



Friends of the Forest

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

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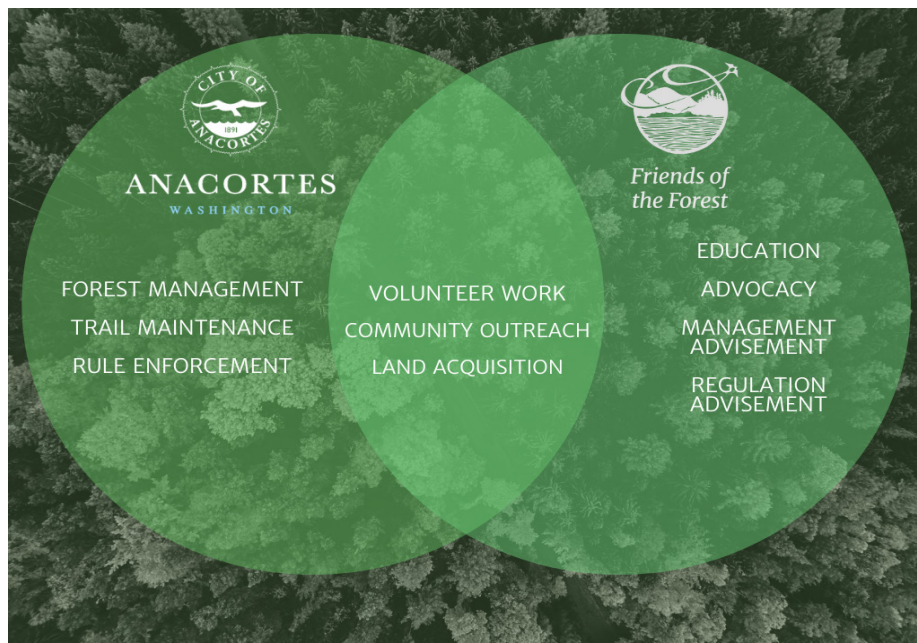
Forest Plan Update, or “How I Learned to Love the Process”

By Asa Deane, Executive Director

As any longtime member will tell you, education is one of the pillars of the work that we do here at Friends of the Forest. While that education traditionally revolves around very engaging topics that are taught through hands-on activities in a forest classroom, there are just some things that are hard to convey via a walk in the woods. This article (appearing as a Blog post on our website just a few weeks ago) offers insight on the upcoming ACFL Forest Plan and how the process of management and governance of the forest works.

Forest Plan Update

On Thursday, April 6th at their monthly meeting, the Forest Advisory Board began the process of reviewing and revising the Forest Plan (formerly known as the ACFL Comprehensive plan), the guiding document for the management of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. The Forest Plan contains a breakdown of the history of the forest lands, the different areas of the ACFL, the goals for the management of the ACFL, and the policies and practices in place to achieve those goals. While the Forest Plan is supposed to be addressed and approved by the City Council every five years, the city has been busy with regulation updates (Critical Areas, Shoreline Master Plan, etc...), other comprehensive plan updates, and Covid, pushing the approval of the 2014 update until 2021. You can read a copy of the 2021 approved Forest Plan by going to our website.



The Forest Plan is a great entry point both to better understand how the forest is managed and to learn about and participate in the process itself. Many folks assume that Friends of the Forest is partially responsible for the actual day-to-day governance of the forest, like smaller-scale like trail maintenance and larger-scale policy-making. While we do work very closely with the City of Anacortes in a number of areas,, we don't make any of the decisions or do any of the physical work involved in the day-to-day operations of the ACFL. We do, however, provide our perspective as an organization on issues and questions on how the forest is managed, and inform our members about important events and upcoming opportunities for public input. The image above gives you a good sense of what areas each entity is responsible for as well as where we work together. (Article continues on page 4).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete details are on the “Upcoming Events” page on our website at www.friendsoftheacfl.org/upcomingactivities. Or simply scan the QR code on the right to get there!



We use a registration system so that we can contact you if the hike needs to be cancelled or rescheduled. Walk-ins are always welcome but if you know your plans ahead of time, we do appreciate if you'd fill out the RSVP located on each event page.

