



**ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

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

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**Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board**

August 5, 2021

6pm

Meeting in person:

#10 Trailhead

“Old Dump Gate”

(west side of “A” Ave, between Forest Park Lane and  
37<sup>th</sup> Street)

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve June 2021 Minutes
3. Public Comments
4. Staff Reports
5. Visit / Review Approved Trail #10 Repair Project Site
6. Adjourn

# Forest Advisory Board

**Date:** June 3, 2021

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

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

**Public:** None

**Called to Order:** 6:02PM

**Minutes:** May 6, 2021 minutes approved as written

**Public Comment:** None

**Friends of the Forest:** None

**Communication/Correspondence:** Commercial shoot on Mt. Erie has finished. Walla Walla College Marine Biology program wanted to go out to the forest lands to collect bugs, and we advised them that we are not a collection facility, but they are more than welcome to photograph and walk through the trails. Jonn: we had a meeting with the chamber and the friends of the forest, with Council Member Walters and Mayor Gere – a promotional video came out while being filmed in the community forest lands - to get young adults to enjoy the forest lands. If videos of the forest lands are being filmed, keeping community in mind and consult with us for do's and don'ts. Brian: communication with lakeside industries - they would like to be included in any wildlands management plan.

**Whistle Lake Dam:** We made another trip out with our consultant, Geo Engineers to do the necessary reconnaissance for the current structure of the dam - what to replace, how big, etc. It's going to be a while going through the analysis. Talking with a few other permitting agencies outside the city to make sure we're doing everything we can do. We certainly got word out on what could possibly happen. The amount of impact of private forest would be just as significant and still need to go up trail #22 and #205 so we're better off using the city trail system and leaving the private land intact. Nick: is this high priority of dept of ecology? They know we're engaged, they have our information, but our preliminary guess - they could take a minimum of possibly a year before anything really happens there.

**Conservation Easement Program Update:** CEP program – Skagit Land Trust would like us to clean up the separate deeds that were collected in the first 20 years of the program to bring it up to speed and what is covered and what is not for the future. Conrad is a consultant we hired and is helping us with some examples and legal wording. It'll be a slight change in the contract – and to add climate change wording - in contract it

could say the Skagit Land Trust can look at small logging, bug infestations the effects of climate change - stewardship and conservation. No language like that currently in the contracts. Presenting to city council hopefully by end of summer. We do not expect it to take too long to update.

**Staff Reports:** Excited to have seasonal help at the ACFL.

Bob: We have Ali Schuh and Gabe Apple working the forest lands this summer. They've done great work so far with the trimming. Spent time over the holiday weekend - so far, they haven't had to deal with behavioral issues much but they had a situation on Monday and dealt with it great and are eager to learn. We have a volunteer work party this Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, also as National Trails Day. We'll be up at trailhead #26 at 9am and attacking scotch broom as much as we can. This past weekend, Friends of the Forest ambassadors were at the whistle lake parking lot with information table and volunteers with no negative reports so all is good. Coming up is city council with the Forest Land Management Plan after the critical areas ordinance discussion is done.

**Other Business:** We won't be meeting in July - next meeting would be August 5th. City hall will be open June 14th 9am-1pm for a soft opening, and July 6th fully open. If there are face to face meetings to commence, we can talk about when the Forest Advisory Board could meet up. Senior Center will be the last to open up at the moment. We will know more in July. Nick: trail #206 closed to horses still? Trail #206 is part of storm damage clean up from mid-january tied into the access to the dam. Because our consultant is looking for some federal aid to clean up, we were asked to not clean it up otherwise it'll be funded differently. Volunteers have just about cleaned it up, but there is a little area that is hard for horses to get through. We're hoping for it to be fixed and cleaned soon. #204 - beginning of the south end of Whistle Lake past the bridge - needs to be a little wider.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:34PM.

The **NEXT MEETING** will be held on **Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 6:00 PM**, virtually.

