Hi, I grew up all my life playing and using Anacortes forest lands for many things. Running bicycling and dirt biking. While I know running and bicycling will remain activities that are sanctioned, I am concerned that the disposition towards dirt biking is not healthy for those who enjoy that recreation. So, my main and only real input is that the dirt biking freedoms that are currently allowed in Anacortes forest lands would remain steadfast or even freed up from the current status they are in now. Trails have been closed and even entire parts of the year now closed off to motorcycle riding. I would suggest that horses would also not be allowed in the forest lands during that time as the trails are more fragile if that is perspective that needs to be taken. I really don't believe the winter time trail environment has much more of an impact from motorcycle use. It's been done for many many years. It mostly comes down to the responsibility of the motorcyclist and their throttle control abilities. That is something that is very difficult to control without complete isolation from motorcycles. But making rules that penalize the 99% to provide justice for the 1% is not the kind of decision-making I would like to see. I hope motorcycles have a future in the ACFL. Thanks!

-Eric Schwulst
Gary Robinson | Director | Anacortes Parks and Recreation P.O. Box 547 | Anacortes | WA | 98221
904 5th Street | Anacortes | WA | 98221
360 293 1918 (office) | 360 293 1929 (fax)
360-661-3601 (cellular) | gary@cityofanacortes.org

-----Original Message-----
From: Mike Vandeman [mailto:mjvande@pacbell.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 23, 2014 8:28 PM
To: Robinson, Gary
Subject: ACFL Comprehensive Management Plan and Mountain Biking

Please share with all appropriate and interested parties.

Bicycles should not be allowed in any natural area. They are inanimate objects and have no rights. There is also no right to mountain bike. That was settled in federal court in 1996:
http://mjvande.nfshost.com/mtbl0.htm . It's dishonest of mountain bikers to say that they don't have access to trails closed to bikes.
They have EXACTLY the same access as everyone else -- ON FOOT! Why isn't that good enough for mountain bikers? They are all capable of walking...

A favorite myth of mountain bikers is that mountain biking is no more harmful to wildlife, people, and the environment than hiking, and that science supports that view. Of course, it's not true. To settle the matter once and for all, I read all of the research they cited, and wrote a review of the research on mountain biking impacts (see http://mjvande.nfshost.com/scb7.htm ). I found that of the seven studies they cited, (1) all were written by mountain bikers, and (2) in every case, the authors misinterpreted their own data, in order to come to the conclusion that they favored. They also studiously avoided mentioning another scientific study (Wisdom et al) which did not favor mountain biking, and came to the opposite conclusions.

Those were all experimental studies. Two other studies (by White et al and by Jeff Marion) used a survey design, which is inherently incapable of answering that question (comparing hiking with mountain biking). I only mention them because mountain bikers often cite them, but scientifically, they are worthless.

Mountain biking accelerates erosion, creates V-shaped ruts, kills small animals and plants on and next to the trail, drives wildlife and other trail users out of the area, and, worst of all, teaches kids that the rough treatment of nature is okay (it's NOT!). What's good about THAT?

To see exactly what harm mountain biking does to the land, watch this 5-minute video:

In addition to all of this, it is extremely dangerous:


--

I am working on creating wildlife habitat that is off-limits to humans ("pure habitat"). Want to help? (I spent the previous 8 years fighting auto dependence and road
Please don't put a cell phone next to any part of your body that you are fond of!

http://mjvande.nfshost.com
Advisory Board:

The levee area on the Cranberry Dam needs some attention. The levee has been crumbling for decades. So much has fallen down, that a fabric is showing, with holes in the fabric.

Why not place some cedar logs on the levee, with ramps on each end, with a gravel path close to the water for wheelchairs. Why can't the High School fabricate a small rustic bridge to give access to both ends.

I can visualize an improvement that wouldn't cost much money and would give more enjoyment for present and users.

Respectfully,

[Signature]
From: Matt Wallis [mailto:wallis_matt@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 22, 2014 9:35 PM
To: coa.mayor; Robinson, Gary
Cc: Miller, Matt; Adams, Brad; Gere, Laurie; Lovelett, Liz; Pickett, Erica; Archibald, John; Johnson, Eric; Walters, Ryan
Subject: ACFL Comp Plan Update

3/22/2014
Proposed addition to the Anacortes Community Forest Comprehensive Plan:

Recreational Events

Goal- The City of Anacortes encourages healthy lifestyles of our citizens by recognizing the need for a limited number of permitted organized recreational events. We promote safe, healthy activities for Anacortes residents on our forest lands such as cross country trail runs, triathlons, fishing derbies, climbing safety courses and mountain bike races. The permitting process is through the parks and recreation department to help select event dates and choose lesser used trails in order to minimize user conflicts and environmental impact.

A couple of summers ago while on a family vacation in Mammoth, California my family watched a weekday mountain bike race organized by the city parks and recreation department. About 25 people of all ages took part in the event, almost all were local residents. This event was hosted in a park setting very similar to the ACFL here in Anacortes- the trails included fire roads and single track. There was no visible impact to the trail system from this small weekly event and user conflicts did not happen. It is obvious to anyone who has attended this weekly small town summer activity that Mammoth takes an active role encouraging positive activities in their forest lands that cause minimal impacts and create civic pride.

Why can’t our parks department host or permit similar events in Anacortes?

