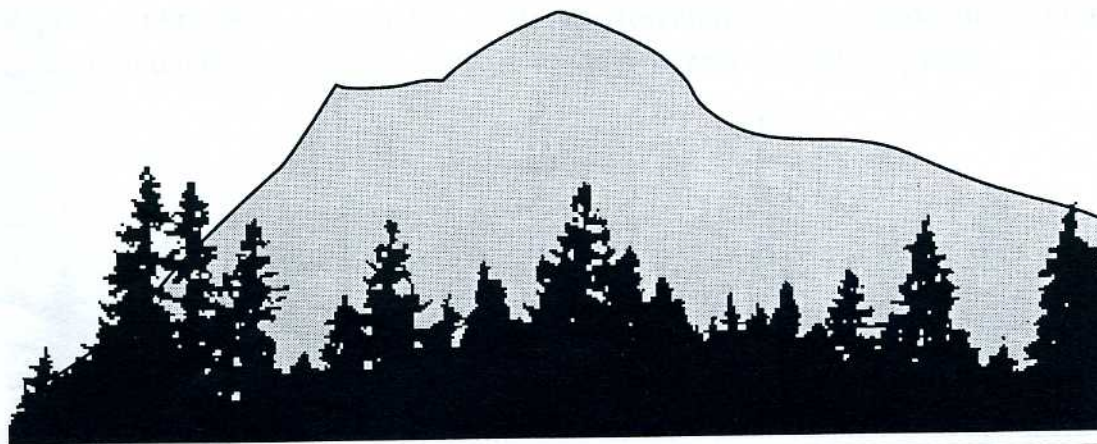

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

September 1998

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



Fire In The Park

During the first week of August, eagle-eyed Jane Owen spotted and reported a fire within Mt. Douglas Park. The fire was along the creek, about 100 m downstream from the new weir.

The Saanich Fire Department responded and quickly doused it with shovel and water from the creek. They said that it appeared to be deliberately set!

Considering the very dry conditions, and the heavy vegetation in this area, Jane likely averted what could have been a very serious fire.

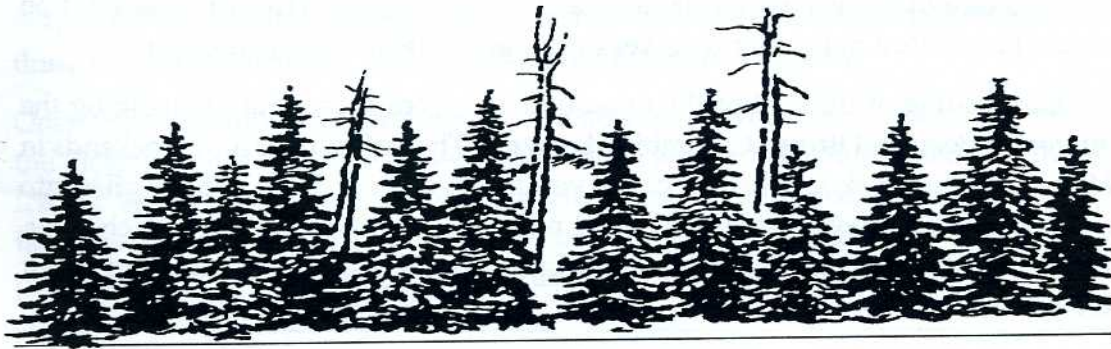
Mount Douglas Bike Trail

Transportation Minister Harry Lali and MLA Andrew Petter have announced that Saanich will receive up to \$147,500 to develop 1.05 kilometres of bike lane along Cordova Bay Road through Mount Douglas Park.

The provincial grant comes from the Cycling Network Program, which helps fund community projects that support transportation cycling on a 50/50 cost-shared basis with local governments. Petter points out that there are now over 1000 cycle trips each day to UVic alone along this route.

Recently...

