



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

November 4, 2021

6pm

No in person meeting. Virtual meeting only.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83286938996>

Preliminary Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approve October 2021 Minutes
3. Public Comments
4. Friends of the Forest Update
5. Staff Reports
6. ACFL Plan update
7. Conservation Easement Program update
8. Other Business

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

Minutes of the Meeting: August 5, 2021

Board Members Present: Sandra Starbuck, Brian Wetcher, JoAnn York-Gilmore

Public Present: Richard Mellon, Asa Deane (FoF)

Staff Present: Bob Vaux, Steve Phillips, Victoria Wong

Meeting called to order: 6:00PM

Approve Minutes: correction to previous minutes by Richard Mellon -hopeful that trail #132 is decommissioned. September 2021 minutes were approved as corrected.

Public Comments:

Asa Deane from Friends of the Forest - we had a phenomenal volunteer summer with our trail ambassadors interacting with new and seasoned users of the trails to talk about rules of the ACFL, give out maps, make sure everyone is well hydrated. We will definitely be continuing this next summer and grow the program even more. We're in fundraising season right now and looking at the management plan that's going in front of City Council.

Richard Mellon: we've begun talking about the Washington Trails Association potential projects that may yield improvements and certain areas that need attention. Continuing dialogue with Bob, Steve and friends of the forest. Nothing has been set forth at this time but we're making progress. We would love to tackle #119 but hopefully we can discuss it further with other projects that are more straightforward that can be considered.

Staff Reports:

Bob - since that report, Jonn Lunsford and I hosted Regina, the steward representative from Skagit County Land Trust. They do annual check ins, and she specifically wanted to visit the Whistle Lake Dam, and the fence on the southern side of the lakeside quarry. She was appreciative of learning about both of those circumstances. We stopped by at the #215 trailhead improvement site to show her what we've done there as well. We've tried to clear a few trees this week from the windstorm.

ACFL Management Plan Update: Reminder that Monday, October 18 council meeting will be the opening of the public hearing. We're anticipating a fair amount of comments. We haven't received any formal requests as of this meeting. Spoke on the phone with a few people about horse language. The Skagit Valley Herald asked if the public was supposed to be looking at the 2014 plan and that is indeed correct. Next week if we get written comments, I can hopefully be able to break them down and put them in the council packet. Have you received any questions from council members since you presented? not currently. It reflects on a well written document. A few changes have been made but most people have been happy with how the City and partners have managed all of it.

Conservation Easement Program Update: Council Meeting minutes - Jonn presented new easement deed and updated the easement of 622 acres of conservation easement program. The proposed agreement language would update any current practice updates as well. Private commercial activity

should be clarified and would that be allowed? The CEP is largely based on the ACFL comp plan, if that doesn't change dramatically, then the easement language remains the same. The document needs a little bit of work, but it's close. Good step forward to the mechanics to specifically do what is deemed necessary for the land trust. Asa - cleaning up the document was necessary. As we're approaching 2022, the set of challenges that will come forth will give us clarity and be clear about what the parameters are for the easements.

Other Business: JoAnn - Bob brought Brad and I to the Cap Sante trail upgrade. That was very helpful and I believe it'll come back to the Parks Commission meeting. We'll have the opportunity to chime in and approve moving forward with that. It's a great approach how they're taking it and it'll be a good thing. Brian: If Evergreen Island board members wanted a site visit at the Whistle Lake Dam, do you want Marlene to contact Bob to set up the meeting? Yes. Would like to walk through the proposed equipment route so they can see. FoF benefit is on November 5th with a guest speaker that will talk about her work up in Alaska.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:39pm

Respectfully submitted by: Victoria Wong

Date: Oct 28, 201

ACFL Maintenance Report October – 2021 by Steve Phillips
October 28, 2021

As I write it rains from the “atmospheric river” event that has made its way up the coast to us. A few days ago, we were all holding on to our hats as the “bomb cyclone” event brought terrifically strong winds to most of the West Coast.

Fortunately from my perspective, the winds were mostly out of the south/southeast and this is what our forest seems to be accustomed to. Not too many trees have been reported as blocking trails since the powerful storm.

I had help with trail clearing early in the month. A large Douglas fir blocking 113 took a few hours of work, spread between Braydn and Brian of the Parks team along with me. Braydn also hiked out to clear a 24” tree on 116, which was no small effort, and certainly appreciated.

