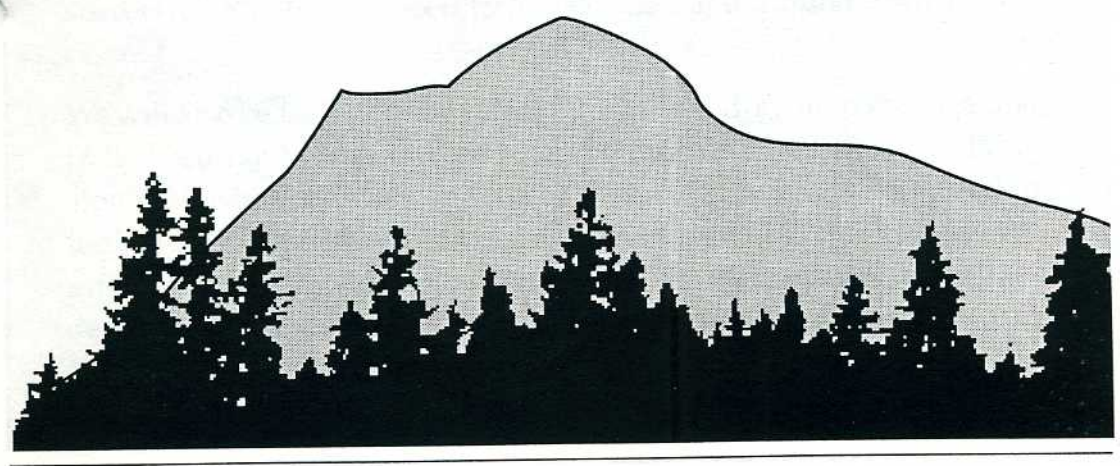

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

September 1997

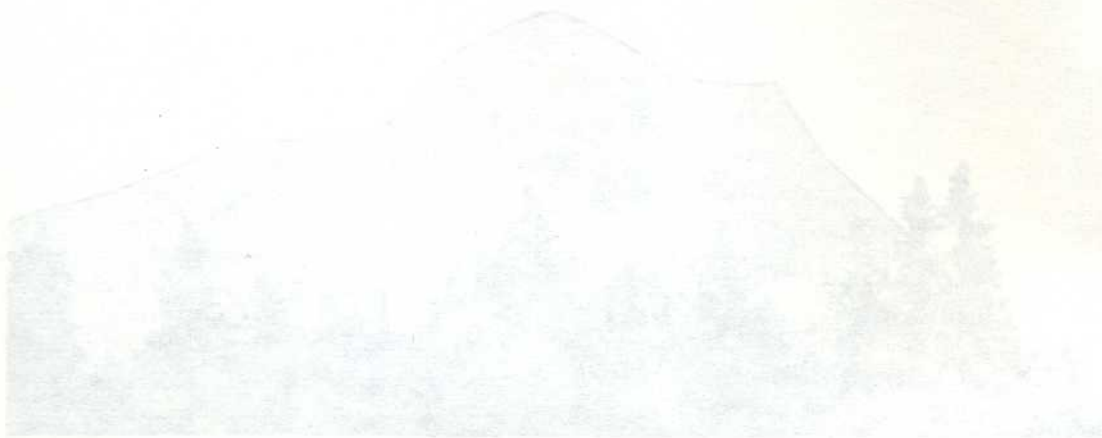


The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

LETTER

Do you have a friend who, like you, wants to see Mount Douglas Park survive and prosper?

Talk them into a membership. It's relatively painless.



President's Report

Consultations with the municipality have kept us busy during the past summer. We met with Mayor Frank Leonard, to acquaint him with our projects and ongoing concerns. Subsequently we discussed with the Engineering Department plans for replacement of the flume that discharges drainage water into the creek, and also for the construction of a weir just in from the Robinwood Drive entrance to the Park. For further details, read the reports further on in the newsletter.

