



**ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**P.O. BOX 547, ANACORTES, WA 98221  
(360) 293-1918 / (360) 293-1928**

---

**Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board**

**June 3rd, 2021**

**6pm**

**Virtual Zoom Meeting:**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87923104076>**

**Preliminary Agenda**

1. Call to Order
2. Approve May 2021 Minutes
3. Public Comments
4. Friends of the Forest
5. Communication/Correspondence
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 Minutes

**Date:** May 6, 2021

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

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

**Public:** Cassie Cichorz - WSDA, Asa Deane- Friends of the Forest

**Called to Order:** 6:00 PM

**Minutes:** March 4, 2021 minutes approved

**Public Comment:** Asa Deane - Friends of the Forest: hired a communications and development coordinator: Ashley - starts full time next week. She'll be the next point of contact for these board meetings if Asa is not able. Excited for the trail ambassador program - started training volunteers for the trailheads and the forest lands last Saturday. This coming Saturday, we will put on another training with the educational tools from Friends of the Forest to provide additional education in the busy summer months especially with all the new people who come into the forest and teaching new and old comers how to treat the forest lands with respect. We'll have 7-8 volunteers potentially more throughout the summer that we can deploy at the trailheads. Friends of the Forest spoke with a wildlife ecologist that consults in movement corridors and green corridors to try to find the connection of the ACFL and the surroundings to prioritize protecting the area. Working on a map that they're analyzing to see if there are areas that hasn't been identified that might be potentially an area for preservation. Community hikes are back and educational hikes as well. Summer camp sign ups for August is up and running and we're planning to do full 5-day sessions. 2 of 4 sessions are full already.

**Communication/Correspondence:** Jonn: meeting with Parks Foundation to help us with potential funds to improve trail on west 2nd street by Smiley's Bottom. Not new trails but improvements to make them more protective in the fragile zones. Possible bridging.

**Asian Giant Hornets - Cassie-WSDA:** Dec 2019 first discovery in Blaine, WA. It could destroy native species and threaten honeybees. They'll nest in the ground, they'll find old rotted tree roots, old burrows, empty tree cavities, can be over 2 ft wide and can produce 100's of adult giant hornets. They could sting when they feel threatened. Their lifecycle – during the winter, the queen bee's workers will die, the only alive specimen would be the new queens over wintering till spring time. Spring they're looking to build underground nest. Summer they'll see workers emerge working and feeding their colonies. Fall colony reaches its maturity they'll start virgin queens and males laid. They'll need more protein in the fall. Honeybee hive is susceptible for giant Asian hornet attacks. The Asian giant hornets mate very close to the nest and the cycle will repeat itself. We're not sure how far they'll fly. Not all queens will successfully mate, and make it through the winter. WSDA placed over 900 traps and we worked with the cooperators and citizen scientists to deploy bottle traps and deployed 325 traps. Over 1225 citizen scientists registered. If it can be helped we try not to kill a live Asian giant hornet so we can attach a tracker and it'll go back to the nest and we can find the nest and remove the entire nest and removing the entire population so they can't go forth next year.

Centered in the Blaine and Bellingham area because that's where it's being detected. We're trapping east of Lynden because there was one across the border by the area. Citizen trapping starting July. Events in Coupeville next week. Good: report sighting to WSDA with details of what you saw and where. Better - get a photo of the suspected hornet to submit with your report. Best - collect the specimen if you want to test it later. [agr.wa.gov/hornet](http://agr.wa.gov/hornet) / email: [hornets@agr.wa.gov](mailto:hornets@agr.wa.gov)

facebook group monitored by us: [www.facebook.com/groups/hornets](http://www.facebook.com/groups/hornets)

For more information and to reach Cassie: [ccichorz@agr.wa.gov](mailto:ccichorz@agr.wa.gov)

Jonn: last year, we coordinated with the port, Samish, and city parks - we collected anything that was in the traps then do the drop stop at the local drop station - we will not be collecting those samples this year. Snap a photo and send the email. We can work to do the bottling scientist item again.

Sandra: are they fast? They're clumsy - they hover around things or speed up and fly. They corner the honeybees and mash them in the ground.