May 6

(Saturday)
10:00 am
-12:00 pm

Family Nature Walk: Birds! - Easy - Heart Lake parking lot - Come learn about the birds of the ACFL! We'll use our eagle eyes to look for our feathered friends and learn about what they eat, who eats them, and how they live in the forest ecosystem. We'll also look for evidence of birds along our walk and play a bird themed family game.

May 7

Friends of the Forest's Spring Party - Sunday, 2:00-5:00 pm. Details on p. 3.

May 12

(Friday)
10:00 am
-12:00 pm

Community Science Wetlands Monitoring - Easy - Location TBA - We'll be meeting on the second Friday of each month to monitor wetlands around Little Cranberry Lake and Big Beaver Pond. Wear weather-proof clothes and bring your curiosity! Location will be emailed to registered participants prior to the hike.

May 16

(Tuesday)
9:00 am
-11:00 am

May Senior Stroll - Moderate - 29th Street access off D Avenue - We will set off to look for the first flush of spring wildflowers near Little Cranberry Lake. We'll keep the pace of this hike slow as the group's curiosity guides our learning, so feel free to bring your own field guides, binoculars/magnifiers, and whatever gear you'll need for walking on trails. Some of the trails may get steep, so hiking poles are recommended.

May 18

(Thursday)
7:00 pm
-8:30 pm

The Big Little Cranberry Lake Bug Hunt - Easy - Little Cranberry Lake parking lot - Have you ever wondered about the bugs that call the ACFL home? Celebrate the diversity of the insect world by joining us on this relaxed evening stroll. We'll search for anything that creeps, crawls, or flutters by the lakeshore environment, and hopefully gain some new appreciation for the work of these underappreciated critters.

May 23

(Tuesday)
10:00 am
-1:00 pm

ACFL Forest Monitoring Program - Moderate - Whistle Lake parking lot - Citizen scientists and community members, in partnership with Transition Fidalgo and the City of Anacortes, came together in 2019 to form the ACFL Forest Monitoring Program. Join Lead Scientist Dave Peterson on an exploration of the woods around Whistle Lake, and learn how citizen science helps us better understand the ecosystems of the ACFL!

Are you receiving our bi-monthly e-newsletter? It's chock full of Upcoming Events, interesting stories, volunteer opportunities, and more! E-newsletter recipients are the first to know when registration goes live for our most in-demand kids' programs, and members get first dibs on registration--don't miss out!

Email info@friendsoftheacfl.org if you're not sure you're subscribed and we'll sign you up!

Come to our “Second Annual” Spring Party!

FRIENDS OF THE FOREST
INVITES YOU TO JOIN US TO WELCOME SPRING AND SUPPORT THE ACFL!

MUSIC BY THE ENTHUSIASTS

FRIENDS OF THE FOREST'S
Spring Party
SUNDAY, MAY 7
2:00 PM-5:00 PM
DEPOT ARTS CENTER
611R AVENUE

FACE PAINTING
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

2:00 DOORS OPEN, BAR'S OPEN!

3:00-5:00 MUSIC FOR ALL AGES FROM THE ENTHUSIASTS

FREE SNACKS, DRINKS FOR SALE, FACE PAINTING, FOREST EDUCATION ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES, AND MORE!

DRINKS PROVIDED BY BASTION BREWERY

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT OUR FOREST EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS. FRIENDS OF THE FOREST IS A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION.

BASTION
Brewing Company
ANACORTES, WA

FRIENDS OF THE FOREST

We had so much fun at our Summer Party last year that we're doing it again, this time in the Spring! Join us at the Depot Arts Center on Sunday, May 7th anytime between 2:00-5:00 pm for music, snacks, drinks, and more! We'll also be offering snapshot activities for both our Youth Education and Community Education programs, making this event a great time for the whole family. Hope to see you there, rain or shine!



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 a 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 of a loved one or special person.

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.