The upgrading of the stretch of Mercer Trail that exits onto Blenkinsop Road has been another concern. We appeared before the committee of the Provincial Capital Commission with the purpose of interesting them in this upgrading, as an integral part of a Greenways system that would connect the Park with Lochside Trail via Lohbrunner Road. Saanich Parks has offered to match the grant by supplying most of the labour and all the materials for the project. The PPC makes the condition, however, that some of the work should be done by volunteers. We will be counting on the goodwill and enthusiasm of our members to translate into a certain amount of sweat should our application for the grant be successful. Plants may need to be relocated and ground obstructions cleared.

We will also be trying to convert the Parks Department to the idea that trails need not be constructed to accommodate side-by-side walking along the whole of their length, but that width should be adjusted to the nature of the terrain through which the trail passes. In brief, the uniform standard width of one-and-a-half metres intrudes on the wilderness character to which the path is supposed to give access.

continued over...

I also wish to remind members of the extent to which the Park environment is dependent on developments further afield. In particular, recent plans for development in the Cordova Bay gravel pits could increase traffic pressures on the road through the Park to an unacceptable degree.

Ken Rankin

Saanich in National Competition

During the summer, Saanich Municipality was part of a national competition trying to decide which municipalities or cities in the country had the best community involvement in their parks and recreation programs. Saanich was in the group of cities with populations of 100,000, which meant stiff competition from towns in Ontario and Quebec. Ron Carter, the arborist for the municipality spearheaded Saanich's participation and we were asked to meet the judges and discuss the various Park issues we have had to face through the nineties.

The judges, who came from Winnipeg and Ottawa, were surprised that such a large park could exist in such an untouched state so close to a major urban population. They were even more surprised to learn that it had come into existence so early in settlement of the area. During a discussion on the evolution of the park, it was clear that many of the problems we've had to face are mirrored at other parks across the country. When we came to the plans for the future and the role the park will play in the new greenways system for the region, the advice these people had to offer was "keep hold of all the green space you have got as it is much easier and cheaper than trying to claw it back for greenways once the land has been assigned other uses."

Overall, Saanich did very well in the national comparisons and all involved are to be congratulated.

Greenways

When we held a meeting a couple of years ago to discuss a greenways and blueways plan for the region, the speakers came from the Provincial Capital Commission, the CRD and the municipality. Their concepts were exciting, the possibilities enormous and the enthusiasm high. But there seemed to be a short supply of tangible assets.

Well, a review of the current plan for the region shows how quickly things have changed. In it, the park becomes a major centre or node in a system which offers alternate routes and connections throughout the region so that people are not encircled by cars and trucks at all points of their journey, but can move through the region separated from motor traffic at their own pace and in their own style.

As a brief comment on the matter of alternate pace, Darrell Wick managed to get from the park boundary on Ash Road to Esquimalt in 20 minutes on his bike, using the Galloping Goose for the most part. You would be hard pressed to do that in a car at any time during the business day. Now all we need to do is persuade everyone to cover a couple of hundred kilometres a week in training to build up their stamina, and then they can do it too.

The Road

As we all are painfully aware, there has been no progress on the road since the last newsletter. At that time we were waiting for the results of the survey, which the engineers needed to complete the drainage work. That has now been done, but the plans for this distinctive park road have yet to emerge.

Undoubtedly, Don Hunter's departure from the Directorship of Parks and Recreation is partially responsible for the delay, but the time has come to move ahead on this issue because the current arrangement is very dangerous.

Firstly, there has been general increase in speed because the road looks wider without the new lines painted on the blacktop. Also, people have reported

seeing cars trying to overtake on the right-hand side of the road going towards the Ash Road turn from the gravel pit. Cyclists have used the same stretch of road as two way bike lane and pedestrians are using it as a walkway.

The common factor in all these cases we believe, is the presence of a shiny black strip of asphalt laid down after the drainage work was done. The bulk of the road has one type of finish and the new stuff another, and this creates the illusion that the road is divided in some way. Unfortunately, each user makes his or her own interpretation of what that division means and the net result is that we have a number of new hazards and have not solved the old ones.

