Another Victory for Mt. Spokane’s Old Growth Forest and Next Steps to Continue Preservation

On a hot Spokane day this past summer, a group of 50 hiked to the west side of Mt Spokane. As we walked into the area of converging streams that form Blanchard Creek, the towering trees blocked the sun and everyone was stunned by moist coolness. At the base of a proposed chairlift were moss-covered snags and forest soil, and huge old trees that were youngsters when Lewis and Clark made their way through the Northwest.

The outrage that anyone would want to chop this forest down in Washington’s largest state park changed to celebration a couple of weeks ago. David Bricklin, our stellar attorney, called us to say that we had just won a major court victory. The Washington State Court of Appeals ruled that the State Parks Commission had illegally classified this area for commercial development, before they even considered the impacts of their actions. That classification is null and void, and now the Parks Commission is faced with the choice to either abandon this ill-conceived plan, or spend money and years trying to revive the project.

This is the second victory this year for the old growth on Mt. Spokane. This past spring, the Spokane County Hearing Examiner ruled in our favor in denying a timber harvest permit that would have allowed the concessionaire to cut down the forest. He ruled that the timber harvest permit and habitat plan had failed to consider the impacts on old growth, threatened wildlife species and wetlands. He found that the concessionaire’s wildlife biologist was unqualified. We want to thank the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Ecology, who testified on our behalf in front of the Hearing Examiner.

The Lands Council is a member of the Save Mt. Spokane Coalition and we share a vision for the ski area. There could be glading on the north side, new runs, and improved lodge and parking facilities. There could be expanded opportunities to use those facilities for mountain bikers, hikers, and education year-around. There are opportunities for canopy tours, music events and nature hikes. Spokane residents love their namesake mountain and it is a great getaway on our hot summer days, as well as a great ski area that is closest to Spokane.

There are some next steps in improving the visitor experience to Mt. Spokane Ski and Snowboard Park that would also create revenue for our State Parks. We believe the concessionaire needs to complete the plan they promised several years ago about their future activities on the mountain. The State Parks Commission needs to step back and insist that such a plan is submitted.
What better way to enjoy the fall colors than to hike amongst the golden larch trees in the beautiful Kettle River Range? That’s what three dozen of us did in mid-October, on a sunny, blue sky day. On the way around the Sherman Peak loop trail we stopped to celebrate Gerry Copeland, a past board member who loved to hike there. We cleared the trail of fallen trees and even crunched in a little snow on the north side.

It reminded me of the winter hike I took to the same area with Senator Maria Cantwell a couple of years ago to show her the Wilderness potential of the area. We don’t have Wilderness yet, but some recent developments with Congressional staff and the motorized recreation community are giving me some hope that we will get this moving again in 2014.

It has been exciting to see The Lands Council’s urban projects in the news! The Spokesman Review ran a story and a positive editorial on our stormgarden project in the Shadle Park area. Our contract with the City of Spokane has us going door to door, offering residents an opportunity to have a storm garden installed in their yard, next to the street. We will design and build these storm gardens and have them working to capture and filter stormwater by next summer. This pilot project is part of our continuing efforts to restore and protect the Spokane River and is a component of the City’s Integrated Clean Water Plan.

Our new Green Sleeves project garnered an excellent story on KREM2 and KPBX. The project is endorsed by Spokane County’s Sheriff and we are partnering with the Geiger Correctional Facility to have work crews help us with our watershed restoration. These hard-working crews prepared sites for our Reforest Spokane Day, and will help us next year on streamside restoration and our stormwater project.

Governor Inslee came to town to talk about climate change in mid-October and I was pleased to see so many Lands Council members show up and testify, including 10 year old Gabriel Logan, who impressed the Governor with his moving testimony. Governor Inslee said about the meeting, “I am so inspired by what I’ve heard, both in Spokane and in Seattle because I’ve heard overwhelming sentiment of people who really want us to take bold action.”

Finally, thanks to all of you who helped plant and water trees on Reforest Spokane Day, which was October 26th. This year, the focus was on riparian tree planting along California Creek and Hangman Creek. Together we are making a difference restoring our watershed!
Thank You for Joining Us...

