



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

P.O. BOX 547, ANACORTES, WA 98221
(360) 293-1918

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

February 6, 2025
6pm

In person and virtual meeting options.

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

Zoom Meeting Link:

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

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve January '25 Minutes
3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda*
4. Forest Plan: 2026 Update Draft Review
5. Friends of the Forest Update
6. Staff Reports
7. Parks Commission Update
8. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: January 2, 2025

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 called to order at 6:01PM

Minutes: December minutes were unanimously approved.

2025 Board Chair Election: Kit was unanimously supported to hold the position for another year.

Public Comments:
None

Heart Lake Master Plan / Grant Review: Bob presented the PowerPoint that Darby and Director Lunsford put together for the ALEA grant presentation. This Recreation and Conservation Office program scored the HL grant 8th out of 15. We will find out if we get funded some time after the current legislative session, and the State budget is approved. A good discussion was had by the Board and the public in attendance.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Ellie was in attendance and reported that the Forest Discovery Center is closed to the public now and will be for some time as staff is fully occupied with programs. She also announced the resignation of Executive Director Katie Early, who left her position with the FoF as of the end of December. We would like to thank Katie for being a great partner and we wish her all the best.

Ellie briefed the FAB on the FoF's new home school program. Because group sizes could be up to 30, permission from the Board and the Parks Director required. Both gave their full support.

Staff Reports:

Bob is hopeful there will be some Whistle Lake dam study data available in the next month or so. Nothing new on the Old Dump MTCA protocol.

Staff is hoping to have a draft of the 2026 Forest Plan update available for the Board and public by January 23. It will then be presented to the FAB for discussion at the Feb. 6 meeting.

Thank you Jamie for a great first year! Jamie reports that he is looking forward to year 2.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported that the Commission continues to work with staff and the public on the pickle ball front.

Other Business:
None.

Adjourn at 6:59pm

Respectfully Submitted by Bob Vaux

**(Darby was gracious enough to come in and get the meeting rolling despite being on sick leave. THANK YOU!) Also, thanks to Ellie from the Friends for running the PowerPoint presentation.*

JANUARY 2025
Assistant Director's Highlights
Submitted: January 30, 2025
Bob Vaux

FOREST PLAN 2026 UPDATE

Working with Director Lunsford and Darby on the updated draft for Forest Advisory Board review. Shout out to Planning Libby for process input, and to Transition Fidalgo for contributing a chapter based upon their years of Citizen Scientist work. We were able to distribute the marked-up draft on Fri, Jan 24th. The plan is now available on the ACFL website as well. The public review will commence at the Feb. 6 FAB meeting.

CAP SANTE VIEW PROJECT

Spent some more time assisting Engineer Tech Kristen on the daily job site inspections. Strandberg crew doing great work. The project blends with the spot more and more.

TREES

ACFL Jamie and I visited a Whistle Lake area neighbor who found a City tree had come down on their side of the line during a recent storm. No damage to people or property. We will schedule a clean up after the first of the year when folks return from holiday leave.

Arborist Steve and I continued working with a Forest Ridge resident on some tree concerns. Steve will evaluate after the first of the year.

Working with a Woods at Sunset Cove NGPE neighbor on a potential hazard tree.

Met with Olsen Tree Service at a private residence job on Parkside Drive, just outside of Washington Park entrance. The hazard tree work will be done exclusively in street right of way.

ACFL RECON

- #247: working on some potential boundary line / private trail activity issues.

- Little Cranberry Dam: working on updating safety and maintenance requirements, as per WDOE.
- #215 tree: a big one came down over the holidays. Jamie did a great job getting the trail back open.
- #102; tricky spot to navigate near the NE corner of LC. Repair requires a comprehensive list of permits. Will put the project in the queue.
- Hiker social trail activity continues near the 29th Street water tank, Morrison Natural Park area. ACFL Jamie has been dealing with this for some time, and he will continue to.
- Great work on the new #104 railing that drops down near the #106 bridge. Thank you Jamie and the Fidalgo Trail Riders.

ROTARY CLUB VOLUNTEERS

I continue to work with and be impressed by Tom Decker and the Rotary Club on the Cap Sante Summit Trail that climbs up the west side of the parks. Thanks to all the club members who consistently volunteer their time to make this trail a great part of our community.

WEST 6TH PARK PROJECT

While there is currently no funding designated for this project, there is significant interest in it from neighbors and elected officials. Director Lunsford and I met with Heike Nelson/HLN Engineering to start the discussion of planning options. We are prepping for a community information meeting to be held Jan. 30th at the Anacortes Senior Activity Center.

DISC GOLF COURSE

Parks Tottenham and I continue to work with DGC Club President Aaron B. on course and park improvements. We will be working next on some green space improvements, focusing on exchanging invasive plants for native stock.

DOGS OFF LEASH

Parks Manager Johnston and I met with Animal Control Officer Z. Nybo, discussed strategies for off leash emphasis patrols in the parks and forest lands. We are hoping to elevate education and voluntary compliance.

ADMIN

This month's administrative focus:

- Ben Root Skate Park: restroom and parking lot project management. Have been reviewing preliminary documents with Engineering.
- WDFW HPA's: continuing to work on simplifying the beaver dam / beaver deceivers permitting process with J. Pyle, WDFW Area Wildlife Habitat Biologist.
- Working with COA Planning and WDFW on a couple of ACFL bridge replacement projects: 105 and 115.
- Working on the Parks & Rec elements of the COA's Comp Plan update.

James Burroughs
ACFL Maintenance technician
January 28th, 2025

ACFL Maintenance Report: January – 2025

This month I've spent a lot of time working on the East Cap Sante trail project with Steve Phillips and some others in the Parks Maintenance team. The goal was to improve accessibility to the trail due to the newly constructed viewing platform. We did some gravel and tread work at the bottom of the trail, a couple of small reroutes in some slippery rockface areas of the trail, worked on the rock stairway, created new steps at the top of the trail head and trimmed the trail. All this was done over a couple of weeks and was a lot of fun to work on.

I also helped the Parks maintenance team on a few other occasions such as Washington park loop road shoulder work, blowing leaves at Storvik Park and helping with a repair at Tursi Park.

In some ACFL news, we had a volunteer work party on January 25th. This was with the Fidalgo Trail Riders and the goal of the work party was to replace the rotting rail on trail 104 near the southeast corner of Little Cranberry and to address some trail tread issues in the nearby area. There was a lot of prep work for me considering the rail was roughly 90ft. long! I had to find and harvest all the cedar material we would need and then I cut all my rail and post material to length. Once I had all my material, I staged it for our work party. It was a good turnout of volunteers, who all worked hard. We also addressed some social trail shortcuts on 104 that continue to get opened by hikers. If it continues, I plan on getting a trail cam out there to address the issue. A couple of the members of the crew and I worked on clearing tree debris from an ACFL neighbors property. A tree from the ACFL (large hemlock) fell and took out some trees in his yard and created quite the mess! We still have more clean up to do there, which I anticipate being back this week to finish up. I also plan to install a water gauge for Little Cranberry lake this week.

The rest of the month has been usual ACFL duties including, Clearing downed and or hazardous trees from trails, beaver rounds and sanitation.

Before and after pictures of 104 rail

I figured I'd give the new rail a bit of character, so I used a chisel to give it a bit of a beaver log look!



Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan



November 2026 Draft

The City of Anacortes owns more than 2,950 acres of designated forest lands within the City limits. This area includes Mt. Erie, Whistle Lake, Little Cranberry Lake, 80 acres north of Heart Lake and the former State Park lands.

These community forest lands contain some of the most unique and complex living environments in the Puget Sound Region. Few cities are so fortunate to have such a resource, coupled with the broad-based desire of its citizens to conserve and responsibly use these resources.

This plan is an update to the 2009 plan. The Forest Advisory Board started discussing this update in the fall of 2013 and began taking public comments at monthly meetings in 2014.

The goal of this process was to develop a plan that works to conserve and enhance the unique environment and habitats within the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) while maintaining recreational opportunities for local residents.

Use in the ACFL from local and regional residents has increased as people seek out its natural beauty and recreational opportunities and should be managed to accommodate this use.

In 1998 the Conservation Easement Program (CEP) was initiated to protect the community forest lands from logging, mining and development while raising money to pay for management and stewardship of the ACFL. It was created when City Council passed Resolution #1492 on December 21, 1998. The program places one acre of land under conservation easement for every \$1,000 donated. City Council reviews and approves each round of acreage that is protected.

Private non-profit groups Skagit Land Trust and Friends of the ACFL are partners with the City in this project. The Skagit Land Trust holds the easements and places them on file with the County Auditor and the Friends of the ACFL help promote the project in the community.

The easement program was conceived of as means to replace revenue which was lost when logging was discontinued in the ACFL in the late 1980's. The money donated goes into the Forest Endowment Fund. The principal of this fund cannot be spent; however, interest revenue can be used for the forest lands. In August of 2007, the fund surpassed the initial goal of \$1.5 million, 11 years ahead of schedule. The CEP will continue as long as there is land to conserve in the community forest lands and people willing to contribute to its protection.

The Friends of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands have provided a wide variety of community forest education programs and naturalist consultation in service to the ACFL since 1988. These services are in partnership with the City and School District, with additional financial support from grants, businesses, private donors, and membership.

Over the course of 30+ years of local forest education, thousands of citizens of all ages have grown in knowledge and appreciation for the ACFL leading to many tangible benefits. These include and are not limited to: an increase in nature literacy, an increase in enjoyment of the woods, a burgeoning conservation ethic in the community, tremendous support for the creation of the Conservation Easement Program and broad financial generosity to see it through, steady stewardship participation in work parties and committees, and a demonstrated sense of respect and care for the woods among most local youth.

This plan reflects new policies and practices in the management and stewardship of the ACFL to address changes that have occurred since the plan was updated. Our goal is to update this plan regularly to review what is and is not working to maintain the ACFL as a healthy forest, wildlife habitat and local recreational venue.

2026 Forest Plan

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INTRODUCTION:

Since the first trails maps began to emerge in the early 1980's, the citizens of Anacortes have taken great pride in the care and enjoyment of what is now the 3,000 acres of Community Forest Lands (ACFL). The ACFL contains some of the most unique and complex living environments in the Puget Sound Region. Few cities are so fortunate to have such a resource, coupled with the broad-based desire of its citizens to conserve and responsibly use these resources.

Managed by the Anacortes Parks & Recreation Department (APRD), the fifty miles of shared use trails have created a link between recreation and conservation, leading to a very successful Conservation Easement campaign in the 1990's and 2000's, along with partners the Skagit Land Trust and the Friends of the Forest (FoF).

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In addition to the Conservation Easement Program (CEP) the most significant policy shifts in the forty years of formal management of the ACFL have been the FoF-lead termination of the City's logging plan, the end of the mini hydro races on Heart Lake, the lease of ACFL land to Lakeside Industries for their quarry extension and the transfer of Heart Lake State Park to the ACFL.

The 2020 COVID pandemic impact on outdoor recreation everywhere has also had a lasting impact on the ACFL. The number of regional visitors exploded and APRD has been unable to add any staff to account for this increase in recreation visits. The City continues to explore enforcement options with the Anacortes Police Department.

The 2021 Forest Plan update was the result of several years of work and various delays. The most significant change was the formalized closure of trail #132. Because of this longer than anticipated update timeline, APRD committed to the 2026 plan update and began the process in the spring of 2023. The goal was 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.

Early public comments voiced opposition to the chapter-by-chapter public participation plan, so a more general series of public comment meetings were held in October, November and December of 2023. The Mayor-appointed five-member volunteer Forest Advisory Board (FAB) presided over these meetings. The vast majority of the oral and written comments were focused on Little Cranberry Lake.

These comments were delivered by a core group of approximately forty citizens that were mostly focused on opposition to Forest Plan's mandate to improve Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access to the lake, along with a secondary focus on eliminating motorized recreation from the ACFL. Approximately fifty-six written comments were received and posted on the City's website throughout the public comment process.

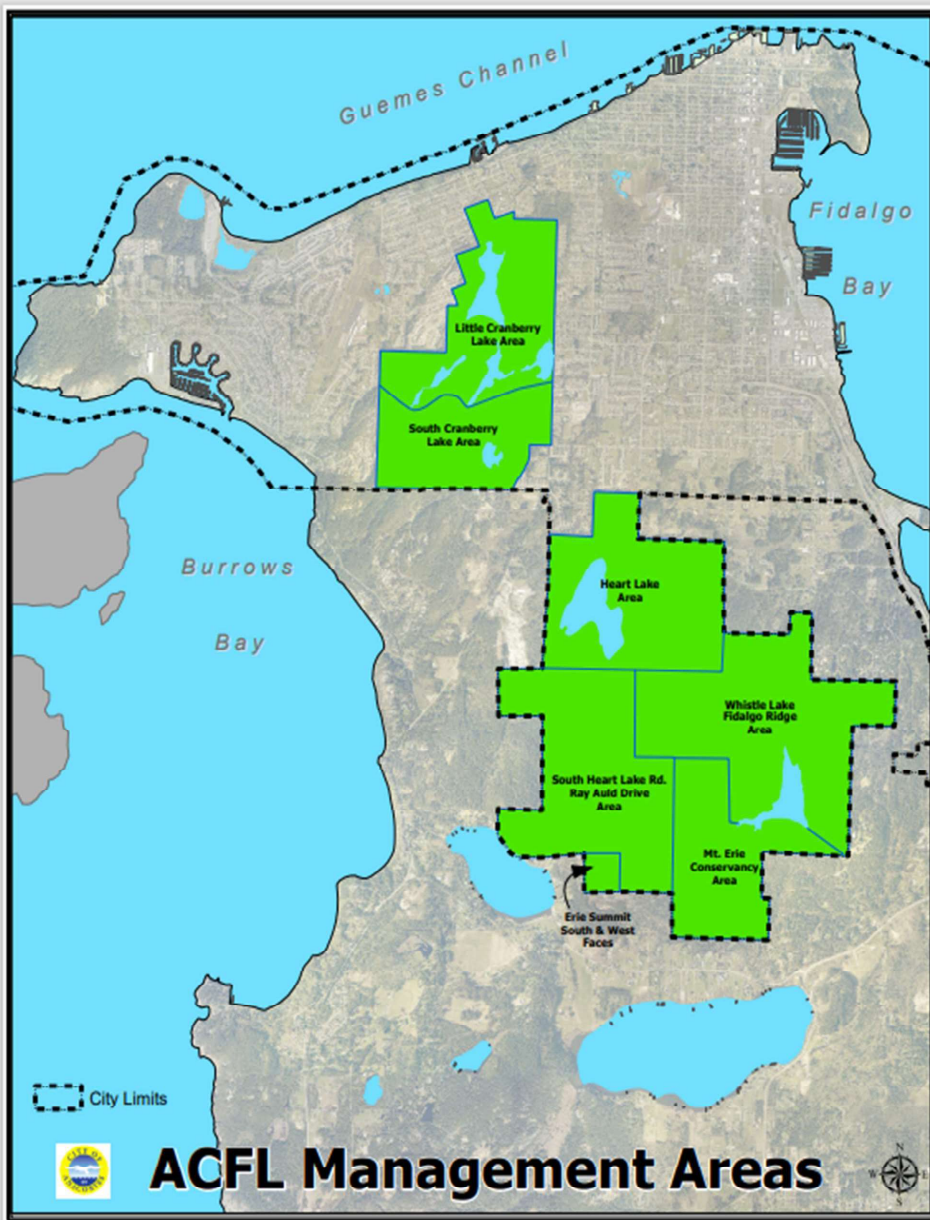
At the April, 2024 FAB meeting, all five members gave APRD staff direction to begin writing the plan. No significant changes were recommended, and the 2021 Forest Plan was referred to as being an effective management tool but needing an organizational upgrade. The public has also asked for more science to be included in the plan. The City has been working with the Transition Fidalgo citizen scientists, and their

work is featured in this plan. This includes a more focused discussion on adapting forest management to Climate Change and what may be the results of same, including the changing wildfire risk levels.

This plan was formerly adopted by City Council on _____, after a series of public meetings held to take input on the document that was recommended by the FAB.

Management Areas: Introduction

These sections of the plan propose management areas, defined by topographical features and deed limitation, to simplify decision making. By identifying primary, secondary, and prohibited uses in each unit, we hope to minimize present and future conflicts. Areas will be managed to conserve and enhance their unique environment and wildlife habitat while maintaining recreational opportunities for local residents. When applicable, management activities on lands proposed for acquisition are included. The recommendations for management of these lands will be presented with the fewest possible restrictions on user groups and yet consistent with protection of the forest against damage, the observance of essential sanitary/safety measures and the prevention of actions by individuals or groups which unduly conflict with the enjoyment of the area by all citizens. Most of the Community Forest Lands have multiple layers of protection. Many acres were donated with restrictive deeds. The bulk of the former water department lands are now covered by protections afforded in the Conservation Easement Program (Resolution #1492).



Management Areas: Introduction

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There are seven management areas in the ACFL, defined by topographical features and deed limitation, in order to help simplify management decisions. All areas will be managed to conserve and enhance their unique environment and wildlife habitat while maintaining recreational opportunities. A primary goal of this plan is to provide these for local residents, but the regional draw of the ACFL must be acknowledged as we look to future impacts. Management decision processes must caution against looking to the past rather than the future.

The vast majority of the Community Forest Lands have multiple layers of protection, including the Conservation Easement Program, the City's Critical Areas Ordinance and the Shoreline Master Program, as well as the State's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas. These provide a guarantee to the public that the ACFL is protected for generations. These regulations and the recreational activities described in this plan balance recreation and conservation. The various requirements of these protections greatly assist City staff in continuing to find the balance between recreation and conservation.

When areas are considered for acquisition into the ACFL, the proposed trail plan for these properties will be reviewed via a public process with the Forest Advisory Board, and then a recommendation to the City Council.

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Management Areas

The Forest Plan is governed by the following statements in the City of Anacortes 2016 Comprehensive Plan pertaining to the Anacortes Community Forest Lands:

Goal: Identify areas of environmental, educational, historic, cultural and/or biological significance, encourage their preservation, and regulate development which could cause significant deterioration of these qualities.

Policy: The Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) are critical areas having the designation as a Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Area.

Goal: Provide opportunities for residents to have access to undeveloped natural areas.

Policy: Whistle Lake, Heart Lake and Little Cranberry Lake watersheds should be managed to maintain their pristine and/or fragile environment and to preserve watersheds, wildlife habitats, wetlands, aesthetic values, and recreational uses with priority for residents.

Goal: The City's parks and forest lands (ACFL) should be managed with the principal goals of maintaining and enhancing habitat, conservation, and recreational values.

Policy: The City of Anacortes will continue to support the Conservation Easement Program until all eligible acres have conservation easements.

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Little Cranberry Lake Area

(Approximately 257 acres)

Boundaries: Entire area dedicated as Little Cranberry Park (1964). This area includes the John M.

Morrison Natural Park along with the and associated wetlands, including dedicated parkland buffers.

Restrictions: The majority of this area is land dedicated for "public park purposes only." The Morrison Natural Park was given with the stipulation that "timber and land never be alienated." In addition, Cranberry Lake is still technically a back-up water supply for the City (see Acquisition section). Its dedication as Cranberry Park in 1964 and the need to maintain water quality argue for very sensitive and careful management.

The associated wetlands, marshes which feed the lake and provide an important habitat for waterfowl and other animal life. In addition, the presence of scattered old growth and mature second growth creates a very rich and diverse biological zone.

