



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT
P.O. BOX 547, ANACORTES, WA 98221
(360) 293-1918 / (360) 293-1928

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

May 6, 2021

6pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82633429642>

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve March 2021 Minutes
3. Public Comments
4. Communication/Correspondence
5. Asian Giant Hornets – Cassie
6. Whistle Lake Dam
7. Conservation Easement Program update
8. Staff Reports
9. Other Business

If reasonable accommodation due to a disability is needed contact Mac Jackson at 360-293-1918.

Forest Advisory Board

Date: March 4, 2021

Board Present: Joanne York-Gilmore, Brian Wetcher, Sandra Starbuck, Nick Stowe

Staff: Bob Vaux, Jonn Lunsford, Steve Phillips, Victoria Wong

Called to Order: 6:05PM

Minutes: March 5, 2020 minutes approved

Public Comment: none.

Communication/Correspondence: Bob suggested meeting every other month unless there is a pressing issue to meet. All agreed.

Jonn communicated that City Council passed the parks impact fee that goes into effect on September 1, 2021 with an updated residential rate and a new commercial development rate. The updated impact fees will help fund capital projects. During the Parks Commission meeting via Zoom, a possible trail and lookout centennial project was discussed with the Rotary at the Rotary Park. An evaluation is being done on the cell towers on Mt. Erie and we're working with the Parks Foundation on this as the funds that come from leasing the cell towers helps support parks projects.

Friends of the Forest (Asa Deane, Executive Director): annual membership meeting last night - fewer questions than anticipated but was able to focus on what it'll look like in the ACFL post Covid. Coming up with ways to address the population increase that uses the forest. Working with parks for a more robust volunteer program. Picked up litter and holly this past volunteer work party at Heart Lake. Would like to put together a trail ambassador program specifically for the summer time. They will be trained by Friends of the Forest and park staff and can be deployed at specific trailheads. This would help longtime residents or new folks that don't have the experience or don't know how to recreate properly and safely. Friends of the Forest is in the process of hiring an Outreach Coordinator to be working as the head of the volunteer program. Question from Brian: any communication with Ryan about the critical area ordinance? - Ryan is close to a rough draft of what the coding will look like.

Whistle Lake Dam:

Department of Ecology dam safety section - carries out the state mandate for dam safety, how dams are managed and how they are inspected annually. The Whistle Lake Dam is about 100 years old and nothing has been done other than the trail over it. Approximately 15 years ago, it was on the DOE radar and we have been asked to move forward in coming up with a maintenance plan. Emergency action plan - in case there is a dam failure what are the measures we have in place and how do we plan on working with neighbors. We don't have one yet for the Whistle Lake Dam - we are working with a consultant. Trail 206 goes south and west of the dam by trail 22 and meets up to a dead end that's very close to deer lane which is privately owned by Skagit county. Welch Brothers construction did a site visit to explore options on how we can use trail 206 end of trail 22 to access dam for maintenance. Spoke to Charles Davis. Cutting trees by the dam to take the logs out on deer lane then to drag it out in the trails was briefly mentioned but the City has not engaged in that conversation at this point. If we were to partner with neighbors, we would make it a very formal outreach and discussion. Working on a plan for the dam itself.

Charles Davis: owns property that trail 22 dead ends to. Spoke to Welch Brothers construction. Campbell park estate home owner's association owns 25 acres. Private road on deer lane. Concern about any sizable logging trucks coming through that could cause havoc to the forest lands and private property if we open a right of way. Size of the trees by the dam is not too large and a chainsaw can help bring it down.

If it's an idea the City want to explore, we would reach out to the homeowner's association. Rest assured nothing will move forward other than we figure out our obligation for the dam itself first. Our first contact with the homeowner's association is to discuss the emergency action plan. Once we know the volume of timber, we will try to leave them in place. If there is some nice cedar, we may use it for other infrastructure.

JoAnn: Has there been anything that would raise questions of the dam itself other than what the department of ecology brought up? None.

