

Lagoon Park: Living at the Edge of Wilderness

AWARDS | 2008 GENERAL DESIGN NATIONAL HONOR AWARD, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS;
 AWARDS | 2007 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER OPEN SPACE HONOR AWARD, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Van Atta Associates, Inc.

204 LOCATION | SANTA BARBARA, CA CLIENT/OWNER | UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA • HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES • OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DESIGN
 PLANT PROPAGATION AND PLANTING | MUSEUM OF SYSTEMATICS AND ECOLOGY EXECUTIVE ARCHITECT FOR MANZANITA VILLAGE | DESIGNARC
 CIVIL | PENFIELD AND SMITH LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR FOR PATHWAYS | VALLEY CREST COMPLETION DATE | 2001

This park achieves aesthetics, function and sustainability on a limited budget. Created wetland habitats, an inviting place for students, and a system that filters and cleans runoff—all have been incorporated into a site that was once a gravel parking lot. Our role as the landscape architect in this accomplishment was unique, as we saw great potential where the client thought only habitat creation was possible.

Before meeting with us, the University feared that a required habitat buffer would result in the loss of use of many acres of beautiful coastal bluff property. We convinced them to regard it as an opportunity to create a park as a wilderness interface to a new cluster of student resident halls and a potential research laboratory for habitat restoration.

This is no habitat cordoned off by fencing. Instead, trails, ocean overlooks, picnic tables, a surf shower, stairs and ramp down to the beach, all invite students to enjoy this park. While restored vernal pools, marshes and meadows—with larger vegetation as barriers to sensitive areas—are equally welcoming to native plants and wildlife. A boardwalk right through the middle of the biggest vernal pool gives students a first hand look at this thriving ecosystem. The park is designed to clean runoff water too, taking the site drainage and removing pollutants before it enters the adjacent lagoon. In the end, this place is as great for people as it is restorative to the environment.



- Project site
- 1. UCSB Main Campus
- 2. Neighboring community of Isla Vista
- 3. UCSB Lagoon
- 4. Campus Point Beach

Lagoon Park, University of California, Santa Barbara





View into the vernal pool from the central observation platform on a foggy day.



A boardwalk of recycled composite lumber brings visitors to the largest vernal pool and cuts a direct path from the residence halls to the ocean bluffs.



A stairway of recycled composite lumber brings visitors to the ocean front and to the lagoon.



A bio-swale that runs along the universal access ramp to the beach.



1,300 linear feet of bio-swales were created as part of the overall project, supporting more than 27 species of local native wetland plants.

Bicycle path



Studying and gathering areas in the newly created coastal sage scrub with recycled plastic picnic tables and walls planned as rammed earth.

