

Broom 9-12 10 Nov
AGM - Feb 12

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The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

September 1996



Report From The President

Acquisition of land on the west side of the Park was reported in a previous newsletter. On the same side, however, the natural arboreal limits of the forest that covers most of the Park still lie, in some places, outside park boundaries. One of our present concerns, accordingly, is that the park boundaries be extended, by acquisition or other means, to these limits. Happily, Saanich Parks directors appear to be making further progress towards this end.

Among our other objectives are the restoration of fish habitat in Douglas Creek, the elimination of broom, and an increase in the Garry oak tree population. As the rest of this letter shows in more detail, our activities in these respects have become somewhat interventionist as opposed to merely protectionist. The ambition is to restore to the Park a balance from which, in the last thirty years or so, it has declined.

How to keep users and Park mutually friendly, how to harmonize recreational, aesthetic and ecological values to the advantage of all is a continuing concern. Our discussions with Saanich Parks directors have ranged over such topics as the siting or re-siting of trails, trail signage, bicycle racks at park entrances, and garbage bins. We understand that the Parks Department is on the point of displaying a map of the principal trail-loops at major points of entry to the park, for the general guidance of park users.

Trails

There has been some progress on the matter of trails in the Park.

Saanich Parks and Recreation have neared completion of a colour-coded map that includes the Park's trail system and natural features. The map will be posted at the main parking lot, and at the Churchill Drive and Cedar Hill X Road entrances to the Park. It should help all of us to better navigate the park and expose the Park's diversity to guests and newcomers.

The map will also show future changes to the trail system:

1. Where Irvine Trail and Norn Trail currently meet, a trail will be extended to connect to an existing trail (also labelled Norn Trail) which begins at Churchill Drive. From this location a viewpoint will be marked leading the hiker to the scenic bog area filled with skunk cabbage and grasses. The existing wooden bridge crossing the bog will be removed to eliminate further destruction to the bog. East from this viewpoint, an existing path crossing the bog will be upgraded to allow for a safe clear walkway.
2. A new parking lot will be constructed on Cordova Bay Road, where the gravel pit is located. This should relieve some of the congestion at the Churchill Drive and Cedar Hill X Road parking areas. Two gravelled trail entrances will lead into the park from this lot. One will extend south to meet the existing gravel trail and the other will extend north to the fire access road next to the motel. This portion of the trail may not be completed until next year, depending on whether the money is available.

Well that's the update for this newsletter. Hope to see you at the next AGM or on the trails. Happy trails.

**If you haven't yet purchased your 1996/97 membership,
why not do it now?**

Mount Doug Park And The Gordon Head Local Area Plan

Until now, Mount Douglas Park has not been included in any Local Area Plan. The position of the Society is that the Park should be included in the Local Area Plan of every community it borders, because it serves and is of concern to them all. We're happy to say that Saanich Planning Department has included Mount Douglas Park in the review of the Gordon Head Local Area Plan, now in its early stages.

Early in September, Past President Darrel Wick sent a memo to Saanich Planning Department and to the Gordon Head Ratepayers Association, making these recommendations:

1. Continue the proposed Coastal Greenway along Mount Douglas Park beach and add a beach access from Mount Douglas Park.
2. Cancel the subdivision that appears on maps of the area southwest of the motel, since the area is now park, and cancel the road right-of-way to Cordova Bay Road in favour of an access to the Park.
3. Protect and restore the tree canopy on Shelbourne Street north of Blair. A new line of trees was to replace the trees removed when Shelbourne was widened: new trees were planted, but there was no follow-through. A restored canopy of trees on Shelbourne Street not only enhances the neighborhood but creates an appealing and appropriate entrance to Mount Douglas Park.
4. The Local Area Plan should acknowledge the stream stewardship for Douglas Creek that has been undertaken by the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, and the problem of drain pollutants from residential areas should be addressed in the Plan.

Tree Planting So Far

The Society has undertaken a program of tree planting in the Park. Last November, volunteers planted 146 Garry oak seedlings over a patch of meadow previously cleared of broom. Since then, some of these seedlings seem to have disappeared. The rest have been watered during the summer months, once in July and once at the end of August. Further planting is planned for an adjacent area now largely covered by blackberry bushes.