Brian: Why is this not a public works project? The lake is the backup water supply for COA so technically a water division issue. We are partnering with Public Works and right now we're acting as the lead with our consultant, but working hand in hand with Public Works. Consultant is paid for by Public Works, but because it's in the forest lands, they understand the sensitivity and Bob is the Project Manager on this project. We self-reported this dam in 2005 and they came to inspect it and we have worked on the dam with them since that time. Recently their standards have evolved and would like to see the emergency action plan in place.

Once we find and develop a reasonable action plan we will present that and discuss with all involved and will do the proper public notification. Little Cranberry Dam - we held a public meeting for all those who live downstream of Little Cranberry with the City Attorney, Fire and Police Departments and explained what was happening and answered public questions and what the emergency action plan is. We will probably follow something similar.

Nick: its a sensitive area, wet land and lake, getting heavy equipment in and out will be a challenge. Finding the option with the lowest impact to achieve goals is what to keep in mind. This is not the same as the Cranberry Lake Dam since it has a parking lot and Whistle Lake Dam does not.

Suggestion of offering formal site visits for all involved would be ideal.

Staff Reports:

Steve: Has been busy with all the fallen trees. Volunteer party was very productive - removed holly, ivy and little bit of blackberry. First volunteer party in just over a year, but hopefully we can have more.

Bob: Steve has been doing a fantastic job chasing trees down. Regular volunteers contact staff and created a spreadsheet to track all the projects and trees that have gone down. A team effort all in all. Lots of interest to help maintain the forest lands from the public. Trail talks on social medias have been great to attract interest.

Other Business:

Jon: Fidalgo fly fishing club - they want to extend the season at Heart Lake. Corresponding with state wildlife request with them to extend it to December 31st. Our existing fishing time is till October 31st, so this would extend it by 2 months. Not too big of a change or influx since they won't stock the fish. Thoughts from the board: Sandra - no harm in extension. Brian - lake season recreation for the community is fine. We're not getting heavy cold into January or February so should be fine. Nick: anyone against this? Reduce the stocking and less footprint. Fewer stockings to add some conservation value. Not a stocking issue, but for locals to be able to recreate there. Can't see a negative effect on the extension. Our concerns would be more trash - but we don't see a large group of people who would like to go out there in November.

A Ave Landfill - Public Works project that Parks is working with them on. Letter was sent over a year ago by Evergreen Islands to the county then to the state then a citizen complaint was filed. Dept of ecology contacted us - we were not part of the toxicity. Hired legal firm - MTCA - how does the dept of ecology want to handle the site. We are hoping to have the same case manager from DOE, Chris Matthews, who was the case manager for the decommissioning of the water treatment plant. We will be meeting with the state and talk about the agreed order and how to proceed. No bike skills course going there.

Bob: ACFL management plan update - the Planning Commission and City Council has been busy for other updates - but we are pushing to get into the queue to get considered. We will let everyone know when we know when City Council discuss this.

Power company up at Mt. Erie and parking revision - replace the power poll outside of the site in their utility easement to the site and put in ballards because they're frustrated for access. We met 4 months or so ago and haven't heard anything from them. Seem like we agreed to the concept but have not heard.

Meeting adjourned at 7:03pm

Next meeting virtual meeting May 6, 2021 6pm.

Respectfully Submitted by: Victoria Wong

Date: March 16, 2021

ACFL Maintenance Report APRIL – 2021 by Steve Phillips
April 29, 2021

This eventful month began with the completion of the repair on Trail 304, where a horse collapsed after puncturing the trail surface over a year ago. Geri Rubin, our Trail Committee equestrian representative, was helpful in inspecting my work and providing suggestions for improvement. The true test is time, and the first month has been good.

At the very end of March, after a year's worth of failed scheduling attempts, I received a walking tour of the climbing access points on Mount Erie by Jim Thompson. Jim is a committed local schoolteacher and rock climber who works to keep climbers safe on the mountain. He has also written and maintains a digital trail guide available on the app Rakkup. He knows the mountain intimately because he helped establish many routes with his friend Dallas Kloke, who passed in 2010. It was important for me to receive this orientation for several reasons, including climber safety and resource protection.

