
*The Friends of Mount Douglas
Park Society*



February 2003



FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK

**The Annual General Meeting
of the Society
will take place**

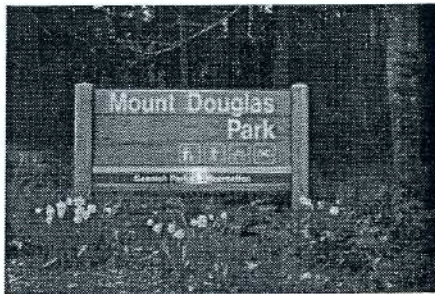
7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 9

**McMorran's Seaview Room
5109 Cordova Bay Road**

Speaker: Dave DeShane, retiring Parks Manager, Saanich

The nominating committee is made up of
Kay Porter, 658-5792
Jane Owen, 477-8963
Lori Vaninsberghe 472-1638

If you wish to nominate someone for a place on the Friends' executive,
please get in touch with one of the above.



President's Foreword

Greetings for 2003! Why so long since our last newsletter? Our plan was to bring one out in December last year. However, for better or for worse, there were too many rather critical issues still in an unsettled state when that time came around to make a progress report seem practicable.

We began the year with a new municipal Council. Happily, within our Society's lifetime councils in Saanich have become increasingly sensitive to, and protective of, community interests where those have run counter to others of a private, mainly lucrative kind. We are fortunate also that the composition of the incoming Council gives promise that this salutary trend will continue and improve.

Braefoot—Sadly, however, the previous Council took a retrograde and deplorable step in the final weeks of its office. One of our concerns has been that the approaches to the Park should blend appropriately into its natural features. A particularly appealing example of this type of blend could previously be enjoyed in the approach from Braefoot along Glendenning. While the last Council seemed to find the pressure to develop from property owners along Braefoot to be irresistible, it at least had the opportunity to moderate some of the predictable scenic degradation by ensuring that the forested portion at the corner of Mount Douglas Cross Road should be left more or less intact. Its evasion in this matter has now been well publicized. Apparently the developer didn't even abide by the rather meagre measures for tree preservation and habitat protection that Council had approved. Because of overcutting the windshield for trees was removed. One tree was blown down, causing an 8-hour power outage in part of the neighbourhood, with the further consequence that BC Hydro insisted on the few remaining companion trees being removed as well. This, of course, was very similar to what happened not so long ago at Vantreight Drive after the Glencoe Cove development. There a whole row of trees fell down because of the removal of established winter protection. How many times more, then, must such disasters occur before sanity commands a safe majority on Council? Oh sure, such and such a number of trees can be planted to replace every one that should not have come down. Oh sure, that would be better than making no repair at all. But even if the replacement is ultimately a benefit to our children or grandchildren, why should a whole generation have had the amenity of their neighbourhood blighted?

Habitat Acquisition Trust—On a happier note, Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), a local non-profit land trust organization, will very soon embark on a project of benefit to

the Park. This will be one part of a Good Neighbourhood program that it has begun to operate for natural parks in our region. The aim is to provide residents in the proximity of Mount Douglas Park with an evaluation of the environmental amenities of their property, and assistance in achieving the conservation goals they may set. After making an appointment by telephone, two personable young women from HAT will be visiting any resident in this category who is interested. They have already completed a similar project for Oak Haven Park in Central Saanich.

Traffic control and distribution—On the main front we continue to engage the municipality in discussion of traffic control and distribution in our area. What we have endeavoured to impress on the decision-makers in these matters is the need to address the problems specific to the road through the Park in the context of the capability of the whole adjacent road system. These problems arise out of the road's potential instability and consequent limited lifetime. Inseparable from this, of course, is the protection of the beach against band-aid measures designed to allow the road above it to carry the present and ever-increasing volume of traffic. More on this further into this newsletter.

Another Subdivision

Long rumoured and now due to begin. The area is within the old orchard that is bounded by Parkside, Cedar Hill Road and Mount Douglas Park. Inevitably this subdivision will have implications for the Park, and we have written to the municipal planner to draw his attention to these implications, under five main headings.

