

Isaac Kay, Waccamaw Elementary School
2nd Place, 2018 Horry Soil and Water Conservation District Essay Contest

Imagine, you are in a park. What does it look like? Is it lovely, beautiful trees and warm beaches with cool waves splashing down upon the shore? The trails lined sometimes with flowers, waterfalls flowing down, a pond at the bottom with mallards and trout alike swimming around? Sadly, your park has been a real disappointment to the imagination. Erosion ruins the beaches and tears apart the sand dunes, adding to the chance of flooding. Pollution and litter line the trails, fishing hooks scattered along the beach, waiting to stab a shoeless visitor. Hikers are constantly going off the trails, purposefully or not, due to unclear paths, obstacles, and/or believing in their own sense of direction, causing harm to come to trees and shrubs. The solutions are clear. Clearing the trails to add to the paths' reliability, volunteers to clear the litter from the trails, picnic shelters, and beaches, and dune rebuilding and strengthening to keep the water from flooding.

First of all, clearing the paths is a must. Clearing the paths would make it obvious where the trail is. It would keep plants healthy and undamaged, and would allow animals to pass from one side to another, unlike fencing off the paths. According to articles.extension.org, it is only necessary to keep a trail clear, not to fence it in. Clearing the paths would really help keep the hikers minds set, and will also help the littering problem. Therefore, the clearing of, and not fencing in of trails, will allow nature to flow, only moving a couple trees that have fallen into the path, keeping the wild mostly natural.

Second, the pollution and littering is bad, so park sweeps and volunteers working to keep it clean is a simple way to keep the park clean. It also works great with clearing the paths of obstacles, as that can mostly be done at the same time. It would affect the environment by keeping pollution away from the park, as many creatures are harmed by the litter. According to pps.org, it says that there is recognition from accomplishment, therefore the volunteers are making an effective effort. This is a better idea than more garbage cans, as then garbage is in larger masses in a smaller area will result in animals like raccoons or bears to eat the unhealthy trash, therefore proving that this is the best course of action.

Finally, since the beach sand dunes are being worn away, methods must be used to hold them together and to rebuild them. Moving sand back to the dunes and putting in fences or plants that can survive on the beach is a simple solution to the problem. It would affect the environment by giving a better home for creatures living on and in the dunes, and keeping flooding from the animals living on the land. According to thinkprogress.org, "These humble heaps of ground down rock and shell are ... being heralded as the solution for coastal erosion.". There is not really any other option anyways, other than doing nothing, doing nothing will ruin the environment, but filling in the dunes will strengthen the environment.

All of these are important efforts, but the most critical effort is the park sweeps. This is important because pollution can faster than any other problems kill animals and plants. Off trail hikers only damage a few plants, and erosion of beaches is a slower problem, so keeping litter out of the picture can keep the park in a better condition than the other two efforts combined.

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So, I hope that in the end that this park will enact these ideas to keep it clean and safe, making it better for the environment and the people. So, I believe that these ideas of clearing the paths, park sweeps, and rebuilding dunes and the strengthening of them will make this park great again.