

# LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the  
Dishman Hills

February 2003

## OUT OF THE BLUE

Just when you think that things couldn't get better, something happens and out of the blue good fortune strikes again. Washington State has decided to divest some of the trust lands that it has owned since statehood in 1889. These lands are managed to provide income for the State's education institutions, but some have been determined to be unsuitable for the State and they are offering them to local governments for use as nature preserves, open space, and recreation areas. As luck would have it, high on their list of land to go is the "Big Rock" parcel on the east end of Big Rock ridge, just 2,640 feet east of Association holdings. The price for the land for Spokane County is attractive, free, and the forest on it, while logged in the 70's and lightly in the early 90's, is beautiful. The State has funds to buy this land from itself (\$600+K) and these funds will only be available for the Big Rock parcel for a few more weeks. This potential 240 acre addition to the Rocks of Sharon Nature Area, besides providing wonderful wildlife habitats, may be a southeast side access to the new nature area and a trailhead for a ridge-climbing trail to the existing land holdings. Public access to this parcel will have to be established in the future, probably from Sands Road.

The Association has been working very hard in the last several weeks to see this land transfer happen. We have told the County that we will participate in the management and maintenance of the transferred land if they include it into the nature area. We have also acted as a facilitator between the State and County to assure the right questions are asked and answered. Up to date County Parks has endorsed the transfer, but the Commissioners have not. They are concerned with issues of potential liability and the added responsibility of land stewardship. Will reason prevail here, stay tuned.

## ADVENTURE!

The Dishman Hills is a place for more than recreation, education, and nature appreciation; it's a place for adventure. Webster's defines adventure as an exciting or remarkable experience, and this place is just chuck full of them. While children seem to be the most susceptible to adventure, adults are not immune. Many local citizens have treasured memories of their adventures in the Hills, and we hope that each new generation will also get a chance to add a few to theirs. The world can't be found in multiplexes theaters or in reality shows on TV. Try the ultimate in wide-screen and surround sound entertainment and head for the forest.

Here are some adventure ideas to try out. How about a full-moon-illuminated hike to Eagle Peak. Take a blanket for horizontal viewing on the flat summit. Try a moonless night for celestial observing. Head for the remote parts like the Lost Pond area and sit on a log for 30 minutes to observe the forest. You will be surprised. Add some poetry by Frost, Wadsworth, or Thoreau. Take a hike when the weather tells you to head for the mall. Wind, rainstorms, and snow all make the forest more dramatic. Nothing fresher than a cool forest at sunrise, and at sunset one may hear some of our resident owls, or see a coyote seeing you. Ever hear the frogs fire up at the Ponds, or see a carpet of camas and balsamroot basking in the sun? These adventures are all waiting for you to find them, so have an adventure on us.

*About nature.....consult nature herself* - - Francis Bacon

## FUTURES ARE HERE

The County's Conservation Futures Program is getting ready to start, and the process details have just been released. The program will identify special natural lands and open space for County purchase in order to continue to build a system of conservation areas that give our community both recreation sites, wildlife habitat, and nature areas. Nominations for lands to be purchased will start in late March and run for 6 to 8 weeks. New this time will be that nomination forms will be available on internet and can be filed on the internet (very modern). Also this time special consideration will be given to sellers that are willing to donate back a small percentage of the purchase price to assist land stewardship cost.

Nominations will first be reviewed by Parks staff to determine the best candidates, passing on recommendations to the Lands Subcommittee. They will process these nominations to come up with a final list. Next are public meetings for public input, then staff property tours, then final rating by the Land Subcommittee using a set list of numbered criteria. This Priority Acquisition List will be discussed at public meeting, then forwarded to the Parks Advisory Committee which will make recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners for final approval. Next more public input, then a official Board resolution to initiate appraisals and purchase. More next month.

## 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 meet every other month on the third Tuesday at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur, in the teacher's lounge, 7pm. Our next meeting will be March 18.

The following are our January donors that have consented to be listed: Bill & Berdine Bender, Jim & Marilyn Bertis, Eric & Beth Calkins, John Cobb, Joseph Collins, Bob Damon, Francis Davis, Liz DeNiro, Joan Fergin, Frank Gropp, Jan Hannink, Isabel Hawkins, Addie Haynes, Inland Empire Gardeners, Mary Jones, Rich Leon, Trudy Miller, Marlene Montgomery, Jack & Claire Nisbet, Joy Peterson, Marion Pillsbury, Norma Rosenberger, Marjorie Rozell, Beverly Scheunemann, Jan Strobeck, Rick Velategul, Edwin & Betty Weilep, and Robert & Sylvia Wilson.

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