Eagle-eyed Marsh Ney spotted an adult otter travelling up the Creek, through the culverts at the trail crossing, then up over the new weir and into the pond.



Mercer Trail Upgrade

As you may know, the Mercer Trail leads from the Park down onto Blenkinsop Road. For that reason, it forms a key component of the greenways system that begins within the Park at the shoreline and extends beyond the Park along Lochside Trail via Lohbrunner Road.

Over time, portions of the trail had become deeply trenched, and some of its rock surfaces were a hazard for pedestrian and equestrian traffic.

In April, Parks Department crews began work on upgrading the trail to standards agreed between Saanich Parks management and your executive board. They rerouted the trail at one point to detour around a particularly hazardous rocky shelf, filled in depressions with granulated rock to allow for drainage, and spread a surface of gravel over the top. The work was completed on June 13.

A total budget of \$30,000 was allocated to the project. To this we contributed \$15,000, the amount of the grant we received from the Provincial Capital Commission. The remaining \$15,000 has been picked up by Saanich.

Broom on the Park's West Side

Until now we have confined our broom-bashing efforts to selected areas accessible to the chipper. Over the past year, however, other enemies of broom have been working in an area on the west side of the Park, into which a chipper cannot be hauled. This posed a problem: the possibility that the piled cuttings might prove a temptation for some pyromaniac could not be lightly dismissed. In discussions between us and Saanich Parks management, it was suggested that the best solution would be to hire a helicopter to lower the chipper into a suitable position.

To defray some of the cost of the operation, we were successful in engaging the interest of Beautiful British Columbia Magazine. Thereafter, over four weekends in May and some weekdays between, our volunteers shifted about 35 to 40 piles into a semicircular array around a central position, in readiness for the chipper. Altogether 22 volunteers were involved, spending between them a total of about 130 hours on the job.

At the time of writing, we are still waiting for the chipper to be dropped in. The helicopter has temporarily left the Island on forest-fighting duties.

In the meantime, we have already recently carried out a broom bash at the summit and a session removing blackberry vines by Cedar Hill firegate.

Broom-pu;ling events have been scheduled for Saturdays October 10 and 31st, on both occasions from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Meet at the parking lot at the top of Mount Douglas. Bring gloves.

Ivy Removal

When he walks his dog each morning in the Park, David Berger North takes along a pair of clippers to cut away the ivy that is ascending many of the Park trees. If enough of our members were to follow his example, it might very well halt, or at least diminish, the insidious progress of this environmentally- harmful species. It is on climbing a tree that, after differentiation, some of the leaves on the ivy vines produce the seeds that lead to further spreading of ivy in other locations.

A New Future For An Old Gravel Pit

In the course of its long history, the gravel pit near the view road has always been a place apart from the natural parkland which surrounds it. As the name suggests, its original role was to provide gravel for the small population of Cordova Bay in the early days of this century. In this way, it acted as a forerunner for the present Trio and Municipal pits to the north. It is an interesting historical coincidence that all the gravel pits in this area are now in the process of transformation to something else. This particular pit has had many uses over the years.

Once the excavation of gravel ended, the deserted and isolated quarry provided the Victoria police with an excellent pistol range where they could practice without fear of accidents. However, as the surrounding population grew and better facilities became available, this use also ceased and the period of benign neglect, punctuated by deposits of household rubbish from passing motorists, began.

Over the last ten years we have seen the site used first for municipal composting then for rock storage and finally as part of the surface-water control system which was built a couple of years ago. Since then a major trail (which runs parallel to the road with a trail crossing to the south of the pit) has been added. During the same period, we have had to endure the effective but hideous chain link fence which, at the cost of massive visual pollution, has reduced the number of incidents of unofficial garbage disposal there.