Buffering—Unless the lots proposed for the north side of the orchard are sited far enough away from the edge of the Park, sooner or later some of the new residents will be pressuring the municipality to cut down trees for reasons of safety. If they were to get their way, that in turn would expose trees further into the Park to weather conditions against which, without their former shield, they would have no defences. The initial plan for the subdivision does, indeed, provide for the drive that at present leads from Cedar Hill Road to the dwelling at the northwest corner of the orchard, by skirting the edge of the Park. This would distance the north edge of the new properties from that side of the Park, but at an insufficient width to allay the fears of the adjacent residents.

Stormwater detention—Stormwater control at the edge of Cedar Hill Road opposite Elnido has off and on presented problems. There has been quite frequent flooding at that point in the past. Hence unless some detention device is programmed for the development within its boundaries much trouble will be created for the future. Without such a device, furthermore, there will be an increase in the pollution of runoff into Douglas Creek.

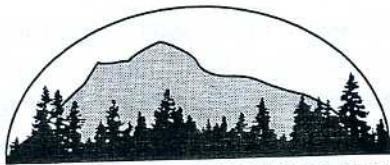
Protected streetscape—The protected streetscaping of Cedar Hill Road stops short of the Park, somewhere near Parkside. It is, however, desirable that it should extend all the way to the Park to prevent an over-harsh contrast between built-up conditions and the Park's natural aspect. We hope that trees will be planted to replace the hedge on the eastern side of the property, if that hedge is due to be removed.

Park access closure—By some strange anomaly, main access to the present dwellings at the top of the orchard has so far been permitted through a fire road within the Park, even though these dwellings are also serviced by two drives that go through the orchard. Thus the present owners invariably take their cars through this Park access, to the inconvenience of other Park users. From our point of view, the only saving feature of the subdivision proposed is that it would provide the occasion for that practice to be stopped by means of some barrier between the fire road and these dwellings.

Traffic—Though much of the traffic increase resulting from the subdivision would be to and from places within the main city, some of it is likely to be in the direction to and from the Pat Bay Highway. That, accordingly, will increase the traffic stress on the part of Cordova Bay Road that runs through the Park. Given the current lack of urgency with which the municipality is treating the need for traffic calming, the proposal for subdivision is therefore premature.

We have had an acknowledgement from the municipal planner to the effect that he has taken note of these five points and that they are under his consideration.

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WHAT'S CURRENTLY GOING ON.



FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK

Mt. Douglas Park at the crossroads once again

Welcome to 2003: the year of the road

In the following pages, you will find a summary of the changes that are scheduled to take place in this part of Saanich. All of them will increase the traffic flow through the Park and neighbouring communities unless steps are taken now to alleviate the traffic effects of the planned developments.

What can you do to help your community and the park?

Please read the summary and the suggestions for calming traffic (in the whole area as well as in your own) and then contact your Community Association or the Society and let them know your views.

The overture

Residents, land owners and park users in the part of Saanich enclosed by the Pat Bay highway, McKenzie Avenue and Sayward Road have many interests in common, but the most enduring and persistent problem they all face is the impact of commuter traffic passing through their communities. Over the last decade there has been a 30% increase in motor traffic through the Park, and thus similar increases to Gordon Head, Broadmead and Cordova Bay traffic. If the current policy of "let the traffic flow wherever it wants" is allowed to continue, there will be an additional massive increase in traffic by the year 2010 because of changes already planned for this part of Saanich.

The overall objective of the Society is to change the Municipality's policy of

"Let the traffic flow wherever it wants"

to

"Direct the commuter traffic along McKenzie and the Pat Bay Highway"

Such a major change in thinking will need all the communities in the area echoing the same fundamental themes, tailored to their own particular requirements and concerns. We believe those themes should be:

- Protecting our parks, green space and communities from the onslaught of commuter traffic.
- Working together, rather than letting one community be pitted against another.

Why now?

During the last year separate bits of information have emerged from many sources, each seeming to affect only small parts of the municipality. But when you join the dots, it's easy to see we are on the verge of another burst of change in Saanich.

The following sections recommend actions that will spare our communities from the traffic increases that will come along with those changes.

None of these actions can succeed without corresponding changes to the way traffic flows along the Pat Bay Highway and McKenzie Avenue. So this is also an argument for directing the taxpayers dollars assigned to transportation towards improving the performance of these roads as major commuter links within the Capital Region.

