



Friends of the Forest

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

Volume 33 • Issue 3 • Summer 2020

From the Director:

Hello Forest Friends,

To say that the last couple of months have been out of the ordinary doesn't scratch the surface of what a world-altering period of time it's been. Beginning with the COVID-19 pandemic that saw us quarantined at home for months on end and continuing with the recent protests spurred by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, 2020 has already proven to be a year of unprecedented change on a national and even international level. In addition to these global changes, we are also in the midst of transition here at Friends of the Forest as we say goodbye to two beloved faces and welcome another to the Friends of the Forest community.

"...I'm thrilled to have our new Forest Educator, Beck Pittman, join the Friends of the Forest team."

As you learned in our previous issue, our Forest Educator, Melissa Courtney, will be leaving us to move with her husband as his career takes him elsewhere to serve. We'll also say goodbye to our Outreach Director, Mackenzie Wilson, who is heading back to school to earn her master's degree in Genetic Counseling (read her message later in this issue). Both Melissa and Mackenzie have been integral to the organization's success over the past few years and have solidified the foundation that we'll build upon for years to come. While I'll miss them terribly as staff members, teammates, and friends, I couldn't be more excited about their next steps as they move forward in life. Similarly, I'm thrilled to have our new Forest Educator, Beck Pittman, join the Friends of the Forest team. As you'll read later in the issue, she brings a depth of experience in environmental education that lends itself perfectly to the work that we do and I couldn't be more excited for you to meet her!

With so much going on in the world, it's sometimes hard to know where we fit in. I've been reflecting as to how to best address the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery and the movements that have risen in response to them. How can we ensure inclusivity for people of all walks of life in our beloved forest lands? As we've seen time and time again, being outside has innumerable positive effects for people- not just physical but mental and emotional as well- and I believe strongly



that all people should have the opportunity to reap these benefits. Barriers often remain, however, for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to fully access the outdoors. I believe that we have a responsibility to actively seek ways to increase accessibility for people of all backgrounds.

That means engaging with people who face barriers in being able to explore the ACFL and providing them with more opportunities to experience the natural wonders of our forest ecosystem. (Continued on pg. 2)

From the Director (continued):

It means examining our organizational practices to ensure that we have prioritized inclusivity in our everyday work. It means further educating our staff as to the different experiences that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have when going outside. It means deepening our connection and partnership with the Indigenous Peoples of this area. I intend to move us forward with a focus on these elements in order to ensure that all members of our community are able to access the sanctuary that is the ACFL.

Indeed, the ACFL has been a sanctuary to so many during this time of COVID when one of the only acceptable forms of recreation has been to head outside. Whatever your preferred method of exploring the outdoors, the ACFL has remained one of the few consistently available greenspaces and, as such, has seen its use increase dramatically. It has been so difficult to not be able to be out there as an organization with all of you; to not have community hikes with all of our friends; to not have school programs to run, bringing the energy and curiosity of youth into the forest lands. We've enjoyed creating digital content, and it's something that we are going to continue to provide beyond the time of COVID, but I am very much looking forward to the time when we can be out in the forest together again.



Hopefully, that time is not too far off. With Skagit County, at the time of this writing, in Phase 2 of reopening, we are making plans to begin our community hikes as early as mid-July and are moving forward with signups for our Forest Discovery Day Camp to take place in August! Safety is paramount in being able to begin group hikes again and we'll be taking precautionary measures to ensure that hike or camp participants can join us safely. Both our community hikes and Forest Discovery, as well as the resumption of our regular office hours, are contingent on Skagit County being in Phase 3 or later of reopening and we'll be following all recommended safety measures, such as social distancing and wearing masks. Beck is

hard at work creating new lessons and activities that will allow for a fulfilling and safe nature experience in the ACFL. If you are interested in signing up for Forest Discovery, please go to our website, www.friendsoftheacfl.org, where there will be a registration link on the homepage.

