

Winter Happy Trails eNewsletter



The Humboldt Trails Council serves as a unified voice to support development, maintenance, connection to, and use of trails for recreation and transportation throughout Humboldt County, California.

2025 Annual Report



The Trail Starts Here!

HUMTRAILS.ORG

The Humboldt Trails Council serves as a unified voice to support development, maintenance, connection to and use of trails for recreation and transportation throughout Humboldt County.

The Humboldt Trails Council (HTC) consists of an 11-person volunteer board of directors, a dozen dedicated trail leaders, one phenomenal part-time staff member, over 200 trail volunteers, and a whole lot of community support for trail stewardship!

In the past year, HTC has been involved in many trail-related activities including planning, maintaining, and advocating for trails throughout the community.

HTC participated in the planning and implementation of the Humboldt Bay Trail Celebration, which highlighted the completion of the trail. That project has been a goal of HTC, County of Humboldt, and many other trail entities for decades. The celebration included tabling by local trails organizations; people hiking, bicycling, skating, etc. along the Bay Trail; and speeches and photo ops at the Adorni Center to commemorate the occasion.

Volunteer Trail Stewards (VTS)

The VTS program logged more than **8,000 hours** of work on 12 local trails. VTS maintains the trails, builds new trail segments, rehabilitates sections of trail, and keeps the trails clear of trash and graffiti. HTC has contractual agreements with McKinleyville Community Services District, County of Humboldt, City of Eureka, City of Arcata, Bureau of Land Management, North Coast Regional Land Trust, and McKinleyville Land Trust to assist these organizations in developing and maintaining trails on their lands. HTC also has a contractual agreement with Redwood Invasive Plant Eradicators (RIPE) that focus exclusively on removal of ivy as an invasive species.

Another task that has kept the VTS Coordinator and board members busy is launching a new VTS program at the McKinleyville Community Forest. Working in conjunction with McKinleyville Community Services District (MCSD), the VTS commenced trail workdays in September. Monthly workdays will continue with Trail Crew Leader Jess Elm, who is a MCSD staff person. The McKinleyville Community Forest Committee and TICS Subcommittee are busy designing the proposed 15-20 miles of trails that will eventually enhance the community forest.

The VTS program also collaborates with the PacOut Green Team as we have similar goals caring for local trails. PacOut held a resource fair on Earth Day which HTC attended; HTC was also a recipient of the prize money raised by the auction held that day. Later in the year, PacOut held a recognition dinner in honor of VTS and other trails programs.

HTC had an exhibit in the Community Case at the Clarke Museum in May/June about the history of the Hammond Trail, a prominent feature of McKinleyville. This exhibit was in conjunction with the museum's exhibit about the town of McKinleyville. The exhibit also featured information about the Volunteer Trail Stewards (VTS) program, which commenced in 2011. The exhibit was organized by Rick Saria and Michael Proulx, both HTC board members.

HTC provided support for the McKay Community Forest, which has organized its Saturday workday so that each month there is a regular crew of volunteers that is supplemented by volunteers from local service clubs and non-profit organizations. Each month includes a different organization assisting the VTS program with developing the McKay trails.

Recently, McKay Community Forest has been the recipient of two generous donations from private citizens who want to encourage the work being done at McKay. Donations will augment the expenditures made by the County to provide for trail-building tools and food for the hard-working volunteers for this forest trail system.

Bagels on the Bay Trail

Dennis Rael, owner of Los Bagels, conceived the idea of hosting a monthly bagel event on the Humboldt Bay Trail. He suggested that each month, Los Bagels would set up a free bagel and coffee table on the Bay Trail. This would be augmented by an information table provided by HTC. His proposal was described as follows: **“Monthly Breakfast & Trail Awareness Booth at Gannon Slough free for the Public to promote Trail Use.”** The goals of this project are:

- Encourage increased use and appreciation of the Humboldt Bay Trail.
- Educate the public about local trail systems, including existing and future opportunities.
- Create a welcoming and family-friendly atmosphere that draws both new and returning users to the trail.

So, weather permitting, look for Los Bagels and HTC at the Gannon Slough on the third Sunday of each month from 9AM - Noon. We thank Dennis for his concept and his generosity!

Advocacy 2025

In the past year, Advocacy Committee members attended numerous meetings, wrote many letters to support trail development, advocated for safe transportation, collaborated with other trail organizations, and supported legislation promoting trail development.

