



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

March 7, 2024
6pm

In person and virtual meeting options.
In Person: City Hall, Council Chambers
Zoom Meeting Link:

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

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve Feb '24 Minutes
3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda*
4. 2026 Forest Plan Update
 - a. Staff Reviews Public Comments with Board
5. Friends of the Forest Update
6. Staff Report
7. Parks Commission Update
8. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: February 1, 2024

Board members present: Brian Wetcher, JoAnn York-Gilmore, Tabb Stringer, Nathan Schwarck, Kit Gilmore

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jamie Burroughs, Darby Jordan

Meeting held in person and via Zoom and called to order at 6:00PM

Annual Board Chair Election:

Kit expressed his thanks for the opportunity to serve as Board Chair last year and he is willing to support someone else serving if they would like. JoAnn made a motion to have Kit continue in the role of Chair, Tabb seconded, all Board members voted in favor.

Minutes: January minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

None

Little Cranberry Lake Update:

Jonn Lunsford was in attendance to give an update on Little Cranberry Lake. He provided a power point presentation showing the history of the lake and the dam as well as the levels of protection and regulations in place for the ACFL, lake and dam. Jonn also shared a way to fix and control the erosion of the lake shore and increase ADA access to the lake. These are both called for in the 2021 Forest Plan. This process is in its very early stages of exploration and will require numerous permits that will allow for public comment on each. Jane Burkhurst (Anacortes resident) asked about the critical areas review and if it has been completed. Jonn explained that the evaluation of the site is just the first step in that review and as there is not project proposal, the review is not complete. Jane also asked if there is expected to be a large increase in use of the area with this project. Staff shared that they do not believe this alone will increase the use of the lake, but due to population growth there will be an increase in use of all ACFL and parks.

Patrick Gallagher (Anacortes resident) expressed thanks for the information and presentation. He asked why boating activities would not be prohibited on the lake. Jonn responded that the Forest Plan calls for an increase in ADA access and a balance in conservation and recreation. To ban a single user group would require more study.

Sarah Peterson (Anacortes resident) asked why ADA access was called for at Little Cranberry and not a more heavily used water access area. Jonn explained that Heart Lake is also being looked at as the Master Plan from 2010 calls for expanded access there. He noted that providing ADA access at more than one place is a desire of staff.

Marlene Finley (Anacortes resident and VP of Evergreen Islands) asked about the oversight of donations and projects. She stated that the Forest Plan also has conservation language and asked if donations could be made for study and preservation. Jonn shared that donations have been made through the Parks Foundation for a variety of projects, but those projects must be in the plan and align with publicly approved goals. Marlene spoke about the CEP and the money donated to protect the ACFL from development. Jonn clarified that the definition of development was mining, logging and building, not allowing public access for recreation.

Cole Mumper (Oak Harbor resident) agreed with Mr Gallagher in prohibiting boats in order to protect the wildlife. Jonn stated that small boat access has been allowed for over 60 years and there would need to be a reason to prohibit use.

Jen McFarland (Anacortes resident) asked why one of the priorities was not a restroom at Little Cranberry. Jonn shared that Whistle and Heart Lakes historically had more use as well as more room for facilities.

Paul Vance (Anacortes resident) asked if there was a way to do some shoreline mitigation now prior to getting the permit and review completed. Jonn shared that any shoreline work must have a permit and be approved. Paul also asked about the background of the Forest Plan and the increase of the ADA access. Jonn referred to the lookout and dam trail access that was built and that it has been well received by the public. Staff and the Forest Board discussed the potential for more at their monthly public meetings and put additional access into the Forest Plan update that was adopted by City Council in 2021.

Tom Johnson (Anacortes resident) shared that he lives close to the ACFL and wants it left as wild as possible. He is against a boat launch and asked about the agencies that have to approve the plan. Jonn stated that there are agencies at the Federal, State, County and City levels that will all have to approve the plan and each will allow public comment. Tom asked where the public can get the latest information. Jonn offered his contact information as well as Bob's. There is also the online notifications from the City website and the Forest Board meetings.

Bruce Rustad (Anacortes resident) spoke about his years of forest trail maintenance and volunteering. He shared that he feels the community should have access to the lake.

Mark Nihart (Anacortes resident) shared that he has been a user of the forest lands since the 60's, using the lake for boating and swimming. He feels the erosion of the shoreline has not gotten worse over the years. Mark asked how other watercraft will be launched if this is a kayak specific launch. He also asked about the timeline of the Forest Plan being reviewed and updated, that could change what is restricted or allowed. He feels that this decision should be combined with the Forest Plan update and no changes be made to the lake at this time.

Christy Hine (Anacortes resident) spoke about being a frequent user of the ACFL and that she enjoys the quiet and peace. She wants the area protected and is an advocate for the wildlife.

