

Old Growth Conservancy Newsletter #3

January 2013 – June 2013

This will be the second year of the Conservancy Newsletter, and since there have been no rumbles or indications that the format should be changed we are going to continue with two newsletters per year, this being the first one for 2013.

1 Annual General Meeting: The sixth AGM was held February 20. A new board was elected, comprised of Alan Bardsley, Marshall Bauman, Miles Hume, Hugh Hamilton, Alexandra Mancini, Bruce McArthur, Katharine Steig and Herb Storm. (Michael Evison was not able to attend the AGM, but was appointed as a Director at the May 2013 meeting) Following the AGM, at the March Directors' meeting, Hugh Hamilton was re-elected President, Alan Bardsley, Vice-President; Katharine Steig, Secretary and Herb Storm, Treasurer. Bill McCuaig and Terry Taylor agreed to serve another term as Advisors to the Society. Godfrey Lynum wanted to retire as an Advisor, and the Society wishes to thank him for his many years of serving as an Advisor and wishes him well for the future.

2. Address by John McMahon at the AGM

We were fortunate to get John McMahon to speak to us at this year's AGM on the subject "The Impact of the Eagle Lake water to West Vancouver". John is of Manager, Roads and Utilities for West Vancouver District and is very familiar with the water supply to Eagle Lake, which is augmented by water supplied from the Black Creek dam. John became very familiar with the issues and impacts of the disturbing actions that took place on the Black Creek Diversion Rehabilitation Project in 2012. He and his staff were helpful and understanding of the issues we brought to their attention.

His talk to us at the AGM focused on the water supply from Eagle Lake and the economic importance of the lake and the water treatment facility in supplying the very best water to the community. We thank John for helping us understand where we get our water and the economics of getting it at the best rate.

3) District of West Vancouver, Parks Manager attends Directors' Meeting:

Andrew Banks gave an interesting overview of his four years in the job as Parks Manager at the Directors' meeting on March 20. Among his priorities is engaging and expanding West Vancouver community groups' involvement, and he feels that the Old Growth Conservancy Society (OGCS) fills an important role in the community. He said that the Parks Master Plan (PMP) had taken a lot of his time and went on to tell us that five parks are being considered for parks protection bylaw including Whyte Lake. He said that there is greater interdepartmental communication following the Black Creek episode and that they now have quarterly meetings in which issues and projects are red flagged so all departments are aware of issues. A protocol for Divisional cooperation was one of the five recommendations made by West Vancouver Streamkeepers and the OGCS to West Vancouver Council and Staff after the Black Creek event. He discussed briefly the relationship of the Official Community Plan to the PMP, watershed boundaries and the importance of Environmental Protection Assessments (EPA) on projects. This important issue came up because of the lack of an EPA on the Black Creek project.

4) Manager of Environment and Sustainability: We welcome Sandra Bicego to West Vancouver as Manager of Environment and Sustainability. Some of you may have met her and for those who have not we hope to convene a meeting of volunteer groups so that Sandra will be able to get to know the groups and how they work with each other. She has already visited the Black Creek site with two Councillors and one of your Directors. We look forward to a good working relationship with Sandra.

5) Downed Trees in the Conservancy: On January 2nd Marshall Bauman reported that a large number of trees had fallen in late December in the OGC and Bill McCuaig reported that many trees were down in the Hollyburn Ridge area. Alex Charanin, West Vancouver District Parks Department, inspected the area for visitors' safety. This was followed by a visit on snow by Marshall Bauman, Hugh Hamilton, Katharine Steig, and Herb Storm to assess the damage along the Conservancy Crossing (CC) trail and fallen trees over the bridge. The fallen trees at the southern Eustace Smith bearing tree site were also looked at to assess what should be done with the fallen cypress bearing tree with Smith's iconic signature inscribed in the tree. It was decided to wait till the spring to properly assess the situation for visitors, how best to clean up the area and deal with the fallen Smith bearing tree.

The general consensus on the reason the trees fell (mostly Western hemlock) was that the soils were super saturated and a heavy wet snowfall clinging to the branches toppled the poorly rooted trees.

A meeting was held on the CC trail on Tuesday May 7 with members of the OGC, Bill McCuaig, A. Charanin, and Ian Haras to discuss the best approach for clearing the CC trail.

