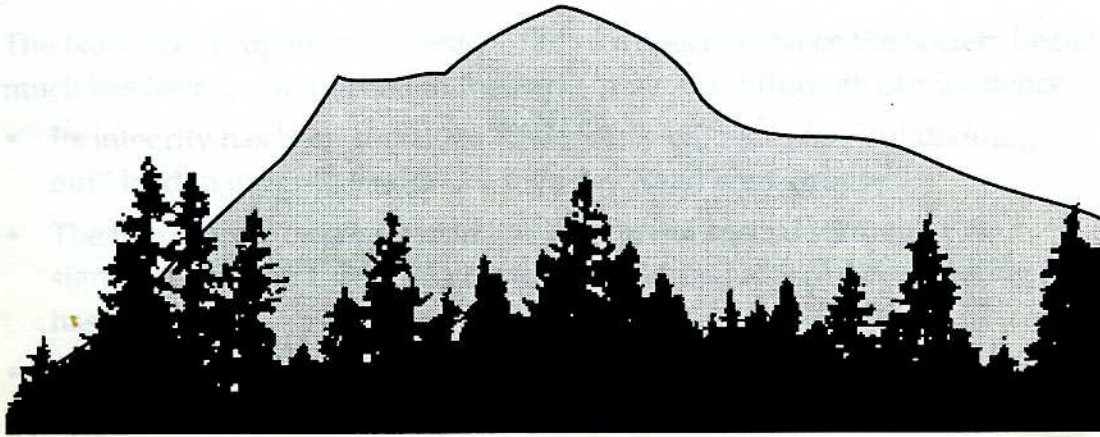

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

January 1997

'96 Rankin
Mr./Mrs. K.W.
4285 Cedar Hill Rd.
Victoria V8N 3C7



Plan to attend the
Annual General Meeting

7:30 p.m., February 12, 1997

Fireplace Room, McMorrans, 5109 Cordova Bay Road

Selina Tank or Meredith Thomson, Environmental Youth Team
Water Management Branch, Ministry of Environment, Lands & Parks
will speak on

Non-point Water Pollution
(with particular reference to Mount Douglas Park)

Nominations to the Board

One of the objects of the Annual General Meeting is to elect three members to the executive board. Should you wish to nominate someone for one of these positions, please call Pam Lewis at 658-5039 before February 10.

President's Message

The New Year is upon us, so first a brief retrospective. Since the Society began, much has been accomplished in the Park, in the main through our influence.

- Its integrity has been sustained. Quite early on, plans for "subdividing out" land in order to re-site Cordova Bay Road were dropped.
 - The tree canopy over that road has been given special status as a significant stand of trees—a constraint within which road-engineering now has to operate.
 - Early on, too, the construction of a scenically-obtrusive service building on the mountain skyline was averted.
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- Environmentally-friendly measures for stabilizing the road by controlling drainage from the mountain are being taken. These may well avert intrusive efforts to buttress the toe of the bank along which it runs, which could cause irreversible damage to the ecology, ambience, and recreational value of the foreshore.
- Acquisition of further treed property on the west side of the Park is well under way.
- A major trail system has been devised for the convenience of park users, though as yet it has not been fully carried through.
- Broom has been cleared on selected sites that should be relatively easy to keep under control, and 246 Garry oak seedlings have already been planted in one of these areas.
- Seedlings of varied native species have also been planted in areas that have been denuded by winds.
- Not least, good communication has been established with the park managers, the engineering department, and other officers of the municipality, in ways that have proved beneficial to the Park.

As this list shows, there has been a shift in emphasis over the years. We came into being by reacting against anti-Park initiatives. More recently, as well as cooperating in or monitoring initiatives that are pro-Park, we have been taking pro-Park initiatives of our own.

As for the future—the implementation of some of our plans will be costly. This applies particularly to work proposed for the restoration of Mount Douglas Creek. We have asked the Habitat Conservation Fund Foundation for financial support for this project. We are making a similar application to the Urban Salmon Habitat Program. We are also drawing up an application to be made to the Action 21 Foundation for a grant to support a comprehensive Sea-To-Summit project which may cover trail maintenance, tree planting and broom clearing.

Finally, to all who have participated in our work parties, many thanks.

Mount Douglas Creek

Mount Douglas Creek is fed by the Shelbourne/Gordon Head watershed. Because of residential and commercial development in the watershed, we don't know where the creek rises, but it emerges from a culvert on Robinwood Drive, and runs 1.1 km through the park until it empties into the bay. Oldtimers recall that cutthroat used to be found at the mouth. Water sampling and analysis tell us that the stream is generally clear and healthy, and should be able to provide breeding grounds for salmonids.