By Lisa Logan - Director of Development and Communications

Since I began as Director of Development and Communications in mid-July, The Lands Council has hosted several events in addition to the Mount Spokane Hike Mike mentions in his Director’s Report. A big part of making them so successful was the prior work of my predecessor, Amanda Swan, who moved on to a position with one of our sponsors, Numerica Credit Union. She is missed and we love seeing her when she comes in to volunteer!

Like our programs and projects, our annual calendar of events serves our mission, to preserve and revitalize our Inland Northwest forests, water, and wildlife through advocacy, education, effective action, and community engagement.

At our First Friday Open House, Mike and Amanda Parrish engaged with community members when they presented our new projects, the Stormwater project in the Shadle neighborhood and Green Sleeves. Be sure to read more about these projects in this issue! They are both off to a great start.

We had a wonderful Picnic with the Beavers that drew over 100 people to Liberty Lake to learn about our toothy friends who help store water in local watersheds. With help from Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District, we threw a great party and educated the folks who joined us about beavers, their habitat, and our Beaver Solution.

Members, business partners, staff, and board members alike had a great time at Brews Cruise this year. The breathtaking views of Spokane Falls from under the Monroe Street Bridge gave us a whole new perspective on the gorgeous river The Lands Council works tirelessly to preserve and revitalize. The breweries were a great highlight of the day and live music from Angela Marie Project was the perfect way to end the party.

Reforest Spokane was refocused this year. We looked outside the city limits to watersheds that feed into the Spokane River for our planting. With the help of SCAFCO, West Corporation, Green Sleeves and 70 volunteers, we planted more than 1,000 trees on six different properties in the Hangman watershed. The trees were planted with care and attention to detail, thanks to the many sets of helping hands that showed up.

Please save the date for our annual Holiday Party on December 4th where we will reflect on 2013 and celebrate The Lands Council’s accomplishments over the last 30 years and look forward to our next 30 with you, our valued members and supporters. Consider renewing your membership now to save postage and trees when we send out our next reminder.
Early Success for Green Sleeves
By Amanda Parrish - Watershed Programs Director

The Lands Council is excited to announce one of our newest programs, Green Sleeves, which has been made possible by a generous donation from the Smith Barbieri Progressive Fund. The impetus behind the program was our need for an increased work force to plant and maintain restoration sites, and from this we’ve developed a new partnership with Geiger County Correctional Facility. Work crews of 8 to 10 offenders regularly complete part of their sentence through community service, so why not have part of this service go toward watershed restoration? So far this fall we’ve had four days worth of labor-intensive restoration and maintenance completed by work crews from Geiger; first at Coulee Creek and then in the Hangman watershed, and the work yielded excellent results.

But Green Sleeves isn’t just about work crew restoration, it’s an on-the-ground application of social justice! We’ve already begun to research environmental education curriculums to incorporate in the program. By teaching offenders skills such as landscaping techniques, plant identification, and other concepts like the importance of restoration and the principles of permaculture and low impact development, we hope that we can help them find jobs in these fields as rehabilitated offenders.

Later this fall, we’ll begin setting up a native plant nursery that will be housed at Geiger and cared for by the offenders. Raising 5000 to 10,000 native trees and shrubs at Geiger will greatly reduce the costs of our restoration, and will give offenders the opportunity for nature therapy. Our hope is that by getting them outside planting and caring for trees, offenders will take part in something that’s greater than themselves; something that benefits our entire region and will last beyond our lifetimes.

Needless to say, The Lands Council and our partners at Geiger and the Smith Barbieri Progressive Fund are all very excited about this program’s potential. Stay tuned for the next issue of Council News to learn more!

Beaver Seasonal Report
By Joe Cannon - Beaver Project/Restoration Ecologist

Team Beaver has been hard at work this season. We recently trapped and relocated another family of beavers—two adults and two kits. We will accept trapping opportunities until November. Thanks to the trapping strategies learned on the recent field trip to Yakima Basin Beaver Reintroduction Project, we will get an earlier start next year. Additionally, we have made great progress on implementation of a flow control device on a dammed stream which caused unwanted flooding for a property owner. After we overcame the permitting hurdle, we were able to install the device ourselves. We monitored for efficacy and added reinforcements to establish optimal water levels.

