



..OLD GROWTH CONSERVANCY SOCIETY

WEST VANCOUVER B.C.

Old Growth Conservancy Newsletter #4

June 2013 – December 2013

Introduction

Welcome to the New Year and we look forward to an active year in 2014.

The first major activity for the Old Growth Conservancy Society (OGCS) will be the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, February 19th in the Marine Room, West Vancouver Seniors Centre, 695 – 21st St. (next to the West Vancouver Community Centre). The meeting will start at 7:00 pm, but the doors will be open at 6:30 pm.

We have invited Sandra Bicego, DWV Manager of Environment and Sustainability, to make a presentation at this year's AGM.

There are several items in the spring Newsletter #3 that you will notice have been carried on into this newsletter so that readers may become more familiar with the issues. Among the many activities that took place during the year we started a new program of guided trips into the Old Growth Conservancy (OGC), which were approved at the Annual General Meeting on February 20th 2013.

1. Report on Summer Trips into the Old Growth Conservancy

The spring Newsletter outlined a proposal presented at the 2013 AGM for accessing the Conservancy, one of West Vancouver's lesser known Parks. It was proposed that the trips would be taken in the summer months with parties of up to eight people and led by one or more Directors and would therefore conform with the policy of the *Strategy for Protection*. The proposal was approved by the Members.

The Newsletter also outlined the initial preparations carried out in June 2013 by Hugh Hamilton and Bill McCuaig who carried out recces of the main area of old-growth redcedar to determine the best access points into the Conservancy. One of the first priorities in the planning process was to review the earlier Release of Liability form that we normally require when taking hikes.

Discussions were held with the Parks Division, and after much work a new Release of Liability form was developed which was approved by Parks for summer trips use.

Six trips to the Conservancy were scheduled between mid-August and September. Invitation lists were sent out, and recipients who replied were sent a package outlining the procedures. Participants for each trip were advised to meet at Hi-View Lookout at 9:30 am and from there they went to the Cypress Mountain Works Yard from which the trips were started.

The six trips were led by Hugh Hamilton and Bill McCuaig who explained the characteristics, features and history of old-growth stands. Two helpers, Katharine Steig and Marshall Bauman, took up positions at the back of the groups for safety purposes to assist participants if necessary and to talk and answer questions about the old-growth forests. There was great interest expressed in these wonderful forests by participants who took the trips. There were 35 participants over the six trips among which there was representation from senior staff, Councillors and the Mayor.

Most of the participants had never seen or walked in an untouched old-growth forest and expressed awe at the size, age and grandeur of this great forest. We hope that this experience made them aware of the uniqueness of this old-growth redcedar stand in West Vancouver and the reasons that the Park is afforded such special protection.

2. Interpretive Signs for the Conservancy Crossing.

Work started on the idea for an Interpretive sign for the Conservancy Crossing (CC) trail in the spring of 2012. It was agreed that the sign should be located close to one of the large old-growth redcedar trees next to the CC trail, so during the summer of 2012 and early 2013, themes were developed and many photos were taken to establish a library from which final photos might be used. It was decided by the end of 2012 that there should also be an interpretive sign at the start of the CC trail depicting the history of the Conservancy and the CC trail.

The Black Creek project required a lot attention, so further work on the interpretive signs was delayed till the early summer of 2013. By mid-summer of 2013 work restarted in earnest on the design and text for the two interpretive signs. Four Directors, Katharine Steig, Alexandra Mancini, Alan Bardsley and Marshall Bauman devoted many hours formulating themes and suitable layout for the two signs. The OGC team, working closely with Jennifer Stone of Black Cat Graphics and Corinne Ambor and Karen Kristensen of West Vancouver Parks Department, have come up with two masterful signs. The team must be congratulated for the passion and focus that has made these two signs such beautiful works. You will be able to see these signs when you come to the Annual General Meeting on February 19th 2014.

3. Nature Centre Proposal

Early in the summer of 2013 John Barker, President of West Vancouver Streamkeeper Society (WVSS), approached each of the West Vancouver volunteer stewardship groups to determine if there was support for a Nature Centre in West Vancouver. All the stewardship groups at the

time supported the notion of such a centre, though several wanted to know more about potential costs and to what extent their volunteers might be implicated.

