

BOARD RETREATS

The Dishman Hills board, nine strong, held their first ever board retreat this month, lead by volunteer facilitator Bob Mansfield, retired Avista Corp. engineer. The Board spent a productive day discussing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Association. Additionally, we stretched our conversations to include goals, both immediate and long term, and a vision of what we want to accomplish in the next ten years.

The Associations strengths were easy to list. We are an effective, local, grassroots conservation group drawing support from the community and the various outdoor recreational organizations that share our vision and goals. By staying focused geographically on the Dishman Hills area we have had many conservation successes when coupled with patience, community support, and long term efforts.

Several strengths were realized to be "two-edge swords", such as depending on broad based community support in donations is both a generous resource, and an undependable funding tool for large land purchases. Acquisition of natural lands is an important part of our mission, but what if our land holdings get larger than we can effectively manage? Our perceived weaknesses were seen as, mainly, not being up to speed with the complexities of today's issues, and not having enough human resources, a typical problem for all volunteers organizations. We wondered how to allocate our limited resources between stewardship and land acquisition, and how we can take advantage of purchase opportunities without the accumulated funds needed.

As you might expect, when brainstorming for opportunities there was lots of input. We agreed that the board needs members with more expertise, and more education on the complex issues we now encounter. In the future there may be better conservation methods to use other than land ownership, such as conservation easements or agreements with land owners for hiker passage. Of course, there were a number of comments on how to improve fund raising and membership recruiting. Better and more partnerships with our neighboring land owners, the development community, and public outreach were all mentioned.

Threats to the Association centered around the uncertainties of an unknown future. Can the organization maintain its support base, both in funds and volunteers, to meet the obligations it has already taken on? Can the Association effectively compete with the development sector for natural lands? Will liability issues rise up to devour our works? Will the sky fall in, etc.?

We next listed goals that may address some of these worries such as forming membership and fund-raising committees, recruiting talented board members, continuing to improve the website, finishing up some of the big projects that we have been working on (stay tuned for possible big news next month), developing rules and guidelines for activities on our conservation lands, and exploring possible new funding sources.

Lastly, we visioned what we would like to see the Association look like in ten years. We realized that some of us will have gone onto (or under) greener pastures by then. There was a general consensus that we would like to see our natural area spanning

As the poet said "Only God can make a tree" - probably because it's so hard to figure how to get the bark on.

Woody Allen - American movie actor (1935-)

From Tower Mountain down to the lower Hills, encompassing 1,000 to 2,000 acres in size, an area big enough to support the native plants and animals while allowing for recreation of various sorts. Membership by then should be hovering around 1,000 and a collection of strong partnerships with user groups, neighbors, and allied organizations will add strength and breath to our support. The community will be well educated as to our mission, and there will be a regular schedule of events for them to partake in. Coordinated fund-raising will use the internet and modern technology to reach out and educate the general public. Land management documents will be fine tuned and all our stewardship programs will be running at full speed. Maybe one our most important visions in this list of changes and improvements is that the wonderful natural spaces we support will not have changed in ten years, and for many generations to come!

SPRING MISC.

A reminder that annual dues for 2009 are to be received by the end of next month if you want to vote at the annual membership election next January. Annual dues will go up to \$15 from \$10 dollars on June 15th. The cost of newsletter postage and reproduction have been climbing for several years and we need to cover the cost.

The third round of tree planting in the burn area happened this month. Thanks to the Sierra Club and their outdoor program for intercity kids for the last planting. The season progresses and the ground is getting too dry for any additional planting this year.

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. June 16, is the next meeting, 7pm, and this is will be our last meeting before summer break. 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 April donors that have consented to be listed: Eric & Lisa Barrett, Denise Beardslee, Nancy Cashon, The Hobnailers, Pat & Ruth Manners, Margaret Mortz, Florence Orcult, Holly Sonneland, Babetta Velategui, Jeanne Wilson, and one anonymous donor. Thank you for your support.

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

Send contributions to: DHNAA
3415 S. Lincoln Dr.
Spokane, WA 99203

Your Name: _____
Please put your account no. on your check (see on address)

\$ _____ Memorial for: _____
\$ _____ Land Purchase Fund
\$ _____ Annual dues, due by June 30 (\$15)
\$ _____ TOTAL

New ? Renewal ? Don't list me as donor

Please tell us if this newsletter is unwanted or if there is an address mistake