

A VERY GOOD YEAR

2002 was a very good year for the Association. The biggest event was our purchase of 100 additional acres of forest land on Tower Mtn. This latest deal is the perfect compliment to our original 1994 land purchase on Tower Mtn. It lies adjacent and east of the original parcel and gives us ownership of most of a canyon on the north side of the mountain. We are now saddled paying off about \$74 K over the next 10 years with quarterly payments totaling \$9.5 K per year. We will be trying to pay down this amount as fast as possible depending on our income, which is hard to predict. Other events included real progress with the "Dream Trail" project to connect the Dishman Hills and the Rocks of Sharon to the south, our efforts that helped in the successful vote for the County's Conservation Futures Program, and the reorganizing and computerizing of our accounting system.

Donations in 2002 totaled about \$12.8 K, a fabulously generous amount considering the general economic downturn we are all experiencing. We also benefited from donated legal, accounting, and real estate services that help us throughout the year and hundreds of volunteer hours that keep the Association running. Operating expenses for the year ran about \$1.6 K consisting mainly of newsletter expenses, taxes, and permits. The closing and loan setup cost on our land purchase ran about \$3K. As always we strive to keep expenses at rock bottom, ignoring suggestions that we spend more for fund-raising or PR. We want as many of your dollars as possible to go to saving natural space thorough land purchase. Our 990 tax form will be available for public inspection when completed sometime this spring. Again we are supplying supporters with an annual accounting of donations for their 2002 tax records. If you do not receive a statement attached to this newsletter, it means that our records indicate we did not receive any dues or donations from you last year.

NEW POLICY

You might have noticed that the mobile home that has been parked at Camp Caro has been removed and the addition of several "cars will be towed" signs. The trailer unit was the quarters of a County Parks worker whose duties included park maintenance and security of the Camp area. Security here is now provided by Argus Services who will be locking up the gates at dusk every day. If you fail to leave the lot by dusk, you can either call Argus (phone number posted at the Camp lot) to open the gate for a charge or wait for the following day. Parks also plans to be more aggressive in towing cars left in the lot, and may put in some additional lighting to discourage vandalism, which can increase without an onsite person.

DEAD OF WINTER

This winter there have been several bodies found in or near the Natural Area. Both incidences involve hikers spotting bodies stretched out on the ground on blankets. According to police reports, both appeared not to have involved any foul play. Both are also part of an mostly untold story of the use of urban forest by those that have no other place to go.

*Now I see the secret of the making of the best person
It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the Earth*
— Walt Whitman

Last year a woman's body was found on a blanket in Deep Ravine on the NE side. Her car was parked at Camp Caro and it appears she hiked over to an isolated area of the forest to be alone in an area that she was familiar with. The other, a 46 year old male transient with a bicycle was found in a sleeping bag near the NE boundary of the Natural Area off Dishman Road. Both were believed to have died from exposure, possibly combined with a weakened body associated with their life style. This area of the NRCA has a history of use by transients. In the 1930s a hobo village was a fixture here, where the forest is close to the railroad. A local elderly lady in an interview several years ago related her impressions of her venture to the village as a child. She said that the transients constructed small shacks of available scrap materials, and she was impressed with their efforts to make do with very little. She found them friendly, fairly neat, and mentioned being impressed with efforts to add some architectural detail to their shacks, such as arched doorways. At this site there are several shack ruins and the pieces of a distillation operation hidden away in a ravine.

One can only hope that those two poor souls whose lives ended alone and in the bitter cold found some comfort in being surrounded by a natural setting devoid of a human engineered world that, apparently, dealt them a pretty bad hand.

ORGANIZATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have any questions. We meet every other month on the third Tuesday at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur, in the teacher's lounge, 7pm. Our next meeting will be March 18.

The following are our December donors that have consented to be listed: Brad Blegen, Vivian & Tom Caufied, Myrna Cliff, Helen Cook, Signe Currier, William Fix, Gary & Andrea Gunning, Merry Herron, Hobnailers, Karol Kaye, Camille Kovarik, Sunnie Lancaster, Patrick Lettermaier, Arla Lewis, Pat & Ruth Manners, Marilyn Miller, Jim Qualls, Norma Rosenberger, Luella Rowberg, Shirley Schmidt, Spokane Mountaineers, Beth & Ed Tietjen, Jeanne Wilson, Larry & Mary Wright, and seven anonymous donors. Wow, in this season of giving what support!

Please use this form when sending **CONTRIBUTIONS** or **DUES**

All contributions are tax deductible

SEND CONTRIBUTIONS TO: DHNAA

3415 S. Lincoln Dr.

Spokane, WA 99203

Your Name: _____

Please put your account no. on your check (see on address)

\$ _____ MEMORIAL FOR _____

\$ _____ LAND PURCHASE FUND

\$ _____ ANNUAL DUES due in January (\$10 regular, \$5 student or living lightly, \$2 to cover bulletin expenses)

New ? Renewal ? Don't list me as donor

Please tell us if this newsletter is unwanted or if there is an address mistake