

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society



Fall 2009

The Salmon Return!

And He's a Beauty!

What a finale to our Tree Appreciation Day planting and reward for the many volunteers working that day and over the past year...six big, powerful chum salmon were spotted working their way up Douglas Creek!

Watch for more salmon returning with the next rain and high tide!

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Bequest

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society are very pleased to have received the generous bequest of \$2000 from Marshal (Marsh) Ney in memory of his wife Irene.

Marsh and Irene moved to Edgemont Road next to the Park over 25 years ago when Marsh retired from the RCMP in Ottawa. Irene was born in the southern, flat part of Saskatchewan. Marsh says she always was a “prairie girl” and this was one of the reasons she really enjoyed their walks through Mount Douglas Park. For her, the beautiful heavily-forested trails, each of the hills as one walked around the base, the native plants and even all the bugs were something new and special. Marsh says she did get lost on more than one walk in the Park, and our efforts to add way-finding signs would be something she would have welcomed.

The bequest is gratefully acknowledged, and we will be speaking with Marsh about possibilities.

A vision for Douglas Creek

We have been working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Saanich Parks, Saanich Engineering and Saanich Environmental Services to lay out a vision for Douglas Creek and the Douglas Creek watershed—what Douglas Creek will look like when we call it done (and when we have figured out how), and how we are going to get there. We have created a draft 5-year plan for restoring the Creek via instream work and stormwater management on the watershed. It is not easy, with all the diverse perspectives, but it is such an important exercise that we are all trying to align the interests that we share.

Crayfish transplant

The long planned-for and years-in-the making crayfish transplant finally happened this summer. Volunteers from the Howard English Hatchery saved the crayfish they trapped along with the coho fry they were salvaging from drying pools in Goldstream River tributaries, brought them down to Douglas Creek and released them in pools behind the weir and downstream of the weir. Although we were looking for and had a permit for 100 crayfish, we could only get 57 mixed males and females, but that’s a good beginning because now we have some top-of-the-food-chain crustaceans processing wood and leaves

for the sustenance of benthic invertebrates resident in the Creek.

Thanks again to the volunteers from the hatchery and to all the other people who worked hard over the last two years to make this happen.

Benthic invertebrates

We are active in the Creek again with our benthic invertebrate monitoring project. The number of complex invertebrates and the biodiversity of the invertebrate community give us a snapshot of long-term processes that are affecting the health of Douglas Creek. We are fortunate to have an expert entomologist working with us. Leon Gaber has been out with us, setting up sampling reaches and collecting samples. Much work remains to be done with sorting and classifying invertebrates, but years of sampling data will tell us whether the work we are doing to improve the health of the Creek is showing up in the ecological relationships in the Creek.

Welcome aboard, Leon, and thank you for your expert help.

Habitat restoration

A large habitat restoration project in the Creek is a tough job, but that is what we accomplished this summer. In October 2008 we made a funding proposal to the Pacific Salmon Foundation. PSF approved it and funded us for the amount we requested, \$13,226. With the initial cash in hand, we were able to leverage additional funds and in kind to make the habitat project possible.

Even then, there were many meetings to attend, planning sessions to work through and Creek walks to get the scope of work right. What made the project possible was the number of first class project partners we worked with—outstanding really. Our old friend Steve Hocquard (who has sadly moved to Ontario) conferred with us via email and built concept drawings for the work. We had help from local stream restorationists Kelly McKeown and Jim Hamly to measure out material requirements and to plan material drop sites: remember that we are working in a deeply eroded gully, and getting material into it was one of the most difficult challenges.

Then there was the star of the show: Saanich Parks. Parks had originally committed to 90 yards of boulders and spawning gravel, but from the figuring and planning evolved a serious case of scope creep. Parks ended up supplying: 190 yards of boulders, sand and



Saanich crews slide large rocks down chute to build spawning pools and riffles.

spawning gravel, as well as five long Douglas fir stems. It was a major problem, but the people who work for Parks sorted it out like the true professionals they are. As it turned out the boulders were almost too big to fit into the chute system used to deliver material into the Creek. Huge piles of boulders had to be handled one at a time to get them into the chute. But they did it at two drop sites, and they had it all in before the next stage of the project. That was very well done!

Once the material was in the Creek, Len Masson arrived with his Spyder Hoe—walked it down into the Creek, and started work. It is often said that good machine operators are worth their weight in gold. Certainly the case with Len and even more so with the Spyder Hoe; an extremely useful machine and an operator who knows how to use it, and how to

create habitat with it.

