



**ANACORTES PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

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**Anacortes Community Forest Lands Advisory Board  
June 4, 2020**

**Due to the Covid-19 virus threat, all city boards and  
commissions have been cancelled indefinitely.**

## ACFL Maintenance Report MAY – 2020 by Steve Phillips

May 28, 2020

As is happening around the country and world, people remain reliant on parks for recreation during the time of shutdown. This puts management challenges on government staff who wish to keep these places open while safe.

As I mentioned last month, we have put incremental measures in place in an effort to meet both goals of maximizing accessibility to residents while keeping park users safe from each other and COVID-19. Here is a continuation of these measures:

- 10-car limit at Heart Lake lifted at onset of fishing season on 5/5/20. Our informal monitoring of the fishing situation has revealed that people are maintaining proper social distancing and remaining civil with each other.
- On 5/11, following a very busy Mother's Day weekend, the sign to the right was placed for visitors at Whistle and Little Cranberry Lake. (No Loitering, no sunbathing, no picnicking, no gathering in groups). Warm weather will really test how much people will cooperate with these efforts to protect us all.
- The 10-car limit signs at whistle Lake were temporarily removed for Memorial Day weekend, which fell on 5/25 this year.



### Violations

A few stalwart off-leash dog owners remain out there. Yesterday, a woman with a black labradoodle jogged by me on Trail 210 on the north side of Heart Lake and pretended not to hear me as I asked her to please leash her dog. A few seconds later I heard her calling it, because it stalled to bark at me. I imagine that our paths will cross again at some point, so that we may discuss this violation.

Another gentleman on a Santa Cruz mountain bike lets his Weimeraner jog with him off leash while he rides with earbuds in. We spoke at Whistle Lake. He expressed a safety concern for himself and others when he rides with his dog on-leash. I proposed that a good solution to this is to leave the dog at home while he rides. But, he feels that all of us choose to disobey *some* rules and laws. Sometimes I do not understand the logic that guides people. In my opinion, this is a selfish attitude.

Motorbike usage has been reported, a few times now, on Trail 210 on the portions of the trail where only hikers are allowed, including on the south side of Heart Lake— one of our old growth forest stands. I visited once and tried to obstruct the trail but need to return to see what can be done.

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

Trees continue to fall and need removal. The most noteworthy was an alder reported by a hiker on Trail 10 that took Bob and I about an hour and a few different approaches to address. Ultimately the hazard was safely removed.

I have been replacing some damaged or missing signs on trails.

I also did my best to decommission a place where switchback on the west side of Trail 129 was being bypassed.

I have begun to trim stinging nettle where it encroaches trails, but much more work is needed. See below for some good news about this!

## **Assistant Director Report May 2020 by Bob Vaux**

The Anacortes Community Forest Lands continue to be an extremely popular regional destination during the COVID19 pandemic. Along with our regulars, user groups numbers have increased dramatically across the board. While we do not have any hard statistics, one only has to walk the trails to find evidence of a very busy spring. We have found bike and horse tracks on hiker only trails, we have found hikers off trail, and we have found at least one camper at the #215 Ray Auld Drive trailhead. While the vast majority of our guests are trying to do the right thing, we have many first time visitors, or those new to a user group (pandemic bicycle sales way up), who are learning the ropes. One consistent example of this is the lack of yielding to hikers by both bicycles and runners. It is easier for the hikers to yield, and many are happy to do so, but I would like to see more acknowledgement from the faster travelers.

I am sure you have noticed the many efforts we have made since mid-March to try and keep the numbers of guests at a reasonable and safe level. Parking restrictions are not always popular, but we have worked hard to maintain access while advocating for proper social distancing. Most reports from the various guests and regular users have been of positive and healthy experiences. We celebrate these successes and look forward to slowly removing some of the temporary restrictions we have been forced to implement.

Along with ACFL lead Steve Phillips, I would like to thank Jonn Lunsford, Nicole Johnston and Dustin South for all of their efforts working in the ACFL over the last two and a half months. Whether being parking attendants at Ray Auld Drive, gate monitors at Heart Lake or Visitor Educators at Whistle and Little Cranberry, everyone is pitching in and doing their part. Much of my time over the summer will continue to be spent in the support of the ACFL in the field, and it is very reassuring knowing my colleagues are ready to suit up and help out as needed.

Steve and I continue to work together on everything from hazard tree removal to trail patrol, and we have already started our summer routine of emphasis rounds on the "hot spots", and secondarily focusing on trail trimming. On May 5, fishing opened in the state, and Heart Lake has been nicely busy ever since. 30 vehicles is a normal count out there, with 4 - 5 being horse trailers, and a dozen or so hiker/bikers. We typically visit the parking lot at least once a day, and folks have been very happy to be fishing.

Friends of the Forest Executive Director, Asa Deane, and I have maintained a fairly regular weekly meeting schedule. I would like to thank he and FOF for supporting our efforts to get information out to the ACFL user groups, and being willing to answer questions and reach out to City staff for answers when needed.

Again, I would like to thank all of the ACFL visitors for their patience and understanding as we work through a very challenging time. We are looking forward to a beautiful summer, and to seeing you on the trail.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Bob Vaux, Assistant Director  
June 2, 2020