



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

FROM THE DISHMAN HILLS

NOVEMBER, 1986

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH WASTE

Perhaps more heat than light has been generated by Spokane city and county governments' decision to build a "waste to energy" plant. We understand that the State Department of Ecology's top priority for waste is to reduce the amount produced; next, to recycle waste, at last, to use waste to produce energy.

A "waste to energy" plant can only partly solve the disposal problem. There would, admittedly, be a sizeable volume of ash to be put somewhere. Serious questions have been raised as to solid particle and toxic fume pollutants, especially from plastics, that could be released into the air. The high cost of the waste to energy plant possibly could be better used on other solutions.

The department's top two priorities make far better ecological sense. Nature has been using them for perhaps two billion years with undeniable success. The key to this success appears to be nature's refusal to accept the idea that anything is necessarily "waste". Air, water and minerals are used to make plant and animal bodies and are eventually returned to the natural system and reused. Energy is reused to a lesser extent but this poses no serious problem for there is a practically inexhaustible source to replace it: the sun.

In human society there seems to be little effort to reduce waste. In fact wasting can, alas, appear to be profitable. Products that wear out readily or cannot be repaired or that we don't really need, generate demand and so "help the economy" at least for those industries that produce them. For society as a whole, however, this is surely a waste of materials and energy.

As for recycling, society is making some progress, though the bulk of our "waste" still goes into the landfill (garbage dump). Recycling aluminum probably provides the best success story though pop and beer cans still show up in the garbage. Glass recycling seems to be improving. Although paper and cardboard recycling handles a good volume, probably most of these still go into the garbage. Some people compost their food scraps but much more goes to the dump, where good old nature helps by providing gulls to eat some of it and the rest enriches the soil. The problem with dumps is, of course, that land for them has become too expensive. (Will Rogers many years ago remarked that the trouble with land is that they don't make it any more.)

(continued in column 2)

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving some of the natural areas of the Spokane area for people to enjoy and learn from. Larry Thieman, President; Thomas H. Rogers, Vice-President and bulletin editor; Helen E. Lininger, Secretary; David E. Lentes, Treasurer.

We offer slide programs on the Dishman Hills and other outdoor subjects, and guide service on hikes in the Hills. No charge for these. Call us at 926-7949 for arrangements. Our monthly meetings during the winter are at Riverview Retirement Center, E. 1801 Upriver Drive, the fourth Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. You are welcome to attend.

OCT. DONATIONS HELP MEET PAYMENT

October donations to our land fund amounted to \$1833.07. At this rate they will cover our quarterly payment of \$4000.28 due December 15. Many thanks to the following friends of the Hills who gave money or services or saved recyclables during October: Lorraine Barnes, Jack/Cornelia Bratten, Gary Brewster, Vera Carpenter, Brian/Doris Donnelly, Karin Ellis, Frank Freeze, Rita Glenson, Growing Pains Garden Club, Mr./Mrs. Donald Hagan, P.R./Eris Heggen, C.A./Karen Hinman, Beverly Hinton, Lady Bugs Garden Club, Myrtle Lang, Christine Larsen, Mary Lee, David Lentes, Dr./Mrs. W.W. Lockwood, Dr. Angelo Lurus, Bernadine McClincy, Mary Meagher, Patricia Murray, Dr. Ian Napier, Helen Nelson, Sylvia Olsen, Joy Peterson, Frank/June Potter, Ambrose/Willene Priestley, Tom Rogers, Dr. Winston Rowe, Dennis/Doni Sanders, Elizabeth Saunders, Hazel Secord, Hazel Smith, Southeast Lions Club, Mary Sweeting, Larry Thieman, Barney/Jeanne Wilson.

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Reprocessing of iron and steel, copper and brass seems to be doing quite well, except for "tin" cans, which are mostly iron. (We import about half of our iron ore from other countries.) A major problem is plastics, which mostly do not break down in dumps, since soil bacteria and fungi lack the enzymes to do this. More and more products come in plastic, from bread, milk and soft drinks to toilet paper, auto oil and myriad small articles. Things we buy may be placed in plastic carrying bags and our garbage goes into plastic trash bags.

Aldo Leopold, that pioneer wildlife manager and conservationist, wrote in the 30's that the modern dogma is convenience at any price. We are now reaping the results of this convenience. By and large we still believe that we can continue this forever and still keep the earth livable. But there is no free lunch. We have to pay the check sooner or later.

Please use this form when sending contributions
(Contributions are income tax deductible)

Account No. **14391**

\$ _____ Land purchase fund

\$ _____ Memorial for _____

\$ _____ Annual Dues (\$10) New? ___ Renewal? ___

\$ _____ Student or Living Lightly (\$5)

Please make checks payable to Dishman Hills Natural Area Association and mail to The Treasurer, P.O. Box 14141, Spokane, WA 99214-0141. Many thanks!