Three-and-a-half days and Len was done. He ran us out of material building riffles amongst the woody debris. He also walked the machine down the Creek and built a Finnegan's Rake woody debris structure to protect a badly eroding stream bank; while down there he repaired a woody debris structure which was creating a good pool with a downstream tail out, frequently used as spawning habitat by chum. Len is a special person: we need to see a lot more of him for the next five or so years.



. . . continued

Next summer we are planning to work upstream in the badly eroded bare reaches above Ash Road—another wonder of planning and team effort. The funding proposal is in, the upper reaches will be surveyed before Christmas, and we are looking for a ‘wizard’ to help us with the woody debris design.

We want to use woody debris engineered structures to control the horrendous erosion that unregulated stormwater flows are wreaking on the creek banks. We also want to create spawning habitat for chum and coho salmon as well as overwintering and oversummering habitat for coho. Moreover, we need boulder clusters and spawning gravel so that there are stable gravel accumulations for fish to spawn. Notably, Saanich Parks has already begun stockpiling wood and root balls for that purpose. You can see them stacked up along the fire road that runs from Shelbourne Street to the weir. This is definitely forward thinking on the part of Parks, and we think we can make it all come together. It is not about us, or our difficulties and challenges; it is about the survival of salmon species, the health of the Park, and amenities for the public who use it. It is too important not to do.

Interpretive signs

We still have a project funded by the Pacific Salmon Foundation—installing three interpretive signs along the Creek, in areas where it is safe for the public to view the Creek. They will explain the restoration work, the salmon life cycle and how it relates to the health of the Creek, and what the weir is supposed to do. We (the Friends, the Foundation and Saanich) are looking at designs, structures and places where the signs can do the maximum good with the minimum intrusion in the natural landscape. We should be a long way down that road by spring 2010.

BC Rivers Day

Kristi Bridgeman led our trash clean-up on September 26 with a good turnout of volunteers from the Saanich Baptist church work party—about 20—plus a few others from the neighbourhood. The volunteers picked up approximately 2 cubic meters of litter as well as the odd bit of furniture that had been abandoned in the Creek.

Tree Appreciation Day

We celebrated Tree Appreciation Day in Saanich this year by planting riparian vegetation along the length of the Creek where we worked on habitat improvement in August. The plants were grown from seeds picked adjacent to Douglas Creek in the late summer and fall of 2008. Rob Hagel at Pacific Forestry Centre took them and made them into rooted plugs for the volunteers to plant. Rob is a master grower. The vegetation he grows for us is the finest that can be found anywhere.

The event was organized on the large scale by a subcommittee of the Significant Tree Committee, and ours was hosted by Saanich Parks Department. Twenty adults and nine child volunteers plus five Saanich staff members planted about 600 shrubs/trees—red osier dogwood, rose, mock orange, Pacific ninebark, Indian plum, bigleaf maple, Douglas maple, ocean spray and thimbleberry. The leftovers will be planted during the Christmas break.

This is always a great time of year to be in the forest along the Creek. The day was ideal, sunny weather blended with autumn coolness as the leaves drifted down and the shrubs were tucked into their new homes. Thanks to everybody who took part—Saanich Parks, the Pacific Forestry Centre, the Significant Tree Committee, the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the volunteer Friends of Mount Douglas Park.

In the immediate future . . .



Saanich Park's Marion McCoy explains how to plant a plug.



Volunteers walk down to the creek to begin planting the plugs

. . . we hope to put another salmon carcass transplant together sometime before Christmas. We have talked about the importance of marine-derived nutrients as a prerequisite for healthy ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest. Planted at the top end of the Creek, those nutrients are made available to vegetation and invertebrates over the length of the Creek.

Even if we get a lot of chum coming into the Creek, it is still a bonus to put a hundred or so carcasses in the upper reaches. At this point there is no spawning habitat in that part of the Creek, so it is unlikely that we will have a large number of chum come into the Creek

and die that far up—at least not yet.

Spilling oil!

Last May, the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and all our community partners—Saanich Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Howard English Hatchery and volunteers, and the Pacific Salmon Foundation—had planned to transplant 50,000 chum fry into the Creek at the weir. Five days before, as we were surveying water quality at the weir, there was an awful reek of oil and upstream of the weir we found the slick of oil itself. Saanich's man did what he could with the technology he had, but it had been raining hard, the weir overflowed, and a multi-coloured channel-wide sheen headed downstream.

