



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

September 5, 2024
6pm

In person and virtual meeting options.

In Person: **Anacortes Library Community Meeting Room**

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/88308344363>

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve August '24 Minutes
3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda*
4. Friends of the Forest Update
 - Wetlands Monitoring Update
5. Staff Report
6. Parks Commission Update
7. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: August 1st, 2024

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jamie Burroughs, Darby Jordan, Jonn Lunsford

Meeting held in person and via Zoom and called to order at 6:02PM

Minutes: May minutes approved as written.

Thank you to Geri Rubin: Bob expressed thanks to Geri's 20 plus years of service on the trail committee as the equestrian representative. This role was busier when trails were being developed and built. Her role was very important during Covid as communication with the community groups as social distancing was so important. The Board and community express their gratitude for her time and communication and education. Geri stated that it was her pleasure and honor to serve.

Confirm New Member of the ACFL Trail Committee: Bob introduced the new member and equestrian representative for the trail committee-Trisha Sutton. She has been a part of the team unofficially since the "high-centered horse", always willing to help. She has grown up in Anacortes and is now raising her kids here. The Board expressed their full support and thanks.

Public Comments: Tim Schmidt was in attendance to express his thanks for the opportunity to use the ACFL for motorized bikes. All user groups are able to use the trails for training and strengthening skills, along with the motorized users. This has allowed him to take trips to Joshua Tree and Death Valley and have the skills necessary to ride in those conditions. He states that he will continue to come and thank the Board and staff for the access to the trails.

Budget Update with Director Lunsford: Jonn spoke about the general Parks department budget as well as the ACFL budget. The budget planning is in process for 2025 and will be sent to the Mayor and Council in October and November. The ACFL funds have stipulations on most so they are allocated to benefit the ACFL. The ACFL budget has about \$2000 of discretionary spending for projects each year, this is where tools, gravel, supplies, etc are spent from. Any further spending will need to come from grants or donations. Jonn shared that a grant proposal is being presented to the State at the end of the month for the Heart Lake Master Plan. But this is just the very first step in a long process requiring support from local, regional and state representatives. Overall, 2025 will be another very lean year for the City with property and sales tax down, however staffing levels will not change.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Katie was in attendance and reported that the big news for the Friends was the soft opening of their new building. They are currently open T/W/Th from 10-3. Ellie is leading the kids activities and they expect new exhibits to open in October.

The Forest Discovery Camp is four weeks of 9-4 and they are getting great feedback from this program.

Their annual fundraiser will be on September 28th at Whisteria Gardens.

Ellie reported that their Trail Ambassador program engaged over 1000 people to date and collected information from over 1700 this summer season. After Labor Day, that data will be reviewed and presented.

Staff Reports:

Bob reported that we are over halfway through the summer and that Jamie has been a fantastic addition to the team. The seasonals, Rubin and Tenzin, have also been amazing and taken a very invested approach to the ACFL. All 50 miles of trail have been trimmed and much data has been collected. There was also the benefit of having the School Resource officer partner with the crew to help with enforcement.

Unfortunately, there was approximately 250 square feet of Whistle Lake shoreline destroyed. Staff is working with APD to look into this criminal activity.

It has been a very family friendly summer overall as the best enforcement is just having families out and about.

Jamie shared that he is still loving his job, even with the Whistle Lake challenges.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported on the Parks Board meeting, sharing that the most up to date information is in the packet. Nicole shared about the prospect of sand volleyball at Storvik park.

Other Business:

None

Adjourn at 7:05pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan

August 2024 Assistant Director's Highlights

Submitted: August 27, 2024
Bob Vaux

EAST WHISTLE LAKE SHORELINE VANDALISM

>You have probably seen on social media that someone(s) did a lot of damage to the WL shoreline, just north of Madrona Beach. Trees were chopped/hacked down and all understory was cleared. Report was made to APD. It is now an active case.

SEASONAL SWITCH

>August 4 will be the farewell shift for Ruben, who has done a fantastic job for us. He is headed back to WSU, and we know he will continue to find success there. We did find another local young man, Gibson, who started July 31. Gibson will take over for Ruben and get us through Labor Day. Welcome aboard Gibson!
Shout out to Ruben and Tenzin for finishing all 50 miles of trail trimming.

AUGUST FOREST ADVISORY BOARD

>Thank you to our friends at the Public Library for the “new” FAB meeting space. Meeting was highlighted by thanking Geri Rubin for her years of service on our trail committee, welcoming Trisha Sutton aboard as her replacement and Director Lunsford's budget update.

FOREST VANDALS

>There are some instances of folks adding their own red tape to our trail user signage. Please remember, every trail user impacts the woods. Do your best to represent the “C” in the ACFL.

ACFL RECON

>Spent some time 8/7 on 107/108/124/123/113/125/137. Looking at a variety of issues raised by various forest users and neighbors. We do have some on-going motorcycle poaching of closed trails. I continue to work with John Meehan and APD on this front. I was reminded of the social trail impact along the eastern shores of Big Beaver Pond. Unless folks are willing to stop walking around in there, it is almost impossible to rehab. I was happy to see all dogs I encountered on leash and did help one turned around hiker find her way back to Little Cranberry.

>Staff and I keeping an eye on the Whistle Lake beaver activity while we await response on our Hydraulic Project Approval application to Ecology. Our goal is to manage with hand tools as we do at a variety of spots throughout the woods.

