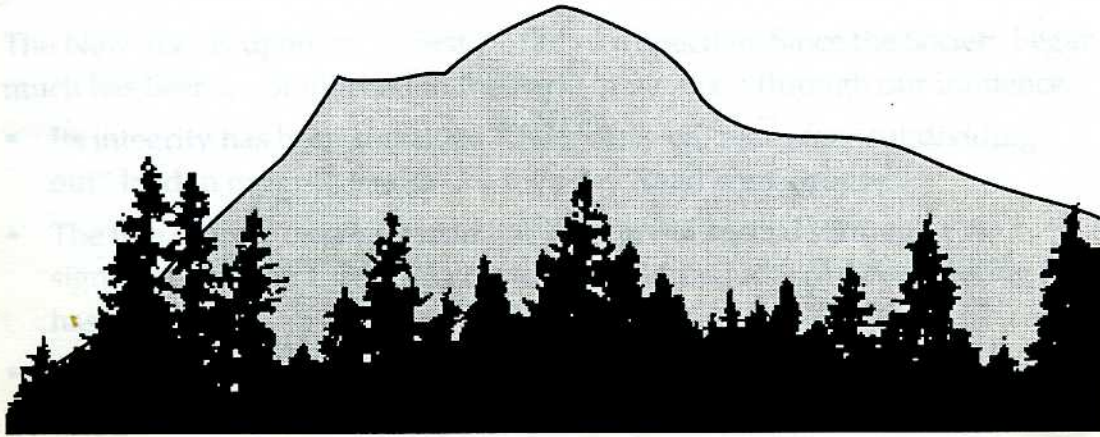

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

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
