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## THE DELTA



SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/STAFF

Artist Cyrus Tilton, left, gets more supplies as Maya Miel applies protective tape to the edges of metal labels on a 30-foot by 50-foot Delta model at the Delta Science Center at Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley on Tuesday. The model, a creation from Scientific Art Studio in Richmond, is made out of a special concrete on a scale of 8 inches equal to one mile.

# Science center awash with progress

**Park district unveils scale model and plans to award contract for meeting and lab space**

By Denis Cuff

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OAKLEY — A long-planned Delta science and natural education center is taking shape along the shoreline here to show and tell the public about the maze of rivers and islands in the heart of California's water delivery system.

The East Bay Regional Park District board is reaching two milestones this month in developing the \$11 million center on 42 acres in the Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley, east of the Antioch Bridge.

On Wednesday, the regional park board is scheduled to award a \$3.5 million contract for a combined visitor center, meeting hall and science lab for young students to examine water, muck and aquatic bugs. The vote comes 15 years after the center was first proposed.

Due to open next year, the 5,500-square-foot, prefabricated building

### IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** East Bay Regional Park District board meeting

**WHEN:** 6:30 p.m. Wednesday

**WHERE:** Oakley City Council chamber, 3231 Main St., Oakley

**INFORMATION:** Go to [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org) and click on "Public meetings"

will feature tall windows overlooking a lake formed by a flooded island that gave "Big Break" its name.

Another milestone occurred last week. The park district opened a 30-by-50-foot outdoor model showing major waterways, islands and cities in the area at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers.

Visitors can walk on the miniature landscape — built to scale, including a Mount Diablo just a few inches tall — and pour water into the rivers to watch it flow through the Delta and into Suisun Bay. Big Break Regional Shoreline will

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## Delta

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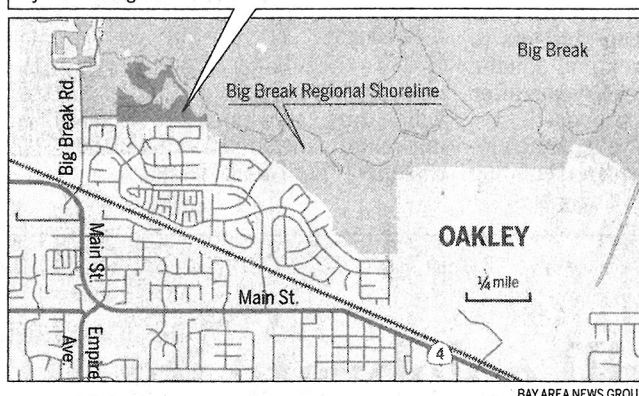
hold an open house from 9 a.m. to noon July 9 to introduce the public to the recreation area with a new scale model of the Delta, a kayak launch ramp and other elements of an emerging Delta science center. Park employees will be on hand to discuss the Delta and lead games for children.

"The center is a great place to see and experience the Delta, and see how this complex environment comes together," said Nancy Kaiser, the park district's manager of interpretive services. "There are few places in the Delta with public shoreline. Unless you have access to a boat, it can be very difficult to see the Delta up close."

Big Break Regional Shoreline, accessible via Highway 4 and Big Break Road, already is open to the public for no charge during daylight hours.

### Oakley's science and education center

A science and natural education center to explain the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is being developed in phases in Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley. A large scale model of the Delta opened last week, and a contract for a 5,500-square-foot visitor center and science lab is scheduled to be awarded Wednesday by the East Regional Park District Board.



The park district spent more than \$2 million to buy the 42 acres plus a larger amount of submerged land. Full development of the center and public facilities at the shoreline will cost \$11 million — much of it from state grants but some from regional park bond measures, said Mike Anderson, a park district assistant general

manager.

The recreation area already has a pier, kayak launch ramp, picnic areas and trails popular with dog walkers.

Park officials say they hope the science center will put the park on the map as a regional destination.

"The Delta is so big and so spread out that it can be hard to take in," Kaiser said.

"Here in one place we can tell the story of the Delta and explain why it's so important to California water, fish and wildlife."

Students will be able to paddle from a park boat ramp, collect water and mud samples, and bring them back to analyze in the science lab.

Fifteen years ago, a coalition of agencies, businesses, colleges and other organizations started meeting to discuss the science center. After the other groups declined to be partners and funders, the regional park system stepped up to take over.

The regional park district remains open to working with other groups and adding other activities at the center, Anderson said.

"Other groups that dropped out along the way may want to get back involved when they see what's going on at the center," Anderson said.

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