



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT
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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

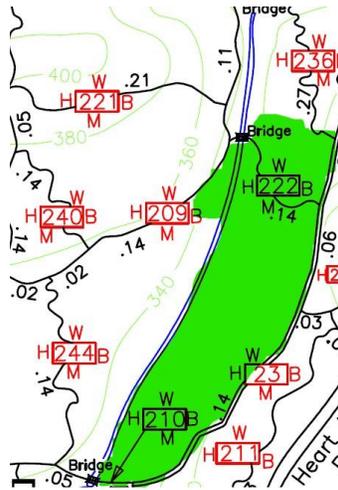
April 1st, 2021

MEETING CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19

March 24, 2021

Much of this month was fairly routine with many miscellaneous tasks – tree removals from trails, garbage, restrooms, beaver material removal from 32nd street's beaver deceiver, and a few efforts assisting the rest of the Parks crew.

The highlight of this past month actually happened *last* month, on February 27, when we held our first volunteer work party since February 8, 2020. To keep a handle on social distancing, which we have been maintaining even outdoors, we limited the number of signups and structured the work party into three groups. Groups were led by myself, Bob Vaux, and Asa Deane of the Friends of the Forest. One group devoted the three-hour event to litter pickup on Heart Lake Road. The other two groups targeted invasive plants – mostly Holly, but also evergreen daphne, English ivy, and invasive blackberry – in the area north of Heart Lake highlighted in green below.



It would be impossible to overstate how grateful we are to the volunteers who came. Although it's short-lived, having the shoulders of Heart Lake Road completely free of litter is a gift to the community. And having a group diligently scour the forest for invasive species is extremely important to the long-term health of this ecosystem. This event came at a perfect time, as we have all been working hard to keep up with everything else. THANK YOU.

This month, I again patched potholes on the roads leading into Heart Lake, Little Cranberry Lake, and Whistle Lake. At Little Cranberry and Whistle, I used a different material this time rather than the pure 1 ¼" or 5/8" gravel as in the past. This material has some larger rocks as well as finer material, so I'm hoping that the larger material will stay in place better than just a uniform mix of smaller gravel. Time will tell.

Yesterday I took our small skiff out to Little Cranberry Lake to fix our log boom and pick up shoreline litter. Shout out to Sky Guthrie for helping me load and unload the watercraft on both ends of the trip. Thanks Sky!

I spent a day and a half helping the Parks crew with another large tree removal at Grandview Cemetery. This was another casualty of high winds coupled with saturated soils.

Another half day was spent removing holiday lights from Downtown trees using our lift truck. This was good practice for me, as it takes practice to become comfortable working at heights. As an arborist, I will likely see more aerial tree work, so it is good to develop this level of comfort before needing to run a handsaw or chainsaw at this height.

Miscellaneous Good News

I noticed the first "spring-gold" (*Lomatium utriculatum*) just beginning to flower on Sugarloaf on March 8, and also noted the first rufous hummingbird heard of the year. Spring has sprung!



Holly removal, February 27, 2021. Photo: Asa Deane

March 2021 Parks and ACFL Operations Administrative Report

After a year's hiatus, it was great to get our quarterly ACFL work parties back in action. In partnership with the Friends of the Forest, we hosted 18 highly motivated community members on Feb. 27th. Many invasive plants were removed from the banks of Ace of Hearts Creek in the North Heart Unit, and we also picked up litter along both sides of Heart Lake Road from trailhead #208 south to the power lines at #248 trailhead. Thanks to all who showed up and left the site better than they found it.

On March 4th we held our first Forest Advisory Board meeting since last March. It was great to see everyone, and get this important body accessible to the public once again.

I continue to help Steve in the woods as I am able, mostly clearing trail when large or complicated blowdown is involved. We did have a nice afternoon of neighborhood outreach near the #105 trailhead in Rockridge. We are working up there to reestablish an awareness and observance of ACFL boundaries. We also continue to work city-wide on a variety of tree issues outside the ACFL.

As we have discussed at a variety of public meetings, planning actions required for the Whistle Lake Dam safety and maintenance protocols continue. ACFL Steve and I have worked with our consultant on numerous site visits, as well as reaching out to a variety of city staff in both Public Works and Planning. As the plan evolves, we will certainly keep our community updated.

ACFL trail #10 saw some very specific water damage at a spot between junctions with #'s 117 and 113. We had a preconstruction site meeting with Planning, Public Works and a wetlands biologist. I am working with all on the repair plan.

Our in-house work on the Washington Park 'A' Loop campground utility upgrades continues with consistent, measured success. Brian Tottenham and the crew have been carefully trenching in and around our park forest, laying conduit for the new electrical lines (which has passed L & I inspection), and prepping sites for the improved pedestals delivering

both power and water. Thank you to our partnering electrical contractor VECA as well, who is always a pleasure to work with. We will be opening the loop back to camping by April 1st.

A 10% increase in our fee structure at Washington Park was approved by City Council. This will go into effect May 1.

Parks staff is working with Puget Way park neighbors on a wind damaged fence that separates a driveway from public trail access. Brian Tottenham is working on an estimate.

City staff from across a variety of departments continue work on the requests for and concepts surrounding the embedded social worker. We believe we have an efficient and effective working model with the Anacortes Police Department and the Anacortes Family Center, along with Parks, Planning and Legal. Council has heard a presentation on same, and has approved a one-year contract with the Family Center.

Parks Manager Nicole Johnston and I have reached out to the local disc golf community, hoping to work more closely with them as they care for the Cap Sante course, which is growing in popularity. At the present time we are focusing on getting the golfers' dogs leashed up, as well as working together on vegetation management decisions.

Planning Department staff presented the Planning Commission with the compiled and categorized Shoreline Master Program public comments at March 10 Commission meeting. Discussion of these will take place at a future meeting.

We are planning for maintenance on the privately-owned section of the Guemes Channel Trail. The land owner has granted permission, and Fish and Wildlife has approved this much needed work. We are now working with City staff to firm up our plan.

I have joined Eric Shjarback from Public Works as City liaison to the Anacortes Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (ABPAC). This group has done a great job over the years advocating for non-motorized transportation, including the necessary planning and safety factors. Their highest profile event has been the Open Streets celebration in August. We are hopeful we might just be able to pull off some version of this in the near future.

I represented the City at the annual Friends of the Forest membership meeting. I really appreciated all the positive feedback on our parks' crews' efforts to get the ACFL trails open after the mid-January westerly winds.

Updated Parks Impact Fees were unanimously passed by City Council at the March 1st meeting. These are scheduled to take effect Sept. 1st of this year.

Planning activities continue with the Cap Sante trail/viewpoint Rotary project team. We are looking forward to the Parks Commission feedback at the April 13 meeting.

It is great to see local stone mason Bryan Elliott working on the Causland Memorial project.

ACFL Steve, Nicole Johnston and I were able to remove the downtown corridor street tree Christmas lights. We are hoping to begin a phased pruning program next fall.

Thank you again to the Samish Nation for our continued partnership with Denise Crowe. Our monthly hikes in the ACFL are an educational and inspirational highlight.

Faithfully Submitted,
Bob Vaux, Assistant Director
March 24, 2021

