



Friends of the Forest

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

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From the Director:

Dear Friends of the Forest,

I write this after a full month of sheltering in place from COVID-19. Over this month, the virus has turned life completely upside down, laying waste to people's health, livelihoods, routines, control, best-laid plans, and overall sense of safety, among many other things. But as so often happens in truly life-altering circumstances, people have gained a renewed understanding of the things that are most important to them, the connections with people, places, and things that make them feel grounded, feel whole. One of the most apparent of these things is the ACFL.

More people have been visiting the forest lands during this time of isolation than at any point in recent memory. Part of this increase is that the ACFL is one of the few places that remain open to the public.

Still, there lies a deeper sense of belonging, comfort, solitude, and connection in the ACFL that people are drawn to. These feelings have always been there, even if they have lain hidden or dormant, as they are innate to all of us. This crisis has merely awoken them, provided the space for people to reconnect with them, to follow them and see where they lead. And so often they lead to those natural spots where the plants and animals carry on as if nothing is amiss, those places of quiet, of stillness, where breath comes deeper and reflection comes easier.

Of course, you and I have long recognized the importance of natural spaces for this very reason. Our mission- to preserve the forest lands- provides space to acknowledge both the power of humans to preserve the forest as well as the power of the forest to preserve humans. This power has been quantified many times over in studies that confirm not only the physical health benefits of time spent in nature, but also the mental and emotional benefits as well. It is heartening to see so many recognize this and to turn to the forest right now during one of the most widespread and reality-shattering events of our lifetimes.

However, in this great migration outside we also have to grapple with a larger reality- that the forest can be pushed to its limit in its ability to provide a safe, healthy outlet for people to explore. With so many flocking to the ACFL, it becomes virtually impossible for us to practice safe social-distancing, especially among our most-visited and most-loved trails. It is both the health of humans and the health of the forest that we worry about as the population in the Pacific Northwest continues to increase and the climate continues to change. In both cases, it is up to us to take the actions needed to maintain these tenuous healths.

Change is always difficult- a fact that we've been grappling with as we prepare to say goodbye to our Forest Educator, Melissa Courtney, as you'll learn about later in this issue. But we have the power to affect that



change. In the short term, please take care of yourselves and each other: follow the social-distancing guidelines put forward by the CDC and respect the parking limits and other best-practices put in place by the City of Anacortes (and detailed on our website). If we want to continue utilizing the ACFL, it is essential that we work together to keep it as safe as possible. If we do, the forest will be there with open arms (branches?) to help us maintain (and regain) our health. In the long term, after gaining so much from our time in the ACFL, we can only hope to return the favor. Stay safe, stay healthy, and we'll see you in the forest (at least six feet away).

-Asa Deane, Executive Director

"...people have gained a renewed understanding of the things that are most important to them..."

Melissa's Message:



“My role as the forest educator has been the most wonderful experience, and one that already holds some of my fondest memories that I will continue to cherish for a lifetime. Some of my favorite moments have been getting to know the Friends of the Forest community on hikes and at our events, and hearing the collective exclamations of awe from students as they discover something new about the forest on one of our field trips. Equally rewarding has been what I have discovered on my own ramblings while wandering the trails and learning more about our forest, like when I felt so delightfully lucky the first time I saw a

beaver on Little Cranberry Lake, admired my first frozen lake at Heart Lake, and quickly developed a soft spot for banana slugs on rainy day walks.

Unfortunately, I regret to say that this summer I will be moving away from the forest we love because my husband's career is taking us to serve in a new location. Although I am very sad to be leaving, I can feel reassured knowing that our forest lands will continue to be taken care of and loved by everyone in the ACFL community. I am happy to know that through your support, our programs will continue to inspire our community, and provide the platform for learning about the importance of natural ecosystems and all of our connections to them. I hope that if you have found yourself participating in a program with me over the past year and a half that you have enjoyed yourself, and that I have helped spark your sense of wonder and place in our forest lands. I have no doubt that the lucky person who will replace me as the forest educator will have the same passion for our forest lands and bring a wealth of knowledge and skills to share, and I look forward to getting them acquainted with our education programs and our community.

I have been so lucky to work with such an amazing, caring, and supportive group of people that make up The Friends of the Forest team. I would like to thank all of you for your support, and I especially would like to thank our board for giving me the opportunity to serve as the Friends of the Forest educator.



