# Point San Pablo – Past, Present & Future
# Parts 2 & 3 – The Present & Future
# The Last of Three Articles on Point San Pablo

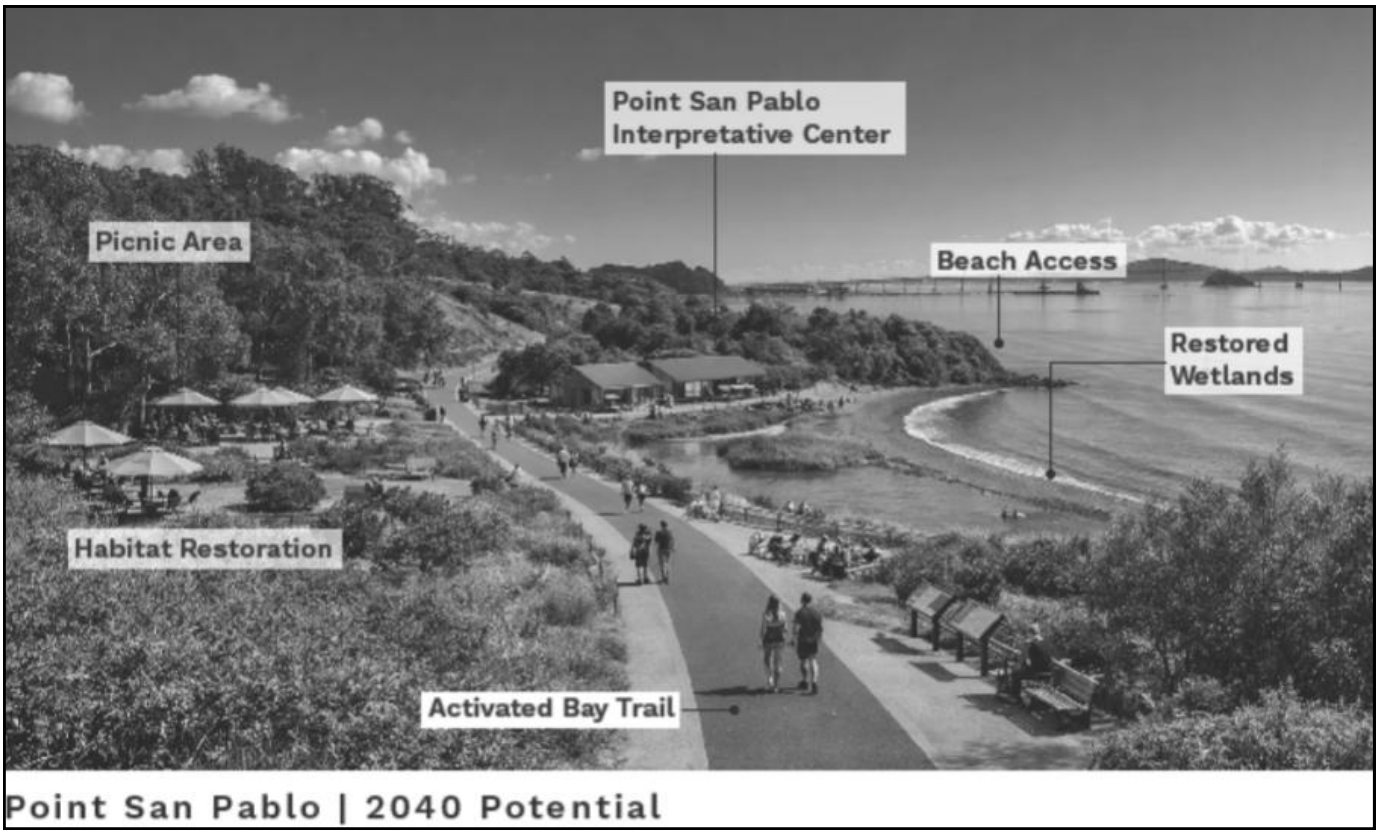
*by Bruce Beyaert*

**Recap of Part 1 - The Past**

**Part 1** described the rich, varied history of Point San Pablo from the last ice age to the removal of the City of Richmond's huge Terminal 4 wharf, pilings, and warehouse structures during 2024-2025. Maritime history began in 1903 with construction of the Richmond Belt Line railroad, wharf and warehouse. Point San Pablo quickly became Richmond's most vital and diverse port due to its combination of deep water access and connection with the transcontinental rail system.

Products such as coconut oil and molasses were imported from Pacific Islands and Asia for processing and rail shipment. Sailing and steam ships loaded barrels of wine from Winehaven for shipment to Europe, as well as cases of kerosene for shipment to Asia as fuel for cooking and illumination. More than 100 purse seiner boats brought in catches of sardines and herring to supply fish reduction plants producing fish meal and fish oil. A fleet of 75 high speed cutters netted sardines and other fish for canning and shipment. An Italian-American and a Chinese-American company caught and dried shrimp for export. Naval ammunition such as shells and torpedoes were shipped to the Pacific during WWII before the construction of Port Chicago Naval Weapons Station and again after the devastating explosion there in 1944. The last whaling station operating in the U.S. closed in 1971 when commercial whaling was banned.

All of these operations came and went over time as economic conditions changed. Contaminated sites have been remediated, and few vestiges remain of these diverse maritime operations.




Point San Pablo | 2040 Potential

**Part 2 – The Present**

The closure of maritime operations, removal of terminal infrastructure and remediation of contaminated soils have positioned Point San Pablo for a new future. No longer considered viable for port operations, the Bay Conservation & Development Commission (BCDC) removed Terminal 4 from its Seaport Plan.

