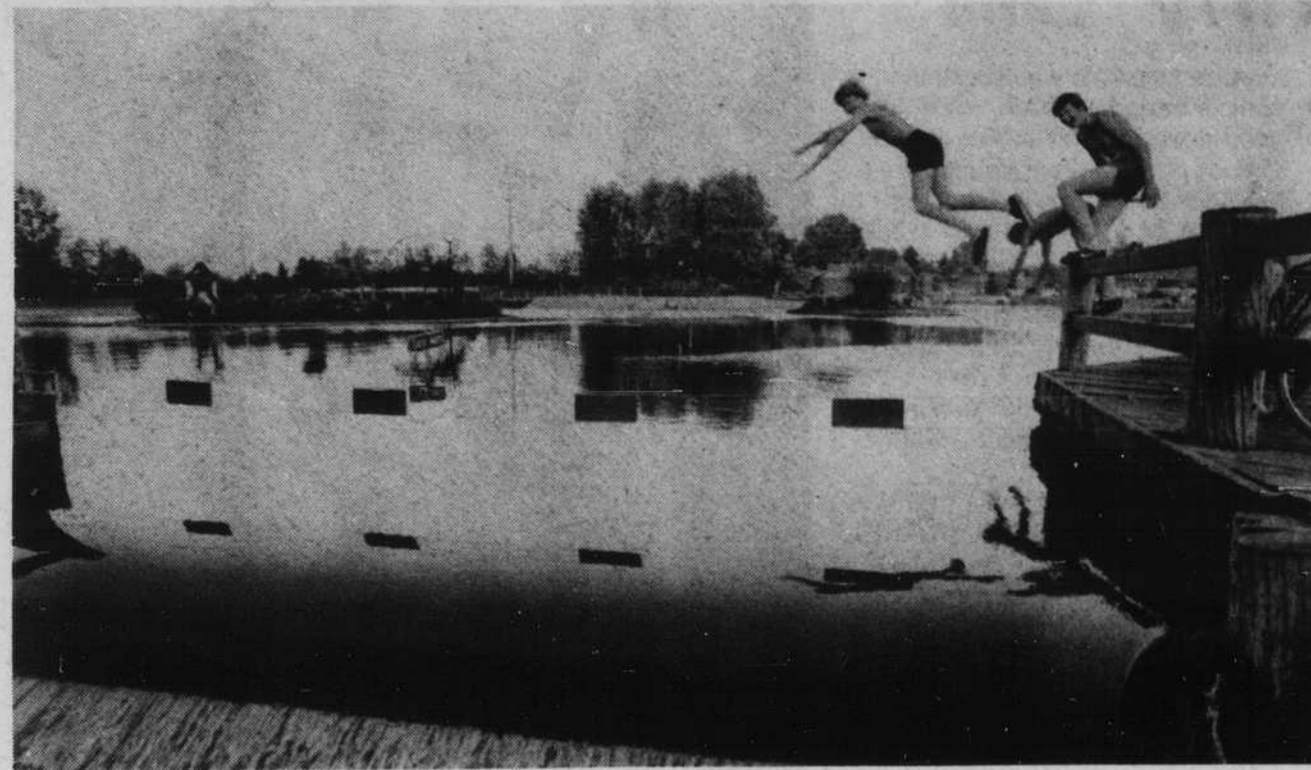


Alton Baker: Development plans to redesign facilities



University plans athletic fields

The University's resident red fox may soon be forced to move to wilder pastures.

The fox lives on mice and rabbits that inhabit the undeveloped land on the southbank of the Willamette River across from Alton Baker Park. The University, which purchased the land from Eugene Sand and Gravel in June, 1968, is planning to build athletic fields on the site, although original plans designated the site as a potential parking lot.

What is now a sanctuary of 60 quiet acres of blackberries, wildflowers, quail and pheasant, would become the site for intramural softball or football games. The University's tract is bounded on the north by the Willamette River, on the south by railroad tracks, on the west by the Eugene Water and Electric Board steam plant, and on the east by Judkins Point.