Current Conditions: Little Cranberry Lake is used extensively by hikers, runners, mountain bikers and some horseback riders. Use has is likely to increase now that neighborhoods around the lake have been developed, and locals use the trails for recreation and dog walking. Fishing, from shore and small non-motorized boats, is are also very popular. Swimming and picnicking are major activities in good weather. The majority of the users is are local residents. The access, a partially improved but mostly gravel road from Georgia Avenue and West 4th, is open at all times, only closed during inclement weather. Maintenance is shared by the Parks and Recreation Department and volunteers working with the department. The Comprehensive Trail Plain prohibits motorcycle use in this unit, north of the old city dump. The lake basin provides a variety of habitats for plants and animals, and wildlife is relatively plentiful. The rocky meadows on both sides of the lake are prime spring wildflower sites.

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Projected Use: The lake basin should be reserved primarily for local resident use. Expanded parking should not be developed. Neighborhood and social trail access should be closely monitored. Current low impact uses include hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and fishing. Picnicking, nature observation and non-motorized boating ~~and canoeing~~ should also continue. City staff will continue to manage the dam at the north end of the lake as per Department of Ecology regulations.

Recommendations: The following measures should be instituted:

- 1.) ~~Post this area for no motorcycles north of the old 32nd Street right of way.~~
- 2.) Provide a permanent restroom facility at the lake access parking lot if permitting allows. ~~Provide restroom facility at or near Little Cranberry Lake parking lot.~~
- 3.) Parks staff work with the Forest Advisory Board to close a portion of trail #101. This should be done at points between the junctions with trail #'s 131 and 105. ~~Block or obliterate trails in areas which need to be re-vegetated and remove unauthorized trails from private property.~~
- 4.) Parks staff work with the Forest Advisory Board on a plan to move trail #106 to higher ground.
- 5.) Continue to remove invasive plants. ~~Continue removing non-invasive alternatives by landowners nearby.~~
- 6.) Expand ADA access.
- 7.) ~~Consider paving access road from Georgia Avenue to the lake.~~
- 8.) ~~Close trail 132.~~
- 9.) Continue to monitor and learn from the natural reforestation of the 2016 burn area.

South Cranberry Lake Area

(Approximately 446 acres)

Boundaries: All of Section 26 exclusive of those areas in the Little Cranberry Lake Unit, bounded by "A" Avenue on the east and south line of Section 26 on the south. The west boundary is delineated by four City of Anacortes short plats and a small amount of undeveloped private property within the Anacortes city limits.

Restrictions: This unit is comprised entirely of land purchased from the Washington Water Company in 1919. There are no restrictions attached to the original deeds but the entire unit (save for the Old City Dump) is now protected by the Conservation Easement Program, ~~but much of the land is now protected by the Conservation Easement Program and subject to its conditions.~~ The major wetland in this area (in the southeast corner) drains south, towards Havekost Road and Alexander Beach. Most of this area is not in the Little Cranberry drainage basin.

Current Use: This area, including the old City dump, is used extensively by motorcycles, horseback riders, mountain bikers and hikers.

Projected Use: Current recreational uses will ~~probably~~ increase, and corresponding trail improvements which would enhance those and similar uses should be considered. will be required.

Recommendations:

- 1.) ~~Now that the old dump (aka New City Meadows) has been capped, site could possibly be used as a fenced off leash dog area.~~
- 2.) ~~Trails should be rehabilitated (and redesigned where necessary) to serve the ends of this plan.~~
- 3.) Boundaries of adjacent private property ownerships should be posted. In particular, the Predators of the Heart/Because We Matter adjacent property lines should be clearly marked. Signs alerting ACFL visitors to the compound should be updated.

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- 4.) There is a unique stand of trees at the property corner of 41st and “A”. This is one of the stands of mature Cedar, Hemlock, White Fir and Douglas Fir in the forest lands should be preserved.
- 5.) Maintain trail #10 as a fire/emergency access road.
- 6.) The City of Anacortes will continue to work through the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) protocol at the old city dump as per the Dept. of Ecology.

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Whistle Lake/Fidalgo Ridge Area

(Approximately 645 acres)

Boundaries: This area includes the northern half of the Whistle Lake basin and all ACFL property north of Whistle Lake in sections 6 and 31. The western boundary is west line of section 6. The east boundary is comprised of a variety of private parcels in unincorporated Skagit County. The south boundary is a combination of the same, along with the Mt. Erie Conservancy Area.

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Restrictions: Whistle Lake is a former City reservoir, acquired when Douglas Allmond sold the Washington Water Company to the City in 1919. The lake was used as a storage reservoir for water pumped from the Skagit. In case of a future water emergency, it may become necessary to use this source again. Consequently, all efforts should be made to maintain the water quality and the wilderness quality of the basin. Parts of this area are also visible from the summit of Mt Erie and on the descent along Ray Auld Drive. This area includes the major ridge seen when traveling west along highway 20 into Anacortes. All forest practices should take visual impacts and watershed management impacts into account. ~~The lake basin is an extraordinary echo chamber. As a result, noise, especially motorcycles, shatters an otherwise pristine quiet.~~

Current Use: Like all areas of the ACFL, trail and lake use at Whistle have increased dramatically since the global events of 2020. While use patterns remain seasonal, local use is still the primary activity most of the time. Most locally-based violations of the ACFL Code involve off-leash dogs. There is also on-going motorbike use of trails closed to them, as well as unsanctioned use during the November 1 – March 31 winter closure.

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Whistle Lake does have the famous “cliffs”, enjoyed by hundreds every summer. With this extraordinary summer-time popularity comes a variety of challenging issues: alcohol and drug use, smoking, illegal camping and use of cook stoves and exceeding parking capacity. Because of this, City staff end up spending most summer hours in the Whistle lake area. Parks staff continues to work with the Anacortes Police Department on strategies for visitor safety and voluntary visitor compliance. Use patterns at Whistle Lake are quite seasonal. In fall, winter and spring, most trail riders are local residents, and use is light and relatively low impact. The summer season is very different. Young people from Anacortes, Whidbey Island and Skagit County come to the lake to swim, drink beer and in the process, litter and trample the sparse vegetation on the lake edges and on the island, where they jump off the cliffs into the lake. Local families also come out to swim and fish and picnic, and there are occasional conflicts.

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Campfires and cook fires are a problem, and littering is heavy and widespread. Most motorcycle, bicycle and horse riders comply with the restrictions in the Comprehensive Trail Plan. There are some traffic problems on trail #20, where pedestrians share the road with horses, bikes and motorcycles going to and from the lake, and to a lesser degree on trail #204. The lakeshore is rimmed with old growth fir left from previous timber harvesting because of difficult access or by Council stipulation.

Projected Use: Whistle Lake should be reserved for low impact use. All efforts should be made to maintain water quality and the wildland as part of this area. Primarily, this unit should be managed for low density recreational use. The Whistle Lake/Fidalgo Ridge trails will only continue to grow in popularity. Trails in this area should be maintained for current user groups, with exploration of motorized options. Parks and Police staff should focus on dogs on leash enforcement and education, as well as the same for motorized trail use. Water quality will remain an important factor when considering any future uses of the lake.

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Recommendations:

- 1.) All forest practices and recreational activities shall be designed to protect water quality.
- 2.) Repair damage to existing areas of intensive use.
- 3.) Encourage low impact recreational use by local residents.
- 4.) Continue successful summer patrols by Anacortes Police Department of popular recreational areas.
 - 1) Continue to work with Public Works and the Dept of Ecology on bringing the dam into compliance with state regulations.
 - 2) Repair existing trail system based upon current trail plan.
 - 3) Do not expand any parking.

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Heart Lake Area

(Approximately 515 acres)

Boundaries: This area is comprised of the 80 -acre North Heart Unit ACFL at the north end of Heart Lake and approximately 435 acres that were formerly Heart Lake State Park.

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Restrictions: The 80-acre parcel on the northern side of the lake was acquired by the City from the State of Washington to assure access to the outflow from Heart Lake for reservoir purposes. In the past, the City allowed this unit to be logged "except for 300 feet along the road to preserve the scenic beauty." Visually, this unit is the entry to the magnificent Heart Lake Road corridor. ~~Almost all this area is protected through conservation easements.~~ The entire area is protected by a combination of the Conservation Easement Plan and the deed restrictions handed down by State Parks. ~~The land and water that formerly made up Heart Lake State Park were transferred to the City in 2002 and contain many restrictions in the deed which are outlined in detail in the Heart Lake Management Plan adopted in 2004. The State required this land to be managed as a non-motorized area with areas to the west, south and east required to remain hiker-only trails.~~

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Current Use: This area is the most popular and diverse of all the ACFL trailheads. While there is no trail open to motorized activity that leaves directly from the Heart Lake parking lot, road legal bikes use this as a jump off point. The fishing community, car top boat launchers, equestrians, mountain bikers, hikers and trail runners may all found here in large numbers. ~~This area is popular for dog walkers and hikers. Trails to the north are used by horse riders, mountain bikes and motorcycles. New nearby developments at Parkside and The Orchards have increased usage as these neighbors regularly recreate here.~~

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Projected Use: ~~Use will increase in this area as new neighborhoods in the vicinity develop. The lake itself is a popular recreational site for fishing, swimming, and kayaking.~~ Visitor and local recreation numbers will continue to grow. Improvements to the parking lot will benefit the environment and trail users alike.

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Recommendation: This area is a very important connecting corridor for both people and wildlife between the Little Cranberry area and the Whistle Lake area. Care must be taken to keep only approved trails open. ~~New trail building and other off trail activity have increased recently and need to be monitored. Because this area is an important corridor between Little Cranberry and Whistle Lake there needs to be a continued emphasis on trail maintenance in this section.~~ A variety of social trails (mostly hiker shortcuts and mountain bike jumps) continue to take shape in this area, along with a variety of homeless encampments as well as “van life” over night occupancy. Roadside over-nights by vehicles is a common occurrence along the entire Heart Lake Road corridor.

- 1.) Develop ADA access and trails where possible at Heart Lake.
- 2.) ~~Continue program to diminish illegal dumping in the area by limiting vehicle pullouts and working with law enforcement.~~ Continue to work with law enforcement on illegal forest and vehicle based encampments.
- 3.) ~~Improve sanitary services at the summit of Mt Erie and Heart Lake.~~ Continue work on improved sanitary services throughout the area.
- 4.) Pursue funding for and implementation of the 2010 Heart Lake Master Plan.
- 5.) Support the Fidalgo Fly Fishing Club pursuit of year ‘round fishing on Heart Lake.
- 6.) Seek funding for the repair of trail #311.

South Heart Lake Road/Ray Auld Drive Area

(Approximately 465 acres)

Boundaries: All City property adjacent to Heart Lake Road south of Heart Lake and all City property adjacent to Ray Auld Drive with the exception of 35 acres around the Mt. Erie summit and south and west faces.

Restrictions: As with the Heart Lake Area, parts of this area were logged in the past between 1940 and 1950 with the stipulation that a 300-foot buffer be left along Heart Lake Road. The 160 acres at the top of Mt. Erie were given to the City for “park purposes” by Gus Hensler and the Kiwanis Club. Mr. Hensler stipulated that his donated 120 acres be a “haven for birds and/or animals” ~~(i.e., a wildlife sanctuary).~~

Current Use: Heart Lake Road (formerly Lake Forest Road) is a scenic corridor. The thoughtful stipulations of past City Councils have preserved a feeling of passage through primeval forests. Ray Auld Drive climbs to the summit of Mt. Erie which is already a multiple-use park. ~~Hundreds,~~ Thousands of people drive to the parking lot for rock climbing, picnicking, sightseeing, photography, hiking and nature study.

Projected Use: Heart Lake Road and Ray Auld Drive will continue to be sightseeing destinations.

Recommendations: Maintain trails and continue to enhance access for south Mt. Erie trail.

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Mt. Erie Summit South/West Faces

(Approximately 35 acres)

Boundaries: This area is primarily defined by the southern boundary of City property on Mt. Erie, the south shore of Whistle Lake, and the east flanks of Mt. Erie.

Restrictions: In addition to the Conservation Easement Program, some of the management area includes Kiwanian and Hensler donations and inherits the restrictions that accompany that land.

Current Use: The summit of Mt. Erie is already a multi-use park. Hundreds of people visit for rock climbing, picnicking, sightseeing, photography, hiking, nature study and hang gliding.

Projected Use: Mt. Erie will continue to be a regional attraction for sightseeing, mountain climbing and scrambling.

Recommendations:

- 1.) Rock face of Mt. Erie is unique in the ACFL as it allows areas for rock climbing and scrambling.
- 2.) Work with the Mt. Erie climbing committee on relevant issues as they emerge.
- 3.) Proposed climbing dates should be submitted in advance to the Parks and Recreation Department. If a large number of climbers apply to use the same area at the same time, the Parks and Recreation Department may require the later applicants to re-schedule their use for another date. With the frequency of large and small commercial and non-profit groups climbing the mountain, staff may explore climbing permit options.
- 4.) Post and sign key access points with appropriate notice of rules in effect.
- 5.) Construct wheelchair accessible parking and routes to a lookout on Mt. Erie summit.
- 6.) Placement of fixed anchors, opening new areas to climbing and scrambling, and work parties to maintain climbing routes, etc., shall be approved by the Forest Advisory Board and coordinated with staff. Climbers are asked to "leave no trace".
- 7.) Construct permanent restroom facility at the summit.
- 8.) Install interpretive signage to educate the public about the fragile and unique ecosystem in this area.
- 9.) Work with adjacent landowners to keep trail #247 (the south Mt. Erie trail) open for recreational use and access to climbing areas.

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Mt. Erie Conservancy Area

(Approximately 459 acres)

Boundaries: This area is primarily defined by the southern boundary of City property on Mt. Erie, the south shore of Whistle Lake, and the east flanks of Mt. Erie.

Restrictions: The Conservation Easement Program, along with the marshes at the western and southern edges of the lake, provide a relatively isolated habitat. Much of the area is without trails and has been intentionally kept that way due to difficult terrain or to maintain wildlife corridors. ~~Most of this area is protected through conservation easements and is subject to their restrictions.~~

Current Use: This is a relatively inaccessible area that has intentionally not received the same density of trails as other places in the community forest lands. It has an old logging road, trail #22 that runs through the northern portion of the area and off that run a ~~couple~~ few multi-use trails. ~~The southern section may be able to accommodate a non-motorized trail that goes along the south face of Mt. Erie. This~~ includes trail #247, trail was built in 2001 and was reopened after years of closure through agreements with the landowners.

Projected Use: This area should be limited to low intensity use: hiking, nature observation, mountain biking and horseback riding of designated trails. Sensitive habitat, difficult access and steep rocky slopes are all reasons to place this unit in a Conservancy/Forest Study designation.

Recommendations:

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- 1.) Post signs and erect suitable barriers to restrict intensive use of this area.
- 2.) Work to acquire trail easements or property to maintain a south Mt. Erie trail and provide a connecting route to Heart Lake area.
- 3.) Limit additional trail construction to increase habitat value.
- 4.) Work with users to help them understand the reasons for these restrictions and direct recreational use to other areas.

Forest Lands Stewardship

Forest Management

Goal: The Anacortes Community Forest Lands should be managed and protected in perpetuity to insure the maximum benefit to sensitive habitats and wildlife and enjoyment to the citizens of Anacortes.

Policies:

- 1.) The underlying policy must be one of minimum disturbance with respect to the forest, wildlife, and low-intensity recreational opportunities. Important “by-products” will include clean air and water and the availability of a forestland setting for citizens’ physical and psychological well-being. For many people, the knowledge that this opportunity exists, whether they ever avail themselves of it or not, is a source of great satisfaction and relief. The increasing urbanization of this area will make this “relief valve” principle a priceless community resource in coming decades.
- 2.) Any direct economic benefit realized in the management of this land should be re-invested to protect the resources.
- 3.) All forest management activities will be conducted to minimize damage to native plant communities and wildlife. Natural processes of growth and succession, with the exception of wildfire, will be encouraged, and any replanting will use species native to that site.

Flora Management

Goal: To maintain, enhance and rehabilitate the native vegetation on City of Anacortes properties.

Policies:

- 1.) Removing trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers or other vegetation from the ACFL is prohibited. Berries or other edibles may be picked from the trail for enjoyment while in the ACFL. Harvesting for home consumption or retail is prohibited. Mushroom harvesting is prohibited.
- 2.) The City should be open to proposals by groups wishing to study these lands in order to provide baseline data on wildlife populations and species diversity. These proposals will be reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Director. The Director will then make a recommendation to the Forest Advisory Board
- 2.) Encourage the use of City property for botanical research, field work and observation by local educational institutions.

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- 3.) Identify those areas of particular and/or unique plant species or colonies and restrict use to an appropriate level.
- 4.) ~~An updated~~ list of plant species found on City land ~~may be should be pursued and~~ made available to the public.
- 5.) Invasive non-native plants should be identified and managed for removal from the ACFL. Volunteers have been and are likely to be relied upon heavily for their work to help keep the forest lands free of these species. Whenever possible, invasive plants should be removed by the roots manually without the use of herbicides. It is prohibited to introduce any plant species into the ACFL without express written approval of the Parks and Recreation Director.

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Wildlife Management

Goal: To preserve and enhance the present diversity of wildlife on City of Anacortes Forest Lands.

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Policies:

- 1.) No activity shall be permitted which will significantly alter the mixture of habitats that provide a varied and abundant wildlife population.
- 2.) ~~The City should be open to proposals by groups wishing to study these lands in order to provide baseline data on wildlife populations and species diversity. These proposals will be reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Director. The Director will then make a recommendation to the Forest Advisory Board.~~
- 3.) ~~An updated~~ list of wildlife species found on City land ~~may be should be pursued and~~ made available to the public.
- 4.) ~~Encourage~~ Support the working relationship between the Anacortes School District and the Friends of the Forest along with other groups seeking appropriate partnerships with the City. ~~local school districts~~ to use City land for nature study. This could include building and setting nesting boxes, passive observation of seasonal wildlife and development of some site-specific curricula.
- 5.) Develop suitable wildlife observation sites in conjunction with recreational development. After a detailed study, observation boardwalks could be built for research, field work and observation by local educational institutions.
- 6.) ~~Identify those areas of particular and/or unique plant species or colonies and restrict use to one or more of the marshes for the purposes of nature study and education.~~
- 7.) No native wildlife shall be removed from the ACFL. Domestic species or wild animals shall not be placed in the forest lands without review by the Forest Advisory Board and written permission of the Parks and Recreation Department.

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Water Resources Management

Goal: To maintain and enhance the water quality of lakes, marshes and wetlands in the Anacortes Community Forests.

Policies:

1-→ New trail construction requires review and approval by the Parks & Recreation Director, including a public review process via the Forest Advisory Board. ~~Locate trails away from the lakeshores and marsh edges where necessary in order to minimize impacts on water quality. Identify areas where trails are perpendicular to main trails that can be built to along shorelines with minimal impact.~~

2-→1.) Improve existing trails to minimize erosion. Where necessary, obliterate trails which are causing undue resource damage.

3-→2.) All Critical Area Ordinance regulations, along with a comprehensive list of other local, State and Federal guidelines, will be met when designing and building a new trail is required.

4-→3.) All Critical Area Ordinance regulations, along with a comprehensive list of other local, State and Federal guidelines, will be met when maintenance demands moving any portion of an existing trail.

5-→4.) Whistle Lake, Heart Lake, and Little Cranberry Lake are back-up supplies of water in case of an emergency. All management activities in the watersheds of these lakes must take this into account.

6-→5.) Work with other City departments and neighboring developments to eliminate run off of contaminants into ACFL watersheds.

Management of Recreational Activities

Picnicking

Goal: To allow picnicking at designated walk-in areas.

Policies:

- 1.) Provide garbage, recycling and sanitary facilities where appropriate. Fires and barbeques are prohibited.
- 2.) Prohibit camping throughout the ACFL.
- 3.) Develop at least one walk in picnic site for local use.
- 4.) There are a few picnic tables in the ACFL, and they may be used on a first come first served basis.
- 5.) Any new picnic tables in the ACFL shall require the recommendation of the Forest Advisory Board and the approval of the Parks & Recreation Director.
- 6.) Off trail picnicking is prohibited.
- 7.) There are a few informal clearings in the ACFL where picnics will be easier to execute.