The Advocacy Committee advocated for and provided public input on the following trail projects:

The Great Redwood Trail (GRT)

- Attended bimonthly Great Redwood Trail Agency meetings.
- Followed status of Mendocino Railway request (adverse discontinuance) at the Surface Transportation Board. Waiting for that board's decision that would allow railbanking of the last section of the GRT between Willits and Cloverdale.
- Attended State Coastal Conservancy meeting (via Zoom) in public support of the GRT (specifically their efforts to collaborate with the tribes and receive financial support).
- Attended (via Zoom) Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire's GRT Town Hall in August.
- Following CEQA exemption for GRT. Sent letter of concern to GRTA.
- Following HR 4924. This bill will kill new rail trails as it requires the approval of all landowners along a rail right-of-way to agree for it to be converted into a rail trail (see bill [HERE](#)). Attended Zoom meeting put on by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission - Letter of support for removal of the Eel River dams (pending).
- Supported the GRT as a member of Great Redwood Trail Friends. This coalition holds monthly meetings and advocates for and supports GRT development that enhances environmental values, honors Indigenous communities and Aboriginal territories, provides safe recreation and transportation opportunities, and connects communities from Humboldt Bay to San Francisco Bay. [HERE](#)

- Attended Spring field trip with Friends to the Eel River Canyon Preserve (Wildlands Conservancy).
- Support for Revitalizing Opportunities for the Alderpoint Region (ROAR) group.
- Carlotta Spur - Continued work on river access from GRT along Fisher Road. Followed up directly and with a letter to the Board of Supervisors on keeping this road easily accessible to the public down to the Van Duzen River; it is the only location along the trail where the public can access the river.
- Met with and advised Pat Higgins to connect with Fortuna regarding his proposed GRT section name: "Lower Eel River Salmon Parkway."

County of Humboldt

- Participated on the planning committee for Celebration of Bay Trail South opening on June 28, 2025. The focal point was the Adorni Center. Participated in that day with tabling and helping with management of the event. Donated money for a bicycle shuttle throughout the day.
- McKay Community Forest Advisory Group – one HTC board member sits on that group. [McKay Community Forest](#).
- Humboldt Bay Trail Fund Committee – one board member sits on the committee.

City of Eureka

- Eureka Waterfront Trail - Attended meeting with staff and city council meetings with concerns for safety of trail users regarding homeless camps along the trail.
- Developed a Trail Safety Questionnaire and interviewed trail users along Wigi Wetlands Trail and Bay Trail North.
- Bay to Zoo Trail – Attended meeting with staff and public outreach meeting in May. Expressed concerns about safety of the southern section (Zoo Section) – needs to look more like a trail.
- Attended a public hearing on the draft Waterfront Eureka Plan. Have long been concerned with the GRT gap between Y St and C St. (1.9 miles long). The gap is acknowledged once in the draft plan.

City of Arcata

- Followed Annie and Mary Connectivity trail construction Project
- Followed Sunset Avenue Interchange project
- Provided CCEP Grant letter of support

McKinleyville Community Services District

- Met with staff to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for VTS crew.
- Met with volunteer work leader
- Began VTS workdays
- Two board members sit on Trails Plan, Infrastructure, Cleanup and Security Subcommittee (TICS)
- Provided letter of support for MCSD for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan Phase

City of Rio Dell - attended opening of the Eel River Trail In mid-June.

Trinidad Coastal Land Trust - wrote grant letter of support for a Trail Capacity grant through American Trails.

North Coast Regional Land Trust and Friends of the Eel River - attended and supported annual fundraisers.

Trinidad Coastal Land Trust – provided a grant letter of support for a Trail Capacity Grant from American Trails.

COMMUNICATION:

HTC continued to maintain its website (<https://humtrails.org/>) to provide information about trail workdays, calendar updates, upcoming trail events, profiles of its volunteers, pending legislation that affects trail users, trail reports, and much more.

HTC Supports:

Happy Trails eNewsletter that distributes four times annually to over 1,300 trail supporters. Join our emailing list [HERE](#)

Facebook page with 2,900 followers [HERE](#)

Instagram Account with 831 followers [HERE](#)

Blue Sky Account -

Youtube [HERE](#) with 13 subscribers - We need more!!!!