The transplant was finally carried out at the end of May. A few days later there was another spill. We expected the worst, that all the fry would be dead, but not so; they kept moving downstream all day, and we ended up having a very good transplant.

However, we definitely need to get the spill problems under control. What we're doing now is not working. We have to intercept these spills before they get to the weir. It is not just about fish: there are birds, mammals, shellfish, and human health to consider, and then there is Cordova Bay. We need to have signage at the weir and on the fences adjacent to the weir, telling how to report a spill, and who to report it to; early reporting can make a big difference. We need to do more about public education. We need to see installed a floating oil water separator that actually continuously removes oil from the pool behind the weir. We need to push for improved written procedures and more effective technology—we have been using the same technology for at least 14 years and it has never been a true success.

Another sewage spill

What, another spill? The last Saturday in September, there was a widespread power outage in Saanich. The Ash Road at Durling sewer lift station pumps sewage up Ash Road where it continues via gravity flow to the next station as it makes its way to the current outflow. Like many of these stations, this one has backup pumps, it is computer-controlled with an additional remote control connection to Saanich's public works offices, and it has an emergency diesel power generator. The only thing it doesn't have is any kind of holding capacity or appropriate overflow design in case something goes wrong...and it did go wrong. Again. For some reason the power outage caused the local pump station computer controller to fail (hence no emergency generator) and also the remote control system failed.

The end result was another sewage spill into Douglas Creek. Isn't this covered by one of Murphy's Laws?

Churchill closure

Saanich Council has approved the Churchill Drive open hours on a permanent basis. The gate at the bottom parking area will be closed at 11:00pm and reopened at noon on a daily basis.

Earlier this year, after proposing these hours, the Society did an extensive survey of all road users, and received strong support for the new hours. Further analysis found that 61% of the Churchill walkers came from outside the Gordon Head area, confirming that this really is a regional park. It was also clear that the Park has tourist appeal; approximately 10% of the morning walkers were visitors to our area who chose to park at the bottom and walk up the road. We were surprised at the number of these visitors who were from off the Island: many were from other BC towns, from the States, and from Europe, making it clear that they wanted to walk, and to enjoy nature.

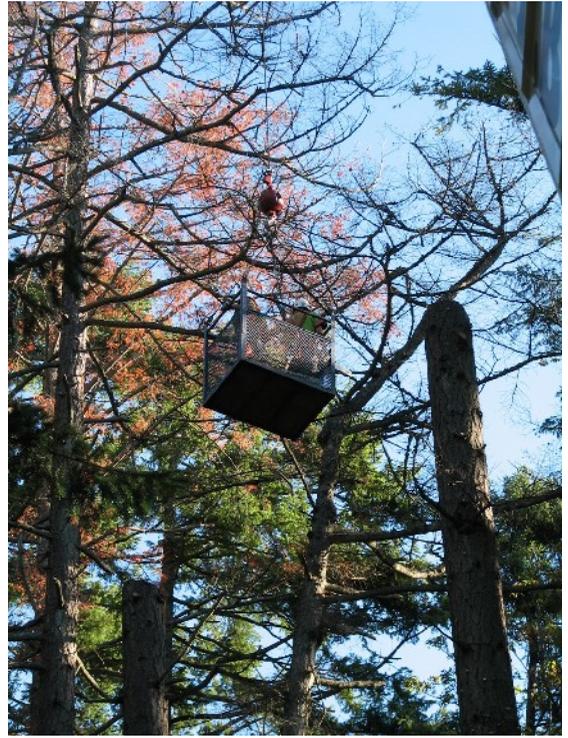
During the six month trial closure, Saanich Parks, in conjunction with Engineering, did extensive user surveys. Their on-line survey and survey forms showed that 73% (602 respondents) supported the trial closure time: their site intercept survey (457 interviews) and observations found that 86% supported the proposal. At the Council meeting, some individual birders indicated that mornings are the best time to observe birds at the summit and that either they couldn't or didn't have time to walk up. Saanich Parks has offered to look at options that would accommodate such bird-watching through organized bird groups.

