



Friends of the Forest

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

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A Message from the Executive Director

by Asa Deane



“There is something so special in the early leaves drifting from the trees—as if we are all to be allowed a chance to peel, to refresh, to start again.”

– Ruth Ahmed

As the hot, dry summer days fade away into the crisp, blustery gray of autumn, and the rain once again graces us to quench the parched earth, it's impossible not to feel the shifting of the seasons and to contemplate the year behind. Like the very leaves falling from the trees in the forest (well, the deciduous ones, anyways); our years are built of little moments, combined on the branches of our lives to form a complete picture of the year. Some of these moments we're ready to say goodbye to. Others, we wish we could live out over and over. But the shedding of these leaves, this peeling, refreshing, is what ultimately will allow us to build anew with a fresh set of leaves in the spring.

They don't actually leave us for good, of course. All of the glucose they've created from the building blocks of sunlight and soil, carbon dioxide and water powers the tree forward, allowing the growth and change necessary for survival. The leaves may be gone, but their legacy remains as the bare branches standing against the storms of winter, ready to start anew in spring with fresh growth. Those moments from the previous year create something larger than themselves, inspiring growth and change, embedded in the very flesh of our beings. (continued on page 7)

Autumn Musings By Bob Vaux, Assistant Director, Anacortes Parks and Rec.



As November approaches and we prepare for that wonderful weekend with the extra hour of sleep, autumn memories begin to take hold. It is that sentimental time of year when we hunker down, build a fire and reflect on the fleeting moments of spring and summer.

A great time of reflection and celebration for so many of us has been the annual Friends of the Forest Benefit. Walking into the room (and there have been many versions over the years), and seeing all the woodsy celebrities in one place is a great way to mark another year of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands, and the fantastic work the Friends have been doing for three plus decades.

At Philip McCracken's Memorial last August, I found my mind drifting to thoughts of giants and the legacies they leave. Sometimes these are

internationally renowned works of art, and sometimes it's a few people sitting around a table talking about the critical need to stop the City from clearcutting 20-acres of publicly owned woods every year.

A memory flashed and I am sitting on a creaking folding chair in the Anacortes Train Depot. We are getting toward the end of the Friends' benefit live auction, and a Philip McCracken woodcut is next up. Magically, I find myself in a not very competitive bidding situation, and end up with the piece. As I am collecting this art and not quite believing what just happened, Fran Lunsford walks up to me and explains, "Phil and I were AHS classmates, and I let you have that woodcut tonight."

A quick note; Fran's home was like a second home to me during my high school and college years. I have a very deep appreciation for the fact that she did indeed let me walk out of the Depot that night with a McCracken original, and the added satisfaction that I was able to secure it by supporting the Friends of the Forest Mission to Educate and Protect.

Unless you've had the privilege to attend, it is impossible to really know just how much fun and how cool it will be to attend the Friends' benefit. Due to the uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic, it is another virtual year, but the cause, the hard work being done, and the amazing items up for grabs only grow in importance as the years pass. More and more community members move in and visitors arrive, each creating an escalating need for education and appreciation.

Community stalwarts like Philip and Fran knew how special these middle of the Salish Sea woods are, and how fleeting the life of a tree can be. The spring and summer sun reaches down into and draws up new growth and inspiration. In the fall we move inside, celebrating the work we have done the last six months and preparing for the quiet mystery of winter.

We think of those that have come before us and done so much, and how we might honor them by jumping into the footprints of giants and following their hopeful path on this earth. Thank you, Friends of the Forest.

“Dear Hoo” A new quarterly column to answer all of your burning ACFL questions!

Email your questions to Hoo the Owl, Friends of the Forest’s Wise Advice Columnist! info@friendsoftheacfl.org

Dear Hoo,

I hike all the time on the trails in ACFL; it’s one of my favorite places in Washington! I’ve seen what look like burn marks and charred wood on some of the really old Douglas-firs and cedars, especially around the southwest side of Heart Lake. Do you have any information on forest fire history in the area? Thanks for any info you might have.