Tree Appreciation Day

Saturday November 2 1996

Planting at Mt. Douglas Park

9:00 a.m. – noon

We will be planting Garry oaks in
the small meadow off Cedar Hill Road.

Meet at the Fire Road gate off Cedar Hill Road.

Bring a shovel and a wheelbarrow or wagon if you have one.

For information, if you would like to participate,
and for last-minute changes,

please call

Bob Bridgeman 477-7464 (evenings)

Tree Planting

Saturday, November 30, 9:30 a.m.

We will be planting the area east of Douglas Creek, along the trail. There has been heavy windfall there, and before the Park was under Saanich management (and before the Society was formed), there was excessive tree-cutting.

Meet in the driveway at 1491 Edgemont.

Bring a shovel and a wheelbarrow or wagon if you have one.

For information, if you would like to participate, and for last-minute changes,

please call

Pam Lewis 658-5039

Broom Clearing

To date, our volunteers have cleared broom from the level area next to the fire gate on Cedar Hill Road, and also from the summit of the mountain. These areas were chosen partly for their accessibility to the municipality's chipping machines and partly because they are relatively quarantined from reseeding by other patches of broom. Last May we managed to clear about half of the broom from the hummock on the east side of the summit parking lot. On a previous occasion we cleared about a quarter of the broom from the hummock on the west side. As can be seen, there is still quite a lot of work to be done even in these rather limited areas.

The Creek Restoration Project

Once a week since the beginning of March 1996, we have monitored the water quality in Douglas Creek. After collection, all of our data has been sent to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (D.F.O.) in Vancouver for review. To date, nothing we have found about the water quality precludes the possibility of salmon living and indeed spawning in the creek. However, in mid- August, when we conducted a benthic invertebrate survey, we only found pollution-tolerant species; the utter lack of intolerant species indicated that there is a problem and it probably has to do with the quality of the water.

In mid-September, we assisted D.F.O. in electroshocking trials at two locations in the creek: at sixty five meters upstream of the Ash Road bridge, no fish whatever were found, while some fifty meters upstream from the creek mouth five sculpins were captured, examined and released unharmed. So the good news is that the creek does support fish, but the very paucity of that life above the creek mouth and its absence above the Ash Road bridge, highlights the problem of water quality again.

The stream keepers model allows us to gather useful information on water chemistry; we can monitor for dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity and temperature which are all good indicators for the overall quality of the water. Unfortunately, we do not have the technical expertise nor the equipment to explore the more complex pollution problems we suspect exist in the creek. Our watershed area is approximately five hundred hectares and most of it has been developed for housing. It isn't too difficult to imagine what sort of pollutants are leaching into the creek through the storm drain system. However, it is much more difficult to prove the existence of these pollutants and to show their specific effects on the water quality.

With this in mind, we are negotiating with Camosun College to integrate the creek into the list of environmental projects conducted by students in their Environmental Technology program . Our hope is that students may create a more

advanced monitoring program which could provide some of the answers we need. If we can find what pollutants are disrupting the water quality, our next job will be to find a way to filter them out.

It seems that the least expensive and most effective method of cleaning storm water is to eliminate pollution at the source. So we are hoping to produce, in collaboration with D.F.O., a brochure which would outline the effects of pollutants in storm drains and, if we are successful, our plan is to deliver the brochure to each household in the watershed as part of a public education program. Also, D.F.O administers a storm drain marking system which is designed to promote public awareness; we haven't had much success with marking drains in the watershed up to now but if you would like to mark storm drains in your neighborhood, call Bob Bridgeman who can provide a kit (477-7464 in the evening)

A lot has happened in the creek this summer. The streamkeepers federation has used it to train volunteers in its program. Two of the Friends board members have now taken the streamkeepers training course and because of the credibility we have established as a Society and because of the inherent values the creek possesses, our restoration program has moved forward steadily. We are at the point now where the Community Advisor on the salmon enhancement program for southern Vancouver Island has begun the process which, if it is successful, will see the release of two hundred coho fry into the creek late next spring. The coho will be Goldstream stock donated by the Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid Enhancement Association. The intent is to monitor the fish with periodic electroshocking trials during the summer of 1997 and, if the creek can successfully support the coho, we will invite local schools to participate with D.F.O. in a rearing program. Schools would raise the fish from eggs until their release into the creek and the process would continue until a wild spawning stock is established. And when all this is accomplished, we will have recreated another natural feature that had been almost eliminated from the park by the development around it.

