

18 Sept 2013

Nicole Oliver
Director, Parks and Recreation Department
City of Bellingham

Dear Nicole:

Thank you for your suggestion that the Chuckanut Community Forest Park District (CCFPD) commissioners write this letter describing potential projects that could be funded with monies currently being transferred from our budget to yours, and that are already earmarked for use in 100 Acre Wood. We estimate that these funds will amount to some \$160,000 after all CCFPD bills are paid.

We understand that CoB Parks will make final decisions about specific projects and funding allocations. We offer these ideas as suggestions for work that would benefit the Woods; these items are not ranked in any order of importance.

Commissioners have discussed the following projects:

--**Monitoring water quality.** Given that 100 Acre Wood sits at the head of Chuckanut and Padden Creeks both of which are salmon-bearing streams, it is important to understand water quality impacts in these watersheds. This is especially important given the amount of dog use in the Woods and current poop management problems. To be effective, such monitoring should be done at specific locations by qualified experts over a period of time (5-10 years?). We know CoB Parks has a tentative interest in partnering with local native people (NW Indian College or the Lummi or Nooksack tribal communities), and this effort may be an opportunity to engage with partners to help with this work. We know that NW Indian College and the tribal Natural Resources Departments have considerable expertise in this area. We would be happy to discuss this work with you.

--**Monitoring impacts of human use on 100 Acre Wood.** We know from past experience that as human use has increased in the Woods so have ecological impacts. As trails are improved and public knowledge and use of the Woods increases, how is Parks going to track potential negative impacts? How to monitor for unacceptable levels of trail widening, new human-made use trails not part of the current trail system, biker vs. hiker conflicts, impacts on plants and animals, etc.? This is a huge area to consider and one cannot monitor every impact. But CoB could target particular areas of concern and then establish baseline monitoring for these concerns. The social science recreational literature shows that if specific baseline monitoring is not established beforehand (such as before current planned trail work has been finished), then it is challenging to determine levels of acceptable vs. unacceptable impacts. We encourage Parks to consider selective monitoring of issues specific to 100 Acre Wood and would be happy to discuss these issues in detail.


--**Fire prevention and management.** Given Summer 2023 discussions on how to better manage illegal fires in 100 Acre Woods, we know that this issue is being reviewed by various CoB departments. It is not yet clear to us that CoB policy between departments has been successfully coordinated and so some of these funds may help with that. In addition to these discussions, funds could be used to make and place "No Fires" signs at entries to the Woods during the July-September dry season. Wildlands fire training for CoB (structural) fire personnel should also be funded. This is a city-wide issue starting now and all climate change scenarios project that our summers will be drier and the fire season longer going forward. This is important in 100 Acre Wood given that there are few if any surface waters available during the summer.

--**Quantitative population study of selected ground-dwelling amphibians/species of concern.** There are a few species that are of concern in the Wood (for example, red-legged frog) but there is no quantitative work on their population numbers. A study could be funded during the early spring breeding season to determine baseline population numbers and locations to establish these as indicators of overall impacts. We can put Parks in contact with biologists familiar with the Woods who may be able to do this work.

--**Interpretive signs to encourage responsible behavior.** Currently, signs at entries to the Wood are not very user-friendly and are not up to current standards in US parks for such messaging. Funds could be used to bring Parks signs up to best practices standards. This is a complex topic; some research shows that signs do not often influence user behavior. But we think that better signs might encourage better ecological behavior by people visiting the Wood. We encourage Parks to look for examples of excellent signs in other park systems and then build signs for the Wood that are of the highest quality.

--**Invasive species.** There are a host of invasive species in the Wood; there are two that are of particular concern given that they are expanding their populations. *Geranium robertianum* (the well-known stinky bob) and *Epipactis helleborine* (a less well-known invasive orchid) need to be controlled in 100 Acre Wood as both are expanding in some of the best native herb habitat in the wood. The good news is that both species can be controlled by hand-pulling and volunteer groups can easily do this work. We suggest that funds be used to pay crew leaders to work with citizens to accomplish weed removal. Multiple trips over several years will likely put a serious dent in these populations while engaging/educating citizens in this work.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations. It is good to know that funds are available and that Parks is open to suggestions for this work.

Sincerely,

Frank James
Board Chair, CCFPD