



Lights and Shadows from the Dishman Hills, August, 1998

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

So far the fire season has been kind to the Hills, knock on wood. The grasses and bushes are turning brown and the forest is doing it's annual "dry up" act. It makes one shutter to see a recently used fire pit (not allowed!), a discarded cigarette, or an expended match this time of year. The recent fire history of the area includes many human-caused fires that were a result of carelessness, and sometimes criminal intent. So, some of us are holding our breath this time of year as the temperature and wind speed climb, looking forward to an early Fall when the rain and cooler temperatures return.

If you are hiking on the east side of the Natural Area near Goldback Springs you might notice a work crews removing downed and dead trees. We decided that responsible management of this area is to remove all the dead debris from Icestorm to greatly reduce the fire danger to the houses along the Natural Area boundary. The Icestorm damage was especially intense here amongst the young pines that filled the area around the Siesta Court trailhead. Thicker wood will be left on the ground, but limbs and needles will be removed since this is potential fuel for hot and fast moving fires. While this is contrary to our "leave it alone" philosophy, we feel this is good land stewardship in a natural area that is being surrounded by urban growth.

ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving natural areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton at 747-8147 with any questions. We have our monthly meeting at Opportunity Elementary School, South 1109 Wilbur, the third Tuesday at 7 PM, **you are cordially invited.**

The response to our urgent appeal for donations was most encouraging, ensuring that we can meet our September land payment and have a good start on money for the December payment.

Those responsible for this good news for July/August donations, and have given permission to be listed here are: James Berry, Brad Blegen, Carolyn Boatsman, Helen Cook, Myrtle Erickson, June Foote, John Gardner, George/Lila Girvin, Claire Goudge, Mr./Mrs. Kenneth Gudgel, Bart Haggin, Adeline Haynes, Eris Heggem, Karen Holden, Betty Hughes, Rich Landers, Helen Lininger, Brian Miller, Maynard Nelson, Don/Gloria Nicol, Janice Mahoney, W.Gale Mueller, C.R. Orcutt, Joy Peterson, Francis/June Potter, Tom Rogers, Marjorie/Dr. Paul Rozell, Mary Rudd, Holly Sonneland, Helen Stowell, Betty Stratton, Patricia Sweeney, Florence Thayer, Beth/Ed Tietjen, Robert Turner, Mrs. Wm. Vogt, Mary Water, Nan Waters, Jody/Mike Wende, Mary Ann Wilharm, Jeanne Wilson, Sylvia/Robert Wilson, and two anonymous doners

SPECIAL ECOLOGY

What makes the Dishman Hill's ecology different from your back yard? While there are a number of reasons, probably the most significant difference is the rugged, rocky topography. This terrain has kept the Hills isolated from many of the effects of human development such as exotic plants and animals, grazing, and the general environmental destruction associated with development. Another effect of the topography is the retention of water in the numerous depressions and pothole ponds, forming microenvironments and refuges for native plants from fire and drought. These refuges retain diverse plant communities that can, if necessary, supply plants to other areas pressured by lack of water, fire, or invasion of noxious weeds.

The ecology has a major problem not directly associated with fire, weeds, or drought; we are loving it to death. Because of our efforts to view, enjoy, and explore the Hill's ecology, foot paths have multiplied, increasing erosion and compressing the soil. Trails are also conduits for incursion of noxious weeds. We are combating this environmental pressure by closing tails where they are not really needed. Recreational uses of higher environmental impact have had to be limited as more people are seeking areas for their special activities. Another "love" effect is the encircling of the Natural Area with housing. After all, what a back yard to have! We are continuing to obtain addition land that will extend the Natural Area out to the natural topographic boundaries, and to establish animal corridors connecting the Hills with other natural areas. Whenever you are in the Hills both enjoy and **respect** the special ecology.

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