Trail System

Goal: Maintain an overall a shared use recreational trail system in City forest lands.

Policies:

- 1-→ Trail maintenance should focus on improving the condition of current trails. New trail construction should be minimized and only pursued when a reroute is an improvement for both the

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natural forest function and trail users. Design and/or renovate existing trails to serve the recreational objectives of this plan with a minimum amount of maintenance required. Sign trails to serve the needs of local residents. Design loop trails and loop options as much as possible. All improvements should harmonize with the natural setting.

2.)1.) Continue to work with the Friends of the Forest, Fidalgo Trail Riders local non-profit organizations, and other properly managed interested volunteers on trail repair projects.

3.)2.) Maintain a supply of current ACFL maps at the Parks & Recreation City Hall office. These maps are to be sold, with the price to be determined by the Parks & Recreation Director or designee. Other businesses, non-profits and information centers may purchase the maps from the Parks & Recreation Department for resale at their respective locations. Purchase price for these organizations also determined by the Parks & Recreation Director or designee. Make

available to the public at City Hall maps of existing main trails on City of Anacortes properties.

4.)3.) ACFL maps should summarize Forest Plan use policies. These maps should also summarize use policies outline elsewhere in this plan.

5.)4.) Obtain easements for current-use trails where they cross onto private property. Work with adjacent owners to prohibit, control or allow current use. Minimize conflicts by working with user groups.

6.)5.) Where necessary, rehabilitate trails where horses, motorcycles or mountain bikes have caused erosion or other problems. Seek involvement of user groups and community service organizations as much as possible.

7.)6.) Post regulatory signs at all entry points, trail junctions and where trails cross onto private property.

8.)7.) No new trail access will be established into the ACFL from private property without review by the Forest Advisory Board and written permission from the Parks and Recreation Director Department.

9.)8.) Design and/or renovate existing trails to serve the recreational objectives of this plan with a minimum amount of maintenance required. Sign trails to serve the needs of local residents. Design loop trails and loop options as much as possible. All improvements should harmonize with the natural setting.

10.)9.) Interpretive trails should be developed (in conjunction with the recreational trail system) with self guiding brochures available either at the trailhead or at City Hall.

11.)10.) Work with Skagit County, the State of Washington, other City departments and other entities to establish linkages between the ACFL trail system and other trails to provide continuous recreational and non-motorized transportation options across Fidalgo Island.

12.)11.) Hours for public access use in the ACFL are 6am to 10pm.

13.)12.) To better serve senior citizens, small children and those with limited stamina or mobility, pedestrian only trails with "easy" difficulty ratings should be established in both forest and lakeside settings. Where appropriate, these trails should meet ADA accessibility standards.

Most use restrictions are obeyed. Overuse by all trail users is beginning to cause problems: erosion, compaction and trail spreading have increased trail maintenance needs. The publication of the trail maps and marking of trails with numbered signs has done a lot to popularize trail use and make it easier for people to get around the trail system. Trail maps should be updated and improved as new trails are identified and trail maintenance must be increased to accommodate the greater use.

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Trail Uses

For specific trail uses see current Comprehensive Trail Plan

Climbing

Goals: #1 Maintain and enhance climbing areas on Mt. Erie while conserving the unique environment and habitat on the summit and South and West faces.

#2 Continue to explore options for a reservation system for all commercial climbing groups.

#3 Work with the Mt. Erie Climbing Committee to establish a climber capacity for the mountain.

Policies:

1. Climbing and scrambling shall be restricted to the Mt. Erie summit and South and West Face Management Area.
2. ~~Establish~~ Maintain a Mt. Erie Committee consisting of five members including: three members representing climbers and/or scramblers, one naturalist and one at large Anacortes citizen. At least two of the climbers shall be residents of Anacortes. At least one of the climbers shall be a climbing instructor. All climber members of the committee shall have substantial experience climbing on Mt. Erie. Each representative shall be appointed by the Forest Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Director. The duties of the Mt. Erie Committee are:
 - A. Assist staff and the Forest Advisory Board with regulation of fixed bolting, creation of new belay platforms, opening new climbing areas and other relevant issues.
 - B. Be available to represent their user group at Forest Advisory Board meetings when issues affecting climbing and scrambling arise.
 - C. Be available to organize volunteer work parties with this user group when needed on Mt. Erie. All maintenance projects must be approved in advance by the Parks and Recreation Director.
 - D. User restrictions and methods to appeal decisions should follow the outline and applicable guidelines discussed in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Comprehensive Trail Plan; Appendix #3.

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Motor Vehicles

Goal: #1 Prohibit ~~the use of~~ all motorized use of the ACFL trail system, except sanctioned maintenance, emergency and motorcycle use as approved by the trail plan. ~~vehicles motor vehicles in City forest lands and parks except on designated roads.~~

#2 Continue to work with the ACFL Trail Committee on updating motorcycle policies. Current cc and four-cycle engine policies could be studied and reviewed. Temporary permission for a controlled study may be considered by the Forest Advisory Board, with final approval coming from the Parks & Recreation Director.

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#3 Review current route options for motorcycles. Changes may be suggested to improve trail-use flow for all user groups.

Policies:

- 1.) All access points into City property shall be gated or blocked to prevent unauthorized vehicular access.
- 2.) No unauthorized motor vehicles (cars, trucks, and ATV's) will be allowed on ACFL roads.
- 3.) Motorcycles are prohibited on all ACFL trails from November 1 to March 31 due to seasonal closure. Motorcycle engines over 250cc are prohibited. Street legal dual sport motorcycles shall be exempt from the 250cc size limitation. Only four-cycle engines are allowed in the ACFL. For specific trail uses see current Comprehensive Trail Plan, Appendix III.
- 3-4.) Staff will work with the Forest Advisory Board on electric motorcycle policies.
- 4-5.) All City of Anacortes fleet vehicles are allowed on properly designated two-track trails for maintenance and emergency response. Other public agency vehicles may be approved for temporary access as circumstances demand.
- 5-6.) Volunteer vehicles may receive temporary permission from the Parks & Recreation Director, or designee, to participate in specific projects.

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Fishing

Goal: Provide the opportunity for local residents access to fishing in Little Cranberry, Heart and Whistle Lakes.

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#2) Continue to support the efforts of the Fidalgo Fly Fishing club to make Heart Lake open year round for fishing, as Little Cranberry and Whistle are.

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Policies:

- 1.) Develop or improve limited access points for fishing City-owned lakes.
- 2.) Prohibit use of any combustion engines on Whistle Lake, Little Cranberry Lake and Heart Lake.
- 3.) At the present time, Whistle Lake will not be enhanced for sport fishing.
- 4.) Develop a long range sport fishing plan in conjunction with the State Game Department.
Continue to work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on short and long term goals for recreational fishing on Heart, Whistle and Little Cranberry lakes.
- 5.) Monitor fish population in conjunction with water-quality monitoring program. There are seven major lakes on Fidalgo Island. Each has a particular recreational and fisheries value. Heart Lake is a well-known trout-fishing lake. Campbell Lake and Lake Erie both have boat launch facilities and are managed for spiny-ray and trout. Pass Lake is a fly-fishing only lake adjacent to Highway 20. Trafton Lake (Crater Lake) is surrounded by private property. Little Cranberry Lake is accessible by automobile and is actively used for fishing. Whistle Lake is the only lake not impacted by automobile access. Whistle Lake will be reserved for a more "primitive" recreational experience.

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Hunting and Trapping

Goal: Hunting and trapping are not allowed on City land. Resolution No. 968, adopted December 7, 1987 and amending Resolution No. 663, prohibits all hunting, trapping and discharge of firearms on Anacortes Community Forest Lands.

Other Activities

Goal: To use the Anacortes Community Forest Lands for dispersed low-intensity recreational activities.

Policies:

- 1.) Developed parks sites in Anacortes allow the opportunity for group games and activities such as baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis and other sports. There is no need to develop these sorts of facilities on City Forest lands.
- 2.) Deception Pass State Park and Washington Park offer an opportunity for overnight recreational camping. It is not appropriate to develop any facilities of this sort in the ACFL.
- 3.) Possession or consumption of alcohol is prohibited in the ACFL.
- 4.) Recreational groups in excess of 25 participants shall apply for a permit from the Anacortes Parks and Recreation Department under the Special Events section of the Anacortes Municipal Code. City staff will review all requests with the Forest Advisory Board.
- 5.) Commercial activities in the ACFL that do not violate existing policies may be permitted by the Parks and Recreation Director in consultation with the ACFL Advisory Board.

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Education

The decades-long partnership between the Friends of the Forest and the City of Anacortes has proven to be an invaluable experience for Anacortes School District students and the local community.

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- 1.) **Goal:** Continue to support the education, outreach and stewardship efforts of the Friends of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands as a civic partnership. The ACFL shall continue to be made available for community forest education that encourages stewardship of our natural resources, a conservation ethic, and deeper understanding of our unique forest ecology. ~~Support ongoing forest education programs aimed at educating residents and visitors with guided hikes, school programs, speakers, print and web materials, and other programs.~~

Policies:

- 2.) Continue to develop the working relationship between the Samish Indian Nation and the City of Anacortes. The City of Anacortes and the Samish Indian Nation have been building a very positive working relationship over the past several years. The City should continue to respectively reach out to the Samish for a variety of cultural, historic and educational processes.
Goal: schedule monthly hikes in the ACFL with City and Samish staff.

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Policy: continue to collaborate on ACFL land use projects with the Samish nation prior to pursuing permitting for same.

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- 3.) Encourage and evaluate joint cooperative arrangements with the Anacortes School District, local colleges and universities and local non-profit organizations to use the ACFL for ongoing research projects by students and faculty. ~~Botany, Biology, Outdoor Recreation, Planning, Forestry and other academic disciplines will all find fruitful opportunity in the watersheds of our lakes and the~~

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surrounding forest lands. These “experts-in-training” could supply useful baseline and monitoring information to the managing authority.

- 4.) Teaching our young people about the recreational and natural values of their land of the forest lands will continue to develop generations instilled with a sense of stewardship that will only enhance the long term health of the ACFL and its recreational opportunities, an attitude of possession and care which can translate into less vandalism and destruction of park and forest areas in the future.

- 5.) Provide physical infrastructure as appropriate to support environmental education efforts. (do we want to keep this line?)

Management Procedures

Management Authority

Goal: To provide efficient and effective management of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands in order to implement the goals and policies of this report plan. Under Council form of government, the City Council has ultimate legal authority and sets policy direction for the City. The Mayor is charged with management responsibility for administration of all City assets under the direction of City Council. The City Council must approve all appropriate contracts, asset sales, and use policies. Within the framework of these legal restrictions, it is recommended that the Forest Advisory Board set use policies and effectively guide management of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands.

Policies:

- 1.) Maintain the “Anacortes Community Forest Advisory Board.” Forest Advisory Board.
 - a.) The Board should consist of five members, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Membership should include one member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and four citizen members.
 - b.) Terms of the Board members should be 5 years, with the initial terms staggered to provide for reappointment of one member each year.
 - c.) At least four members should be residents of the City of Anacortes, with it being permissible for the fifth member to reside elsewhere on Fidalgo or Guemes Islands.
- 2.) The duties and responsibilities of the Anacortes Community Forest Advisory Board shall include the following:
 - a.) Setting use policies and guidelines, under the terms outlined in this report plan, for the nearly 3,000 acres of Anacortes Community Forest Lands. as well as for Cranberry Lake Park, the summit of Mt. Erie, and the area that formerly comprised Heart Lake State Park.
 - 1.) Use policies requiring legal enforcement authority shall be confirmed by City Council.
 - b.) Securing additional studies, trail plans and surveys as deemed necessary by the Board.
 - c.) Recommending an annual budget to the Mayor and City Council for management of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands.

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- d.) Providing policy advice to the Mayor and City Council for the long-range use, enhancement and conservation of the resource.
- e.) Conducting periodic reviews and recommendations for required changes in this plan and providing technical advice to the Mayor and City Council for its implementation.
- f.) Serving in a liaison capacity with interested citizens, user groups, educational institutions and volunteer service organizations.
- g.) Maintaining a Trail Committee and Mt. Erie Climbing Committee for recommendations concerning trail use and climbing management.

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Finance

Goal: Funding the ACFL Management will be provided by the annual Parks and Recreation Department Budget.

Policy:

- 1.) Funds 101, & 113 and 114 have been established by ordinance for the management of the ACFL. ~~A Forest Land Management Fund has been created by ordinance.~~ This ordinance specifies the uses for which these monies may be expended. The funds derived from the Conservation Easement Program and the lease of the ACFL for mining also have specifications and limitations regarding their use.
- 2.) If necessary, special accounts may be set up within the Forest Lands Management Fund.
- 3.) Any revenues derived from the Forest Lands shall only be used for Forest Lands management, stewardship, land acquisition and education per City ordinance 2535.
- 4.) ~~Continue coordinated planning and joint funding and maintenance of facilities among the various providers of park and recreation services (State, County, School, City, private entities).~~ Continue to pursue appropriate grant opportunities as well as partnerships with other public and private entities as recommended by the Forest Advisory Board and approved by the City Council.

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Enforcement

Goal: The policies and regulations developed in this plan will be enforced by the ~~appropriate authority.~~ City of Anacortes.

Policies:

- 1.) The day to day maintenance and operations of the ACFL will be managed by the Parks & Recreation Department.
- 2.) City staff will continue to find a way to permanently fund a fully commissioned Park Ranger, whose job it will be to focus on voluntary visitor compliance throughout the ACFL and the City's extensive park system.
- 1.) ~~In the meantime, The Community Forest Lands, the ACFL,~~ In the meantime, the ACFL will be patrolled by the City of Anacortes Police Department.
- 2.) The City will emphasize off leash dog patrol whenever possible.
- 3.) Continue community education to help people understand the cost of vandalism and illegal dumping in the Forest Lands and ~~the~~ damage this can do to the environment.

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- 4.) Defensively plan facilities to minimize vandalism. Build and design rugged facilities to harmonize with surroundings.
- 5.) Maintain facilities. Rundown areas promote vandalism and destructive behavior.

Law Enforcement in the ACFL

Goal: A full-time, fully commissioned Park Ranger dedicated to the City's Parks and Forest Lands. The job description for this position will allow for maintenance as well as enforcement work.

The City has a significant amount of park space that is enjoyed year-round by residents and visitors, which includes nearly 3,000 acres of city owned forest lands, trails, and lakes. The Parks Department and Police Department both recognize the necessity and value of a Park Ranger position to maintain order in the parks, keeping them inviting and family friendly to all park and forest land users. The Police Department attempts to have a presence in the forest lands during months of peak use, but cannot afford to have an officer dedicated to spending a full shift in the parks / forest lands, many times a long distance from their patrol vehicle, out of necessity to be available for response to 911 calls. The Parks Department analyzed the possibility of converting a park maintenance position to a Park Ranger that would have a limited commission for enforcement in city owned parks for low level issues like dogs off leash, possession / consumption of alcohol in city parks and forest lands, but research revealed that the Park Ranger position would have to be a Police Department employee for access to the law enforcement maintained data bases needed to take enforcement action on the low level issues.

The Police Department and the Parks Department should continue to work together toward meeting the goal of a full-time dedicated Park Ranger. The Forest Advisory Board will work with the Parks & Recreation Director to encourage and secure funding for this position.

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Fire Protection

Goal: To protect City Forest Lands from damage or destruction by fire.

Policies:

- 1.) ~~In conjunction with other forest management activities, improve and map the existing road system to allow fire vehicle access.~~ Continue working with the Anacortes Planning and Fire Departments to maintain the two-track forest roads available for emergency and maintenance access.

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- 2.) Maintain existing fire plan in conjunction with the Anacortes Fire Department and Department of Natural Resources.
- 3.) Work with the Anacortes Fire Department and the Friends of the Forest on educating adjacent property owners on defensible space.
- 4.) Prohibit fireworks, fires and barbeques any kind of grill, stove and any burner based cooking or heating system in the Community Forest Lands. Any open flame used for cooking or lighting is prohibited in the ACFL.
- 5.) Levy stiff fines, in addition to suppression costs, for violations.
- 6.) Smoking and vaping is prohibited within the Community Forest Lands per City ordinance 3050.

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Access, Signs and Boundary Markers

Goal: The boundaries of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands shall be clearly marked at trailheads, access points and wherever possible to indicate that users are entering publicly owned property.

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Policies:

- ~~1.) Boundaries of areas likely to be impacted by recreational use or real estate development should be surveyed and posted as quickly as possible. In some cases, this should be done in cooperation with adjacent private owners.~~ Work with ACFL neighbors on clearly marked boundaries.
- 2.) All access roads and parking areas within the ACFL shall be maintained in a safe manner.
- 3.) All access and egress points should be posted with notification that use of the City of Anacortes lands is governed by certain rules and regulations.
- 4.) Access roads should be blocked by sturdy gate, ditch and berm or other suitable barriers to prevent unauthorized garbage dumping, timber harvesting and creation of mayhem on City lands. Unauthorized uses should be punishable by stiff fines.
- 5.) Continue to place A distinctive, visible boundary tags ~~should be used to indicate Anacortes ownership.~~ as needed.

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Cooperation with Adjacent Property Owners and Public Agencies

- ~~1.) Goal: All land management decisions should be compatible with adjacent land owners within Anacortes and on Fidalgo Island.~~ The ACFL should be a good neighbor. All development adjacent to the ACFL is required to follow relevant City, County, State and Federal guidelines, including all appropriate permits, buffers and other environmental protections.

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Policies:

- ~~2.) On land outside the City limits, efforts should be made to contact adjacent private property owners and inform them of the intended use of the City land. Every attempt should be made, as early as possible, to resolve present and potential conflicts arising from timber harvesting, trespass, garbage dumping, etc.~~

- 3.) ~~Development adjacent to City forested lands and/or watersheds should provide buffers, erosion and drainage control measures and access control. This should be part of the review by City staff, the Planning Commission and City Council.~~
- 4.) ~~Whenever necessary, reach agreement with adjacent landowners to create, by easement, purchase or donation, buffer areas between developments and public use lands and public trail access. This recommendation depends upon the specific characteristics of the site.~~
- 5.) Work with neighbors on opportunities for buffers and access.
- 6.) Work with neighboring jurisdictions, Skagit Land Trust and private landowners to acquire or protect in an undeveloped state wildlife corridors between the ACFL and other undeveloped and marine habitats. ~~on Fidalgo Island including Deception Pass State Park.~~
- 7.) Work with County residents adjacent to the ACFL on access and other issues arising from a shared property line.
- 7.) Any access to the ACFL requires approval from the Parks and Recreation Director along with a recommendation from the Forest Advisory Board.

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Future Acquisition Considerations

Goal: Assure guaranteed public access to *the* Anacortes Community Forest Lands. The parcels listed below would guarantee future access to areas important for conservation and recreation.

Policies:

- 1.) Consider acquisition of a public access to the rock-climbing route to Mt. Erie. One of the primary recreational uses of Mt. Erie is by rock-climbing groups often numbering up to *and over* 50 people. Cooperate with private landowners to maintain a non-motorized trail along the south side of Mt. Erie.
- 2.) Prioritize acquisition of land adjacent to the forest lands and acquire or protect by other means all wetlands, streams and ponds that flow into forest lands lakes and wetlands. Priority should be given to acquiring land that is contiguous to the ACFL, provides critical habitat, is part of the drainage system of an ACFL lake or wetlands, helps connect or improve ACFL trail access, or is an important wildlife corridor.

Appendix I: History

History of Land Acquisition

Every land-use document prepared for Anacortes has a standard history of the City, its incorporation and growth. It is not necessary to repeat, once again, that scenario. There is, however, another history, more crucial to the responsible development of this comprehensive plan.