**Whistle lake dam:** Bob: staying abreast of the process. Jonn: met with the dam safety office - spoke with their engineers along with Fred - we need to do a hydrological survey of the lake and Geotech of the dam. We are hiring a consultant to do this. Geotech determines whether we need to open the trail wider to extend the dam. if we have to do this - we will coordinate with the planning dept to get the permits out there. Trail 20 - trail 21 - 22 - 205 staying away from 206 and wetlands and the creek as much as possible without cutting any trees. We would probably need to take down smaller trees to get the excavator through. Planning Dept and community development - until the Geotech comes out we won't know what the scope of work will be until the site visit.

Asa - saw some trees being marked already. Would those be the trees that would be cut down? We're not sure how far we need to go. Not sure if we need to take down the second growth trees.

Bob: the paint markings on the trees ensures transparency to the public which is the aim.

Bob extended offer to do site visits if board members would like to see the dam.

Conservation Easement Program Update: working for a couple years with Skagit Land Trust to update easement language and consolidate information since the standard has changed. Questions raised in regards to the language of the contract: there will not be any logging - salvage logging prescribed burns if climate change cause non native species and fungus - safe guards for the public to deal with the infestations. Clarifying commercial needs. New sections of the forest lands that are recently purchased from the program. They'll look at it this month - and we will bring it to city council and forest board - in the summer if the land trust approves the minor changes, we suggested then we will start the public process. It will probably take 2-3 months. We don't view it as a major change but the public may want to discuss it further. Definition standard? generally we follow the rules of size and how it impacts recreation value.

**Staff Reports:** Steve: appreciate the signs that were painted by heart lake road. Birding hike - invaluable asset from friends of the forest group.

Bob: We are close to getting our 2 seasonal staff on board - big challenge this year - WA park, trim crew, mowers, cemetery, forest lands, ball fields - hard time finding people to apply. Commercial film crew top of Mt. Erie for super vitamins geared towards Olympic athletes. They had a pretty big crew - they were flexible and worked with us because we had to close the mountain for them and it so happened that PSE worked on the utility pole to increase the tension on the line coming down the mountain at the same time. The pole is still not in the ground yet but we'll be reaching out to PSE to see when that will be done. Try driving up to Mt. Erie because the road is in much better shape now.

Trail ambassador program - going to be a fantastic thing with Friends of the Forest to get boots on the ground to have numbers out in the ACFL. We're aware of the numbers we had last year and the potential numbers we have this year - we're so happy to have FOF be a visible presence to help with de-escalation, no confrontation but help us keep an eye out on what's going on and being a presence overall. Critical areas ordinance - public hearing phase before going to council. Please join the meeting Monday night. City council working hard on these items and other issues - we're optimistic that our ACFL management plan can come into fruition. In the next few weeks, we might have updated language for the forest board to take a look at. Councilman Walters is doing work with community groups such as Evergreen Islands – to tweak line items.

Trail 10 repair - shifted in the last few years we have upgraded protocols with all trail projects. If we have trails that are degraded or super wet or need to be fixed or moved, we start the process with planning staff and they come into the woods with Steve and Bob and we talk through what we think we need to do to fix the trail with best practices and they put it through their analysis and they can decide whether we need to reach out to a wetland biologist.

A Ave landfill update: city staff and consultants met with Dept of Ecology late March about next steps. Talked about how we can get information out on our website > public works> links to dept of ecology, 2009 closure report and a lot of information for public to have. West of the dump that's not fenced off was written about and photographed in the Anacortes American - prohibited off trail travel no walking through the wetlands signage is up, but to preserve the area, no fence was erected but only rows to keep people out. To keep people on trail if they have questions, they can make a request to speak to the board.

Brian: CAO and ACFL management plan: When Tess said we're nearing our next review update - referring to ACFL management and that part of the decision can take up 3 years from now. Find out what Tess meant by that if it's actually a delay for 3 years or not.

Other Business: June 3rd next meeting instead of July. June 5th is national trails day volunteer work party on that day.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:13pm

## **ACFL Maintenance Report    MAY – 2021    by Steve Phillips**

May 26, 2021

The month began with the pumping of the Heart Lake restrooms, much needed after opening weekend in late April. I also painted the floors of each unit, as it was needed, and it seemed like the right time to do it.

Also on May 3, I closed Erie Mountain Road with a sign and chain so that a crew could do preparatory work for the installation of a new utility pole near the summit, between the road and the tower enclosure. The road was closed for a few days but reopened before Mother's Day weekend.