Sources of new traffic

University of Victoria

Over the last forty years the story from the Gordon Head campus has been one of continued and accelerating success locally, nationally and internationally. Tangible proof of this comes in the proposed UVic development plans, which would see the campus population grow from 18,000 individual students at present to approximately 25,000 by the year 2015. With a corresponding increase in teaching and support staff, the overall population will approach 30,000 and the vast majority of them will commute to the campus. So far, no traffic management plan has been prepared to deal with this expansion. Neighbouring communities are discussing their part of the problem, but in the broader perspective the traffic flowing north and west from the campus must be directed along McKenzie to prevent its intrusion into Gordon Head, the Blenkinsop Valley and North Quadra.

Central Saanich and the Sayward Interchange

For those of you with long memories, a trip through present day Central Saanich is reminiscent of similar journeys through Saanich in the sixties—the essential rural nature of the place, the pockets of industrial growth and the bulldozers at work creating subdivisions. We can expect to see a lot more traffic from the peninsula, and the vision the Ministry of Highways has for the Pat Bay Highway would see the south-moving traffic brought to an interchange at Sayward Road and given easy access to Cordova Bay and points south and east—in short, the northern end of a commuter link between Shelbourne/UVic and the Highway.

Rezoning

Rezoning is a fact of life in B.C. but there has been more activity than usual in the area around Mount Douglas Park in the last year. The Braefoot development is advancing, but as well as the inevitable increase in traffic it will cause, there are major questions about land use surrounding this project (which started life simply as a means of repairing old and faulty septic systems).

The Cedar Hill Road orchard project is in its infancy and, as everyone is now sensitized to the problems of development next to an urban forest (the foresters' term for Mount

Douglas Park), we can work for a better result in terms of land use. However, it will still increase traffic in the area.

By far the most important change is the one that was finalized last October, allowing two properties on Cordova Bay Road to be rezoned to include a pump station. It will have the capacity to handle all the effluent from the existing homes and from any further development all the way to the park boundary. As a result, an arc of land (stretching from the motel at the edge of the Park on Cordova Bay Road, through the Royal Oak/Blenkinsop intersection, down Blenkinsop to some point south of Pierce Crescent) will have all the municipal services required for subdivision—large enough to allow the development of another Sunnymead.

The only obstacle to these changes is the current zoning of the land. To their credit, the politicians have stated that they do not want to see mindless single family development throughout, and that any change to the urban containment boundary would be considered a major event. However, no one should be under any illusion that it is going to be easy to resist the pressure for development.

In-filling

Of all the communities in this area, Gordon Head is the most susceptible to this process because when most of the houses were constructed, the lot sizes were very generous. Under the current zoning, it is possible to remove an existing house and replace it with either two separate ones or a single monster home. If you drive up Ash Road, that process is clear for all to see, and it will continue throughout Gordon Head on a piecemeal basis for the foreseeable future.

Although the same process can take place in other parts of Saanich, the room to manoeuvre is much less and the increase in traffic will be smaller.

It is important to realize that the business world around us has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. People used to commute almost exclusively into the centre of Victoria, and Shelbourne Street was sacrificed to those commuters. Now, with the growth of Keating Cross Road and the cluster of companies around the airport, no community in this area is immune from the effects of commuter traffic.

The heart of the matter

Much of this new traffic is destined to flow through the Park unless active steps are taken to restrict it.

The road through the Park has become a traffic corridor by default—it was not designed to carry the present loads, let alone any expansion. Moreover, it is unstable and subject to collapse. One of those small items of information that emerged last year was the proposal to stabilize the cliff and secure the toe of the cliff. It is under review by a consultant who will bring forward recommendations later this year. Whatever is done to make the road more secure, it is vital that traffic calming measures are incorporated at the same time so that the route will be less attractive to people travelling from south of Gordon Head to north of Cordova Bay and west of Royal Oak.

Cordova Bay Road from the Park boundary to the Royal Oak Drive/Blenkinsop intersection will soon be closed to install the new sewer line, together with the long awaited bike lanes and footpath: the plans also include a series of new traffic calming measures. If Saanich can be persuaded to allow this traffic calming to continue through the Park, there will be a lowering of the average speed (now about 25 kph above the posted limit) which will encourage people who want to get to the highway in a hurry to use a different route.