The lasting technical use of the site will be as part of the new drainage system. When it was constructed, a number of characteristics of the pit were permanently changed so that the surface water could be collected and discharged in an orderly way. The rock and rubble were removed and the area graded so that water would flow towards the road from the mountain across the floor of the pit. To prevent the water seeping into the natural sand and gravel, a cap of clay soil was added, causing the water to stay on the surface and to flow into the specially-created pond just before the road. Within the pond there is a discharge system linked to the drainage ditch which runs parallel to Cordova Bay Road, then under the road, then through the parking lot and finally into the Creek.

Under normal operations, only a trickle of water flows through the system, but during the winter storms the pond acts as a damper or control reservoir; providing a crucial delay in the discharge of the water into the Creek as well as reducing the peak flow rates considerably. For those of us with memories of the damage done by the torrential winter storms of the early nineties, this new system promises to prevent a repeat—provided the clay cap remains intact and water can flow freely in and out of the pond. So, any changes that are carried out within the gravel pit must not destroy the integrity of this drainage system.

Similarly, from earlier newsletters you know that the character of the road is scheduled to be changed significantly by the addition of bike lanes and specially designed crosswalks. One of the latter will be at the entrance to the gravel pit.

We concluded that this is the right time to develop a comprehensive or holistic plan for the pit and the other major features surrounding it. In broad terms we hope to achieve the successful integration of the following:

- A major trail and trail crossing
- Integration of the view road into pedestrian and cycling routes
- A safe road crossing
- The removal of the chain link fence
- The exclusive access to the fire hydrant for the fire department
- Maintenance of the clay cap within the gravel pit
- Additional use of the pond
- Vegetation to screen the area from the road
- A haven for the deer
- Planting of native species

With this in mind, we applied to Saanich for a grant to support this work, and were successful. No one person within the Society had the expertise to oversee the project and so we approached those people at the University of Victoria who are in charge of the Restoration of Natural Systems Program. They agreed to coordinate the work. The candidates who applied to do the work were very impressive: it is heartening to see such a wealth of talent directed towards such desirable ends. It was a difficult choice to make, but we offered the position to Maria Grau Lopez.

Her first task is to prepare a comprehensive inventory of the site, drawing together the current information which is scattered throughout a number of government departments. Where she finds gaps, she will complete the data using her own observations and measurements. The second task calls for an analysis of the data and a series of recommendations about how we can achieve the goals listed earlier and, at the same time, satisfy the competing claims of various users. Finally, she will prepare a procedures manual or prescription for those aspects of the proposed changes which will be carried out by inexperienced, volunteer labour (e.g., planting of native species).

The overall document, when it is complete, should provide us with an excellent manual proposing environmentally-sound methods for carrying out the immediate changes, while also providing us with an excellent reference for any future work and development in this area. The whole process breaks new ground for the Society but it could become a major way of doing our work in the future.

Restoration of the Creek



Plans for the reintroduction of large woody debris into the Creek channel are complete, and pre-restoration habitat monitoring is under way.

On July 25 and 26, we completed a detailed habitat survey of 150 metres of continuous stream channel and riparian zone. In the surveyed length, three pieces of large woody debris placed to act as woody debris catchers will be set on the outside curve of a natural meander. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Saanich Parks and Recreation have made major resource contributions to this achievement. If the large woody debris structures operate the way we hope they will, scour pools will develop and woody debris piles will accumulate around the catchers. These will create pools for low-water habitat and woody debris piles to shelter coho fry from high energy flushing of the storm drain system during storms.

We have taken photographs of each habitat unit, be it pool or riffle. Next year we can compare our structures with this year's photographs. Have we created a greater number of pools in the surveyed channel? Are we recruiting spawning gravel behind our large woody debris? Are the structures still in place? We will be able to answer these questions and more because we will have pre-restoration habitat surveys to compare with.

Supplementary to the habitat surveys are benthic invertebrate surveys. We have surveyed for benthic invertebrates in many places in the creek, but have yet to concentrate on the areas where restoration will occur. If time allows, we hope to complete a comprehensive set of benthic invertebrate surveys as well.

