



**ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

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**Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board**

**Sept 3, 2020**

**MEETING CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19**

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

While we continue a pretty steady streak of 70 degree days, the first messengers of autumn have begun their work. Most notably, sunset is easing back from 8:00PM, and the corresponding chill setting in helps quiet our woods from the summer pandemic rush. We are still focused on our weekend patrols and all that goes along with those interactions; alcohol consumption, camping, firepits and bbq's, dogs off leash and first time visitors who are legitimately trying to learn the rules and the etiquette. Again, thank you to Jonn and Nicole for putting the extra time in alongside ACFL staff when the summer visitor numbers have put very heavy demands on our staff and our resources.

One indicator of our increased visitor numbers is the fact that we have already had to pump out the Heart Lake pit toilets, after just doing so in preparation for the May 5 Opening Day. Typically, we get a year out of tank emptying, but the lake shore, like the rest of the ACFL, has seen a steady stream of use. The parking lot continues to be a very popular trailhead for equestrians, as well as mountain bikers and hikers.

One highlight from August is that Steve and I were able to reconnect with the Samish Indian Nation's Education Program Manager, Denise Crowe. The Samish have very generously agreed to share Denise with the City ACFL staff for a monthly hike and educational experience. Reconnecting with Denise in the woods is one of the great aspects of my official return to the ACFL.

In other forest education news, Friends of the Forest Forest Educator Beck Pittman has been setting up information/education tables at a variety of trailheads over the last few weeks, greatly enhancing the woods experience for those who choose to take advantage of her presence. The FOF have been providing this service at no cost to the City or the visitors, and it is much appreciated. Asa Deane and I continue our regular meetings and open lines of communication.

Director Lunsford was able to secure an HPA from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, allowing us to do low impact maintenance on the trail #108 bridge. Our plan is to slowly remove some of the brush piled up there by our beaver population, and to keep the water moving under the bridge on its way to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street swamp. We have got it flowing at the level of a trickle now, and this has yet to attract new beaver work.

We have seen an uptick the last few weeks in public requests for hazard tree evaluations, property line questions and trailhead issues. I am doing my best to keep up with this, and make sure the ACFL is being a good neighbor.

We will continue to close the Mt. Erie Road to motorized vehicles Friday – Sunday for the foreseeable future. We have received a fair amount of positive feedback on this temporary closure from non-motorized recreators.

Thanks to ACFL Steve for grading improvements on the Little Cranberry access road. He was able to do that with no new material.

I would also like to thank Parks Maintenance Foreperson Brian Tottenham and his crew for falling a hazard tree at the #121 trailhead. Its removal is allowing lots of new light in and the adjacent street and sidewalk are now much safer.

Faithfully Submitted,  
Bv /August 27, 2020

Cooler temperatures and shorter daylight hours are a relief for those of us who work in parks. The challenges we face as authority figures are different each day, but always seem to justify our presence in the woods: whether due to fires and barbecues, alcohol, off-leash dog activity; or just to answer simple questions about trails.

The flipside of the sometimes unsavory duties of correcting illegal behavior is being there to receive compliments from the various user groups we have. I say this not just because we enjoy receiving thanks for hard work and enforcement of rules and ordinances, but I say this because I am grateful for those who appreciate the rare treasure that the ACFL represents to this community and region, especially in times of economic hardship, a global pandemic, and social unrest.

### Compliance

#### **Fecal coliform**

We tested for fecal coliform in all three lakes on August 6 and again on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Numbers are looking favorably low and well within county guidelines for safe swimming.

#### **Asian giant hornets**

Per WSDA protocol, we continue to monitor our two traps each week; this 17-week commitment will continue through October. I have collected and submitted all my trap contents each week, but have trapped no stinging insects other than bald-faced hornets and yellowjackets. The trap at the Mount Erie summit is a great conversation starter about the monitoring program and these pests in general. Statewide, confirmed sightings remain only in northern Whatcom County:

<b>Date</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b># Reported</b>	<b># Trapped</b>
09/30/19	Blaine	Whatcom	Worker	1	
10/22/19	Blaine	Whatcom	Worker	1	
12/08/19	Blaine	Whatcom	Worker	1	
05/27/20	Custer	Whatcom	Queen, mated	1	
06/06/20	Bellingham	Whatcom	Queen, unknown	1	
07/14/20	Birch Bay	Whatcom	Queen, unmated		1
07/29/20	Custer	Whatcom	Male		1
08/18/20	Birch Bay	Whatcom	Unknown	1	
08/19/20	Birch Bay	Whatcom	Worker		1

Source: <https://agr.wa.gov/departments/insects-pests-and-weeds/insects/hornets/data>

#### **Toxic algae**

Toxic algae has been detected in Pass Lake. As of this report, our lakes remain free of blue-green algae blooms. We received a cc of this message replying a concerned citizen inquiring to Skagit County Public Health. I'm including it here since you may be curious:

"The City of Anacortes or Skagit County Public Health will submit water samples for blue green algae toxin analysis if there is sign of a blue green algae bloom. Blooms are very distinctive in appearance and if there is no visual evidence of a significant bloom there will not be detectable toxin found in the lake. Even with evidence of a significant bloom many blooms do not release toxins. Blue green algae are always present in lakes at some level as they are a natural part of the lake ecosystem. It is

when there is a large bloom with visual evidence of distinctive surface scum and color in the lake that we will recommend sampling the water to see if the bloom is releasing toxins. “

You can keep up to date on local monitoring efforts, see examples of harmful algae blooms or report a bloom here: <https://www.nwtoxicalgae.org/Default.aspx>

### **Trails – Drainage, erosion, bridges, fallen trees**

We’ve been getting compliments on trail trimming and how good the trails look. Still, trees have fallen, some large, but we’ve been able to stay on top of these and often clear them within a few days of being notified.

We have also continued to remove derelict pieces of rebar as they are revealed. It was used in the past to anchor log sections to the ground in turnpikes. These seem to have mostly been used in the trail system north of Heart Lake.

Brian Tottenham and others on the Parks crew helped safely remove a hazardous dead hemlock that recently died, but remained standing, at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street terminus of Trail 121. It posed a potential danger to traffic and residents, had it been allowed to fall naturally.

### **Miscellaneous Good News**

We helped Beck, Friends of the Forest’s new Naturalist, set up an information table on Trail 20 at Whistle Lake for the last two weeks. We hope she made some new friends!