Student money is financing the planning of the development, and would be used if the athletic fields are built. The money is drawn out of the student building fees account, which all students pay into at a rate of \$12.50 per term.

The student building fees from each of the state's campuses are co-mingled in one large account from which the State Board of Higher Education finances bonds to construct student facilities. The Erb Memorial Union addition was built using funds generated by the co-mingled building fees.

The University had originally hoped to begin construction on the athletic fields at the end of this summer, but delays in awarding a planning contract will most likely postpone the start of construction until

next spring.

The University signed a professional services agreement with a Portland landscape architectural firm that will study the site. The \$13,000 study by the McCarthur/Gardner partnership is expected to determine the cost to build the athletic fields and to develop a master plan for the southbank site.

Once the preliminary cost estimates and planning are completed, the University will have to request authorization to build the fields from the state emergency board. The emergency board must approve the allocations of the funds.

"The University was authorized to make improvements to the playing fields adjacent to Howe Field at the same time that the Hayward Field grandstand was authorized," says J.I. Hunderup, vice-chancellor for facilities planning for the state board of higher education.

The University was authorized to spend \$600,000 for the grandstand and \$325,000 for playing field improvements. However, the grandstand (which was financed from gift money to the University) cost \$900,000 to build and the playing field improvements were not undertaken.

"We have never gone back to the emergency board for additional authorization for the playing fields," Hunderup says. "We would have to seek authorization to spend the \$325,000 at the southbank site instead of next to Howe Field. The authorization could be denied."

So the University's resident fox shouldn't start packing just yet.

Park scheduled for facelift as 10th anniversary nears

Radical changes are in line for Alton Baker Park as it nears its tenth anniversary as a county park this summer.

The 375-acre park extends along three miles of the north bank of the Willamette River. Eugene's Ferry Street bridge is the west boundary and Springfield forms the east boundary.

The concept for a park on the north bank of the Willamette River began in 1951 when a Eugene Park study identified the recreational potential of the area.

At that time, the north bank was largely brush-covered and periodically flooded by the Willamette River. Development of dams on the river solved the flooding problem and a serious effort to develop the park started in 1959.

By 1964 the University acquired the property to build Autzen Stadium; the city bought another 75 acres; and the Eugene Water and Electric Board committed land it controlled to the park program.

The park was officially dedicated July 30, 1967 and named for Alton Baker, Sr., late publisher of the Eugene Register-Guard, for his efforts to establish the park.

The University owns the river's south bank from the Ferry Street Bridge to Judkins Point, the high ridge just east of the University. Plans for developing athletic fields on these 63 acres of the riverbank are being considered by University officials.

The combined north and south bank areas comprise the largest open space area near downtown Eugene and currently is only 10 per cent developed.

Some projects have already begun, but others await funds. Pending grant applications, if funded, would replace the community gardens with a picnic area; replace the filbert orchards with an ornamental tree garden, and construct an aquatic center just east of Interstate 5 and north of the canoe waterway.

Lane County has applied for \$3.2 million in grants from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to pay for the projects. The projects were not allocated funds this year, but county officials intend to reapply for grants. Other projects have already received funds and construction should begin this year.

One project calls for a new bike path to parallel the waterway and jogging path through the park from Springfield to the boat basin in the park's center. It will be an alternate route to the winding riverside bikeway.

"It's not designed as a high-speed bikeway, but it will offer a straight shot across the park for bicycle commuters," says Charles Schrader, director of Lane County's parks and open space department.

"Eventually, I would like to see this bike path continue along the north bank of the park's waterway to the west edge of the park," he adds. There were approximately 1000 daily trips on the

existing bike path last year, he estimates.

Another project funded but not yet contracted is construction of a new group picnic center at the park's south end near the Ferry Street Bridge. Some of the gardens will be uprooted to make way for 150 parking spaces and picnic tables.