Mark Kachaluba and an assistant completed the clearing of the trail on June 4th 2013 and reported that the only damage to the bridge was one board, which was replaced.

6) Community Day Planning: On January 24th the District called a meeting for Community Day planning at the West Vancouver Library. It was agreed that the No Fees policy for stewardship groups established for 2011 should be continued in 2012. It was further agreed the stewardship groups should all be located in one area for environmental focus and that they be under one tent.

It was not determined at this time what form and where the Parade would take place and whether the event would be held in only Ambleside Park or would be distributed out across the municipality.

Although Community Day on June 1 started off raining and looking miserable it improved during the day and by the end of the day smiles were on all faces. The OGCS display together with a Friends of Cypress display was a great success in the communal tent. Visitors flowed around the display all day and kept the many volunteers busy. Thanks to all those volunteers that made it such a great success. There are some improvements which should be made to the setup, and these will be taken up in the planning process for next year.

7) Black Creek Rehabilitation Project: With the advent of snow at the Black Creek site the saga of the Black Creek Rehabilitation Project come to a virtual halt. However, on January 9th the North Shore News published the third article by Brent Richter. His report was also published the following day on January 10th in the Vancouver Sun. This article specifically mentioned the five recommendations made to Council by the OGCS and the West Vancouver Streamkeepers in July. All three of his articles were made available at the OGCS AGM on February 20th. His articles were published in the North Shore News on June 22, July 13 of 2012 and January 9 of 2013.

On May 15th a visit to Black Creek was made by Trish Panz, Nora Gambioli, Sandra Bicego, Todd Major and Hugh Hamilton to see how the slopes and ditches had survived the winter. The group looked over the area and reviewed the history of the Black Creek Project so that Sandra and Todd could appreciate the situation. An article by Todd Major was printed in the Wednesday, May 29th edition of the NSN.

In the Newsletter July – December 2012 we reported that the District had recommended funds from the sale of timber be directed to the OGCS. Arrangements were made by Alan Bardsley to direct these funds to the West Vancouver Community Foundation (WVCF) and set up as a "flow through" fund under the name *Black Creek Environmental Fund*. The fund is managed by the OGCS who will authorize the release of monies for suitable projects on written instructions from the OGCS. West Vancouver Engineering Division has sent \$13,401.54 from Black Creek timber sales to the WVCF.

On May 31, 2013 District staff, Alan Whitehead of Whitehead Environmental Consultants Ltd. and Timothy Smith of Westrek Geotechnical Services Ltd. completed a field review of the Black Mountain project site. They reported that the steep slopes had not been disturbed by the melting snow and that in general the site had fared fairly well over the winter. There will be some ditch cleanup and road work which will be done later by the District.

On June 4, 2013 Whitehead Environmental Consultants Ltd. submitted an Environmental Monitoring Inspection Report to the Engineering and Transport Division of the District.

During the week of June 3 to June 7 hydro seeding was completed on all the open slopes along the access road.

8) OGC Access Policy: Proposals for visits to the Old Growth Conservancy were reported in the June-December 2012 newsletter. These proposals were presented at the AGM on February 20th 2013. The essence of the proposals is that the OGCS would develop plans for visits to the Conservancy in the late summer of 2013 (July- September) by taking parties of no more than eight people into the area led by one or more Directors. This concept is supported by the District and conforms within the *Strategy for Protection* guidelines.

On June 4 and 5 Hugh and Bill McCuaig carried out a recce of the apex area of the Conservancy to determine the most appropriate points of entry into the area of the large old growth cedar and proposed three entry points. Katharine, accompanied by Bill McCuaig and Hugh Hamilton, revisited areas # 2 and #3 to assure that these areas are suitable as entry points. The results of the two recces was reported to the Directors on June 13 in a letter "Proposed Routes for Conducting Tours of the OGC". At a subsequent meeting of Directors, and based on this report, it was agreed that after a visit there should be no evidence of the route taken or of the site visit and that there should be no trimming of vegetation other than the removal of dead branches which might be a hazard to walkers.

With these provisions in mind we propose to invite people from a list that is being compiled. There will be a check-in procedure and written recommendations for clothing and footwear for safety and comfort. If you wish to taking part on one of these trips, please advise Hugh Hamilton (hugheah@smarrt.com).