For many years the ACFL has been the host of organized informal events such as the Mount Erie Trail Run, youth fishing derbies, trail runs, climbing courses and mountain bike rides. It is time for the ACFL plan to recognize and encourage a limited number of events and create a permitting process to allow for these to be organized to benefit our residents. It is my belief these opportunities give young people a positive activity that leads to healthier lifestyles and an improved quality of life.

There are many appropriate areas for these events, many trails and fire roads in the Whistle lake area see little use and would be a good fit for trail runs and mountain bike races.

I believe strongly that our parks and recreation department should not just be permitting these events. They should be at the forefront in organizing them.

Thank you for your time
Subject: FW: Forest lands plan

From: Andrew Lemberg [mailto:andrewlemberg@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2014 11:00 AM
To: Robinson, Gary
Subject: Forest lands plan

I have two ideas I wanted to propose for the ACFL. The first involves parking passes. During the high season the ACFL experiences an extremely high level of parked cars at all major entrances, with of course the worst being Whistle Lake. I propose issuing a "Fidalgo Island ACFL Parking Permit". If you can prove you live on the island (through similar means that the public library uses to verify residency) then you receive a free annual pass. Now, if you don’t live on the island and want to enjoy all the benefits of the ACFL, you must obtain a parking permit. I think a day pass of something like $3 would be fine. The other option would be an annual pass they could purchase for maybe $35-40? Obviously these price structures could be changed.

What this plan offers is simple. The ACFL can offset some financial loss incurred during the high season when rangers and aides have to be out patrolling every day. But the real winner is the forest lands. A small fee will discourage the people most likely to trash on the woods, who have no connection with the forest lands they are visiting. We've all seen it time and time again, people littering and drinking who come from Oak Harbor or the valley. I don't have any problem with people visiting and enjoying the ACFL, I just think they need to put in something for it like we all do. I’ve talked to a lot of locals who think this concept might be a winner - I say give it a try and see what the impact is.

The second idea I wanted to float is expansion of the ACFL. It seems to me that in the past decade there has been no real push to expand the boundaries of the forest lands. This is unfortunate given the reality of more housing developments boxing in the ACFL. There are real opportunities still on Fidalgo Island to make the forest lands even better than they currently are. The most obvious would be expansion into the Skyline area, but I'm also talking about plots of land I see for sale bordering on the forest lands in places like Heart and Whistle lakes. I would hope to see more activity of this in the future.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lemberg
1419 20th Street
Anacortes, WA
Here’s suggestions for the update of the ACFL comp plan. Although I am a board member of Friends of the Forest, these are my individual suggestions, not board suggestions:

- I’ve already commented orally on the idea of closing redundant connector trails to reduce human impact and improve ecological values. Goal: (slightly) fewer trail miles, better maintenance of remaining system, encouragement of wildlife.

Another suggestion is endorsement of forest science research, which could be included in Section IV, Forest Lards Stewardship:

“Forest Land Managers will encourage scientific research on the ACFL and partnership with institutions capable of offering scientific expertise and data collection, such as Western Washington University or the University of Washington. The goal would be to enhance management and preservation by better understanding of on-going ecological processes. Examples of useful areas of study include:

- Ongoing census and inventory of ACFL plants and animals, both in species and population. Are they changing and if so, how?

- The water quality of ACFL streams and lakes, including fecal coliform, invasive species, nitrogen levels, and other measures of water quality.

- Data on the frequency and impact of fire, both negative and beneficial, including its role in the native ecosystem and ecological recovery of burn areas. The goal would be to clarify fire response, to conclude whether there is any need of controlled burns, whether burned areas should be replanted, and if so, how.
- Information on forest composition and transition as the trees mature and natural succession takes place. Is there net growth, is the forest healthy, and can we expect some species to increase and others to decline as the forest matures? What might the forest look like in 2100?

- A historical record of wind and snow damage, with the goal of better predicting likely damage in the future and any appropriate responses.

- Data on the impact of pet and horse waste on forest health.

- Examination of the impact of boot, hoof, and wheel trail wear on root system health and ACFL erosion. Are there trail maintenance lessons to be learned from other public lands managers?

- Surveys on human use of the ACFL, such as people’s habits, preferences, etc.

- Study on the impact, positive and negative, of maintaining view openings from overlooks on Mount Erie or elsewhere."

This is just suggested wording; city staff could/should modify.

Bill Dietrich
Jonn,

Would you please include the following comments for consideration in the update of the ACFL Comprehensive Plan.

For many years there has been a philosophical conflict between dog owners who like to let their pets run freely along wooded trails, and other trail users who are concerned about aggressive dogs or the impact of dogs on wildlife. I am hoping that the new ACFL plan can include an area where dogs can be allowed to run off-leash, while most areas would still require dogs to be on-leash. Allowing dogs to be off-leash on a few designated trails is a reasonable compromise between requiring leashes everywhere and allowing dogs to run freely everywhere.

Will providing specific legal off-leash areas stop illegal use - of course not. Just as some bicyclists illegally use non-bike trails, some folks will always misbehave. But most people will do the right thing by keeping their dogs on leash except on the designated off-leash trails. And those who don't can still be subject to fines as they are now.

I'm sure that deciding exactly what area is best for off-leash use will be controversial - many people won't want it on "their" favorite trail. It will take some thoughtful consideration of options. I'm sure that dog owners will have lots of ideas for the best places. There can even be several designated off-leash trails convenient to various neighborhoods.

One thought might be to make the old dump site an off-leash area. An owner could walk the dog on-leash to this area, then let it off leash to run a while, then put the dog back on the leash to go back to the car. And perhaps trails 124 and 113 around the back side of the dump site could be designated as an off-leash trail.