Picnic areas will also replace the community gardens if EDA or Bureau of Outdoor Recreation funding is forthcoming. The picnic area would occupy the area just south of Day Island Road. There are no plans for a community garden elsewhere in the park.

The tree garden grant calls for the development of an ornamental tree plot on 35 acres of the park south of the water gardens. The site is now occupied by a filbert orchard.

"There was a discussion of the value

Stories by E.G. WHITE-SWIFT
Of the Emerald

of the filbert trees and the reasons for replacing them," Schrader says. "They are short-lived trees, they require care and treatment each year, and most of them are old. They would be replaced by trees requiring less care with more aesthetic and recreational value for the area."

State regulations mandate that old orchards be maintained by landowners to prevent insect predation in other orchards. Schrader says that filbert trees will be left in other parts of the park.

Schrader hopes that funds will become available this year for the proposed aquatic center. It would contain a fresh-water swimming "hole" just north of the waterway and east of the I-5 bridge.

The football-field sized swimming hole would have concrete sides and a sand bottom. Fresh water from the waterway would be diverted into the pool. A parking lot and children's recreational equipment are also planned for the area.

"We are trying to provide an open space for people to do what they choose," Schrader says. "We do not run a recreational park."

The park's master plan was developed several years ago by a citizen's advisory committee that oversees development of the park. It requested that the park be developed for passive recreation — reading a book, strolling through the woods, canoeing or visiting a museum. The passive idea was intended to eliminate the challenge of competitive sports such as tennis or basketball.

Future land use plans for the park include construction of a new building complex to house the Southwest Museum of Science and Industry and a planetarium. Funding for the project was acquired, and construction of the structures should begin later this year.

It will be located just north of the canoe waterway on the west side of Autzen Stadium.

An area just north of Day Island Road and west of KASH radio studios will require extensive grading. There is currently an open pit on the site, as gravel was excavated for construction of the Autzen Stadium parking lot. Park officials plan to lower the grade in the whole area to create a new natural area.

Other long range plans include a beach area just east of the Willamette River footbridge, construction of a coliseum for regional sports events, horticultural display gardens, an outdoor dining and dancing area by the boat basin, and additional parking areas.

The rate of development of the park will be determined by the allotment of federal grants. There is also an Alton Baker Park Foundation, which is working to raise money privately to help develop some aspects of the park.

The talk of aquatic centers, picnic areas and athletic fields has upset some area residents who believe the park is best serving the needs of open space in its present undeveloped state.

At a recent Metropolitan Area Planning Advisory Committee hearing several groups advocated for more attention to natural open space values in areas like Alton Baker Park.

"Our organization believes that wildlife, vegetation, and wildlife habitat all have a place in an urban setting," said a letter from the Eugene-based Southern Willamette Ornithological Club. "These related elements add greatly to the livability of our community. As the population increases in our metropolitan region and as development pressures grow, valuable natural areas are consumed."

