



Friends of the Forest

Dedicated to the preservation of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands through education, outreach & stewardship.

April 6, 2023

To: Anacortes Forest Advisory Board
From: Asa Deane, Executive Director, Friends of the Forest
Re: Forest Plan Update Chapters 1 & 2

Dear Forest Advisory Board Members,

I want to first thank you for beginning the process of updating the Forest Plan early and with plenty of time before it's due to pass to City Council. As we saw previously, unforeseen circumstances can so easily delay the procedure and this early start will allow for flexibility in timing as we move along. Additionally, this long timeline gives the public ample opportunity to understand the document and participate in the process.

As the guiding document for the management and decision-making for the Anacortes Community Forest Lands, a clear and ambitious Forest Plan is essential to ensure the preservation and health of the ACFL. As such, the first two chapters, Introduction and Management Areas, respectively, set the tone for the rest of the document and should reflect the overarching goals and priorities of the management. Below are our comments and suggestions broken down by section:

Chapter 1- Introduction

In general, the introduction should address not only the history but also the current state of the ACFL, including challenges and goals laid out to address those challenges. In that vein, the two largest threats to the ACFL should be stated: population growth throughout the region resulting in increased use and impact, and climate change. The Forest Plan should recognize these threats and make it a goal to manage the forest with this recognition at the forefront.

Additionally, while the land is currently owned and managed by the City of Anacortes, we feel it's essential to acknowledge the historical and current stewardship of the Indigenous Peoples of Fidalgo Island. It should be a stated priority to include local tribes as stakeholders and people of importance when considering management goals and decisions.

Some more specific suggestions for the Introduction:

- The description of the role of Friends of the Forest in the Conservation Easement Program should include continual monitoring of the forest and the submittal of an annual report to the Skagit Land Trust attesting that there has been no violation of Conservation Easements.
- In addition to educational programming, Friends of the Forest's work of volunteer management and stewardship should also be noted.

Chapter 2- Management Areas

Little Cranberry Lake

- We'd like to add a recommendation for erecting educational signage focused on, among other things, the nature of the bogs and the sensitivity of their habitat.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the number of invasive amphibians, specifically bullfrogs (though some claim to have seen green frog activity as well). Consider a goal of invasive amphibian removal and prioritization of amphibian habitat, especially along the south end of the lake.

South Cranberry Lake Area

- The recommendation to consider the old dump for an off-leash dog area should be removed considering the area's current status with the Department of Ecology.

South Heart Lake Road/Ray Auld Drive Area

- The term "wildlife sanctuary" should be removed. It has a very specific meaning and is not how the forest is currently being managed nor how Gus Hensler intended his donation to be used as he states it be deeded to the City for "park purposes" as well as a haven for wildlife.
- Clarity re: "*Proposed climbing dates should be submitted in advance to the Parks and Recreation Department.*" - Is this specific to commercial enterprises and larger groups or what all climbers are expected to do? If everyone is supposed to submit their dates, a simple submission process and education campaign should be implemented.

Thank you for your consideration. We're looking forward to continuing the conversation and the process of updating the entirety of the Forest Plan. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or clarifications you might have.

Sincerely,

Asa Deane, Executive Director

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360-399-6184

Generally, it might be really useful to have a table showing the recommended actions and either state when they were completed or the time line for their completion. I'm proposing this as an update/addition for all the management zones. I highlight two below.

For instance, in the 2021 approved Forest Plan, Chapter 2, the Little Cranberry Mgt Area section includes these recommendations:

"Recommendations: The following measures should be instituted:

- 1) Post this area for no motorcycles north of the old 32nd Street right of way.
- 2) Provide restroom facility at or near Little Cranberry Lake parking lot.
- 3) Block or obliterate trails in areas which need to be re-vegetated and remove unauthorized trails from private property.
- 4) Continue removing noninvasive alternatives by landowners nearby.
- 5) Expand ADA access.
- 6) Consider paving access road from Georgia Avenue to the lake.
- 7) Close trail 132.

Some of these items (i.e., #6 and #7) have been completed. Others not. How long have these non-fulfilled recommendations been on the list? When can we expect to have them completed? Should some recommendations be dropped? Others could be better defined as they rather open-ended.

In particular for Little Cranberry Lake, recommendation #2 would be great to have in existence all year, if possible, or at least arrive earlier (ie. Mid March). Recommendation #4 doesn't make any sense. Did it mean to say, "continue removing invasive species"?

What type and where is ADA access planned to be expanded (recommendation #5)? At first read, expanding ADA access at Little Cranberry Lake sounds construction intensive, of which I am not in favor. I strongly encourage keeping Little Cranberry Lake as undeveloped as possible. It's a gem as it is; more infrastructure will diminish its uniqueness and what many of us treasure.