Although the exploratory poll for a Nature Centre was not mentioned in the spring Newsletter, the initial meeting of this group was organized for April 25 2013, by the Nature Centre Committee, Liz Leduc and Bill Chapman. This meeting, chaired by Bill Chapman, was to get a feel of the interest from potential members of the outcome of a meeting with District staff and the owner of Navy Jack house, Lloyd Williams, as to the location of his house as a suitable place and building for the Nature Centre. The next meeting with Council was set for July 8, at which meeting WVSS offered to put up \$2,500 of the estimated \$5,000 for an assessment of the structure of the building.

The next meeting of the Nature Centre group was on July 23, 2013 at which the Project Team proposed to deliver a Memorandum of Understanding among the six organizations represented. Later in October the District made an open request for "Expressions of Interest" (EOI) for the building to be submitted by November 15. Since no other submissions were received, the District will prepare a Report to Council stating the Nature Centre's group interest in the building.

4. Old Growth Conservancy Website

Work on the Old Growth Conservancy Society (OGCS) website was well under way in early 2012 and Miles Hume took on the task of improving it and linking it to other websites. The website was made public in 2012 and a number of events and field trips were posted on it. Miles continued to change and improve the site and in 2013 we saw the full introduction of the OGCS website (OGCS.ca).

Some of the tasks that were tackled were checking the text, adding clarity to some of the content and the important role of maintaining a news/upcoming events page of the website. Various events, such as the Coho Festival, snowshoe hikes to the Conservancy, and other community happenings are listed on the website. More recently, Miles has been working on formatting and uploading of images and documents to the site.

There has been discussion amongst the Board that there is a desire to increase traffic to the website as a way to educate OGCS members and the broader community about OGCS affairs. The society has updated the District of West Vancouver website to include our new site and contact information, and we are attempting to link other groups in the North Shore Environmental Network in an attempt to increase the visibility of our site. Moving forward, OGCS members are looking at options to increase website viewership, and the society may also utilize Google Analytics, which is a program/tool used to document website activity and make recommendations for increased exposure.

5. Community Events

OGCS has always participated in the two main West Vancouver summer events, Community Day and the Coho Festival.

At this year's Community Day the Stewardship groups were located in one large tent near the entrance to Ambleside Park. It was a good location and despite some early rain it turned out to be a very successful show. However, it was noted that space for stewardship groups was limited, and accordingly representation was made to Christie Rosta at the District to see how more space can be provided for the 2014 event. Christie Rosta proposes to convene a planning group on January 22 for the 2014 Community Day event.

The Coho Festival is always a fun occasion and this year was no exception. This year the committee decided to go back to having only one day and it was very successful. OGCS was under one tent and put up a good display which attracted a lot of interest. It included a 745 year old hemlock disc, cones and examples of conifer tree twigs.

6. Monitoring the Conservancy

Marshall Bauman has consistently checked Parking Lot #5 for people depositing garbage and other unwanted material in the parking area. The gate which was put in by Cypress Mountain did stop people getting into the parking area, but they still drop off garbage and invasive plants near the gate as Marshall and Herb Storm found in July.

In September Marshall and David Cook found mushroom pickers in the Conservancy and quickly reported it to Parks. Corinne Ambor responded that the District prohibits the removal of any plants in West Vancouver parks.

7. Charitable Society Status

Herb Storm has reviewed the CRA website for the requirements for applying for charitable society status. He is willing to take on the job, but indicated he would like some help on this challenging project. This project is still ongoing and will take some time to get sufficient information to present to the Directors at an AGM. It is unlikely that this project will be far enough along to report at the 2014 AGM.

8. Unusual Plants in the Conservancy

In that part of the Conservancy where the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) cuts through the Conservancy, there is a small but valuable wetland which supports a number of unusual plants such as fern-leaved goldthread and Labrador tea, so when it was learnt that Alex Charanin was going to carry out brush clearing of the TCT, Katharine Steig and Bill McCuaig walked the trail on November 3 to check out the wetland and then reported to Alex on the special nature of the wetland plants. Alex responded that the brush clearing project was to clear the TCT for walkers and bikers, but that as it is part of the District Fire Access system it has to be maintained. He noted that the plants in the wetlands would not be affected.

9. Downed Trees in the Conservancy

During the heavy snowfall in late December 2012 many hemlock trees were felled by the unusually heavy wet snow conditions. We reported this event in the #3 Newsletter. Mark Kachaluba and his assistant completed the clean-up of felled trees on June 4th. Although several trees fell across the Conservancy Crossing trail and bridge only one board was damaged and was quickly repaired.

