

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE YACHATS COMMUNITY PARK AND WETLANDS

Up until the 1930's, a hidden treasure had always been present at Yachats near the current Yachats Commons: a natural wetlands once fed by streams and rainwater from the nearby hillside, populated by flora and fauna native the region. However, in the 1930's, parents of the nearby elementary school grew concerned for their children's health and safety, leading to an artificial ditch being created to drain the Wetlands. This left the area to become a tangle of blackberry, salal and willows, a garbage dump and an area frequented by transients.



In 2003, a dedicated group of volunteers started work to reclaim this environmental jewel in an effort to bring back a healthy, functioning wetlands. With the vision of local entomologist and city county member Jerry Kraft, a master plan to include restoration of the wetlands was created. Following his death in 2003, his widow Cheryl and others formed a task to continue his work. The task force included Don Niskanen, president of the Friends of the Yachats Commons; Betty Bahn, Master Gardener, David Schlesinger, fish biologist; Cy Kauffman, chair of the Parks & Commons Commission; Leslie Carter, also of the Parks & Commons Commission; Paul Engelmeyer, National Audubon Society; Keith Kraft, Jerry's brother and entomologist; Chad Link, developer; Jim Gerdemann, botanist; Jim Adler, water quality monitor; Ray Meehan, city council member; Larry Lewis, Yachats city planner, and Evelyn Everett. Several hired professionals joined the project and were so inspired what was accomplished by this all-volunteer group they forwent being paid.



When the project obtained permits, including from the Department of State Lands, grants were sought after and awarded and donations for the project poured in to support the completion of the project. Physical work and construction began, starting with the removal of invasive plants and the rebuilding of the original ponds. A boardwalk was added to allow visitors to enjoy the Wetlands while protecting the habitat. Finally, natural flora for the region were planted on the site. In addition, construction of a pavilion, arbor and treehouse were completed, and in 2007, the Wetlands was restored, including the gradual return of local wildlife to the area.