-Deepening Our Understanding of Giant-Elders

Dear DOUG-E,

The trees are so old that they’ve experienced a lot in their lifetime, but we’re not exactly sure when they withstood their last fire. Douglas-fir can survive fires other plants cannot– by the time they’re around 40, their bark is especially protective. I went out and measured three Douglas-firs on trail 210, all with char on their bark. The oldest I measured was around 430 years old, one was around 350 years old, and one was around 300 years old. There is a sizeable Douglas-fir in the Little Cranberry Lake section about the same girth and with char on it as well (trail 108 by the 32nd St. Swamp).

Logging around the lakes was prohibited in the early 1900s in an effort to keep the water clean (the City began sourcing water from the Skagit River in 1931), which is why there are so many old growth trees on the southern part of Heart Lake.

All considering, the fire must have happened when the trees were old enough to withstand fire and young enough to still be around today. It’s amazing to think about; thanks for your curiosity! -Hoo

Ways to Give

Our work depends on a healthy mix of funding sources. All contributions to our group are tax deductible. Please consider the following options for financial contribution to our organization!

You may contact our office at 360-293-3725 to discuss any of these options.

1 Active Membership

Dues are due in January! There are different categories of membership to suit your preference. Any contributions to our group above your membership level are greatly appreciated. See our membership form on the back page.

2 Individual Contributions

We greatly appreciate any contributions to help support our education and outreach program. You are welcome to make this in honor or in memory.

3 Endowment Fund

We have an endowment fund established with the Skagit Community Foundation. The purpose of this fund is to create an endowment that will eventually provide interest income to our organization. This is an excellent option for sizable donations.

4 Planned Giving

One of the best ways you can continue supporting the work of the Friends is through a legacy gift. If you are making estate plans, please consider including our organization.

Plant a Tree

by Forest Educator Beck Pittman

It's autumn, and after the driest and hottest summer on record, the rain is finally back! On the heels of an already hot and dry spring, summer delivered June's shocking heatwave, and for over 50 days, there was no measurable rainfall.

Anyone who visited any of the lakes in the ACFL this summer could easily see the drastic decrease in water levels. In some sections of the forest, sword ferns are still wilted over, even after all this rain. This summer's extreme weather affected plants and animals on land, in freshwater, and in the sea at deadly levels.

Summer in the Pacific Northwest now seems it will be an annual gauntlet, as our ecosystems deal with more and more of the stress that comes with climate change. I was curious how 2020's early-pandemic lockdown might result in CO₂ reductions, but they were momentary, and compared with the fossil fuel industry as a whole, the decrease was a drop in the bucket.

It can be easy to feel powerless when our individual carbon footprints account for much smaller climate change effects in comparison with the Big Polluters. But still, we can --and should--take actions in mitigating climate change, and taking action is one way of demonstrating hope.

Something as simple and enjoyable as stewarding the life of young native plants can be good for mental wellness, bolster the ecosystem, and sequester carbon. Plants capture carbon as they photosynthesize, which they use to build their bodies and keep growing.

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house more carbon). Many environmental organizations lead tree-planting volunteer events, so everyone can enjoy all the benefits of planting. But if you have a yard, why not try filling it up with amazing native species?



Ben and Liam successfully add another tree to their yard!

Here's what to do:

1. Obtain a native tree or shrub from a local nursery (please do not go digging in the ACFL).

2. Find a spot where your native tree or shrub could go in your yard. Make sure you follow planting guidelines from the nursery and use proper spacing— does your plant likes more sun or more shade, well-drained or soggy soils?

3. Grab a shovel and dig a hole wider and deeper than the pot your plant is in, and save the soil

you dig to the side. You'll be using it again, so keep it "clean," i.e., not mixed with any other leaves or sticks that could decompose while touching your plant's young roots.

4. Roll the pot to loosen your plant out of the container, and once removed, rough up the roots a little; this will stimulate fresh growth. Save the plastic container for reuse or return to the nursery.

