



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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**Anacortes Community Forest Lands
Advisory Board**

February 3, 2022 at 6pm

No in person meeting. Virtual meeting only.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88308344363>

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. E-bike Use Policy in the ACFL
 - a) Panel Discussion
 - b) FAB Q & A with Panel
 - c) Public Q & A with Panel
3. Approve January 2022 Minutes
4. Public Comments
5. Stand Up Paddle Board Classes at Heart Lake
6. Friends of the Forest Update

7. ACFL Trail Committee Report

8. Staff Reports

9. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: January 6, 2022

Board members present: Brian Wetcher, Sandra Starbuck, JoAnn York-Gilmore, Kit Gerwels

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jonn Lunsford, Steve Phillips

Guests with Zoom names: Bret Andrich, Ryan Mielke, Tim Maricich, Warren Tessler, Cole Colman, Kim Erickson, B Conner, Robert Billow, Dave Crumbo, Asa Deane, Ray Desy, Kathleen Lorence-Flanagan, Marlene Finley, Mike VanQuickenborne, Tom Glade, Neil O'Hara, Jane Brandt

Meeting held by Zoom and called to order at 6:05PM

Minutes: December minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.

Brian nominated Sandra to continue as chair. JoAnn seconded this and there was unanimous approval by board members.

Bob introduced Kit as the new board member. Kit spoke about his history and reasons for his desire to serve. He is a long-time user and supporter of the Forest Lands, and is excited to be part of the team

Public Comments: opened for anything NOT on the agenda, there was no response.

Asa report for Friends of the Forest:

School programs are expected to keep happening with adjustments for Covid and a lack of field trips, but outreach is happening into classes in the schools. Community hikes will be starting again soon. A summer program "Fields to Forests" is in the planning stages with the goal to invite children of Skagit county field workers to come for day camps. The trail ambassador program is set to continue and a citizen science program to start soon with Fidalgo and

AHS kids as an internship program. The naturalist club is transitioning to a hybrid virtual and in person meetings and helping with water quality testing.

Staff Reports:

Steve gave a summary of the very active winter weather storms and the additional challenges this has brought. He has some new volunteers and is very thankful for that. Parks staff has been helping with the weather in the streets department with snow removal and solid waste garbage pickup.

Bob reminded the group that full staff reports are available ahead of time in the online packet of information. Thankfully, 107 trail issues with the APD has been resolved. The 2022 forest land projects look to be trail #311 as the first project of the year, a tough trail in our system. The next step is getting the trail community together again with planning staff from the city on site. The staff is looking at the options and researching what permits are needed for long term restoration.

JoAnn serves on the parks board and gave a brief report on the skate park. The renovations are seeing great fundraising. Public input is needed, as well as lots of permits. The parks department is working with GrindLine who are specialists in skate parks.

Jonn gave a report on the Conservation Easement Program: Very successful project with about 1800 acres protected with the funds held in trust. Skagit Land Trust staff have been confirming that all was in order and nothing missed. The review is almost done and will be brought to council for renewal in late January or early February.

Bob stated that the ACFL Plan was adopted in November, with intention to update every 5 years.

Bob opened discussion of Ebikes with a reminder: Board members are volunteers. Time is volunteered by everyone to guide staff and give the community a voice and to ensure a transparent process. Ebikes are starting to gain in popularity and a request was made to open the trails to Ebikes. The issue was put to the side for a while, but we want to reopen the issue. This is just the beginning of the process and no decisions will be made tonight. Next month will be with neighboring groups for presentation of information. There have been lots of responses from the community especially after the newspaper article. They will be posted online and are being sent to the FAB as they come in. FAB will eventually make a recommendation and then it will be brought to the city council.

At the time of opening comments, there were 31 people in the meeting.

Brian Wetcher: Reminder, all ebikes are currently classified as motorized vehicles under the current temporary policy.

Bret Andrich, Anacortes resident; He read the letter that was submitted previously. He is thankful for staff and FAB for the consideration of changes to the current regulations. He believes that Class 1 should be given the same classification as analog bikes.

Bruce Rustad, Anacortes resident; He stated that he is a longtime resident and bike rider and a longtime volunteer and supporter of our trails. He has helped with trail maintenance via bike as that was the only way to access some areas. He would like to open up the trails to Ebikes as they won't damage the trails.

Dave Crumbo, Whistle Lake road resident; He is a longtime resident and bike rider and has sent in a letter as well. He shared some additional information about how Ebikes work with "assist" power, has ridden both "E" and suspension bikes and feels he is causing less damage to trails on his Ebike. He only wants to allow Class I, not II or III bikes. He feels there is no detrimental trail impact from these bikes.

Tom Glade, Anacortes Resident, representing Evergreen Islands; He appreciates the love of bikes, but encourages the limit of Ebikes in the ACFL due to harm to the system. He, and Evergreen Islands, feel the trails should be kept as natural as possible. He supports the temporary guidelines that classifies the bikes as motorized.