See you in the woods,
Melissa



April Speaker Series Event:

“From the Forest to the Sea”

Online (live), Wednesday, April 29th 4:00pm

What do beaver and salmon have in common?
What animals rely on our sea to tree highways?



Sam Murphy, a local marine naturalist, joins Friends of the Forest’s own Forest Educator, Melissa Courtney, to present “From the Forest to the Sea”. We are excited to offer our second quarterly speaker event of 2020, which will focus on the ways the forest and the sea are interconnected here on Fidalgo Island.

The presenting duo will dive into some of the key ecological principles that drive these interactions like local climate, keystone species, and wildlife corridors. We’ll discuss what we, as stewards of our land and water, can do to limit human impacts on the relationship between our beloved Anacortes Community Forest Lands and the beautiful Salish Sea that surrounds us.

Due to COVID-19 limitations, this presentation will now be online! Please email info@friendsoftheacfl.org for access to this webinar event.

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 Foudation. 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.

New City Team in the ACFL

Written by Bob Vaux, Assistant Director, Anacortes Parks & Recreation

Change has been a definite theme in the ACFL over the last couple of years. Familiar faces have moved on, while others have returned. The City of Anacortes Parks & Recreation Department (APRD) continues its long time commitment to the management and protection of these amazing acres. APRD and the Friends of the Forest (FOF) have worked for decades defending and implementing the ACFL Management Plan, and our new ACFL team here at the City is excited about the future.

We are grateful to Jonn Lunsford for the last twenty years of exceptional ACFL management. We also want to thank former Director Gary Robinson for his decades of ACFL stewardship, implementing landmark decisions ranging from the Conservation Easement Program to the end of the Heart Lake hydro racing series. Gary's commitment to the long term health of the ACFL cannot be over-stated. He also successfully added a full time ACFL maintenance position and was able to coordinate purchasing key additions to our woods as opportunities arose. After Gary left APRD just over a year ago, Jonn was promoted to the Director position. Long time ACFL maintenance worker Dave Oicles transferred to the City's Planning Department shortly thereafter. Dave certainly left the 50+ mile recreational trail system better than he found it, with numerous infrastructure upgrades and countless hours working with our thousands of visitors. Adding to the personnel shift our Office Management job share team of Valora Sandstrom and Mary Snyder have both announced their respective retirements. Mary is already enjoying hers, while Valora will be with us through the month of April.

In the wake of Jonn's promotion, I moved from Washington Park to APRD's Assistant Director. This new position is largely responsible for the administration of all of our Parks and ACFL management. Over the last few months we have been working at breaking down the traditional three silos of Parks, ACFL, and Washington Park. Our goals include strengthening the diversity of experience for our maintenance staff, providing for all of our visitors and program participants in an efficient and effective manner and, of course, using all available resources to manage that fine line between enjoying our natural resources and "loving them to death."



Nicole Johnston, our long time Recreation Coordinator, was promoted to the Parks Manager position. She reports directly to me, and is our hands-on decision maker in the field, working along side our maintenance team. As I have absorbed the traditional roles of ACFL and Washington Park Manager into my new position, Nicole's responsibilities include all of our publicly owned recreation lands and facilities. Working closely with Nicole is our Parks Foreperson, Brian Tottenham. Brian was promoted last August after APRD legend Chuck Arneson retired after 43 years of exemplary service. Like Nicole and I, Brian's daily responsibilities stretch throughout our parks, including Washington Park, as well as the ACFL.

Completing our line-up is ACFL maintenance worker Steve Philips. Steve joined our parks team a little over a year ago, and brings a wealth of conservation experience. The four of us are working to effectively manage the many conservation and recreation challenges we deal with as a community every day.

The current pandemic brings new challenges to each of us every day. We are working hard with our many partners to make sure recreation remains as safe as possible, where we are still able to offer it. The FOF have been a dynamic partner of APRD for decades. We remain committed to this relationship, supporting ourselves on the good work of our predecessors while we navigate our way into the future.

What's happening at Friends of the Forest during COVID-19?

Based on recent updates and stay-at-home orders at the state level, Friends of the Forest is not holding regularly scheduled office hours until further notice. Our staff is operating remotely and continuing as much of our work as possible while practicing social distancing. In an effort to keep the community safe, we have also decided to tentatively cancel or place on-hold all upcoming events and programs that were scheduled until further notice.

