

# LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the  
Dishman Hills

August 2006

## BIG ROCK DEAL STARTS

The following story was written by Tom Lutey for the Spokesman Review and was printed on Tuesday, August 22. It captures the details of the signing for the exchange agreement the Association has made to obtain the Big Rock land as an important addition to the natural area on Tower Mtn. The next step is to raise funds to retire the contract on the land we are exchanging. It's all coming together but we are still holding our breath till closing.

He's a rock star now. For years, Bob Hamacher's name has been uttered in frustration by hikers and climbers covetous of the Costco-size boulder he co-owns as a member of Spokane Investors LLC.

Locals know the 10-story granite mass dubbed "Big Rock" as one of the area's best rock-climbing spots, a place on Spokane's southeast flank where some climbers have trained before ascending Mount Everest. But they also know Big Rock, the largest rock of the Rocks of Sharon, as private property and they know Hamacher forbids trespassers.

Monday, on behalf of the Spokane Investors, Hamacher agreed to trade Big Rock and the 80 acres on which it sits to the Dishman Hills Natural Area Association for 80 acres off Hallett Road in Spokane Valley.

Years ago, Spokane Investors use the rock as a perch for a communication radio tower.

The Dishman Hills Association has made several purchases in recent years near Big Rock. Spokane County has done the same, leveraging voter-approved conservation money to buy land in the area. More than 1,000 acres in the area are now in the public trust.

The land will remain private and off-limits until the deal closes sometimes in the next 45 days.

The negotiations of one kind or other to make Big Rock available to the public have gone on for 15 years. Hamacher credited the Dishman Hills association on Monday with crafting an acceptable proposal.

"It's always been our intent to figure out how to get it into nonprofit hands," Hamacher said. "We're confident that its in the right hands. If someone walked in tomorrow and said, 'here's cash - take it,' we probably wouldn't. It's a beautiful area."

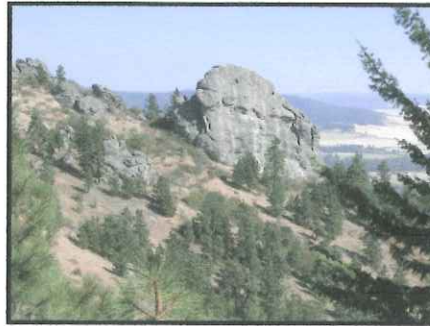
Hamacher said talks leading to the agreement have been in the works for only a few years. Earlier talks centered on either Spokane County or the Dishman Hills association buying the land outright, but the amount never was acceptable according to news accounts.

Spokane County wanted to buy Big Rock using the Conservation Futures program, but the program allowed the county to pay only the appraised value for the land, which was a deal breaker. Located on a ridge dividing Moran Prairie and Spokane Valley, Big Rock dovetailed nicely with the 800-acre Iller Creek area already owned by the county.

The Dishman Hills association went as far as trying to buy Big Rock for more than appraised value so the group could sell it to the county for the required price of appraised value. The group would have had to pay Spokane Investors \$340,000 for the land, said geologist Michael Hamilton, who negotiated the land swap for the Dishman Hills association. When it became clear the group lacked the needed cash, a land swap was proposed.

*This being the only living world we are ever likely to know, let us join to make the most of it* — Edward Wilson, 1985

The 80 acres the Dishman Hills group offered in trade contains an unnamed creek and forest access road. As a condition of the swap, those areas will remain open to public and off-limits to development in order to preserve wildlife habitat and trail access. Zoning for the rest of the land limits homes to one per 20 acres. Hamacher's investment group has no current plans for the land. Before the swap can be finished, the Dishman Hills group will be scrambling to pay off \$46,000 it still owes on the Hallett Road land, Hamilton said. Over the years, group members have pledged \$42,000 for paying off the debt. That money will now have to be paid within two weeks. In addition, to group will have to raise the remaining \$4,000.



**The Prize**

**Help us get  
Big Rock**

## 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 are taking our summer break and meet next will be on the third Tuesday of the month, September 19th, at 7pm, at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur.

The following are our June and July donors that have consented to be listed: Julie Donaldson, Robert Downing, Bruce Erickson, Celesta Frost, Mary Gardner, Sondra Goodner, Gloria Krebs, John Landt, Hugh Lefcort, Janette Lentes, Bettie Maron, Hubert Marsh, Della Meyer, Leo Middendorf, Margaret Millsap, Joy Peterson, Janna Pontieri, Janet Reynolds, Harold Skinner, Adin & Cindy Smith, Terry Smith, Holly Sonneland, Cynthia Stevenson, Mike & Jody Wende, Jeanne Wilson, and one anonymous donor. Thank you for your generous support.

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