B Conner, Anacortes Resident; While he supports bikes fully and enjoys hiking in the trails of our community he is opposed to increasing any stress on the system. He feels there has been lack of concern or respect by bikers on the trails, does not want to increase the number of users and open the door and allow a domino effect. He proposes research by committee of impact on trails and numbers of users of Ebikes on the trails. He suggested a possible tag for "handicap" if necessary. As a hiker, he enjoys the quiet, meditative atmosphere, feels bikes are often a group and disturbing the peace.

Gina Gillespie, Anacortes resident; Stated she is concerned that putting regulations on trails and taking away opportunities for use is a bad thing. As a realtor she shared that many people come to our community for our forest lands and trails. She expressed full support of Ebikes on the trails. She feels Ebikes give more people opportunity to experience even with back or knee issues. She asked that we please give, not take away.

Betty Conner, Anacortes Resident; She lives by forest lands and appreciates all the area in our community to ride bikes. She has an ebike, but enjoys the forest lands for the quiet. She expressed concern about speeds of bikes and

danger to walkers and hikers, as well as the overuse of trails and damage it would cause.

Diane Guinn, Anacortes resident; She is glad we have hiking trails that are separated from bike use trails. She feels the ones marked for hikers only are not appropriate for bikes for safety reasons. She appreciates limiting the access by bikes of all kinds and wants to keep access as it currently is.

Gary Muskman, Anacortes resident; He is both a biker and hiker and has noticed trails with bikes are being significantly impacted, especially the 100 trail. He feels opening up bike trails to Ebikes will add more impact and make use of forest lands less enjoyable due to trail conditions. He expressed concern about the Ebike classification and how to enforce that. He is also concerned about vendors coming in and renting Ebikes, or a rental service by city. He asked for more planning and looking at which trails could accommodate Ebikes.

Bruce Rustad, Anacortes resident; He stated that when he started helping to maintain the trails it was mostly used by horses and dirt bikers. He spoke to the concerns of the conditions of the trails and stated that we are in the NW with lots of rain and snow which impacts the trails. He invited anyone to come and volunteer.

Brian Wetcher opened the floor to anyone in support of Class II or III asking if anyone would like to speak to these options. No one spoke in favor of these options

Brian Wetcher stated that there is a speed limit currently in all forest lands of 15mph for everyone and asked that people please report anyone in violation of this.

Discussion continued

Sandra invited any other opinions to be sent in, Brian also moved to continue the discussion to the next meeting.

Bob stated that the next meeting will be February 3rd, with a plan to continue discussion on this topic and we hope to have more of a presentation from other entities. There is no time limit on accepting comments or a set timeframe for a decision.

Brian: extended welcome to Kit, thankful for new member.

Asa: FOF is openly discussing this subject at their meetings as well

Meeting adjourned at 7:29pm

Respectfully submitted by: Darby Jordan

January 2022 Report from the Assistant Director's Desk

E-bikes

Doing my best to collect relevant data and opinions for the Forest Advisory Board process. I am very interested to see just what the width and breadth becomes of this venture into the latest user group to seek out the ACFL.

The January Forest Advisory Board meeting was a good test balloon, with over 25 attendees (in addition to the Board) expressing heart felt opinions why we should and shouldn't roll out the red carpet for these modern modes of transportation and recreation.

New Admin Ass't Darby Jordan

Please stop by the parks & rec hq sometime and meet Darby. She has jumped right into her new gig, and is learning fast. It has been a pleasure getting to know her, and her skill set is a great fit. Again, special thanks to Victoria Alsup, Mary Snyder and Valora Sandstrom for taking the time to help transition Darby successfully into her new parks & rec roll.

ACFL Beaver Activity

Visited a home in the Vista Too neighborhood, where beaver are working on assorted alder rather close to the property line. Thus far their work remains in the 32nd Street swamp, but good to keep an eye out.

ACFL Tree Theft

It's been a long time since I have seen the blatant "stealing" of trees in our woods. On 7 January Brian Tottenham showed me a spot near the southern 220 trailhead. One was standing, one was down. We have not found new evidence of this practice since. The snow and the rain combo have various impacts on peoples' lives.

Guemes Channel Trail Storm Repair

Have been working with our staff, Public Works, our consultant and communicating with various agencies regarding routine storm damage repair on the GCT. We did have to close the trail for a few days to make sure we could safely operate some equipment. The vast majority of the trail regulars showed great patience for this.

Ace of Hearts Park

Spending some time here at both the dog and ballfield sectors, along the bank of AOH Creek. B. Tottenham is developing a volunteer work party plan to improve some of the dog side surfacing, along with volunteer Bill Turner. On the ballfield side, we have enlisted the help of Animal Control Officer Zabrina Nybo. Folks from afar, as well as neighbors, have taken to using this side for dogs as well. We are hoping improving the dog side might slow down this unpleasant and illegal practice.