We want to remind everyone that, even though the gate is closed, this is still a mixed-use trail, and that we all should watch and be respectful of other users. The gate only stops private vehicles from driving to the top. Expect Saanich maintenance vehicles and transmitter site service vehicles at any time. This paved area is the only area within the Park in which bicycle riding is permitted, and cyclists need to show caution on their descent and expect walkers, especially at corners where the visibility is poor. Conversely, walkers need to expect cyclists. It doesn't help if you are on one side of the road and your dog, on a long leash, is on the other!

New Churchill parking



Saanich crews fly high to top dead tree at new Churchill parking area.



Danger trees were topped and left as wild life trees.

Our surveys have shown that the majority of morning walkers up Churchill Drive come from outside the Gordon Head area, which no doubt explains the number of cars attempting to park in the lower lot, often exceeding its capacity. In conjunction with the new gate hours, the lower Churchill Drive parking area is being redesigned and expanded. The gate has been moved a little further up the road. A new concrete curbed turn-around area has been created near the gate. By the time you read this, there should be a new information kiosk with maps and other Park information, a large semi-underground waste bin, and bicycle racks, all near the gate. This new parking area is a significant improvement over the old, which was in a poor condition. Although it provides an expanded number of parking stalls, there are still more cars arriving than it will accommodate. We need either to find ways to get people to the Park without a car and/or find new ways to accommodate these cars.

Tree storage for Creek work

You've likely noticed that, in the new Churchill parking area, a significant number of trees have been cut down or topped to become wildlife trees. Almost all the Douglas firs in this area were found to have serious root rot and were either dead or in their last year or two. For the safety of the public walking and parking here, and also in accordance with Work Safe BC requirements, the danger trees had to be removed.

We are pleased to report that Saanich Parks has already replanted on a two-to-one basis. Additionally, the cut trees are being put to good use. Some have been used as a road edge to protect the watercourse that parallels the road so that it can better serve as a bio-swale. Before it was protected, parking cars turned this watercourse into a mud hole. The larger trees and a couple of the removed stumps have been moved to a temporary storage area along the weir trail just east of Cedar Hill Road. Next summer they will be used to construct woody debris dams along the upper stretches of Douglas Creek above Ash Road, similar to the ones constructed last summer in the lower



Logs stored near weir will be used next summer to build spawning pools and help with stormwater control in the upper section of Douglas Creek.

Creek. These debris dams provide several benefits to the Creek and the salmon. They are used to create spawning pools, they provide very effective stormwater surge control, and the pools help with sedimentation (After a rain, look at the muddy water near Ash Road, then look how clear it is at the ocean end!).

New Cedar Hill Road crossing

Early next year, Saanich Engineering will install a crosswalk with pedestrian-activated flashing light to connect Churchill with the weir trail. Despite what many think, this will cross Cedar Hill Road and not Shelbourne, since Shelbourne Street ends at Churchill and it

is Cedar Hill Road that continues through the Park, ending at the Ash Road/Cordova Bay Road junction. At the same time, they will also create a connecting trail between the new parking area and this crosswalk. It is a heavily used crossing and the official crossing is both long overdue and welcome. We look forward to seeing it completed.

Gordon Head Recreation Centre Rain Garden - \$4000 Grant

In our last newsletter, we reported that our Society had received a \$4000 grant from The Nature Trust of BC that we will forward to the Municipality of Saanich for a demonstration rain garden landscape feature at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre. Stormwater from Gordon Head in general is a major problem affecting our salmon restoration attempts in Douglas Creek, and part of the solution is through small- to medium-sized projects such as this. Past engineering practices dictated “getting water into a pipe as soon as possible”. The shortcomings of this approach are now well recognized – at the same time that this depletes the ground water and the summer stream flow, it creates a large storm surge of water containing oil residues and other pollutants that damage downstream environments, including washing out spawning beds.

We are pleased to report that Saanich is developing plans to channel water from the entire parking lot area to a rain garden in the area near the northeast corner of the lot. This is good news, since it addresses a large non-porous area with many pollutants that mix with rain water. The intent is to make the rain garden a design feature as well as a demonstration project.

Power Lines, Telephone Lines, Unused Poles

Our Society has been monitoring the three different power and telephone lines within the Park. We have some good news, see below:

Removal of telephone line along Ash Road

We discovered some time ago that the telephone lines along Ash Road and continuing a little ways up Cordova Bay Road were no longer in use. In fact, the end had been cut fifteen or more years ago, likely when the washroom facility was built in the beach parking area. It took a lot of reminders, but the lines and poles along Ash Road were finally removed earlier this year. Now that the trees were no long trimmed to protect this unused line, it didn't take

long for the tree canopy to start regrowing. As one approaches along Ash Road, it has made a significant improvement to the streetscape and the entrance to the Park.