September's issue, and the articles in this issue describe the work that has already been done by Friends and by the many professionals who have donated their time and expertise. This work has had the support of Saanich Municipality, the Capital Regional District, the B.C. Ministry of Environment and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

At the Creek

Weekly water quality sampling continues. The water quality index is so good that it would be the envy of many groups working on stream restoration projects such as ours: it is one of the many strengths we have to build on.

A recent excursion along the creek included representatives from Camosun College's Environmental Technology program, three representatives from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the provincial government's senior rivers biologist from the Stock Management Unit, and executive members of The Friends. Some of the comments of the provincial rivers biologist are worthy of note. He pointed out some large Douglas-fir trees along the way and remarked that we are fortunate to have an ancient forest in the riparian zone (the area bordering the creek). If we had to replant the riparian zone from scratch, it would be a very long time before trees that size could play a role in the creek habitat. Large trees are important to that habitat: eventually they fall, and fall into the creek, creating pools that are critical high and low water habitat for salmonids. Moreover, large trees cannot be moved even by winter high water

flows, while small ones are simply swept away. This is not to downplay the need for small trees in the riparian zone: these replace big trees that have fallen. Small trees and understory shrubs shade the creek from blistering summer heat which can send water temperatures soaring in summer low flow periods. The provincial rivers biologist remarked that he had never seen fish habitat of such good quality so close to Victoria.

It was the consensus of the representatives from Fisheries and Oceans that Mount Douglas Creek has the habitat to support coho right now. We did view a few areas that need to be "tweaked" (fine-tuned) to maximize habitat potential, but we have important components of the habitat in place and functioning.

If we find that we have a water quality problem our basic testing methods are not picking up, it will be a difficult problem to solve. We need, *as a community*, to find a way to stop poisoning storm water. We can't point the finger at industry in this case, for there is no industry to speak of in the watershed. The blame rests squarely upon us, because the storm water springs from our modern urban community. If we demand that industry operate cleanly, we surely cannot ask any less from ourselves. Not only does it rest with us, it is entirely within our grasp to have salmon spawning within our natural park.

Pending at the Creek

Saanich Engineering has budgeted fifty thousand dollars for 1997 to construct a weir near the culverts behind Robinwood Drive. Plans are in the conceptual stage, so we can't offer any comment on the design. The intent is for the weir to skim off oil: it is not clear whether it will pick up sediment as well. At high flow periods the creek will wash over the top of the weir—oil and all.

A possible fish obstruction has been identified in the culvert under Ash Road bridge. Plans are for Department of Fisheries and Oceans engineers to collaborate with staff from Saanich Engineering to design a series of baffles to be installed in the culvert. We will not have to pay for this engineering expertise, but

we may have to come up with capital for the construction and placing of the baffles. We are addressing the issue in our grant application to the Urban Salmon Habitat Program.

We have written to Saanich Parks & Recreation asking them to cost-share with the Capital Regional District in analyzing three core samples to be taken from the sediments at the Robinwood Drive Culvert. Initial responses from both are promising.

We have applied to the Habitat Conservation Fund for money to:

- develop a method to readily measure flow rates in the creek;
- develop a series of brochures focusing on storm water quality, to be delivered to all houses within the watershed;
- carry out further water quality testing as required; and
- replant trees and shrubs in the upper third of the creek, where the forest has suffered massive blowdown, tree mortality, and invasion of exotic species.

Trails

Saanich Parks and Recreation has carried out the upgrade of the Norn trail, from the park entrance at Churchill Drive to the Irvine Trail, complete with gravel and cedar chip.

In constructing this trail, a number of dead trees were cut down. Many of these trees may have been hazardous to Saanich workers blazing the trail as well as to trail users, but their destruction does detract from the benefit of upgrading Park trails.

While developing 'user friendly' trails promotes Park exposure and therefore an increase in Park support, cutting down dead trees removes shelter that many birds and animals depend on for survival. Weighing these circumstances very carefully before proceeding is important to the future of the Park environment.

"Sea to Summit" and a New Park Entrance

Remember a few years back, when we spent several newsletters and meetings putting together a "vision" for the future of the park? The major theme then was keeping the park intact and linking the seashore to summit. But, like many long-term plans made in the early nineties, this one has sat on a shelf until now.

Over the last couple of months a number of separate developments have surfaced which make that integrated view highly relevant. Firstly, the Provincial Capital Commission's work on "Greenways and Blueways" for non-motoring travellers progresses nicely and they see the park, with its beach and trail system, as a natural focal point within the regional plan. Secondly, in the recent local elections, Mayor Frank Leonard made the road through the park a major issue in his campaign and since taking office he has given the Parks and Engineering departments the task of preparing a plan which will address the needs of the various user groups while maintaining the unique environment through which the road passes. Finally, the old gravel pit, home to piles of compost and rock, is set for some major changes. During the latter part of last year, when the methods available to stabilize the cliffs were reviewed, the order of priorities was changed from constructing a sea wall on the beach to controlling surface and runoff water at road level. The gravel pit will play a central role in the new drainage plan, and when the engineers' work is complete the floor of the pit should be level, with a clay cap and a pond. As a result, it is now possible to see this site as an entrance to the park, with a viewpoint, trail centre, car park and a clear link from the picnic area and the beach up the old view road, through gravel pit to the trails that lead ultimately to the summit.

