



Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, December, 2000

A DREAM COME TRUE

On Friday, December 8th a dream came true for the Dishman Hills Association and those who supported our efforts to start a new nature area on Tower Mountain called the Rocks of Sharon. Spokane County Parks and Recreation finalised the purchase of 466 acres from the Bank of America using Conservation Futures funds matched with a Washington State grant for the saving of urban forest. The parcel purchase price of \$650,000 used up the remainder of a one-half million dollar State grant before it expired at the end of December (that's cutting it pretty close). This latest purchase comes on top other County purchases earlier this year and late last year of 330 acres, and of our 175 acre purchase back in 1994. A total of 974 acres, nearly twice the size of the Dishman Hills NRCA, with public access makes for an ecological unit big enough to support environmental health, recreation, and nature area management goals. So, in many respects, the Rocks of Sharon Nature Area was born at the beginning of this new millennium.

The story behind this birth starts with the vision of Tom Rogers to clone the Associations success at the Dishman Hills to save another important piece of our communities' Natural Heritage, the rocks and the high country on Tower Mountain, about 5 miles south of the original natural area. Our land purchase on Tower Mountain in 1994 was a bold commitment involving the burden of a one-quarter million dollar debt to start land acquisition. Shortly thereafter the Association and Spokane County applied for the State grant. We had to make a audio/visual presentation to a State grant board in Olympia as part of a state-wide competition. Besides the merits of a naturally beautiful candidate that was close to an urban center, that had important wildlife corridors, and was still "saveable", the Rocks of Sharon had the commitment of public support which caused our application to stand out amongst many other similar contenders. We won the grant and all we needed was matching money and willing sellers. Many years of effort were needed to bring funds and purchase opportunities together to bring us where we are today.

Our next challenge is to transform these acres into a attractive nature area that is accessible, user friendly, and well managed to preserve the natural setting. For the Association there is the additional task of paying off the remaining \$48K owed on its land purchase. There are also some prime potential land additions on the ridge top that will warrant close attention. All the issues we have dealt with in the "lower" Hills will have to be addressed again: signs, parking, trails, restoration, interpretation, maps, etc., etc.. Stay tuned for more articles in the future on access, hiking trails, and ecology in the new nature area. In any case, it is a time to celebrate the efforts and the generosity of all those that made this happen. A very, very merry christmas indeed!

MISCELLANEOUS

Very soon (next month) you will see a new logo for the Association. We had planned to replace the old one since the corporate address changed last year and we needed to replace the stationary (then why not a new letterhead!). The perpetrator of this fine, new logo is David Cole, a member of the board and an instructor of biology at Spokane Community College. The logo includes elements of the old one; see if you can identify the bird in silhouette.

Articles about the Dishman Hills Association are appearing this month in the newsletters for the Inland NW Land Trust and Spokane Recycling. We and others feel that the a dialog between all the conservation groups in the area should be encouraged. There are quite a few groups out there that share interest and goals, but are unaware of each others efforts and resources.

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 third Tuesday of the month at Opportunity Elementary School, in the teacher's lounge, S. 1109 Wilbur, 7pm.

The following are our November donors that have consented to be listed: Lionel Bernstein, Richard Byrd, Lyndall Cook, Spokane Retired Educators, Wilbert Fritz, Greg Godsey, Harry Hendron, Mark Huggar, Helen Lininger, Melvin McCuddin, Dan Nocol, Francis Potter, Jane Rogers, Gene Slichter, Kenneth Swedberg, Lois Smith, Edwin Weilep, and Barney Wilson. Thank you one and all!

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