

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

November 2003

SUCCESS !!

This Halloween it was treat rather than trick for the Association. On October 31 the Spokane County completed the transfer of the surplus Tower Mtn. parcel to us. The entire transfer from the State, to County, then to us, took 8 months, and there were plenty of "hoops" to jump through. The property came with a number of conditions including perpetual requirements to use the land for open space or recreation, and not to cut any timber (no problem). We also had to address all the County's concerns in a 30 year agreement to shelter them from liability and to assure that the land doesn't come bouncing back to them. It was all worth it, ten times over. The transfer of this 240 acres of forest, assessed at \$640K, is the Association's largest step yet in saving nature space for future generations. The property is in fine shape, but has no public access yet. For a while it will have to be just prime wildlife habitat. Public recreation will follow in the future when we can establish access with additional easements or land purchases. This event would not have happened without the help from others including the Dept. of Natural Resources, Spokane County Parks and Recreation, and Inland Northwest Land Trust. The Trust backed us up at a critical time by offering to take this parcel if the Association ever ceases to exist.

EAGLE HELP

The following article is written by Scott Grimmett, Scoutmaster Troop 405. We really appreciate the efforts of the troop to make the Natural Area a better place for hikers.

"Four Eagle Scout projects were completed along the Pond Short Trail this past summer and fall. All the projects were organized by Eagle Scout candidates from Troop 405. The projects included trail restoration, erosion control, and trail improvement. Brett Walker of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources provided instruction and materials for the projects. Several local business also donated materials for the project.

Randy Harward made getting up the hill just West of Camp Caro easier by installing 20 timber steps on the trail. He led the planting of 30 ponderosa pine trees above the trail to reduce erosion. Twenty scouts and adults participated in the project that took the better part of a Saturday to complete. Randy's project was completed on one of those hot summer days and everyone was glad when it was finished.

Jesse Croskrey mitigated the erosion of the trail just below the junction to the East/Ponds. He and about twenty-five scouts and adults installed 30 timber steps. The steps act as miniature dams that act to slow down the rainwater that runs down the trail thus reducing the erosion. Jesse, his brother, Jason, and his dad carried all 30 the timber steps up to the site the night before the project. This was no easy task as the steps are 6x6 inch treated timbers four-foot length and had to be carried about 1/4 of a mile up a hill.

Chris Grimmett restored the steep rocky slope just West of Camp Caro back to its natural condition. For many years, this steep sloop was used as the trail to the ponds. Two years ago, this trail was bypassed with a much easier switch back trail. While most hikers use the new switch back trail, the vegetation on steep slope was not recovering because of use by unauthorized 4 wheel drive vehicles. Chris led a group of twenty-seven scouts and adults in blocking off the old trail with large fallen tree trunks. To prevent vandals from moving the tree barriers the trunks were anchored to the ground with rebar. The compacted ground on the old trail was ditch to reduce erosion and aerated to stimulate plant growth. Further, ponderosa

pine and natural grasses were planted on the old trail to speed the restoration. It took 14 people to carry in each of the four large tree trunks used as barriers.

Brent Goldsberry improved accessibility to the ponds by rerouting a steep rocky section of the trail. Brent and crew constructed a new switch back trail with an easier grade around the rocky section. The old trail was hidden and vegetation added to prevent its use. About 30 scouts and adults participated in the project. A large rock had to be moved to make way for the new trail that took 10 people pushing with pry bars and others pulling to roll the rock out of the trail.

The scouts of Troop 405 are happy to provide this service to the community and the Dishman Hills Natural area and look forward to further service opportunities in the Dishman Hills."

ATTACK

A short while ago the Natural Area was "attacked" by a small group of 4-wheel drive vehicles that plowed their way from Appleway up to the ponds, damaging the newly improved trail that the Eagle Scouts worked so hard on last summer. A member of the Association was present and intercepted the group that claimed to be part of a 4-wheel drive club in the Valley. When asked to leave the member was threatened, but they did leave. More later.

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 January 20. This will be our annual election meeting.

The following are our October donors that have consented to be listed: Margaret Bloom, Michael Edwards, Victoria Freeman, Addie Haynes, Eris Heggem, The Hobnailers, Cynthia Langlois, Linda Martin, Kerry Masters, NE Chapter of the Native Plant Society, Grace Rawlings, S. Scrimshire, Peter Witherspoon, and one anonymous. Thank you all for making this a landmark month.

When one tugs at a single thing in Nature, he finds it is attached to the rest of the world - - John Muir

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