

Dear Mayor Brean and Members of the Yachats City Council,

I am writing in concern of a request for Memorial signage and installation of a marker for the tragic drowning of two youth near Smelt Sands beach last year.

My sincere sympathies go out to the families involved.

Most Memorial requests on Yachats Public Trails or Parks are directed to the Parks and Commons Commission for discussion and recommendation to City Council. This is the first I have heard of this request.

Signage and Memorials have been a much discussed topic for many years. It was a real issue in the development of the wetlands and the Yachats Community Park, west of the Yachats Commons. Memorial benches were attempted as a fundraising effort, however the end costs barely covered the cost of the bench and plaque. There was strong opposition to making it a Memorial Park, with good reason.

I will speak personally. I don't agree with Memorials along our ocean front trail, unless they are designated benches, and even those should be limited, as I believe they are, by the State Parks system.

I do think "interpretive signage", used sparingly and in strategic locations, can enhance the trail system and make people's experience more meaningful.

I can not blame the rocks or the waves for the tragic loss of individual lives. They are not required to put out warnings or signs. It is the same in the rest of nature. The individual is responsible for knowing the risks they are in. It is true on lakes, rivers, glaciers, volcanoes and in the wild with wildlife.

We have ample warnings for guests about ocean hazards. It is in our motel rooms, vacation rentals, bed and breakfasts, on TV, in brochures and in every State Park (three in Yachats). If people refuse to read or heed these warnings, then they are gambling with fate. The ocean is a mighty force and it is unforgiving.

My deepest sympathies for the families involved and the loved ones they lost. I have lost several close friends to the ocean, over the last 30 years. Their memories are in our heart and minds.

The Parks and Commons Commission has not had a chance to discuss this request. I would ask that we be given that opportunity and forward our recommendation to City Council.

Sincerely,

Donald W. Niskanen, Chair
Parks and Commons Commission