



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

March 3, 2022

6pm

No in person meeting. Virtual meeting only.

Zoom Meeting Link:

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

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve February 2022 Minutes
3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda*
4. E-bike Use Policy in the ACFL
Public Comments / Close Public Comments
Deliberation / May Continue to April Meeting
5. Stand Up Paddle Board Classes at Heart Lake /Commercial Operation Proposal
6. Friends of the Forest Update
7. ACFL Trail Committee Report
8. Staff Reports
9. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: February 3, 2022

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Steven Phillips, Darby Jordan

Presenters: Randy Kline, Gina Austin, John Keates

Guests with Zoom names: Charlie Drew, Jim Taylor, Jesse Janicula, Richard Bergner, Bret Andrich, Tim Maricich, Larry Parfitt, Kevin Welch, Tabb Stringer, Asa Deane, Danny Lindstrom, Beck Pittman, Kathleen Lorence-Flanagan, Bruce Rustad, others not identified

Meeting held by Zoom and called to order at 6:05pm (29 total on zoom when called to order)

E-bike Use Policy in the ACFL

Bob announced that we have received 65 public comments from 61 individuals and will continue to accept public comments on this issue. He introduced the panel of our two closest entities with multi-use trails-the City of Bellingham and Washington State Parks. Bob expressed thanks for being such helpful resources and willingness to be here and share their experiences.

Bob stated that he is thankful to have an opportunity to openly discuss changes to the use of our trail system. He made a point that he is not just the Assistant Director of the Parks Department but he is speaking from a position of using an ebike and loving it, as well as an awareness of the impact that any increase of use to our trail system will cause. No matter how we look at it, the number of trips, duration of trips and quantity of users will increase. But we take great pride in our system and the multi-use it supports.

a) Panel Discussion

Gina Austin is a Project Engineer with the City of Bellingham Parks & Recreation, Design and Development Division. She has worked for the City of Bellingham for nearly 20 years. Gina has been involved in many projects for the city, including acting as the lead project engineer for Taylor Dock in Fairhaven and Waypoint Park at the downtown Waterfront District. Gina is also the comanager for the Bellingham Parks design standards workgroup. She lives in Bellingham with her family and is an avid long-distance runner who spends a lot of time on local and regional trails.

Gina had a presentation to help show the history of the parks and why the City makes the decisions they do, especially in regard to the decision making process for ebikes and scooters. Bellingham has lots of local users and visitors accessing the trail system. They have a long history of managing trails and are opening new trails annually with strong community support. They try to build all trails multimodal to accommodate everyone as the trails are used to commute, as school routes, and as recreation. The City recently updated the municipal code to allow ebikes on all trails except Sehome arboretum where no bikes are allowed, and Galbraith mountain where only regular mt bikes are permitted. Motorized scooters are only permitted on streets or on paved or gravel surfaces.

Bellingham is adding the signage needed with increased use so everyone can enjoy the trails. They have always had user conflict, but this has not been made worse by ebikes. They have allowed for the Parks Director to modify a rule, based on safety, and change what users are allowed on each trail.

Randy Kline is a Planner in Washington State Parks Trails Program. He's been working on e-bike issues since the legislature adopted rules in 2018. He was a member of the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliances' 2021 e-bike policy advisory committee and has served as a conference panelist on this issue. He works regularly with local governments, state agencies, federal land managers, and industry representatives to gain perspective on this evolving recreational use.

Randy spoke about the 1300 miles of trail in the state parks, supporting all sorts of users. In State Parks, since 2018, ebikes are allowed to be on all trails that regular bikes can use due to regulation in place that categorized them as non-motorized. Washington State Parks wanted to allow as much recreation use as possible without risking safety or causing trail damage and none has been noted in the last three years. Randy stated that our area is popular for outdoor recreation and the largest concern is the number of people on trails. While there is crowding at trail heads, from State Park experience, checking in with park managers and looking at the number of citations, there has been no increase in negative interactions since allowing ebikes. The issues of concern were not as large as anticipated.