Looking further into the future, while we plan to continue our digital content and our community and educational programming, there is one large change that we will be making this year: we'll be shifting our Benefit Auction from an in-person event to an online event. We'll greatly miss this opportunity for so many of our friends to gather and celebrate the Friends of the Forest, but there are too many unknowns to ensure we are able to run a safe benefit. Instead, we're excited to offer an online fundraiser that will provide entertaining and educational content in addition to the opportunity to support the Friends of the Forest. Keep an eye out for emails and on our website for further announcements surrounding this unique event that will allow more people than ever to participate in our principal fundraiser of the year!

2020 has brought many changes here at Friends of the Forest. Some, like the departures of Melissa and Mackenzie, were expected and planned for. Others, like the canceling of our benefit and a shift in the way we reach out to our members, were obviously unexpected. But we've felt the support from you and have seen the importance of our forest lands to the community. With more people using the ACFL than ever before, our mission remains as important, if not more so, than ever. We remain steadfast in our work and committed to the preservation of our beautiful forest lands. Thank you for being here with us and, hopefully, in the very near future, we'll see you in the forest!

-Asa Deane, Executive Director

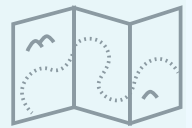
From Anacortes Parks & Recreation:

By Bob Vaux, Parks & Recreation Assistant Director

We have all tried to sum up and decipher the last three months, and the challenges continue. Our woods have seen an abundance of visitors seeking solace from the “storm”, and some folks just out because there was very little else to do. Parking management at Ray Auld Drive throughout most of the spring was a daily challenge for City staff. Somewhere, there is an online call to visit the “viewpoint/lookout at Sugarloaf”. I have watched many a visitor intensely staring at the #215 trailhead map, nary a daypack amongst them.

Throughout the first months of the pandemic many difficult decisions have been made limiting access at trailheads, regulating some user groups, and closing roads. These measures all run contrary to the City’s traditional mission of inclusive access combined with resource protection. We spent the spring pursuing the goal of helping protect visitors by encouraging social distancing and doing our best to share the message of stay home, stay healthy. All the while the influx of first-time visitors was large and constant. We thank Asa and the team at the Friends of the Forest for their on-going willingness to discuss, plan for and help execute the many temporary regulations we have seen come and go in the ACFL this spring. We would also like to wish Melissa and Mackenzie all the best on all of their exiting new adventures. We look forward to our continued work with the Friends, and we thank all of you for your patience and vigilance in the woods as we transition into summer.

bobv@cityofanacortes.org
360-588-8233



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. You can also make contributions directly from your IRA starting at age 59 1/2 but especially useful if you are 70 1/2 or older and must take a Required Minimum Distribution! Contact us for more information.

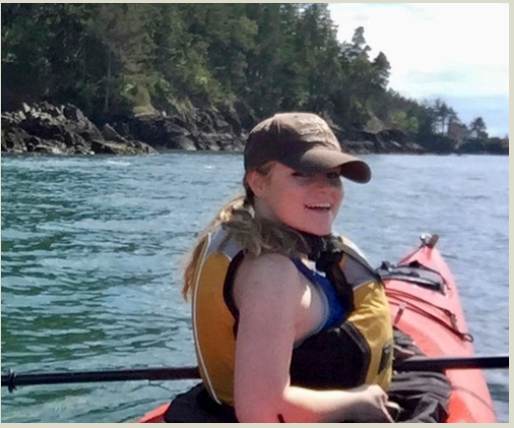
3 Endowment Fund

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.

A Message from Mac:



It is with a bittersweet mix of sadness and excitement about the opportunity to achieve lifelong educational goals that I will be winding down my time at Friends of the Forest this summer. I have had the privilege of working with The Friends for several years in a few different roles- my position has morphed along with the changing needs of a growing organization. As the Communications Director and Auction Coordinator, I've enjoyed being a part of the annual Friends of the Forest benefit for the past three years, contributing to the newsletters and blog feed, growing our digital outreach with the community, and learning and sharing information about our amazing local forest lands that I have grown to

appreciate even more. You may have seen me behind the scenes at events or community hikes, but even before that I was fortunate to participate in The Friends' programs as a middle school student here in Anacortes.