Patty Pattee (Anacortes resident) stated that she has reviewed the minutes of the Forest Board meetings and does not see support for this project. Jonn shared that staff rarely hear support or opposition from the public until a project is suggested. Staff are looking at this idea to see if it fits into the Plan and increases equality and inclusion.

Sarah Roberts (Anacortes resident) expressed her appreciation for the presentation and information as well as the trail over the years. She feels that Little Cranberry is not a good kayak lake, being small. She shared that she had never heard anyone say that they wanted changes to the lake. She feels that Little Cranberry is unique with no nearby roads and should have access reduced.

Barbara Cooper (Anacortes resident) stated that she is not against ADA access but feels there are better areas.

Josh Gates (Anacortes resident) shared that he is a frequent user of the ACFL and Little Cranberry. He expressed concern over the use of the word “wild” and asked if the lake has a wildlife designation. He also shared his concern about restricting a user group and the trickle down impact that could have on other user groups. Josh asked about the ratio of conserved land to used land. Jonn shared that there is about 2200 acres of land protected in the CEP and other areas are protected by deed. When the miles of trail are combined and considered “used land”, they make up just under 4% of the ACFL with over 96% being unused.

Susana Gilbertson (Anacortes resident) asked about motorboats being allowed on the lake. Staff responded that only electric motors are allowed. She feels that the lake is quiet and peaceful and any increase in traffic is bad.

Todd Sham (Anacortes resident) enjoys the quiet and rejects any development, feeling that it disrespects the value of the ACFL.

Sarah Peterson (Anacortes resident) feel that allowing this change before the Plan adoption should be reviewed.

2026 Forest Plan Update Discussion:

Bob shared that this was kept on the agenda as staff is working on this for the March meeting, knowing the majority of this meeting would be discussion on Little Cranberry.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Katie spoke about the Naturalist program starting in March. Their annual meeting will be February 27th at 7pm.

Staff Reports:

Bob shared that Jamie is up and running in the ACFL. The team is thankful to have a full crew. Staff is working with the Friends to coordinate work projects with the next work party disguised as a hike is February 29th. Staff is also working with Josh and the Fidalgo Trail Riders on trail maintenance.

Jamie was in attendance and welcomed any questions from the Board and community.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported on the Parks Board meeting. She shared that the agenda packet has the most up to date information.

Other Business:

Marlene Finley asked if the Board and Staff were still accepting written comments. Bob responded that officially the written comment window on the Forest Plan was closed for this round. The next round of public comment will be on the draft when it is published. However, the public is always welcome to email the Board or Staff.

Adjourn at 7:47pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan

February 2024
Assistant Director's Highlights

Bob Vaux

Submitted: February 29, 2024

WASHINGTON PARK RESTROOM PROJECT

The week of Jan 22nd wrapped up with the CXT RR Unit install and hook up on Wed/Thurs, and then the walkway concrete was poured on Friday.

The week of the 29th was mostly occupied by fixing the sewer line road cut, and finishing up the landscaping, along with the last section of the walkway and the steps concrete pour. By midweek we are working on the contractor's exit punch list.

As of Feb. 5th that very punch list is getting finely honed, and working with Blackfish, HLN Engineering and CXT to wrap this project up. Metal railing fabrication in progress and should be installed next week.

Parks Team Leadership Johnston and Tottenham working now on a replanting plan for the area impacted by sewer line installation.

On the routine WP front, conducted the annual residence inspection with Caretaker Chris. He continues doing a great job caring for the house, as well as the park.

Still waiting for our railing for the new restroom steps. Along with this, we are dealing with a needed correction on the water line hook up. Not debilitating challenges but taking time to resolve.

ACFL

Parks Tottenham and I took a look at a real soft spot a short distance north of the paved section of the Little Cranberry access road. A major source for this appears to be the deterioration of the ditch along the road's west side. We are reaching out to the COA Streets Team for a consultation.

They responded almost immediately, reminding us that the LC access road from Georgia to the base of the paved section is part of the Public Works storm water control system. They did a great job of improving the road, as well as the storm water infrastructure.

Our DOE grant (FEMA funds distributed by the State) for the structural assessment of the Whistle Lake dam and accompanying safety plan is getting closer to distribution. We should have a confirmed access plan to share very soon.

ACFL Jamie and I spent some time exploring the ridge that parallels "A" Avenue, responding to the report of a rogue toilet placement. Sure enough, we found it on a fragile mossy outcropping. It appeared to be unused but had been placed very deliberately. An explanation would be fascinating, and probably rather sad.

Jamie and I met up with Denise Crowe for our monthly Samish/COA outing. We focused this trip on 210/224/241 and 244. All's well on this particular day.

