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Introduction

The Heart Lake Area Master Planning process updates the Heart Lake Management Plan, which was created in 2003-2004. The Management Plan was the result of a community-based planning process facilitated by City Parks & Recreation staff. An advisory committee of volunteers was instrumental in the success of the process, and this same model was utilized for the Master Plan process.

A series of public meetings was held over a six month period. They included an open house, five Advisory Committee work sessions and a formal public comment meeting. All meetings were open to and attended by the public.

The current Heart Lake Area Management Plan, which includes the 436-acres transferred to the City by State Parks in 2002, as well as the 80-acre North Heart Lake Unit the City initially acquired as a protection for drinking water flowing out of the lake, is a general outline for current and future management. It mandates that the entire management area fall under the ACFL Comprehensive Plan and accepts the State Parks Land Classification System. This system includes restrictions that in many cases supersede those of the ACFL Comprehensive Plan.

A primary goal of the 2003-04 Management Plan was to update the plan every five years, and this is a major driver of the current update process. The primary goal of this update is to continue and fine tune the previously accomplished planning process. This has been done by providing opportunity for public input and direction in the preparation of an updated Master Plan which will help guide future development and funding decisions.
Heart Lake Master Plan

Goal

Continue the previously accomplished planning process. This will be done by providing opportunity for public input and direction in the preparation of a master plan which will help guide future development and funding decisions. The update needs to be consistent with the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) Comprehensive Plan and relevant State Parks Land Use Classifications.

The City of Anacortes is committed to employing Best Management Practices and sustainable design methodologies where possible throughout the site to protect this valuable natural resource for generations to come.

Any and all construction and enhancement projects recommended in this plan are to be carried out with the utmost sensitivity to the area's native habitat, vegetation and inhabitants. All amenities shown in the Master Plan graphic will be designed, built and installed with a priority focus on ACFL standards and practices in effect at the time of installation.

Master Plan Advisory Committee

- Sarah Nichols, Parks Commission
- Marcia Hunt, Forest Advisory Board
- Geri Rubin, ACFL Trail Committee
- Denise Crowe, Friends of the Forest
- Brad Adams, City Council
- Doug Colglazier, Anacortes Parks Foundation
- Kirk Kennedy, Accessibility/Parkside Home Owner's Assoc.
- Anna Melling, Citizen at Large
- Kathryn Alexandra, Evergreen Islands

Planning Team

- Patrik Dylan, Eccos Design
- Bob Vaux, Anacortes Parks & Recreation

Process Management

- Gary Robinson, Parks & Recreation Director
- Jonn Lunsford, Parks & Forest Lands Manager

Anacortes Community Forest Lands Staff

- Dave Oicles
Update Process

INITIAL STEPS
In September of 2009, Anacortes Parks & Recreation put together a planning team consisting of part-time staff member Bob Vaux and consultant Patrik Dylan, Owner & Principal, Eccos Design, to execute a master planning process for the Heart Lake Area. The process was managed by department staff Gary Robinson, Director, and Jonn Lunsford, Parks and Forest Lands Manager. Work began immediately on assembling a citizen-based Heart Lake Master Plan Advisory Committee (AC). Careful thought was given, and the invite list was the following:

Brad Adams, City Council
Doug Colglazier, Anacortes Parks Foundation
Denise Crowe, Friends of the Forest
Rod Gilmore, Lakeside Industries
Marcia Hunt, Forest Advisory Board
Kirk Kennedy, Accessibility/Parkside Neighborhood Association
Anna Melling, Citizen at Large
Sarah Nichols, Parks Commission
Geri Rubin, ACFL Trail Committee

While supportive of the process, Mr. Gilmore was unable to participate on the AC and did not provide an alternate. All others accepted the invitation. Shortly thereafter, an AC position was added at the request of and for Evergreen Islands. Kathryn Alexandra agreed to serve in that capacity.