The first half of this century, especially the period before 1930, was a time of growing civic awareness of the scenic resources of this area. As a result, numerous individuals deeded land to the City for "public park purposes." What follows is a brief catalog of the major land parcels dealt with in this plan, the donor and the restrictions and covenants these donors placed on the deeds.

These donations are examples of what is called the “bequest motive,” or the desire of people to leave estates for their heirs or the public. The dedication of private properties for public parks is exemplary of this desire. Douglas Allmond, John M. Morrison, Gus Hensler, Tonjes Havekost and others all donated substantial holdings to the people of Anacortes to assure that future generations would have natural environments to enjoy and grow with.

As our population grows, these natural areas will increase in value and future utility. For many people, exploring these areas and using them for recreation is often secondary to the knowledge that they exist. This knowledge is a resource of personal satisfaction—that a part of the natural world still surrounds us, unpaved, unlit and unspoiled, in perpetuity.

Cranberry Park was created by City Council on January 7, 1964 by Ordinance No. 1358. These were Water Department lands which are to be used for public park purposes and managed by the Park Department. Cranberry Lake is approximately 25 acres and the park land is approximately 106 acres. “Said park is created in order to preserve for public use and general welfare the natural beauty and recreational facilities of Little Cranberry Lake for such period of time as the said property is not required for actual use by the Water Department in the public interest.”

John M. Morrison Natural Park Douglas and Cora Allmond donated this park to the City on February 25, 1928 and on March 12, 1928. Other owners, including L. Farmer and W. Odlin and E. English, also donated substantial holdings. This area includes the forested ridge seen from downtown Anacortes when looking west. The parcel donated on February 25th is in the Tuttle and Buckley Addition, including a portion of the large marsh which drains into Little Cranberry Lake. The parcel donated on March 12th (the ridge) is in the Northern Pacific Addition. Both areas are platted with streets and alleys. Although Douglas Allmond stipulated that these lands “for all-time be named John M. Morrison Natural Park,” the City Council of Anacortes has never ordinances these lands as Mr. Allmond wished. The Anacortes Chamber of Commerce advertisements from the 1930s state that “J.M. Morrison Natural Park is a recent gift to the City by public-spirited citizens. It is scenic and admirably adapted to park uses.” Morrison was a former mayor of Anacortes at the beginning of the century who, with Allmond, “conceived of the idea of the peninsula forming the extreme northwesterly part of Fidalgo Island being secured to the City for park purposes (Sunset Park/Washington Park).” Morrison was also the President of the Chamber of Commerce when that organization led the effort to make Deception Pass a State Park. In Allmond’s words, “No man ever appreciated or loved the woods of Puget Sound more than Mr. Morrison.” (August 5, 1925).

Allmond donated these lands “with the absolute condition and proviso that said land and timber be never alienated by the grantee or used or permission given to use it for any other than strictly park purposes and that the park hereby created shall for all time be named John M. Morrison Natural Park.” In the original deed “property” was the original language but was changed to read “land and timber.” The City Attorney advises that this change, coupled with the naming of the park “Natural Park,” are severely restrictive.

Another 60 acres of land was also donated to the City directly south of Little Cranberry with the same restrictions, but without the designation, “Morrison Park.”

Water Department Lands The major portion of these extensive holdings, including most of Section 26 (south of Cranberry Lake), the Whistle Lake basin, and both sides of Heart Lake Road, were obtained by the City on August 2, 1919, when Anacortes bought Douglas Allmond’s Washington Power, Light and

Water Company for \$135,000. The assets included all equipment and these extensive land holdings. The 80 acres at the north end of Heart Lake were acquired from the State in order to control the outflow of the lake for public water purposes. The City still has the right to drain the lake or raise its level by 4 feet.

On November 26, 1952, F.E. and Eva Foss donated 80 acres located adjacent to the Hensler/Kiwanis donation on Mt. Erie for \$1.00.

There are no restrictions on use or sale of Water Department Lands attached to the original deeds. Since 1999 and the creation of the Conservation Easement Plan, most of these former lands have been placed under conservation easement and are subject to the restrictions of that program.

Mt. Erie Park Gus Hensler donated 120 acres around the summit of Mt. Erie to the City on January 12, 1934. His will states the following: "Said property to be deeded by my executors to the City of Anacortes for park purposes, it being my wish that same be a haven of safety for birds and/or animal." On March 30, 1951, the Kiwanis Club, by way of Dr. Ray Pinson, deeded the City the 40-acre summit of Mt. Erie. "The property herein conveyed shall be used for public park purposes only, and any other use by the Grantee shall render this instrument void and cause title to revert to the Grantor, his successors and assigns. The Grantor hereby reserves the right to place, upon a prominent part of the property herein conveyed, a suitable plaque to inform the public that the land was donated by the Anacortes Kiwanis Club." A limited area at the top of Mt. Erie has been leased for communication towers. All revenue from these leases is used for park purposes.

Other Donations In December of 1996, Floyd and Mary Willette donated 20 acres to the Anacortes Community Forest Lands with a deed restriction stating "for park purposes only."

In 2001 the City of Anacortes purchased approximately 16 acres south of Whistle Lake from the McIntyre family.

On March 29, 2002, the State of Washington transferred 436 acres that formerly made up Heart Lake State Park to the City of Anacortes. The land came with a number of restrictions in place that were incorporated in a subsequent management plan.

In 2003 Bill Welch and Nels Strandberg donated 15 acres of wetlands and upland forest east of Mitten Pond to the City of Anacortes.

In 2006 Barbara Wells donated approximately .5 acre of forested land adjacent to 29th Street in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. The land was donated to be used strictly for park purposes with the condition that the "land and timber never be alienated by the grantee."

History of Logging on City Properties

During the time Bob Powell was the City Forester, he compiled, by way of City Council minutes and associated documents, a chronology of forest-related activities on City land from 1942 until 1975. The record reveals that during the decade 1942-1952, eight separate logging contracts were signed by the City Council. These sales, mostly to local businesses, including Anacortes Veneer and a local ship building firm, encompassed most of the City forest lands.

All of Section 26, south of Little Cranberry, except the John M. Morrison Natural Park area, was cut over during the late 1940s. During the same period, the timber at the north end of Heart Lake was cut. Foss and Sons logged much of the timber at the north and south end of Whistle Lake and the east side of Mt. Erie. Also, during this period, the right-of-way for the Mt. Erie Road was cleared and the south face of Sugarloaf was logged.

In addition, many contracts for wood cutting and salvage logging were let by Council. All of these requests were granted "provided contractors stay 300 feet from the lake shore" or "provided a 300-foot strip be left along lake and road (Heart Lake Road) to preserve scenic beauty." The record makes clear that at no point in the past has the City had any long range management plan for these lands. It is most likely that much of this land had been previously logged, by horses or oxen, sometime around the turn of the century. In short, except for the buffer strips expressly left in the past for scenic and aesthetic reasons, most of the City forest land has been logged at least once, perhaps twice; either clear-cut or high-graded. There was no conscious effort to reforest and as a result many areas grew up in brush and undesirable species. Forest fires have swept across much of this area. Past practice has left inferior or defective trees for seed sources. In the past, the City has allowed certain parties to work on City land salvaging dead and dying timber. A memorandum from Bob Powell indicates the kind of problems that can result from unsupervised forest practices when the City supposedly "knows" what is going on. The potential loss of resources and revenues through unsupervised activities does not need to be elaborated upon.

Any residual large trees, not along visible road corridors or lake shores, remain because they were deemed unmarketable or inaccessible when surrounding timber was cut.

In 1984, 1985 and 1986, partial cuts were contracted by the ACFL Board in the South Cranberry and Whistle Lake units, covering about 50 acres each year. These contracts removed more than 500,000 board feet, but because they did not turn a profit, selective cutting was abandoned in 1987 in favor of clear cutting. That year 20 acres were cut in two units northwest of Whistle Lake. More than 400,000 board feet was harvested, but the road building cost half of the City's share of the revenue, so that job also did not cover the ACFL expenses that year.

In 1988, four parcels totaling 20 acres, were clear cut northeast of Whistle Lake, removing 400,000 board feet of timber and producing enough revenue to cover the ACFL budget and a small surplus which was carried over to 1989. In that year another 20-acre clear cut in one parcel southwest of Heart Lake harvested another 400,000 board feet of timber and generated revenue sufficient to pay the ACFL budget for 1989 and 1990.

At this point two things happened to stop the logging activity: the Board and ACFL staff began to doubt the capacity of the forest lands to sustain this level of harvesting; and the citizens of Anacortes, led by the Friends of the Forest organization, began to voice their opposition to logging in the ACFL.

In 1989, an ad hoc committee was appointed by the Forest Advisory Board to study the problem, and their recommendation was that timber harvesting as a source of revenue be stopped. A petition circulated by the Friends of the Forest demanded that all logging on the ACFL be stopped and alternative funding be found. A survey conducted by the Board through the Parks and Recreation Department's quarterly newsletter indicated that the majority of residents of Anacortes and Fidalgo Island did not want the City to harvest timber in the ACFL. Another survey, randomly distributed throughout the city and statistically valid, showed that Anacortes citizens did not want logging to occur on City forest lands, nor do they want any revenue facilities built on these lands, but they do expect the City to manage them for current uses and protect them from fire, vandalism and trespass.

In response to these statements of citizen concern, the Forest Advisory Board stopped all logging activity and began pursuing other methods of funding the ACFL management program.

In 1990 the Forest Endowment Fund was authorized by Council, and the ACFL Board and Friends of the Forest began soliciting donations. When the fund reached \$50,000, interest from it could be used for ACFL management. Early in 1991, donations had exceeded \$10,000, indicating public support for the

Endowment; and the State law banning export of timber from public lands went into effect. Both of these events convinced the Planning Commission and Forest Board to recommend deletion of revenue logging from the revised Forest Plan and the City Comprehensive Plan. On April 15, 1991, City Council voted to remove all references to logging, with the exception of limited salvage of blow down and hazard trees.

Conservation Easement Program

In 1998 the Conservation Easement Program (CEP) was initiated to protect the community forest lands from logging, mining and development while places them on file with the Skagit County Auditor and the Friends of the ACFL helped promote the project in the community.

The easement program was conceived of as means to replace lost logging revenue which was discontinued in the ACFL in late 1980s. The money donated goes into the Forest Endowment Fund. The principal of this fund cannot be spent; however, interest revenue can be used for the forest lands. In August of 2007, the fund surpassed the initial goal of \$1.5 million, 11 years ahead of schedule. The CEP will continue as long as there is land to conserve in the community forest lands and people willing to contribute to its protection.

Appendix 3: Comprehensive Trail Use Plan

I. Introduction

This comprehensive trail use plan builds upon the plan originally created for the 1991 Forest Lands Management Plan. It is designed with a sense of stewardship for native flora and fauna in the Community Forest Lands and the need to balance multi-use recreational activities. The goal of this plan is to ensure the protection of the ACFL and provide a range of recreational activities.

II. The Trail Plan

A. Trail Plan Limitations

1.) Environmental Limitations

If wildlife, flora or water quality are being adversely impacted at certain locations by trail users, the trail plan may be amended in those areas to protect environmental quality. The trail use plan must always ensure that these goals are not hindered. The procedure for amending the trail plan due to environmental impacts is as follows:

- a.) Environmental impact must be documented
- b.) Environmental impact documentation must be made available to the Parks and Recreation Director, the Forest Advisory Board and interested citizens.
- c.) The Trail Committee and/or Mt. Erie Committee shall review the proposed amendment and make a recommendation to the Forest Advisory Board.
- d.) User-group representatives must be notified of any potential trail plan changes and must have the chance to be present and make comment during the decision-making process.
- e.) Amendment to the trail plan must be passed by the Forest Advisory Board in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Director.

2.) Safety Limitations

Multiple use trails have the potential to create safety problems for all user groups. The trail user rules and regulations, if followed, should prevent safety problems; however, if it is found that the trail use plan must be changed to alleviate trail user collisions, or a number of near-collisions, the following procedure for amending the trail plan must be followed:

- a.) The safety hazard must be documented.
- b.) Safety hazard documentation must be made available to the Parks and Recreation Director, the Forest Advisory Board and interested citizens.
- c.) The Trail Committee and/or Mt. Erie Committee shall review the proposed amendment and make a recommendation to the Forest Advisory Board.
- d.) User-group representatives must be notified of any potential trail plan changes and must have the chance to be present and make comment during the decision-making process.
- e.) Amendment to the trail plan must be passed by the Forest Advisory Board in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Director.

3.) Fire Hazard Limitations

Seasonal dry periods may require temporary trail closures due to high fire danger. These closures do not require trail plan amendment. These trail closures can be mandated by the Department of Natural Resources or can be requested by the Parks and Recreation Director in consultation with the Forest Advisory Board.

4.) Natural Hazard Trail Construction Limitations

There will be times when natural hazards may require temporary trail closures. Trails may be washed out, bridges may become unsafe, or a trail crew may be working on a portion of trail causing it to be temporarily unusable. In such circumstances, the trails involved can be closed temporarily without trail plan amendment. These trail closures will be imposed under the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Director and will be posted until the trail is repaired.

5.) Seasonal Trail Closures

Motorcycles are prohibited on all ACFL trails from November 1st to March 31st. Staff shall have the authority to extend the seasonal closure if warranted with Forest Advisory Board approval. Due to trail conditions during the wet season or if unexpected situations arise throughout the year, seasonal closures may be invoked for other user groups to minimize trail damage. A trail or series of trails may be closed until the problems or conditions leading to the damage are corrected. These seasonal closures will be imposed under the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Director and be discussed at the next regularly scheduled Forest Advisory Board meeting to explain the reasons for the closure and take public input. Seasonal closures will be posted at trailheads and/or popular parking areas.

6.) Provision for Trail Plan Amendment

Unforeseeable circumstances may create in the future the need for trail plan amendments other than those already provided for in the trail plan limitations. If such a situation arises, amendment to the plan must follow the procedures below.

- a.) The public and user-group representatives must be notified of any amendments proposed by the Forest Advisory Board or the Parks and Recreation Director that have not been covered under other Trail Plan Limitations.
- b.) The public and user-group representatives must be given the opportunity to make public comment. A public hearing must be held for those amendment proposals which elicit a large amount of public concern.
- c.) After public comment, the Forest Advisory Board will make a recommendation and send the proposed amendment on to the Anacortes City Council for a final decision.
- d.) As new trails are added to the ACFL system, permitted uses shall be determined by environmental considerations and what uses are allowed on connecting trails. In between comprehensive plan updates, new trail designations can be found on updated ACFL maps, and rationale for permitted usage will be available through ACFL Trail Committee minutes and/or Forest Advisory Board minutes.

B. The Cranberry Area

1.) Rationale for Trail Designations

The Cranberry Lake Area of the ACFL includes a number of environmentally sensitive areas. There is one lake, three large beaver ponds, and numerous smaller wetland areas, which support diverse wildlife populations. There are also a number of rocky bluffs covered by thin soils and small meadows of native wildflowers. To protect these sensitive environments, the trail plan for the Cranberry Unit directs the heaviest usage to the South end. All terrain vehicles (ATV's) are prohibited on all Forest Lands Trails.

2.) Trail Designations

a.) Hikers and Walkers

All Cranberry Unit trails are open to pedestrian users. Those wishing to avoid other trail users may wish to use some of the pedestrian-only trails. On ACFL trail maps, trails open to hikers and walkers are designated with a "W". The pedestrian-only trails are as follows:

- 1.) The #101, #102, ~~#132~~ #105, #11, #106 loop around the lake shore of Little Cranberry.
- 2.) Trail #103, #133 the Morrison Forest Nature Trail.
- 3.) Trail #122, the Mine Shaft Trails.
- 4.) Trail #123, along the east shore of the Big Beaver Pond.
- 5.) Trails #130 and #131 on the west side of Little Cranberry.
- 6.) Trail #125 on the south shore of Big Beaver Pond.

b.) Horses

Horses are allowed on most Cranberry Area trails. As with mountain bikes and motorcycles, horses are prohibited in some trails near shorelines and areas where the terrain does not accommodate horse access. On ACFL maps, trails open to horses are marked with an "H". Horses are permitted on the following trails:

- 1.) Horses are permitted on Trails #100, #127, #128, #105 and #104 around Little Cranberry Lake.
- 2.) Horses are permitted on Trails #106, #107, #108, #109, #110, #129, #10, #11, and #12 around the Big Beaver and Little Beaver Ponds.

- 3.) Horses are currently permitted on most trails in the South Cranberry area south of the beaver ponds, this includes Trails #113, #114, #115, #117, #118, #120, #124, #126, #134 and #135. Refer to the map for the Little Cranberry Area.

c.) Mountain Bikes

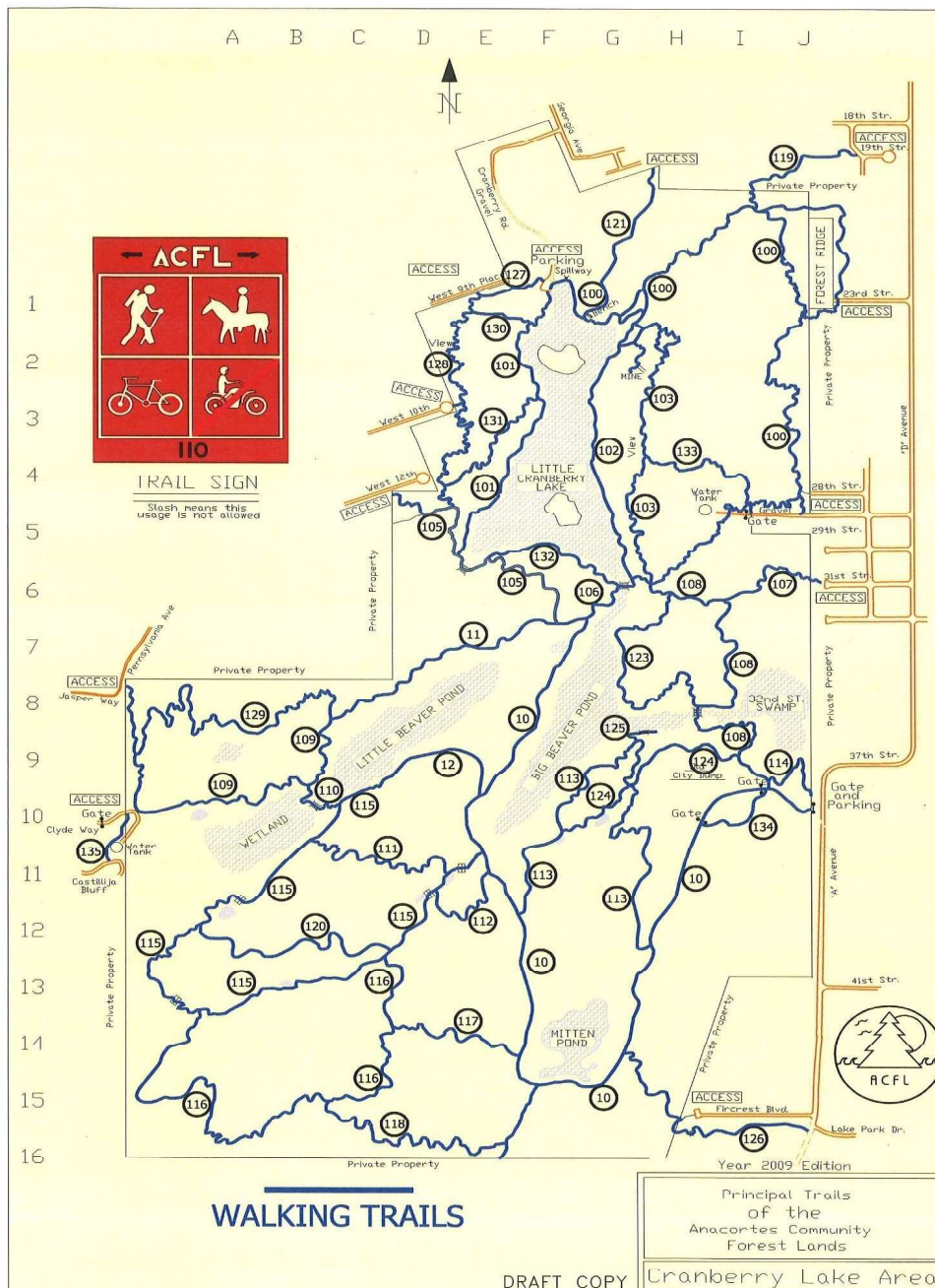
Pedaled bicycle use is allowed on many trails throughout the Little Cranberry area. On ACFL trail maps, trails open to mountain bikes are marked with a "B". Mountain bikes are permitted on the following trails:

- 1.) Mountain bikes are permitted on Trails #104, #105, #106, #107, #108, #109, #110, #119, #121, #129, #10, #11, and #12 near Little Cranberry Lake, the Big Beaver and Little Beaver Ponds.
- 2.) Mountain bikes are currently permitted on most trails in the South Cranberry area south of the beaver ponds, this includes Trail #113, #114, #115, #116, #117, #118, #120, #124, #126, #134 and #135.

d.) Motorcycles

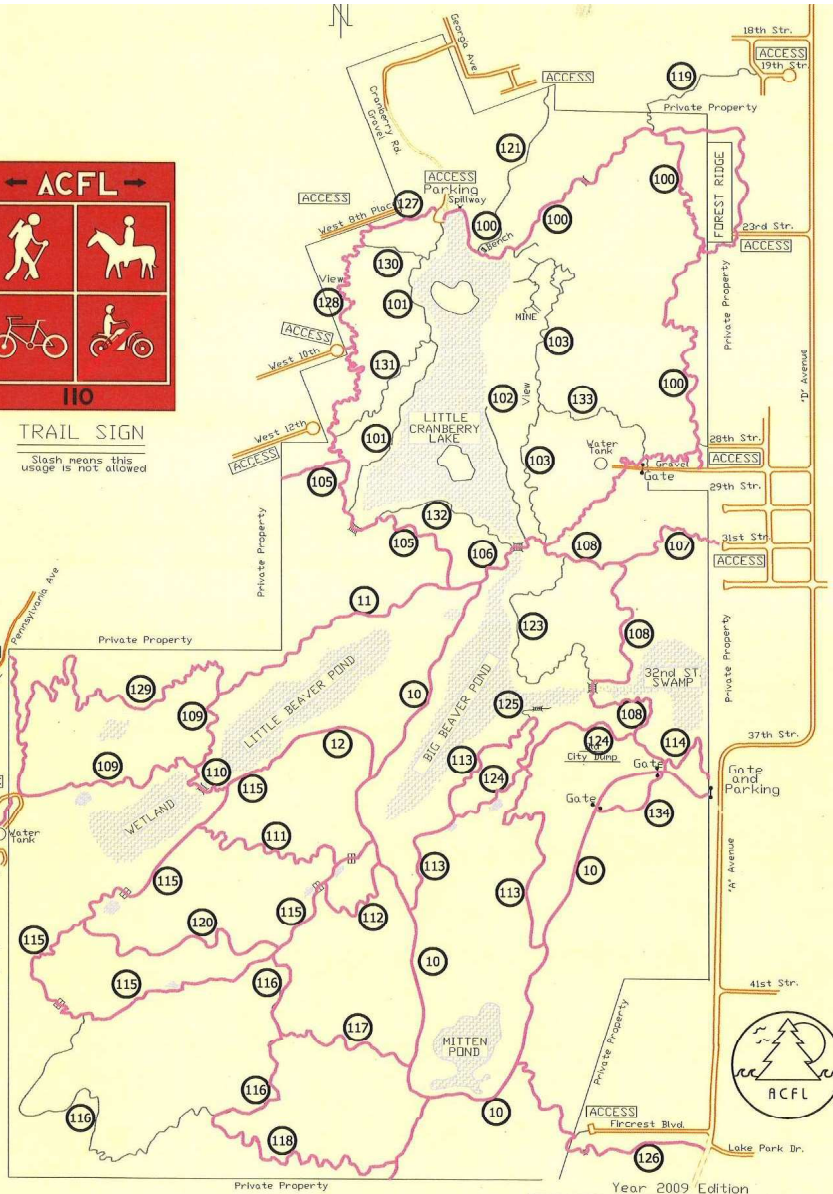
Motorcycle use must remain in the South end of the Cranberry Area. Access is provided to the south end via Trail #10 at the Old City Dump. Motorcycles are permitted on the following trails:

- 1.) Motorcycles are permitted on many trails in the South Cranberry area south of the beaver ponds; this includes trails #12, #111, #115, #120, #134.
- 2.) Motorcycles are permitted on Trail #10, south of Trail #12. Motorcycles are also permitted on sections of Trail #113 and Trail #124. Refer to the map for the Little Cranberry Area.





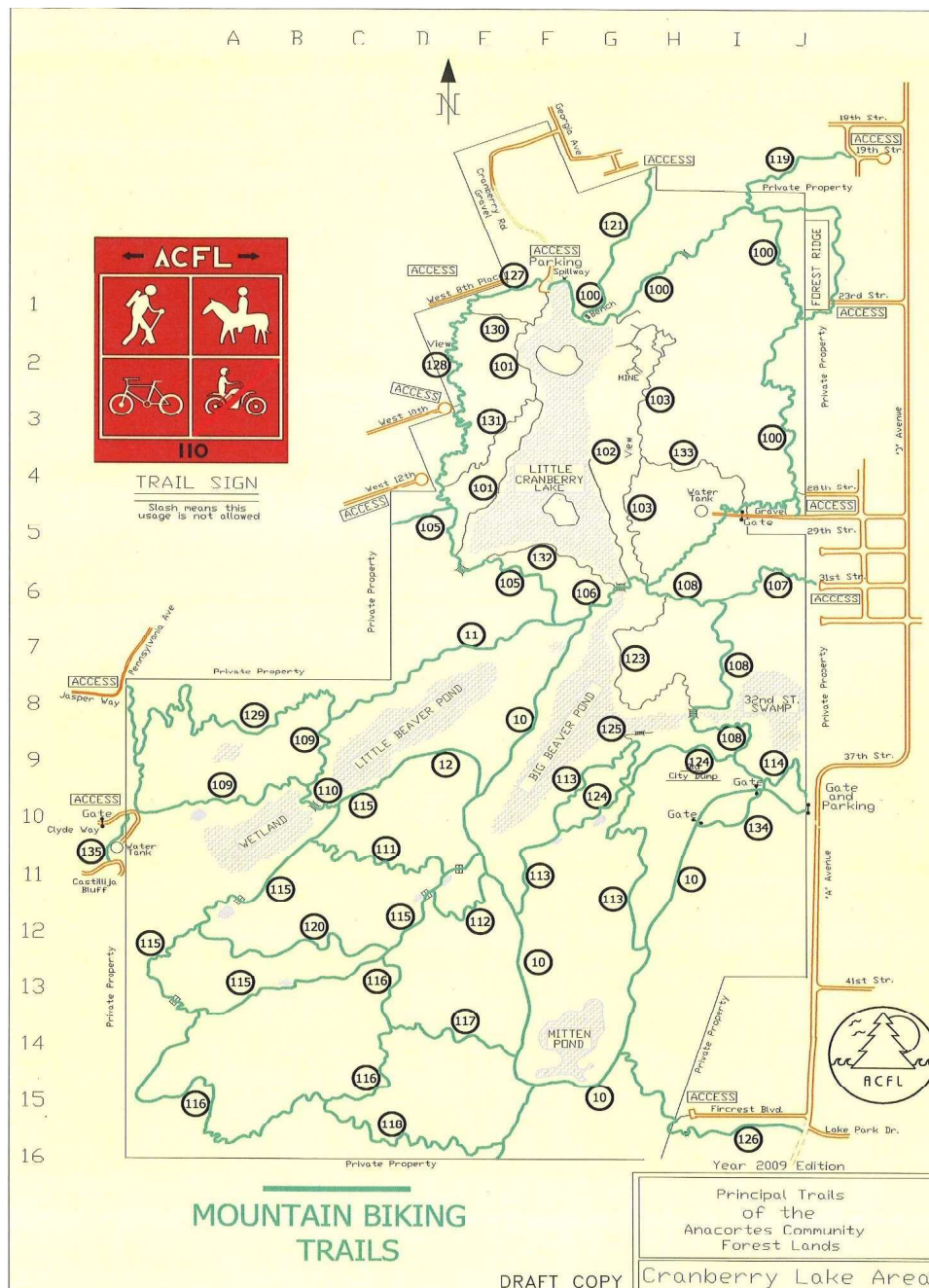
TRAIL SIGN
Slash means this
usage is not allowed

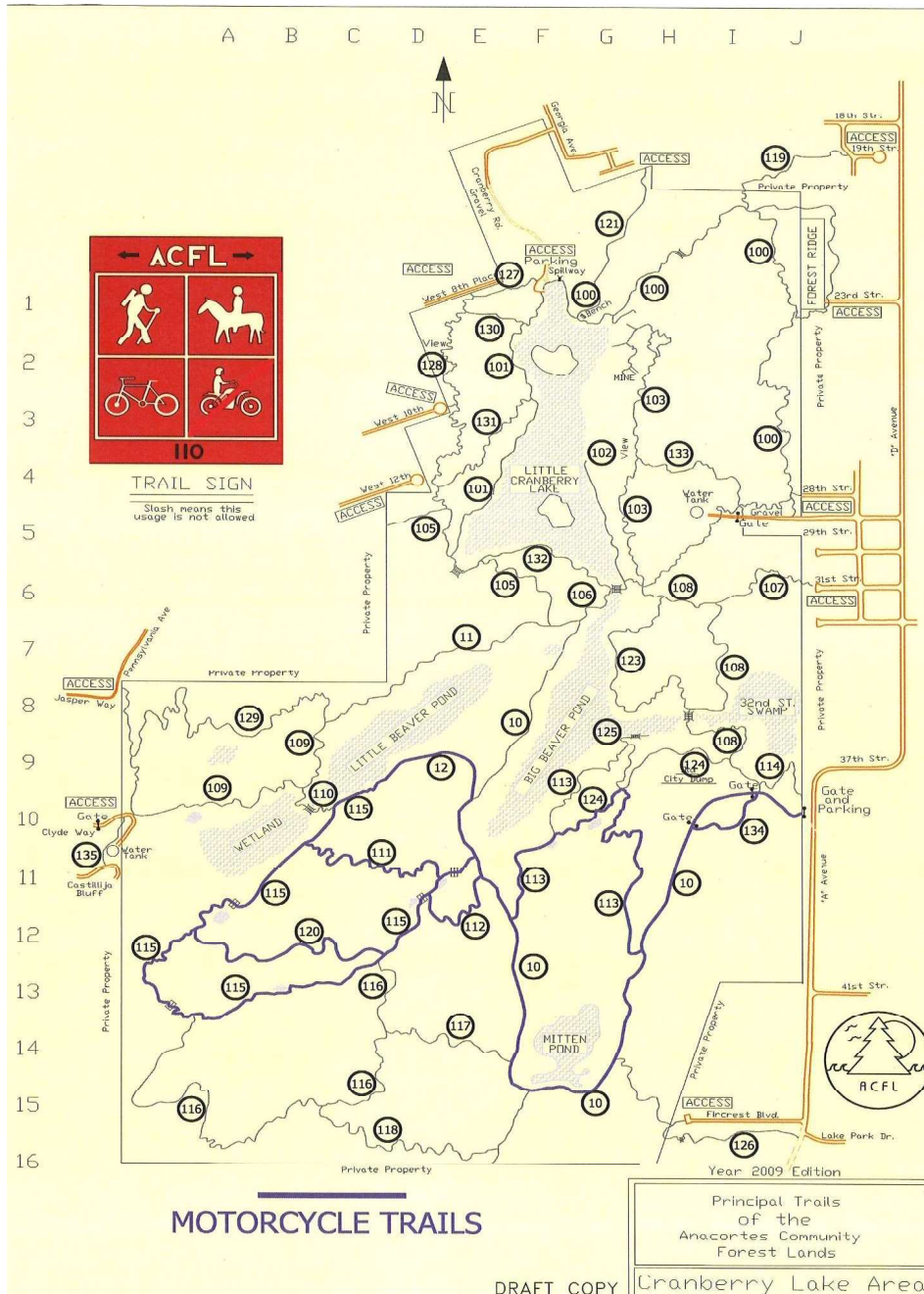


HORSE TRAILS

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Principal Trails
of the
Anacortes Community
Forest Lands
Cranberry Lake Area





C. The Whistle Lake Area

1.) Rationale for Trail Designations

The Whistle Lake Area includes deep forest areas, a pristine lake, a swamp, mountainous bluffs with native wildflowers, and numerous trails. This relatively undisturbed area must be protected from over-use, thus our trail designations direct most non-pedestrian usage to wide forest trails and old skid roads. All-terrain vehicles (ATV's) are prohibited on all Forest Lands Trails.

2.) Trail Designations

a.) Hikers and Walkers

All Whistle Lake Area trails are open to pedestrian users. Those hikers seeking to avoid other trail users may wish to use some of the pedestrian-only trails. On ACFL trail maps, trails open to hikers and walkers are designated with a "W". The pedestrian-only trails are as follows:

- 1.) Trail #246 at the cliffs is hiker only.
- 2.) Trail #205, along the East shore of Whistle Lake from the end of #20 to the intersection with Trail #29.
- 3.) Trail #215, from its Southern access on Mt. Erie Road to the top of Sugarloaf.
- 4.) Trail #214, the Ray Auld Trail.
- 5.) Trail #227, #228 and #238 near the Sugarloaf meadow, and Trail #216 which leads to the summit of Mt. Erie. Refer to the map for the Whistle Lake Area.

b.) Horses

Horses are allowed on most Whistle Lake trails. As in other areas horses are prohibited near the shorelines and in sensitive meadow areas. Horse use is permitted on the following trails.

- 1.) Horses are permitted on trails #20, #21, #22, #26, #27, #28, #29, #201, #202, #203, #206, #207, #218, #219, #225, #226, #229, #231, #232, #234, #235, #237 and #245. Horses are permitted on trail #233 where it is a double track trail. Horses are permitted on Trail #204 along the West edge of Whistle Lake, to trail #203. Horses are permitted on Trail #217 but must turn on Trail #245 before heading west to Whistle Lake.
- 2.) Horses are only permitted on Trail #205 on the stretch of trail between Trail #22 and Trail #206.
- 3.) Horses climbing Sugarloaf must access 215 from its north end at the base of Ray Auld Drive. Near the top of Sugarloaf, horses must be left in the marked wooded intersection on Trail #226. Leaving horses at this intersection and walking out to the viewpoint will protect the meadows and native wild flowers.
- 4.) Horses are prohibited on Trail #217 on the stretch from #245 to #205. Refer to the map for the Whistle Lake area.

c.) Mountain Bikes

Mountain bikes are allowed on most Whistle Lake Unit trails. Mountain bike use is permitted on the following trails:

- 1.) Mountain bikes are permitted on Trails #20, #21, #22, #26, #27, #28, #29, #201, #202, #203, #204, #206, #207, #217, #218, #219, #225, #226, #229, #231, #232,

#233, #234, #235, #237, #245, #247 and #248. Mountain bikes are permitted on trail #205 except the section along the shore of Whistle Lake from Trail #20 to Trail #29.

- 2.) Mountain bikes are prohibited on Trail #215 from its southern access on Ray Auld Drive, to the top of Sugarloaf. Mountain bikes climbing Sugarloaf must access Trail #215 from its north end at the base of Ray Auld Drive. Near the top of Sugarloaf, mountain bikes must be left in the marked wooded intersection at Trail #226. Leaving bikes at this intersection and walking to the viewpoint will protect the meadows and native wildflowers.

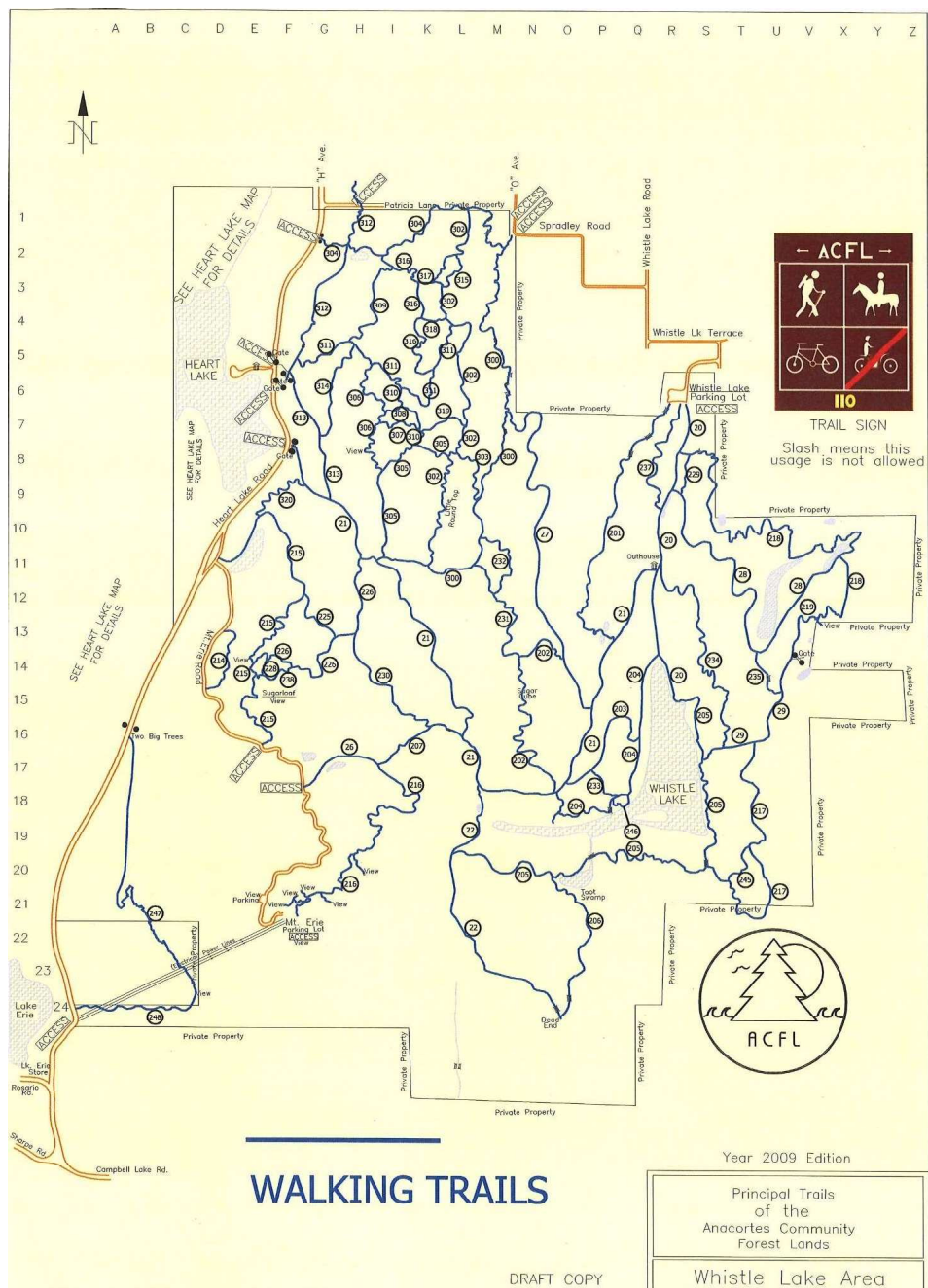
Refer to the map for the Whistle Lake area.