Installation of flow control devices means we don’t disturb the beavers, and instead slightly modify their habitat to reduce unwanted flooding on farm land or near homes. Leaving existing beaver populations in their chosen habitat gives us greater results in regard to beaver-derived stream quality improvements. We monitor beaver impacted ecosystems through data collection on vegetation communities and analyze the imperatives of beaver vs. non-beaver derived wetlands. This may also lead to unintended discoveries unique to beaver ecosystems. These steps forward have been made feasible by our collaborations with agencies and local education programs like state and federal Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Gonzaga University’s Biology department.
**River Toxins: Awareness & Prevention**

By Matthew West - Community Outreach Coordinator

Hello, wonderful Council News readers. As the Community Outreach Coordinator for The Lands Council, I am excited to let you all know what I have been up to in my first contribution to our quarterly newsletter.

Our intern, Ben Covino, and I conducted Spokane River Toxins Outreach this summer and our 11th year of participation in this project was a successful one! Ben and I focused our outreach in five target areas; homeless shelters, food banks, tabling at street fairs, neighborhood council meetings, and on the river itself. You may have seen us giving talks at the House of Charity one day or we may have floated past you on the river another. We collected about 350 surveys from Spokane river-goers, and informed over 600 citizens of the toxins found in our river.

As we gained experience, we turned our focus to non-English speakers who often do not receive publicly disseminated information for various reasons. Ben and I met with community leaders from the Marshallese, Burmese, and Spanish speaking populations here in town to get translations of our advisories, and to present to large groups via translators. Keep an eye out for the November publication of “La Prensa Bilingüe,” a newspaper read by 30,000 Spanish speakers in our region for more about our outreach. As we approach winter I will continue to meet with non-English speakers to inform them about our river and its contaminants.

Our Stormwater project outreach began in October. We have been contracted by the City of Spokane to reach out the residents of the Shadle neighborhood. Our outreach on this project has two goals. We want to inform citizens about how we can use our innovative techniques to make stormwater run-off less polluted, and let them know of the long term value it could have on our city’s infrastructure. Our second goal is to build four “Stormwater gardens” in the neighborhood. We are going door-to-door informing and asking people if they want to participate. The positive, engaged, and inquisitive response to this project is overwhelming. I will be sure to keep you all informed as we move forward.

-Matthew

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**Best Management Practice:**

**Pet & Farm Animal Waste Management**

Waste from pets/livestock enters streams and lakes via run-off. The wastewater can contain various pathogens and bacteria which can spread to wildlife and humans. This issue’s “best management practice” for maintaining/improving the water quality of Hangman Creek and other streams and lakes throughout the Inland Northwest is “Pet & Farm Animal Waste Management.”

- Keep waste out of rain and open water.
- Well-managed manure can help reduce the amount of mud in a farm or paddock.
- Well-managed manure can prevent parasite re-infestation. Manure can contain eggs of strongyles, roundworms, and other internal parasites. If not properly handled, the eggs (or larvae that hatch from them) can contaminate pastures, feed, or water and can infect other livestock.
- Consider selling livestock manure to local businesses to be made into compost.
- Only flush pet feces if you are on a sewer system. It contains more hair and ash than human waste and can interfere with septic function.
- Don’t bury pet feces or compost. Burying waste is equivalent to a broken septic tank and can contaminate groundwater.
- Don’t put pet feces into compost piles/bins, as they fail to reach temperatures high enough to kill pathogens found in feces.
- Dispose of pet feces in standard trash cans.

Do you own riparian property in the Hangman Creek watershed? Are you interested in planting trees and shrubs along the streambanks? Contact Kat at (509) 209-2403 or khall@landscouncil.org.
“Trout in the Classroom,” multi-media biodiversity, introduction to stormwater management, and field-based AP Environmental Science are just some of the new curriculum additions for the kids at our seven SUSTAIN Schools this year!