Motorbike season opened again on April 1. I've been learning more about our rules as I talk to moto riders. I often cross paths with John Meehan, our motorbike rep on the Trail Committee. He is helping educate me on the different sizes and styles of bikes and motors. He rides a mountain bike in the moto off-season, so his eyes are always on the trail. We reflected that this past winter seemed pretty good concerning illegal moto use.

During the February snow, ATV tracks appeared at Whistle Lake. Bob and I put our heads together to figure out improvements at the parking lot to eliminate this possibility without restricting access to the allowed user groups. This work is now partly complete and will be finished soon.

Bob, Nicole Johnston, and I spent three mornings pruning trees on Commercial Avenue. This work was needed to protect the structures of businesses there and improve clearance for peds and vehicles.

I met up with volunteer and ACFL neighbor Mike Oras on the 15th. Mike has been finding patches of holly and ivy near Little Cranberry Lake. I pulled these with him for a little while, but need to return for some follow up work. I'm grateful that he found and helped remove this patch. Locating patches of invasives is hard enough, but setting aside the time to work them is a challenge unto itself.

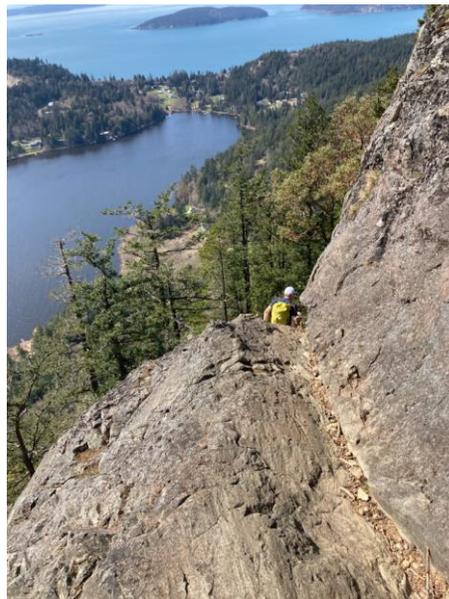
The need to patch potholes on Mount Erie had gotten to a critical point. On March 30 I asked Bill Larson, Street Maintenance, about using cold mix to patch potholes. Next thing we knew, he drove the road and agreed to have his crew pave it if we would split the costs. As of April 16, the road has been resurfaced in two critical areas and the worst potholes have been patched with asphalt. Many thanks to Bill and his crew for making this happen!

I spent a little over an hour on the 21st with Beck Pittman, co-leading the Friends of the Forest for the "Late Riser's Morning Chorus" bird hike for FoF members. It was fun! As a group we saw or heard 23 species, some exhibiting breeding behavior. The highlights for me were two warblers (yellow-rumped and orange-crowned), gleaning insects from the flowers in the crown of a flowering bigleaf maple. This was the first such hike that I have co-led with her, and I hope to do more. We started at the trailhead of Trail 10 but only made it as far as the old city dump. This tells you how "birdy" it was.

On April 21, I signed the paperwork approving the work that Andrew O'Donnell of Troop 911 performed for his Eagle Scout Project. He and a small team of volunteers made structural improvements and repainted three signs along Heart Lake Road. They did this on weekends this month. Although we drive by these frequently without noticing them, you will certainly notice the improved appearance of these. The fresh paint will also increase their longevity. Thanks Andrew! Mayor Laurie, Fiddlehead Montessori, and a photographer from the American joined Nicole and me at Ben Root Skate Park on April 22 for a combined Arbor Day/Earth Day celebration. We planted two Pacific Sunset Maples to replace two trees that hadn't survived their planting a few years ago. We'll water these over the summer to see that they thrive in their new home.

Fishing season opened on March 24. We increased staff coverage hours, shoreline patrols, restroom and garbage maintenance, and signage leading up to and during the weekend. Nicole put out one shoreline campfire on the morning of the 24th. Other than that it was pretty quiet, probably largely in part to fairly miserable weather. Rain and highs in the upper 40s probably kept most away on Friday and Saturday. It picked up a bit with sunny weather on Sunday the 25th, but overall it was a manageable opener. It's always better to be overprepared than not.