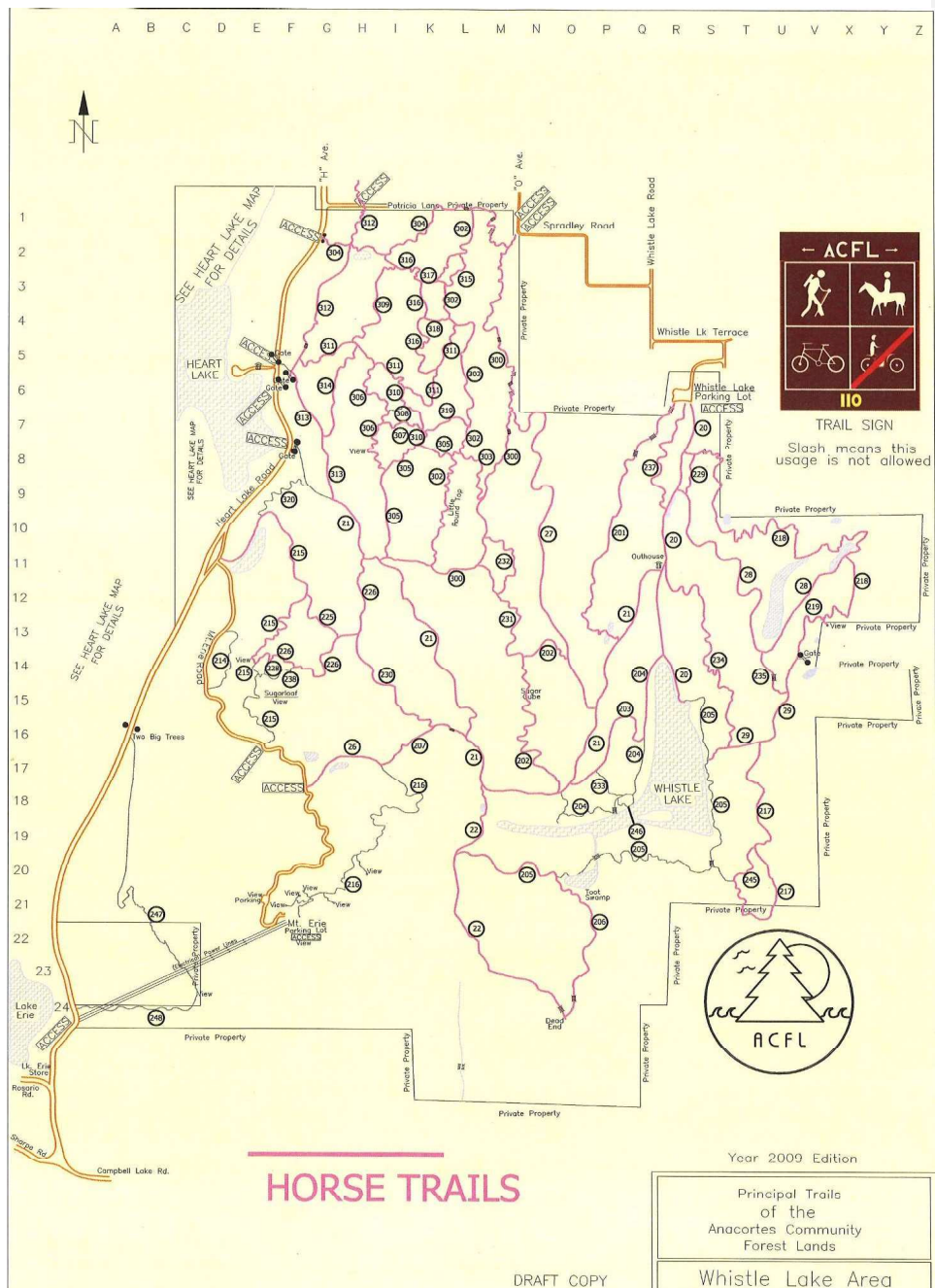
d.) Motorcycles

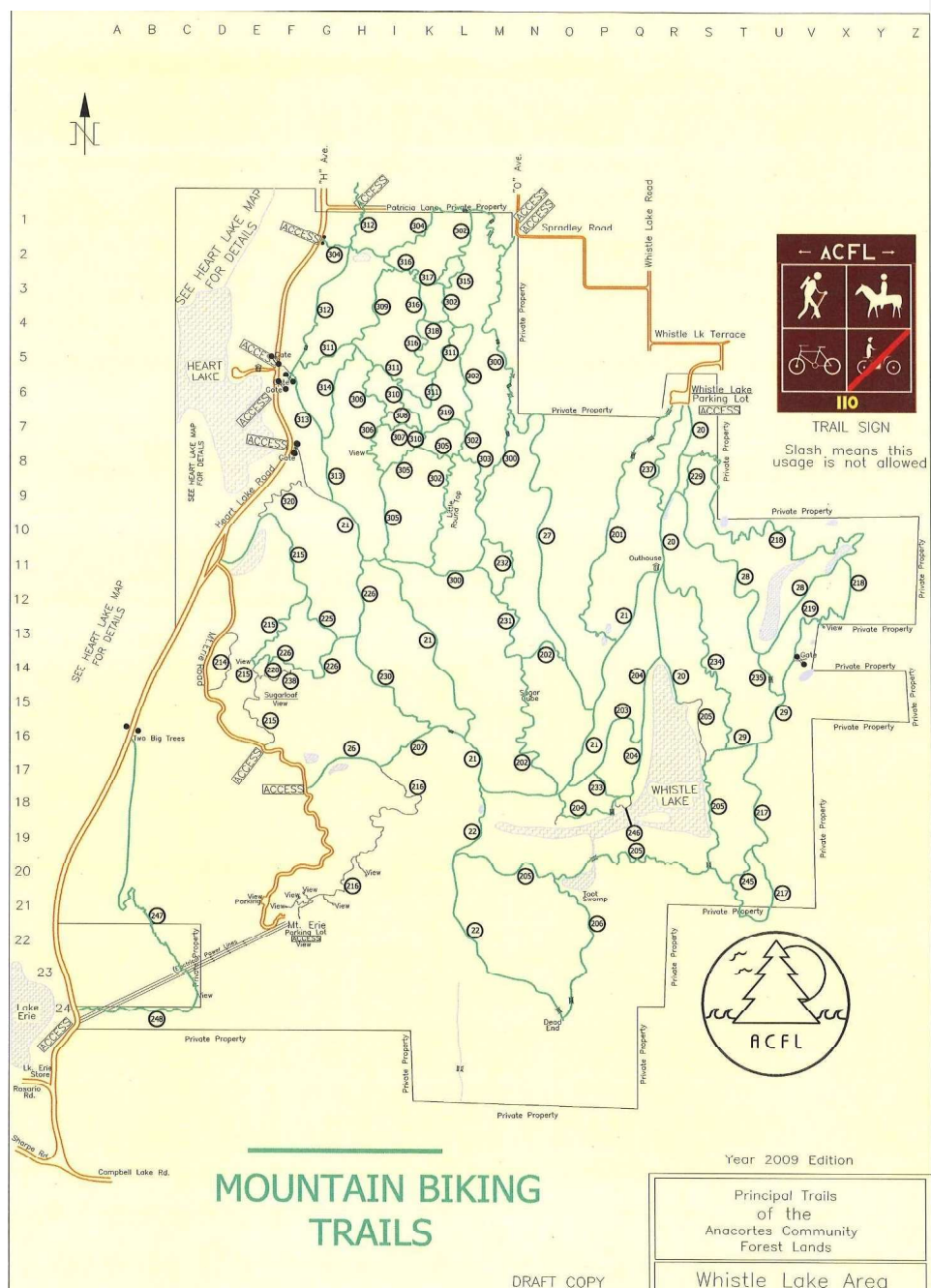
Motorcycles are allowed on a number of Whistle Lake Area trails. Motorcycles are permitted on the following trails:

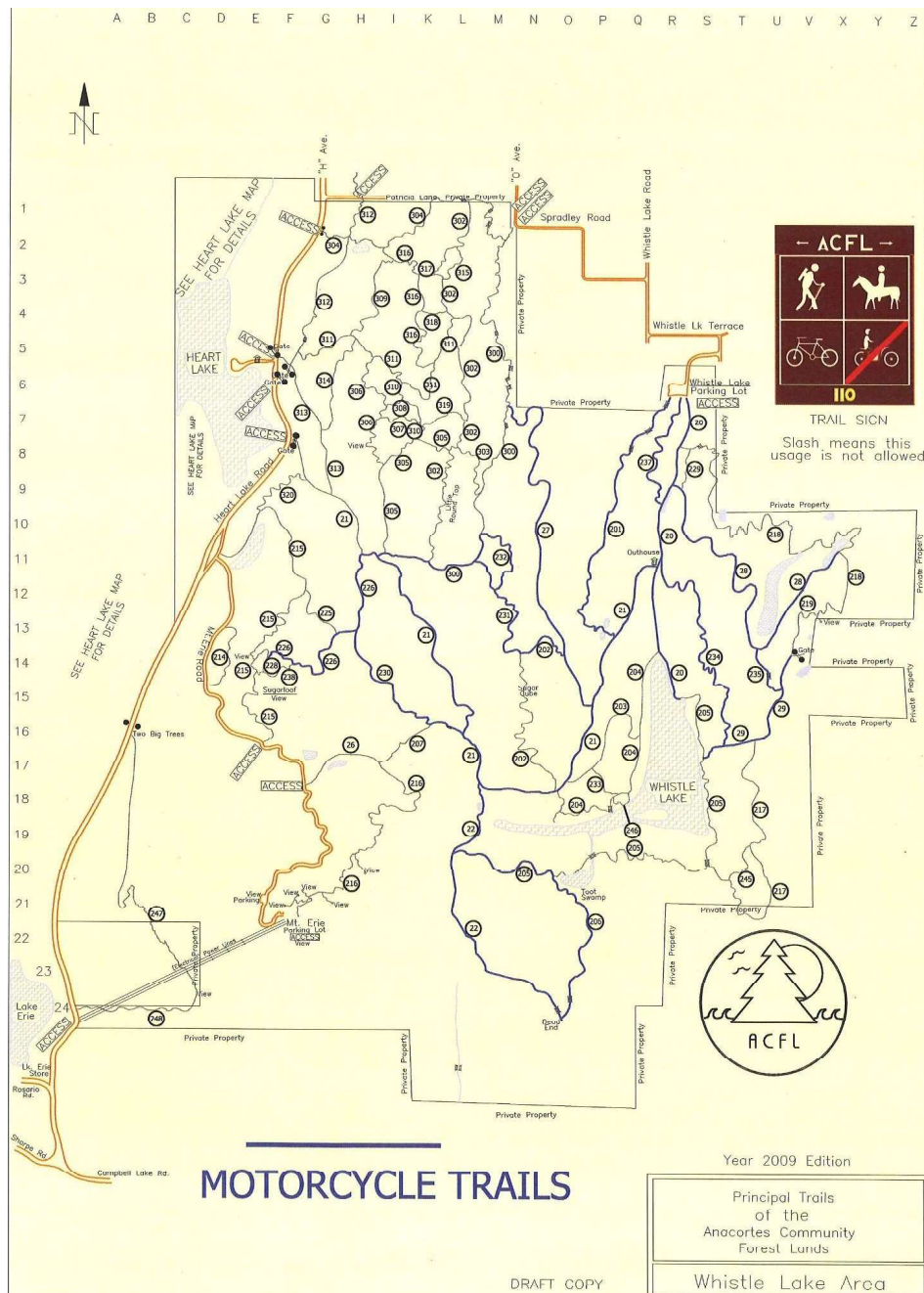
- 1.) Motorcycles are permitted on Trails #20, #21, #22, #27, #28, #29, #201, #206, #231, #232, #234, #235, #237, and #245.
- 2.) There is no motorcycle access to the cliffs at Whistle Lake.
- 3.) Motorcycles are prohibited on Trail 207 except that portion between Trails 230 and 21.
- 4.) Motorcycles are prohibited on most of Trail 205, except that portion of 205 between its intersection with trails 206 and 22. Motorcycles are prohibited on Trail #202 (through the Sugar Cube meadow) except the section between Trail #231 and Trail #27.
- 5.) Motorcycle use is prohibited on Trail 215. Trail #226 is open to motorcycles approaching Sugarloaf from the east until it intersects with Trail #238. Leaving motorcycles at this intersection and walking to the viewpoint will protect the meadows and native wildflowers.

Refer to the map for the Whistle Lake area









D.) The Heart Lake Area

1.) Rationale for Trail Designations

The area that made up the former Heart Lake State Park was transferred to the City of Anacortes in 2002. A management plan was developed shortly thereafter to make this area part of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands and is incorporated into this document. All trail designations conform to requirements passed along by the State of Washington at the time of the transfer or are the result of the subsequent management plan.

The State required that all the land to the City be non-motorized. Therefore all trails in the former State Park are closed to motorcycles. This includes trails around the lake, south of the lake, and almost all trails east of Heart Lake road that were once part of the State Park. All terrain vehicles (ATV's) are prohibited on all Forest Land Trails.

2.) Trail Designations

a.) Hikers and Walkers

All Heart Lake Area trails are open to pedestrian use. On ACFL trail maps, trails open to hikers and walkers are designated with a "W". The following are pedestrian only trails:

- 1.) Trails #213, #243 and #249 are hiker only.
- 2.) Trail #210 from the Heart Lake parking lot to intersection of Trail #242 is hiker only. Trail #210 is also hiker only from the intersection of Trail #250 to Trail #212.
- 3.) East of Heart Lake Road, in the former State Park lands, Trail #320 is hiker only. Refer to map for Heart Lake area.

b.) Horses

Horses are allowed on most Heart Lake area trails. The following are open to horseback riding:

- 1.) Trail #23, #25, #208, #209, #211, #212, #221, #222, #223, #224, #236, #240, #241, #242, #244 and #250.
- 2.) Trail #210 is open to horses from the intersection with #242 to Trail #250.
- 3.) East of Heart Lake Road, in the former State Park lands all trails in the #300 series, except Trail 320, are open to horses.

Refer to map for Heart Lake area.

c.) Mountain Bikes

Mountain bikes are allowed on most Heart Lake area trails. The following are open to mountain bikes:

- 1.) Trail #23, #25, #208, #209, #211, #212, #220, #221, #222, #223, #224, #236, #240, #241, #242, #244 and #250.
- 2.) Trail #210 is open to mountain bikes from the intersection with #242 to Trail #250.
- 3.) East of Heart Lake Road, in the former State Park lands all trails in the #300 series, except Trail #320, are open to mountain bikes.

Refer to map for Heart Lake area.

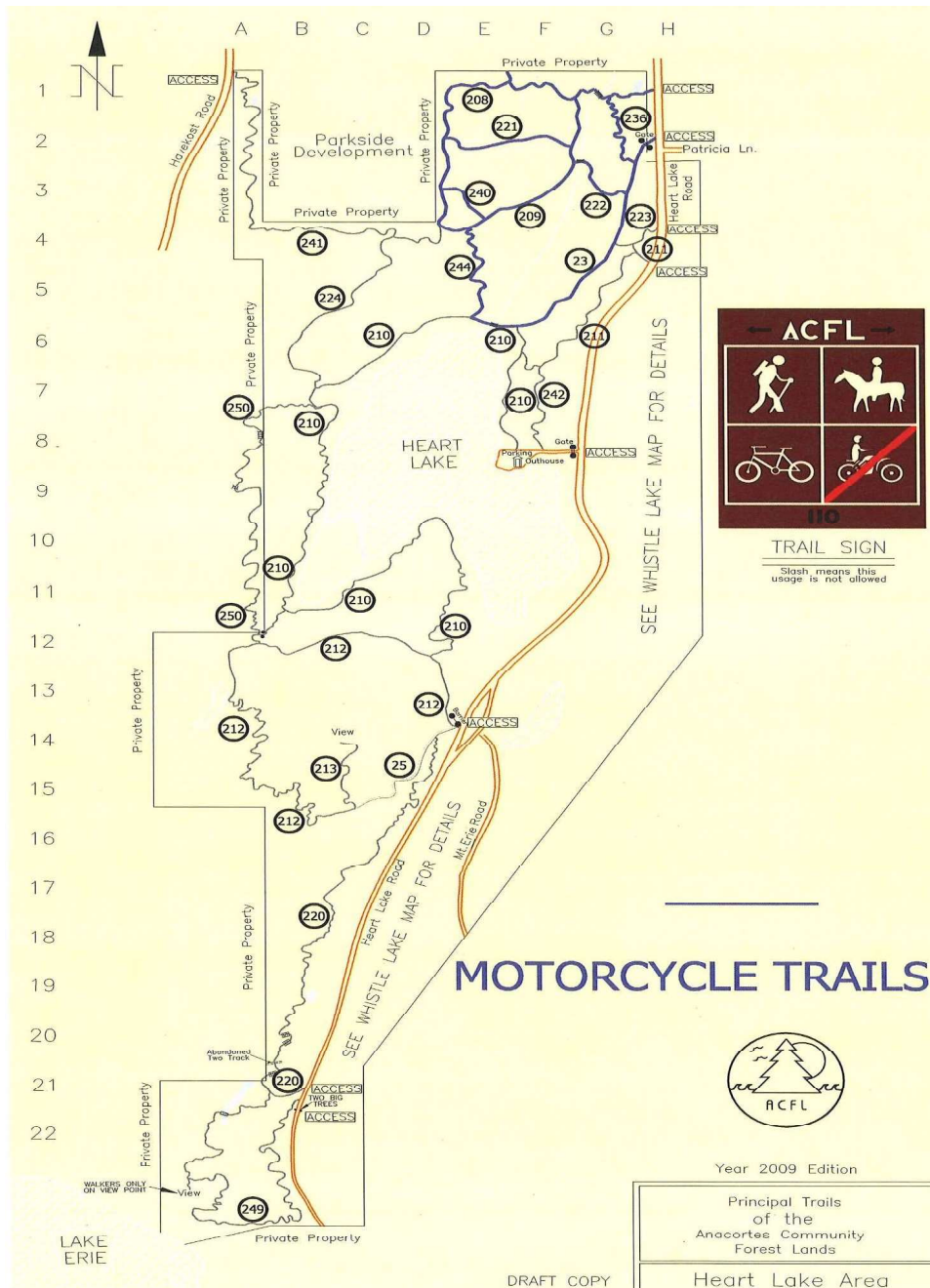
d.) Motorcycles

Motorcycles are only allowed on a limited number of trails north of Heart Lake. The following trails are open to motorcycles:

- 1.) Trail #23, #208, #209, #221, #222, #236, and #244.
- 2.) East of Heart Lake Road motorcycles are prohibited on all trails in the #300 series with the exception of Trail #300 from Trail #232 to Trail #21.

Refer to map for Heart Lake area.