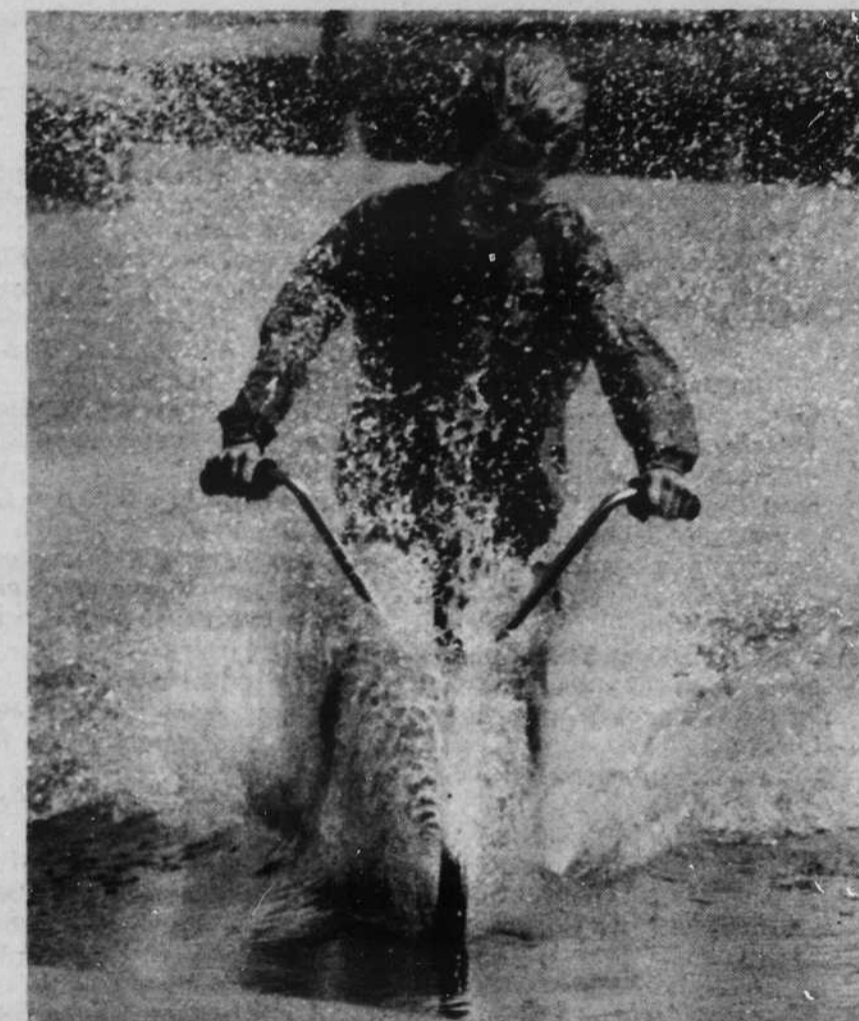
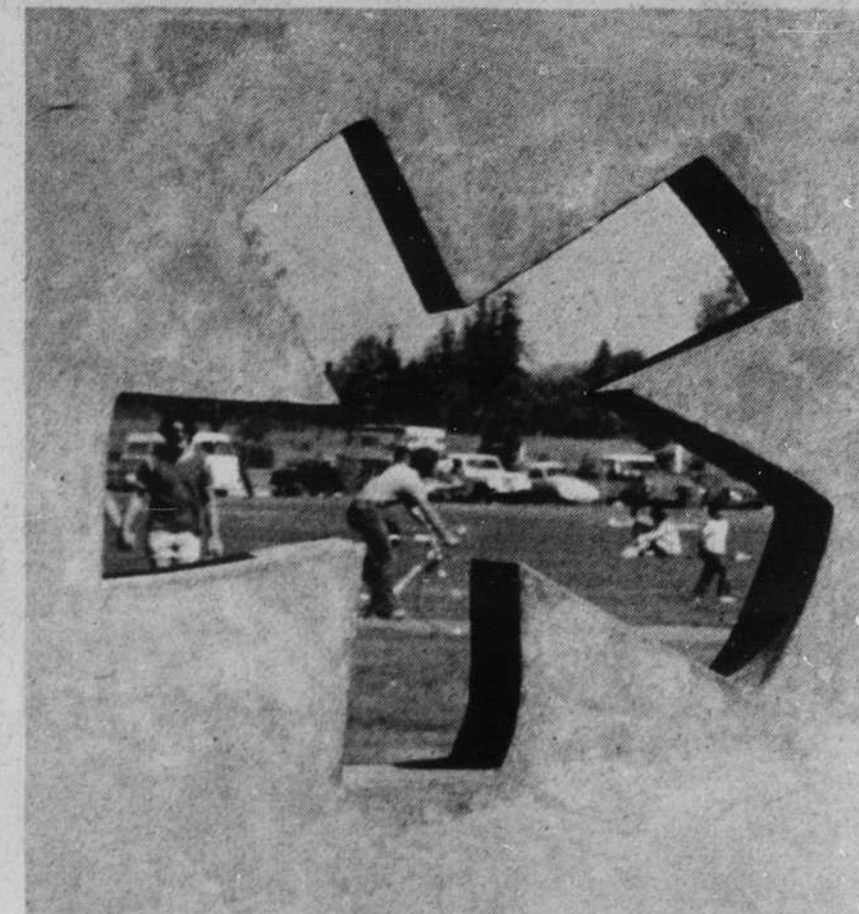
"We can no longer rationalize this consumption of significant natural areas by looking elsewhere outside the region for a similar setting. We have an obligation to preserve the diversity of life within our own community."