At the end of the day, though, it won't matter how many boxes of filled-out data sheets we have. Either we will have established a self-sustaining stock of coho or we will not. The real test of the effectiveness of our restoration will be the production of smolts from fry reared within the instream structures. We have a release of summer coho fry, approximately 2000, planned for October 1998. As with the release last year, we will continually monitor the coho fry with live trapping—but with very different results this year, we hope!

Urban Salmonid Habitat Grant

In previous newsletters, we've talked about the twofold nature of our problems on the Creek. The problems inside the Park boundary, are, in a roughly descending order of importance: no channel habitat; a spasmodic hydraulic regime; water quality; sedimentation from eroding stream banks; dearth of aquatic invertebrates; poor accumulations of spawning gravel; and a changing (and, for our purposes, to some extent degrading) riparian zone on the upper end of the Creek. Outside the Park, we have the effects from a watershed of 5.2 km² (520 hectares) containing 6500 addresses with all the associated roads, driveways and rooftops.

The foregoing is just a lead-in to the good news that we have been given a grant from the Urban Salmonid Habitat Program (USHP). It will allow us to create two brochures and deliver them to every address in the watershed. Delivery of the first is tentatively scheduled for October of 1998, to coincide with our October coho fry release and with B.C. Rivers Day. It will deal with water quality issues as affected by storm water, and will give some useful information about heating oil spills on private property. Watch for the "sticky" fish included with the first brochure. Please apply it next to the drain in your laundry room or garage as a reminder that both of these drain into the Creek, and that great care needs to be taken not to put down anything that might harm the fish. And tell your friends and neighbours!

It is with great satisfaction that I contemplate the work that has gone before, and all the people, and all the agencies great and small, each indispensable, that have contributed to bring us where we are now. With this vote of confidence from USHP, to the tune of \$4650, we can mitigate the adverse effects of land use decisions outside the Park, and relink clean water to appropriate habitat.

The oil interceptor behind Robinwood is complete: dry weather allowed the work to go on apace. Thanks go to Saanich Engineering for carrying the work out in a thoughtful and sensitive manner: If the weir functions as we hope, lighter-than-water pollutants that escape from a homeowner's property can be mopped up before they get into the riparian ecosystem and thence into Cordova Bay.

Well, until we meet again, enjoy your neighbourhood—and please don't pollute the water!

Trails Policies For Mount Douglas Park

I: Preamble

Within the confines of the Park, its more notable assets include mountain vistas and seascapes, flower-bearing slopes and forest floors, woodland birds and animals, stands of tall trees, old growth, rainforest vegetation, swamps, rocky bluffs and outcrops, steep elevations, the creek and the foreshore, all within a relatively small compass. As well as retaining some of the rugged character that formerly prevailed throughout the province, the Park also harbours many species of plant that now linger as endangered elsewhere. Its biodiversity and topographical variety epitomize the respective kinds of natural habitat within which the early settlers on this island acquired their cultural identity as well as their livelihood.

Due to this topographical and biological abundance, the containing area deserves its present status as a natural park under the following definition:

A natural park is dedicated to the preservation of indigenous wilderness while allowing access for the enjoyment of the natural conditions therein without appreciably detracting from them.

This definition reflects the consensus of a meeting between representatives of the Outdoor Club of Victoria, the Friends of Knockan Hill Society, the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and the Saanich Greenbelt Association, held on November 4, 1991, with particular reference to the development and maintenance of trails.

II: Access (General Principles)

As the definition implies, for the preservation of the wilderness character of a natural park, environmentally nonintrusive forms of access are required. To this end, what may be called corridor trails should be placed in a distinct category from those that have a more exploratory character. Some park trails may be corridor trails, but not all corridor trails are park trails.

