

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

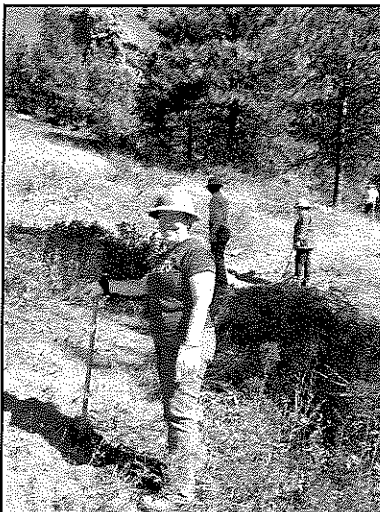
from the
Dishman Hills

September 2009

TRAIL BEGINS

The trail building work weekend this month at Big Rock was a tremendous success. First a crew bush wacked the trail path that had been flagged earlier by the learned trail planners of the Washington Trail Association (WTA). About 50 volunteers showed up for the heavy work of digging in the trail over the topography. The path started at the end of the Stevens Creek road right-of-way, and about 1,800 feet of switch-back trail was completed during the weekend. WTA "ran the show" starting workers with lectures on safety, use of tools, and the details of

how to construct a trail. Most all the equipment was supplied by the WTA. Next the green-helmeted work group started cutting in trail, supported by the mild weather of late summer and bag lunches supplied by the Association. The group's age ranged from high school students to some pushing the far side of 80. The students were earning extra credit for their science classes at Ferris High School. The Spokane Mountaineers supplied the bulk of people power. Workers were shuttled up to the worksite so as not to overload the very limited parking at the end of the road.



Crew works below Big Rock

The trail is an important part of our plans to provide environmentally sound and well designed recreational access to the large conservation area forming around Big Rock and Tower Mountain. Trail specifications included grades not to exceed 12%, a trail surface that slants downhill to shed water, and a narrow, comfortable path to encourage hikers to stay on trail. Older tracks on these steep slopes are usually straight up and have been rutted and eroded over time into scars that we would like to restore once we have provided much better trail alternatives.

There will be another opportunity to be a part of the trail construction project. WTA will be running a second weekend, the 10th and 11th of October, to complete the trail up to Big Rock. To sign up or to gather additional information just access the WTA website, and query their "volunteer" pull-down menu.

CAMP CARO REHAB

As part of the bustling activity nowadays in the Natural Area, there was a crew this month from the Home Depot stores working on the cabin at Camp Caro. Their community service program supports the work which includes refinishing the deck around the cabin, and repairing and refinishing the picnic tables and benches. They also plan to help construct four new trail head kiosk in October to replace old ones that have suffered from years of weathering. Way to go Home Depot!!

STUDENTS ABOUND

The West Valley Outdoor Learning Center ran a number of programs this month in the Natural Area involving about 50 fifth graders per day. The schedule included habitat and ecosystem studies, use of the compass, and field identification of all the plants and critters that were found by the kids who were, undoubtedly, tickled to be outside and enjoying the beautiful Fall weather that we all enjoy this time of year.

Their learning programs also include second grade fieldtrips to the Hills in the spring and seventh grade in October. This is a reminder of how important our Natural Area is to the education community. The kids used field guides to ID plants and visited the Ponds (dry now) to check out what lives there under rocks (salamanders and frogs). Students sharpened their scientific talents by observing and recording both what they saw (include snakes and deer) and some of the physical parameters of the forest such as soil temperatures and humidity.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

We are a non-profit 501(c) (3) 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. Our next meeting will be November 17th. We will meet at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St.. Members and the public are always welcomed to drop by to see what is going on with the Association.

The following are our August donors that have consented to be listed: Erwin Bronsch, Nancy Cashon, Jean Flechel, Isabel Hawkins, Linda Jansen, Hans & Katie Krauss, Charles Lund, Bob Peregoy, Mary & Lawrence Wright, Jeanne Wilson, and one anonymous donor. Thank you for your generous support.

A very general rule of thumb is that every increment of 1,000 feet above sea level is equivalent to 600 miles in a south-north direction. By ascending a mountain one encounters life zones in the same sequence that one observes driving hundreds of mile south to north.

Robert Mohlenbrock, American Botanist (1986)

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