



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

May 2, 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 April '24 Minutes
3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda*
4. ACFL Forest Canopy Assessment Grant
-Robbie Andrus is a postdoctoral researcher at Washington State University. He studies the implications of disturbances (bark beetles, fire, drought) and climate change for forest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest.
5. Friends of the Forest Update
6. Staff Report
7. Parks Commission Update
8. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: April 4th, 2024

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jamie Burroughs, Darby Jordan

Meeting held in person and via Zoom and called to order at 6:01PM

Minutes: Board member Kit Gerwels acknowledged receipt of comments from a member of the public that sought to expand on comments made during the March meeting. The content of the comments (budgets and revenue) were noted. March minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

None

2026 Forest Plan Update Discussion:

Kit provided an overview of the process for the Forest Plan update, sharing that the Board has reviewed all comments from the public as well as staff recommendations. All Board members gave their opinions, with the next steps being staff writing a first draft which will then come back to the Board and public for additional comments and revisions.

Board member comments:

JoAnn-

JoAnn shared her thanks to the community for taking time to submit their thoughts and concerns. It was clear that climate change is at the forefront of many people's minds. JoAnn expressed her gratitude for the community partners such as the Friends of the Forest and Transition Fidalgo that are studying the science of the ACFL. She feels it is important to recognize the future changes and adjust the governance accordingly. She noted that the community is growing and changing, with increasing population a factor in the ACFL. She anticipates that rules and regulations will become stronger City wide. JoAnn would like to see the plan have an improved format and be easier to read. The Board has looked at examples from other entities for ideas and guidance. She feels that the City staff have a good relationship with other agencies at the county and state levels as well as the community partners. JoAnn gave her recommendation that staff move forward with drafting a plan to bring back to the Board and community.

Nate-

Nate shared that he works at the Shannon Point Marine Center and through that network has access to the expertise of many professionals and scientist colleagues. Nate also expressed his thanks to the public for their comments

and time. When reviewing the current plan, he noted one sentence that shared the goal of the plan: "...to develop a plan that works to conserve and enhance the unique environment and habitats within the ACFL while maintaining recreational opportunities for local residents." He shared that the comments expressed the struggle of balancing conservation and recreation. Nate is hesitant to make any major changes to policy. He shared a quote from a 1947 text book on the definition of conservation, that states in part "...the wise use of existing supply...".

Tabb-

Tabb expressed his gratitude to be part of the Forest Board and have the opportunity to give back to the community. He shared that last April and May, he felt that no changes should be made to the Plan without full public input. Tabb thanked the community for their support and comments, as this allows for informed decisions. Tabb stated that he had spent the last 12 months on the Board listening to the public. He said that it has become clear that everyone ultimately wants the same thing-for the natural beauty of the ACFL to be kept for future generations. However, there are lots of opinions on how to accomplish that goal. Tabb expressed that there has been no major degradation to the ACFL from recreation which he feels shows successful management by City staff and the Forest Board. The comments reflected the concern about population growth and the popularity of the ACFL. He shared that the City and the Board look at science in addition to Transition Fidalgo and their studies. Tabb felt last year that the Plan was disjointed but now feels that it makes more sense and needs minor changes instead of sweeping changes. He expressed his support in the staff starting to draft an updated Plan.

Kit-

Kit shared that the Forest Plan has been around for over 43 years and much of it has stood the test of time. He mentioned a few things that have changed; in 1998 the CEP was started as a new form of revenue which was a big change from the 1981 plan that focused on logging the ACFL. The latest Plan focuses on forest education and the help of non-profits. He shared that more land has come under the City's management but the needs and desires of the community have been at the forefront of the decisions. Kit expressed his thanks to those that took the time to submit comments and opinions, stating that out of 17,000 people in town, the 40 that shared their thoughts show a core group committed to caring for the ACFL. He also expressed that it is tough to find the balance between conservation and recreation. He acknowledged that out of town uses have increased and the modes of use have evolved over time. The goal is to consider how all of those users can exist on the trails together. Kit gave an example of the increase in seasonal use at Whistle Lake during the summer. Rules and constraints can be put in place, but if there is not a way to enforce the rules, there will still be issues. The Anacortes Police Department are helpful, but there needs to be more resources

for enforcement. Kit stated that budget and staffing are large parts of this issue with hopes that the Plan can have a general outline of the needs now and in the future to anticipate the increased needs. He shared that the Plan is updated only every five years, so this should be general actions and guidance. Kit would like to see the updated Plan have the increase in acreage and show the new areas, possibly an overlay map showing the CEP, previous state park and what is left to achieve full protection under the CEP. Kit also stated that there should be monitoring of ecosystem health included as this would allow the Plan to be forward looking and more informed to help guide decisions.

Brian-

Brian also thanked the community for the comments and suggestions. He shared that he has read every comment and that most site conservation as the principle concern and priority and recreation should be second. Brian feels that “less is more” when it comes to user groups and any expansion. He shared that the Board has looked at other documents such as federal, state, county and City regulations that cover the ACFL and would like to see these in the Plan in a clear and concise manner. Brian stated that many of the comments mentioned things already being done, such as moving trails away from the water, but that the Plan could be clearer in some areas. He recommends staff begin to write a draft in preparation of going forward with a new Plan.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Ellie was in attendance and reported that April and May have been busy with the Spring Break camps. They hosted two sessions with about 30 kids. The Naturalist Club is up and running with 15 participants and they are almost half-way through the program studying the ecology of Fidalgo Island. The Friends are looking for summer volunteers to help with their Trail Ambassador program. The Friends held a work party recently to pull invasives and despite it being wet and muddy, the volunteers were all smiles. Brian asked about replanting with native species when an area is cleared of invasives. Ellie answered that they have not replanted in the past as the native plants quickly fill in the open spaces.