Roughly speaking, corridor trails have a definite point of departure and a definite destination. Some have private property on either side, either for part or for the whole of the way. Some may cross regions, provinces or states. For any of these

reasons there may be a need for a trail of this sort to assert its identity and continuity by the maintenance of quite a generous width throughout its length. In other cases there will be no such need.

Lochside Trail and the Galloping Goose Trail are good local examples of this type. Examples can also be found within Mount Douglas Park. These include:

- the section of trail that relieves the Cedar Hill and Cordova Bay Roads from pedestrian traffic by running alongside;
- the trails in places of public congregation adjacent to the main parking lot; and
- fire roads.

In the main, trails of this type do not give access to the Park's inner recesses, or to where many of its features of special interest are to be found. Trails that do that can be called exploratory trails. Upon these depends the main appreciation of the wilderness character of Mount Douglas Park.

The provisions immediately below are extracted from The Parks Canada Trails Manual of 1978. Though having a quite general application, they seem particularly pertinent to the maintenance and construction of the exploratory type of trail.

- 1.1.1 (4) Tread should not be rigidly constant. In rough terrain the tread may be narrow, while in areas where there are fewer constraints (open woods, meadows, etc.) it may be wider. This variation is not only more economical, but trail experience becomes more interesting when in some places people must walk in single file and in others they can walk two or more abreast.
 - 1.1.1 (5) Clearing should be supervised by persons with sound knowledge of plants so that only species whose growth is likely to block the trail are removed.
 - 1.1.1 (6) For hiking trails, the existing soil and overlying organic layer will usually provide the most suitable surface. Rocks and roots in the tread area will be of no consequence.
-

- 1.2.1. Damage to the environment should also be thought of in terms of aesthetic effect. Development and use of a trail may not cause significant ecological damage, but still result in loss of features important to scenic and interpretive qualities of the trail. The effect may be to destroy the conditions that originally made the area attractive for trail development.
- 3.1.5. Trails should not be designed to accommodate the use of mechanized equipment if other conditions are preferable for the purpose of the trail. Trail width, tightness of curve, steepness of grades, etc. should be suited firstly to the requirements of trail activities....this requirement will restrict the use of most types of equipment on many foot trails, since these are often quite narrow, e.g., 45–60 cm tread width.
- 3.3 Personnel should be briefed on proper construction and maintenance procedures.
- 3.3.1 The quality of on-the-job supervision greatly affects the success of trail development....It is desirable that supervisory staff be hired on a year-round basis.
- 4.4.4 (For day-use hiking trails) For trails intended for use by a broad range of users, widths of 45–60 cm will generally be the most suitable.

These positions are also reinforced by recommendations of the Healthy Saanich 2000 Subcommittee, published recently in Recommended Environmental Policy Guidelines and Suggested Actions for the Municipality of Saanich (pp. 4, 9, 10). The following passage from page 10 is of particular relevance:

Path Maintenance Guidelines: Establish guidelines for park trails that allow flexibility in width, materials used and type of trail constructed, depending on topography, sensitivity of vegetation in the area, and anticipated use intensity. Wide chip-surfaced trails are not universally desirable. Use of heavy machinery should be strictly limited in natural areas, and should be totally banned from sensitive sites such as mossy hilltops. Use of any mechanical equipment should be minimized, occurring only when other maintenance options are unavailable. Trail construction should be undertaken in spring and summer, after a full season of observation, before a route is selected.

III: Access (*Specific Recommendations*)

Corridor trails in the Park to be limited to those mentioned above, viz. the pedestrian-relief trail by Cedar Hill and Cordova Bay Roads, fire roads, and those in the vicinity of the beach parking lot (and more particularly the path down to the beach from the parking lot, the trail along the north side of the creek leading to Ash Road, and the path from the washrooms to the Cordova Bay Road pedestrian crossing).