Heart Lake has its own management plan have any of the recommendation from that plan been completed? Begun? Thought about? I'm guessing not many or none. Why? At the very least, it seems fairly easy to erect barriers (logs even) between the parking lot and the lake edge. The pot-hole ridden gravel parking lot is an eye sore and feeds dirty water directly into the lake all rainy season long. Cars and trucks park within inches of the water's edge. It makes me so sad every time I'm there.

Let's do something to improve the way we treat Heart Lake. It was a favorite swimming and paddling spot for many this past summer. The Heart Lake Plan of many years ago envisioned a different aesthetic. Let's begin on the journey in 2023!

~Catherine Houck

EVERGREEN ISLANDS

April 6, 2023

To: Anacortes Forest Advisory Board
(Brian Wetcher, Tabb Stringer, JoAnn Gilmore, Nathan Schwark, Kit Gerwels)
cc: Jonn Lunsford (APRD), Asa Deane (Friends of the Forest),
Evergreen Islands Board of Directors

Re: Our Opposition to the Proposed Small Boat Launch at Little Cranberry Lake

The ACFL Advisory Board Preliminary Agenda, April 6, 2023 included the following statement: Jonn shared that the Parks Foundation has received a donation for the Little Cranberry boat launch and shoreline improvement. The first step is to get a report from a biologist and then there will be an opportunity for public comment. The goal of this project is to protect the shoreline and contain the users to certain areas. Jennifer, public in attendance, expressed concern that there is not a permanent restroom in the area.

Discussion

Evergreen Islands opposes the Anacortes Parks and Recreation Department's proposed small boat launch at Little Cranberry Lake because it will:

- The dock will permanently degrade Little Cranberry Lake's natural shoreline.
- The boats will disturb the creatures that depend on the lake for survival.
- Increase the risk of contaminating lake with milfoil and algae, etc.
- Boat launches and boat access are available at 3 other Anacortes park locations: Heart Lake, Washington Park, and Whistle Lake.

Recommendation

Evergreen Islands recommends that the City prohibit all Little Cranberry Lake surface use except swimming.

Regards,



Tom Glade
Evergreen Islands Board of Directors

EVERGREEN ISLANDS

PO Box 223, Anacortes, WA 98221

April 21, 2023

To: Anacortes Forest Advisory Board

(Brian Wetcher, Tabb Stringer, JoAnn Gilmore, Nick Stowe, Kit Gerwels)

cc: Jonn Lunsford (APRD), Asa Deane (Friends of the Forest),

Evergreen Islands Board of Directors

Re: Planning Process for Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan Update

Evergreen Islands highly recommends that the Anacortes Forest Advisory Board adopt the Planning Process for Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan Update that was developed by Marlene Finley, Vice President of Evergreen Islands.

Marlene is a retired professional forest manager and outdoor recreation planner who served 35 years working for the US Forest Service and National Park Service. She served for over a decade as the Deputy Director and eventually, Director of Recreation, Wilderness and Trails for the National Forests in California and followed by 3 years as the Parks Director for San Mateo County Parks.

Marlene's experience in park planning includes the following plans:

- Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Plan
- Many Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Plans
- Multiple National Forest Plans
- Oregon State University McDonald-Dunn Forest Recreation Plan
- Recreation sections of the Northwest Forest Plan
- Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area Plan
- Assisted John Baas, reviewing chapters in his book Outdoor Recreation Planning, 2016
- Technical Advisor on Pescadero Creek Climate and Habitat Resiliency Plan 2022-2023 (post fire recovery, Santa Cruz Mountains)

Conclusion

Marlene's recommendations for the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Plan Update are included below and attached.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Glade". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Glade" clearly legible.

Tom Glade
President, Evergreen Islands

ACFL Plan Update Recommendations

Marlene Finley, Evergreen Islands

Most outdoor resource recreation planners know, planning occurs in a very different political and economic climate than it did in the early 1960s, 1970s or 1980s. Decision-making processes are more open, more democratic, less linear and often begin with public involvement. While reviewing the 2021 Plan chapter by chapter at the Forest Advisory meetings is commendable, it is critical that Park and Recreation staff/planners involve the public by taking a step back to look at the overall effectiveness of the current plan and assess changes that have occurred since the last planning cycle.