Respectfully submitted by,

Victoria Wong

Approved: June 8, 2021

## ACFL Maintenance Report JULY – 2021 by Steve Phillips

JULY 28, 2021

### Patrols.

The usual business this time of year is patrolling. We patrol, our parking lots and heavily used lakeside areas for three main purposes:

- To ensure that our users are keeping themselves safe;
- To ensure that users' behavior is not impacting the safety and enjoyment of other users; and
- To ensure that users' behavior is not impacting the well-being of the resource.

Sometimes it feels like we are babysitting, when we return to the Cliffs at Whistle Lake for the 5<sup>th</sup> time that afternoon to “inform” people that alcohol is not allowed and to ask them to dispose of the contents of their open cans with a stern warning not to drink anything else they may have.

We had an unusual occurrence last weekend when a patrol resulted in our staff being the first responder to a 911 call. A park user called dispatch to report that they needed help due to a potential overdose that had taken effect to proportions enough to induce fear in the individual.

As it happened, we had the assistance of APD Officer Packard, who had signed up for a Parks-sponsored overtime shift to assist in weekend patrols in the ACFL. He got the notification from Dispatch and called me for assistance. The location the individual had given Dispatch was confusing, and Officer Packard would have walked to the other side of the lake if he had followed the individual's instructions. I had our seasonal Gabe call him back (I was offsite at the time of the call).

While on the phone with Officer Packard, Gabe walked directly to the individual needing help. They teamed up to carry the individual out and shuttle him far enough to where an ambulance could receive him.

This unusual circumstance – a park user overdosing and needing assistance – could have resulted far differently without the combining factors of regular patrols and onsite APD presence. Time was of the essence and the response time was minimal.

Bob will surely elaborate more in his report about how these patrols have come to pass, so I'll defer to him there. We have already discussed among ourselves how utterly invaluable it has been to have an officer standing by our side when we walk, even just for routine conversations with park users. It is my strong hope that this trend continues when things get busy and hectic in the Forestlands. Because they do.

### Drought, Fire prevention

This is on the forefront of our minds each day as we patrol. “Fire” is a four-letter word that we don't want to think about, but we have to prepare ourselves as much as possible for the thought. We have a smokechaser pack and portable pump with about 250 feet of hose to assist if needed. The main thing we can do is ensure, as above, that users' behavior is not impacting the resource, and that we stop problems before they start. Last summer it was a charcoal fire at the Cliffs, and this year a similar effort was stopped on the eastern shore of Whistle Lake. Three of us were on lookout until midnight on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Gabe reported that one person asked permission to light fireworks from the summit of Mount Erie. He was denied, of course.

### Maintenance

Gabe and Alli have done most of the work on what I'm calling the Green Mile – repainting the handrails on the summit of Mount Erie. Painting is the easy part – first we scrape off paint flakes, then we clean with a scrubby sponge to remove lichen/scum/buildup, then we spray with a rust neutralizer. Then it gets a coat of oil-based paint. Some sections need rail replacement, and in some places the concrete footing has rotted. But overall the condition of the railing is good. As of today, the longest of them is complete and we will continue as time allows.

In early July, the Anacortes Street Department's sign shop helped me replace the stolen "curvy road ahead" sign at the summit of Mount Erie.

In early July, Alli and I trimmed vegetation on the SHIP trail.

We also trimmed vegetation on the "Goat Trail", a green corridor passing parallel to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> streets, and later removed brush piles from the site.

I collaborated with Parks staff to plant 8 Arborvitae trees at the Pickleball courts. Sky and Braydn helped dig a trench using our mini-excavator, dispose of the rocky fill, and import higher-quality soil as a planting substrate. Since projects need a title, this one was dubbed the "Fertile Rectangle" as a callback to the Cradle of Civilization. Gabe and Alli helped plant and mulch the trees, and I will continue to water them regularly.

Reports of ACFL black bear sightings and sign have been coming in since early July. No photos of bears have emerged yet, but a pair of photos showing droppings and a clawed cedar seem compelling! This is an exciting reminder that our Forestlands serve as valuable wildlife sanctuary as well as a recreational outlet for humans.