5. Plant by leveling the root collar with the top of the ground. It helps to have a partner holding the tree. Check that the hole is deep enough and roots aren't cramped. Use the soil from the hole you've dug to fill in a preliminary layer at the bottom of the hole. Gently pack in soil layer by layer, with a sprinkle here and a firming pat there. Gently tug on the plant's main stem to make sure it is securely in the ground. Check that the plant's root collar isn't buried too deep or left over-exposed.

6. Take a deep breath. Imagine who will need this plant in 100 years. Give it a good luck wish, and if you like, give it a name. Enjoy the benefits of contributing to a more resilient ecosystem.

If you want, work all autumn and winter to build a native habitat paradise and mimic ecosystem conditions in your own yard. Native forest trees have their highest tolerance to stress from December through March, so planting during those months is best. You can begin today though, and still be in a safe planting window. Think of building a lovely home for insects, arachnids, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds, who all rely on native plants and each other to thrive. Aid pollinators and insects by providing habitat right at the base of the food chain, and the effects will trickle up the trophic levels.

Having native species in the garden likely means there will be fewer invasive species taking up real estate, too. Invasive plants like English ivy, English holly, Himalayan and Evergreen blackberry, Cherry laurel, and Spurge laurel can be found popping up in random spots in the ACFL, which can happen when birds eat their fruits from gardens in urbanized areas and then deposit those seeds in the forest. (continued on page 7)



Planting as a team: root refresh, adding in soil, and a gentle tug test

UPCOMING EVENTS (complete details on website)

- Nov 11** **Veterans' Day Family Field Trip** (co-sponsored with Skagit Land Trust)
10:00 am - 12:00 pm
- Easy - Parking Lot at Heart Lake - Join our family field trip to learn about our forests, plants, and animals of the ACFL. Bring the whole family to learn together through our hands-on, science-based program where we will work with each other to uncover the understory. Space is limited; see website events for registration info.
- Nov 17** **Gratitude Hike** - Easy - Meet at A Avenue Access, Trail 10 - Our last hike of the year! During this time of year when the light is low again and we're heading into winter, it's natural to reflect on the things we are grateful for. This gentle hike will offer quiet times for the group to reflect on all that you may be grateful for this year.
- Nov 20** **Forest Trail Work Party** (co-sponsored with Anacortes Parks and Rec)
9:00 am - 12:00 pm
- Intermediate - ACFL Location TBA - Come on out to our quarterly volunteer day and help us get moving to clean up the ACFL! Watch our website and social media for more details closer to the date of the event.
- Dec 3, 10, 11** **ACFL Naturalist Club: Online Class** - Easy - Our multi-faceted class is back, and we'll be digging in (virtually) to the ACFL's incredible wetlands! We'll go over the basics of wetland ecology and learn about some of the plant and animal species you might encounter in the wetlands and ponds of the ACFL. December 11th is an in-person field trip from 9:00am-1:00pm. More details on our website.

Friends of the Forest

Friends of the Forest Board Meetings are at 7pm the second Wednesday of every month. We are temporarily meeting via Zoom. Meetings are open to the public- please email Director Asa Deane for more information on how you can join.

How to reach us:

Email

info@friendsoftheacfl.org

Office

611 R. Ave. Anacortes, WA

Office Phone

360-293-3725

Mail

PO Box 2213 Anacortes, WA 98221

Web

www.friendsoftheacfl.org

Forest Advisory Board

Bob Vaux | Parks and Recreation
Asst. Director | 360-299-1918

Board Members

Charlie Collins | President | Jan. 2023
Jean Ford Andrich | Vice President | Jan. 2022
Lin Nichols | Treasurer | Jan. 2022
Lynne Jordan | Secretary | Jan. 2023
Andy Stewart | Past President | Jan. 2022
Steve Williams | Board Member | Jan. 2022
Bill Dietrich | Board Member | Jan. 2022
Rob Skelton | Board Member | Jan. 2023
board@friendsoftheacfl.org 360-293-3725

*Emails sent to the board are received directly by the executive committee & are not seen by staff.