Rotary Club Cap Sante Trail Project

Continue with various site visits, kiosk design and construction, working with Planning on permitting upland phases. Rotary Club members hard at it, and a pleasure to work with.

Friends of the Forest 2022 Preview

Director Lunsford and I had a good 2022 kick off meeting with FoF Exec Dir Asa Deane. We are looking forward to enhancing our combined volunteer efforts, and generally working hard on the ACFL wellness plan.

Volunteer Park Neighbor

Ballfield lead AJ Yost and I met on site with a frustrated neighbor. She pointed out a handful of legit concerns. Thank you AJ for quickly handling and improving the situation. And I appreciate the neighbor reaching out directly to us rather than wasting a bunch of time on social media.

Storvik Vandalism

Closed out 2021 with a rash of vandalism at Storvik. Thanks so much to the Parks Crew for dealing with this day after day after day. Parks Manager Johnston has been working with APD on the investigation.

Site Visits with Planners

Thanks to Emily and Nathan from Planning. They have been able to join the following; W. 2nd and Baltimore trail discussion with Director Lunsford and I. Stopped by Smiley's for a brief trail options discussion as well.

Joined members of the ACFL Trail Committee, Washington Trails Association staff and volunteer, ACFL Steve and I on trail 311. We explored a very interesting repair plan prepared by WTA at our request. First Trail Committee meeting in a long, long time.

For What It's Worth

Finished out 2021 on vacation, Dec 24 thru Jan 2.

Pandemic hitting work forces everywhere, including ours. Am proud of our staff's ability and willingness to cover for whomever needs to quarantine.

Took care of a hazard tree on trail 25 on MLK Day. Thank you Officer Janet Wilson for reporting this one. Was right in the sweet spot for bicycles on a blind downhill corner.

Took personal leave Jan 20, 21.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux

January 27, 2022

ACFL Maintenance Report JANUARY – 2022 by Steve Phillips

January 26, 2022

Maintenance Activities

In late December, I added a few buckets full of gravel to the Heart Lake parking lot to prepare for holiday visitors. I also patched a few more Erie Mountain Road potholes with cold mix (asphalt).

The first week of the year saw me joining the Parks crew assisting with snow removal at the Anacortes Library and Storvik Park parking lot. We also accompanied City garbage truck drivers to help Solid Waste catch up with their regular schedule after the snow was mostly cleared from our streets.

January in the Forestlands was a continuation of December – water management and clearing trails of downed trees. The beaver activity has seemingly shifted from clogging waterways to downing live trees. This can be observed near the 32nd street swamp, on a few alders near the end of 32nd street, and on a large cedar from Trail 113 looking down toward Big Beaver Pond. I wonder whether the cool weather has caused this change, or if it is just a seasonal shift. At any rate, it's made my job a little easier.

Trees to cut have been numerous and widely distributed throughout the ACFL. Before and after holiday absences, I try to prioritize fire roads for emergency vehicle access.

I used a flat shovel to de-muck Trail 10 in certain places on January 12-13. On January 13, I added gravel to a pair of low spots near Trails 117/118.

On January 19 I blew debris off Mount Erie Road. On the same day, I finally removed the piles of holly that have been lining Trail 23 in places from our November work party. I also hauled away some of the brush that we have removed from the Ace of Hearts headwaters, to counter the work of beavers.

I could not do my work without the help of volunteers and Parks coworkers; nor without specialized equipment, such as: 16", 20", and 32" bar chainsaws; a John Deere Gator; a John Deere tractor with PTO blower; a flatbed truck; nor without occasionally drawing from material stockpiles at our Operations HQ.

Violations

As of today, one can see lots of damage in the 300s, near Little Round Top, from a motorbike rider or riders. The rider pictured below, on a 2-stroke bike, was photographed on Tuesday, January 18 at 3:30pm on Trail 302 by Dan Senour. The accompanying photo is one I took yesterday on 302, near 300.



Not only is this out of season for motorbikes, but none of the trails where I noticed damage allow them. The damage appears superficial in places, but in others new ruts were created and exacerbated by runoff from snowmelt and rain. This is what hurts our trails most – when the fine sediments and soil particles are removed from the matrix, leaving cobbles and rock that easily tumble away from the tread, creating a gully in time.

There are 4 offenses, legal and ethical, here: 1. Off-season motorbike; 2. Motorbike on unauthorized trails; 3. Riding a 2-stroke bike, which is not allowed in the ACFL; and 4. Riding in an aggressive way outside of the existing tread, spinning wheels to tear up moss, soil, and plants.

[Continuing Education](#)

I have been afforded time this month to complete some Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to maintain my Arborist certification. I've spent an hour or two each day for a few days in the office, watching online content put out by the Pacific Northwest chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Topics have included forest fire, the importance of dead trees in a forest, drought, pruning, tree pests, safety, equipment advances, and others. Arborists are required to earn 30 CEUs over each 3-year renewal period.