We will actively communicate with our members and the community as soon as our events, office hours, and typical activities resume.

Stay in touch with the forest from home by checking out our blog on our website or following along on social media for videos, fun facts, activities, and scientific articles. We can't wait to see you in the woods when we are able!

Visit the homepage of our website at www.friendsoftheacfl.org for operations updates and parking restrictions at applicable trailheads, as well as tips on how to safely enjoy the ACFL while practicing social distancing.



GiveBIG Washington!



This year's GiveBIG days are May 5th and 6th, 2020.

This year, Friends of the Forest is participating in GiveBIG Washington, a state-wide fundraising event for non-profits that culminates in a 48-hour giving campaign, held this year on May 5th and 6th. GiveBIG aims to inspire individuals to invest back into their communities in meaningful ways.

We are excited to announce that pre-pledged matching funds will be available! This means that donations made to The Friends through GiveBIG on these days will be matched, making your gift go twice as far. For example, a \$100 donation becomes \$200, which will double the positive impact for students, community members, and the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. Please keep an eye out for more information or visit our website on May 5th and 6th to participate!

Friends of the Forest

Friends of the Forest Board Meetings are at 7pm the second Wednesday of every month. We meet in the Barrett Financial office conference room, located at 1809 Commercial Ave., Anacortes. Meetings are open to the public. Please come and get involved!

How to reach us:

Email

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611 R. Ave. Anacortes, WA

Office Phone

360-293-3725

Mail

PO Box 2213 Anacortes, WA 98221

Web

www.friendsoftheacfl.org

Forest Advisory Board

Jonn Lunsford

Parks and Recreation Director
360-299-1953

Board Members

Charlie Collins | President | Jan. 2021

Jean Ford Andrich | Vice President | Jan. 2022

Lin Nichols | Treasurer | Jan. 2022

Lynne Jordan | Secretary | Jan. 2021

Andy Stewart | Past President | Jan. 2022

Ed Gastellum | Board Member | Jan. 2021

Steve Williams | Board Member | Jan. 2022

Bill Dietrich | Board Member | Jan. 2022

Rob Skelton | Board Member | Jan. 2021

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

Melissa Courtney | Forest Educator
360-399-6292

Mackenzie Wilson | Communications Director
360-399-6472

Unearthing History

Recently at Friends of the Forest, we've turned our attention to the past. While planning for the future, it seems prudent to consider how it is you've gotten to where you currently are—the same goes for us as an organization. Dreaming up new programs and setting lofty goals for the coming years has inspired us to think about the successes and achievements of the past; the stepping stones of progress that have culminated in the sturdy foundation atop where we now stand.

During this period of ongoing reflection, the team made quite a timely and serendipitous discovery. While cleaning out and reorganizing our basement storage area (Please note that this was a pre-COVID 19 activity.)—a dizzying task albeit necessary, we came across a box filled with hundreds of photo slides, mostly from the 80s. This era was about the same time the Friends of the Forest was beginning to assemble and to continue the work that had been previously started by a few environmental pioneering individuals to halt the logging on Fidalgo Island (#loveitorlogit). This lucrative logging was required by the city Forest Management Plan in place at that time in order to pay for the maintenance of the forest lands; which precipitated a vicious cycle of utilizing the timber resources that were to be maintained and protected in order to do so.

The slides we found ranged from beautiful snapshots of flora and fauna to images of active logging activity, youth education programs led by then Forest Educator, Ruthie Johns, and aerial photographs of Fidalgo Island. While we were working to piece together a semi-comprehensive understanding of the history of the ACFL, finding these slides felt like hitting the jackpot. If a picture is worth a thousand words, we had just found a highly loquacious book.

What's an office full of millennials to do with a box of old Kodak slides? Digitize them of course! And that's exactly what we did. These photos tell a story, one that we, in partnership with the community, are still continuing to write. We hope to share more of this history with you, our members and the community, in the near future. We've considered writing our own book or perhaps putting together a short documentary. In the meantime, these digitized slides have been posted in an album on our Facebook page if you'd like to peruse them. Please watch for more history of the ACFL content to follow!

By Mackenzie Wilson



Ruthie Johns (top right) and campers at Forest Discovery Day Camp.



Photo documenting logging activity on Fidalgo Island.



Construction of ACFL signage at Little Cranberry Lake parking lot.



A Great Horned Owl in the ACFL.



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!