



ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board

August 6, 2020

MEETING CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19

ACFL Administrative Report for August Forest Advisory Board Meeting
Bob Vaux, Assistant Director, Anacortes Parks & Recreation

As with all of our parks and forest lands, user numbers have been steadily high since mid-March. Many of our guests are new to the woods, and new to their particular activity, especially mountain biking, rock climbing and car top boat launching. ACFL staff have been doing our best to educate and assist whenever possible, as well as respond to the variety of concerns we hear about. Most of these concerns have to do with the previously mentioned volume of visitors.

While we managed to get through the 4th of July weekend safely, we did have a wildfire on the SW face of Mount Erie on Sunday, July 12th. The burned area ended being approximately 75' x 75' at the base of Orange Wall, a popular spot for sport climbers. The Department of Natural Resources had boots on the ground and a tanker helicopter in the air with an hour or so of the original 911 call. The fire was quickly under control, though the helicopter was called back the next day to take care of a few hot spots. The DNR maintained patrol of the area for the next couple of weeks. There has been no determination of a cause at this time. The annual trail system trimming project has all been completed, except for trail #247. Team ACFL has done an amazing and efficient job of this, and have been recognized for their stellar work. We will get to #247, but might hold off for a bit as the wasps, hornets and yellow jackets are now a very real risk for humans with weed eaters.

The summer weather the last couple of weeks has had us focused on our "patrol" protocol much of the time. I would like to thank Nicole and Jonn for supporting this. ACFL Lead Steve Phillips is doing a great job of working on voluntary visitor compliance with a level head and thoughtful discourse.

We have had a couple reports of homeless campers in the Little Cranberry area in recent weeks. We have been able to work with these folks and help them to their next destinations with support from the Anacortes Police Department. We also thank our regular ACFL hikers who have taken the time to notify us of these situations so that we are able to keep the woods, our guests, and the campers safe.

We are in the process now of setting up our regular summer time water quality monitoring in our lakes. I did enjoy a Socially Distanced meeting and hike with the Friends of the Forest Board, and continue to meet with Executive Director Asa Deane on a regular basis.

Finally, a quick word about Ebikes. Please remember these motorized bicycles must follow the same rules as motorcycles in the ACFL; staying on those designated trails, especially. We are seeing more and more of these bikes around town and on the trails. Thank you for taking the time to know your machine, and where you are permitted to operate it.

Faithfully Submitted,
BV /August 3rd, 2020

ACFL Maintenance Report JULY – 2020 by Steve Phillips

August 1, 2020

The warm summer temperatures that waited until July to arrive are finally here. Temperatures in the upper 80s hit Anacortes last week, bringing large numbers to our ACFL lake and forest oases. This has shifted much our effort from trail trimming to patrols. Visitor safety is our primary concern, especially in areas where swimming and cliff jumping take place; as fire season intensifies, we also remain vigilant to discourage BBQ usage, campfires and camping, and smoking as we encounter it. We have been working shifts to cover all days of the week and all hours with the warmest weather. We pick up litter as we patrol.

Violations

There have been too many to count here – as we do not log the number of beers, hard seltzers, etc. (even a bag of wine last week) that we dump on our patrols. Add to the list smokers and people using vape pens, and barbeques. And of course there's the bevy of off leash dogs that we encounter. Summer has intensified all of these things, and more, to name a few: people parking in fire lanes, hanging rope swings, dumping unwanted items like leaky boats in our parks. But these are all exceptions to the rule, and if we could count the number of satisfied, law-abiding park users who have come and gone, it would probably far exceed the violators.

There was a fire on Mount Erie (cause unknown, but it occurred in a popular rock-climbing area) on Sunday, July 12. Although it occurred in very rugged terrain, responders were thankfully able to keep it small. Bob interacted with the crews and has more information about the event.

Trails

As of this writing, we (seasonals Chris and Eli, and I) only have Trail 247 remaining to trim. This rugged beast will not be easy – but that means that we only have about 2 miles left out of the roughly 60 in the entire system. We're all very excited about this!

Stoppage of rain has led to dry and dusty conditions. A few trees have fallen, but have been manageable.

Invasive Species

I deployed and have been monitoring my Asian Giant Hornet traps. I have not captured any of them, only other stinging insects so far. As of this writing, WSDA captured one Asian Giant Hornet in a trap on July 14 near Birch Bay. Confirmed sightings have remained mostly very close to the Canadian border, the closest to us remaining in Bellingham on June 6 of this year.

I have been locating a few patches of scotch broom that I'd like to address, most likely when we have volunteer work parties again.

Miscellaneous Good News

- We relocated and refilled our fire buckets. These are 5-gallon plastic buckets that we store in fairly remote locations where campfires have traditionally occurred.
- I took our small skiff trip around Whistle Lake to pick up trash, snagged fishing lures, etc. I was pleased that the island was fairly litter-free. I have since come to learn that at least one gentleman (and sometimes his kids also) regularly swims out to the island with a garbage bag to clean up litter. There is another individual who regularly patrols the eastern side of Whistle Lake for garbage as well. Thanks, anonymous stewards!
- Social distancing and mask wearing is taking place on our trails, which is good to see.
- We have been watering trees weekly at three locations: the Ferry terminal, Guemes Channel Trail, and 32nd Street wetland. Although a few have dropped off, we are seeing good survival rates at these planted sites.
- Roughly 4,000 small cutthroat trout were released into Whistle Lake on July 9. Chris and I helped the DNR fish biologist back the truck in and release the fish.