Part of the Future

In reading the rest of this newsletter, you'll see that The Friends are engaged in restoring and enhancing Mount Douglas Park in a variety of ways—working on trails, planting trees, clearing broom and eventually bringing fish back into Douglas Creek. Although it's impressive how much can be achieved by volunteers, everything can't be done that way. Simply as a matter of time, if nothing else.

This is where we hope that some of the government grants available for habitat conservation and restoration will come to the aid of Mount Douglas Park.

We are hoping to make a proposal at the beginning of November for a grant that will assist the stream stewardship program that started last year. And this fall and winter we will be working on a February proposal for a program to clear broom from the summit of the mountain and replant the area to its native species. In order to do that replanting, we need to find out a good deal about the species that were there originally and how they can be successfully restored. If you have any information that would be useful to us, please call and let us know.

This broom-clearing and planting program will, we hope, be the beginning of an effort that will remove all the broom from Mount Douglas Park, keep it clear, and restore the natural condition of the Park. Since broom seeds fall down, rather than being airborne, initial removal of broom from the summit should reduce the seeding that occurs lower down.

There are also pockets of other introduced vegetation that should be removed, such as the blackberry bushes and the ivy that tend to move into any vulnerable ecological niche.

Many, if not most of the available grants require an equal donation from The Friends, not necessarily money but things like time, labour and expertise. As always, Mount Douglas Park will be counting on its supporters and volunteers.

The Road And The Sea Wall

The big news is the decision by the engineering department to postpone building a 600 meter sea wall along the beach and to concentrate on solving the drainage problems at road level. In addition, they plan a monitoring program for the toe of the cliff and are recommending that 5 metres of recession should trigger the alarm bells in the future. The plan calls for both activities to start this fall. One of the direct results of this work will be a bike lane along part of the road through park on the mountain side of the road. Moreover, in the last couple of weeks other engineering works on Cordova Bay Road have covered ditches and created new sections of bike lane that require only black top to make them complete. When the revised engineering plan was presented to Council, we recommended that sufficient funds be added to the budget so that these isolated strips could be linked together to form a continuous bike lane from Royal Oak Drive, up the hill to the motel and on past the gravel pit. Council accepted this recommendation together with one calling for a bike lane on the sea side from Ash Road, up the hill to the viewpoint and beyond. The ideas behind these proposals are now supported by Council, the Engineering Department (funds permitting) and the Cordova Bay Association. So the end of a long debate is in sight and we are several steps closer to creating a genuine park road, one that blends with its surroundings rather than ignoring them. The next stage will come when Council receives and debates an executive summary of the Engineering Department's plan of action.

So we now have plans for road stabilization at the top of the cliff and for erosion control at the toe which complement each other and provide for the continued use of this road of decades to come. For the long term, we have given the planners and the engineers a breathing space to rethink the needs of the neighborhoods that surround the park and the traffic flow through them. And, most importantly, we should be able to pass on to the next generation a park whose structure has not changed significantly over the last fifty years and leave them with the task of maintaining and enhancing this heritage from Sir James Douglas.

Board of Directors 1996/97

President	Kenneth Rankin	4285 Cedar Hill Road	V8N 3C7	477-8007
Past President	Darrell Wick	1491 Edgemont Road	V8N 4P7	477-9291
Treasurer	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
Secretary	Sheilagh Ogilvie	515 Carnation Place	V8X 6G6	479-4281
Acquisitions	Claude Maurice	2200 Lorne Terrace	V8S 2H8	598-7407
Streams	Robert Bridgeman	1481 Elnido Road	V8N 4Z7	477-7464
Trails	Lisa Evans	2590 MacDonald Drive	V8N 1X8	721-3910

Membership

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

\$5.00/person

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postal code: _____

Please fill in this form and mail it to: Graham Shorthill
4623 Cordova Bay Road
Victoria, BC V8X 3V6