We also want to ensure that when the road is reopened, no one can claim that it is available for unbridled future growth. If this is achieved, there will be a positive ripple effect throughout the surrounding rural and residential communities. Combined with some or all of the following suggested actions, major steps will have been taken towards saving our communities from the ravages of excessive motorized traffic.

Action plans

These suggestions are aimed at discouraging commuter traffic from using residential streets for their daily trips, and reducing the average travelling speed of all vehicles driving through our neighbourhoods.

- Level 1: These actions do not cost a great deal and have minor impact in isolation, but can make a significant difference when combined with other similar actions.
- Level 2 These actions do have a major cost associated with them and they can make a significant change by themselves.

The list is not exhaustive: the points are made for discussion only. The hope is that once each community begins to examine the traffic patterns through its neighbourhood, it will produce its own list of changes that would improve the quality of life for its residents.

The Park and its approaches

Level 1

- Enforce the speed limit
- Remove the road from the truck by law
- Remove the road from the scenic route
- Encourage multiple use of the road (cars, bikes, joggers, pedestrians, etc.)
- Plant trees

Level 2

- Create a sense of change to let people know they are entering a natural park by adding major signs on the approaches to the park at Ash/Majestic, Shelbourne/Kenmore, Glendenning/Mt.Douglas X Roads, Cedar Hill/Parkside Crescent, Cordova Bay Road/Blenkinsop
 - Reduce the lane width on the road
 - Add raised curbs
 - Add cross walks
 - Add speed tables to calm the traffic.
-

Gordon Head

Level 1

- In the section Shelbourne north of Feltham, paint the lines to show the road as one lane in each direction with the present inside lane clearly used for residential parking bus stops and right turn lanes.
- Alter the truck route by law so that trucks stay out of the residential areas and return to Mackenzie Avenue via Feltham and Cedar Hill Road.
- Encourage all traffic to use Feltham and Shelbourne rather than Gordon Head, Grandview and Ash.

Level 2

- Close the section of Cedar Hill Road between Mount Douglas X Road and Feltham to prevent commuters using Blenkinsop, Mount Douglas X Roads and Feltham as throughway to UVic.

Broadmead

Level 1

- Paint the bicycle lanes the whole length of Royal Oak Drive

Level 2

- Wherever possible, add more planters/dividers to reduce the width of the road.

Cordova Bay

Level 1

- Encourage the closure of the gravel pit
- Remove road from truck by law
- Paint the lanes on the road to clearly indicate residential parking, bus stops, etc.
- Continue the work of streetscaping along the road through the village
- Enforce the speed limit
- Add a four-way stop at Claremont and Cordova Bay Roads

Level 2

- Pursue the frontage road concept on the Highway as an alternative to traffic coming through the village
 - Change the signaling at Cordova Bay and Royal Oak Drive to encourage drivers to use Royal Oak Drive rather than Cordova Bay Road as access to the Highway.
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We have been here before!

In the early 90's Saanich engineers, under pressure from the Ministry of Highways, began assembling land from the Trans Canada Highway to Shelbourne via Wilkinson, Royal Oak Drive and the Park. The intention was to form a continuous road running parallel to McKenzie Avenue.

However, as the communities realized what was at stake they worked to ensure that their portion maintained its original character, or changed so that it did not become part of a four-lane road.

- Wilkinson road has had its status changed and it is no longer part of the truck route.
- Royal Oak Drive has been narrowed from a potential four lanes down to two lanes.
- The road through the Park has stayed in its original position and maintained its two-lane width.

What we are facing in the next eighteen months is a variation on this theme. This time the roads will all be two-lane and the connection will be to the Pat Bay Highway, but the concept is the same—to commandeer existing roads on either side of the Park and impose a commuter traffic link through those residential neighbourhoods and the Park.

Distribution

In addition to our normal pattern of distribution, this supplement will be distributed to the executive members of the community associations and to households along the affected routes.

Please let your community association executive know your opinions and make sure they are heard as each topic is raised.

Or you can contact the Friends of Mt. Douglas Park Society at the address below.