FUTURE:

The slate of officers for the Humboldt Trails Council Board of Directors for 2026 is:

President – Michael Proulx

Vice President – Mark Mauer

Treasurer – Kemset Moore

Secretary – Korina Johnson

If you would like to participate on this extraordinary board please consider joining. Please contact Michael Proulx at michaerltp47@aol.com

FUTURE EVENTS:

HTC, along with other trail organizations, will sponsor an in-person Trails Summit on May 30, 2026, at the Sequoia Conference Center in Eureka.

Highlights will include updates on local trails; a trail resource fair with organizations and agencies speaking to the public about new trails coming on-line in Humboldt

County; update on the Great Redwood Trail. View the video of our 2024 summit [HERE](#).

HTC will hold a volunteer recognition event in 2027 to celebrate, recognize, and thank its VTS volunteers for their dedication to trail maintenance since 2011.

2025 Annual Financial Report:

Thank you to these Trail Angels for their generous financial support and encouragement.

Lesley McClogrie in Memory of Keith McClogrie
 Elaine Astrue for her support of McKay Community Forest
 Danny Soklosky for his support of McKay Community Forest
 Dennis Rael
 Humboldt Bay Trail Fund
 Los Bagels
 McClain Foundation
 Lorraine Dillon
 Anonymous
 Eureka Natural Foods
 Pacific Outfitters
 Humboldt Bay Marathon
 City of Eureka
 City of Arcata
 Humboldt County
 North Coast Regional Land Trust
 McKinleyville Community Services District
 McKinleyville Land Trust
 Rotary Club of Eureka grant to Arcata Community Forest and Freshwater Farms.
 SmartDumpsters.co and James Morrison for help with ivy removal
 Wes Chesbro for Bay Trail Bike Trailer

We could not do our work without you.

The mission of the Humboldt Trails Council is to serve as a unified voice to support development, maintenance, connection to and use of trails for recreation and transportation throughout Humboldt County.

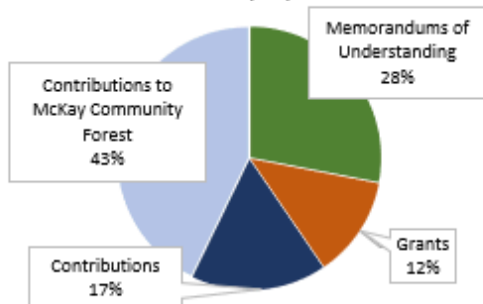
REVENUE *

Memorandums of Understanding	\$10,500
Contributions	\$6,437
Grants	\$4,797

Subtotal **\$22,034**

Contributions to McKay Community Forest	\$16,500
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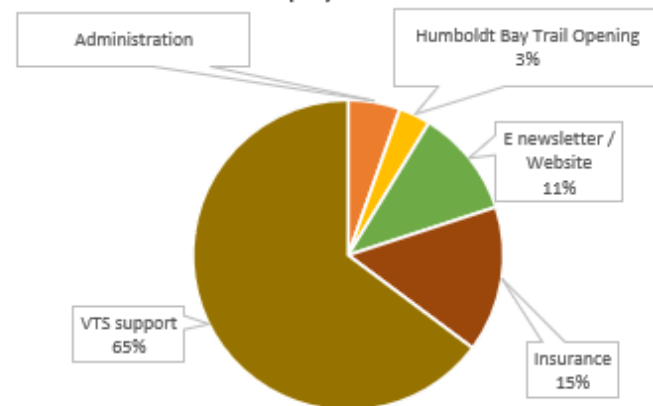
TOTAL **\$38,534**



EXPENSES *

VTS Support	\$13,913
Insurance	\$3,267
E newsletter/website	\$2,420
Administration	\$1,162
Humboldt Bay Trail Opening	\$710

TOTAL **\$21,472**



* October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025

The Birth of the Trail Stewards- the Hammond Trail

With the start of a new year, January is a good time to reflect on the growth and development of the trail steward movement in Humboldt County. We have come a long way from our humble beginnings.

Back in January of 2010 at a meeting at Redwood Community Action Agency, discussions began regarding the development of volunteers serving as trail stewards. Starting with a small grant from the Headwaters Fund, and a connection with Friends of the Dunes for insurance coverage, the project began.

The Hammond Trail in McKinleyville was the first of two sites. (Eureka's Cooper Gulch was briefly attempted). The current trail starts at the Hammond Bridge which stretches over the Mad River, connecting the Arcata Bottoms with the southern end of McKinleyville. The trail continues for five and a half miles through McKinleyville past Hiller Park, and ends at Clam Beach County Park.