I spent a few hours making sure trail 216 was clear to the Mount Erie summit in support of the Dallas Kloke Mt. Erie Road and Trail Run, clearing low-hanging vegetation and a few logs and blatant tripping hazards from the trail.

I found a firepit (cold ashes) directly on trail 201, just downhill from a downed alder blocking the trail, on October 9. This seemed strange, but Bob and I agreed that it likely came from someone sleeping in a vehicle in the parking lot who started a fire for warmth or food. As far as I know, this was an isolated incident.

On October 13, Myles from Parks and I cleared the trees near Toot Swamp on 206. I returned on the 14th to work the trail a bit where an alder had tipped to create a rooty hole in the trail. The trail is now open after having been obstructed since last January...where I had described on my list of tree issues as a “nasty big mess.”

I had the help of a superstar volunteer removing trees and improving drainage on the trails south and west of Heart Lake on October 15. She needs trail work volunteer hours for an upcoming 100-mile trail run on Orcas Island. I think she'll be back to help more in December.

As most readers of this report know, on October 18, City Council discussed approving the 2014 draft of the Forest Lands Comprehensive Plan. The discussion was favorable, and a vote on this action is scheduled for November 1. A 2021 draft has now been created to include suggested changes.

I spent the week of the 18th pruning our downtown street trees. The main objectives were: to remove branches that were brushing against buildings; and to remove or prune limbs to allow for clearance of pedestrians and vehicles. In some cases I removed internal, crossing branches for tree health. I also identified a few trees as dead that the Street Department will help us remove. I also spent some time pruning trees at the Library and Depot.

There was one interruption in the pruning when Bob pulled me out to the Little Cranberry Lake area to evacuate the public and display signs. Three wolf/dog hybrids had escaped the Predators of the Heart property. As a precaution we evacuated the public and posted cautionary signs at trailheads near the property. We received the “all clear” call just a few hours in, as we were still hanging signs.

Just before receiving the “all clear,” Bob was pulled out to Mount Erie due to a stranded climber needing a helicopter airlift. (For the record, that day was October 19 and my calendar shows a full moon on the 20th.)

That brings us to the current week, which began with windstorms. I took some time on Monday to sample 9 trees around Anacortes for Sooty Bark Disease and send them to WSU Puyallup Extension. We recently learned of this tree disease that seems to be on the rise in our region due to increasing temperatures. I will follow up with more information when I have it. So far I have not noticed any symptomatic trees in the forestlands, but a tree that WSU sampled at Cap Sante did test positive. For more information, see <https://ppo.puyallup.wsu.edu/sbd/>

I pitched in earlier this week to trim some markers at Grandview Cemetery, an all-hands-on-deck effort in Parks in advance of Veteran’s Day next month.



Myles in action on 206, 10/13/21

October 2021 Parks and ACFL Operations Administrative Report

ACFL Plan

The Oct 18th City Council Public Hearing for the plan came and went without much fanfare. Council made it clear that we will get back into the Plan within the next couple of years, assuring the next update will occur in a much more timely manner. The good news is we have a plan that has done its job for a long, long time, and will continue to do so. It is slated for the November 1st Council Consent Agenda.

A very special thank you to Victoria Alsup, nee Wong, for going several extra miles to prep a very challengingly formatted document for the Council meeting, and the ease of future readers.

Tuesday, October 19th

We came to work feeling good about our ACFL plan, and getting ready to prep the updated document for City Council, when the call came to Director Lunsford that the local wolves had escaped their cages. As these wolves live adjacent to the South Cranberry Unit of the ACFL, we took immediate action to evacuate the woods and close down the trailheads. Special thanks to Friends of the Forest Executive Director Asa Deane for volunteering alongside Parks Mgr Johnston, ACFL Steve and myself as we worked to get this done.

While this emergency response was in progress, Director Lunsford contacted me and asked me to check on a Mt. Erie rescue of a stranded climber. I made my way out to Lake Erie Grocery just in time to watch the United States Navy successfully pluck the climber from a south Mt. Erie rock wall, and safely get the individual to awaiting medical care at the Lake Erie boat launch.

