

12th Annual El Cerrito

Hillside Fest 2026

Saturday May 2
Sunday May 3

Locations throughout the
Hillside Natural Area.

FREE



Presented by El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and
El Cerrito's Environmental Quality Committee



Explore El Cerrito's Hillside Natural Area.

Activities for young and old. Please enjoy the haiku poems by Haiku Contest winners displayed throughout the Hillside. Questions? davidsweinstein@yahoo.com

Trail Trekkers is dedicated to expanding El Cerrito's wildland and urban paths and trails and preserving open space. The **Hillside Natural Area** is a 100-plus acre park that will be preserved forever as open space. **Be aware:** *Wear hiking shoes and a hat and bring water. Watch for poison oak and ticks. All hikes have steep sections. "Easy" has only a few and is a short walk. "Moderate" is longer with several steep sections. "Strenuous" hikes are longer and steeper still.*

Saturday, May 2

8 to 10 a.m. Early Morning Bird Walk led by Cathy Bleier and Tara McIntire, Golden Gate Bird Alliance members. Identify birds and learn how, when and why they inhabit the Hillside. We'll walk up to a 1.5 mile loop. Bring binoculars and walking stick, if needed, for short steep pitches. **No dogs, other than service dogs!** Location Five, King Court. Moderate.

10 to 11:30 a.m. Edible and Medicinal Plant Walk. Learn about ethnobotany — how native plants have been used for food, medicine, and crafts — with Alan Siegel, a docent at Tilden Botanic Garden. Family-friendly uphill walk. Location Four, Northern Regency. Moderate.

Start anytime between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Nature Scavenger Hunt. Learn about plants, birds, animals, rocks, and creeks. Parents help their children in this fun drop-in event. Find things on your illustrated list (no actual collecting please), take photos, return to talk about your finds and win prizes. Location Six, Schmidt Lane. Easy to Strenuous.

Noon to 2 p.m. Insect Exploration. Learn about the Hillside's tiniest, most fascinating creatures in this drop-in any time, hands-on event for both children and adults. Capture (and release) insects, learn about their habitat and life cycles. Eddie Dunbar, founder and president of the Insect Sciences Museum of California, hosts with help from his Merritt College students. Location Five, King Court. Easy.

2 to 3:30 p.m. Beginner-General Level Plant Walk. Janet Gawthrop of the California Native Plant Society leads this moderate walk, focusing on native plant restoration. Janet hopes to find Oakland star tulips in bloom. Location Three, Madera Circle. Moderate.

4 to 6 p.m. Fire Resilience, Forest Conservation and the Future of the Hillside. Climate change and sudden oak death are just two challenges facing our urban forest. A new Hillside Management Plan is guiding the City as it preserves the native forest while reducing wildfire risk. Learn about work tied to a grant from the Coastal Conservancy with Stephen Prée, program manager/city arborist and liaison to the Urban Forest Committee. Location Five, King Court. Easy to Moderate.

Sunday, May 3

10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Family friendly Rock Walk. Learn about the geology of the East Bay Hills by examining and handling rocks and visiting rock outcrops. Gary Prost and Bill Motzer of the Northern California Geological Society will share their knowledge and enthusiasm on a short walk. Location Six, Schmidt Lane. Easy.

Noon to 3 p.m. Geology Hike. Co-sponsored by the Northern California Geological Society. Leaders are geologists Gary Prost and Mark Petrofsky. Learn about the geological setting of El Cerrito, rocks, faults and landslides. Location Six, Schmidt Lane. Strenuous.

12:30 to 2 p.m. Haiku Hike. Celebrate the winners of our haiku contest. Winners will be awarded prizes at the trailhead and read their haiku along the first half mile of walking. Then there are options for a 1-mile or a 2 1/2-mile round trip hike. Leaders are Melissa Hobbs, Barbara Lass and Laura Lent. Location Five, King Court. Easy to Moderate.

2:30 to 4 p.m. Saving the Hillside Natural Area — in 1963. In the early '60s Madera Elementary school student Ruth Wallen unsuccessfully petitioned the City to preserve parts of what would later become the Hillside Natural Area. Ruth today is an ecological artist. Let's tour the area to see how the Hillside has changed in 60 years. Co-sponsored by the El Cerrito Historical Society. Location Two, Julian Steps. Moderate.

4:30 to 6 p.m. Building Healthier Landscapes. Join Audrey Liese of Friends of the Hillside as we explore how native plants reveal pathways to ecological resilience, and how we can support healthier landscapes — especially for pollinators and carbon storage. We will visit restoration sites, with a focus on California's state grass, purple needlegrass. Location Three, Madera Circle. Moderate.