As an interim measure to provide site security and generate revenue, the City of Richmond leases former Terminal 4 to Nematode Holdings, LLC owned by Bobby Winston at a base rent plus 40% of sublease revenues. Most subleases are for equipment and motor vehicle storage, with the notable exception of Good Hot, which offers the unique experience of shoreline saunas followed by a dip in San Francisco Bay. Nematode has made major investments in site cleanup and improvements, including installation of an electronic entrance gate and bay viewing sites.

In 2024, the Pacific Molasses boiler house was named the "Beyaert Building" in honor of Bruce Beyaert, founder of the Trails for Richmond Action Committee, and TRAC's 25 years of leadership in working with the City of Richmond, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) and the private sector toward completing the San Francisco Bay Trail in Richmond. The eastern end of former Terminal 4 was named "Butt's End" in honor of former Mayor Tom Butt, who led rescue and rehabilitation of East Brother Light Station in 1979 and continues to support its maintenance and preservation to this day .

For safety and security reasons, access to Point San Pablo is limited to tenants and to those reserving a sauna.

**Part 3 – The Future**

It is time to plan for the future of Point San Pablo upon expiration of Nematode Holding's lease on June 30, 2030.

All adopted land use plans envision Point San Pablo as a place for recreation and open space. These include the City of Richmond General Plan, BCDC's Bay Plan and the San Pablo Peninsula Open Space Study prepared by LSA Associates, Inc. for the City, EBRPD, the State Coastal Conservancy, Chevron, TRAC and Muir Heritage Land Trust. The Open Space Study states that Point San Pablo should be "developed for recreational use as the key to success of an open space plan for the Peninsula".

The San Francisco Bay Trail Plan calls for a four-mile walking and cycling trail extending north from the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge to Point San Pablo Harbor. The first 2½ miles are under construction along the shoreline from the bridge through Point Molate Beach Park and the Winehaven Historic District to the northern boundary of the City's Point Molate property.

The next step is extending the Bay Trail from Point Molate to Point San Pablo and the Harbor. Chevron has agreed to provide shoreline access across its property between Point Molate and Point San Pablo. The principal remaining challenges are securing access on the 20-foot-wide former Belt Line rail corridor, jointly owned by the BNSF and Union Pacific railroads, and creating safe public access around Point San Pablo.

EBRPD's Master Plan adopted in 2013 before cleanup of Point San Pablo calls for a Regional Shoreline park at nearby Point Molate. The most effective and efficient path forward would be to integrate Point San Pablo into planning for a park at Point Molate, linked by the Bay Trail extending to Point San Pablo Harbor.

As Point Molate moves toward realization as a Regional Shoreline park, the time has arrived to think comprehensively about the entire Point San Pablo Peninsula. Point San Pablo is not an isolated parcel. It is the natural extension of a larger shoreline landscape defined by dramatic scenery, layered maritime history, ecological value, and extraordinary public access potential. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Large, continuous stretches of publicly accessible shoreline are increasingly rare in the Bay Area — especially places where thoughtful planning can occur before intensive private development forecloses future possibilities. The Point San Pablo Peninsula presents a singular opportunity to create one of the Bay Area's great shoreline parks: a continuous public landscape stretching from Point Molate to Point San Pablo Harbor.

The Peninsula combines rugged shoreline,

rolling hillsides, panoramic Bay views, and a remarkable sense of openness uncommon along the urbanized East Bay waterfront. Few places in the Bay Area offer such views …. historic East Brother Light Station, built in 1871, together with vistas of Mount Tamalpais, the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge, eight Bay islands, and the distant San Francisco skyline. Just minutes from central Richmond, the landscape feels remote, expansive, and deeply connected to the Bay's natural and maritime heritage.

Realizing this vision will require leadership and partnership. Development of a Regional Shoreline park on the Point San Pablo Peninsula can proceed only if the City of Richmond is willing to provide the necessary lands at both Point Molate and Point San Pablo. The City owns approximately 70 percent of the Point Molate dry land — about 194 acres — as well as the 47-acre former Terminal 4 property at Point San Pablo.

**Important questions remain.**

Will the Richmond City Council be willing to convey title or lease these lands to EBRPD for park and open space purposes? Will EBRPD be willing to prioritize funding for planning and development to provide timely park and trail access when it is simultaneously pursuing other major projects in its two-county jurisdiction? The City understandably would not want to transfer its lands only to see them placed indefinitely into a "land bank" without meaningful public access or progress toward park development.

Yet opportunities like this are extraordinarily rare. Decisions made during the next few years will determine whether the Point San Pablo Peninsula becomes a largely inaccessible collection of isolated properties — or one of the great public shoreline landscapes of the Bay Area.

You may let the Mayor and City Council Members know what you think by sending them an email addressed to:

*cityclerkdept@ci.richmond.ca.us* using subject line "Public Comments - Open Forum" with copies to *lina_velascot@ci.richmond.ca.us* and *baytrailtrac@gmail.com*.

East Bay
Regional Park District
Point Molate - Point San Pablo Peninsula
Richmond, Contra Costa County
Feet
0 500 1,000
Point San Pablo
Point San Pablo
Point San Pablo Yacht Club
LOCATION MAP
Contra Costa County
Alameda County
Winehaven Historic District
Stenmark Dr
Cypress Circle
Point Molate
Point Molate Beach Park
City of Richmond Property
EBRPD Property
San Francisco Bay Trail
In Construction
Existing
Proposed
Schematic
SAN PABLO YACHT HARBOR
Richmond - San Rafael Bridge
580

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