Staff

Asa Deane | Executive Director | 360-399-6184
Beck Pittman | Forest Educator | 971-248-6618
Ashleigh Ellsworth-Keller | Outreach and
Development Coordinator | 928-607-2961

Articles, continued...

A Message from the ED (from page 1)

As we reflect on this year's leaves and moments at Friends of the Forest, we are proud of the growth that we've made in our mission to preserve the Anacortes Community Forest Lands—growth that, as is so often the case, was spawned in response to challenges from the outside world. The pandemic. The shifting climate. The increase in population, both local and worldwide. All of these things push us to innovate and create, to respond, to grow.

This year brought a variety of accomplishments that we are excited to build upon as we move forward:

- Throughout the summer, our Trail Ambassador program had volunteers at various trailheads, greeting and educating old and new visitors alike.
- Our naturalist club geared toward those nature lovers that want to go deeper, learn more, and experience the forest in a new way.
- Year-round Forest Discovery day camp for kids of all ages to learn about the forest, each other, and themselves in all seasons.
- Input and guidance for the city on the protection and management of the ACFL in a variety of policy updates, including the Critical Areas Ordinance and ACFL Management Plan.
- The Small Wonders program in association with the Fidalgo Nature School provided space for families and their babies and toddlers to experience and explore the ACFL.
- Ashleigh Ellsworth-Keller joined our organization as our new Outreach and Development Coordinator to improve our connection with the community.

All of this is, of course, only possible because of all of you. You are our sunshine and water, carbon dioxide and soil. Your support allows us to create our glucose, to grow and build and change. As we head deeper into fall, we want to appreciate you and to ask for your support one more time this year, at our online auction and benefit. You can visit aocl.cbo.io to register to bid on our many items, or just to donate to the cause. This is also where our guest speaker, Amy Gulick, will be presenting on Friday, November 5th at 7:00 pm.

And with the benefit, we will begin our own peeling and refreshing as we build our tree to be even stronger, and even more effective, for the preservation of our absolutely unique and wonderful ACFL.

Plant a Tree! (from page 5)

Left unchecked, these invasive species pose a high threat to biodiversity by creating monocultures, which is why we remove them from the ACFL during volunteer events.

Hike in the ACFL for your own research, observations, and inspiration; where are certain species growing? What sorts of conditions do they like? Who are their neighbors and friends? Do they grow alone or together?

Thank you to all the Friends of the Forest, for helping to preserve a gargantuan chunk of land that actively sequesters carbon, provides habitat for so many species, and in the midst of uncertainty, lends us humans a place to find moments of inspiration, learning, and peace.



Friends of the ACFL
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Friends of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Membership Form

The Friends of the Forest is a nonprofit, citizens organization dedicated to the preservation of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands through education, outreach and stewardship. **Friends of the Forest is a not for profit 501 c3 organization. Tax ID #501C3 91-1430220**

Please join us! Membership and contributions are tax deductible.

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

We offer many levels of annual membership dues.

Please choose your level of support for this vital mission in our community.

- Annual Dues: Individual \$25 Family \$40 Partner \$50 Supporter \$100
 Sponsor \$250 Benefactor \$500 Steward \$1000 Major Donor \$5000 or More

Other _____

Areas of Interest _____ Topics for general meetings or newsletter _____

Please mail memberships/contributions to: Friends of the ACFL, PO Box 2213, Anacortes WA 98221
 or visit us at 611 R Avenue, Anacortes WA

Thank you to all the friends who have renewed their dues and a reminder to those who haven't sent it in this year - we need it! Keeping your dues current with the Friends of the Forest is one of the best ways to Think Globally and Act Locally. On Fidalgo Island, thankfully we have the ACFL and it needs Friends to ensure its preservation. Our Education program depends on your support. Thank you!