INFORMATION GATHERING
Initial work began with the planning team reviewing the area's history and its Management Plan which forms an appendix in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) Comprehensive Plan. The ACFL Comprehensive Plan was updated and approved by City Council on November, 2nd, 2009. The culmination of this process in the midst of the Heart Lake Master Planning process allowed the community a high degree of confidence in the City's direction for the Heart Lake Area Master Plan.

The Heart Lake Area Management plan, also referenced in this plan as Appendix A, provides an informative introduction, history, and description of the area. The State Parks Land Use Classifications, which came with the Heart Lake State Park property when it was deeded to the City in 2002, are mapped and described in the plan as well. As noted in the process goal, a clear understanding of these classifications was critical to the success of the master planning process.

The Heart Lake Management Plan establishes a foundation of community expectations and goals for the area. This Master Planning process makes a first attempt to bring these expectations and goals to life, and are demonstrated in the graphic master plan at the end of this document.

The Planning Team did conduct informal Heart Lake Area site visits with representatives from the Parks Commission, Friends of the Forest and City Parks & Recreation Staff. The primary goal of these meetings was to review the relevancy of the Heart Lake Management Plan and explore any new developments. It was clear that the Management Plan was a strong document and should remain the guiding force behind this master planning process.
The Planning Process

The table below calls out the specific checkpoints and important dates of this planning process. The narrative for these is found in Appendix C.

Process Kick-Off
- Oct 8, 2009 Forest Advisory Board Meeting:
- Oct 13, 2009 Parks Commission Meeting:
- Advisory Committee Meeting #1: Oct 20, 2009

Information Gathering
- Master Plan Open House: Nov 10, 2009
- Advisory Committee Meeting #2: Dec 1, 2009
- Advisory Committee Meeting #3: Dec 15, 2009

Prepare Schematic Designs
- Advisory Committee Meeting #4: Jan 12, 2010

Prepare Preliminary Master Plan
- Advisory Committee Meeting #5: Feb 2, 2010
- Plan Presentation For Formal Public Comment: Feb 18, 2010
Recommendations

The updated Master Plan seeks to provide improved access and an enhanced recreational experience for as many user groups as possible while delineating areas for each group to minimize conflicts. In all cases the layout and design of each element of the plan seeks to retain a more natural, less "built" feel at the park and preserve vistas of untrammeled forest.

**Accessibility:** The updated Master Plan seeks to provide recreational enjoyment for people of all abilities. Where possible and practical, areas will incorporate design features consistent with those defined in ADA guidelines for buildings, facilities, trails, parking, seating, docks, ramps, and other amenities.

**Conservation:** Wherever possible native vegetation including old growth trees will be retained. Invasive milfoil will be removed as part of a separate planning effort. Existing wetland areas will be enhanced and riparian and shoreline areas restored. Several thousand square feet of additional native vegetation will be introduced into the existing parking lot area.

**Parking Lot:** The existing impervious packed gravel surface will be reduced by more than 22,000 SF. Two distinct upper and lower parking lots will be delineated and separated from active recreation areas. Water quality bioswales will be added to collect and treat surface water run-off. Parking spaces will be striped to achieve the most efficient parking for the space and will include ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; please see Appendix A) as well as equestrian and boat trailer designations. Overflow parking may be accommodated on the east side of Heart Lake Road, in the area formerly used for same and now gated as the southern trailhead for Trail #312. Safe non-motorized access to Heart Lake will be encouraged (see below) to help lessen the demand for vehicle parking.

**Boating:** The existing boat launch will be a relocated, improved concrete facility. A separate path will be provided from the lower parking lot to the water for hand launching of car top boats.

**Trails:** All existing ACFL trails will be retained while access and safety will be enhanced and two additional trails are proposed. The first is a non-motorized route along Heart Lake Road heading south from 41st Street and "H" Avenue to the Trail #23 trailhead. At that point the Trail #23 two track will be improved to provide a permeable but accessible route to connect to Trail #210. All current permitted uses of trail #23 shall be retained. The existing hiker-only Trail #210 will be improved to an interpretive and accessible trail running roughly along the lakeshore, connecting to the interpretive facility/picnic shelter.