The characteristics of a good off-leash area could include:

Good parking
Short on-leash walk to the off-leash trails
Loop route that brings you back to the starting point
Both short and long route options
Open area for dogs to run and play
Doggie bag dispenser and garbage can
Away from the most sensitive wildlife areas
Away from the most heavily used trails
Near residential neighborhoods so folks can walk there from their homes

With nearly 3,000 acres of forest and parks in Anacortes, we should be able to find a few small areas where dogs can have some freedom to run free. The ACFL multi-user philosophy has found ways to accommodate bicycles, motorcycles, and horses – all of which enjoy access to many miles of trails. Surely it is reasonable within that multi-user philosophy to also designate a few trails where dogs can run free.

Please add designated off-leash trails for dogs to the ACFL Comprehensive Plan.

Cynthia Richardson
315 V Avenue
Anacortes, WA 98221
360-299-9081
COMMENT SUBMITTED TO THE ANACORTES FOREST LANDS ADVISORY BOARD

Four years ago the city council reluctantly approved an ACFL Plan Update containing a policy maintaining a total ban on off-leash dog use in the ACFL. As a result we have four more years of proof that that policy is an unreachable fantasy. Four more years of education and enforcement have done nothing to change the reality that off-leash dog use is one of the most common activities engaged in by Forest Land users. Yet the Parks and Recreation Department and the Forest Advisory Board are showing no sign of giving up the fantasy that more education about the horrible dangers of off-leash dog use and more empty threats of rigorous enforcement of the leash law will change on-the-ground realities. There are several factors involved here.

Factor #1: Records show that claims that off-leash dog use is a dangerous activity are not true.

It’s hard to educate people into changing their behavior when they know that what you telling them is a manipulative distortion of reality. That’s exactly how dog-owning forest users see the claims that letting a dog run off-leash in the forest lands is a dangerous thing for the dog, for its owner, and for other forest users. Many of them have spent hundreds of hours hiking Forest Land trails, and they are not taken in by claims which are in direct contradiction with what they experience day after day. Public records make it very clear that these claims of danger and peril are exaggerations which grossly distort reality.

During all of 2012 and 2013 the Anacortes Police Department responded to more than 650 dog-related incidents citywide, including 32 people being attacked or bitten. Out of these hundreds of incidents, only seven happened in the Anacortes Forest Lands. Two of these related to dogs stray or lost, while three simply involved dogs being walked off-leash (no aggressive behavior or threat). One was for off-leash dogs being allowed to harass other dogs. There also was one report of an off-leash dog running aggressively toward a person. Over the entire two year period not a single incident of a person or dog being bitten or injured in the ACFL was reported to the Police Department!

It is standard practice for agencies managing public recreation areas to maintain a file of public safety related incidents reported to them. The City Parks and Recreation Department keeps no such records, so a public records act request seeking all their records relating to dogs in the ACFL during 2012 and 2013 produced only six incidents. These included one reported wolf sighting, one lost dog, a person walking several dogs off-leash, one too-friendly dog jumping up on a person, two situations where off-leash dogs harassed horseback riders, and one dog being aggressive toward a youth class in the ACFL. There were a handful of casual, hearsay mentions of someone having been bitten, but these were not supported by any detail or documentation. The ACFL Manager summed up the situation in an e-mail saying, “We get occasional reports of dogs biting people, mostly this is a nip that doesn’t break the skin.”

In short, during 2012 and 2013 a grand total of five ACFL incidents were reported to the Police or Park Departments where off-leash dogs behaved aggressively. There was not a single bite or attack incident serious enough to motivate the victim to file a report, and no dogs were reported as being injured.

These city agency records are in perfect agreement with data which Hershel Janz reported to the ACFL Advisory Board in November 2012. Based on his many hours of working and walking in the Forest Lands, he reported that over a period of two years he counted 130 dogs on leash, 205 dogs off leash, and no aggressive dogs.
Factor #2: The real problem with off-leash dogs.

So where does the perception that off-leash dog use is a dangerous activity resulting in frequent user conflicts come from? That becomes apparent from a review of the daily work logs maintained by the Parks staff. These records show that most staff time in the ACFL is devoted to maintenance work on forest trails and facilities. That work concentrates on the more heavily used areas and trails, and while staff routinely asks off-leash dog owners they encounter to leash their dog, the nature of the work gives them little chance to observe what happens when people with an off-leash dog encounter other parties on the trail. They may get an earful when unpleasant situations do occur, but the Parks Department obviously sees these hearsay complaints as not worth recording or documenting.

The one time when park staff do focus on visitor use management is on the high-use summer weekends, when their activity takes place at the heavily used areas and trails. In fact, the only mentions of off-leash dogs that appear in their daily logs come from these situations. One entry summed up an employee’s weekend duty in the Whistle Lake area saying, “Lots of drunks and off-leash dogs!”

In short, what the parks staff sees is the rare days and places (in the context of a total year in the ACFL) when so many people are packed into limited areas that dogs emphatically DO need to be leashed. The problem is compounded by the reality that the people who let their dog of leash in such a setting are generally occasional ACFL visitors; they are a very different breed from dog owners who frequent the less use back trails year around. Having a no off-leash dog use policy that clearly is needed in high use areas on prime weekends, makes no sense on the ACFL’s lightly-used back trails and during the times of the year when (as the records show) such restriction becomes simply ridiculous.

