



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

March 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 February '25 Minutes
3. Public Comments *for any item not on the agenda*
4. Forest Plan 2026 Update Draft Review: Public Comments
5. Friends of the Forest Update
6. Staff Reports
7. Parks Commission Update
8. Other Business

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: February 6, 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: January minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

None

Forest Plan: 2026 Update Draft Review:

Kit gave an overview of the process and timeline, reviewing the steps that the Board, public and Staff have taken so far. He also laid out the steps to be taken going forward, with Board review of the draft, additional public comment periods and revisions of the draft. It will then end with a Board approved Draft, hopefully in June, to be submitted to Council for approval. This step will also allow for public comment. He reminded the public that all written comments and the draft plan are posted online.

Members of the audience expressed concern over the process of reviewing the draft and public comments received.

Discussion was had about the process and timeline as well as the public comment review.

JoAnn gave some feedback about the draft, appreciating the organization of the plan and criteria used in the flora/fauna and wildlife protections.

Brian echoed his appreciation of the organization.

The other Board members expressed their appreciation for the structure.

It was decided that public comments will be taken until March 4th at 5pm for this round of the draft and the Board will review the Plan after public comments are taken at the next meeting or two. Public comments should be sent to Bob who will forward to the Board and staff will post them weekly online. Staff will publicize online, via social media and press releases that comments are being taken.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Ellie was in attendance and reported that the programs are planned and filling quickly. They will run a half day camp during conference week in February. Adult programs are also running with great attendance. March 1st will be the next volunteer work party. March 4th will be their annual meeting.

Staff Reports:

Bob thanked Ellie for adding to her responsibilities in the absence of an Executive Director at the Friends.

Trees have been coming down on trails and on City property with the winter weather. Staff are working hard to keep up.

No updates on the Whistle Lake dam available.

The biggest challenges in the ACFL are regarding enforcement. With no officer on staff dedicated to the forest lands, many people don't follow the rules.

Jamie had nothing to add to his report. Kit expressed thanks to Jamie for his continued work and improvements in the forest lands.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported that the Commission continues to work with staff and the public on the pickle ball front. The Parks Foundation will be providing the funding to purchase noise dampening curtains. Staff will be fixing the fence and providing additional parking.

Staff is updating policies at the Cemetery to include green burials.

There was a neighborhood meeting on January 30th about the possibility of a park at W 6th and Minnesota. The Mayor and Council have allocated \$50,000 for the planning of this park.

Other Business:

Brian spoke about the Forest Plan and that it is a wish list without an enforcement officer in the ACFL. He encouraged the public to speak to their Council members and ask for funding for a dedicated park officer.

Bob shared that the Police department is supportive of this position, however it is a matter of funding.

Tabb asked about the Heart Lake Master Plan and changes to the parking, specifically regarding horse trailers. At this time the drawing is just a conceptual plan.

Adjourned at 7:18pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan

FEBRUARY 2025
Assistant Director's Highlights
Submitted: February 27, 2025
Bob Vaux

WEST 6TH PARK

Held a community engagement meeting Jan. 30th at the Anacortes Senior Activity Center. Had 20+ citizens, along with Council Member Fantini and two Parks Commissioners. Constructive conversations regarding park planning and the accompanying financial challenges. We will process the information received and bring an update back at a meeting to be scheduled.

Met with HLN Civil Engineering. They are working on a conceptual plan that we will eventually share with the public. This will most likely be an early spring meeting.

2026 FOREST PLAN UPDATE

Draft shared at the February Forest Advisory Board meeting. Some preliminary discussion of the current draft ensued with the public and the Board. Written comments on the current draft are open now through Tuesday, Mar. 4th, 5PM. The March 6th FAB meeting will focus on public comments.

Public comments coming in, both written and in person.

ACFL RECON:

- 1/31: ACFL Jamie and I spent some time in the North Heart Unit, looking at Ace o' Hearts flagging and some off trail activity. Flagging appears to be connected to Public Works Heart Lake Road sidewalk planning (from 41st Street to the ACFL).
- 2/13: ACFL Jamie and I did a Whistle Lake Dam spillway walk thru. Thanks to Parks Tottenham for installing the staff gauge. Spillway fully functional, no recent beaver activity.

BEN ROOT SKATE PARK

Started the permitting process with Planning. They are working on our check list.