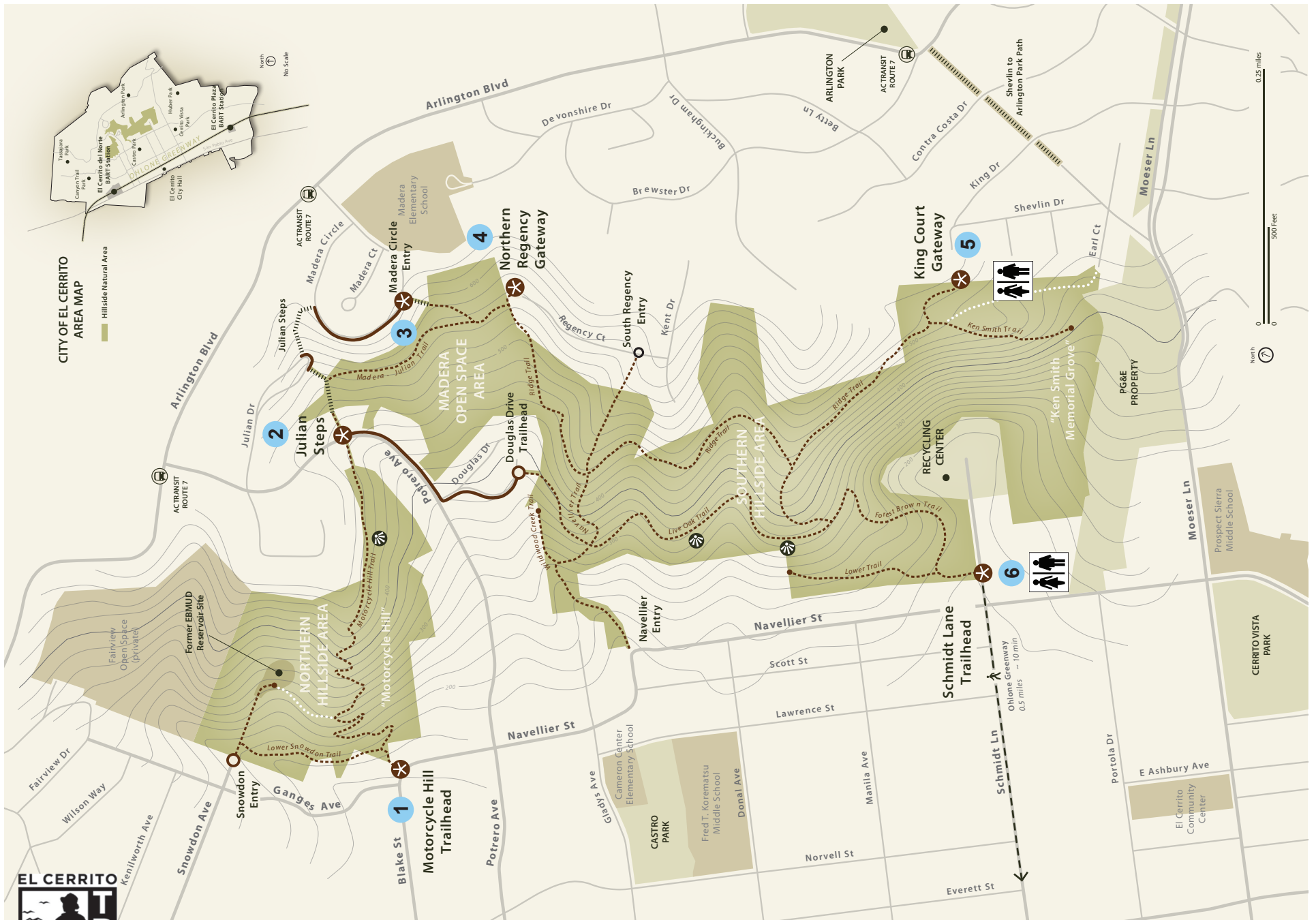
6 to 7 p.m. Early Evening Stroll. Alina Constantinescu leads a relaxing and sociable hour-long stroll through the Hillside. We'll take breaks to enjoy views and conversation. Meet at Location Five, King Court trailhead. Moderate.

7 to 8 p.m. Bluegrass in the Hillside. Enjoy El Cerrito-based Fresh Picked band while partaking of snacks and beverages and drinking in the view. Fresh Picked, (www.freshpickedband.com) performs bluegrass with a smattering of western swing and swing jazz. For band info: Joyce Hennessey metronome7@aol.com, Richard Brooks Fiddler-Richard@gmail.com. Location Five, King Court. Follow signs to the concert. Easy.

Both days — but only if it rains fairly heavily!

Enjoy the Rain Hike. The Hillside is so different in the rain, appealing and mysterious! Join Dave Weinstein for an observational stroll. Check our website if it is raining for start time and for other rain-induced schedule changes. Location One, Motorcycle Hill. Strenuous.

Porta-potties are available at King Court and Schmidt Lane. There is a restroom open until 5 p.m. Saturday only at the Recycling Center near the Schmidt Lane Trailhead.



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-  **RESTROOMS**
-  **TRAILS**

Locations: One, Motorcycle Hill, where Navellier and Blake streets meet. Two, Julian Steps, by 7704 Potrero Ave. Three, Madera Circle Entry, between 1520 and 1524 Madera Circle. Four, Northern Regency Gateway, at northern end of Regency Court. Five, King Court Gateway, at the end of King Court. Six, Schmidt Lane Trailhead, on Schmidt Lane near the Recycling Center.