Factor #3: Using scare tactics in the attempt to “educate” the public into complying with regulations is not just ineffective; it is counter-productive and unethical.

Is the Parks Department really so out of touch with forest users that they expect owners who let their dog off-leash in the ACFL to believe dire warnings about the dangers of off-leash dog use?

Many off-leash dog owners have spent hundreds of hours hiking Forest Land trails. Day-in-day-out they encounter other user with no problems, and no unpleasantties. This is partly because most owners take care to get their dog under close control when they meet other people. Yes, there are exceptions. A small minority of dog owners are not responsible. Encounters with fearful or aggressive dogs happen occasionally, but they are very rare. When city officials make claims conflicting with user experience, users don’t change their behavior. They simply write the officials off as lacking both credibility and integrity.

The one thing that publication of the dire claims about dog related dangers in the ACFL does achieve is to frighten people who are not dog enthusiasts. Expecting horrible encounters with snarling dogs, some of them give up the opportunity to enjoy the ACFL while others expect bad, nasty things to happen every time they meet a dog in the forest Lands.

The signs recently tacked up at every ACFL trailhead warning about the penalties under the city leash law for having a dog off-leash provide another example of using scare tactics in an attempt to obtain compliance with the ban on off-leash dog use. Yes, those signs are technically correct, but in reality they
are an empty threat. The police records show that in two years exactly two individuals were cited for having a dog off-leash in the ACFL. Neither case was a simple matter of a dog just not being on a leash; both involved aggravating circumstances. Those signs may have made a few dog owners more discrete for a few days, but regular forest land users know very well that there isn’t a cop hiding behind every tree in the ACFL just waiting to jump out and issue a leash law violation ticket.

Factor #4: The city dog parks are not an alternative to taking your dog hiking in the Forest Lands.

The dire warnings of the dangers of off-leash dog use in the ACFL put out by the Parks Department are almost always accompanied by the comment that if owners want to let their dogs run off-leash they should take them to one of the two city dog parks. This comment reveals an abysmal lack of understanding by ACFL managers of their public’s needs and motivations.

Dog park users are motivated primarily to get exercise for their dog, and many also enjoy socializing with other owners at the park. For Forest Land users, exercising the dog often is not their primary motivation. They want to get exercise themselves and to enjoy the Forest Lands environment — while their dogs get exercise too. Dog parks don’t meet their needs!

Many dog owners also reject the claim that the dog parks are such a safe place. An on-line search of the terms “dog park safety” and “dog park health” is anything but reassuring. Veterinarians, dog trainers, and animal protection organizations point out many health and safety issues. The message that emerges is that dog park use is never risk free and owners have little control over their own or their dog’s safety. A major health concern relates to dog parks where vaccination requirements for rabies AND other diseases are not in place and/or are not vigorously enforced. This is exactly the existing situation in the Anacortes dog parks!

Factor #5: A total ban on off-leash dog use in the ACFL is unenforceable.

It is often suggested that compliance with leash law requirements in the ACFL could be obtained by more rigorous enforcement. Specifically these comments advocate that the police should issue citations for virtually any off-leash dog situation observed.

The current enforcement program involves police officers assisting with visitor use management on the busiest weekends in the heavily used areas of the ACFL. The police also respond promptly to reports of problems occurring essentially any time anywhere in the Forest Lands.

When they are working in the Forest Lands the police follow the same protocol they use in the rest of the city. They seek compliance with the law, but reserve the use of citations for situations where a dog is acting aggressively toward other users and the owner is failing to control the animal. This protocol has proven to be the best way to deal with animal control situations citywide. It’s what works best! It encourages cooperation and reserves the citations, fines, and dangerous dog classification for those situations where there is a significant issue of public safety. Abandoning this approach in the Forest Lands is not an option.

The second reality that limits police enforcement as a tool for obtaining leash law compliance in most of the ACFL is that most off-leash use takes place away from easily accessible trailhead and heavy use areas. City police officers have more important things to do than to spend their time wandering the ACFL.
trails in the hope that hours spent doing so will result in contacts with an occasional owner hiking with a
dog off-leash.

Factor #6: Personal responsibility is essential.

In any public recreation area or park setting, laws, regulations, and rules can only reduce the incidents of
negative encounters or conflicts between people using the area. Reasonable responsible behavior on the
part of area visitors also is essential to giving people with varied interests a chance to enjoy their visit.

The existing ban on off-leash dog use in the ACFL attempts to give those members of the public who are
annoyed or fearful about encountering dogs an unconditional right to enjoy their desired recreational
experience everywhere and at all times in the Forest Lands. It does so by telling members of the public
who enjoy hiking in the Forest Lands with their dog off-leash that they have no right and no opportunity
to engage in their desired recreational experience. Dog owners see this blatantly discriminatory policy as
unreasonable and unnecessary, so they largely ignore it. The practical result is that there is no place
where people who have a problem with dogs can be certain that they won’t encounter dogs running off-
leash. Everyone loses!

In spite of their second-class status under ACFL policy, most dog owners who regularly walk their dog in
the Forest Lands do behave responsibly. (The occasional user who turns his dog loose in a high-use area
on a busy weekend is the exception to this rule.) Few owners walking their dog off-leash in the Forest
Lands fail to immediately leash or otherwise control their dog when they encounter other people.
Occasionally they do get caught off guard; and, yes, the 10% of the public who behave irresponsibly are
always with us. Still, as pointed out in Factor #1, situations sufficiently unpleasant to prompt a report to
the City Police or Park Departments are extremely rare.