Forest Plan Update, continued

Updating the ACFL Forest Plan is a perfect example of how the process works and what role Friends of the Forest plays. To provide a more efficient avenue to the slated 2026 update, the Parks Department is beginning the process for the Forest Plan next week with an update schedule spread out over two years. With meetings alternating between public comment periods and Forest Board work sessions, there will be ample opportunity for the public to be involved and for the board to understand and debate any proposed changes and still be on track for City Council review in 2026. The proposed schedule for the process is as follows:

2023

April- Public Comment, Chapters 1 & 2
May- Study/Work Session, Chapter 1 & 2
June- Hike with Friends of the Forest Board
July- No Forest Advisory Board Meeting
August- Public Comment, Chapter 3
September- Study/Work Session, Chapter 3
October- Public Comment, Chapter 4
November- Study/Work Session, Chapter 4
December- Public Comment, Chapter 5

2024

January- Study/Work Session, Chapter 5
February- Public Comment, Chapter 6
March- Study/Work Session, Chapter 6
April- Draft Revisions/Additions to Plan Reviewed by Forest Advisory Board and Open to Public Comment
May- Final Draft Revisions/Additions and public comment
June- Hike with Friends of the Forest Board
July- No Meeting
August- Prep Plan for Planning Commission and/or City Council

Is this timeline strict and immovable? No; part of the reason for starting so early is so there's flexibility to move things around and not run up past the deadline like in years past. It also provides ample time for the Planning Commission and City Council to set their own timeline for review and action, which, as you'll see next, is the next step in the process.

City of Anacortes ACFL Decision-Making Process

While not all big decisions made about the ACFL are this involved, they all go through a similar process with at least one but often several opportunities for the public to comment. Friends of the Forest, while not in charge of the process, always participates in a number of different ways, detailed below. But first, let's take a look at the steps on the City's side for how a decision is made, outlined in the infographic on the opposite page (page 5).

As you can see, there is a multi-step process in place for any large-scale changes or proposals in the ACFL that are not dealing with the day-to-day management of the forest (trail clearing, rule enforcement, etc...). Besides the Forest Plan, some other examples are the recent conversation surrounding the classification of electric mountain bikes or the proposal to put in a bike-skills course on top of the old dump off of trail 10. These proposals almost always start at the Forest Advisory Board.

The Forest Advisory Board is a volunteer committee of citizen forest users appointed by the mayor that meets on the first Thursday of each month to discuss the happenings in the ACFL and advise the city. As an advisory board, their votes are nonbinding but are taken into consideration by the City at later stages of the process when they are involved in the actual decision-making and implementation. Forest Advisory Board meetings are all open to the public with opportunities to comment on any subject whether on the agenda or not. They meet the first Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm in the Parks and Recreation conference room at City Hall with a Zoom option for those that would like to attend remotely.

Continued on page 5

Forest Plan Update, continued



Friends of the Forest attends each of these meetings and has a standing agenda item where we update the Board on our programs and provide any other pertinent information about our upcoming events. We also provide comments on many of the topics and proposals that come before the Board. Once the board has voted on their recommendations, the proposal moves to the next stage of the process which is often the Planning Commission and/or the City Council. These meetings are also open to the public and available for anyone interested to provide comments. There are certain proposals that are required to go to City Council, some that aren't required but - due to substantial public interest - the Council requests to hear, and some lower-level decisions that don't end up there at all. It really depends on the nature of the proposal at hand. Once a proposal has made its way through the various stages of the process, a final decision is made either by the City Council or the Parks and Recreation Department based on all of the input from the community and stakeholders.

Friends of the Forest's Process

But how, really, does Friends of the Forest participate? And how do we decide what our role is? On our end, we have our own internal process that we follow as new proposals arise (see infographic on page 11). One of our main goals, when new proposals or questions arise regarding the ACFL, is to provide as much accurate information to our members and the community as possible. Once we've gathered all the relevant information, we synthesize what we've heard from our community and decide what our role should be. For example, with the recent electric bike conversations, we felt the best thing we could do was not to advocate directly for either side. Rather, we wanted to be sure that there was as much accurate information available as possible so our members could research it and come to their own conclusions. (Continued on page 11)

