



# LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

APRIL 1992

## CONTRIBUTORS FOR MARCH LISTED

Donations for February and March totaled \$2,412.20 and expenses came to \$290.55. Our thanks to you who have contributed cash and/or recyclables or service. If you have given permission to be listed here and wished to be, please let us know at 926-7949. Thanks! Ruth Cunningham, Janet R. Davis, Jincy Engle, Grace C. Fellows, June Helen Foote, Blanche/Mel Holsten, John Gardner, Nicolin J. Gray, Larry K. Hatch, Adeline E. Haynes, Jane M. Kirk, Janice M. Mahoney, Leo J. Middendorf, Rich Nelson, Northside Garden Club, Charlotte Pladsen, Dwight Pladsen, Hazel Richard, Tom Rogers, Dennis L. Sanders, Kay/William A. Schaich Jr., Ruth L. Schermer, S. Schrimshire, Marcella Smith, Spokane Floral Association, Patricia Sweeney, Florence Thayer, Laurence Thieman, Ed Tietjen, Marvel Travis, Doreen B. Vance, and Jeanne H. Wilson.

## BIG ATTENDANCE FOR HILLS HEARING

The well attended hearing April 14, sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources at Spokane Community College, though not designed to produce any decisions, apparently did clear up some misunderstandings about the uses of Dishman Hills Natural Area. Mountain bike riders came out in large numbers but only two people spoke for horse riders and one for the Rock Rollers. All seemed concerned about the protection of the area but disagreement was evident as to what would or would not damage it. I think we dispelled the idea that all the land there was "public" land and therefore the public had a right, within limits, to use it as they wished. (Actually only about half the land involved was paid for by tax money, hence "public" land, the rest by donations from people like you.) The advocates for the various uses were courteous though often insistent. Some mountain bikers said there were other areas where they could ride their bikes. They offered to help maintain the trails and to educate their groups in how to protect the area. One of them said that the bikers would be satisfied with a "loop trail" through the area. We are not clear where that would be, but supposedly on the DNR and County land, over which we have no control though we, like others, have the right to express our opinion on uses of that land.

We are much concerned, as are residents of the trailer court along the edge of the hills, about shooting and beer parties as well as motorcycles, which nobody in attendance wanted. No motorcycles advocates and apparently no shooters nor beer partyers were present at the meeting. The Nature Conservancy and Spokane County Parks Department were not represented.

Written comments will be accepted until May 15. These should be addressed to the Department of Natural Resources, 234 8th Ave., Olympia, WA 98504.

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural areas of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from.

Our monthly meetings continuing until Spring will be at Opportunity Elementary School, 1109 South Wilbur the third Monday at 7 P.M. You are cordially invited.

## TOWER MOUNTAIN BURN RECOVERING

Visits to the undeveloped area burned in the October 16 "firestorm" area of Tower Mountain are revealing the area's progress toward recovery. Many of the trees of the riparian area along the creek on the west side of the mountain (Iller Creek) are surviving. In most of the blackened areas flowers and native grasses are doing well. Bushes look dead but may yet sprout from the roots. There is no indication of erosion.

Newspaper reports indicated that wheat was spread by helicopter to prevent erosion but very little of it was found growing. On the west facing slope at least fifty erosion barriers consisting of black plastic sheets supported on stakes had been placed last fall. There was no evidence that this was of any help. It appears that, even if there had been normal precipitation during the winter, the plants that survived would have prevented erosion.

The only erosion found on Tower Mountain was where roads have been dozed for logging and possible housing development. Erosion channels up to two or three feet deep are evident. Motorcycles and four-wheel drives have made the channels deeper. Some of the land burned a few years earlier farther down was cleared of burned trees and brush and then plowed. It is showing erosion. We seem to have little faith in the ability of Nature to take care of itself. To interfere can be costly and even damaging.

Of course the entire situation was caused by power lines that were not protected from falling trees. It seems that, rather than cut down down trees, needed to take carbon dioxide, which we are producing in increasing amounts, out of the air, it would be more prudent to put the lines underground where they would be safer. Some developments are already doing this.

Government recommendations for disposing of the debris left from the fire are that it be "chipped" and hauled away since burning would be hazardous and polluting. The natural solution, though not by human standards the "neat" one, would be, again, to let Nature take its course, and let the material decompose and return to the soil and replenish it, releasing carbon dioxide slowly.

-----  
Please use this form when sending contributions

(Contributions are income tax deductible)

Account No. **06514**

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put your account number on your check.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Land purchase fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Memorial for \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Dues (\$10) New? \_\_\_ Renewal? \_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Student or Living Lightly (\$5)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ To cover bulletin expense (\$2)

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if you do NOT want your name listed as a donor.