Power line replacement

The Saanich Tree Preservation Bylaw has designated the Mount Douglas Corridor tree canopy over the road to be protected. Despite this designation, tree canopy trimming continues in an effort to protect the power lines along this corridor. If you look up Cordova Bay Road from its junction with Ash Road, you will see the canopy has been severely trimmed up to the end of the power lines, a distance of probably 100m. After that, the canopy is full and beautiful. Several years ago Bell installed new poles, a new power transformer, new lines and a new cell site along Cordova Bay Road near the entrance to the beach parking area. Although the Saanich Engineering Department was aware of this, nobody consulted with us, and it was a done deal before we saw the installation. We expressed our dismay, and a couple of years later the site was mostly removed. What remains are the original power lines and their now-unused transformer. These remaining lines are used to provide power to the beach washroom facility, but by a circuitous route: they travel in a big circle up Cordova Bay Road, into the Park, then underground back to the washrooms. We propose that they be rerouted under the parking area from the intersection to the washrooms, a more logical route and certainly a much shorter route. When this happens, the trimming will stop, permitting a new canopy to grow.

New cable to summit

The transmitter site obtains power via power lines running overhead along the Cedar Hill fire road, then up the south slope to near the top where they go underground the rest of the way to the transmitter site. We would love to see these lines disappear, but it isn't easy. One thought was to bury them along the present route. We looked at this proposal in depth with Parks and Engineering, but were disheartened when we learned how many trees would be threatened or simply cut down. The trenching would most likely cause significant root damage to all the trees bordering the trail along the route. But worse, before trenching machinery can be brought in, Work Safe BC requires that all "danger" trees be removed. Loosely, a danger tree is any tree that might fall within the work area. This, then, includes all trees within a distance from the work site equivalent to the tree height. But since the area is in a deep ravine, this extends the area of concern even further. We feel the tree damage

simply is not worth the gains of burying the power line in this area.

Another possibility would be to bury the line under Churchill Drive. Since sections of the road require repair anyway, doing this in conjunction with roadwork might make sense, and we understand there is thought of an additional fibre optic cable. Perhaps combining these into one project might make burying under the road feasible.

Saanich did armour the existing line and added a supporting protection cable earlier this year. The rationale was that this would protect the line if a tree fell on it, and might protect the park from a fire that could be caused by a broken power line or tree contact with the line.

Trail way-finding signs

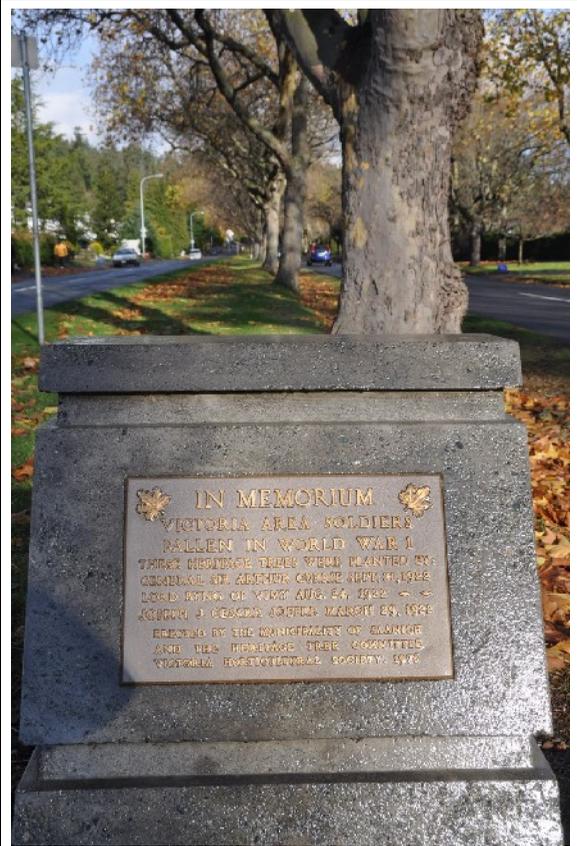
A common complaint heard from park walkers is the difficulty in determining what trail they are on or where a particular trail goes. A related problem is the increase in the number of impromptu trails. Without any indicators, it is impossible to determine the preferred trails. We proposed a trail classification system along with trail way-finding signs in our Park Plan, sent to all members about a year ago. Saanich Parks and our Society have been working on this classification system and early in the new year expect to test-mark two trails sections with prototype signs. Assuming the test is successful, more trails will be marked in the fall of 2010. There are several aspects to this project. A trail where way-finding signs are needed must be selected. Likely some trail work will be required; a well maintained trail is easier to follow. In some areas, impromptu trails that are poor shortcuts or in sensitive areas might be closed for restoration work. We also intend to coordinate this with a new trails map for distribution in the spring. It's a much bigger project than simply installing a few signs.