More recently, on October 20 a small crew of Directors from the OGCS cleared debris and small logs from the north side of the bridge which were impeding the flow of a small creek. This completed the clean-up of the debris from the fallen hemlock trees. The logs and branches left from the cleared trees remain on the ground as evidence of the heavy damage caused by the snowfall, and this debris will remain on the ground to rot slowly and provide nutrients for future vegetation growth.

There was also heavy downfall of hemlock around the Eustace Smith survey point northwest of the CC trail. One of the disasters of the felled trees was that a large hemlock had pushed down one of the Smith's yellow-cedar witness trees. At the request of the OGCS, Alex Charanin and Mark Kachaluba inspected the felled yellow-cedar to determine how best to save the iconic bearing tree. Mark Kachaluba returned a few days later and, with Hugh Hamilton present, bucked a log out of the yellow-cedar which holds the survey inscription. The log was placed in a vertical position so that it can be retrieved on a sled when there is sufficient snow cover. The Directors are now trying to determine the best way to preserve the inscribed log and where the best place will be to house the log in the mean time.

10. Black Creek Rehabilitation Project

It is now just over a year and a half since two Directors of the OGCS discovered the incursion by the Engineering Department into the old growth stand on Black Creek for the purposes of rehabilitating the Black Creek dam. You have probably read about the events that have occurred over the past 18 months with the Black Creek project in the last two Newsletters, and/or have read the three articles by Brent Richter in the North Shore News. Hopefully you are aware of the events in which the OGCS has been deeply involved.

The saga has now essentially come to a close with a final visit on October 24 by four Directors of the OGCS together with Andy Kwan from the Engineering Division. Whitehead Environmental Consultants Ltd. submitted a final report dated October 31 2013, which is available on request. The main feature of the final work at the site was the completion of a bridge, built by Mark Kachaluba, from the end of the gravel road, providing walking access to the dam. The access road has been well ballasted with angular rock so it should withstand any slides from the steep upper slopes. These steep slopes, which vary up to 70%, were hydro-seeded in the spring, but due to the very dry summer the grass has not fully covered the steep slopes. The trees which were planted in the spring on less steep slopes, and also along the Trans Canada Trail, appear to be doing well.

You may wonder what the OGCS has achieved through the processes of resolving the disastrous incursion into the old-growth. After the initial shock of what had happened, Ray Fung,

Manager of Utilities for DWV convened a meeting on July 5th 2012 of representatives from the three Divisions; Engineering and Environmental consultants; contractors; the OGCS and West Vancouver Streamkeeper Society (WVSS). At the conclusion of the meeting John Barker, President of the WVSS, presented a request on behalf of the OGCS and the WVSS to the Chair of the meeting, Ray Fung, specifying five specific recommendations for the West Vancouver District to adopt.

We are now able to report that the District has taken action on the five recommendations. Firstly, with respect to the first two, they have filled the position of Manager of Environment and Sustainability with Sandra Bicego. Thirdly, the mapping section has worked on incorporating valuable natural features, especially in the Upper Lands, on their GIS system as was recommended.

There were also two specific requests made. Firstly, that there be meaningful consultation with Stewardship groups on any work planned in the Upper Lands, or in the vicinity of creeks and secondly that the District develop protocols so that relevant internal departments are consulted and participate in all aspects of work planned in the Upper Lands and creeks. We understand that the District is following these requests. As part of the protocols there are regular meetings of the three District divisions and the Manager of Environment and Sustainability attends these meetings.

We believe that there are now good protocols in place to be assured that no mistake like that of the Black Creek situation should occur again and that the District now fully understands the value of their old-growth stands.

11. Liaison with Cypress Mountain

Joffrey Koeman of the Cypress Mountain staff invited the OGCS to install a display at the Crazy Raven Grill in the Lodge. Katharine Steig and Marshall Bauman installed the display on June 28th and it was retained there throughout the summer.

12. Upper Lands Working Group

The Upper Land Study Review Working Group was formed by the District of West Vancouver to review the 2001 Upper Lands Report and the Official Community Plan (OCP) to ensure they reflect the current and long-term priorities of West Vancouver residents. OGCS Director Alan Bardsley is a member of the Working Group (WG). While the WG will not make any decisions on land use, something best left to the elected Council, it will make recommendations to Council on changes to policies and the OCP.

The study area can be roughly described as the undeveloped lands above the Upper Levels Highway, comprising over 6,000 acres. Most of it is owned by either the District or by British Pacific Properties. Development in the area is a key component of the OCP which includes planned neighbourhoods and Cypress Village. The recommendations of the WG will help shape the future of the mountainside all the way west to Horseshoe Bay.