Exploratory trails to be of two types, major and minor. The major type to be limited to those providing for the major portion of exploratory traffic, such as the Mercer Trail and the recommended loop trails. At the moment, there is a considerable variance in the width of these trails. Apart from exceptional cases, and in places that require remedial action, that should be left as it is. Minor trails are those that are not in such heavy use, particularly those that give access to rougher or more precipitous terrain. These, at the moment, are quite narrow and should be left in that condition.

In general, exploratory trails should give guided access to their users through a diversity of woodland and hilltop scenery, while avoiding undue hazards and making the minimum visual (hence territorial) impact on the natural features to which they give access. To maximize perspectives within any one area and not disclose too soon what lies ahead, they should also be allowed to curve and meander. More specific standards for maintenance or construction include the following:

1. The root systems of adjacent trees should not be damaged. Roots projecting above the earth surface are native to a woodland trail. There may, indeed, be cases in which they constitute an unacceptable hazard, but these should be regarded as rare.
 2. Aside from the avoidance or removal of hazards, improvements to the trail surface should be designed primarily to prevent or repair erosion (e.g., by construction of water-bars or drainage channels). The natural should, so far as possible, be retained.
-

3. Existing trails should not be widened, nor should their width be rendered artificially uniform. Where at any point the trail has to be re-routed (e.g., to bypass rocky outcrops or large logs) the width and character of the newly constructed portion should remain consistent with the portions it joins.
4. Trails should not be straightened unnecessarily.
5. There should be no unnecessary tidiness (e.g., trail borders should not be lined by rows of rocks or banked-up earth just for the sake of making them look trim.
6. Hairpin bends, if required, should not be sited at points where impatient users can readily cut them out.
7. Areas around the trails should not be disturbed. Pruning of encroaching vegetation should be conservative.

In general, a measure of success in trail construction and maintenance is that evidence of work performed should not be obtrusive, an all-important constraint being harmony with the park environment.

Appendix to Trails Policy

Corridor Trails

- a. All fire roads recognized as such by the Fire Department. From south to north these include
 - the Glendenning Trail
 - the short stretch of the Maddock Trail from Cedar Hill Road to the exit to the two residences above the orchard
 - the trail from the firegate by Cedar Hill Road up to the junction with the Glendenning Trail
 - the trail leading east from the firegate near the junction of Cedar Hill Road and Shelbourne Street up to the footpath into Edgemont; and
 - the trail continuing west into the Park from the motel.
-

These trails should not exceed in tread width and marginal clearance the minimum required by the Fire Department.

b.

- the part of the Whittaker Trail that skirts Cedar Hill and Cordova Bay Roads, with Maddock Trail and the motel entrance as its termini
- the trail from the Edgemont footpath junction to Ash Road
- the trail by the creek from Ash Road to the picnic parking lot
- the trail from that lot down to the beach
- the old view road that joins Cordova Bay Road from the parking lot
- the trail from the washrooms to the south pedestrian crossing
- the trail from the summit parking lot up to the summit viewpoint.

None of these trails should become wider than they presently are.

Exploratory Trails (Major)

These include all trails presently named on the Park map, viz. Birch, Harrop, Irvine, Maddock, Mercer, Merriman, Munson, Norn, Norrington, and Whittaker, with the exception of whatever portions coincide with corridor trails. To this list should be added the summit trail that ascends from the end of Glendenning to the summit parking lot. Any major loop trails planned by the Parks Department will presumably incorporate in whole or in part some of the trails here listed, and hence will belong to the same category. In general, the tread width of these trails should be kept within the 45–60 cm limit mentioned in 3.1.5 and 4.4.4 of The Parks Canada Trails Manual of 1978. Where machines are required for upkeep work or re-routing, the tread width should not exceed 1 m.

Exploratory Trails (Minor)

These include all trails that do not fall into the other two categories. They should not be allowed to proliferate or to develop into major exploratory trails. Here no excess is appropriate over the 40–60 cm limit for tread width, except by traffic erosion.

Board of Directors 1997/98

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Membership

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

\$5.00/person

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Please fill in this form and mail it to:

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