Director Lunsford and I met with Skate Park Foundation Director Rachel, discussed potential donor options and some long-term park planning.

ADMIN:

- Attended a very educational American Trails webinar, focusing the on the differences between access and accessibility. A very good discussion on the many barriers so much of our population confronts and how we can help reduce these.
- Continuing to work on DOE and WDFW permit updates.

COA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Joined ABPAC for a multi-modal transportation plan focus group. Good back and forth regarding long term non-motorized transportation improvements, sidewalks in particular.

NEW APD STAFF

Nicole and I did our part in the ACFL and Parks with two new members of the Police Department. We greatly appreciate the PD working us into their new employee orientation program. Nicole and I spend

time with them, touring key spots in the woods and parks that have typically been the sites of frequent need for law enforcement support.

LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

Director Lunsford and I had a good discussion of the Heart Lake parking lot improvement ALEA grant that awaits funding in Olympia with Rep. Ramel's Senior Executive Legislative Assistant, our own Amanda Hubik. We always appreciate the access to Rep. Ramel, along with the good work he does in the state legislature.

I joined the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition's Day on the Hill remotely. Had a great group meeting with Rep. Ramel, as well as a panel discussion with Legislators from both sides of the isle. Most are feeling pretty good about the Capital Budget. It is the Operating budget that comes with the biggest challenges this session.

TREES

- Met on site with a homeowner and landscaper at the Woods at Sunset Cove NGPE. Reviewed Planning Dept. approved hazard abatement plan.
- Arborist Steve and I took a look at a few more hazard trees in the Grandview Cemetery East property, along with Dan Rawls, who did the last job out that way. It's a complicated situation.

ROGUE MOTORCYCLES

We continue to see a small group of motorized trail users ignoring not only the seasonal closure but also using trails prohibiting motorized use at all times. We appreciate the observations shared by regular ACFL visitors. City staff snapped this photo on a recent Saturday but was unable to make contact with the rider.



James Burroughs
ACFL Maintenance technician
February 24th, 2025

ACFL Maintenance Report: February – 2025

I started this month finishing the cleanup work on the ACFL neighbor's property with the help of the parks crew. I finally installed our water gauge at Little Cranberry Lake. The water gauge went through some trial-and-error steps, but it was a requirement that the Department of Ecology has in place for the dam. Bob and I went out and checked on the Whistle Lake dam and took pictures of the water gauge at the spillway of the dam. I cleared a few trees this month that were blown over on trails. I imagine as I am writing this more trees will be reported due to the windy conditions over the last couple of days. I received a report of a new hole in the middle of the trail on 123. It is located close to an old hole that has been there for quite some time. After my site evaluation it appears the hole is connected to tunnels that run towards the pond and are pretty elaborate splitting into different directions. It would be my guess that these are created by beavers using them for safer passage to and from the pond. After some reading, I found that we may need to get the department of fish and wildlife's approval/insight before disturbing the hole/tunnels. Bob is meeting with WDFW later this week. I have put cones around the hole to notify trail users of the issue for the time being. I installed trail cams in three different locations in the ACFL. One being focused on monitoring off-leash dog activity, the second one focused on overnight parking/ motorbike use and the third being focused on some social trails that continued to be opened as hiker shortcuts. I have continued the "beaver rounds" monitoring our water levels in these areas. We have seen a lot less activity from them during these cold winter months. Recently I put together a document for our bridge inspections, I plan on getting an inventory together for all our ACFL bridges and having an inspection sheet for each bridge. This will help us start doing a more formal yearly inspection of our bridges. The idea here is for us to have a more proactive approach to bridge replacement rather than reactive. I have a work party scheduled for March 1st with Friends of the Forest. It will be focused on some trail tread issues on Trail 320, sections of this trail are very muddy and in turn has created trail widening in these areas. We will install turnpikes in one 12-foot-long stretch of trail and fill in other problem areas with gravel. I will be doing some prep work for the work party this week. The snow we got early in the month had me helping the in-town parks maintenance crew with clearing and salting walkways around town. It also meant we closed Mt. Erie Road, which stayed closed for about a week until the road could be opened safely for vehicle traffic. I have also been participating in a 24-hour HAZWOPPER training course in the last couple weeks. I have also helped the in-town crew with other tasks such as cemetery burial preparation and sanitation rounds.

