



ECOLA STATE PARK
BRACING FOR
SUMMER

COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

A PARK MANAGER ASKS VISITORS TO TREAD LIGHTLY ON THE LAND

By **JON BRODERICK**
 FOR COAST WEEKEND



Ecola State Park took a beating this winter and is now holding its breath as another tourist season approaches.

The park is the busiest day-use fee park in the Oregon State Parks system, hosting as many as half a million visitors in a calendar year, according to Park Manager Ben Cox.

Cox manages not only Ecola State Park, but Nehalem Bay and Oswald West state parks, Saddle Mountain State Natural Area and a dozen or so waysides.

“We have miles and miles of trail. It’s a challenge

to keep them free of brush, the water bars dug, the elevated tread in good shape,” he said.

The public’s affection for Ecola State Park is hard on it, and not only in the summer. During tough winters like the last one, it is vulnerable to damage even from fewer visitors.

“Places like the park are resources that need to be cared for,” Cox explained. “When you walk these trails in the wintertime, for example, and walk around fallen trees, you create new problems, erosion problems, habitat problems. We need to let the resource rest.”

“I don’t know how to get that message out without contradicting our arms-wide-open policy,” he added.