



# City of Bandon

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*Bandon by the Sea*

<b>CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC COMMENTS</b>	<b>DATE: 4-1-2024</b>
<b>SUBJECT: JOHNSON CREEK GREENWAY PARK</b>	<b>ITEM NO: 7.2</b>

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Bandon offers citizens the ability to comment on municipal issues not already on the agenda. The following is letter regarding Bandon's Johnson Creek Greenway Park from Julia Christoferson.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

None

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Informational

## **SUBMITTED BY:**

**June Hinojosa, City Recorder**

March 21, 2024

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

My desire that Bandon's Johnson Creek Greenway Park continue thriving as a Natural Area motivates me to write this letter. I appreciate you giving your attention to this important matter.

I moved to Bandon in 2021, which I believe is the same year the Johnson Creek property was wisely procured by the City. I am a Native Oregonian, having never lived outside of our beautiful State. It has been a gift throughout my life to experience, appreciate, and recreate in the incredibly diverse landscapes and natural areas that are plentiful here.

When I knew it was time for me to move from Bend, where I had lived for 35 years, and thinking I'd trade our beautiful Cascade Mountains for our beautiful Pacific Ocean, I came to Bandon. One walk at Coquille Point and I knew Bandon would be my new home. I later learned of the hard work that caring people undertook in 1989 to preserve Coquille Point. I understand it took quite an effort from many forward thinking, caring citizens to secure its position as a National Wildlife Refuge open for public enjoyment. From my perspective, Coquille Point is Bandon's most iconic landmark. It's beyond my ability to comprehend if that area had been developed and not made available for public enjoyment, how vastly different all of Bandon would feel as a result.

While Johnson Creek Greenway Park is remarkably different than Coquille Point, I feel its significance as a unique and important asset for the health and wellbeing of our environment as well as our Bandon residents and guests compels its preservation. I don't know how many Coastal Prairie Wetland Areas exist in our state anymore, but I do know there are far fewer than there once were. Many have been filled in and are being utilized in other ways. Part of the Johnson Creek area is Coastal Prairie Wetland! It feels important to me that it be preserved as such. This land that was once a golf course that many people fondly remember, now plays an important role in providing habitat for native plants, pollinators, birds, fungi, reptiles and amphibians, wildlife, fish, and more. In doing so, it also offers itself as a beautiful amenity for our community and our visitors as well.

My awareness of the South Coast of Oregon being one of the most botanically diverse places *on our planet* amplifies, in my thinking, the importance of restoring and preserving this sacred land. And Sacred Land it is. In our country today conversations are taking place about how to adequately make reparations for the injustices imposed on communities of color, including Indigenous populations. Here in Bandon we reside on the Tribal Lands of the Coquille Indian Tribe and the Confederated Tribe of the Siletz Indians. In my thinking, the preservation of this land is one small gesture toward making an important reparation from the incomprehensible injustices incurred upon these people over hundreds of years.

Another thread in my thinking which calls for the intentional stewardship of this 30 plus acre natural resource as a City Greenway Park has to do with similar natural places I have enjoyed in city environments throughout Oregon. Bend's Shevlin Park, Portland's Forest Park, Lake Oswego's Tryon Creek Park, Eugene's Amazon Parkway, Corvallis' Starker Arts Park and Natural Area are just a few. My thoughts go to the foresight and future oriented thinking that ensured these natural areas for the benefit of the residents, and the resident's appreciation of these open spaces as development descended upon these population centers. Parks promote

the health of community and individuals in all ways; physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. We *need* them to provide diverse offerings, from disc golf, to pickle-ball, to *quiet solitude*, and more. It is apparent that development is descending upon Bandon. I feel it crucial that natural open space be "built into" the development and evolution of our little town.

Johnson Creek is already owned by the city. It is already designated in the city's comprehensive plan as a greenway park intended to be maintained as a natural area. Keeping it as such feels essential as our community undoubtedly will continue to grow and change.

As a child and young adult, I remember the significant legislative foresight of Governor Tom McCall to secure Oregon's public beaches as public spaces. Can you imagine what Oregon would be today, how Bandon would be today, had that foresight by Tom McCall not been acted upon? As a student of Forest Resource and Recreation Management at OSU in the early 1980s, I remember the significant efforts made to protect the California Condor from extinction. Breeding numbers had dwindled into single digits! The intention to perpetuate this species felt nearly impossible. Imagine my delight when hiking Blacklock Point last Spring, to actually see one fly overhead on its way back to the Yurok Tribal Lands where reintroduction efforts that began in 2008 have been successful. I remember when sightings of grey whales along the Oregon Coast were incredibly rare because of their dwindling population. Indeed I remember the first time I actually saw one in my early 40s. While it will always be a heartfelt experience for me to see them, I now get to see them in their majesty much more often than in my younger years because of efforts taken by everyday people like you and me who *care*. How cool is that? How hopeful it is! We have an opportunity with Johnson Creek Greenway Park, to make a significant, hopeful, positive impact that will be felt for generations to come. How tragic it would be, should we let that opportunity pass us by. It is important that we *care*.

May the Sacred Land of Johnson Creek Greenway Park, managed through the garnering of grant funds and through careful stewardship of involved citizens as supported by the city, become a hub for educational opportunities for schools, children, and families. May it be a place that draws eco tourists to experience the specialness of its many attributes, including its uniqueness, in part, as a Coastal Wetland Prairie. May it provide opportunities for quiet solitude in nature to Bandon citizens like me. May it endure through the changes Bandon is bound to experience! May our efforts to restore and protect it be appreciated, many years from now, just as I appreciate the efforts that were made to protect Coquille Point thirty five years ago!

With deep appreciation for your service as Mayor and Council Members to our very special city, Bandon By The Sea, I respectfully submit these words for your consideration.

In Gratitude,

  
Julia Christoferson