Randy noted that federal lands do not allow ebikes as they are categorized as motorized but a report due out by September 30, 2022 will provide more information and guidance.

b) FAB Q & A with Panel

JoAnn asked Randy-Since all bikes are allowed on trails, what is the criteria for deciding on which trails to allow bikes. Randy responded that items considered are: environmental issues, can a trail handle use without damage, parks managers input, increased use and public interest.

Brian asked of Randy and Gina-With our having multiple users including motorcycles, and ebikes classified as motor assist, what advice do you have about the RCW defining ebikes and their classification? What is the logic and interpretation of the codes? Randy responded about the three classes of ebikes. For State Parks they only allow pedal assist-class 1 or 3, with possible top speed being the difference between the two. Gina stated that electric assist is in the code, with any class permitted on all trails allowed to bikes and it has been like that since before ebikes.

Brian state that he was hoping for more language and interpretation on RCW. Randy clarified that class 1 and 3 are both operational only if operator propelled. If a person is required to make the bike move, it is classified as non-motorized. If it can be propelled without a person, then classified as motorized.

Sandra asked to clarify the difference between class 1 and class 3. Randy said the only difference is top speed.

Kit expressed thanks to both presenters. He asked of Gina how many miles of single-track trails they have?

She said that Galbraith is mostly single track. Kit asked about their concern about parking and speed on regular bikes. Gina said their focus has been on trail etiquette and the speed limit applies to all trails. She spoke about the yield signs/trail triangles saying they have no signs yet but will soon. Gina spoke to the natural speed control due to intersection or turns in the trail system.

Kit asked of Randy if there is a speed limit for state trails. With speed and public safety a big issue, speed is capped at 15mph and they have had minimal issues with speed. The Spokane area manager spoke to the local mt bike association and there is not really an issue with speed.

Randy shared the statute, class 1 ebikes top speed is 20mph and class 3 maximum is 28mph at which time they stop providing assistance.

Brian asked of both-As a board meant to guide user impact, what impacts has additional tech had on trail maintenance and use in general? With more use has there been more damage to the trails or environment? Randy responded that not a lot of research has been done on ebikes and impact, but it does not seem to cause more than regular bikes. Parks managers have reported that trail conditions have not seen a large impact and there has been no change in maintenance practices. Gina agreed, sharing that there is no way to determine what change in use has done or who caused it. The biggest impact is weather, especially in our area. Bellingham has not seen a large influx of ebikes.

John Keates shared that most impact to the trails is due to special events, no matter the user. The volume of users is causing the most damage and therefore they are starting to deny use to large groups.

Bob asked about rangers in the parks. Gina said that they do not have rangers, just park maintenance workers with no expectation they enforce policy. They will approach if there is a concern, but no enforcement or fines or tickets. They have started a park ambassador program to provide education and resources staffed by volunteers. Any major issues will require a call to police.

c) Public Q & A with Panel

Asa asked about what enforcement is being done in State Parks regarding class 1 vs class 2 ebikes. Randy responded that it is almost impossible to enforce between classes or even regular vs ebike. There will need to be regulation on bikes and conversation on how to identify them.

Bob shared that there is no scientific data, but with Covid, outdoor recreation has increased with more bikes on trails overall. He asked both if they have looked at trail use policies for bikes in general. How have they handled recreation numbers going up in general? Randy said their largest issues are trail heads in urban areas and are looking to address this in the future. Gina said that they have such a unique system, if one spot is overcrowded, people have lots of choices and it is a personal choice to find a less crowded area. There has been a bike vs person conversation for 20 years, well before ebikes. They have Galbraith mountain as a unique option for bikes only to be away from other users. She agreed that trailheads are a challenge but there are lots of options. John again spoke to the amount of applications for large groups use, and the large increase in this. They are starting discussion on how to limit damage by these groups.

Asa shared that their members have expressed concern about increasing noise. Has there been an increase in state parks? Randy spoke about the use of ebikes to help maintain trails and there is no increase in noise from the ebikes. Gina said there is no notice of noise increase in the city of Bellingham.