The second new route would be along the eastern lake shore running south from the parking lot to a new connector to Trail #212. The purpose of this trail is to complete the long-desired loop trail around the lake without requiring users to cross Heart Lake Road.
Siting, design and construction of such a trail will require careful and creative efforts in order to preserve and enhance the habitat and aesthetic value of the shore while enhancing safety and expanding access.

Finally, the #313 trailhead now across Heart Lake Road from the parking lot access will be moved north to an area providing clearer sightlines for both motorists and trail users to enhance safety. This new road crossing shall be marked with appropriate safety technology, i.e., crosswalk, flashing light, etc.

ACFL staff will continue to work with the Forest Advisory Board and ACFL Trail Committee to improve trail signage and maps in order to assist visitors with way-finding and forest education.

**Fishing:** Selected shoreline fishing spots will be designated and improved to discourage degradation of shoreline vegetation. A new fishing dock and pier will be constructed that may double as a swimming platform as the season warms up. The City will work with the Department of Fish and Wildlife to attempt to transition to a year round fishery. The current single season marked by a peak-use opening day puts occasional extraordinary demands on parking and other facilities.

**Swimming:** A ¼ mile swim lane will be marked with unobtrusive floats in the west half of the lake. A hard surface ADA ramp will be added leading directly into the lake; its exact location will be determined in relation to other program elements and existing vegetation. An imported sand beach and upland native turf/meadow area will provide a staging area for swimmers and other recreational activities.

**Dogs:** As per City Ordinances 1717 & 2692, dogs are welcome but must be leashed at all times and owners must pick up and properly dispose of pet waste.

**Horses:** A hitching post will be provided near the upper trailhead restroom and horse trailer parking spaces will be provided at the east end of the lower lot, both designed to welcome equestrians but to keep horses out of and away from the lake itself.

**Upland Structures:** Both wooded and lawn picnic tables will be provided, at least one of each with hard-surfaced and amenity ADA access. A new rustic structure will be built into the hillside below the upper parking lot with views out over the lake; it will serve as an outdoor interpretive classroom and as a group picnic shelter. The existing, antiquated pit toilet will be replaced by both an upper (trailhead) and lower (beach/boat launch/seasonal) improved technology restroom. Each shall be ADA accessible. Bike racks should be provided for both locations. A climbing rock for children will be provided with clear sight lines from the beach.

**Utilities:** The plan specifically and intentionally does not introduce power, water, sewer or other utilities to the site. In keeping with the regulations in place for the rest of the ACFL, no fires of any kind will be permitted.
Summary

The Heart Lake Master Plan Update is the result of a successful collaboration of City Staff, a planning and design consultant, the public and a hard working and conscientious group of citizens identified in this plan as the Advisory Committee. These individuals took their jobs very seriously and are commended for their efforts.

It cannot be overstated that any and all construction and enhancement projects recommended in this plan are to be carried out with the utmost sensitivity to the area’s native habitat, vegetation and inhabitants. Each element of the plan will require specific planning and permitting processes and these will be pursued in a manner consistent with all projects in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands.

All the recreation and conservation improvements recommended by this Master Plan update are expressly permitted within the vision and parameters of the ACFL Comprehensive Plan and the relevant State Parks Land Use Classifications. No new user groups are introduced in this plan nor are any current user groups excluded. Access is explicitly expanded for mobility-impaired users.

The plan’s core goal is expressly demonstrated throughout, and plainly noted here:

"Continue the previously accomplished planning process. This will be done by providing opportunity for public input and direction in the preparation of a master plan which will help guide future development and funding decisions. The update needs to be consistent with the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL) Comprehensive Plan and relevant State Parks Land Use Classifications."
"The City of Anacortes is committed to employing Best Management Practices and sustainable design methodologies where possible throughout the site to protect this valuable natural resource for generations to come."