I feel so grateful to have been a part of the very same organization that helped foster my love for the natural world. That idea gets to the heart of why the work that Friends of the Forest does is so important- both important to support and important to participate in. I think it's true that what people (especially young ones) become knowledgeable in and connected to, they will care for. Our community's commitment to the ACFL has blown me away time and time again and I'm proud knowing that this connectedness to our environment is part of my hometown's legacy and just one of its great strengths.

In August I'll be moving to Sioux Falls, SD to begin a master's program in Genetic Counseling at Augustana University, followed by another move to San Diego, CA for the second year of the program. I'm certainly going to miss working with my fantastic co-workers, the supportive FOF Board, FOF members, and the greater Anacortes community. I can't wait to see what The Friends accomplishes in the coming years, as the energy and momentum within the organization is palpable and inspiring. You can bet I'll be spending some time in the trails whenever I get a chance to come home and hope to see you in the woods when I do!



-Mackenzie Wilson

Community Hikes Back on the Calendar Soon!

We've certainly missed seeing our friends on the trails and have some great naturalist-guided community hikes planned for the not too distant future. As long as Skagit County has entered Phase 3, we will be able to begin our outdoor community programming with some new COVID-19 safety considerations. We're hoping to begin these hikes again as early as mid-July. Stay tuned for more hike calendar updates in the coming weeks. We're excited to see you again soon!



FOREST DISCOVERY DAY CAMP REGISTRATION

We've started getting calls from parents and grandparents wondering if our popular summer day camp, Forest Discovery, will be happening this year. The answer is a resounding "We sure hope so!" Not only are we hoping to run Forest Discovery, but we're also excited to say that it's going to be better than ever- we've increased the experience for our older kids so that they get a full day adventuring and learning in the forest and added an additional session for our little kids so as many as possible can join.

Safety is always our primary concern and with COVID-19 still present in Skagit County, we're taking extra precautions this year to ensure our campers have the best experience possible. We'll only be offering the program if Skagit County is in at least Phase 3 of reopening and will follow all social distancing and PPE recommendations. While it will certainly be different than years past, we're hard at work ensuring that our activities are just as fun and educational as always.

So how do you sign up? Head to the homepage of our website at www.friendsoftheacfl.org. Click the green button that says "Add me to the list!", which will take you to our Forest Discovery interest page and fill out the associated form for each child that you'd like to have participate. You'll be added to our list and we'll get in touch with you in mid-to-late July as it becomes more clear where Skagit County is in the reopening process. At that point, we'll let you know about specific details and requirements for participation and have you fill out permission and health forms for your kids. As long as we are in Phases 3 or 4, Forest Discovery will move forward as planned!

Slots are limited and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. We'll let you know if you are on the main list or the waitlist after you sign up. We've moved our start date back a week this year in hopes of an increased likelihood of Phase 3. As always, please feel free to contact us with questions or for help with registration.



Forest Discovery Day Camp Session Dates:

August 11-13, from 9 am- 3pm (Ages 10-12)

August 18-20, from 9 am- 3pm (Ages 10-12)

August 25-27, from 9 am- 12 pm (Ages 7-9)

August 25-27, from 1 pm- 4 pm (Ages 7-9)

Friends of the Forest Speaker Series Presents: “The Pacific Northwest Trail and the ACFL”

Zoom Webinar

Wednesday, July 8th from 4 - 5 pm

Introducing Friends of the Forest’s next speaker event (online summer edition), presented by Sterling Collins-Hill (pictured right), Western Washington Regional Coordinator for the Pacific Northwest Trail Association (PNTA) and Eric Wollborg, Communications Manger for the PNTA.