I haven't mentioned them for awhile, but Bob and I continue to hike with Denise Crowe each month. This month was Sugarloaf, and we enjoyed the viewing of a rare orchid in flower, the heart-leaved twayblade (*Listera cordata*). Some of the most fascinating things in nature are relatively small and silent. These hikes are an important reminder of this and a re-connection to the resource that we all work hard to protect.



"This is the way down."

April 2021 Parks and ACFL Operations Administrative Report

We are super excited to thank our brothers and sisters in Public Works for getting some LONG NEEDED road work done on the Mt. Erie Road. Parks & Rec was able to purchase the material and the Streets Division provided the operators and equipment. It really has improved the drive up and down the mountain. We look forward to continuing this low-cost partnership in the future on other parks roads.

We had two great clean-up projects in the ACFL centered on Earth Day. I helped out with the Dallas Kloke Mt. Erie climbers clean up, and Parks Staffer Sky Guthrie worked with divers in Heart Lake. Both events took place the morning of April 17th, and were successful in getting some non-native materials off the mountain and out of the lake. Thanks to all who participated.

Very happy to report the Washington Park 'A' Loop was opened for camping by the promised date of Friday, April 2nd. A huge thank you to Nicole, Brian, Nichola, Steve, AJ and Sky for making this happen. And thanks to VECA as well for their continued positive partnership.

We also completed a long term stay program in the campground with partners the Anacortes Police Department and the Anacortes Family Center (AFC). This was done in conjunction with the cold weather shelter, and an outreach grant the AFC was able to secure. The program resulted in no complaints in the campground, and some very positive steps forward for program participants.

I completed two sessions of trail steward training with the Rotary Club on the Cap Sante trails system. The two outings included at least six of each; Rotarians and AHS Green Club members. The sun came out both days, and we are now ready to send some new trail stewards into the wild.

The vacation of portions of 11th Street and 'B' Avenue to the Wynn and Ortman families in exchange for waterfront easements to be used for Guemes Channel Trail construction continue to work their way through the City Council Public Hearing process. A few of the neighbors have raised concerns regarding their views and the long term plans of the residents of their neighborhood. The Public Hearing is currently continued to Monday, May 3rd.

Nicole Johnston and I continue to work on a much drawn out seasonal hiring process. We have found it challenging this year to find applicants willing to meet us for an interview. Thankfully, we have also found some new folks who are ready to pitch in, alongside a returning core group at Washington Park.

Nicole, ACFL Steve and I were also able to get a fair amount of downtown street tree pruning completed. We shall take our next look at this in the fall. The three of us also continue our work with a variety of tree owners, both public and private.

Steve and I have been responding to 4-wheel drive access issues at the Whistle Lake trailhead. I was able to catch up with a home-made rig in response to a concerned hiker's phone call. From there, Steve and I put a plan together, and he has done a nice job shoring up the access points.

Friends of Forest Executive Director Asa Deane and I had a good South Cranberry outing. I included a tour and description of the trail #10 improvements we are working on between trail's 117 and 113. We are working with Public Works and a local biologist on the plan, and will have the paperwork in to Planning very soon.

Director Lunsford and I had a nice meet and greet with new Fire Chief Bill Harris. We are looking forward to showing him around the ACFL and Parks, and continue our work on community safety.

Steve, Denise Crowe and I continue our City/Samish educational ACFL outings. We spent a beautiful afternoon on Sugarloaf, where the spring wildflowers are beginning to burst, and things look pretty good up there, despite the steadily increasing visitor numbers.

I was on vacation April 19 – 27. Special thanks to Steve, Nicole and seasonal staffer Vinod Kushner for taking care of Heart Lake on Opening Day weekend. All reports indicate a wet, orderly fishing adventure had by all.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux, Assistant Director

April 29, 2021