Thank you to Randy and Gina and John for their time and insight and help navigating this issue. It is helpful to see what other agencies are doing locally.

Bob suggested a timeline for the board to end public comments on February 24th, one week before the next meeting. The board will not be locked into making a decision in March, but final public comments will be taken at that time. The board will leave options open to deciding in March or April about a recommendation. Unless there is a major change, board members agree to this timeframe.

Minutes: January 2022 Minutes approved with no corrections

Public Comments: None

Stand Up Paddle Board Classes at Heart Lake

Jesse presented his proposal. He has 20 years outdoor education experience and has started Fidalgo Paddle Sports offering a range of kayaking and standup paddleboard classes. There is a challenge to finding a venue that is safe and warm and has easy access. He is asking to hold his classes at Heart Lake. Approximately 22 classes, 2-3 hours per class, held April-October.

Joann asked a question about parking and the number of users. Jesse responded that there are five students to one instructor, so six cars maximum. They also require a staging area for six paddle boards which is about the size of a car.

Kit asked about the time of day and length of time. Jesse responded that classes are held about 9am-4pm. Starting in April with up to 4 in the summer, held twice a day. Kit asked about who is eligible, with Jesse saying classes have a minimum age of 16 years old.

Kit asked about days of the week and what other locations are options for having classes. Jesse responded that most classes will be Saturday and Sunday, and he has looked at Seafarers Park, Cap Sante marina, and Deception Pass state park, but none are ideal for stand up paddleboarding.

Brian spoke to the nature of a for profit company doing business in the ACFL. There is no history of permitting commercial use and is worried this may open the door to for-profit groups.

Bob shared that paddleboard yoga has been done through the Recreation department on Little Cranberry. He is also aware of some rouge wilderness companies operating in town. The Parks department is trying to make it fair for everyone. The example being Mt Erie which is a popular climbing spot for groups, but not are all nonprofits. This is a unique sport and the allowed use increases safety. Bob expressed thanks for doing this through the proper channels.

Brian asked what type of permit this would be. Bob responded that assuming all city and federal business licenses in order, there is no official paper permit. This is just the start of the process, lots of steps to go. Jesse confirmed that all licenses are in order including his accreditation. Brian asked about liability insurance and would a partnership with city provide better coverage for both? Jesse confirmed all insurance is in order. Bob suggested that we continue to discuss this in March but Jesse expressed concerned about a late start to his season.

Brian suggested a partnership with the Parks and Recreation department. Sandra agreed that there are several options but the board is not able to come to a decision this evening.

Bob suggested that Jesse come speak with the Parks department.

Friends of the Forest Update

Asa shared that they had just completed their annual look forward and the only update is they have two high school students on board as interns for water quality for Heartlake and Ace of Hearts. Their first meeting is 02/17 for training, then in the forest on 02/24 to start the program with Transitions Fidalgo. Bob clarified that this program with Friends of the Forest and Transitions Fidalgo, a partnership that has been ongoing and involved the City.

ACFL Trail Committee Report

Dan spoke about the reunion of the trail committee and they are thankful to be back.

Bob added that several members met with Planning Staff from the City and the WA Trails Association, Bob and Steve at trail #311 which is in rough shape. Parks staff are currently reviewing permitting costs. Friends of the Forest have been advocating for partnership and fixing of the trail.

Brian asked if there was any ID of the person riding the motorcycle. Bob responded that there has not been an ID but we do have people watching as much as possible in the trail system. Brian asked if we could put the photo in the paper to deter this type of activity.

Staff Reports

Steve had nothing to add to his written report. Dan asked how many downed trees there are at this time.

Steve will respond with exact number later but it is not as bad as he expected.

Bob issued a thank you to Steve for his work to coordinate the 02/19 winter work party with Friends of the Forest. The group will meet at Little Cranberry to work on the surfacing on trail #100 and possible fence and turnstile repairs, and potential invasive plant removal.