Did you know that the Anacortes Community Forest Lands is home to a stretch of the Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT)? The PNT is a 1,200 mile footpath, running from the Rocky Mountains in Glacier National park to the Pacific Ocean in Olympic National Park and is actually one of America’s newest National Scenic Trails! Although the PNT is not likely to see the same heavy use common to the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails, this trail will likely bring some west-bound thru-hikers to Anacortes in search of comfortable lodging, good food, and a place to re-supply and explore.

Sterling and Eric will talk with us about the history of the PNT, the current route of the trail, and where the trail intersects with the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. They’ll share inspiring anecdotes from the trail and photos of breathtaking scenery showing the epic journey that is a PNT thru hike. We’ll discuss what the PNTA crews and volunteers are working on locally, what the hopes are for the future of the trail, and how we, as stewards of the ACFL, can contribute towards those goals.

Register for the zoom webinar by visiting our upcoming events calendar online at www.friendsoftheacfl.org. We can’t wait for this one- join us!



Forest Studies in an Era of Covid and Rain

Written by Jack Hartt, Transition Fidalgo & Friends

The Transition Fidalgo & Friends (www.TransitionFidalgo.org) forest monitoring project continues in the woods of the ACFL. Volunteers are conducting numerous studies, including plot studies, trailside cedar monitoring, photo documentation of the burn area, weather analysis, phenology measurements (the timing of leafing, flower, etc.), soil moisture monitoring, and more!

So what happens when a virus slams on the brakes on all these studies that required two or more people out in the field, sharing equipment and notes and standing close to each other to do it? It changes how we do things, of course. The safety of our volunteers is paramount.

We are modifying the plot studies for this summer to reduce how many people are in a group, and to ensure spacing and no sharing of equipment. Each person will have their own role to play as the team evaluates the 12 established plots. The phenology and cedar monitoring had to change to be solo efforts instead of teamwork. Now individuals (or household pairs) are checking up on our phenology plants and trailside cedars to monitor their growth and health, which requires juggling a camera and data sheet for phenology or a measuring device and an old data sheet for the cedars to record any changes.

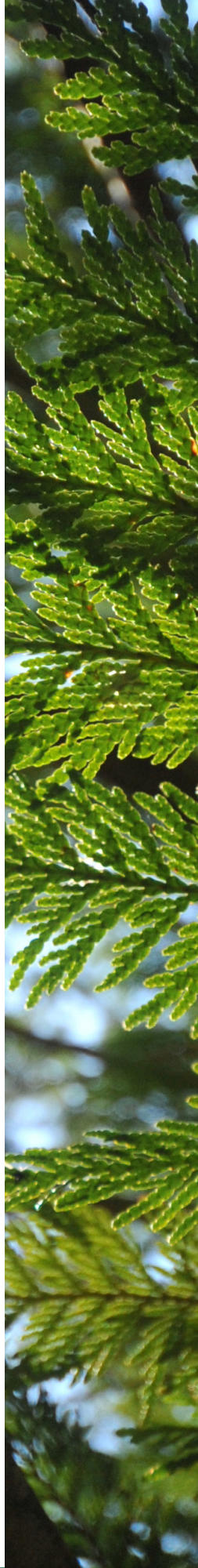
We are noticing in these studies that this spring has been wet – you knew that already, didn't you?! We have the data to show it, in the delayed start of some of our plants, the continued health of cedars this year compared to previous years, and eventually in the actual rainfall numbers we hope to gather by one of our volunteers. We have the equipment to be measuring the rainfall, but we are still waiting for the city to authorize us to use an ideal weather station location.

The soil moisture monitoring will require two or three people to install the devices into the soil, and thus this has been postponed until the team can install the equipment safely. But once they are in, we will be able to measure in real time how much water is getting into the roots of our trees, not only at the surface but several feet below the ground too. Because last year was our first year, we do not have any comparative numbers to speak of yet to show results. That will begin to happen at the end of this year, when we will then have two years of data for some of our studies.

