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from the Dishman Hills, August, 2002

BACK TO THE FUTURES

Is there a future for natural space conservation in Spokane? You bet there is if we can keep our Conservation Futures tax program going. The program, which was strongly approved in the 1998 elections, needs to be reapproved this November. Its fate is in your hands, and we thought now is a good time to list what you can do.

Conservation Futures is a small tax (6 cents per \$1,000 property value) that is to be used to acquire, but not manage or maintain, natural spaces in our community. The program has been a smashing success, giving the County and City the means to purchase natural space when the opportunity arises. So far, 14 parcels have been purchased, ranging from 2 to 800 acres in size. For details visit the Conservation Futures campaign web site at <http://conservationfutures.palisadesnw.com> or visit the County Parks office at 404 N. Havana for something on paper. The Dishman Hills has greatly benefited from this program. Futures funds were used to purchase substantial acreage for the Rocks of Sharon nature area. Without these funds we would not have been able to use the half million dollar State urban forest matching grant the Association and the County won back in 1994.

Here are some ways to support the program. First, cast your vote in November to retain the Futures Tax, and encourage others to do the same. Right now, donation can be to send to the committee working on public information, which will include distributing brochures on the program before the election. Checks can be sent to Conservation Futures c/o Barbara Marney, Treasurer, 710 N. Summit, Spokane, WA 99201. Mailings are expensive. Those inclined to volunteer to help personally can contact Program Coordinator Lunell Haught (448-9852, Lunellh@aol.com). This is our community and its character can include forest, rivers, meadows, cliffs, and creeks for the public to enjoy. It's up to us!

GO NATIVE

One of the most important missions of the Dishman Hills natural area is the protection of the native plants and animals and the habitats they occupy. Native species are those that occur naturally in an ecosystem and are not the result of human activity. In North America natives were present prior to Columbus about 500 years ago, but in our region they are just prior to Euro-American settlement, about 200 years past. Eastern Washington has about 2000 vascular native plant species, not including mosses, fungi, lichens, and molds. The Hills are blessed with a exceptional collection of these native plants that occupy the many micro environments that range from wet to dry, warm to cool, flat to sloped, sunny to shady, and rocky to loamy. Many of our plants have spectacular blooms; from the mysterious ginger flowers one can only find by getting down on the ground and lifting up the leaves, to the arrowleaf balsamroot that cover hillsides with panels of bright yellow every Spring. Right along with the native plants come the native animals that over the thousands of years have formed fascinating relationships with them. Besides the food chain, there are many commensal arrangements such as pollinating insects and seed-dispersing birds.

The Hills can be classified as a "eastside low montane forest" habitat, and the ponderosa forest still has the pre-settlement grassy under-story in many places instead of the shrub layer one usually finds today. This habitat is typified by a short growing season and a

distinctive dry summers that have widely fluctuating temperatures. The native forest were more fire resistant with frequent ground fires burning the dry grasses but not hurting the mature pines.

Why should we be so obstinate in preserving our native species? Biodiversity is a global goal for all those who care about maintaining the flexibility of this planet's life to adjust to change. Native plants are very fascinating and refuges of them can be considered biological "museums". We may well make good use of native species for our own living space to provide landscapes that are adapted to our local weather and don't have to deplete limited water resources, or be nurtured with fertilizers and chemicals. With forest fires a current topic and how can we reduce the problem, we should be studying native forest to understand why these fires are no longer natural. Maybe the most powerful statement for the preservation of native species was made by Chief Seattle in 1854 in his reply to our offer to buy a large area of "Indian" land. He addressed the "white mans" destiny to alter and destroy the natural landscape.

This we know: the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood that unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of earth. Man does not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it.That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires, where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival.

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. It is still our summer break and the next monthly meeting is not until September.

The following are our July donors that have consented to be listed: Alan&Velda Carlson, Myrna Cliff, Helen Cook, Steven & Karen Heaps, Tom Johnson, Hank Kuhlman, Pat&Ruth Manners, Linda Martin, Kerry Masters, James & Marilyn McCall, Marilyn Miller, Bettie Maron, Wilfred Moss, Jack&Patti Muncy, James&Leta Quallis, Mary Ruud, Holly Sonneland, Stephanie Schrimshire, Beth & Ed Tietjen, Larry Thorson and Jeanne Wilson

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