

PUBLIC SAFETY

No one injured at brush fire from outdoor cooking near Berkeley Marina

The fire did not threaten any structures and firefighters knocked it out in 30 minutes.

By Supriya Yelimeli

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The burn scar from a fire near the Berkeley Marina on July 25, 2021. Credit: Supriya Yelimeli

No one was injured in an **outdoor cooking fire** at McLaughlin State Park on Sunday evening that burned about two acres of brush and wildlife area near the Berkeley Marina, officials with Berkeley and East Bay Regional Parks District fire departments confirmed.

The fire began around 6 p.m. in an area known as the “Berkeley Meadows” on East Bay Regional Park Land. The area is fenced off from walking trails in the park due to protected habitats and is not open to the public, but homeless residents sometimes sleep in the space, which is separate from the large homeless encampment on the eastern side of Frontage Road at University Avenue.

Berkeley fire officials responded to the area first due to their proximity to the location, and both agencies were able to extinguish the blaze in about 30 minutes, according to BFD Battalion Chief Paul Cavagnero.

EBRPD Fire Capt. Kent Simpson said the location of the fire posed a very minimal threat to the surrounding community, even if there had been fire weather conditions, and there were never any structures threatened during its course.

“It was surrounded on three sides by the ocean and one side by the freeway,” Simpson said, commending BFD and EBRPD firefighters for their quick response and collaboration, as well as EBPRD’s **regular vegetation management**. “The overall potential for that fire to become something larger than what it was was minimal.”

Cooking and campfires are not allowed in that area of McLaughlin Park, but the fire appeared to be accidental and will not be treated as arson or fire-setting, Simpson said.



The area of McLaughlin Park where the fire originated. Credit: Supriya Yelimeli

Simpson and Cavagnero both credited Berkeley residents for quickly reporting the blaze. Due to marine winds, much of the smoke from the fires traveled quickly over the I-80 freeway to the Berkeley Hills, where numerous people called in reports, Cavagnero said.

A large patch of terrain was blackened in the area on Monday afternoon, and there were a few pots and cooking supplies left in the area where the fire originated. One man appeared to be currently living in the space, but he was not present when the fire officials responded to the scene and was uninjured, according to Simpson. The man declined to speak with Berkeleyside.

Separate fire burns encampment under I-80 underpass



A separate fire at the encampment at Eastshore Highway and Hearst Avenue on Thursday, July 22. Credit: BeFree Photography

There was another fire reported at an encampment at Eastshore Highway and Hearst Avenue on Thursday night nearby the University and Frontage encampment. Berkeleyside has requested information from the Berkeley Fire Department and will report the details when they are available.

A citizen reporter who responded to the scene said residents were awakened by the blaze at around 11 p.m. that night, and many homeless residents who live in the area lost their possessions due to the conflagration. Other Berkeleyside readers reported hearing loud booms and explosions.

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