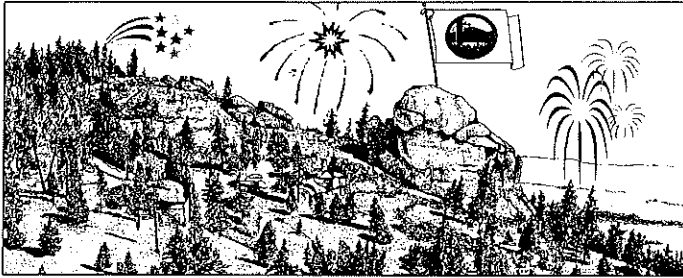


BIG ROCK CLOSES



After three and one-half years of negotiations The Big Rock land exchange deal has closed. The monolith and its smaller rock neighbors along with the 80 acres of land around them are now part of the Associations conservation land holdings on Tower Mountain. The final deal involved an even swap of 80 acres of Association land that is on the north side of the ridge at the end of Hallett Road for the 80 acres that surrounds Big Rock. In addition, the deal includes the retention by the Association of a conservation easement corridor on the land we are exchanging that is 200 feet wide and centered on the creek at the valley bottom. We felt that it is most important to protect this riparian ecosystem for the native plant and animal populations as part of this exchange. We are also receiving a small patch of land, at a slight extra cost, that will provide the Big Rock parcel a connection with the end of the Stevens Creek Road right-of-way. This will allow dependable access to the land from the south for future use.

An important part of this success is all the support we received over the years it took to close this exchange. The acquisition of the Tower Mountain lands goes back to the mid 1990's when the Association bought it's first 170 acre parcel. A partnership was soon established with Spokane County Parks and Recreation. With the use of State grant and Conservation Futures money we were able to add additional land purchases of 320 acres in 1999 and 466 acres in 2001 resulting in a sizable conservation area. The Association bought 100 more acres in 2002 and 240 acres in 2003 to bring the total up to 1,300 acres under conservation protection! From the beginning we all had our sights on the Big Rock lands as the centerpiece for the new conservation area. In the mid 1990's the County made an unsuccessful bid to purchase it. For years after, there was a lot of "head scratching" on how to assemble the large amount of money needed to outright buy the land, but it was not until 2005 that the idea surfaced of a land exchange that might provide a path forward. This idea both interested the owners of Big Rock and rallied support from the Spokane Mountaineers and others like them that considered the Big Rock a special landmark that should be saved and kept open as a public place. A new partnership was formed to complete the task and the negotiations began in 2006.

Putting this deal together seemed like a large, complex maze through which we had to find a path. Several times we found ourselves in a cul de sac and had to back up to try another route. There was a learning curve for us to understand the details of the

What we save in the next few years is all that will ever be saved.

A. Morgan

deal such as conservation easements (much help from the Inland NW Land Trust), land appraisals, legal documentation, access and tax issues, and the responsibilities we have as a non-profit organization. While the land exchange bypassed the large cost of an outright purchase, there were significant cost to complete the deal. This included clearing of the title for our exchange parcel by paying off the money still owed from purchase, appraisals, an access corridor purchase, lawyer and survey fees, and closing and filing cost. The exchange is viewed by the County as two land sales and two land purchases thus doubling some of the closing and filing cost. The total came to just under \$55K.

Without support from donors and volunteers this acquisition would not have been possible to accomplish. Big Rock should serve as a monument to the generosity and commitment of our community to save the natural spaces that are an important part of where we live. But while this is the end of the long campaign of acquire the Big Rock, it is the beginning of another challenge of how to best protect this beautiful piece of real estate for the many future generations to come.

ASSOCIATION 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 questions. Our board meets every other month on the third Tuesday. We are on our summer break and the next meeting will not be until September 15th. We will meet at the lodge at Camp Caro on the northern side of the Natural Area off Appleway at the end of Sargent Rd.. Members and the public are always welcomed to drop by to see what is going on with the Association.

The following are our May donors that have consented to be listed: Phyllis Burwell, Diane Casey, John Casey, Nancy Cashon, Joe Collins, Carol Ellis, Chris Ericksen, William Erler, Harriet & Bill Fix, Patty & Bill Houff, General Dynamics- Electric Boat (they make submarines!), Lila & George Girvin, Larry Grossman, Glen Kivett, Jean Koch, Gloria Krebs, Light & Nature LLC, Bettie Maron, Linda Martin, Brian Miller, Marilyn Miller, Patricia Muncy, Jack O'Brien, Ellen Pierce, Robert Pierce, Neil Prescott, Lorna & Joel Ream, Kathi Shissler, Lee Smith, Spokane Valley Business Assoc., Jan Strobeck, Mary Ann Sullivan, Lawrence Thieman, Steve & Ella Victor, and one anonymous donor. What a spectacular month of support, thanks !

Please use this form when sending **CONTRIBUTIONS** or **DUES**
All contributions are tax deductible.

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