

The Story and Legacy of Off-Leash Area Edmonds (OLAE)

The Off-Leash Area Edmonds (OLAE) is a beloved community asset and a testament to the power of local volunteerism and dog lovers' dedication. Located at the southern end of Admiral Way, adjacent to Marina Beach, OLAE offers a rare stretch of Puget Sound shoreline where dogs can run free, swim, play in the sand, and socialize-all while their humans enjoy sweeping views of the Olympic Mountains, ferry boats, and the Kitsap Peninsula^{[1][2][3]}.

Founding and Early Days

About 20 years ago, the area was little more than an open, somewhat wild stretch of beach, known mostly by word of mouth among local dog owners. The site's industrial past was evident, with remnants of a pier once used by Chevron container ships. Early visitors, like you, found a hidden gem-an untamed space where dogs could romp and swim, and where a handful of dedicated individuals began to see the potential for something more^{[2][3]}.

A pivotal moment came when a handwritten note seeking help brought together four women-BB, Coco, Lori, and Diane Buckshnis (who would become a key founder)^{[2][4]}. Inspired by the volunteer-run model at Marymoor Park's off-leash area, they began organizing, meeting with city officials, and, after some resistance, establishing a partnership with the City of Edmonds Parks and Recreation Department^[4].

In 2005, the group formed the nonprofit Off-Leash Area Edmonds (OLAE), securing 501(c)(3) status the following year^{[1][4]}. This enabled them to raise funds, recruit more volunteers, and embark on the hard work of transforming the area into a safe, clean, and welcoming park for dogs and their owners.

Volunteer Projects and Park Improvements

The park's development has been shaped by countless volunteer hours and community partnerships. Eagle Scout projects have added key amenities, including:

- A double-gated entry system
- Agility course
- Bulletin boards
- "Poo bag" kiosks
- A fenced small-dog area, ensuring safety for smaller breeds^{[5][2][6]}

Other improvements included fire hydrants (donated by members), annual debris cleanups, and the creation of a logo and brand identity for OLAE^{[5][2][4]}. The city contributed by picking up debris, installing a cement pad for garbage cans, and eventually taking over regular maintenance tasks like mowing and repairs^[2].

Signature Events and Community Spirit

OLAE's signature event, the annual Halloween Howl, has become a beloved tradition, drawing dog lovers from across the region for costume contests and fundraising^{[7][8][9][10]}. The event's success has helped sustain the park financially, especially during challenging periods like the COVID-19 pandemic, when community donations were critical to keeping OLAE afloat^{[11][9]}.

Membership has remained steady at around 100, and the park continues to be managed by a volunteer board, with ongoing support from the City of Edmonds^{[4][11]}.

A Lasting Community Asset

Today, OLAE is celebrated as one of the most scenic and well-maintained dog parks in the Puget Sound region. It offers:

- Hundreds of feet of beach access
- Separate areas for large and small dogs
- An agility course
- Ample benches and driftwood for humans
- A hydration station and rinse hose
- Waste bags and trash cans for responsible cleanup^{[1][2][6][3]}

The park is a testament to grassroots community action, volunteer spirit, and the enduring bond between people and their dogs. As one visitor put it, OLAE is "Disneyland for dogs"-a place where dogs and their humans can enjoy the beauty of the Sound, the company of friends, and the simple joy of a day at the beach^{[2][6]}.

Rules and Reminders

- Dogs must be licensed and vaccinated
- Puppies under four months and dogs in heat are not allowed
- Owners must pick up after their dogs and close gates after use^[2]

OLAE remains a shining example of what a small group of committed volunteers can achieve, creating a community space cherished by generations of Edmonds residents and their four-legged companions^{[1][2][4]}.

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1. <https://www.olae.org>
2. <https://exploreedmonds.com/blog/post/roam-free-fur-babies>
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