“The Confluence Project,” sprung from our recently cultivated partnership with the University of Idaho’s Waters of the West program. Students at Lake City, Post Falls, and St. Maries High Schools are in the midst of the year-long local water resources unit. They will learn about water quality of the Lake Coeur d’Alene and Twin Lakes watersheds, and compare input, storage, and output water quality within and between the two systems. Students participate in water quality and water quantity field trips, water-related service learning, and a culminating youth water summit at U of I in Moscow in April, where they will present findings of individual research questions studied during the year. Schools share data with each other via live, interactive video-conferencing through the Idaho Education Network, and students maintain individual portfolios of the year’s activities. The Lands Council—in conjunction with our north Idaho education partners, including the U of I, North Idaho College, Coeur d’Alene Tribe, and local high school teachers—hopes to expand this model to schools throughout the Idaho Panhandle.

Our “Pass the Potato” multi-media project was recently funded by Outdoor Nation. This gets students outside to learn about and appreciate their region’s unique natural wonders and swap their experiences with “sister schools” throughout the nation via student-filmed field videos and a traveling “Mr. Potato Head!” Students film their experiences on an outdoor school field trip to create short, edited videos to post online and share with a sister school in another part of the nation. Students place photographs and small mementos of their outdoor experience inside a travelling Mr. Potato Head and send it to the sister school where the same process is repeated and the potato is passed on to other schools until the original school receives the potato to “close the loop.” This virtual (and real!) outdoor learning adventure will foster students’ pride in their own natural surroundings, teach them about the outdoors, encourage them to become better environmental stewards, and motivate them to get outside...whether it’s in their own region or another part of the country or world!

The SUSTAIN schools are MEAD Alternative, On Track Academy, The Community School, Bancroft School, Post Falls HS, St. Maries HS, and Lake City HS.

Many thanks to our Project SUSTAIN sponsors—Itron, Inc., STCU, Pura Vida Homes, SCAFCO, University of Idaho, and Avista.
The Spokane River is one of our region’s most treasured assets, and here at The Lands Council we’re always trying to find innovative ways to make the river cleaner. One of the biggest sources of pollution to it is stormwater—water flowing from rooftops and streets after a precipitation event that often flows into storm drains and then directly to the Spokane River without being treated. This water picks up pollutants along the way, including PCBs which accumulate in plant and animal tissues, and are already in high concentrations in the Spokane River.

One way to mitigate the effects of stormwater is through storm gardens which store and treat the water onsite instead of discharging stormwater into the river. Storm gardens are made by excavating dirt and re-filling the area with special soil treated with biochar which removes PCBs from water. Researchers from the University of Idaho and Oregon State University are assisting us. Native trees, shrubs, and flowers are then planted, and a simple curb cut diverts stormwater flowing from the street into the garden where it percolates through the treated soil.

We think storm gardens are an excellent way to deal with our stormwater problem, and so does the City of Spokane! The City recently contracted with TLC to do a pilot project in the Shadle neighborhood. We’ve already got a team of staff, students, and volunteers going door-to-door in the neighborhood explaining our new project, and tracking the interest of local residents. Once we complete our outreach this fall we expect to have a long list of homeowners and businesses interested in having a storm garden installed.

During this initial phase of the project, we only have funding to install 3-5 gardens throughout the neighborhood, but there’s always a potential for more as the City and its citizens see the value. We’ll be working with engineers from AHBL to help us choose final sites and designs over the winter and will begin construction next spring.

Not only will these gardens provide important water quality benefits to the Spokane River, but will accomplish a whole list of improvements like traffic calming, improved aesthetics, and a more robust urban forest. Not to mention they’re more cost-effective than traditional ways of managing stormwater. Storm gardens are truly a win-win for our community!

Photo Courtesy of David Dods, URS
SAVE THE DATE:

THE LANDS COUNCIL’S

HOLIDAY PARTY

DECEMBER 4TH, 2013
5:30 – 7:30 PM

COMMUNITY BUILDING LOBBY
35 W MAIN AVE SPOKANE