

## MAIN PHOTO

Ecola State Park features several trails that require routine maintenance in order to be ready for summer tourist traffic.

### 'TREAD LIGHTLY'

With the right to enjoy state lands and public beaches comes a responsibility to care for them. "The entire park is sensitive, culturally significant," he said.

Not only is habitat fragile, but a history of earlier people dwells in the park. Captain William Clark, in 1806, noted a small village at today's Indian Beach.

"People recognized, 'This is a great place to get to the water, so our village will go here,' or, 'Because of this view, this will be ceremonial ground, sacred ground to us,'" Cox said. "They found it awe-inspiring long ago, just like we do today."

Fencing off sensitive area isn't a happy solution. "So tread lightly on the land," Cox said.

Significant sliding inside the park poses a chronic, expensive maintenance problem. Internal conversation about how and whether to provide a better road to the park has resumed.

The Ecola State Park Master Plan, written in 1975, recognized the same need. A landslide that year closed the park for four months. Another in 1961 closed the park for 10 months.

"The present park entrance road," the plan reads, "... suffers major slide damage on nearly an annual basis. To avoid endless maintenance, repair costs and danger to vehicular traffic, future re-routing or closure of this road appears imminent."

Forty-two years later, it may be imminent again.

### HELP FROM HIKERS

Little can be done to avoid damage from coastal winds and rain, but damage (most of which is unintentional) from human activity can be reduced.

"It's trails, mostly," Cox said. For example, from Ecola Point the park maintains only one trail to access the beach below, the mile-and-a-quarter-long Crescent Beach trail.

Slides destroyed a more direct trail to the beach below some years ago. There are no other trails, but people slide down the muddy cliffs anyway, creating ad hoc trails that damage the park.

Park rangers haven't time to walk the trails frequently, so Cox invites hikers to participate in maintaining the park.

"The biggest thing people can do for us is walk the trails. Tell us where a spruce is down across the trail or where a water bar is compromised and there's a big wash-out," he said. "Tell us the GPS location. Take a photo if you can."

With that information rangers can more efficiently organize a work party, and the park can breathe easier.

Hikers can send trail information to park. [info@state.or.us](mailto:info@state.or.us) or, for Ecola State Park, can leave a message at 503-436-2844.



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Above: Visitors at Ecola State Park take in just one of the many scenic views the park has to offer.

Right: Park Manager Ben Cox



Roads often need repair after harsh winter conditions in Ecola State Park before tourists arrive.

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