III. Implementation of the Trail Plan

A.) Enforcement and Education

1.) Trail User Rules and Regulations

a.) General Rules and Regulations

- 1.) Trail users found or proven to be violating the ACFL trail users rules and regulations can be cited and/or fined.
- 2.) All City, State and Federal laws that apply within the city limits of Anacortes can be enforced within the ACFL, except where differences are specifically outlined in this trail plan, or other ACFL documents.
- 3.) All trail users must remain on designated trails. Clearing new trails or traveling off-trail is prohibited except as otherwise allowed by the Forest Advisory Board.
- 4.) Knowledge of trail designations is the responsibility of the user (barring sudden changes which have not been posted or announced). Traveling on trails not designated for the mode of transportation being used is prohibited. Trail use violators on unmarked trails where signs have been vandalized or removed can still be ticketed and fined.
- 5.) Trail users must obey all seasonal trail closures. Motorcycles are prohibited on all ACFL trails from November 1 to March 31, Two cycle engines and ATV's are prohibited year round.
- 6.) Pets must be leashed at all times.
- 7.) Littering is prohibited on ACFL property. All litter and dog waste must be packed out.
- 8.) Fireworks, fires or barbeques are prohibited. Smoking in the ACFL is prohibited. Possession or consumption of alcohol is prohibited.
- 9.) The taking of trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers or other vegetation from the ACFL land is prohibited.
- 10.) Hunting and trapping are prohibited on ACFL property.
- 11.) The taking of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, or any other wildlife (with the exception of legal sports fishing) is prohibited.
- 12.) Geocaching is allowed in the ACFL by permit only. Permits are available through the Parks and Recreation Department.

b.) Hiker Rules and Regulations

- 1.) Pedestrians must remain on trails designated for hiker use in the ACFL trail plan. Traveling off trail is prohibited except as otherwise allowed by the Forest Advisory Board.
- 2.) Hikers must walk in such a way that they will have little or no adverse impact. It is unlawful to cause the following impacts:
 - Severe erosion
 - Damage to vegetation along the trail
 - Damage to vegetation in meadows and mossy outcrops
 - Damage to trails such that trail use by other users is hindered
- 3.) Upon meeting a horse, mountain bike, motorcycle or other hiker from the front, a hiker should slow down or stop and move to the right to allow safe

passage to the other users. If you meet a horse, let the horse have the uphill edge of the trail. Say "Hi" as each rider in a string passes you, otherwise a green horse may spook when the thing seen as a stump suddenly moves.

- 4.) Upon meeting a horse, mountain bike, motorcycle or other hiker from behind, a hiker should slow or stop, announce his/her presence, and ask that the other user(s) move to the right (or uphill side in the case of a horse) to allow safe hiker passage. Only when the other user is safely out of the way may the hiker proceed.
- 5.) When stopping along the trail, hikers should move over to the right or uphill trail edge to be out of the way of others. Ideally, a hiker should wait for a widening in the trail before stopping.

c.) Horse rider Rules and Regulations

- 1.) Horses must remain on trails designated for horses in the ACFL Trail Plan. Traveling off-trail is prohibited. No horse shall be off tether.
- 2.) Horses must be handled in such a way that they will have little or no adverse impact. It is unlawful to allow your horse to cause the following impacts:
 - Severe erosion
 - Damage to vegetation bordering the trail
 - Damage to vegetation in meadows or mossy outcrops
 - Damage to trails such that trail use by other users is hindered
- 3.) When stopping for equipment adjustment or to view the scenery, horse riders should move over to the right or uphill trail edge to be out of the way of others. Ideally, a rider should wait for a widening in the trail before stopping.
- 4.) Hikers, mountain bikers and motorcycle riders must all yield to horses. As previously stated, maintain voice contact with the equestrian group as they pass.
- 5.) Maintain at least one horse length between horses when traveling in groups.
- 6.) Horse riders must remove all manure left by their horses from parking areas and designated picnic areas. If no receptacle area or container is provided, take it out with you.
- 7.) When tying up horses, be sure to tie them in such a way that damage to vegetation or trees will be minimal. Causing severe impact is unlawful.

d.) Mountain bike Rules and regulations

- 1.) Mountain bikes must remain on trails designated for mountain bikes in the ACFL Trail Plan.
- 2.) Bikes must be handled in such a way that they will have little or no adverse impact. It is unlawful to cause the following impacts:
 - Severe erosion
 - Damage to vegetation bordering the trail
 - Damage to vegetation in meadows or mossy outcrops
 - Damage to trails such that trail use by other users is hindered
- 3.) When stopping along the trail, bikers should move over to the right or uphill trail edge to be out of the way of others. Ideally, a biker should wait for a widening in the trail before stopping.

- 4.) Upon meeting a hiker, horse, motorcycle or other mountain bike from the front, a biker must slow or stop, move to the right (unless meeting a horse when one should let the rider use the uphill side even if it is on the right), and allow passage to the other trail user(s).
- 5.) Upon meeting a hiker, horse, motorcycle, or other mountain bike from behind, a biker should slow or stop, announce his/her presence and ask that the other user move to the right (or uphill grade in the case of a horse). Only when the other trail user is safely out of the way may the mountain biker proceed.
- 6.) Maintain at least one bicycle length between bikes when travelling in groups.
- 7.) Mountain bikes shall not exceed 15 mph on the trails designated for their use.

e.) Motorcycle Rules and Regulations

- 1.) A motorcycle is defined as a two-wheeled vehicle. Motorcycle engines over 250cc are prohibited. Street legal dual sport motorcycles shall be exempt from the 250cc size limitation. Only four-cycle engines are allowed in the ACFL. Two-cycle engines are prohibited. Three and four-wheeled all-terrain vehicles are prohibited on ACFL trails.
- 2.) Motorcycles must have an adequate and operating muffler that limits exhaust noise to 105 decibels at 20 inches from the exhaust to be trail legal in Washington State.
- 3.) Motorcycles must have a USDA Forest Service approved spark arrester to be trail legal in Washington State.
- 4.) Motorcycles must have lighted headlights and taillights at night or during poor visibility to be trail legal in Washington State.
- 5.) Motorcycles must have brakes which work properly to be trail legal in Washington State.
- 6.) Motorcycle riders must have a valid Washington State ORV permit or vehicle license to be trail legal in the State of Washington.
- 7.) Motorcycles must remain on trails designated for motorcycle use in the ACFL Trail Plan. Off-trail riding is prohibited.
- 8.) Motorcycles shall not exceed 15 mph on trails designated for motorcycle use.
- 9.) Motorcycles must be handled with extreme caution. Riding unsafely in any way is strictly prohibited and will be enforced. Motorcycles must ensure that all other trail users they meet will be safe from collision or fear of collision. These trails are heavily traveled by pedestrians of all ages.
- 10.) Motorcycles must be handled with extreme caution in environmentally sensitive areas. Wetland areas and erodible trails must be protected from impact. Trail plan amendment will be required if impact becomes great.
- 11.) Upon meeting a hiker, horse, mountain bike or other motorcycle from the front, a motorcycle must stop, move to the right (or downhill side in the case of meeting a horse) and allow safe passage to the other trail user(s).
- 12.) Upon meeting a hiker, horse, mountain bike or other motorcycle from behind, a motorcyclist must stop, announce his/her presence, and ask that the other user move safely to the right or uphill side to allow safe motorcycle passage. Only when the other user is safely out of the way may the motorcycle proceed.

- 13.) Maintain at least two motorcycle lengths between riders when travelling in groups.
- 14.) Motorcycles must be handled in such a way that they will have little or no adverse impact. It is unlawful to cause the following impacts:
 - Severe erosion
 - Damage to vegetation bordering the trail
 - Damage to vegetation in meadows or mossy outcrops
 - Damage to trails such that trail use by other users is hindered
- 15.) The ACFL recommends that all motorcycle users obtain and read the Washington Off-Road Vehicle Guide from the Washington Department of Natural Resources. This guide provides information important to all motorcycle trail riders.
- 16.) Motorcycle rules and regulations stated here shall be reviewed annually for effectiveness, with regard to safety, protecting habitat, minimizing trail damage and promoting compatibility with other user groups.

2.) Signage

Enforcement of the Trail Plan requires proper signage. A sign will be used to mark all access points, trail intersections, and points where trail use could be confusing.

a.) Trail Designation Sign Design

A number of other signs are also needed. Private property boundaries must be signed where ACFL trails run onto private land and signs are needed for those locations where trail users must leave bikes, horses, and motorcycles, and walk to view points or lakes. Signs will be put up by staff with the help of volunteers from the different user-groups.

3.) Enforcement

The vast majority of the ACFL lies within the Anacortes City limits. Thus, all city, state, and federal laws that apply within the City limits of Anacortes can be enforced within the ACFL. Exception to this would occur only where differences from City laws are specified in this Trail Plan or other ACFL documents.

Enforcement of the law will be provided by Anacortes Police Department. Trail users found to be violating the Rules and Regulations specified in this plan or the laws of the City of Anacortes can be cited and fined.

4.) Brochure

It is vital to the success of this trail plan to provide for the public a condensed version of this plan. These will be provided on the reverse side of all ACFL trail maps and may contain the following:

- Explanation of how the trails are signed
- Rules and Regulations
- Trail designations
- Suggestions for minimum environmental impact
- User group representatives listed as contacts
- Parks and Recreation Department contacts

These brochures should be made available within all map sets sold from the Forest Lands office at City Hall, User Group representatives, and at well-used trail heads.

5.) ACFL Trail Committee

For each user-group (horse riders, hikers, mountain bikers, motorcyclists, persons with disabilities, and an ACFL naturalist), a volunteer representative shall be appointed by the Forest Board and Parks and Recreation Director to the ACFL Trail Committee. The ACFL Trail Committee is to:

- a.) Assist ACFL Staff and the Forest Advisory Board with questions regarding new trails, trail re-routes, trail closure, trail signage, review of the trail plan.
- b.) Be available to represent their user-group at Forest Board meetings when issues affecting the trail plan arise.
- c.) Be available to organize volunteer trail maintenance work parties with their user-group, when needed in the ACFL. All maintenance projects must be approved by the Parks and Recreation Director.

B.) Trail Maintenance

1.) Maintenance Standards

Trail maintenance shall follow standards for Recreation Trail Maintenance as shown in the booklet available from the State of Washington Department of Natural Resources or other recognized trail manuals and staff experience. Resources will be available at the Parks and Recreation Office.

2.) New Trails

New trails may be built if such construction is deemed necessary by the Parks and Recreation Director in cooperation with the Forest Advisory Board. The Trail Committee should be involved and review trail location. Trail construction should be completed with all due care to native flora and fauna while providing a quality recreational experience. New trail construction can be completed by user-group volunteers or crews arranged and supervised by the Forest Lands Staff.

3.) Work Crews

The ACFL encourages and depends upon volunteer help in maintaining trails. Volunteers wishing to help with trail work must contact the Forest Lands Manager prior to starting any projects. The Parks and Recreation Office will be able to supply a list of the areas needing work the most, and resources on trail maintenance. The Forest Lands Office may also be able to supply some of the equipment needed. Non volunteer trail maintenance is also done, but employees of the Parks and Recreation Office and contracted work crews such as the Washington Conservation Corps.

4.) Yearly Trail Maintenance Record

To facilitate trail maintenance, a record of areas needing trail work or having had trail work completed will be kept by the Parks and Recreation Department. This record will provide information for volunteers and Parks and Recreation Department on the status of the trail system on a yearly basis. Such a record will show the continual trouble areas, which user-groups are causing the most damage, which user-groups are contributing the most volunteer trail maintenance, what types of trail maintenance is most successful, etc. The record shall be updated yearly.

Appendix 4: Heart Lake Management Plan

Introduction

In 2002, the State of Washington deeded Heart Lake State Park to the City of Anacortes. 436 acres including the lake and land surrounding it was transferred to the City with a number of conditions regulating its use as a recreational area.

The State Parks and Recreation Commission divided the land at Heart Lake into three separate areas noted on the attached map:

Natural Forest Area: The land along the southwest portion of the lake, stretching along the southern edge including one area on the east side of Heart Lake Road.

Resource Recreation Area: The land along the northwest portion of the lake and most of the area east of Heart Lake Road except that area designated as Natural Forest or Recreation.

Recreation Area: The current parking lot at Heart Lake and the former overflow parking east of Heart Lake Road.

In their deliberations, the Heart Lake Management Plan Committee decided to treat the lake surface as a fourth and separate area for review. Management of the lake surface shall take into consideration the environmental sensitivity of the adjacent upland areas.

In December of 2003, the City began work on a management plan by seeking input from the community about use of Heart Lake and the surrounding land. The results of that input and numerous meetings by an eight-member planning committee are contained within these pages.

State regulations for the former State Park listed a variety of permitted and conditional activities. The Committee spent significant time reviewing each of these to determine if they were appropriate. The State did mandate that all trails be non-motorized. The Committee agreed not to challenge the State regulations during the planning process.

This management plan is intended to become an amendment to the existing Anacortes Community Forest Lands Management Plan drafted in 1991, and to follow the same rules expressed in that document unless otherwise noted.

Committee Members:

Doug Colglazier-Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

Denise Crowe-ACFL Trail Committee

Marty Laumbattus-ACFL Trail Committee

Bart Lovric-Whidbey Island Roostertails Racing Club

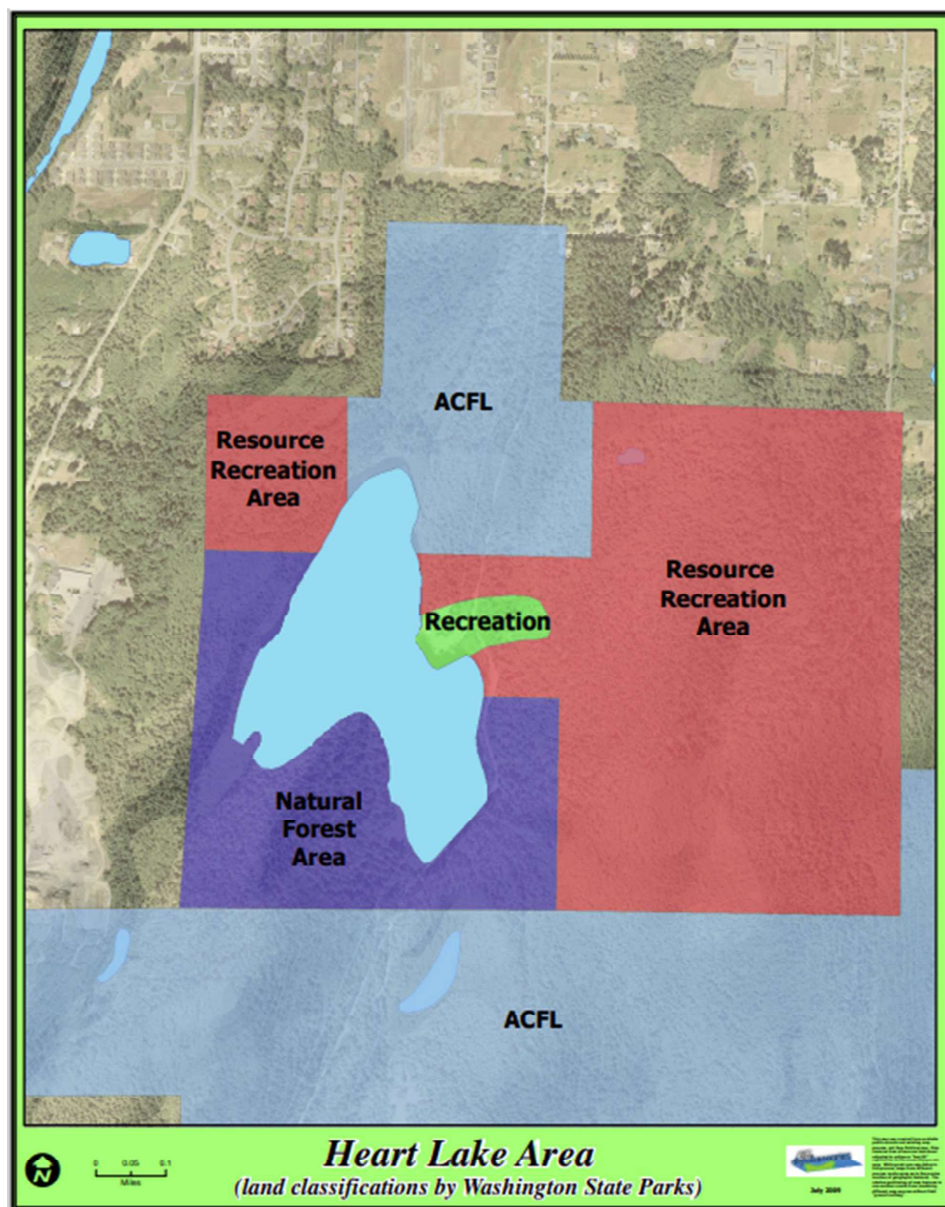
Alan Mazonson-Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Geri Rubin-ACFL Trail Committee

Bruce Rustad-ACFL Trail Committee

Dan Senour-ACFL Trail Committee

Buzz Bannister-Whidbey Island Roostertails Racing Club (alternate)



History

Before becoming a State Park, Heart Lake was managed by the State Department of Natural Resources as school trust land. While long considered a back-up water supply for the City of Anacortes, it was also a recreational resource used year round by Fidalgo Island residents and attracted large crowds from around the region for the opening day of fishing season.

Local citizens became concerned about the future of the lake when the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) proposed leasing the lakeshore for condominium development in 1977. This set off a flurry of local activity by community members to pressure lawmakers and State officials to preserve the lake and surrounding forests.

On Valentine's Day 1980, then Washington State Governor Dixy Lee Ray signed a bill permitting Heart Lake to become a State Park. It was not until more than a year later that the price of \$2.5 million was agreed upon between the DNR and the State Parks and Recreation Commission for the transfer of the land into the park system.

In 2002, the City of Anacortes and State Parks and Recreation concluded their long-standing discussions regarding transfer of the land and the lake. Governor Gary Locke signed the deed transferring the Heart Lake State Park to the City on March 29, 2002. The deed contains a reversionary clause, which allows the State to retake control of the land if the City violates conditions of the transfer. The City formally took control of the former State Park on June 1, 2002.

I. Natural Forest Area

The Natural Forest Area is comprised of approximately 75 acres. It covers the old growth forest in the southwest area of the lake and extends across Heart Lake road to include a small grove of ancient forest just east of the road.

- A.) **Trail Use:** All trails in the Natural Forest Area are for use by hikers only. Horses, mountain bikes and motorcycles are prohibited. Off trail use is prohibited. No taking of trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers, fungi or other vegetation. Hand picking of berries and other edibles from the trails for consumption while in the forest is allowed. Picking for home consumption or for retail is prohibited. Cross-country skiing and snow shoeing on those trails are permitted winter recreation activities.
- B.) **Conditional Uses:** Interpretive Trails and signage; filming; special events; interpretive kiosks; and non-motorized paved trails for ADA access. Activities listed as "conditional uses" are those uses that need to be approved by the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board in advance.
- C.) **Future Trail Plans:** The existing loop around the lake could be made more explicit on ACFL maps, and maps at trailhead kiosks could also be improved to show a clear route. This could also include renumbering the loop route or giving it a "name" to assist trail users. The trail could have interpretive signage at the trailhead to educate hikers regarding the old growth forests in the area. A future plan on both how to best cross Heart Lake road in this loop route, or to allow non-motorized users to safely transit the road corridor is encouraged. Side trails on this loop route should be reduced.
- D.) **Management Authority:** Under Council form of government, the City Council has the ultimate legal authority and sets policy direction for the City. The Mayor is charged with management responsibility for administration of all City assets under the direction of the

Council. The City Council must approve all contracts, asset sales and use policies. Within this framework, it is recommended that the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board suggest use policies and effectively guide management of the Natural Forest Area. As an amendment to the existing Anacortes Community Forest Lands Management Plan drafted in 1991, this plan will follow the same rules expressed in that document unless otherwise noted.

II. Resource Recreation Area

The Resource Recreation Area is comprised of approximately 292 acres. It includes the northwest corner of the former State Park, the road corridor, and the entire area east of Heart Lake Road except that zone previously noted as Natural Forest Area.