You may notice our "Tree City USA" signs on Heart Lake Road and Ferry Terminal Road are now brand new. They have a yellow sticker proclaiming our 20-year eligibility in this nationwide program. The Street Department helped me by providing the proper rivets in hanging the one on Heart Lake Road.

On May 6, volunteer arborist and tree climber Keith Stoner again came to help with a small task that took a high level of skill. He used ropes to climb a large maple that still had remnants of an illegally hung rope swing. He removed these quickly and safely. I took the opportunity to show him the huge fir that had become uprooted and fell uphill along 313 last winter, and he agrees with our assessment that it seems to be staying put for awhile.

On Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> I pruned some trees on 16<sup>th</sup> Street with the ground assistance of the street crew. I was off the week of May 10-14.

Our two seasonal maintenance workers began on May 18. If you've been out on trails, you certainly have noticed their work. As of today, the three of us (but mostly those two) have already trimmed all the trails on the Little Cranberry Lake and Heart Lake maps. Ally and Gabe are a welcome addition, needless to say. I appreciate their positive attitudes and energy, not to mention their competence and professionalism.

Trimming trails has been the focus of the last week and a half and will continue to be, with the goal of finishing before yellowjackets are abundant and aggressive!

### **May 2021 Parks and ACFL Operations Administrative Report**

---

The City Council did approve the 11<sup>th</sup> Street vacation, as well as the easement offered to the City by the Wynn Family for the Guemes Channel Trail. While this is a stand along segment of the trail, it is another 200 linear feet committed to the ultimate goal of the trail. We thank the Wynn's for their willingness to support the trail project. It combines with the 200 foot easement already given by the Ortman's.

The Council also continues its work on the Critical Areas Ordinance. The public hearing is still open, and has been continued to June 7<sup>th</sup>.

Parks Manager Nicole Johnston and I managed to finally fill out our seasonal staff. It has been a very tough year for this task, but we found some good ones. They are all hard at work, from trimming ACFL trails to assisting campers at Washington Park, and all the many parks tasks inbetween.

Work continues with the Friends of the Forest on the ACFL Trail Ambassador Program. On May 1<sup>st</sup> we had a good training/orientation with some eager and generous volunteers. The FOF followed up the next Saturday with some training of their own. It is looking like Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup> will be the kick off for the program.

Asa Deane and I continue our regular meetings and healthy exchange of ideas, plans and projects.

The Whistle Lake Dam safety compliance project has seen another visit from consultants, with a follow up meeting coming soon. There are no firm updates as of the writing of this report.

We are working to up our in house trail diplomatic policy compliance game. In other words, please leash your dog! There are certainly a myriad of other issues with so many new visitors to our woods and parks. We are doing our best to get out there and be more of a presence before the BIG summer numbers start rolling in.

May 3 – 6, PSE was able to get the hole dug for the additional pole required for the transmission lines safety upgrade. We kept the summit road closed to motorized travel during this time. We did have a previously scheduled vitamin commercial that managed its production schedule around the project, with a little extra help from our staff. They sent the Parks Foundation a nice donation.

The Rotary Club Centennial Project continues forward. I am talking with GeoEngineers about necessary habitat and environmental reports, while getting more formal written information in front of our Planning Department. The Rotary Club has kicked off its trail steward program.

ACFL Steve was on vacation May 10 – 14. I managed to keep the garbage dumped and bathrooms in decent shape in his absence. There were a couple of trees to clear from trails, and a few guests to discuss leashes with.

The Samish Nation continues to generously share Denise Crowe from their staff with ACFL staff. We conduct our monthly hikes, native tradition education as well as flora and fauna sharing and discovery.

City staff continues its work on homeless issues in our community. The usual departments; Legal, Planning, Police and Parks along with a variety of others are working on improving our understanding of many legal issues, including managing possessions left behind; might be a trailer, or a sleeping bag. We strive for community safety, as well as compassion for those who need it most.

I am working with Public Works staff on storm/surface water management at Washington Park, and how it affects our parking areas, as well as other park amenities. We are focusing on winter safety when the freeze impacts the stretch of road between the Caretaker house and the lower restroom.

I took personal leave Thurs 20<sup>th</sup> afternoon thru Mon 24<sup>th</sup>.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux, Assistant Director  
May 26, 2021