Other Business

JoAnn shared that the skate park project is out for design after the kickoff with the planning team.

Brian asked about a tree specialist that wants to come out to look at and report on cedar, possibly with Transitions Fidalgo. Steve shared that previous testing on Maple trees came back negative.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm

Respectfully submitted by: Darby Jordan

February 2022 Report from the Assistant Director's Desk

SKATE PARK

I will be on this project team from here on out. We had our initial planning team meeting Jan 31. We are mapping out our Planning Department critical path map. Looking forward to working with local inspiration Rachel Muntean-Salazar, as well as the Grindline team.

Feb 9: Director Lunsford and I walked and talked the site with Samish Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Jackie Ferry. Always a pleasure working with Jackie. Of course, we will keep her apprised as we move forward, and she will let us know if there is anything we need to know.

WINTER VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY

On a grey, rainy Feb 19th morning, we had over 30 hearty souls show up for the quarterly Friends of the Forest/COA ACFL volunteer work party. We managed to do some great surfacing work along #100, and pulled many invasive plants. Thank you one and all who came out.

ACFL/FoF/MTA

The Friends of the Forest have been advocating for an ACFL trail crew project with the Washington Trails Association. After our meeting on #311 last month, we decided to pursue a simpler task in the meantime. ACFL Steve has been touring the 113/124 area with MTA and I on different occasions. We are in the process of finalizing a plan.

LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

Director Lunsford and I met with Cole Harvey, Legislative Aide to Rep. Lekanoff. Had a fine discussion of various park projects, including pursuing grant \$ for the Skate Park project.

WASHINGTON PARK

We have been discussing how to improve the local discount protocol for camping and parking with our Finance Dept. We hope to have some information for the Parks Commission in the near future.

We also have put together an in-house WP Task Force. We are looking at all WP policies, and working toward making some recommendations to Director Lunsford in the next few months.

ROTARY CLUB TRAIL PROJECT

The excitement is building on Cap Sante. We are working on kiosks, maps and trailheads in early February. Also submitted the upland permit application.

Feb 9: COA GIS Master Robert Hoxie and I recon the trails so he may begin zeroing in on necessary coordinates for project map making.

ACFL TRAFFIC SAFETY

At the request of some trail regulars, I have submitted for Traffic Safety Committee review the Heart Lake Road crossing from the main HL parking lot to trail #313. We all know what a speedway that road corridor can be, and this blind corner can be treacherous for our hikers, bikers and equestrians.

GUEMES CHANNEL TRAIL

Our Parks Crew did a great job repairing the latest round of storm damage.

TREES

Planning asked us to take a look at an issue in the NGPE at Geer Lane. N. Johnston conducted the site visit and passed info back to Planning. Outside Parks jurisdiction.

Cap Sante Madrone Vandalism Feb 1: APD called with a report of this. I followed up Officer Rhodes' report with some quick recon and photos. Looks like at least 3 portions of substantial living limbs were cut out. Parks Crew staff Tottenham and Guthrie took a closer look the following morning. Did not find any more damage to trees, but some random burned grass and some candy wrappers. Always hate to blame those darn kids, but this one is looking that way.

ACFL Steve and I met with an Orchard Avenue residence, discussing NGPE tree concerns. Steve will do a formal arborist assessment.

REGULAR MEETINGS

Had our quarterly meeting with our Council Parks Committee. The 2022 roster is Moulton, McDougall and Hubik. We covered a lot of ground and were able to answer several good questions.

Consistently working with Friends of the Forest. Recent highlights include Ebike discussions, volunteer work party planning and programming schedule.

Our Parks Crew conducts very frank and helpful tailgate safety meetings monthly. I do my best to attend.

Thanks again to the City of Bellingham and State Parks, respectively, for providing our February Forest Board meeting with such a great panel. The ebike discussion was very helpful for me.

Enjoyed a Parks Commission field trip to Grand View Cemetery. Nicole J has done a fantastic job shepherding that project along.

