



Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

September 3, 2026

6PM

In person and virtual meeting options.

In Person: **City Hall Main Floor Conference Room**

Zoom Meeting Link:

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

Preliminary Agenda

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approve August '26 Minutes**
- 3. Public Comments for any item not on the agenda**
- 4. Friends of the ACFL Update**
- 5. Staff Reports**
- 6. Parks Commission Update**
- 7. Other Business**

Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting: August 6, 2026

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

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Darby Jordan

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

Minutes: May minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

None

Skagit Conservation District: Cone Collection Request

Nick Kunz with the SCD was in attendance. He is a forester who works on seed sourcing and tree regeneration and reforestation. Jim Brown was also in attendance. He is a plant materials grower. They are working alongside Transition Fidalgo on this project.

Nick spoke about the need for sourcing Grand Fir tree seeds. There has been no collection in over a decade in this area. This collection would allow for seed banking and to conserve the local genetics which could be developed into rooting stock from the graft families. This would provide seedlings to various restoration projects.

The reason this request is being made now and for the ACFL is that Grand Fir is difficult to source. The ACFL has areas that have not been contaminated by other species. This project will give climbers an opportunity to develop their skills. There is a narrow window for best collection in late August to early September, should the work be allowed, and data would be shared with the City.

A drone will be used to detect the cones and an app to check for sensitive species. A climber will take samples, which can be stored for up to 10 years. The area is south of Heart Lake.

A question was asked about the volume of cones in each tree. Nick stated that the top 5 feet of mature Grand Fir has about 2 bushels of cones, with a bushel equaling 8 gallons.

Ecological impact was brought up with concerns about under planting, slope stability. Repair and restoration will be a big focus.

It was asked about the minimum amount of cones to have in the tree for reproduction. During the site visit, they will make sure that seedlings are established, and they will not be taking all of the cones.

Clarification was asked for about the climbing method. Nick responded that there will be no spikes used and they will be very careful about limb breakage and the integrity of the tree.

There is a MOU in place with Transition Fidalgo and the City so there is no need for additional contracts.

Bob shared that staff is comfortable with this and the Forest Plan encourages projects that provide opportunity for study.

The Board was in complete support of this project with Kit making a motion, and a second by JoAnn.

Friends of the ACFL Update:

Josie was in attendance and announced that the Friends will be hosting Nick Kunz at the Forest Discovery Center for a talk on wildfire ecology, wildfire safety and mitigating risk.

She said that this is the last week of camps, with a total of 6 weeks and 110 kids. There have been some concerns about air quality with the smoke in the air.

She will be operating a drone at Heart Lake and Whistle Lake taking footage for a video on awareness, permission has been given by staff.

The annual benefit will be held on September 26th at Whisteria Gardens.

Staff Reports:

Bob reported that Jamie is out on medical leave with an unknown return date. Will is back to school and Gibson is volunteering at AMP camp this week so that means Bob is out in the woods a lot. Staff is thankful for the help of Officer Kellington.

The seasonals have been absolutely amazing, Will even deep cleaned the Heart Lake vault toilet without being asked! Regular staff have supported the ACFL occasionally and management are always available.

Whistle Lake has been pretty calm this season, much more family friendly and less wild parties.

Little Cranberry had an observation of blue-green algae. The County came out and sampled and sent it to King County. It came back non-toxic and no additional tests have been required at this time.

There has been some seed gathering at Washington Park by Padilla Bay Research Center.

Small wildfires have occurred on Cap Sante and trail #304 but the causes for each are unknown.

Heart Lake was treated for milfoil on Monday.

The City budget is facing a \$2.4 million shortfall in 2027 so staff and electeds are looking at solutions. The Heart Lake project is still moving forward and the Whistle Lake dam and A Avenue projects are funded by Public Works funds.

The Whistle Lake dam and Skagit County mitigation plan will be on the Council agenda on Monday August 10th.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported on the Parks Board. She had information from the July meeting as they did not meet in August. Rotary Park is being looked at for an upgrade by the Rotary Club. They are looking to demo the gazebo and put in stamped concrete and seating.

The W 6th Street Park will most likely be pushed to next year.

Other Business:

None

Adjourned at 7:05 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan

AUGUST 2026
Assistant Director's Highlights
Parks & Recreation
Submitted: Aug 27, 2026
Bob Vaux

STAFFING| due to some extended medical leave, we have some staffing challenges through August. Parks Mgr Johnston and I doing our best to mix and match both full-time and seasonal staff to cover our most essential tasks.

Director Lunsford, PM Johnston and I covering various needs in the field as well.

7/31 Will's farewell ACFL shift. This young man did a fantastic job for us. We wish him all the best.

Meanwhile, Will's ACFL seasonal partner, Gibson, is carrying on with great focus and energy. Can't say enough good things about his willingness to work alone, his lack of need for supervision after the plan for the day has been made and his follow through. We are continuing to hold the line out there.

We are also leaning on Lead Worker Steve P. in the ACFL. His years of experience are very helpful.

BLUE GREEN ALGAE| we are continuing to monitor Little Cranberry for any changes. Any sign of it getting harder to find as the month progresses.

HEART LAKE SHORELINE RESTORATION PROJECT| on 7/30 Director Lunsford and I met with our design engineers and our storm water team. We continue to work on storm water treatment options.

HEART LAKE TREATED FOR EURASIAN MILFOIL| 8/3 as per the approved and permitted contract, Aqua Technex treated 11.5 acres of Heart Lake shoreline for this invasive interloper.

SMALL WILDFIRE| the Anacortes FD was able to quickly extinguish this small fire just east of Heart Lake Road on Saturday afternoon, 8/2, called in by a hiker. May have been a small campfire, or a cigarette.

BEN ROOT SKATE PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PH II| still working through some storm water issues. Thank you, Storm Water Aaron, for all the expert help and advice.

8/3 Council approved our contract with Colacurcio Brothers.

BURN BAN| 8/13 now in place throughout Anacortes, including Washington Park.

WILDFIRE RESILIENCE PRESENTATION| 8/13 really enjoyed Skagit Conservation District's Forestry and Wildfire Resilience teams' presentation on forest and wildfire ecology along with current wildfire season conditions in Western WA and the Anacortes area. This included discussing what homeowners and communities can do to mitigate their wildfire risks and how the local Conservation District can help. Anacortes Fire personnel spoke as well about their professional qualifications and specialized wildfire fighting equipment. Thank you, Friends of the ACFL, for presenting this community event.

TREES| have had three visits this month to neighbors of the ACFL and Grandview Cemetery regarding tree concerns. Arborist Steve will be called upon soon.

PARK "RANGER"| Officer Kellington's presence in our parks and woods this summer continues to have a positive impact on our visitors' experience, as well as the work of staff. Thanks again to Chief Floyd and Director Lunsford for making this happen.

WHISTLE LAKE GATE LEANER| you may have noticed the old growth cedar about 100' south of the main WL gate that has been "falling" for 3 or so years now. Have been reviewing options to fall the tree and fix the road. All the options thus far are complicated due to budget issues.

OPEN STREETS| have been working with coordinator Josh G along with relevant City staff in preparation for this very popular Aug 30 community event.



Figure 1 10x10 Fire Near #304 West Trailhead 8/2