

# Welcome to Briones

Most of Briones Regional Park was once part of *Rancho Boca de la Canada del Pinole* (rancho at the mouth of Pinole Canyon), popularly known as Rancho San Felipe. In 1829, Felipe Briones built a home near what is now the Bear Creek entrance to the park, cultivating the land and raising cattle. In 1842 Felipe's widow, Maria Manuela Valencia Briones, petitioned Governor Alvarado for a grant to the land the family had occupied. The grant, covering three square leagues, was issued in June 1842. The title was contested when California achieved statehood, but was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1860. After that, much of the rancho was purchased by Simon and Elias Blum. Challenges to the boundary survey continued and it was not until 1878 that a patent to the 13,316.26-acre rancho was issued. In addition to Rancho San Felipe, the park includes small portions of *Rancho Canada del Hambre y las Bolsas*, and *Rancho Acalanes*.

In the 1850s and 1860s, Alhambra Valley was developed into rich orchards and vineyards. It became Contra Costa County's most important fruit growing area. The remains of many of these old orchards are still noticeable. Cattle grazing has been the major land use in the Bear Creek watershed and the ridges since the Briones family first settled there. Hay and grain have been produced in the valleys intermittently for some years, as well as truck crops.

In 1906, the People's Water Company began purchasing land in the San Pablo and Bear Creek areas for watershed lands. This included the Blum property and the Brown Ranch, which made up much of the former Rancho San Felipe. The East Bay Municipal Utility District, which acquired People's Water Company in 1916, constructed San Pablo Dam in 1923. In 1957 Contra Costa County and EBMUD agreed to a land conveyance that established a large open space park in the Bear Creek watershed to be called Briones. In 1964, when portions of Contra Costa County were annexed

**FEES**  
There is a fee for parking and for dogs.

**POLICE, FIRE, MEDICAL EMERGENCY** .....9-1-1  
**EBRPD HEADQUARTERS** ..... 1-888-EBPARKS  
**PICNIC, GROUP CAMPING RESERVATIONS** .....  
..... 1-888-EBPARKS, option 2, then 1  
**PARK OFFICE** ..... 1-888-EBPARKS, option 3, ext. 4508  
**WEB SITE** ..... [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org)  
**TDD** .....(510) 633-0460

to the East Bay Regional Park District, the County and the Park District agreed to a transfer of county land to the Park District, with the District to carry out additional land acquisition. Since 1966, watershed lands and other acquisitions have combined to total nearly 6,256 acres of parkland.

**THE PARK TODAY** Minor staging area facilities were constructed by the Park District, and Briones Regional Park opened on October 22, 1967. Today there are five staging areas providing access to all sides of the park. Predominant uses include hiking and horseback riding over the park's scenic trails; picnicking, bird-watching, and similar activities; and informal recreation such as kite flying, photography, and nature study.

**GROUP CAMPING** Briones Regional Park's three group camping areas—Wee-Ta-Chi, Maud Whalen, and Homestead Valley—may be reserved by calling EBRPD Reservations at 1-888-EBPARKS, option 2, then 1. Reservations must be made at least 7 days in advance.

**ARCHERY RANGE** The Briones Archers archery club range is accessible off the Crescent Ridge Trail from Briones' west-side Bear Creek Road entrance. For information, visit [www.brionesarchers.org](http://www.brionesarchers.org).

**PICNICKING** Briones Regional Park offers a number of first-come, first-served picnic sites with tables and barbecue stands at the Bear Creek Staging Area and the Alhambra Creek Staging Area. The park also has two larger, reservable group picnic areas at the Bear Creek Staging Area: Oak Grove, which can accommodate 50 people, and Newt Hollow, which holds 150. Crow, a 50-person reservable site, is at the Alhambra Staging Area. For information or to make a reservation, call EBRPD Reservations at 1-888-EBPARKS, then press option 2, then 1.



Lower Sindich Lagoon and Mt. Diablo, seen from the Briones Crest Trail.



**To Reach Briones Regional Park:**  
From Highway 24, take the Camino Pablo/Moraga Way exit on the east side of the Caldecott Tunnel to Orinda/Orinda Village. Go north on Camino Pablo about 2.5 miles to Bear Creek Road and turn right. The Bear Creek Staging Area is about five miles ahead, on the right. Several staging areas on the park's east side are accessible from Reliez Valley Road in Martinez and Pleasant Hill, and on the north from Alhambra Valley Road in Martinez.  
If you would like this information in an alternative format, please contact the EBRPD Public Affairs Department at (510) 544-2200, fax (510) 635-3478, TDD (510) 633-0460, or [info@ebparks.org](mailto:info@ebparks.org).



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# Briones Regional Park

East Bay  
Regional Park District



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