A real blessing to the work this year was having an intern to look at our data and put it into a spreadsheet beyond the Excel basics. Haley Sherman put in 90 hours of number crunching and set us up to be able to quickly add and analyze data in the future.

I am excited about a new potential project growing in our thoughts and preparations: forest observation, for lack of a better description right now. We will ask volunteers to visit a particular forest area on a regular basis, and just keep a diary or log book or journal of what they see and experience. It could be bird lists, mammals observed, or other observations. The value for the future is that these log books will have eventually documented when 'things' are happening in the ACFL, and in future years and decades, comparisons can be made to see what changes are occurring.

We hope that with these studies, we will have engaged members of our community in the experiences of being in the ACFL, and from their data and observations develop a better picture of the health and changes taking place there. Come join us if any of these projects sound interesting and meaningful to you! Contact : skagitjack@outlook.com



Friends, Meet Beck Pittman



Fun Facts about Beck:

Favorite trail snack: Chocolate coated nuts or pretzels

Secret talent: Riding a unicycle!

Favorite native plant/animal: Western Hemlock and ravens

Ideal hike destination: Hotsprings

Beck recently joined Friends of the Forest as our new Forest Educator and has already hit the ground running!

Born and raised in rural Massachusetts, Beck spent much of her time hiking through woods and creeks and swamps, establishing a love of nature that continues to influence her present life and career. She studied at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina where she graduated with a B.S. in biology and a minor in environmental studies.

After graduating, Beck moved to Seattle to be near family and served two AmeriCorps terms with the Seattle non-profit EarthCorps doing environmental restoration alongside peers from around the globe. Leading community volunteer events for EarthCorps sparked her passion for facilitating people's relationships with nature. (cont.)

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

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

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

Beck Pittman | Forest Educator

971-248-6618

Mackenzie Wilson | Communications Director

360-399-6472

Friends, Meet Beck Pittman

Looking for a way to further this, Beck studied and taught at IslandWood's graduate residency program on Bainbridge Island, and earned a M.Ed. in Science Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Washington. She then spent a year as a resident teacher at the University Child Development School. Before her move to Skagit County, Beck taught and served as the Director at Nature Vision Preschool in Redmond, where she helped guide young humans in their discoveries of the wild world and fostered their interconnected relationships with nature, each other, and their own self.

In 2019, Beck moved from central Seattle to Bow with her husband, Miles, which she describes as the dream life with "two cats in the yard". Since moving north, she has been enjoying gardening, birding from her porch, and working at the blueberry farm. Beck loves riding bikes, making art (painting, drawing and making linoleum prints) and music, sipping coffee, and of course, being outdoors.

“ In my new position as a Forest Educator with Friends of the Forest, I am most looking forward to working with community members of all ages and helping people feel more connected to these ecosystems here in the ACFL. I especially value fostering young children's growth and development through outdoor exploration and discovery. We know that a connection to nature leads to a sense of place and critical thinking about our own behaviors that impact the environment, and I look forward to facilitating experiences that help create this mindset. Environmental education isn't the only answer to creating a better world, but it is such a significant part of it, and I'm so happy to be part of an organization that touches so many lives and influences the future in a positive and healing way.

-Beck Pittman

You'll see Beck in the office and on the trails, leading community hikes and running Friends of the Forest's educational programs as they start back up again. We can't wait for you to meet her!



Friends of the Forest's new Forest Educator, Beck Pittman (left).



Beck and her mom, Susan, after a ride.



Beck and her husband, Miles (left), live in Bow with their 2 cats.



Exploring the moss and bogs of Little Cranberry Lake.





Friends of the ACFL
 P.O. Box 2213
 Anacortes, WA 98221

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Friends of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands Membership Form

The Friends of the Forest in 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!