Pictured here with Stacy Becker, Barbara and Jim Asher volunteered for many years, and brought others from Telios Christian Fellowship in Arcata to help. Photo submitted by Stacy Becker.

The first trail crew leader for Volunteer Trail Stewards was Stacy Becker, a longtime supporter of volunteerism, a McKinleyville resident, and a lover of nature. Becker

continues to serve as the coordinator all these years later, and can be found on the trail the first Saturday of each month (except January) providing direction and snacks for volunteers.

“Working on the trails is a great way to give back,” says Becker. “County parks are under-funded. We’re getting stuff done they would never be able to get to with a small staff.”

She shares this task with Mike Orr, a Humboldt County Parks Supervisor. Orr has been with the Hammond project from the beginning and provides guidance and some of the County’s tools used to hold back plant growth along the edges of the trail. Becker values all the wonderful people she has met. “Among the many individuals and groups that have pitched in to help, including churches, businesses, Coast Guard and schools and colleges, many delightful neighbors have stuck with the trail over all these years. Ongoing regulars who live on the trail have investment in it. They’ll report downed limbs and other issues that need attention.” She adds, “People in this area are so appreciative of the specialness of this region. They really care about the ecosystems and trails here.”



On a crisp Spring morning, the Cal Poly Humboldt Men's soccer team weeded along the poppies at Vista Point above Clam Beach. Photo submitted by Stacy Becker.

Of the now twelve trail sites throughout the region currently served by the Volunteer Trail Stewards of the Humboldt Trails Council, three of them are supervised by the County of Humboldt. They include the Hammond Trail, the McKay Community Forest, and most of the newly opened Humboldt Bay Trail between Arcata and Eureka. The estimated value of volunteer time (based on the average earnings of private sector workers in California) is \$38.61/hour. For their time and effort, the accumulated hours of Humboldt County trail volunteers from the Hammond, McKay, and Humboldt Bay trails have collectively contributed \$204,653 worth of donated time during 2025. (The majority of this amount is from work done in the McKay Forest.)

“The Hammond regulars are dedicated. They work rain or shine. We’ve been out there when it was snowing,” Becker recalls. “The sun came out. Then it snowed again. By the end of that workday, we were grinning ear to ear.”

For more information about volunteering on the Hammond Trail, contact Stacy Becker at sbecker@reninet.com, and for all VTS trail opportunities, email vtscordinator@humtrails.org.

Article by Maureen McGarry, HTC VTS Coordinator

Students Work and Learn in the McKay Community Forest

At the bottom of a steep slope in the McKay Community Forest, several teens from Eureka Community School helped with habitat restoration on a pleasant Wednesday morning in October. Using wheel barrels to carry tools and small willow logs and branches, they descended into the forest to plant in a wet, boggy area which had originally been a road crossed by a stream. Previous logging had disturbed the flow of water and damaged plant life due to the placement of the temporary logging road. Under the guidance of Dennis Houghton, McKay Trail Coordinator, the students half-buried the willow cuttings in the muddy earth.



Photo by Maureen McGarry

"As long as the wood is touching water, it will sprout," said Houghton whose goal is to repair the damaged area. "Willows provide habitat, food, and nesting for a variety of birds as well as other species such as insects and salamanders."



Photo by Maureen McGarry

Considered a keystone species in many ecosystems, willow roots hold soil in place along stream banks, prevent erosion, and improve water quality. Larger mammals such as deer and elk forage on willow. Native to the region, this plant has been used by local tribal basket makers for centuries, weaving willow roots and sticks into their baskets.

Houghton works with this group of students every Wednesday morning, introducing them to forest ecology, and teaching them trail-building skills. He hopes the experiences they have in the forest will inspire them to work in outdoor jobs and instill in them a strong work ethic.

Students from grades 7 through 12 are referred to community schools through the Department of Probation, School Attendance Review Boards, and school districts. These youth are in need of alternative education which supports academic and social development.

Jasmyn Lemus, Student Services Specialist at Eureka Community School, drives the group of students each week to the site and accompanies the work crew into the forest.



Photo by Maureen McGarry

Another adult who frequently attends is Larry Buwalda, a longtime outdoor enthusiast and volunteer with the Volunteer Trail Stewards (VTS.)