Harvest Lane closure

There was an agreement to allow access to one house on Harvest Lane (next to the Cedar Hill Fire Road) via a trail access to the Park. That agreement expired earlier this year and Saanich has since installed traffic control bollards on this driveway to restrict vehicle access to maintenance and fire vehicles only. The driveway will continue to act as trail access to the park.

Memorial plaque

Late last year we wrote to both the Saanich Significant Tree Committee and to the Victoria Horticultural Society about the Shelbourne Street plane trees and the poor state of the memorial plaque. To refresh the memory of those of us who weren't around then, plans were made as early as 1916 to create a memorial to the fallen soldiers of WW1 by planting London plane trees all the way from Mount Douglas south to Rockland Avenue. The trees were indeed planted, but Shelbourne Street became known as the "Street of Broken Dreams" when many of the trees were cut down in the 60s and 70s to make room for road widening. On a walking tour with Saanich Parks, we pointed out the plaque, its poor condition and poor location. To their credit, they incorporated a refurbished plaque within the San Juan Greenway project, and you can see it in the centre median on Shelbourne at San Juan. Thank you, Saanich Parks!



Newly refurbished memorial plaque now located along the new San Juan Greenway crosswalk on Shelbourne.

The shore line

The rains have arrived and it is once again the season to look for returning salmon, and to watch for instability in the banks along Cordova Bay Road. The salmon have returned and, as yet, we have seen no slippage in the cliff face; both positive developments. The shore line protection project, designed to stabilize the cliffs, is still on hold until about \$6 million can be found to finance the work. Several attempts have been made to secure these funds as joint projects between different levels of government but none of them have been approved. The item will appear as part of the municipality's budget proposals for next year with all the financing coming from Saanich. If it makes it through the review process (December – January), then we could see some work next summer. However, the enormous pressure on

all governments to provide funds for infrastructure projects as part of the economic recovery plan means that there is every chance that this one will be lost in the stampede: after all, it is competing with blue bridges, airport interchanges and the Olympics.

In previous newsletters, rueful comments have been made about the urgency expressed by the engineers at the start of the project compared to the present laid-back approach. If a driver lost control on Cordova Bay Road above the old gravel pit there is nothing to restrain a car from plunging 50 metres to the beach below. Beneath this apparent lack of concern is a classic Catch 22. At the moment, the engineers deem the paved roadway to be stable and the onus is on the travelling public to exercise due care and attention; if there is an accident, the driver is at fault. However, if the municipality places a barrier here it acknowledges a special danger, but the engineers do not want to install such a barrier because it would disturb and weaken the top of the cliff, accelerating the erosion they are trying to prevent. As well, the barrier itself would be poorly anchored and inadequate. Under these circumstances a crash, fatal or otherwise, would leave the municipality open to the charge of negligence. You can almost hear a roomful of argumentative lawyers enjoying endless hours of debate regarding the relative merits of action versus inaction.

Events may not have moved with the swiftness predicted at the start of the shoreline project, but Mother Nature has now encroached to within 8 feet (2.5m) of the blacktop. It is time to look for interim solutions if there is no funding presently available to fund the real and long-term project we have been working toward for nearly a decade. A good time to review the options available would be after the budget is set for next year.

A new walk to the Park

It is hard to recall the sunny days of summer once the fall clouds roll in, but if you drove through Cordova Bay this summer you will remember the road works and delays we all endured as the latest phase of the Cordova Bay Streetscape was completed. Well, it was worth it: cars can now go through without interruption (at 40kph of course) and the cyclists have more lanes to use. But most importantly, people can walk along the whole length of the road in reasonable safety. The strip between Haliburton and Galey used to be the worst section and now it is the best. And at either end of the new construction, the walkway continues on serviceable blacktop and gravel so that pedestrians are separated from the motor traffic all the way from the centre of Cordova Bay to the park boundary. We hope this increased safety will encourage more people to visit the park using this gently-graded

sidewalk.

