

## Portland Monthly

### The Muddy Boot

[All in Agreement: The City and the Forest Park Conservancy draft a plan to tackle the trails together.](#)

Posted by: Lauren Fox on Jul 21, 2010 at 10:51AM

When it comes to showing big love for Forest Park, you'd be hard-pressed to find any group more passionate about the park's advocacy than the [Forest Park Conservancy](#).

Since 1989, FPC has helped rally some major funds for park projects; enlisted scores of volunteers to combat an onslaught of invasive ivy; and devoted countless hours to educating Portlanders on the importance of treating Portland's Grand Dame of green spaces with a healthy dose of respect. (Keep those dogs on leashes, please!)

In short, the nonprofit has done just about everything but written the city's largest natural area a weepy love letter. And now, after a long, sometimes rocky history together, [Portland Parks and Recreation Department](#), Forest Park's formal caretaker, wants to ensure that this non-profit is feeling its share of the love as well.

On Tuesday, The Parks department and the Forest Park Conservancy announced a new partnership agreement, in which they'll outline a yearly work plan for the park and firm up the responsibilities of both organizations with respect to the park's maintenance. The action plan, which will be presented to council members today, is one of five management initiatives that Parks Commissioner Nick Fish announced back on June 17 to address a myriad of ecological and recreational concerns about the park.

The newly hatched union wasn't exactly born of mutual admiration for each other, though. The plan comes just two months after a disturbing report on the health of Forest Park issued by the City Club of Portland. In it, the influential group largely reiterated what Forest Park Conservancy has been saying for years; Forest Park is facing unprecedented challenges—illegal single-track trails, lack of funding, skyrocketing user numbers, just to name a few. To add insult to injury, the report flatly stated that Forest Park might be better off without the city in charge.

And as the problems mounted, so did the disagreements about how to deal with them.

"As we started focusing on the fact that Forest Park was threatened, there were tensions that arose between Portland Parks and the Forest Park Conservancy," explains Michelle Bussard, the Executive Director of the Forest Park Conservancy while quickly noting that the partnership agreement is a good first step toward ironing out any differences her group may have had with the city's treatment of the park.

A sentiment that's echoed by Commissioner Fish.

"If there were bumps in the road before, my feeling is we are on the right track now," he says.

Neither organization is writing the other one a love letter, but here's to the hope that agreeing to formal partnership is a step in the right direction.

**Tags:** [Forest Park](#)