"Hiking and biking in our community forest is truly special. So for me, it's a little bit of 'paying it forward.' I've found the VTS program very welcoming to anyone interested in helping out. It's easy to get hooked!"

When the students return in a few weeks to the site they planted, they will find sprouting willows. Houghton hopes that, with the exposure they are receiving in the community forest, some of the teens will consider joining the California Conservation Corps after graduating.

"The CCC program could be a great stepping stone for many of these students, giving them valuable work experience as they consider their work or academic futures."

Like the roots and shoots of the willows they planted, the youth in this program may grow into tomorrow's stewards of the forest.

For more information about volunteering, contact Dennis Houghton at dbhedm@gmail.com, or vtscordinator@hum.trails.org, or go to www.humtrails.org.

Article by Maureen McGarry, HTC VTS Coordinator

Volunteers Restoring Native Plants to Wigi

A crisp and clear November morning greeted several Volunteer Trail Stewards at the Wigi Wetland behind the Bayshore Mall. “Wigi”- the Wiyot word for Humboldt Bay - is the name for that section of trail and wetland area. Utilized for thousands of years by the Wiyot, it was a place for ceremonies and as a source for food from the bay.

When settlers arrived in the mid 1800’s, the area became an industrial site for timber production and transport. Numerous pier posts and pilings stand like ghosts from the past, rising above the surface of the water and exposing a disrupted history which affected the lives and culture of the Wiyot people. The native landscape was also ravaged by the logging and shipping activities of settlers, and many invasive plants were introduced by that industry.

On the day of the November clean-up, the smell of licorice filled the air as fennel roots were being dug up from the wet earth. Fennel is an invasive plant brought from southern Europe to America as an ornamental. While some volunteers dug up roots, others, such as Kathryn Wendel, president of the Redwood Region Audubon Society, along with her daughter, Vivian, and niece Cassidy, planted dogwood starts in an area close to the edge of the bay. Other natives that have been previously reintroduced by volunteers include silk tassel, twinberry, and alder.



Volunteer Trail Steward Dayna Mauer gets a workout removing fennel roots at Wigi Wetland. Photo by Maureen McGarry

Susan Penn, an active volunteer with the Redwood Region Audubon Society and the Volunteer Trail Stewards, said that volunteers are working to create a bird and wildlife friendly habitat by planting natives, removing invasive plants, and cleaning up trash from the area, and keeping the trail along the bay clear and beautiful.

“We’ve already removed lots of pampas grass and scotch broom. We have been chopping off the seed heads of fennel for years to keep it from growing,” said Penn. “Now we have decided to finally dig out the roots of the fennel.”



Kathryn Wendel and her daughter and niece plant dogwood in the Wigi Wetlands. "When you girls are all grown up, you can come out here and see how big they are, and know that you planted them"

Photo by Maureen McGarry

Another volunteer, Hal Genger, a retired Oceanography professor from Cal Poly Humboldt, has been helping out at Wigi for about seven years.

"When we first started, you couldn't see the bay from the trail. It was too thick to walk through," said Genger. "There were hundreds of pampas grass plants. There are still plenty more of them further up the trail." He is hoping for additional grants to cover the costs of hiring a backhoe to remove more of them, and to pay for the dump fees. Genger has been an Audubon society member since the late 70's.

"With more native plants, there will be more food for bugs and birds."

VTs Trail Crew Leader Eric Nelson has volunteered at the Wigi Trail site on and off for the past seven years. Having worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, he served as manager for the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge since 2001, retiring in 2019.

"It feels good to help," said Nelson. "Every bit of trash you can pick up doesn't go into the bay. Every invasive plant removed leaves room for more natives. The volunteers are awesome." He added, "The more people you have, the less it seems like work." To learn more about volunteering at the Wigi Trail site, contact Eric Nelson at etn.95547@gmail.com, or Susan Penn at susanpenn60@gmail.com, or Hal Genger at hal.genger@humboldt.edu.

Ted Humphry's Trail Notes From Redwood National and State Parks; Pure and Unfiltered Observations from the Trail.

1/11/2026 - Damnation Creek Trail

Hello,

I parked at the Damnation Creek Trailhead off Highway 101, and walked down to the beach, then back to the vehicle.

Damnation Creek Trail is passable. There are several easy climb overs or step through obstructions on the trail.