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society
4623 Cordova Bay Road
Victoria V8X 3V6
Telephone: (250) 658-5873

Douglas Creek

Bob Bridgeman, our Director of Streams and writer of this column, is juggling studies and job and Creek even harder than ever, so his report on Douglas Creek carries us up only to October of 2002. He promises a full update in the next newsletter.

Did anyone else note the unusually luxuriant plant growth in the park last spring into early summer— salal eighteen inches of growth; stinging nettle seven feet tall. and the same sort of growth in red elderberry and Indian plum? With July's warm weather came thoughts of propagation of native plant species for restoration planting in the riparian zone of the Creek. Beyond enjoying native plant ecology in the park setting is the utilitarian perspective of using the plants for bioengineering—to hold stream banks together and to provide cover over shady pools.



Looking at the seed production of the various species as they wax into fullness and wane into seed banks for future times, is a wonderful way to enjoy the seasonality of plants. It has been interesting to watch the progression from Indian plum into red elderberry and then into mock orange and alder and then red osier dogwood. We have permission from Saanich Parks to harvest some seeds to experiment with propagation techniques, on the understanding that whatever we grow will be returned to the Park. All the plants mentioned produced bumper crops of seeds this year, excepting the red osier dogwood, which was sparse. These can all be grown from seed so we will do a bit of experimenting and see what comes up.

These species can also be grown from both semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings. We have tried a few semi-hardwood cuttings of cottonwood, willow and red osier dogwood and all show promise. If they carry on come next spring perhaps we can look at more. We plan to stick some hardwood cuttings directly into the stream banks this winter to get an idea of how a proven successful technique works in the Park environment.



Of course, when we try new things we learn new things, and not always what we expect. The cottonwood stakes we stuck in last April proved irresistible to the resident

deer population. The alders we planted in November of 2001 suffered much the same fate. The cottonwoods may recover but 90% of the alders are dead. We planted them along the stream bank just upstream of the Ash Road bridge culvert, in the expectation that they would take off and stabilize the streambank. The channel is cutting down into some older gravel deposits just there, hence the water is moving away from the alder root systems. So maybe the alders were just too dry this summer, or perhaps it is just too dark a spot after heavy browsing or perhaps all three impacts were just too much.

Earlier in the summer we were able to get our hands on 80 alder plugs which we transplanted into one-gallon pots in good soil. We nursed them through the summer and will give it another shot in a different place. That was part of our Significant Tree Day in Saanich on November 3, along with planting some other tree and shrub species supplied by Ron Carter, Saanich's tree preservation officer, and other partners of the Significant Tree Committee.

On August 5 we picked up the egg cassettes from the February eyed-egg transplant. We left them in the gravel too long to get an effective impression of the egg-to-fry survival rate. Some of the cells in the cassettes had leeches and other invertebrates in them, so it takes no stretch of the imagination to suppose that any remains of spoiled eggs are dealt with by critters that find eggs mighty tasty. We will have to work out the timing on the pick-ups a little better. We want to ensure that late hatchers have an opportunity to button up and to move out into the stream, yet we want to count spoiled eggs. The percent of eggs hatched is a good indicator of conditions in the creek—positive in previous years.

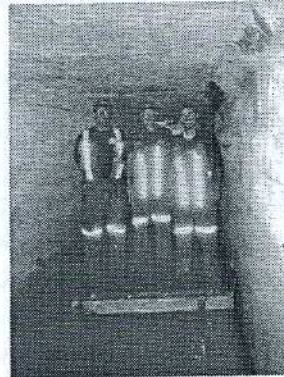
On August 28 we walked the Creek with John Lee, the municipal arboriculture charge hand, looking for opportunities to put some large woody debris into the stream. Early in September John and the arboriculture crew came in and bucked some large Douglas fir windfalls adjacent to and in the Creek. While they were in there they knocked the top off that split Douglas fir on the side of the fire road just across from the weir. The top fell right next to the Creek. Perhaps next year we can plan to move one end of that into the channel. The stem was left standing as a wildlife tree—safe for passers-by since it leans away



from the path. Thanks to Dave Hill, John Lee and the crew of workers. Nice job. We hope for the same each year, for as long as there are opportunities.

On September 7 we put our fish traps in, then picked them up the morning of September 8. It was a bit of a scramble—since it started to rain, we picked the traps up in a hurry. There were no fish in any of them, but we saw some outside the trap, just upstream of Ash Road Bridge. Trapping is hit and miss. We are sure that there are coho fry in the Creek, we just don't know how many.