ACFL Steve, Denise Crowe and I continue our monthly COA/Samish gatherings on the trails in the woods. We visited Washington Park in February. Blue blue sky and bright bright sun.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH...

It's hard to put into words just how amazing the Johnston/Tottenham lead Washington Park shop clean-up was on Feb 18th. THANK YOU

Working with the Museum on the future of James Rice Civic Park, re: a true waterfront destination is lurking in that neglected triangle... amidst the scotchbroom and the old RR ties.

Been upping the drive by's at Ace of Hearts Dog and Ballfield Park. Been happily surprised by the lack of dog traffic on the ballfield.

Working on our DOE Aquatic Plant and Algae General Permit.

Personal leave taken: Fri 2/4.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux

February 23, 2022

ACFL Maintenance Report FEBRUARY – 2022 by Steve Phillips

February 23, 2022

Winter Work Party

Last week we had an extraordinary volunteer turnout (close to 30, by my count) considering it was a drizzly Saturday morning on a holiday weekend. The group completed an impressive amount of work, collaborating to resurface Trail 100 trail going eastward from the Little Cranberry Lake parking lot. Using cedar logs gleaned from ACFL blowdowns, we replaced sections of turnpike where logs had rotted. This will help focus traffic and keep the trail footprint minimal. Bob and I had assistance from Asa and Ashleigh from the Friends of the Forest in leading this portion of the project.

The rest of the group, led by Beck from the Friends, undertook the removal of holly, English ivy, and evergreen daphne/spurge laurel in an infested corner of the woods that has been bothering me for some time.

It's a great feeling to know that this work was completed with the same amount of care that I would put into it. Thanks, volunteers and Friends staff!

Misc maintenance

I finished last month replacing the maps that were stolen out of the Ray Auld Drive trailhead kiosk. I installed a padlock hasp and locked it.

Brian Tottenham blocked off the informal turnoff/parking space on the east side of Heart Lake Road, south of Ray Auld Drive. He has been progressively adding logs and boulders to this derelict parking area.

I needed to do fewer beaver dam visits this month owing to the reduction in rainfall. Wetland levels have subsided to the point where roads and houses are well out of danger from flooding as a result of our beaver activity.

I helped cut down two severely leaning trees at Grandview Cemetery on February 1.

WDFW gill netted Heart Lake on February 1.

We are in the process of installing a more permanent porta-potty enclosure at Ray Auld Drive, similar to the one at the Mt. Erie summit. Brian Tottenham, Sky Guthrie and I prepared the site Feb 1-2, but we needed to wait for the weather to improve; we poured the concrete on February 10. Later in the month, I transplanted a few ACFL plants to vegetate the earthen berm. We hope to have the ribbon cutting on the new enclosure next month.

On February 3, someone crashed his SUV into the earthen berm at the 37th St./A Avenue S-curve. He injured a few trees, but I think they will all survive. A few branches subsequently blocked the 114 trailhead, which took me about a half hour to clear.

On February 8, I added new trail signage at 28/219 and 218/219. For some reason, these signs had never been hung, or had both vanished.

On February 11, researcher Joey Hulbert of WSU met Brian Wetcher and I at Rotary Park. He demonstrated his soil sampling protocol, which I approved. He is working with Transition Fidalgo as part of his statewide collaborative effort to figure out what's causing western redcedar dieback (See

<https://foresthealth.org/redcedar/dieback/>). He also showed us symptoms of Sooty Bark Disease, which has been the ACFL/Anacortes Parks Department radar since last year, thanks to Joey. We look forward to his findings. Maybe what he finds in Anacortes will help solve a regional mystery in a very important tree species.

I spent most of the rest of the month, between garbage and bathrooms, preparing for the Feb 19 work party. This involved a trip to Lakeside quarry, trips into the woods to glean cedar logs, measuring and numbering them for their particular destinations, and gathering tools for the weekend.

This week, Parks coworkers and I have been taking down xmas lights from the trees on Commercial Street.



