



March 25, 2022

RE: Chuckanut Community Forest Master Plan

Dear Nicole and Laine,

On behalf of the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition and Recreation Northwest, we are writing to provide input regarding the Chuckanut Community Forest Master Plan Steering Committee's recent recommendations. We appreciate the amount of time and consideration that has gone into the plan and the various viewpoints you have received.

We understand the concerns surrounding redundant trails and poorly routed trails in sensitive areas. Our primary feedback is centered around the committee's recommendation to ban bikes from natural surface trails within the community park.

Historically, the Chuckanut Community Forest has been a place where hikers, bikers, dog walkers, and runners have recreated and, more importantly, coexisted for several decades. In fact, the Bellingham community is quite practiced at sharing trails with varied uses in areas throughout the City, including on Galbraith Mountain: A mountain biking destination.

The Chuckanut Community Forest trail system serves as an important connector between the Interurban Trail and Fairhaven Park and is also a place where younger, less experienced riders can learn to ride bikes. This is an accessible place where families ride together and young children test their mountain biking skills without the pressure of sharing trails with more technical riders. This park means so much to the families who ride in this community and utilize the trail network due to its easy accessibility to the surrounding neighborhoods.

We are grateful for the vision to secure the 82 acres near Fairhaven Park and it's exciting to see the CCFPD finalize the repayment of the \$3.2 Million loan this year. While we appreciate the CCFPD's concerns about bikes, it has been our experience that their members have a narrow focus of how the park should be enjoyed and by what mode of transport. There is a perception that the CCPD believes the south side neighborhoods unilaterally saved this forest from development, but it's notable that the entire city supported the park's formation via \$5 Million dollars in Greenways funding.

We were impressed that 716 people filled out the survey last summer and found it noteworthy that out of 711 responses to the types of use in the Chuckanut Community Forest, 326 participants selected “biking – recreation” which was second behind “walking”, yet the master plan limits this experience to a modest, limestone trail. Secondly, the field survey the CCFPD performed was anecdotal, and conducted on a Saturday and Monday in October. Basing any policy decisions on this limited information seems ill informed at a minimum.

Based on our many interactions with CCFPD members, it also seems as though they have taken the planning process hostage and have essentially inserted their personal stance against bikes in the park. This came as a big surprise due to the continued support we’ve had from Bellingham Parks staff regarding bikes in the Chuckanut Community Forest, including a proposed bike jump park / pump track in the old rock quarry and for cycling in general.

In our opinion, the steering committee also lacked the type of diversity that might better inform Parks with a more well-rounded opinion of desired use in and around the Chuckanut Community Forest as it was primarily composed of older white homeowners from or with strong links to the south side district.

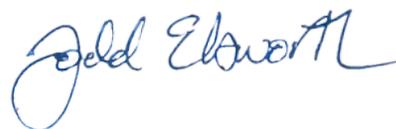
Our organizations and community are rightfully concerned about the recommendation to ban bikes from the natural surface trails in the Chuckanut Community Forest. We are asking Parks to include bikes in future master plan considerations to reflect the needs and interest of our community. As proud long-time partners of Bellingham Parks, both the WMBC and Recreation Northwest look forward to helping make the 100 Acre Wood an even better multi-use trail system with fantastic public open space and protected natural areas.

Sincerely,



Eric Brown
Executive Director, WMBC
eric@wmbcmtb.org

Sincerely,



Todd Elsworth
Executive Director, Recreation Northwest
Todd@RecreationNorthwest.org