or further training. Many of the sailors refused out of fear for their lives, creating a significant work stoppage at a critical time during the war. Ultimately, 50 sailors were charged with mutiny and court-martialed following their refusal to load munitions. The trial that followed brought to light the discriminatory Jim Crow practices and racial prejudice that existed within the Navy and across the entire Armed Services. These events are now recognized as an early battle in what would become the Civil Rights Movement.



Port Chicago 50's court-martial, September 14, 1944.



Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993)

NAACP civil rights lawyer Thurgood Marshall helped defend the 50 black sailors accused of mutiny in the aftermath of the devastating Port Chicago explosion. The military trial took place on Treasure Island in nearby San Francisco Bay from September 14 to October 24, 1944. Marshall made a point of holding press conferences outside of the courtroom to keep the American public updated about the trial and the miscarriage of justice occurring within. Although the 50 sailors were quickly found guilty and sentenced to 8-to-15-year prison terms, Marshall's subsequent high-profile appeal paved the way for the desegregation of the entire U.S. military. Marshall went on to argue the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which led to school desegregation nationwide, and became the first black U.S. Supreme Court Justice in 1967.

This new regional park, formerly part of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, was officially named in honor of this civil rights history, Justice Marshall, and the Port Chicago 50 on June 1, 2021.



Photo: Stephen Joseph

Photo courtesy NPS

Photo courtesy NPS

Photo: US Navy

Photo: 1967\_Yochi Okamoto, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)