On a more positive note, there has been an unexpected bonus from the work done in the gravel pit; it has become a gathering place for the deer in the park. It is not uncommon to pass the gravel pit and see them sampling the water in the new pool or grazing in the open space. Another blow against encroaching development, some would say, but the local gardeners might not agree!

Over the summer there was a significant increase in the number of tourists and other park users crossing on foot into the main part of the park at the top of the old view road. As well, cyclists in increasing numbers are traveling in both directions and using the view road as an alternative to the main road. The left turn lane and a trail crossing, which we discussed with the engineers and the parks staff in the spring, are needed now more than ever.

For the last few years the news from the surrounding areas has been very positive; Royal Oak Drive confined to two lanes with bike lanes, a streetscape plan for Cordova Bay Road through the village, the closing of the gravel pits and the reduction in truck traffic. They all have the potential to help the traffic problem through the park . Now there are plans for the conversion of the Trio and municipal gravel pits to residential use including some high density housing . If the traffic from these new developments were allowed to flow unrestricted along Cordova Bay Road, in addition the other sources of traffic, then there would be new problems along Cordova Bay Road (including through the Park), Blenkinsop

Road and Gordon Head. According to the municipal engineer, no changes will be made to any roads to support this considerable increase in traffic—it will be left to make its own way, and people will simply have to change their lifestyle. While it's hard to disagree with the concept of no more road widening, we suggest that such a concept is not complete unless it includes a plan to keep high-density development in check.

There will be public hearing on this topic in the near future and it is important that the traffic issue be solved at the planning stage so we don't have any "surprises" once the project is complete. Stay tuned!

Broom and Blackberry Clearance

Twice this summer parties of volunteers have attacked the growth of broom between the summit parking lot and the lookout. Twice this summer they have also been chopping down the blackberry shrubs that periodically threaten to overwhelm the Garry oak seedlings that we planted last year. As well, individual members have been pegging away at this same task from time to time. This fall and winter we will be renewing efforts in both these areas.

Please plan to participate in this work on the following Saturdays:

October 25

November 8

November 22

Much of the work will merely consist in pulling up the newly-sprouting broom, for which very little effort is required.

Special thanks are due to Jane Owen for undertaking the time-consuming task of recruiting volunteers for our workparties by phone. She would welcome assistance: contact her at 477-8963.

The Latest on the Creek

B.C. Rivers Day

This year, B.C. Rivers Day will be celebrated on Saturday, September 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. This is an annual event, sponsored by the Outlook Recreational Council of British Columbia.

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society is planning to participate by sponsoring a creek cleanup. We will supply garbage bags and latex gloves. I recommend wearing wetproof footwear, warm clothing, and an old pair of gardening gloves to go over the latex gloves.

Saanich Parks has volunteered to pick up the collected and bagged garbage.

If you are moderately fit, this is a great opportunity to come out, meet people, and have a firsthand look at the creek. It is a remarkable place to find that natural feeling.

If you would like to participate, please call me,

Bob Bridgeman
477-7464

If I know how many people are coming, I can match the scope of the event with the number of volunteers. Last year, fifteen people cleaned from Robinwood to the Ash Road Bridge. A few more people and we could also clean from Ash Road Bridge to the mouth of the creek.

We are asking people to be very careful in and around the creek. The best policy is to walk through the creek bed as little as possible. As far as we know, there are still coho fry (that the schoolchildren released) in the creek. When rocks in the creekbed roll around under your feet, benthic invertebrates, a basic link in the food chain, are invariably crushed.

The Bug Kit

We have finally got our bug kit together, thanks to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for supplying the funds. While I was completing the last benthic invertebrate survey, I discovered two caddisfly larvae—good news. Caddisfly larvae are pollution-intolerant, and when found in abundance are an indicator of good water quality. Even the few we found are a positive indicator. What's more, there is a basic intact population to expand as the water cleans up.