- A.) Trail Use:** All trails in the Resource Recreation Area are open to hikers, horses, and mountain bikers. Motorcycles are prohibited. Off trail use is prohibited. No taking of trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers, fungi or other vegetation. Hand picking of berries and other edibles from the trails for consumption while in the forest is allowed. Picking for home consumption or for retail is prohibited. On trail cross-country skiing and snow shoeing are permitted winter recreation activities. Picnicking is permitted; users are asked not to disturb native plants and pack their trash out. Picnic tables and picnic structures are not recommended for this area.
- B.) Conditional Uses:** Filming; equestrian hitching posts; and paved non-motorized trails for ADA access. Activities listed as “conditional uses” are those uses that need to be presented to the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board prior to approval.
- C.) Future Trail Plans:** Interpretive information and signage may be included in a future trail plan. Sanitary vault or composting toilets may be constructed in this area if needed. Roads shall be limited to those already existing in the Resource Recreation area and parking would be limited to that which already exists along Heart Lake Road.
- D.) Management Authority:** Under Council form of government, the City Council has the ultimate legal authority and sets policy direction for the City. The Mayor is charged with management responsibility for administration of all City assets under the direction of the Council. The City Council must approve all contracts, asset sales and use policies. Within this framework, it is recommended that the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board suggest use policies and effectively guide management of the Resource Recreation Area. As an amendment to the existing Anacortes Community Forest Lands Management Plan drafted in 1991, this plan will follow the same rules expressed in that document unless otherwise noted.

III. Recreation Area

The Recreation Area is comprised of approximately eight acres. It encompasses the existing parking lot and the former gravel parking lot and overflow parking area east of Heart Lake Road.

- A.) Trail Use:** All trails are open to hikers, horses and mountain bikers. Motorcycles are prohibited. Off trail use is prohibited. No taking of trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers, fungi or other vegetation. Hand picking of berries and other edibles from the trails for consumption while in the forest is allowed. Picking for home consumption or for retail is prohibited.

- B.) Information/Education Facilities:** A rustic type of amphitheater in the parking lot area that could seat up to 30 people and be used for environmental education was approved as a conditional use. It could be covered. The committee encourages any covered facility to have a multi-use function (i.e.: both picnic and interpretive/educational) and to be limited to the appropriate size and scale for the area.
- C.) Permitted Uses:** Snow shoeing (on trail); wind surfing; swimming; sailing; hand launch areas; launch ramps; floating dock (instead of pier); cross country skiing; kayaks and canoes; walking; mountain biking; equestrian trails; interpretive signs, trails or kiosks; vehicle parking; roads (review location concerning environmental issues); equestrian facilities (allow parking and hitching post); paved non-motorized trail for ADA purposes (review location concerning environmental issues); composting or vault toilets (review location and design concerning environmental issues). The committee noted that they have heard from the public that they would like to recreate at the lake (fishing, swimming, picnicking, etc.). The committee encourages “rustic” facilities to accommodate these activities.
- D.) Conditional Uses:** Organized non-profit group activity, interpretive centers; environmental learning center; filming; and special events. Activities listed as “conditional uses” are those uses that need to be approved by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission in advance. Harvesting of shellfish, fish, and algae will be coordinated with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- E.) Children’s Play Area:** It should be in keeping with the surrounding area and could incorporate a natural theme or could be an artistic piece that was designed to be suitable for children to play on.
- F.) Camping:** The committee opposed developing camping at the lake without supervision by full time staff. The committee decided that camping could occur in self-contained units in the current parking lot area by special permit only. Staff must be present during the event. The Committee did not wish to see the development of a special camping area with individual campsites.
- G.) Beach Use:** The Committee would like to accommodate use by the public and separate this from vehicle traffic; this is raised out of a concern for safety of all users. They expressed a vision of a clean sand or grassy area for picnic blankets, etc. by the edge of the lake and an overall reduction of the current gravel parking lot. If grass is used, there was a desire to see that it not be fertilized or irrigated, etc. as to minimize impact on the lake’s ecosystem from excess nitrogen.
- H.) Boat Launch:** Consideration should be given to moving the current boat launch to the east-southeast side of the parking lot. The Committee received comment that the west shore of the parking area is shallow and preferable for wading. Relocating the boat launch would better separate boaters from other users at the shoreline.
- I.) Prohibited uses (from list provided by the State):** Wood debris collection; snowmobiling; mushing/sled dogs; off trail skiing; alpine skiing; white water boating; mooring buoys; jet skiing; Nordic track skiing; rock climbing; skiing facilities; sports fields; paragliding; off trail use; ocean beach driving; orienteering; metal detecting; indoor accommodations; haying; mushroom harvesting; grazing; farming or orchards.

J.) **Management Authority:** Under Council form of government, the City Council has the ultimate legal authority and sets policy direction for the City. The Mayor is charged with management responsibility for administration of all City assets under the direction of the Council. The City Council must approve all contracts, asset sales and use policies. Within this framework, it is recommended that the ACFL Advisory Board suggest use policies and effectively guide management of the Recreation Area. As an amendment to the existing Anacortes Community Forest Lands Management Plan, drafted in 1991, this plan will follow the same rules expressed in that document unless otherwise noted.

IV. Lake Surface

Heart Lake is approximately 51 acres in size. It is bordered by Heart Lake Road to the east, has a large gravel parking lot on its northeastern shore, second growth forests to the north and northwest, and a significant grove of old growth trees to the south and southwest. Fidalgo Island residents have used it as a popular recreational destination for boating, fishing, swimming, mini-hydroplane racing, bird watching, and occasional ice-skating when the winter weather permits. Management of the lake surface shall take into consideration the environmental sensitivity of the adjacent upland areas. Problems with algae and milfoil shall be addressed with this in mind, but if manual removal is not effective chemical herbicides may be used.

A.) **Dock:** A floating dock adjacent to the Recreation Area for non-commercial recreational use is approved provisionally with need for future discussion on location and style of dock. Consideration on the style of dock should be given to those having minimal environmental impact.

B.) **Motorized Use:** The use of combustion engines is prohibited. The speed limit is 5 mph.

C.) **Management Authority:** Under Council form of government, the City Council has the ultimate legal authority and sets policy direction for the City. The Mayor is charged with management responsibility for administration of all City assets under the direction of the Council. The City Council must approve all contracts, asset sales and use policies. Within this framework, it is recommended that the ACFL Advisory Board suggest use policies and effectively guide management of the lake surface. As an amendment to the existing Anacortes Community Forest Lands Management Plan, drafted in 1991, this plan will follow the same rules expressed in that document unless otherwise noted.

[ACFL Forest Management plan](#)

[ACFL Forest Health Monitoring Plan](#)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and motivations

In 2019, a concerned and skilled team of citizen scientists launched a multi-faceted inventory and monitoring program in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL). The overall goal was to develop a baseline understanding and document changes to multiple environmental systems over time. The team was led by Transition Fidalgo (501c3 non-profit) in partnership with the City of Anacortes (CoA). Interest in the program by CoA forest managers and the public was initially motivated by observed changes in forest health, such as dieback of western redcedar from 2015 to 2019, and the desire to understand the implications of climate change. By annually monitoring changes in abiotic conditions (e.g., weather, soil moisture), vegetation, birds, disturbed areas, and aquatic systems, the monitoring program is well positioned to help detect changes to forest ecosystem health in the ACFL over the next several decades.

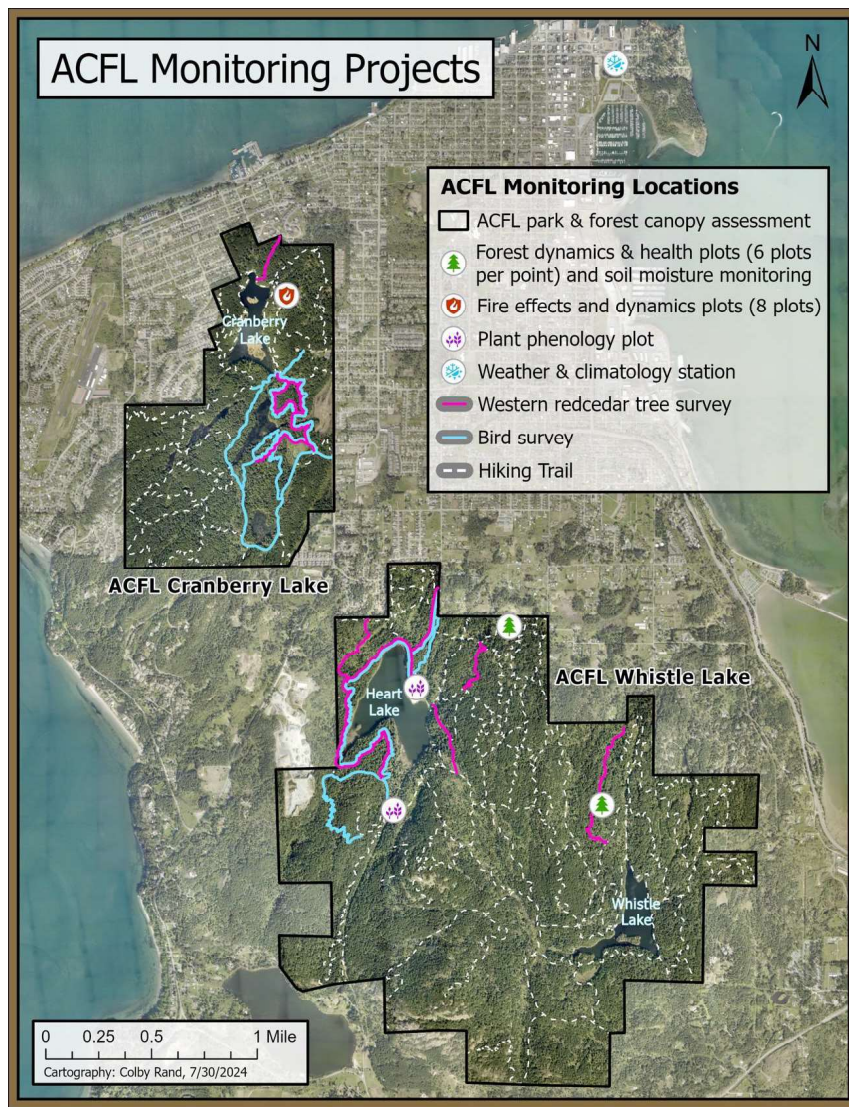
1.2 ACFL forest monitoring program goals

The ACFL forest monitoring program has three overall goals and benefits:

- Engage community members in hands-on monitoring projects to improve their understanding of forest ecosystems.
- Gain insight into the stressors on forest ecosystems and the implications of climate change for individual species and forest ecosystem types.
- Provide CoA managers and the ACFL Forest Advisory Board with environmental monitoring summaries to support forest management.

2. Context and goals of each monitoring program

The ACFL monitoring program is comprised of eight individual projects. Each project studies a specific aspect of forest health conditions and wildlife with field data collection in varying locations (field plots or trail sampling) in the ACFL, while the forest canopy assessment project is an overall survey of forest cover in the ACFL forest lands (see map below for project locations). In summary, two projects study abiotic conditions (1. Weather and climatology and 2. Soil moisture), four projects study forest health conditions (3. Forest dynamics and health, 4. Western redcedar mortality, and 5. Forest canopy assessment, 6. Fire effects and forest recovery), one project studies plant phenology (7. Plant phenology), and one project studies wildlife (8. Bird populations). In summer 2024, several projects completed their fifth year of monitoring. All data from each monitoring project are submitted annually to the Transition Fidalgo data manager and archived. A data management plan is in place to provide a roadmap for data archiving and management. See Section 3 for details on where to find data summaries. Below we detail the context and goals of each project.



[Map of the eight ACFL monitoring projects.](#)

2.1. Weather and climatology

Changing climate conditions are expected to be an important factor impacting the health of forest plant and animal species. The weather and climatology project records daily weather at one site (see map above) and archives historical weather data. The project has three specific goals:

- Produce and maintain a database of temperature and precipitation on Fidalgo Island (1900 to present).
- Compile and archive historical weather data for Fidalgo Island and adjacent locations.
- Summarize weather data to examine at annual variability and long-term trends in climate and for comparison with forest health and wildlife datasets.

2.2. Soil moisture

Soil moisture along with weather data are the two predominant factors expected to affect plant health. Soil moisture sensors are in two sites, one representing a drier location and the other a wetter location, and both sites were co-located with the permanent forest plots (see next section). Soil moisture is recorded daily at three depths ranging from 6" to 60" below ground. To understand how weather influences soil moisture at various depths, time series of soil moisture are compared to precipitation, temperature, and drought indices. The project has two specific goals:

- Collect and archive soil moisture data from sites in the ACFL.
- Archive and summarize soil moisture data to allow comparison with weather variables and assessments of vegetation health.

2.3. Forest dynamics and health (permanent forest plot monitoring)

Following observations of mortality in western redcedar trees in some portions of the ACFL, permanent forest plots were established to evaluate the long-term dynamics and health of forests. Permanent plots are in dry and wetter locations that are representative of forests in the ACFL; each location includes six plots. In each plot, individually tagged trees are monitored (e.g., status, size, health) every year and understory plant species (shrubs, forbs, herbs only) are recorded every other year. Combined with data on weather and soil moisture, long-term monitoring facilitates inferences about trends in forest dynamics (e.g., stand structure, demography) and health and the relative role of abiotic stressors. The project has two specific goals:

- Develop a baseline assessment of vegetation health in the ACFL.
- Monitor changes in vegetation health over time.
- Summarize changes in vegetation health and interpret changes in the context of weather and climate, management history, and forest succession.

2.4. Western redcedar mortality survey

The western redcedar tree monitoring survey was also motivated by the increase in western redcedar tree mortality in the ACFL. Monitoring occurs along 11 trails located throughout the ACFL and is a more extensive assessment of western redcedar health than the permanent forest plots. Surveys characterize the health of the first 100 western redcedar trees located within 5 meters of each monitoring trail. For each tree, foliage density and color are recorded to assess the overall health. The eleven trails are representative of the various forest ecosystem types within the ACFL. The project has three specific goals:

- Assess the baseline health of western redcedar trees along selected trails.
- Annually monitor health of western redcedars.
- Analyze color and density data for trends in western redcedar tree health and identify environmental stressors associated with tree health.

2.5. Forest canopy assessment

The forest canopy assessment project was initiated in 2024 to track overall changes in forest health and delineate general forest ecosystem units in the ACFL. The permanent plots provide detailed changes in stand structure and composition for a small area, whereas the forest canopy assessment is conducted over the entire extent of the ACFL. The project applies remote sensing methods to aerial imagery to characterize changes in vegetation communities over time (1940 to present) and build a map of tree species. The project has four specific goals:

- Assess decadal changes in forest health conditions from 1940s to present.
- Produce a map of tree species composition for main canopy trees.
- Estimate the extent of recent (last decade) tree mortality by species.
- Delineate forest ecosystem units based on tree species composition.

2.6. Fire effects and forest recovery

In 2016, a 17-acre forest fire occurred within the Little Cranberry Lake area, primarily in dry Douglas-fir forest. The fire effects and forest recovery project monitors vegetation recovery following fire with two monitoring efforts. First, photo surveys are conducted annually at eight sites to visually track changes in vegetation communities with time since fire. Second, field surveys of plant species presence are conducted every two years at eight sites. By monitoring vegetation recovery, this project will help identify the positive and negative implications and outcomes of future fires. The project has three goals:

- Document the post-fire recovery of tree species and structure.
- Monitor understory vegetation recovery through photo surveys.
- Monitor changes in plant species composition during the recovery process.

2.7. Plant phenology

Phenology is the study of the timing of annual lifecycle stages, such as budbreak or flowering of plants. Phenology helps us understand how plants respond to their environment, such as day length, temperature, and rainfall. To document annual plant responses to weather, the timing of several

plant phenology stages is surveyed annually. Three tree and three shrub species that are indicative the broader plant communities are surveyed. Data will be used to understand how changes in climate may alter the timing of phenological stages, which may in turn have implications for plant fitness. The project has three specific goals:

- Record the timing of phenology stages each year for selected tree and shrub species.
- Compare the timing of phenology stages among years and species.
- Compare the timing of phenology stages with weather and soil moisture data.

2.8. Bird populations

Bird species and population sizes fluctuate with changes in forest ecosystems, seasonal weather, and other environmental processes. The bird monitoring project conducts monthly surveys of migratory and non-migratory bird species in the ACFL, and surveys are conducted in the Little Cranberry Lake, Heart Lake, and Big Beaver Pond areas. Bird surveys track species presence and abundance. Seasonal and annual variability in bird populations is interpreted in the context of seasonal weather and shifts in climate conditions. The project has two goals:

- Document the species present and the number of each species observed.
- Examine annual variations in presence of species and species populations to look for long-term trends.

3. Sharing results of monitoring programs

Annual updates and results from the environmental monitoring programs are shared in the Transition Fidalgo annual forest monitoring reports and a public online dashboard. Annual forest monitoring reports are available from 2022 to present on the Transition Fidalgo website. The online dashboard was initiated in 2024 to showcase all environmental monitoring programs and new monitoring data is added annually (expected completion June 2025). For each program, maps of site locations, graphics, tables, and photographs are included to highlight the status of environmental systems and the work of citizen scientists. A link to the dashboard can be found [here](#) and on the Transition Fidalgo website. Data from each project is available by request from Transition Fidalgo. Existing data collection will help develop a baseline understanding of environmental systems, and continued monitoring is needed to develop inferences about the impacts of climatic variability and change on environmental systems.

4. Climate change in the ACFL

Forest ecosystems in the ACFL are being affected by climate variability and change. Within western Washington, the ACFL is in the driest area and therefore may experience earlier effects of climate change. Here, we review trends in climate associated with climate change using tools from the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group, then briefly discuss some impacts of climate change for forest ecosystems. Climate change, driven by anthropogenic increases in greenhouse gases, is increasing temperatures and shifting precipitation regimes. Annual temperatures on the westside of the Cascade Mountains are projected to increase 3.4°F by mid-century compared to 1950-1999 (average of multiple climate models). The largest increases are expected during the summer, with maximum summer temperatures projected to increase 6.7°F.

Annual precipitation has high year-to-year variability, and annual variability is much greater than the slight increases (~3%) in total annual precipitation expected by mid-century compared to 1950-1999 (average of multiple climate models). Summer (mid-June to mid-September) precipitation is forecasted to decrease 10-25% (estimate depends on climate model), increasing the severity and length of the summer drought. Changes in climate will be moderated and amplified by variability in topography in the ACFL. Higher-elevation areas (e.g., Mt. Erie), drainages, and northern aspects will remain cooler compared to the warmer and drier southern aspects, offering refuge for plants and animals.

Climate partially controls where trees exist, and climate change is shifting the suitable location for trees. As climate continues to warm, tree species persistence in the ACFL will depend on the survival and growth of existing trees and the capacity to regenerate new trees. Higher maximum summer temperatures and decreased summer precipitation are expected to lower soil moisture availability, with important implications for survival of mature trees and newly established seedlings. Longer periods of low soil moisture will increase tree stress and the likelihood of mortality from the direct effects of drought (seasonal, annual, multi-year) or climate stress followed by insects and disease.

Tree species will vary in their response to changing climate. For example, western redcedar and western hemlock, both drought-intolerant species, have already experienced a mortality event (2015-2019) of canopy trees that was associated with multiple, consecutive summers of hot, dry conditions. Additional mortality is expected under continued climate change and multiple monitoring projects were designed to detect new mortality. In contrast, more drought tolerant species, such as Douglas-fir, are less vulnerable to the lengthening summer drought and may replace drought intolerant species.

Following tree mortality, local to broader shifts in tree species populations will depend on the complex interaction of reproductive processes (e.g., cone production, germination, seedling survival) and climate variability and change. New seedlings need to establish and grow to maturity to sustain forests, but seedlings are highly sensitive to unfavorable weather and climate, such as extended periods of low soil moisture during the summer. Climate-driven shifts in tree species composition may initially be indicated by the species that successfully reproduce adjacent to new tree mortalities. An additional impact of warmer, drier summers is an increased risk of wildfire. Wildfire is a natural part of forest ecosystems in the ACFL, and the high diversity of plants recovering following the Little Cranberry Lake burn exemplifies the natural fire recovery process. The monitoring program in the ACFL is a critical first step toward documenting how climate change is affecting environmental systems.

5. Acknowledgements

The Forest Health Monitoring chapter was funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The monitoring programs are supported by Transition Fidalgo, the City of Anacortes, and generous volunteer time from community scientists.