On July 22 I cleaned out the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street beaver deceiver, which it needed. I also watered the remaining alders at this location (planted winter 2019), which I will continue to do until rainy season. It seems like they still need it.

Later the same day I visited Cap Sante to extinguish two remaining smoldering embers from the brush fire that had occurred there the previous evening.

On two occasions in July, as time allowed, I cut and treated holly in off-trail locations near Cranberry Lake and Whistle Lake.



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

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The heat wave that rolled through the region at the end of June tested a lot of us in many ways. It also tested Whistle Lake's capacity for humans. We never did do an actual vehicle count on any of those four days, but Spradley Road was almost booked solid. There was the usual disregard for our alcohol and smoking prohibitions, but there were also many people just looking to cool down a few degrees. Along with ACFL Steve and his seasonal staff, Director Lunsford, Parks Manager Johnston and I spent a fair amount of time directing traffic and trying to keep activity at the lake somewhat reasonable. Steve and the team, along with an APD Officer that we have been able to schedule in the forest lands, continue to do a terrific job of working daily for the health of the woods and the safety of its visitors.

The 4th of July holiday weekend came and went in a relatively quiet manner. We had the ACFL staffed well into the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> and early morning on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Locals and visitors were very respectful of the City's No Fireworks in parks and woods policy.

We did have about a ½ acre wildfire just north of the Cap Sante summit on July 20<sup>th</sup>. AFD responded quickly, keeping the fire on the rocky balds and out of the woods. DNR also responded. We are cleaning up all the litter that was exposed by the burn.

Planning progress continues for the Rotary Club Centennial project on Cap Sante. Club members and I are doing an extensive site visit this week with an environmental scientist in preparation for submitting permit applications. We should have a conceptual view platform for Parks Commission review soon.

A variety of conversations with neighbors of the potential Guemes Channel Trail route continue. Interest remains high, and we are doing our best to answer questions and present options as we look to the future.

The City Council unanimously passed the Critical Areas Ordinance update Monday, July 26<sup>th</sup>. Parks & Recreation will continue to work with Planning and Permitting on all relevant projects, incorporating especially the updated wetland and riparian zone buffers.

There is a good chance we have discovered some invasive milfoil at Heart Lake. We are working with a consultant to put together a survey of the lake, and we shall develop an action plan from there.

Spent time with various city staff working on homeless issues. The contract with the Anacortes Family Center is proving to be very helpful for staff, the community at large, and most importantly, the folks in need of a break.

#### Miscellaneous:

- our two new Parks maintenance team employees Braydn Krueger and Myles Farrell got started with us at the beginning of July. It thus far has been a pleasure and big time shot in the arm.
- FOF Exec. Dir. Asa Deane is still out on Family Leave. I have been meeting with Ashleigh and Beck in his absence. We are working on a date for the FOF and FAB Boards to get together for a summer hike.
- working with the LaConner School District on some science field trips that include the ACFL and Washington Park. Really appreciated their reaching out and willingness to plan with us.
- thanks to Parks Foreperson Brian Tottenham and ACFL Steve for bolstering our Whistle Lake parking lot trailhead against illegal 4-tired access.
- working with ABPAC (Bicycle and Pedestrian group) planning the Aug 29<sup>th</sup> Open Streets event. Should be tons o' fun.
- Samish Nation staffer Denise Crowe, ACFL Steve and I continue our monthly hikes; keeping a close eye on the health of the woods, and a deeper glimpse into the sacred space.
- have been working with Brandon Lowry from Public Works on protecting the "Powerlines" rock climbing access neighbors from rogue parking attempts.
- working on various community tree issues.
- have found myself spending a little time at Washington Park this month. We continue to set revenue records out there, despite the burn ban. Our veteran seasonal staff has been doing a great job under the leadership of Parks Manager Johnston.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux, Assistant Director  
July 27, 2021