ANOTHER SMALL WILDFIRE

>On 8/7 a regular ACFL mountain biker reported a heavy smoke smell near the south end of 250. We deployed staff into the various Heart Lake trails, as well as Police and Fire personnel operating a drone from a Mt. Erie viewpoint. One of our seasonals spotted the smoke from up there, and a DNR helo was able to pinpoint what turned out to be less than an acre burn on private land near Lakeside Industries. Mt. Erie FD and DNR put the fire out.

SAN JUAN PASSAGE VIEW WINDOWING

>This every 3-year project, as laid out in the City Council approved plat conditions, requires significant staff time and periodic closure of the Guemes Channel Trail. Signature Tree Service working hard to operate within the approved guidelines. One of the increasing challenges of this work is the upgraded Critical Areas Ordinance and Shoreline Master Program since the original SJP plat conditions. Both the SJP HOA and our Planning Department are hoping to sit down and review this process going forward.

Project wrapped up on Aug 13. Now, we are moving on to similar work at Channel Landing.

OPEN STREETS 2024

>Working with the usual suspects on this year's event; Aug 25. Special thanks to Josh Gates for taking the lead baton from Warren Tessler. And thank you so much Warren for working so hard to create and nurture this fun event for the past several years.

Attended final pre-event ABPAC meeting. Good turn-out. All the volunteers ready to make it all happen.

Shout Out to the COA Engineering team for putting out the street closure warnings Fri 8/23.

The Event was a great success. Solid attendance, lots of family-based smiles. Thank you Steve Lange as well as the Fidalgo Trail Riders for all the help with set up and take down.

FTR VOLUNTEER WORK FORCE

>Jamie and I had a great meeting with Josh Gates of the Fidalgo Trail Riders. He and his teams are ready to deepen their trail maintenance skills and take on more projects. We are stoked to continue to work with them.

An interesting note, we held this meeting at Little Cranberry. **While there was no sign of geese, including no goose poop on the dam, there were four fresh piles of dog poop instead.** These are coming from regular users of the ACFL. It's really hard to understand why...

AND...

>took some personal leave July 24, 25, 26, Aug 5

>Director Lunsford took a couple of days off July 29, 30. I stayed pretty close to the office these days with admin coverage.

>started a Zoom series sponsored by the Society for Outdoor Recreational Professionals (SORP); An Integrated Approach to Recreation and Fire Resiliency and Recovery. A couple of the early points made were how much commitment is required to start the prescribed burn process. Once you start that process there is a very high level of on-going maintenance required, and it's expensive. Large scale land managers are working to improve recreational opportunities as surveillance is often the most effective in preventing and spotting wildfire. Land managers also finding that improved accessibility typically improves situations like illegal dumping, vandalism and rogue recreators. User groups holding each other accountable is the most effective management tool. Along with full-time Park Rangers, of course.

>Pano AI Advance Wildfire Detection: AFD Chief Harris, Director Lunsford and I enjoyed a Zoom presentation from this company. Very interesting technology. We are following up with some questions and listing options for how it may be utilized on Fidalgo Island.

>Ellie/FoF lead a second meeting of the new office's interpretive center design committee. A solid coming together of concepts and goals. Looking forward to what the Friends pull off.

>August Parks Commission: provided update on recent ACFL vandalism.

>Aug 15-22: Parks Manager Johnston taking a well-deserved vacation. Doing my best to help fill in.

>Aug 15: good Council Parks Committee meeting. Discussed a wide array of projects and programs. Dug into the current COA Trespass rules. Parks staff hoping to work back toward the old way.

>Aug 16: Samish/COA ACFL hike with Denise Crowe. Showed her Whistle Lake / Toot Swamp beaver activity and covered the 205/206/22 loop. Beautiful. Quiet.

>As we approach Labor Day, have been able to get back to the Forest Plan update.

James Burroughs
ACFL Maintenance technician

August 28, 2024

ACFL Maintenance Report: August – 2024

Hello all, this month our numbers in the forest lands have slowed down quite a bit compared to July, thanks to some cloudy and rainy days. The weather has given us opportunity to get back to some maintenance tasks that have been on the backburner due to the needed patrols of the lakes. Some of the highlights include updated signposts, turnstile replacement, round 2 of trail trimming and gate cleaning. The ACFL also benefited from an eagle scout project that consisted of making new signs up at Mount Erie, more specifically the Nettle alley, sugarloaf and Ray auld trails. The signs look great, special thanks you to Eagle scout Bryson.

Maintenance Activities

- ACFL sanitation
 - ACFL patrol
 - Litter pick up
 - Hazard/Downed trees cut: 137, 202, 21*, 29, 212, 20*, 237, 108 and 215
-

*: Multiple trees cut

- Signage: New signpost for Whistle Lake fire lane sign, 201 /237 trail head and 210 trail head, new signs on trails 21, 112, new caution sign for 313
 - Hiker only turnstile: Replaced 216 rotten turnstile
 - Closed social trails: 133, 104, 121
 - Trail trimming: Second round of trimming at north heart, northeast whistle and south cranberry
 - Installed trail cam: 205 illegally made beach, Mt. Erie Road and Whistle Lake Road
-

Violations in the ACFL

Homeless camp: August 1st I found another camp in the woods off Cranberry Lake road that belonged to the man that Officer Kellington and I had contacted about a month prior. I met with Officer Kellington later that day and the man was issued a trespass from all Anacortes parks. I have since returned to check the area multiple times and have seen no trace of him.

Trail 205 illegally made beach: I discovered an area just north of the area we call Madrona beach that had been turned into a trail down to the shoreline. 3 trees were cut/hacked down and all ground level vegetation had been removed. I covered the area with brush that had been cut. I installed a trail cam that day on 205 facing the illegal beach. However we have not seen anyone try to remove the brush that is covering up the trail. There is an active police report on the issue.