One element notable for its absence from existing ACFL policy is the simple idea that members of the
public who have a problem with dogs need to take some responsibility for their own peace of mind or
safety. Nothing the city could do short of providing them with a personal body guard could guarantee
that they won’t have an unpleasant dog encounter in the ACFL (or in any other public place in the city).
The current city program does absolutely nothing to educate people about what they can do for
themselves. It does nothing to encourage or facilitate reporting really dangerous incidents to the police.
There is no mention that the failure to report such incidents is grossly irresponsible in that it leaves the
door wide open for the same owner and dog to harm someone else. For those who are truly frightened by
the possibility of a dog attack, there is no information available about deterrent methods and devices
available.

OPTIONS

Plan updates are intended to provide the opportunity for managers to fix the aspects of their management
program which are not working. In 2009 it was very apparent that the total ban on off-leash dog use in
the ACFL was a farcical failure. Incredibly no meaningful changes to the existing management policies
were made in the plan update. The result was entirely predictable – the situation hasn’t changed one iota
from what it was four years ago.
So what will the Parks Department and the Forest Advisory board decide to do about the off-leash dog issue in this year’s plan update? The options might be said to fall essentially into three categories — a) do nothing, b) make token changes, and c) make realistic policy change.

**Option #1: Do nothing.**

If the Park Department and the Forest Advisory Board believes that continuing existing policy is the best way available to deal with the off-leash dog issue, they certainly can opt to retain that policy with no changes. However, based on the discussions which took place when the City Council approved the 2009 update of the Forest Lands Plan, they might find it somewhat difficult to again sell this option.

**Option #2: Token change.**

Designate a small area and/or a few trails in the ACFL for off-leash dog use. This would “legalize” what is already taking place in virtually the entirety of the Forest Lands. Unfortunately it would be unlikely to change what actually happens on the ground. Dog owners are not stupid. They would see that they had been “thrown a bone” and that the city was still incapable of enforcing a ban covering the great majority of the ACFL. So they would keep on doing exactly what they do now.

**Option #3: Realistic policy change.**

Realistic policy change would require giving up two fantasies. The first of these is that there is any prospect of obtaining on-the-ground compliance with a ban on off-leash dog use which applies to all or even most of the Forest Lands. The second is that off-leash dog use is a dangerous activity for dog owners, their dogs, and the public at large.

A realistic policy would to a certain extent legalize what is happening on the ground now. It would have two essential elements:

A. Identify specific areas and trails where use levels and the type of uses occurring actually necessitate that dogs in those areas must be kept on a leash to ensure public safety and prevent conflicts of use. These areas should be kept to a size where it will be possible to obtain a high degree of compliance with leash requirements using available education and enforcement resources. If the city animal control ordinance could be amended to establish the equivalent of a parking ticket violation with a penalty of perhaps $25 to $40 for simply having a dog off-leash in these areas, obtaining compliance with leash requirements would be greatly facilitated.

B. In the remainder of the ACFL where public use activities and levels do not warrant a ban on off-leash dog use and where enforcing such a ban is not possible, relax the leash requirement to allow off-leash use so long as dogs are within sight and under voice control of their owners. In these areas retain all leash law provisions relating to aggressive behavior or wildlife harassment. Establish a program educating and encouraging the public to report dangerous incidents or observed instances of aggressive behavior or wildlife harassment.

Robert L. Barry

April 30, 2014
April 30, 2014

Dear Forest Advisory Board and City Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the ACFL Comprehensive Plan update.

First, the Friends of the Forest would like to say that we think the extensive rewrite of the ACFL management plan a few years ago has held up extremely well. In general, the plan in its current form is a solid document that is doing a very good job of serving both our citizens and the forest lands.

As a group, we represent people devoted to the preservation of healthy native plants, animals, and habitats as well as the joys of recreation and nature education. There are often challenges to finding the right balance between these - and indeed the vast majority of issues facing the woods have to do with a steady increase in recreational activity. The bulk of the problems stem from individuals who are not following forest rules, and either willfully or inadvertently affect the rights and experiences of others while causing more damage to the nature integrity of the ACFL.

We are devoted to continuing citizen education in as many forms as possible, with the belief that this is the key to sustaining our forest ecosystem health and minimizing forest recreation based interpersonal conflicts. We value our unique multiple use trail system and will continue to work towards mutual understanding and the importance of following the rules out of respect for others’ experience and the sustainable health of wildlife and the precious habitats they depend on. If everyone were to follow current rules, there would be maximum enjoyment and very little cause for conflict. This is a worthy ideal to strive for.

We urge FAB and City Staff to resist pressure from any groups seeking to elevate their desired use in any way that causes more impact on other trail users and/or wildlife and habitats. We also encourage the continuing prohibition on private for profit activities.

The woods are sure to face more environmental challenges such as the recent Heart Lake water quality and invasive milfoil situation, the steady influx of multiple invasive species, ACFL border development and the unforeseen consequences of climate change.

We look forward to a continuing partnership with the city that strives to meet all of these challenges to the best of our collective ability. We will continue to participate as any changes to the plan may take shape in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Ardy Stewart
President
Friends of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands
Anacortes Forest Advisory Board  
City of Anacortes  
Anacortes, WA 98221  

Greetings:  

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on the need to continue with the present policy of leashed dogs in the Community Forest. To restate my position briefly, I believe there should be no areas in the Community Forest where unleashed dogs are permitted, and that some periodic law enforcement be applied as funds permit. Trail head signing recently completed is a good step in the right direction.  