This is an excellent example of the integrated use of park amenities, and one that encourages people to explore a far wider area in peace and safety than has been possible up to now. We look forward to contributing to this very positive and unexpected development, which should create a delightful ambience where there is now an eyesore. Watch this space for more details!

Friends Restore Lost Trees

During November and December, the Friends of Mount Douglas Park conducted two tree plantings. The first, in November, was to enhance the Garry Oak meadow area near the fire road park-access on Cedar Hill Road. Fifteen people, including Girl Guides, planted 100 Garry oaks and 8 western yews. Special thanks to Pacific Forest Research for the donation of 84 Garry oaks, to Friends member Henry Neison who donated 16, and of course to the volunteers who helped with this planting.

During December, about 25 members, neighbours of the park, and Scouts planted a mixture of approximately 300 Douglas-fir, cedar and alder seedlings in the area bounded by Mount Douglas Creek, the eastern park boundary, and south of Ash Road. Prior to the planting, Bob Bridgeman organized a walk through and inspection by arborists from Saanich Parks Department and from the CRD Water Board to determine the most appropriate trees to plant and the suitability of this area for planting. The area previously had a good tree cover, but this disappeared several years ago during an extremely severe wind storm which caused a blow down of almost every tree in the areas planted. The Friends are especially appreciative of the help from the Water Board and the donation of the majority of the trees, and also of the help and tree donations from Saanich Parks and Recreation. The volunteer tree planters had a really tough time with the planting because of the extremely dense underbrush, but were able to fight their way through to plant each tree group with good separation from the others.

Memberships for 1997/1998 are due.

We hope you'll attend the AGM and renew your membership there. If you can't, the membership form, as always, is on the back of this newsletter.

Broom Clearing

Little has been done about broom on the mountain since our last report. Our latest efforts are still concentrated on the top of the mountain. Because the broom there is elevated above the rest, this site offers some resistance to reseeding from its surroundings. In a previous "bash," we pulled up most of the broom on the knoll to the east side of the summit parking-lot. (Pulling is the approved technique for the winter months only). On November 2 we transferred attention to the knoll to the west. But since there were only 5 volunteers on that occasion, and pulling is strenuous work, much broom in that area remains to be eliminated.

MORE!

Meeting with Saanich Department Heads

In late November, five members of the Friends executive board met with the heads of the Planning, Engineering and Parks and Recreation departments. The object of the meeting, requested by us, was to lay out the Society's concerns, hopes and intentions for the immediate future of the Park. Hugh McKay, the new Chief Engineer, commented that this kind of meeting is far more productive than a confrontation before Council.

Birds?

We are told that the bird count is down in the park this year. Do you wonder why? Do you know why?

Grant Proposals

As you'll have read earlier in this newsletter, in mid-November we sent a grant proposal to the Habitat Conservation Fund, for assistance in the restoration of Mount Douglas Creek. Our end-of-January application is to the Urban Salmon Habitat Program, which is working to protect and restore salmonid habitats in urban areas in the B.C. portion of the Georgia Basin.

These granting agencies, in common with most others, expect that the applicant (in this case, The Friends) will provide some specified degree of volunteer labour, as well as evidence of donations and contributions in kind from outside supporting agencies. It's worthy of note that while we are requesting an amount of \$8000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund for 1997, a conservative estimate of the dollar equivalent of volunteer labour (based on what has been given in 1996) already tops the \$18,000 mark, and outside contributions of service can be valued at \$9700.

Speaking of Volunteers...

what would you like to do to help the Park you're supporting with your membership? You can:

- help improve trails
- plant trees
- pull broom
- monitor the creek and do water sampling.
- collect information on the history of the park, and on its birds, animals and plants.
- make calls to bring our membership list up to date.

If you're not free to volunteer, how about talking your friends into joining?

Membership numbers...

tell the municipality that people DO care about Mount Douglas Park. The membership fees fund our work. They keep you in touch with what's going on in the park, through meetings and the newsletter. They pay for writing paper and stamps and long distance phone calls, costs that do mount up. We may need to use some part of them to inform the residents in the Shelbourne/Gordon Head watershed how to avoid letting pollutants into the storm drains that run into Mount Douglas Creek.

Why not make this your year to volunteer?

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	V8Z6G6	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