Jamie escorted WDFW to Whistle Lake with a truck load of trout. I didn't hear the final number, but they do stop by with fish every once in a while.

Parks & Rec staff working with Ellie/FoF on some future volunteer projects, with a focus on invasive removal.

More time in the woods with Jamie, including a photo recon of the WL dam. Also took a trip up #133, as some recent motorbike activity in that area has been reported. Found some tracks. Also found significant hiker-created short cuts and social trails. We will get to work on making those go away.

Jamie and I spent some time with Fidalgo Trail Rider Josh Gates, planning an upcoming FTR work party on #100. Will focus on some much-needed turnpike upgrades.

#221 repair on site precon w/Jamie. He has a good plan and executed it well.

Later that day, J and I joined FoF staff, and put together the spring volunteer work party plan near #304x#302. Based upon a tip from a regular hiker, we will do invasive removal here.

Jamie and I did some social trail recon along #109. We found what seems to be a rather old and little used route. We did some creative landscaping. Jamie will monitor. Walked #129 as well. Quiet Tuesday afternoon.

Attended the annual meeting of the Friends of the Forest. Very interesting presentation on BioDiversity by Jake Verschuyl. FoF legend Phil Burton was also in the house! The Friends continue to do their important and very good work.

Worked in a late February Samish/COA trip. Denise and I spent some time at the 32nd Street swamp, #107 and the Little Cranberry dam. Jamie was busy with Steve tearing down a "fort" structure just off of #215.

SKATE PARK LIGHTS

Janicki General Contracting is still unable to confirm when their lighting sub will have our lights on site. We appreciate everyone's patience and will certainly announce the arrival of light once we have it in hand.

SENATOR LOVELETT, REP. RAMEL

Parks & Rec management team met with the good Senator to advocate for the WWRP program and update her on a variety of projects. The Senator's support of local parks projects goes back to her days on our City Council, and even before.

I had a phone meeting with Rep. Ramel as well, discussing WWRP, some of our bigger projects and potential RCO funds seeking. Really appreciated Rep. Ramel calling me back after a very long week on the Hill.

HIRING

Provided support and analysis for both our Recreation Coordinator and Senior Activity Center Program Coordinator hiring processes.

VOLUNTEERS

Lined out a Boy Scout troop on daphne removal from the Cap Sante Disc Golf course surroundings.

ABPAC

Joined this monthly meeting for folks advocating muscle powered recreation and transportation. The time is now to begin planning for Open Streets 2024: AUG 25TH!

GO ROTARY!

Special thanks to Tom Decker and his Rotary team for continuing their regular volunteer care of the Rotary and Cap Sante parks. Appreciate this citizen positivity.

–took vacation Feb 14–20

James Burroughs
ACFL Maintenance Technician
February 27, 2024

ACFL Maintenance Report: February – 2024

Introduction

Hello again, February has flown by, and it appears spring is almost here! I'm almost 3 months in and still loving it every day. It's been great to meet new community members. This month I've helped the park's maintenance crew in a

wide variety of different tasks and locations. I've also been involved in organizing our volunteer work parties. I'm excited to tell you all that we now have dates for these events. March 9th we will be working with the Fidalgo Trail riders on trail 100, to improve some areas on the trail that need some serious gravel work. March 23rd, we have another event with the Friends of the Forest, it will take place on trail 304 where there are some severe invasive plant takeovers happening. Excited to get my first ACFL work party under my belt and continue my efforts in improving our forestlands. May the forest be with you.

Maintenance Activities

Trail clearing: 218*, 205*, 300, 21, 212, 130, 206, 302, 316, 26, 217, 121, 204, 224, 249

Multiple trees cut:*

Beaver rounds: Inspections of water areas such as 32nd st swamp, 108 Bridge, Mitten Pond beaver deceiver and Ace of Hearts creek. Removing debris in these areas as necessary per permits.

Sanitation: Cleaning ACFL bathrooms and Garbage rounds

Litter patrol: Picking up litter in ACFL parking lots and trails

Sign replacement: New sign up on trail 300, New trail numbers on 134

Blocked off social trails: Trail 133 and 104

Graffiti Removal: Removed multiple graffiti spots at Mount Erie

Trail repair: Repaired trail 221 where a tree had uprooted through the middle of the trail

Violations in the ACFL

Out of season Motor bikes: There has been a large increase in the use of motorbikes out-of-season in the ACFL, numerous reports from community members all over the ACFL. I've only managed to make contact with one user and educate them on motorbike use in the ACFL

Illegal dumping of garbage: Picked up multiple items that have been dumped in ACFL such as furniture, appliances, etc.

Off leash dogs: Continued efforts in educating forestland users of the importance of dogs on leash

Overnight camping: Monitored different suspected vehicles of overnight camping in ACFL