Towards this goal, and more, Evergreen Islands suggests the following actions:

Strengths and Weakness of Current Plan

In practice, planners often start a plan revision process by examining the strengths and weakness of the previous plan and the agency's successes and failures during the succeeding 5 to 10 year period. Staff critically evaluate the impact of the previous plan on subsequent events, determining what direction proved useful and what failed to produce the desired results. An organization that has gone through a planning process wants to correct its weaknesses, build on and exploit its strengths, seize opportunities, and deal with threats as best as it can. **We recommend City Parks and Recreation staff review the strengths and weakness of the existing Plan and consider doing the same with the Forest Advisory Committee.**

Rapid Assessment of Change

As the City begins the process to update the Anacortes Community Forest Plan 2021, **Evergreen Islands recommends that the City staff assess the changes that have occurred since the 2016, when the 2021 plan was drafted.** This rapid assessment should include:

1. Changes in law, regulation and policy. For example, the Critical Area Ordinance (CAO) adopted in 2022 and the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) update TBD. The Plan should explicitly describe how the CAO and SMP apply to the management of ACFL.
2. Changes in forest use and use patterns, including any data available on changes in visitor numbers, patterns of use (such as days of the week, times of day) and types of uses (e-bikes)
3. Trends in law enforcement (visitor behavior impacting forest ecosystems, wildlife or negatively impacting other forest visitors). For example, the fire at Little Cranberry Lake .
4. Environmental changes need to be noted: climate change, impacts on vegetation (cedar die off, dying and dry shrubs in late summer, etc...). Any changes in water quality? (Little

Cranberry Lake closure, for example). There are several science experts in our area that would be very helpful in crafting this context for planning.

5. Changes in forest condition (based on new data, weather, citizen science). This could include new baseline information to begin tracking. You may even consider including a chapter on Citizen Science; what is being measured and how. How the City will use this information in the future.

6. Determine potential species of conservation concern, both plants and animals that are at risk.

7. Lastly, are there any emerging public demands or values that could influence changes in forest management? An example of this would be increasing outcries to protect forest ecosystems, preserve "naturalness" and encourage rewilding over forest development and increasing human amenities. Another emerging forest management practice is managing for climate resilience. Is the City considering best practices for managing forest ecosystems in a changing climate?

Executive Summary

Most plan revisions or updates contain an Executive Summary summarizing the need for change and resulting management decisions. **Consider including an Executive Summary.**

Resource and Recreation Management Changes

Not only should there be a summary of changes. **The update Plan should also include a more detailed list of changes made in the Plan along with the rationale and data to support the changes.** This could be included at the close of each section: Each Management Area, Forest Stewardship and Management of Recreational Activities.

Sustainability, Budget and Staffing

The Plan revision should be environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable. During a recent Forest Advisory Board meeting, someone raised the question of whether the updated Plan will include budget recommendations. Park and Recreation staff answered that budget is not typically included. **Evergreen Islands recommends that the Plan include in the appendix a section on staffing and budget needed to meet the community vision for the ACFL.** Without budget goals, the Plan will not be realistic. The budget considerations do not need to be detailed. Please consider including a new position: a professional Natural Resource Manager (NRM) knowledgeable in resource planning, ecosystem management and arcGIS skills. The NRM does not necessarily need to be on the Park and Recreation staff. They could report directly to the Mayor or be housed in the Planning Staff, but their primary responsibility would be the planning and management of the ACFL from the Natural Resource perspective.

INSET:

Is the ACFL being managed sustainably? The concept of sustainability has emerged due to significant concerns regarding the unintended social, environmental, and economic consequences of population and economic growth and the consumption of our natural resources. The 1987 United Nations (U.N.) World Commission on Environment and Development's (WCED) report, "Our Common Future", defines sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Recently the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that sustainability is based on a simple principle:

Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.

Typically, any discussion of the concept of sustainability begins with more traditional ecological concerns and issues. Any comprehensive discussion on sustainability must also include social and economic considerations.

Please consider these recommendations. Many of these need to be implemented now, rather than continue to muddle through the chapter by chapter process. Now is the time to:

1. Conduct a mini staff retreat to discuss Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities in the ACFL Plan. Consider doing the same with the Forest Advisory Board.
2. Complete a draft rapid assessment and present it to the Forest Advisory Board. Show the Forest Advisory Board the draft assessment including data you will use to INFORM the plan update.
3. Ask the Forest Advisory Board what changes, if any, they have observed in the ACFL since 2016. Review the public comments from the first meeting and reflect on issues and opportunities you heard. Share these with the Forest Advisory Board.
4. Create a new outline for the Plan which includes an executive summary, assessment and need for change, summary of resource and recreation management changes and budget considerations.

These recommendations are not onerous. We believe the updated ACFL Plan will be stronger, better informed and provide increased social capital to support successful implementation if you include these additional steps.

Evergreen Islands appreciates that Park and Recreation staff have the foresight to begin the Plan revision early, allowing for enough time to create a Plan which reflects the community vision and values for this well-loved, protected and appreciated forest. Thank you for all you do to steward this special place.