Staff Reports:

Bob and Jamie had nothing to add to their written reports. Kit expressed his thanks to Jamie for his hard work.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported on the Parks Board meeting, sharing that the most up to date information is in the packet. The last Park Board meeting involved a discussion on the small courts area at Storvik and what the community would like to see. The other big announcement is that the new restrooms are open at Washington Park.

Other Business:

None

Adjourn at 6:52pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan

April 2024
Assistant Director's Highlights

Bob Vaux

Submitted: April 23, 2024

EARTH DAY CLEAN UP THANK YOU'S

Thanks so much for the following...Rotary Club work on Cap Sante/Rotary Parks / Friends of the Forest on Rotary Park beach / Anacortes Diving and Supply on and under Heart Lake. All three of these projects were filled with volunteers making our community better for all of us.

BEN ROOT SKATE PARK

On March 25th Janicki's electrical sub is on site prepping for tomorrow's light pole and fixture delivery. The 26th does indeed bring the installation of the working lights. There was some ground impact, but Janicki crew did a pretty good job of repairing.

Engineering Kristen and I did meet on site with Ferndale Public Works staff, as they are embarking on a Janicki/Grindline skate park project very soon. Good talk. Told them to enjoy.

COMMUNITY FOREST LANDS

With Ashleigh moving on, Ellie will be taking over the Friends of the Forest Trail Ambassador program. We had a good discussion about some future options. Looking forward to the TA program's continued expansion.

A fond farewell to Ashleigh. It has been a pleasure working with her these last few years. Her contributions to the ACFL will long be appreciated.

Good to hear Forest Plan thoughts from the Forest Advisory Board at the April FAB meeting. Time to start updating the document. It will be shared with another public comment process via the FAB, most likely in early 2025.

Have programmed focus time on the Forest Plan update into my daily routine. Jonn and Darby are also engaged in the process.

Expanding trail patrol hours with Jamie. We covered 226/230/207/21, responding to a report of a bicycle jump in the area. Jamie has since repaired the jump area. We also looked at a property line question in the North Heart Unit. All seems fine on the public side of the line.

SPECIAL THANKS to all the climbers that showed up on April 13th for the annual Dallas Kloke clean up. Two main groups covered the summit parking area and several of the rock-climbing sites.

DOE held an informational meeting on the "A" Avenue landfill process. Public input continues.

Jamie and I spent a beautiful morning doing recon on the Pacific Northwest Trail section in the ACFL, as well as some forest boundary observation: 23/211/210/224/241/250/210S. Doing some inventory along with some scouting for a National Trails Day project.

OPEN STREETS

Council unanimously passed the street closure for this annual event. Being held August 25th.

PARKS COMMISSION

Spent most of the April meeting discussing the public's input on the northwest corner of Storvik. Director Lunsford will have more to say about that at the May meeting.

DISC GOLF COURSE

Working with Parks Tottenham and Disc Golf Club leader Aaron Bryant on some understory rehab and basic course maintenance planning.

SEASONAL STAFF

Parks Manager Johnston and I spent a day interviewing seasonal job candidates. Nice to see a few more applications flowing in than in recent years. Nicole now working on making some offers via Human Resources.

TREES

Spent an afternoon with Arborist Steve, visiting three different ACFL neighbors and working through tree questions with each.

LEAVE TAKEN

March 27 – April 1

April 19

James Burroughs

ACFL Maintenance technician

April 22nd, 2024

ACFL Maintenance Report: April – 2024

Introduction

It's been a busy month in the ACFL this month, thanks to the nice weather. We are seeing more visitors every day. Saturday the 27th will be opening day for fishing on Heart Lake which will mean another busy weekend for the ACFL. I will be there both Saturday and Sunday monitoring the garbage and restrooms and making sure ACFL rules are followed by our visitors. This month I've tried to identify some more future projects to start before we get into the busy trail trimming months. Some of these projects include replacing some more of these rotten and old turnstiles on our hiker only trails. I will continue my efforts in making the ACFL better each day! May the forest be with you.

Maintenance Activities

ACFL Garbage & Restrooms

Trail clearing: 201*, 26, 303, 100, 221

Multiple trees cut:*

Signage: New and replaced signs at 135, 134, 104, 23, Heart Lake boat launch

Boundary Patrols: Ensuring ACFL boundaries are not being infringed upon

Trash can configurations: Seasonal Can at Heart Lake boat launch installed, New trash can pad at Ray Auld dr.

Trail patching: 104, 126

Block social trails: 230, 134, 10, 221

Pothole filling: Heart Lake parking lot entrance

Projects: New “turnstile” at 215, (*Pictures below)



Before



After

Violations in the ACFL

Off leash dogs: Continue to educate and remind visitors of ACFL rules

Camping in ACFL: as weather gets nicer the attempt to camp in the ACFL by visitors ramps up, one incident of it already on 4/13

Trail usage: reminded all user groups to use only the trails there allowed to go on.

Litter: As more visitors come to the ACFL, unfortunately so does the litter.