Also, I was interested in the discussion of Heart Lake management goals and objectives. There seem to be two forces at work in this ecosystem, natural forces of change though eutrophication, and man made forces. My predominant impression of Heart Lake is that there is an extremely large gravel surface which has displaced natural vegetation along the lake shore. It is well known that runoff from gravel is a source of phosphorous, nitrogen, and petrochemicals. Because of the large size of this parking lot, and its unmanaged drainage, it probably has a significant negative impact on water chemistry in the lake.  

I believe that the Forest Comprehensive Plan should establish a policy of significantly reducing man made impacts on the lake. This could be accomplished by selectively restoring a natural vegetation filter strip along the lake shore in place of most of the artificial gravel edge, and by directing the flow of run off from the gravel surface into these and other filter areas. Parking should not be permitted near the lake shore.  

The Natural Resources Conservation Service would likely offer free assessment and design services for this kind of project.  

Where non-native species are negatively impacting the lake, I support use of registered herbicides according to label directions, in conjunction with physical removal of plants.

Thomas Fulk  
\[Signature\]
I am opposed to an off-leash dog area in the forest. Many dog owners currently allow their dogs to run loose on the trails. These dogs make physical contact with other people or growl at them, posing a safety risk. Even leashed dogs are an annoyance, because most are not properly restrained by their handlers and will nose you or jump on you if you do not step off the trail. Unleashed dogs can be a real danger.

Rauna Sinkewitsch
Anacortes
Comments for the Anacortes Forest Lands Comprehensive Plan

Introduction: Page 4

“These community forest lands contain some of the most unique and complex living environments in the Puget Sound Region. Few cities are so fortunate to have such a resource, coupled with the broad based desire of its citizens to conserve and responsibly use these resources.”

“The goal of this process was to develop a plan that works to conserve and enhance the unique environment and habitats within the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) while maintaining recreational opportunities for local residents.”

These comments provide a good start for the discussion for the update of this plan. And, it is impressive that this plan is being revised every five (5) years from its last update. In reading this plan, I am confused about the intent of the management of these forest lands. Are these “unique and complex living environments in the Puget Sound” to be preserved for present and future generations of Anacortes residents or is recreation the trump card at the expense of preservation for present and future generations? The introduction should plainly state the “Vision and Intent” of how these lands are to be managed. Is recreation the most important function of these lands or is protecting these unique environments the most important to include other opportunities such as recreation, environmental education, secondary water supplies, etc.? With a growing population and increasing popularity of these lands, there may be a time that some limits will need to be invoked because the Forest Lands are being over run and trampled. This plan needs to be bold in its vision and management for the future.

...”Conservation Easement Program and broad financial generosity to see it through steady stewardship participation in work parties and committees, and a demonstrated sense of respect and care for the woods among most local youth.”

The above statement should not target any group such as youth but should apply to all groups. For instance, environmental education is focused on all groups of kids in specific grades. “All” residents whether young or older should be responsible stewards of the resource. That should be the underlying goal not most.


“ACFL neighbors should be informed of the types of non-native plants which are invasive and encouraged to plant native alternatives”.

Recommendation: The city pass a city ordinance prohibiting the sale of exotic species such as ivy, holly trees, butterfly bushes, etc. To protect the integrity of the environment of the forest lands which would apply to all outlets that sell exotic species such as nurseries, retail outlets like grocery stores, Rite Aid, etc.
Anacortes depends primarily on volunteers to do exotic removal with occasional grants to subsidize the removal but a higher level of help is needed for people like Hershel Walker who has devoted considerable retirement time in exotic plant removal. My experience as National Park Manager shows that volunteers do have “Limits” in their donation of time and they wear out.

Recommendation: The city pass a city ordinance prohibiting the planting of exotic species in new developments around the forest lands that identifies what those exotic species are. In the future, there should be little need for exotic control of invasive species as a goal with this commitment by the city, retailers and developers.

Forest Lands Stewardship

Forest Management:

Goal: “The Anacortes Community Forest Lands should be managed and protected in perpetuity to insure the maximum benefit to sensitive habitats and wildlife and enjoyment to the citizens of Anacortes”.

The first half of the plan on page 4 should reflect the same principles identified in this portion of the plan. In this section it appears that the resource comes first with more of a preservation and protection ethic. The plan should reflect the same value throughout the plan.

3. “All forest management activities will be conducted so as to minimize damage to native plant communities and wildlife. Natural processes of growth and succession, with the exception of wildfire, will be encouraged, and any replanting will use species native to that site.”

Fire is a part of the natural process and is one of the most effective ways to control exotic species and at the same time to encourage native plants to come back naturally. With the encroachment of development all around the forest, fuel reduction in the forest will be necessary to avoid a catastrophic fire. You either accomplish this through manual labor and removal, or you introduce fire in a very controlled way to reduce fuels. Recent disasters in Colorado are testament to the loss of private property in close proximity to a forest with the lack of control of heavy fuels. There are numerous examples of community’s saved by reduced fuel management.

In a recent look at entry points into the forest lands, there are now 40 identified locations where one can enter the forest lands. In most entry points there is no identification that you are entering the ACFL. There should be an analysis of how many entry points are needed for a relatively small forest of 2,800 acres. All entry points should be signed discreetly letting people know that they are on ACFL lands and that stewardship is primary. There is still land around the ACFL that will be developed. How many more entry points are necessary? Are there limits and at what point do you lose control of the forest?
Trails: Trails are an important part of the forest lands but in some areas there are a proliferation of very short trails (.01 of a mile) that are perhaps not needed. Can some of these connector trails be reduced?