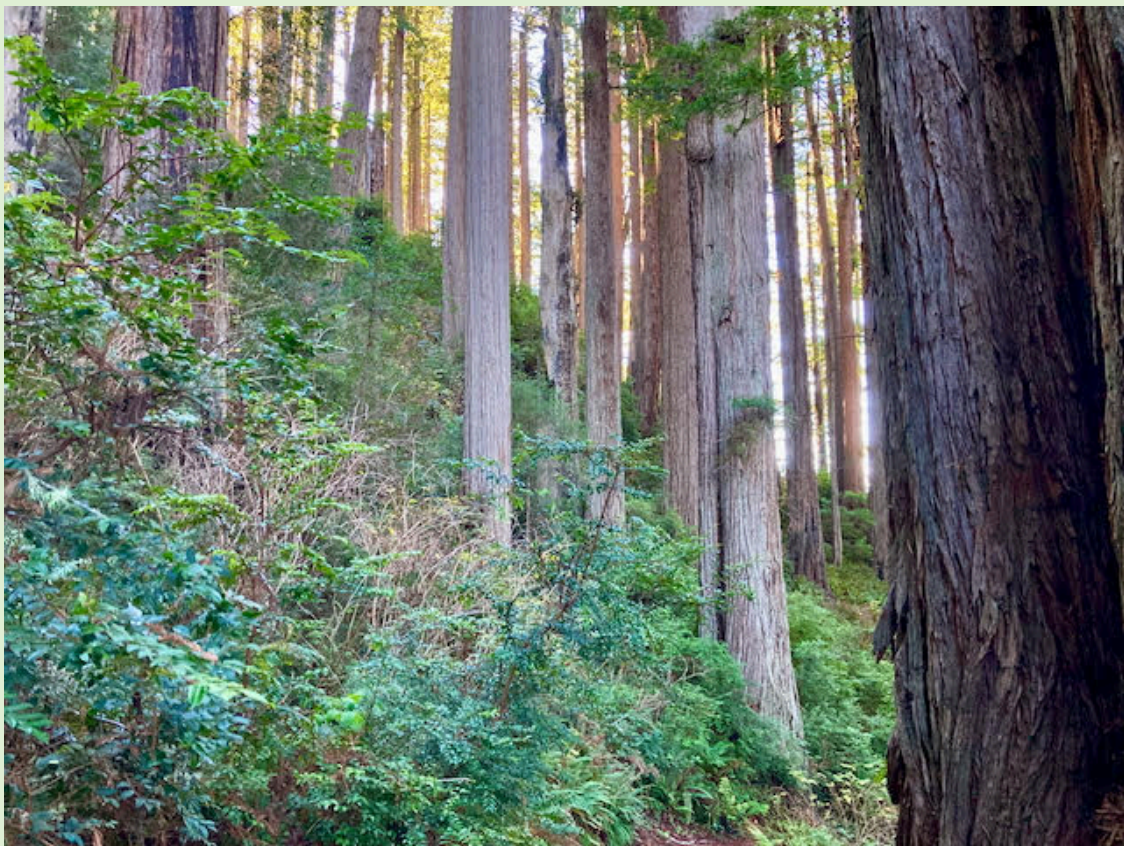
Sign says it is a 1,000 foot elevation drop to the rocky beach.



The Damnation Creek Trail starts out in almost 100 percent old growth redwood forest.



But the forest gradually moves to mostly Douglas Fir as you go down.



Then more Sitka spruce and no redwoods.



Then big leaf maples and a few alders as you approach the beach...



Then open sky and treeless bushes overlooking the Pacific.



Unfortunately I neglected to bring my muck boots to access the beach. It was a wall to wall Damnation Creek flow.



Back up on the bluff looking south.



And looking north.



Cormorants were standing guard.



And looking back up the hill where the trail goes.



Ted is a retired pediatrician who volunteers at Redwood National and State Parks.

Our Website



Our Mission

The Humboldt Trails Council serves as a unified voice to support development, maintenance, and connection to, and use of the trails for recreation and transportation throughout Humboldt County, California.

Our Vision

The Humboldt Trails Council envisions a well-maintained network of accessible community pathways traveled by walkers and riders of all abilities, ages, and means in the pursuit of unfettered kinetic joy. We are advocates, educators, and coordinators working to enhance the county's active transportation and recreation options, community wellbeing, economic vitality, visitor captivation, and appreciation of open spaces.

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