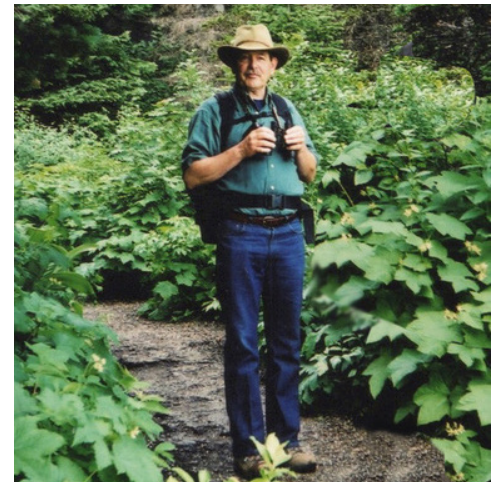
Remembering Members We Lost In 2022

Friends of the Forest is fortunate to have so many wonderful long-time members who care deeply about these forests and have contributed so much to their communities. We honor three special people who are no longer with us, and we are humbled by their dedication to preserving our forestlands. Their memory, like so many before them, can still be found in the peacefulness and beauty of the nature surrounding us.



Von Kuehn (left) and his wife Betty arrived in Anacortes in 1972, so Von experienced the early days of harvesting trees to attempt to make the forest “self-sustaining”. He always laughed at how quickly that idea was discarded, once people were horrified by the resulting devastation, and he was thankful that clever minds instead devised the Conservation Easement program. He loved the owls, the lakes, the winding trails, and the fresh air that make up our ACFL, and he appreciated the foresight of our community in protecting it. (Submitted by his wife, Betty)

Responsible stewardship of the environment mattered to Gene Derig (right), who advocated for the preservation of the farmlands of Skagit County as well as for the forest lands of Anacortes. He provided sanctuary for backyard birds, both year-round residents and those passing through, especially the swallows. Remember Gene when you catch sight of the many nesting boxes he built and placed around Anacortes. (Submitted by his wife, Marilyn)



Michael Taylor (left) moved to Anacortes from Hawai'i in December 2015 without knowing the ACFL existed. He and his wife, Laura, hiked daily in Hawai'i and were pleasantly surprised when they discovered the forest lands. The forest shared its beauty of the Pacific Northwest and introduced them to the local birds, flora, and fauna they were not used to seeing.

Anacortes should be very proud of their forest lands and treasure what they have. As Joni Mitchell said, “They paved paradise and put up a parking lot.” Don't let that happen here. You will regret it. Take care of the aina (land) and you will be rewarded.

(Submitted by his wife, Laura)

From Our Partners at Parks and Recreation

Give Thanks First By Bob Vaux, APRD Assistant Director

As our community embarks on the formidable task of updating our Forest Plan (previously referred to as the ACFL Comprehensive Plan), let's pause for a moment. Many opinions are going to be shared over this seventeen-month planning process. Most of us are sure that our opinions are indeed facts that should be regarded as sacred truths. These opinions are going to collide. Pulses will occasionally race and voices will elevate. We have a passion for these nearly 3,000 acres of woods the City of Anacortes is so fortunate to currently steward.

Before we get rolling, let's take a minute. Let's look at our shared immediate history, remembering all the while the essential need to acknowledge the historical and current forest stewardship of the Indigenous Peoples of this island. A little over 30 years ago, the City of Anacortes put forth a plan to care for these lands based upon the revenue from logging them. A plan came together to clearcut 20-acres a year. After a couple of rounds of this, the Friends of the Forest emerged and changed the City's course.

The Friends and the Parks and Recreation Department committed to finding alternative ways to fund the management of the ACFL. Since then we have seen incredible support for the Conservation Easement Program and an expectation from the community that the City's General Fund will support the ACFL. And the Friends of the Forest's Annual Benefit Auction revenue seems to increase by the tens of thousands annually. These are just a few of the core mechanisms of support for the ACFL. Essentially, City leaders challenged us to find a way to take care of these forests, and we have all been working hard at it ever since.

Because of our success and the unique shared trail system, we have become an inspirational beacon to many. From the beginning of the inception of the Forest Advisory Board, the public and City staff have been struggling with two central themes: balancing recreation with forest health, and emphasizing local enjoyment over regional. New residents have also been drawn by these woods, and it takes time for them to assimilate into local history and understand all that has come before them.

