



Lights and Shadows

from the Dishman Hills, November, 1999

NATURE AREAS - WHO NEEDS THEM

There has been a lot of conversation going on about what Spokane has that will attract business, industry, and prosperity in the next century. Most think that good roads, schools, technology, utilities, and work force are the answer; others would add a vibrant city centre, ample shopping facilities, and abundant cultural or recreation opportunities to the list. While they are right, they are missing something very important. The quality of life is a real issue to businesses and people who are looking for a place to relocate, and big part of this quality is the natural settings, the parks, green spaces, and nature areas that abound in the community.

The natural setting of every city defines the character and uniqueness of the community, and provides a quality of life that can't be described with numbers, monetary values, or economic statistics. When communities are rich with nature areas and green spaces, it's a source of civic pride, it's a daily dose of natural beauty, it's a place for everyone to unwind, reflect, and escape the developed world. Green spaces can be classrooms, recreation areas, buffer zones, and even cathedrals. Nature areas are what people remember when they visit our fair city, and they are the best of neighbours. They just make everyone feel better about being alive and living here. Most everyone supports nature areas, so what's the problem.

Spokane may not have been first in line when prosperity was being handed out in the 90's. Our natural resource economy is declining, we aren't in the Sun Belt or on the coast, or close to California, or a centre of high technology (whatever that is). But Spokane has a first class natural setting, it's our strong point. We don't need to develop more green areas, we just need to save what we have. So why are we in such a hurry to cash them in for more development room? Why do we verbally criticise big cities like LA or Phoenix that have lost much of their natural beauty and turn right around and copy them?

The answer may lie in the fact that short term profit from development is taking priority over longer term community planning. There is little profit in leaving green space where there could be bridges, casinos, factories, and housing. Green space doesn't provide jobs, pay taxes, or make people rich today, so they must take second seat to that which does. The sad part is that when the nature areas are gone we will just become another city that has sold out to growth to become a generic large commercial centre with little character. The Comprehensive Growth Plan for Spokane is now in the making, planning the growth of our area for the next decade. They are making the same old mistakes of putting the preservation of our limited green spaces behind the needs of never ending development. Speak up, if you can, that we need green spaces, nature areas, and open areas as a first priority; they should be established up front, and protected, with development filling in as appropriate.

HILLS MISC.

The Hills are quieting down for the winter, with Fall rains ending the fire season. We had no fires despite all the fuel on the ground left over from Ice Storm, and the following bark beetle attack. We had the drought, winds, and heat necessary for forest fires, but were minus one key component, careless people; thank you public.

The Association is negotiating with Pring Corp. for a donation of 12 acres of land on the north side of natural area. The land is the rocky portion of a lot that is being split up by the new Sprague Couplet right-of-way. As the road is built we will hopefully have several more opportunities to obtain more land between it and the natural area. We could really use some buffer zones to protect the Hills from the increase in noise, and pollution associated with the new road.

ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have any questions. We have a monthly meeting the 3rd Tuesday at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur, at 7 PM.

To date, the Tom Rogers Memorial fund, has had 123 contributors donate over \$15,000 ! What a tremendous show of generosity in tribute to a great man who gave so much himself. Other donations to the land fund have been recieved from: Carol Ellis, Frieda Froth, Charles & Corrine Gillingham, Hobnailer Inc., Rebecca & David Knapp, Vernon Krebs, Helen Lininger, Kerry Masters, John & Marilyn Miller, Jack & Patricia Muncy, Bill & Gwen Nienhuis, Francis & June Potter, Francis Roellich, Holly Sonnetland, Spokane, Mushroom Club, St. Mary's Garden Club, Star Steel, Betty Stratton, Barney & Jeanne Wilson

Please use this form when sending **CONTRIBUTIONS** or **DUES**

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