On my way back to the South Cranberry woods, the call came in that the wolves had been returned to their fenced enclosures. We pulled the emergency closure signs and got on with the afternoon.

Washington Park Boat Launch Access Road Improvement

Parks Maintenance Team members Johnston, Tottenham and I have met with Street Division leadership Brandon Lowry and Saben Williamson. They came to us with a plan to improve the launch road at Washington Park. This includes tight lining some drainage ditches and overlaying the existing approach with new asphalt. The project looks great, and is ready for the asphalt overlay finishing touch. We just need the weather window to get that done. THANK YOU to Brandon and Saben for suggesting creative and cost saving solutions to park challenges.

Skagit Land Trust Visits ACFL

Monday, Oct 4th, Director Lunsford and I welcomed SLT Stewardship Director Regina Wandler to the ACFL for a periodic check in. At Regina's request, we focused our visit on the Whistle Lake Dam, the #215 Ray Auld Drive trailhead and the southern boundary of the Lakeside rock quarry lease. All sites are consistent with the ACFL Comprehensive Plan, as well as the expectations of the SLT. A very enjoyable outing. Special thanks to Billy Campbell at Lakeside Industries for his generosity with his time and knowledge.

Rotary Park on Cap Sante Trail Project

Parks Commission Members Brad and JoAnn joined me for a trail tour in preparation for the October Commission meeting. Good walk. Good talk. The Rotary Club and I appreciate the unanimous support of the Commission at its Oct 12 meeting for the trail route. Director Lunsford and I are currently working with the Rotarians on eastern viewpoint concepts.

DNR Urban Forestry Program

I met with NW Region Community Assistance Forester Jeremy Porter Oct. 7th. We work with Jeremy in a variety of capacities, including some very good hazard tree workshops over the years and of

course, maintaining our now 20-year run as a Tree City, USA. Jeremy introduced me to brand new to WA DNR Jess Lloyd, who was just hired to fill the Urban Forestry Specialist position in Olympia. We provided updates on our respective agencies, and look forward to continuing to find ways to work together.

Friday, October 1st

Had the opportunity to contact three separate homeless individuals in our parks today. Nicole J. and I met with two of them at Volunteer Park, one near the restroom, the other near Daniels Field. The third contact was made later in the day by Brian T. and I above the #5 Cap Sante disc golf course tee box. The first person left willingly, the second worked with us to clean up his sleeping spot, and the third honored our 72-hour notice and had cleaned up their campsite and moved on when Brian T. went back to check the following week.

Worth Mentioning...

...attended a graveside service at Grandview Cemetery on the 16th. Wanted to thank the whole Parks Crew for the work they get done up there, and also for the professional and compassionate manner in which they help make the services happen.

...keeping up with my regular meetings with both the Friends of the Forest and the Samish Nation. Really grateful for the positive nature of both.

...Oct 11 Council meeting; Parks Elements of the Capital Facilities Plan were moved forward, along with the plan.

...ACFL Steve and I met with Streets Division Lead Brandon Lowry. He and his crew will be removing a few dead street trees in the 9th and Q neighborhood.

...Rec Coordinator Anderson and I met with APD Capt Fuller, re: Wonderland Walk parking. We are very appreciative that the PD will be on site both nights this year, helping us safely process what will surely be thousands of visitors.

...Parks Manager Johnston and I conducted the annual inspection of the Washington Park Caretaker residence. All is well, and Caretaker Chris continues to be a critical member of our team.

...finally conducted Gabe Apple's exit interview Oct 1. He was generous enough to meet with me two weeks after his last working day, and share some good thoughts about the ACFL seasonal job.

...Oct 5; attended all staff planning meetings for Haunted Forest and Wonderland Walk. Great to bring everyone together creating these very popular community events. Go Travis!

...Director Lunsford took a few well deserved days off. I did my best to move from the Co-Pilot's to the Pilot's seat while he enjoyed some free time.

...Travis and Dustin were both occupied with events on Saturday, October 9th, so I was able to step in as field supervisor for a few soccer Saturday hours. Brought back lots of memories. Most of Travis' referees are the children of the ones who worked for me a couple of decades ago. Great to see a small town still being small in some ways.

...took some personal leave on Oct 14, 15.

Faithfully Submitted,

Bob Vaux, Assistant Director
October 28, 2021