In the early 80's, some hand drawn trail maps began to emerge. What was once simply lakes, woods, and a couple of modest mountains started to gel as the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. Trails that were dominated by motorbikes and horses began to take on more and more hiking. Then some folks in Marin County began to build bicycles with sturdier frames and knobby tires, and, well, you know the rest of the story.

Nothing has impacted the ACFL, and outdoor recreation in general, like the COVID experience. We were outpaced and outdueled by a pandemic that ravaged our normal routines and sent folks scurrying to lots of beautiful places for selfies, space, and a chance to think about something other than society unraveling.

We, the fortunate residents of Anacortes, have a great blessing to care for so we may bestow it upon those who follow. While we will wrestle with the finer points, keep the big picture in mind.



Volunteer Firefighter Program: Join Us in Protecting the ACFL

By Fire Chief Bill Harris, Anacortes Fire Department

Thankfully, serious fires in the ACFL are few and far between. However, when they do occur, they require a significant commitment of both firefighters and equipment. With nearly 3000 acres of forestland within our borders, this risk is one we take very seriously here at the Anacortes Fire Department.

This year we are working to recruit a team of volunteers who are interested in helping to protect our forests by serving as wildland firefighters. These new firefighters will work side by side with our career firefighting staff if and when a serious fire occurs.

The time commitment will be minimal. Initially there will be approximately 30 hours of self-paced online training and 8 hours of hands-on field training. This training will result in Wildland Firefighter Type 2 certification, which will qualify the individuals for employment with wildland firefighting agencies, if that is something desired.

After initial training there will be one 2-3 hour training class per month, spring through fall, for continuing education and skills maintenance. Additional training and assignments may be available but not required. All training and equipment will be provided by the AFD.

If you are interested or know someone who might be a good fit, please contact Fire Chief Bill Harris at: billh@cityofanacortes.org or 360-855-5081. Let's be prepared if the need arises!



*Friends of
the Forest*



Become a Trail Ambassador!

If you like connecting with people, love our forestlands, and want to share that with others, then become a Trail Ambassador for the ACFL! Being a Trail Ambassador entails tabling with a partner or two at various trailheads on weekends over the summer, offering activities for families and visitors, hiking the trails and interacting with people, collecting demographic data, conveying the rules and expectations to those visiting the forest (as needed), and sharing general information about the ACFL's trails, history, and native flora and fauna. Most of all, you represent the Friends of the Forest and the City of Anacortes to all ACFL visitors and helping us to fulfill our mission of preserving the ACFL through outreach, education, and stewardship, and FUN!



We will have one training day, Saturday, May 20 from 10:00-2:00 pm. Learn more at friendsoftheacfl.org/volunteer for details, and we hope to see you in the forest!

School Field Trips Reach a Wide, WILD audience! By Hannah Katz, Youth Programs Coordinator

Over the month of March, every kindergarten class in the Anacortes School District visited the ACFL to smell the spring flowers—Skunk Cabbage flowers, that is! Approximately 160 kindergartners and 50 adults ventured out to A Ave during these field trips to meet trees, look for evidence of animals using trees, and “adopt” trees in small groups. This field trip builds on the February classroom visit where we learned about how trees are similar to us, and turned the whole class into a tree factory to witness the magic of photosynthesis. Each class will continue their tree exploration with a field day in May, and lots of new kindergartners have signed up for our After School in the ACFL and Forest Discovery summer camp.

Third graders learned about forest animals and microhabitats in the forest during their February classroom visits and are getting excited to explore the connection between animals and their forest habitats all around Heart Lake this spring! During their field trips third graders will become different forest animals and explore their forest habitat looking for food, water and shelter. We will build on the relationships between animals and explore how each forest member contributes to the web of life that creates balance in the forest.



Also this spring, 7th graders will visit the forest to learn about different forest ecosystems and adaptations animals have to have in order to live there. They'll take this knowledge and the data they collect during their field trip to create the “perfect beast” to survive in the ACFL!

We define forest education hours as hours of education times students present, ie. a one-hour field trip or classroom visit for 20 students would be 20 forest education hours. Thanks to the support of members like you, we have been able to offer over 700 forest education hours through our school programs so far this calendar year!