University of Oregon biology professor Stan Cook says that leaving Alton Baker Park alone may be more desirable in the future when there are fewer natural areas in the metropolitan area.

"Some plants on the sandy floodplain there don't occur much in other areas of the valley. Incense Cedar, California Poppy, and buckbrush, originally in abundance in the Willamette Valley floodplain, are now being eliminated by development," he says.

"Developing Alton Baker Park on a model of a high density central park may be inevitable, but we may prefer it in the future for its values as a natural undisturbed area."

Although park officials say that native plantings are designated throughout the park's development, Cook points out that even though some areas are left intact, introduced species in the developed areas might out-compete the native plants in the natural areas.



Eugene residents enjoy the water and fields of Alton Baker Park. The 375-acre park is celebrating its tenth anniversary as a county park this summer. Projects are now in the offing for improving and expanding the park and its facilities. Included in the plans are an extended bikeway, parking spaces, picnic centers and an ornamental tree garden.

Emerald photos

Center Commission projects 18-month complex deadline

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Lane County and Eugene may see a new civic center facility begin to take shape before January, 1979, according to the newly formed Eugene Civic Center Commission.

At its first meeting Tuesday morning, the commission discussed the possibility of beginning work on an auditorium-sports complex within the next 18 months.

The commission was created last month by the Eugene city council at the request of the Lane County Auditorium Association (LCAA) to take over the civic center project. The 15-member commission consists of representatives from city and county governments and other interested organizations, including University Pres. William Boyd.

Calling the meeting an "exciting morning," Eugene Mayor Gus Keller detailed the history of the civic center.

The project, which originated in 1963, has twice been rejected by city voters he pointed out, once in 1972 and again in 1973. The new commission, Keller said, should begin with a fresh concept for the project and "propose to the people in the 1978 general election something we've all been waiting for."

Former mayor and commission chairer Les Anderson explained that it was important for commission members to keep an open mind on the type of facility to be built. "It is our intent to make this a community-wide program," he said. "I personally like the idea of a public facility. Of course that can refer to anything from a rest room to a civic auditorium."

Outlining a nine-phase commission work program, Development Director Dean Baumgartner explained that it would be necessary for the commission to hold several public hearings on the proposal to determine the consensus of use by the public.

"For this project to succeed, it will be necessary to encompass enough of the wants of the public as well as the aesthetic aspects," he said.

The commission work program, which outlines the project through time-limited steps of completion, covers every area of the civic center proposal from background research to evaluating the center's potential impact. Baumgartner stressed the importance of establishing a construction site as soon as possible, in order to begin work on architectural plans.

Marketing and Feasibility studies for the project have already been completed by the LCAA, according to Baumgartner. Money estimates from those studies, he pointed out, would be higher than the new commission would need to allow, due to the nature of the LCAA proposal.

Funding for the project brought concern from several commission members. Eugene City Councilman Brian Obie said the commission should start as early as possible to find sources of money for the center.

According to the adopted work program, funding possibilities wouldn't be explored until the eleventh week of the project. Other funding, such as Federal Job Works Funds, National Endowment for the Arts grants or public donations, will also be sought.

The commission's next step is to hire a consulting firm to begin a market analysis for the project. Public hearings on the proposal will also be scheduled in the next two weeks.

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