In 2013 the WG met with stakeholders and stewardship groups and had several site visits including Whyte Lake, Cypress Falls Park and the Cabin Area on Hollyburn Ridge. A public outreach program is planned for the spring. Look for workshops to be held later in February and March for your chance to share your views.

13. Invasive Plant Strategy Working Group

This Working Group had its first meeting on January 16th 2013. The Council representative is Nora Gambioli and the Chair is Lori Williams, with Michael Evison as co-chair. Hugh Hamilton and Michael Evison from the OGCS are members of this Working Group.

An interim report was submitted to Council on July 8, 2013 after a lot of work was put in deciding which of the many invasive species should receive priority and which should be the target species for treatment. Through this procedure the Group developed a risk assessment procedure for target species which rated species according to treatment strategies of *prevention, eradication, containment and control*, and under each category risk ratings of *very high, high, low and very low* were applied. This work led up to draft plans which were put together by consultant Fiona Steel of Diamond Head Consultants.

The last meeting of the year was on December 4th and draft #5 report was sent to all members on December 20th 2013 for comments at the next Working Group meeting on January 8th 2014. Following the January meeting there will be public meetings to be held in late February or March 2014.

14. Cypress/West Vancouver Liaison Group

This Group meets twice a year in the first week of June and the first week in October. The group is made up of a number of volunteer stakeholders, members of District staff and others involved with mountainside concerns. Old Growth Conservancy Society, West Vancouver Streamkeeper Society, North Shore Mountain Bike Association, North Shore Wetland Partners, Friends of Cypress Provincial Park, Hollyburn Heritage Society and the Hollyburn Ridge Association are among the participating stakeholder groups. District staff include Corinne Ambor, Manager of Parks Planning and Community Stewardship; Sandra Bicego, Manager of Environment and Sustainability; and a representative from the Engineering Division. Larry Syroishko, BC Parks; Bobby Swain; Cypress Mountain Resort; and Geoff Croll, British Pacific Properties, also attend.

These meetings are a great forum for the exchange of information and knowledge and give a good perspective of all the activities that are going on in Hollyburn Ridge, Cypress Provincial Park, and the Upper Lands.

The June 5th meeting provided much valuable information. OGCS reported on their activities and provided an update on Black Creek project. Katharine Steig gave an update on the Cypress Park Hiking Trails map and talked about the Friends of Cypress trail watch program; Alan Bardsley advised that the NSMBA has no plans for trail building this year, and noted that the

Upper Lands WG will have a booth at Community Day. Bruce McArthur (NSWP) reported on Hollyburn Mountain Bog Bridge work to be undertaken in July by BC Parks, Friends of Cypress and Knee Knacker volunteers.

At the October 2nd meeting Hugh Hamilton reported that there would be final inspections by the OGCS and District staff. Alan Bardsley reported on the lack of tree cutting regulations in the Upper Lands and a visit to the Cabin area and Rodgers Creek development. He noted that the NSMBA is looking for an area to which mountain bike activities can be directed. Katharine Steig announced the launching of the Cypress Park Hiking Trails map, and Paul Berlinguette announced that the NSWP is working on Reed Canary grass and iron oxide problems. From these reports you can see that there is a great value in being a member of, and attending the Cypress Liaison Group meetings.

15. Nature Vancouver Annual Picnic.

Jeremy McCall, Chair of the Conservation Section of Nature Vancouver asked the OGCS if it could hold their annual Conservation Section picnic at the Quarry Lookout on August 14th and also lead a trip into the Old Growth Conservancy before the picnic started. The OGCS agreed with the plan and Hugh agreed to conduct the trip to the Conservancy and afterwards attended the picnic with Alan Bardsley, who had been asked to talk about the Upper Lands WG and the Whyte Lake area.

The weather was poor resulting in a small turn-out for the picnic. The group was shown the CC trail area in the Conservancy and then returned to the Quarry for the picnic. However, the rain dampened the party, and so the group retired to Hugh's house to finish the picnic. The OGCS maintains a very good relationship with Nature Vancouver and in no way has it been dampened by this rainy event.

16. Information/Membership Brochure

Bruce McArthur is continuing his work to upgrade the Brochure. It is hoped to have the new edition available early in 2014.

Hugh Hamilton, President
January 7, 2014
hugheah@smartt.com