



# Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, July, 2000

## HARD CHOICES

A productive meeting between the Association and the County resulted in an agreement over the disposition of adjacent county lands involved with road and water tank construction. Commissioner John Roskelley "went to bat" for the Hills by steering Public Works into adding about 6 acres of beautiful, rocky terrain behind Vista trailer court to the Natural Area to comply with the Sprague Couplet Environmental Impact Statement; thus saving Split Rock Canyon, an impressive topographic feature that is sandwiched between the Natural Area and the new road right-of-way.

Another part of the agreement was to allow for the construction of a water tank on the NW side of the Natural Area on land that was promised for inclusion as part of the Park Place development in 1995 (see Lights and Shadows, May, 2000). The addition was never made but we still felt that we had some claim to this land. In exchange for the 3 acres for the tank and access road, the County agreed to add about 14 acres of rocky county land behind Park Place to the Natural Area.

A good deal is where everyone wins, the Hills gain about 20 acres of beautiful land and a ecological buffer zone south of the new roadway, and the County gets a water tank and the Sprague Couplet. As the city grows and development surrounds the Natural Area, it's a painful task to protect natural settings while accommodating the inevitable development that presses in from all sides. Hard choices must be made, but to not make them will probably mean that natural areas will suffer more.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The Dishman Hills Natural Area is more than nice piece of biology, geology, and ecology. The Hills have a organization behind them that has to manage, and maintain the natural setting we all enjoy. While the landscape is the main act, what's behind it is also a fascinating story. For starters, the Natural Area is really a Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA), part of a state-wide system of lands that have high priority for conservation, and are good examples of native ecology. Protection of the natural systems comes first, but low-impact public use is part of the plan. The State NRCA rules and regulations are a guideline for ours. But management policy is not that simple, for the Hills have 3 owners, thus 3 managers, and 3 perspectives. Our Association is most concerned with preservation, ecology quality, and saving more land; the State emphasises forest health, protection for threaten species, and recreation; and the County supports recreation facilities like Camp Caro and the saving of urban forest. Our individual strengths are complimentary, while we can supply public support, private grants, and volunteers, the State and County can supply equipment, capital funds, law enforcement, and,

now and then, some more land (see other article, this issue). In the 90's we got together to build a joint management plan that would allow for one set of rules and guidelines for the NRCA. This document has been a success and the partnership is strong and running smoothly. Copies of this joint management document are available from the Association upon request. People often visit just to see how we do it. We are trying to clone this partnership on Tower Mountain with the new Rocks of Sharon Nature Area.

## GONE FISHING

There will not be a newsletter mailing in August since we will all be out there enjoying the world on what is commonly referred to as vacation. We hope that you all are in the same fix. For those of you wonderful people that like to send in a monthly donation with their monthly newsletter contribution form, consider doubling up on your July donation to avoid leaving a August hole in our payment obligation for the Tower Mt. land. See you in September.

## 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. For the summer months we meet only for special reasons and will resume monthly meetings in the Fall.

The following are our June donors that have consented to be listed: Lila Ackerman, T.J. & Mary Badger, Joseph Collins, William Erler, Helen & Neal Fosseen, Don & Inga Griffiths, Mark & Diane Huggar, Diana Hsieh, Helen Lininger, Marilyn & John Miller, Francis & June Potter, Jane Rogers, Lois Smith, and Barney & Jeanne Wilson. Many thanks for your support.

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