Forest Plan Update, continued



This infographic represents Friends of the Forest's role in the decision making process about the ACFL.

Friends of the Forest

Friends of the Forest Board Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. We are currently meeting via Zoom. Meetings are open to the public - please email Director Asa Deane for more information on how to 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. 2025

Rob Skelton | Secretary | Jan. 2025

Steve Williams | Vice President | Jan. 2024

Lin Nichols | Treasurer | Jan. 2024

Andy Stewart | President Emeritus | Jan. 2024

Lynne Jordan | Board Member | Jan. 2025

Andrea Petrich | Board Member | Jan. 2024

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 | asa@friendsoftheacfl.org

Ashleigh Ellsworth-Keller | Outreach and Development
Coordinator | ashleigh@friendsoftheacfl.org

Ellie Kravets | Community Programs Coordinator |
ellie@friendsoftheacfl.org

Hannah Katz | Youth Education Coordinator |
hannah@friendsoftheacfl.org

Forest Plan Update, continued

In other instances, we'll take a more active advocacy approach, such as with the Critical Areas Ordinance passed through City Council last year where we provided multiple comments to City Council. In all instances, we inform our members as much as possible, take comments from them directly, and guide them on how they can continue to be involved if they would like. We stay connected through the entire process and may change our action plan as new information becomes available or if we feel that the motivations or actions of the city are out of line with the best interests of the forest and its users.

Once the process is complete, our role shifts to educating people about any changes in the forest lands, especially those that will impact them or their interactions with the forest. As part of this process, I have monthly meetings with Bob Vaux, Assistant Director of Parks, and regularly speak with Steve Phillips, Head of Maintenance for the Forest Lands. We also stay connected with the Forest Advisory Board with a standing joint meeting in June of each year for them and our staff and board members to take a hike together in the ACFL. These connections allow us to stay up-to-date on all of the happenings and big things on the horizon for the ACFL.

So what big things are coming up? The Forest Plan is the biggest item coming before the Forest Advisory Board that's on the agenda now and we're going through our process in preparation for these meetings. There are rumblings of some plans that may show up before the board soon, including a potential kayak launch and shoreline rehabilitation proposal for Little Cranberry Lake, but as of now there are no actual plans or proposals to comment on. When there are, we'll be sure to let you know so you can be informed and active in your participation.

Staying Informed & Getting Involved

What are some other ways to stay informed and get involved? Keep an eye on meeting agendas for the Forest Advisory Board, Planning Commission, and City Council; they're typically published the week before those meetings and posted here on the meeting document dashboard. You can also sign up for email alerts through the City's website so you get an email anytime a new agenda is published for those boards (and a whole host of other really useful alert options). And, of course, you can always contact us directly to ask questions or provide input on what you think is important. Email me with any questions or comments at asa@friendsoftheacfl.org or swing by our office during office hours, Tuesday-Thursday 10:00 am- 3:00 pm.

At our heart, Friends of the Forest has always been a citizen-based organization focused on the preservation of the ACFL. It's the community that formed us, the community that supported us, and the community that, ultimately, stopped the logging of the forest lands. As part of our mission, we continue to educate the community and give a voice to the ACFL and all things that live there. In the end, we're unbelievably lucky to have such an incredible forest to discuss and debate. And the only reason we are fortunate enough to have these conversations about the ACFL is that you cared enough to be involved and continue to care. Thanks for your support, your involvement, and your dedication.



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 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 _____

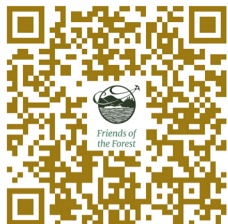
Address _____

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



<--Save a stamp-renew by scanning this QR code!

Other amount _____

_____ 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. Annual dues should be renewed each January.

Thank you to all the friends who have renewed their dues! Keeping your dues current with the Friends of the Forest is one of the best ways to Think Globally and Act Locally. Here on Fidalgo Island, the ACFL needs Friends to ensure its preservation. Our Education program depends on your support.

Thank you!