Page 10 Management Areas

Goal: “Identify areas of environmental, educational, historic, cultural and/or biological significance, encourage their preservation, and regulate development which could cause significant deterioration of these qualities.”

This is a very good goal but is trumped by the next stated goal of "Provide opportunities for residents to have access to undeveloped natural areas." Does this mean that no lands are sacred from some form of development such as trails?

The next Policy statement dealing with watersheds..."be managed to maintain their pristine and/or fragile environment and to preserve watersheds, wildlife habitats, wetlands, aesthetic values, and recreational uses with priority for residents."

This policy is a mixed bag of preservation because of pristine environments and at the same time use is the over riding factor. If use begins to compromise these pristine environments will they be stopped? This policy needs to be clarified and better stated.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Comprehensive Plan. As my wife and I hiked up the Sugar Loaf trail today, I was impressed with the care of the trail we were hiking. It is well managed, with care for protecting the resource and at the same time providing a wonderful opportunity to view the water and islands that surround us. The information kiosk at the trail head was well designed and appropriate for the information provided. Other major trailheads should have the same information.

Thank you for your stewardship and interest in getting public input on this Comprehensive Plan.

Ed Gastellum
September 1, 2014

Mr. Lunsford,

Knowing that the ACFL Advisory Board meets on the first Thursday of the month and having checked the city website calendar page to be sure that the meeting had not been rescheduled, I mailed a copy of the enclosed material directly to each board member so that they would have a chance to review it before their meeting on September 4. A few minutes ago in a conversation with a Board member, I learned that my extra effort was wasted because the meeting has been rescheduled to the following week.

The Forest Board has made it very clear that it prefers to run its fiefdom without any interference from the public. Still, it would be nice if the city web calendar page would show schedule changes. You might also note that the minutes of the May board meeting which were approved at last month’s meeting have yet to be posted.

Robert L. Barry
Note: Participation in recent Advisory Board meetings has left me with the impression that my previous comments on the ACFL plan update had not been seen by some Board members. For that reason I am mailing a copy of this letter to each Board member at his or her home address.

On April 30 of this year I submitted public comment on the Anacortes Community Forest Lands plan update to the Forest Advisory Board. A salient part of the information provided in that comment was the results of a search of Anacortes Police Department incident reports which identified all dog related incidents recorded in the ACFL during the two year period 2012 and 2013. I recently filed a request with the Police Department to obtain incident reports covering 2014 year-to-date. The information which the Department provided in response to this request has enabled me to identify and review all incidents responded to by the Anacortes Police Department which involved dogs in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands during the period beginning January 1, 2012 and ending August 25, 2014.

The attached Table I lists all the dog-related police incidents which occurred in the ACFL during the last 32 months. Several points should be specifically noted with regard to these incidents.

- No incidents involved any person being bitten, injured, or attacked.
- There were only three incidents where dogs running at large or off-leash exhibited aggressive or “skittish” behavior.
- No injuries to any dog or other animal were reported.
- Three incidents involved dogs running at large with no owner present — as opposed to dogs being walked off-leash. In two of these incidents the animals were impounded and not claimed, suggesting abandonment.
- Police involvement was initiated in response to reports from members of the public in seven incidents. A report from an ACFL staff person and one from a State Wildlife Officer prompted the remaining two incidents.
- All but one or two of these incidents occurred near trailheads and/or in the heavily used Whistle Lake area. None occurred on the more remote secondary trails.
- The Police issued citations for dogs running at large in only two incidents.
- No incidents involved wildlife in any way.
- No incidents involved any damage to public or private property.

It is standard practice for agencies managing public recreation areas to maintain a file of public safety related incidents reported to them. The Anacortes Parks and Recreation Department keeps no such records, so a Public Records Act request seeking all their records relating to dogs in the ACFL during 2012 and 2013 produced mostly irrelevant material. An exhaustive review of Department employee log books, e-mails, and staff reports to the Forest Advisory Board produced only seven identifiable incidents occurring between January 1, 2012 and February 1, 2014 (more recent data are not available).

Table II lists these seven incidents. In contrast to the well-documented incidents listed in Table I, the information available on these situations is meager. In some cases the reporting person is known and a brief e-mail may relate what happened. In other cases nothing is available other than a notation in a set of committee meeting minutes to the effect that “so-and-so reported an off-leash dog doing such-and-such in the ACFL this summer.”
Points worth noting about the incidents listed in Table II include:

- No person or animal was actually bitten, injured, or attacked in these incidents.
- A greater proportion of these incidents report dog aggression or misbehavior than was true of the incidents reported to the Police Department. These user conflict incidents happened in a brief period during the summer of 2012; they could relate to a single dog and owner.
- Although at least three of these incidents appear to be exactly the sort of situation which should be reported to the police as soon as possible to prevent harm to other ACFL users, no such reports were filed. Instead e-mails were sent to the Parks Department a day or more after the event; or, worse yet, just a comment was made at a meeting taking place weeks afterward.
- Unconfirmed hearsay reports such as comments made by park staff that “someone informed me that a dog bit somebody in the ACFL last month.” are not listed in this table. Such references provide no useful data, and the fact that neither the involved party nor the Parks Department staff considered what happened to be worth reporting and documenting gives a strong indication of the insignificance of the incidents.