Our basic water quality monitoring still shows good values for the parameters of water temperature, turbidity, pH and dissolved oxygen content.

Is Your Oil Tank Leaking?

While researching facts for our clean-water brochure, I found some startling information—while oil spills into the creek through the storm drain system are all too frequent—and environmentally extremely expensive—they are costly to the homeowner too.

On a seven-year average for Gordon Head, it costs \$1,000 for the District to find the leak, seal off the storm drain, and try to recover the oil at the top of the creek. The cost to the homeowner for cleaning up contaminated soil averages between \$7,000–\$10,000. The operation is directed by an emergency response officer from the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.

If the homeowner refuses to pay, or is tardy in the cleanup, the Ministry takes over and puts a lien against the property for costs. My insurance broker tells me that most homeowner policies do not cover these costs: some will not even cover third-party liability.

It is a dead certainty that an oil tank left long enough will leak. Above-ground tanks cause 90% of oil spills, and they rot from the inside out.

Storm Drain Marking

The storm-drain marking program is up and running again. My wife and some neighbourhood children have been out marking drains in our area. It's a positive experience—doesn't take much time, and everything you need is supplied. This is an opportunity to get out and talk to people: to do something positive for the area you live in. Just call up and we will set you up—no charge!

The Creek

A week or so after the last coho fry were released, we set up six signs along the creek. The signs were supplied by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Saanich Parks supplied iron posts with brackets on which the signs were mounted. Constructed of sturdy yellow plastic, the signs read "Caution! Salmon at work. This stream supports spawning and rearing salmon and trout. Please protect your resource"—an important message to get out. In a week's time, five signs were missing. I found two of them lying in the creek and reinstalled them. Now the last three have disappeared.

The only alternative to the posts and brackets is to strap the signs around trees, and Saanich Parks isn't keen on doing that.

So vandalism is yet another problem in the effort to rescue urban streams, and the only answer is to catch the vandals at it. When you're in the Park, or passing through the Park, keep your eyes open.

To End on a Positive Note...

...both the Cordova Bay Road drain outlet and the weir have been given the go-ahead. The cutoff date for work in the creek is mid-September, so getting the weir built could be a tight fit. However, we are encouraged to be hopeful. The drain outlet is adjacent to the creek; hence it is not tied into the mid-September deadline and can be slipped in any time before the rain starts in earnest.

Letters to the Editor

January 1, 1997

Dear Editor:

I read (finally!) the Friends of Mount Douglas Park newsletter of September 1996. I congratulate you and the rest of the Society's members for having achieved so many of your goals so quickly.

In future, I would like to help with such projects as tree planting, creek clearing, etc. I do not border the Park, so would find bringing a wheelbarrow in my car very difficult. But I am fairly strong and am willing to work manually. I can't promise to be available at each time the Society sends out a "help!" call, but I shall try to help when and however I can.

When next you order stationery, please get hemp paper, or at least unbleached paper. The David Suzuki Foundation uses hemp "paper" that they get, I believe, from a grower in Ontario.

Also I have a concern: what does "electroshocking trials" mean? I do not like the sound of it. Does it mean electroshocks into fish? Please explain, or have someone else explain it to me. By telephone if you like.

Very pleased I am that Gordon Head Local Area Plan acknowledges Mount Douglas Park's needs.

Best wishes for a bright new year for the Park.

Sylvia Rickard
5373 Lochside Drive

Electroshocking fish is the usual way to identify just what fish are present in the stream. We are researching this, and will pass the information along as soon as we have it. Also, this time around we are printing on recycled paper. We will continue to do so as long as cost doesn't become an insuperable problem. More membership fees would help. Ed.

More Letters

March 16, 1997

Dear Editor:

Is it possible to improve the north half of the Maddock Trail?

Not only do bikers and horses make a mess for years, but a lot of tree roots are exposed and are a great safety hazard for hikers and joggers.

Some gravel and sand, covered with chips, will improve this trail greatly.

