



The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) is an organization of distinguished practitioners and scholars committed to the advancement of the park and recreation field.

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Robert E. Doyle

Year Awarded: 2018



Robert Emmett Doyle (1952-) was born and raised in California's East San Francisco Bay Area and has spent a lifetime raising money and advocating for parks and recreation with a career spanning 40-plus years with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), culminating with his role as General Manager. The EBRPD is the largest local park agency in the United States, with a \$200 million budget, and 1,000 employees serving a diverse population of users in an urban interface setting, receiving 25 million visitors per year. EBRPD manages 73 parks, including three State Parks, providing recreation and interpretive opportunities in Alameda and Contra Costa counties with 1,250 miles of trails and more than 121,000 acres including eight lakes, ten interpretive centers, and 55 miles of San Francisco Bay shoreline.

In 2018, the East Bay Regional Parks received the prestigious Legacy Award from the East Bay Economic Development Association, a testament to Mr. Doyle's visionary leadership which as General Manager over the previous decade, served to further East Bay Regional Parks' legacy as an innovative leader not only in the field of parks and recreation, but as an entity that has an important positive impact for the entire San Francisco Bay region.

As part of his responsibility to advance the mission and vision of the East Bay Regional Parks, Mr. Doyle has advocated for urban parks and recreation, and best practices for managing public lands, garnering support nationally and internationally. He is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources International Urban Protected Areas Committee and has presented at IUCN World Parks conferences. He has presented at national park and public lands conferences on youth engagement, diversity, economic benefits and development, and climate resilience, and has testified before Congress on National Parks and the Land & Water Conservation Fund.

Mr. Doyle serves as a member of the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, an organization of distinguished practitioners and scholars committed to the advancement of the park and recreation field. He also served as a trustee for the National Association of Olmsted Parks. In 1971, Mr. Doyle was a founding board member of Save Mount Diablo, a nonprofit land trust and conservation organization that serves to support the State Park; he served on the board for 25 years, with several years as board president. He was also a founding board member of the East Bay Conservation Corps and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, and served as a board member of the Bay Area Open Space Council. In 2010, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from California Trails and Greenways, and, in 2002, a Mountain Star Award from Save Mount Diablo.

Over his career, Mr. Doyle has worked on more than \$1 billion of park funding projects advancing park funding strategies for the Park District and statewide through creative, strategic efforts. He has enhanced the Park District's

stewardship of taxpayer funds through insightful, calculated risk-taking, and developed cutting-edge, model partnerships, efforts which have taught and inspired others about possibilities for development of park funding.

Mr. Doyle has developed regional and statewide park leadership groups to build coalitions of support for state and local parks. As co-chair of the statewide California State Parks Partners Coalition he was a key leader in advancing a state parks bond to the ballot for the first time in more than 15 years; he advocated over five years to conceive and help advance the desperately needed California Proposition 68 State Park and Water Bond to the June 2018 ballot, where it was approved by the voters. His key strategy was to work with legislators, encouraging them to become park advocates; developing coalitions of park leaders to do the same; and providing trainings for current and up-and-coming park leaders to understand how to develop park advocates among their legislative delegation. For this work, he received a special President's Award for Advocacy and Advancing the Park Profession from the California Park and Recreation Society in March 2018.

A lifelong park user and advocate, Mr. Doyle began his career as a park ranger with EBRPD, and moved to the Planning & Design Department where he worked to develop a first-of-its-kind Regional Trails Master Plan, for a regional trail system that has nationally recognized multi-use urban trails, as well as open space connector trails that benefit natural habitat corridors across the two East Bay counties. He later became a Chief, then Assistant General Manager for Land Acquisition and Planning in 1990, where he served for 21 years – leading the greatest expansion of parks and trails in the EBRPD's 85-year history, and co-authoring two Regional Parks Bond Measures AA (1988) and WW (2008). He was appointed General Manager by the Board of Directors in 2010.

Over his career with the EBRPD, Mr. Doyle has increased public land and trail acquisitions, expanding the Park District by 61,000+ acres, fully half of its current acreage. This work has provided increased access for local residents, especially recently in the more rural eastern areas of Contra Costa County; and promoted smart development within urban limit lines through strategic purchases of small parcels, which also serve to protect potential open space acquisition targets from encroaching development. At the same time, this strategy advances biodiversity, focusing on contiguous land preservation – protecting the greenbelt.

As General Manager, Mr. Doyle has overseen the greatest diversification of the EBRPD's user base through innovative management models, such as: expanding the Regional Parks Foundation to champion private fundraising in support of park access for disadvantaged youth and increasing annual fundraising by 150%; and embracing multicultural outreach efforts, providing support, funding, and staff for community-based engagement efforts, including the very well attended Multicultural Wellness Walks, and the Multicultural Advisory Committee comprised of leaders from the Bay Area's diverse cultural communities. These events and advisory committee have given multicultural groups a voice in the Park District's outreach efforts and buy-in to a sense of ownership of their public parklands; in turn, the participants are leading their own outreach efforts to get their community out to the parks.

Other partnership initiatives include the expansion of the Healthy Parks Healthy People program in collaboration with the National Park Service, local park agencies and health providers throughout the Bay Area, and with UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland, developing ParksRX which "prescribes" the use of parks by folks with high risk for chronic disease, integrating park programs for social, mental and physical health benefits, and developing positive and lasting connections for these new park users to their Regional Parks.

Mr. Doyle graduated from Saint Mary's College with a BA in Management. He is a life-long gardener, an avid hiker and a black belt in Aikido. He has two adult children, two adult stepsons, and two grandchildren. He is a resident of Walnut Creek, where he lives with his wife, Tina Batt. [September 2018]

Contact Information

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