The two tables reveal that during the last 32 months only 8 incidents involving conflicts between dogs and other forest users have been reported to the police or parks departments. One incident every four months (none involving injury to anyone) can hardly be considered a meaningful threat to public safety. Taken out of context, this record would even suggest that dog owners are religiously obeying the leash law requirement.

As anyone familiar with the Anacortes Forest Lands is well aware that’s not what is happening. Few owners keep their dogs on a leash in the ACFL. The data compiled by Hershel Janz a few years ago is still valid. During two years of observation in the forest lands he counted “130 dogs on leash, 205 dogs off leash, and no aggressive dogs.” The Parks Department’s frantic installation of signs at the ACFL trailheads this spring warning dog owners that they will be fined for letting their dogs off-leash reveals that the Department is bound and determined to “educate” or intimidate the public into compliance with the off-leash ban. These signs provide a source of humor to ACFL visitors. The public may not know that only two dog owners have been cited for having their dogs off-leash in the last 32 months or that the last citation was issued 16 months ago, but they know from experience that the chances of encountering the Animal Control Officer on the back trails of the forest land are virtually nil.

In Short:

- The ban on allowing dogs off-leash in the ACFL has been in place for years, during that entire time it has been, and continues to be, ignored by the public.
- The ban is ignored by dog owners because they are well aware that the stories of the horrible dangers to both people and dogs resulting from dogs off-leash are pure big-brother government fantasy.
- Dog owners are also aware that this ban, applying to the entire ACFL during all 365 days per year, is simply unenforceable.
- The ban is unenforceable precisely because it’s current non-enforcement most of the time in most ACFL areas has no negative consequences. Police officers have better things to do with their time than to spend it chasing through the woods after off-leash dogs the vast majority of which are causing no harm to anyone.

In 2009 the Anacortes City Council very reluctantly allowed the total ban on dogs off-leash in the ACFL to remain in effect. I’m looking forward to the Council’s consideration of this year’s draft plan update.

Robert L. Barry
September 1, 2014
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/15/2012 - 4/2/2012</td>
<td>Rpt #12-A02188</td>
<td>Woman seen several times walking 10+/- dogs off-leash</td>
<td>South end Little Cranberry Lake. Trail 10?</td>
<td>ACO informed owner she will be cited next time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9/2013</td>
<td>Rpt #13-A00127</td>
<td>Dog found running at large</td>
<td>Whistle Lake Area</td>
<td>Unable to contact owner. Dog impounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1/2013</td>
<td>Rpt #13-A00795</td>
<td>Dog owner ignored ACFL maintenance person's order to leash his dog, so police were called. Dog behaved.</td>
<td>Ray Auld Dr, Base of Mt Erie Rd.</td>
<td>Owner cited by ACO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3/2013</td>
<td>Rpt #13-A01404</td>
<td>&quot;Skittish&quot; dog reported running at large &amp; barking at people</td>
<td>Near Whistle Lake restrooms</td>
<td>Officer could not locate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/24/2013</td>
<td>Rpt #13-A02724</td>
<td>WFD Officer observed person with 3 dogs off-leash which were harassing people with dogs on-leash</td>
<td>Whistle Lake at locked gate</td>
<td>ACO issued 3 citations for dog off-leash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/4/2013</td>
<td>Rpt #13-A03008</td>
<td>2 dog owners arguing about dog off-leash</td>
<td>Cranberry Lake trailhead</td>
<td>Officer broke up argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/21/2013</td>
<td>Rpt #13-A04378</td>
<td>Off-leash dog ran aggressively toward reporting person. Owner appeared after dog backed off.</td>
<td>Trail 116, near D Ave.</td>
<td>ACO officer warned dog owner about allowing dog to run off-leash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/11/2014</td>
<td>Rpt #14-A01532</td>
<td>Lost or abandoned dog found</td>
<td>Ray Auld Dr, Base of Mt Erie Rd.</td>
<td>Dog impounded, not claimed, so released to SPOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/21/2014</td>
<td>Rpt #14-A02421</td>
<td>Dog RAL on private property outside city and onto ACFL</td>
<td>Canyon Ridge Dr. off Hwy 20 near Sharps Corner</td>
<td>Dog not located. Information passed to County ALCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Incident</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/5/2012</td>
<td>Parks staff e-mail</td>
<td>Dogs harassing a horse &amp; rider</td>
<td>Near Whistle Lake, possibly outside ACFL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/1/2012</td>
<td>Advisory Board August Meeting</td>
<td>Dog lost near old city dump, found shortly after at A Ave trailhead</td>
<td>Near old city dump</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
<td>Reported at Trail Committee meeting 9/4/12</td>
<td>Aggressive dog delayed class and prevented them from using a trail</td>
<td>ACFL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
<td>Reported at Trail Committee meeting 9/4/12</td>
<td>Off-leash dog caused issue with horseback rider</td>
<td>ACFL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/2012</td>
<td>E-mail to Parks staff</td>
<td>Off-leash dog jumped up on reporting person.</td>
<td>29th St Trailhead??</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/2014</td>
<td>E-mail to Parks staff</td>
<td>Lady walking 8-10 dogs off-leash, one ran aggressively toward reporting person</td>
<td>Trail 10 south of Mitten Pond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29/2014</td>
<td>E-mail to Parks staff</td>
<td>Two dogs off-leash</td>
<td>Near Cranberry Lake parking area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>