The District can dump several loads of gravel, sand and chips at the north end of the trail and Boy Scouts and Girl Guides can wheelbarrow it to the trail.

Thank you for your attention to this problem all of us have.

Henk Gautier
4028 Hopesmore Drive

Thank you for your suggestions. There is a continuing effort to upgrade trails in the Park, and your request has been put on the list. Ed.

Membership

Please check the address label on this newsletter. If the date is '96 or earlier, your membership renewal time has come.

We hope you find these newsletters interesting and the work of the Society valuable. If you do, please continue to support the Society by mailing \$5.00 per membership to

Graham Shorthill (Treasurer) 4623 Cordova Bay Road, Victoria, B.C. V8X

New Diploma and Certificate Course— Restoration of Natural Systems

June 19, 1997

Dear Mr. Rankin:

The Division of Continuing Studies and School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria have recently launched a new Diploma and Certificate Program in Restoration of Natural Systems. It is an interdisciplinary program designed to give students a broad-based knowledge of the science and practice of environmental restoration. Emphasis is on giving students a rigorous grounding in science, a good technical background in restoration and an understanding of the human elements of restoration.

The Program is set up for part-time learners, and students take 8–12 UVic accredited courses (depending on whether they have chosen the Certificate or Diploma option) over a 2–5 year period. Courses are given during the evening and as one-week Institutes to accommodate full-time workers and out-of-town students. During our first year we have offered courses at the UVic campus only, but in time we will be offering many of the courses in other locations around the province.

If you need more information or a copy of our brochure, please contact Richard Hebda or Ruth McDougall in the Restoration office—by phone (250) 472-4568, or by e-mail rns@uvic.ca, or Peggy Faulds in Continuing Studies at (250)721-8463 or pfaulds@uvic.uvic.ca.

Ruth McDougall
Program Coordinator
Restoration of Natural Systems Program.

Help Protect Endangered Habitat

The Victoria Natural History Society is undertaking a Greenways Inventory Project in collaboration with local governments in the Capital Region. The objective is to make an inventory of as wide an array as possible of the dwindling number of undeveloped sites in the Capital Improvement District, to identify significant biological habitat and their related "green" values.

The findings will be passed on to local government planners, to assist them in making appropriate land use decisions for those sites.

This is too large and important a project for the VNHS to complete alone in time to influence the fate of many of the remaining important sites. We are inviting other volunteer organizations and individuals to help conduct the inventory.

We will be establishing and training a number of small teams of volunteers, each to specialize in a part of the spectrum of "green values" to be inventoried. Each team will be led by a person knowledgeable about their green value subject. Thus, volunteers will select the green values they wish to help inventory. It is anticipated that the project will extend over many months, perhaps with repeat visits to some sites to capture information of a changing seasonal nature.

We will contract a professional to help coordinate the project, conduct research and provide guidance to volunteers. The project will focus on identifying the importance of the sites to the flora and fauna that occupy them.

Subject matter for the inventory may include, but not be limited to, dominant and secondary plant habitats, birds, mammals, insects, aquatic species and aesthetics.

Volunteers are needed to train; to conduct and record inventories; lead inventory teams; conduct site inventories; nominate new ecologically sensitive areas and greenspace for consideration; assist the contractor to support inventorying teams and compile their results

For more information, or to volunteer, please contact

Tony Embleton
595-6812

Norm Mogensen
477-9114

We Always Need Help

Jane Owen wants help with telephoning. If she had that help, we could have the most up-to-date membership list in the country, call to advise you about meetings, and call to let you know about matters too urgent to wait for the newsletter.

We need help with creek cleaning—right now, on the 28th of September, B.C. Rivers Day.

We need help with broom and blackberry clearing, three Saturdays in October. Our goal for this year is to get the summit of the mountain cleared.

We need help with tree planting.

Whatever your skill or your will, we have a use for it

Why not make this your year to volunteer?

Board of Directors 1997/98

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