On September 18 Centra Gas sent in a work crew to replace a missing baffle in the culvert under Ash Road Bridge. It was a wonderful piece of work and very much appreciated. It saved us a lot of work and trouble. There are not enough hours in the day and when a company steps forward to help it is meaningful. Thanks to Susan Low and Tom Rutherford for putting the pieces together and to the CEO Jac Kreut and workers Darrin Crozier, Dean Mace, Eric Hoekstra, and Steve Lodge. Great job.



We celebrated BC Rivers Day on September 29 by cleaning a cubic metre of trash out of the Creek. Thanks to Sara Stallard, Scott Keesey, Steve Paterson, Andrew Marchand, Joey Browne, Jay Marshall, Lori VanInsberghe, Laura Bridgeman, and Bob Bridgeman for their litter-picking and to Saanich Parks for picking up the bagged trash and taking it away.

Lots of coho around this year so keep your fingers crossed. It is only a matter of time.

Broom Clearing

Our sister organisation, GORP (Garry Oak Restoration Project), has been working to improve conditions for a Garry oak meadow on the west side of the park. On the mornings of Sunday December 1, 2002 and January 26, 2003, volunteers from that group and ours joined to clear broom from a site that is suitable for this restoration project. Since the last clearing on the west side broom has been regenerating, and the site will need further attention over the next few years.

Churchill Drive

You might have seen the people from Saanich Parks making some changes to the parking area at the foot of the Drive. They are creating more parking spaces to accommodate the increasing numbers who want to park and then hike to the summit or along the trails on either side of the Drive. It is very encouraging to see so many more people using the park in this way but it would be wrong to impose this extra parking on the surrounding neighbourhood—in this case, Cedar Hill Road. In addition, we have asked them to move the gate further up the Drive so that the very popular "Sunday morning without Traffic" event can continue its expansion.

Many people who walk to the summit on Sundays have asked the Society to try to get the road closed on Saturday as well. However, Council is unlikely to approve such a change, as it would deprive people who have difficulty walking of access to one of the regions most breathtaking vistas. But all is not lost; after looking at sites around the world the most common solution to the problem could be a shuttle bus. In this case it would have to be a quiet electric bus, but it could be an ideal way of introducing one of B.C.'s major hi-tech success stories to the general public. Using non-polluting fuel cell technology in a quiet mini bus might do the trick. What do you think of having such a link operating on Friday or Saturday or ? Let's hear your views

Trail Walkers Guide

Not a guideon where to go, but on where NOT to go. With increasing use over the years, not only by walkers but by bikers as well, some of the trails have begun to deteriorate.

- Corners are being cut where one trail meets another, eventually leading to delta configuration and wide areas of bare earth.
 - Perpendicular tracks between lateral trails are being worn into the hillside, thus creating channels for water erosion.
 - Trails are splitting unnecessarily around many of the trees that they skirt.
 - More generally, trails are braiding into several strands that weave in and out of each other.
 - As well, they have begun to bulge in and out in a way that makes unnecessary and unsightly incursions into the bordering vegetation.
-

- In places where broom has helped hitherto to confine a trail to a single track it has been removed.

The aim of this note is to draw attention to the harmful effects of some of our more carefree practices while walking in the park. Of course, now that so much damage has been done how do you decide on which of the two available ways you should skirt a tree or which strand in a braiding you should follow?

Part of the solution will lie in a program we hope to set up to eliminate the need to make such choices. This will consist in making use of much of the fallen wood that lies around trails for the purpose of constructing boundaries that will confine them. Without appearing intrusive, wood piles can be used for blocking superfluous pathways or for stabilising corners. One or two of these are already in place. When you pass any, you might like to add more to them. Cut or fallen tree stems can also be used to delineate trail edges. By the time you read this we hope that volunteers will have begun to work on the project.

From Sea to Sky

All of the images in this issue of the newsletter except for that of the Centra Gas team, are from photographs taken by Mike Vaninsberghe, our Youth Representative. He photographs Mount Douglas Park entire, from water to skyline—plants, animals, the beach ecosystem, the forest, an unparalleled record for today and the future.