9) Working Groups: Although the Terms of Reference for the Upper Lands Working Group (ULWG) were approved on July 23, 2012, only two meetings were held prior to the end of the year. Alan Bardsley is a member of this working group and reports to the OGCS on the events and progress of this group. One of the main items that the WG decided on at an early stage was that it is not obliged to deal with the Regional Growth Strategy's Special Study area. This group met every three weeks until early summer when the frequency was reduced. During this time the WG organized five "Site Discovery" trips, one of which focused of the contentious issue of the 1,200 foot development limit. On June 11th ULWG held one of several community meetings of which this one was to get the input from West Vancouver volunteer groups. Bruce McArthur gave a good accounting of the background of the OGCS and the concerns it has that it has for the plans for the Upper Lands. The final WG report is not due until 2014.

The Invasive Plant Strategy Working Group (IPSWG) had its first meeting on January 16th 2013 following which meetings were held every two weeks. Council representative is Nora Gambioli; Michael Evison and Hugh Hamilton are on this Working Group. Although the main focus has been on Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed, other species such as Scotch Broom, Yellow Lamium, Daphne Laurel and Periwinkle (Vinca) are all part of the focus to present a strategy for Invasive plants control and containment to Council by the end of the year. An interim report was presented to WG Council on July 8.

10) Old Growth Society Website: Continuous improvements have been made to the OGCS Website by Miles Hume during the latter part of 2012 and the first half of 2013 including setting up links to other sites. The existing site is an excellent way to see upcoming events such as snowshoe trips, notices of events such as the AGM, and other notices of interest. Our thanks go to Miles for setting up, maintaining and continuously improving our OGCS website.

11) Monitoring Activity around the Conservancy: For the past few years Marshall Bauman has been monitoring activities around and inside the Conservancy. This has included setting up permanent photo points along the CC trail, checking on invasive species dumped in Parking Lot 5, and checking for invasive plants in the Cypress Mountain works yard immediately north of the Conservancy. This year Marshall was one of the first to photo the catastrophe of the felled hemlock along the CC trail and at the site of Eustace Smith's fallen bearing tree.

On June 16th he was looking at the CC trail with Jeremy McCall, Nature Vancouver and Outdoor Recreation Council, when five mountain bikers came down an unauthorized trail onto the CC trail. This trail had been noticed in the Fall of 2011 and notices not to use it had been posted. Although it may have been used sparingly in the past, this has been the first time a number of mountain bikers were actually seen and were talked with on the trail. The issue of bikers using this trail or any trail other than the CC trail through the Conservancy is a major concern and your Directors are working on this problem. Marshall is taking photos of some invasive plants in Parking Lot 5 and we expect some reports later in the summer.

12) Winter Snowshoe Trips: Two winter snowshoe trips were organized and posted on our website. The first trip on February 16th was essentially to look at the severe damage to access to the CC trail that was made by the trees felled by the combination of super saturated soils and a very heavy wet snowfall. It was a depressing site to see these old growth and even young hemlock felled in all directions and showing clearly their root structure in their upturned root balls. We would not know whether the bridge had been damaged until the snow had melted in May. The sight of Eustace Smith's bearing tree buried under a large hemlock was particularly disheartening.

The second snowshoe trip on March 16th was to the Apex area of the Conservancy where the largest and oldest Western Redcedar trees are located. There are fewer hemlock in this area and consequently few fallen hemlock were noticed. A circuitous route was taken in order to cover a wide area of these magnificent old trees. Those on the trip were shown some of the largest of the old growth redcedar, standing dead old sentinels and new growth pushing up through the snow in the openings. It was encouraging to have 16 people attend these snowshoe trips.

13) Summer Trips with Nature Vancouver: On June 29th David Cook led a party of 24 people on a natural history hike around Cypress Falls Park starting from the parking lot at Woodgreen Place at the lower part of Cypress Park estates. This combined Nature Vancouver and Old Growth Conservancy Society hike is a feature we have used in the past and which we will carry on in the future. In addition to three OGCS directors there were members from North Shore Wetland Partners and many Nature Vancouver members as far off as Coquitlam. It was a casual walk in which David pointed out many interesting shrubs and wildflowers, e.g., Western Spotted Coralroot, and talked about the old growth forests that we went through. The tour of Cypress Falls Park took just three hours.

Hugh Hamilton, President
July 29, 2013
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