For the more adventurous, a walk along the beach on an ebbing tide gives you time to walk to the Park and climb the steps to the picnic area. The return trip would be more conventional using the new sidewalk to get you home. The round trip is about 6km in length and would take about two hours. But check the tides before you start!

Invasive Species 2009

Another busy year in the Park! A huge thank you to our small-but-intrepid group of regular volunteers who come out, rain or shine, to battle the spread of non-native, invasive plants within Mount Douglas Park. Our group has been somewhat diminished in size this year, with unforeseen life events affecting fellow volunteers. We keep them in our thoughts and hope to see them again when they are able.

Participation

In their absence, our workload has been eased and progress still achieved with the unexpected—and much appreciated—participation of local schools and community groups. This year we have enjoyed the help of students from St. Michael's University School, Mount Douglas High School, UVic, Camosun College, staff at 3E Training, and members of Saanich Baptist Church. Thanks to these wonderful folk for giving of their time and effort!

We were also fortunate this summer to have help and guidance from Cain Van Cadsand, a senior UVic student majoring in Environmental Studies. Cain was employed to work alongside volunteers in a number of Saanich Parks and to undertake other environmental work. A key facet of his job was to conduct outreach sessions for young people in local schools, bringing them to our parks for nature walks and leading them in hands-on invasive species removal. He was very successful and Mount Douglas Park was one of the beneficiaries.

Specific invasives

In 2009, garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) was not nearly as lush as in 2008. Fewer hours were spent removing plants to prevent maturation and seeding. Total plant debris removed from the Park was less than 10% of the '08 "harvest". However, garlic mustard has continued to spread to other sites on lower Vancouver Island and our volunteers were

called in to assist in other parks.

Unfortunately, we anticipate a bumper crop of garlic mustard in 2010. Seed can remain viable in soil for up to 10 years and there were at least 3 years of uncontrolled growth/seeding in Mount Douglas Park prior to the control/management regimen established for the Park in 2007. Given this, it's expected that garlic mustard removal will remain an annual task in the Park until at least 2016 or until the existing seed bank is eliminated, whichever comes first.

Ivy and holly removal continued throughout the year at a number of sites, and we estimate that more than a few tons of such plant material was removed in '09.

We hope the future will include YOU!

As always, there is much more work to be done. We will continue on, with the guidance of Saanich's new, full-time Natural Areas Technician. But we do need more hands-on help from Park users and supporters. If you can come in, if only for a morning each month or even once a year, it makes a difference to the health of the Park and the morale of regular volunteers. Tasks can be modified to accommodate people at all levels of ability. Please consider making a donation of your time in 2010 to this worthy cause. You can contact me, Judy Spearing, at the Friends' website at <http://www.mountdouglaspark.ca/contact.html>.

Gerald Fleming, Park Planning and Design Manager Retires

We want to give special recognition to Gerald Fleming, who retires as the Saanich Park Planning and Design Manager at the end of this month. Gerald has provided us, the Park and Saanich with truly superior wisdom and design ideas on the incredibly wide range of amenities we all enjoy and appreciate. Not only has he been a key inspiration on park design, but has been a major contributor to our bicycle network, our 'green ways', trails such as the Goose and Lochside, and on and on. He speaks with a soft, diplomatic voice, but listen, because what he says is worth hearing! He probably knows the historical background and rationale for most of what we accomplished in Saanich, knowledge that will be truly missed. We wish him well in his retirement, but sincerely hope he just might reappear and continue to provide insight, but from a different perspective! Gerald, all the best!

Board of Directors

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One of the many friends of Mount Douglas Park!

Gift Membership

Providing information via this newsletter about the Park is an important Society function. We want to reach more Park users and Park neighbours. Why not **give someone you know a gift subscription and include it with your renewal**? A one year membership isn't much more than the price of a good cup of coffee! You provide the gift and we'll send notification to the recipient of your generosity.

Use this form for a gift membership; we will send a gift card in your name. Or for your own renewal, please check your address label; the label shows the year your membership expires (e.g. '09 means membership expires December 31, 2009). We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year by sending \$5 for each one-year membership to the address below.

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