

From: Richard Hunter <ric@highspeedplus.com>
Date: February 13, 2006 9:52:54 AM PST
To: Frances Hunter <frhunter@highspeedplus.com>
Subject: Re: prospector article

Here is a new beginning < plus. Maybe you can meld it to your ending and the HAT stuff. And add what you think needs insertion. It didn't seem necessary to include all the stuff about watersheds, tree cutting, etc, but maybe you'll think it is...

From: Frances Hunter <frhunter@highspeedplus.com>
Date: Mon, 13 Feb 2006 04:24:33 -0800
To: ric@highspeedplus.com
Subject: prospector article

A conservation ³first² in the Prospect Lake/Tod Creek Watershed

Early in 1969, shortly after purchasing their Goward Road property, Ric and Frances Hunter met local painter Emily Sartain on their site. She explained that she and several of her nature-loving friends frequently visited the property, admiring its meadow, wildflowers and prospect of the eponymous lake. Perhaps she sensed that if there were trespassers present, they were not us, and hastened to say that if a new house was to be built, the property would be "lost." We tried to explain that we planned *not* to cause havoc, only to hear the retort that no, that would be the end of the meadow, the trees, the flowers, everything. "In no time there will be daffodils, pavement and grass. I've seen it too many times."

Unfortunately, we never saw Emily Sartain again, but she might be amused to know that her advance admonitions haunt us still and were a major impetus in our decision to leave untouched as much of our five-acre parcel as building and living would allow. In building close to the road, we sacrificed a grand view of the lake, but we also saved the Garry Oak Meadow, nearly all of the flowers, and all but a few Douglas firs. One sees the lake through trees, and knowing it is there is enough. Summer speed boats are scarcely heard and the increasingly dispoiled distant shoreline is veiled.

Accordingly, the small meadow, with its wonderous oaks and seasonal shifting of flora and fauna, has become as close to a private natural garden as one could wish. Fawns walk across the terrace, camus, dodecatheon, erythronium and quail brush it and even the occasional otter has romped in the meadow. Unfortunaely, it is also a favorite place for diseased deer to die, and they in turn have brought eagles, vultures and ravens.

Saving the land for ourselves was one thing, but over the years it became apparent that good intentions would not be enough: quasi wilderness < even small pieces of it < so close to a major urban center would become increasingly important on many levels. The property had to be saved in perpetuity.

For over 30 years Ric and Frances Hunter have lived on 5 acres at the corner of Goward Road and Echo Drive. One day, before they started construction, a woman confronted them on the site. It was the local artist Emily Sartain who had often come there to paint the wildflowers. ³Once a house goes in, the land will be ruined,² she said despite their reassurances. That confrontation reinforced their opinion that at least the Garry Oak meadow area should not be developed in any way. As time went on they became aware of many ways that they could damage sensitive ecosystems on their property and in the watershed. They increasingly thought about what would happen when they no longer owned the land. In particular, they realized that runoff on the steep wooded slope to the lake could be seriously affected by tree cutting and future development.

From 1998-2000, as the community collaborated with the Municipality of Saanich on the Prospect Lake/Tod Creek Action Plan, it became clear that there was an urgent need to slow the degradation of the water quality in the lake by protecting the shoreline, wetland and stream habitats, reducing stormwater runoff and reducing nutrients in watercourses. Indiscriminate tree cutting, impermeable paving and the use of pesticide/herbicide/chemical fertilizers were identified as practices clearly harmful to the watershed.

To make sure that their property would be protected in perpetuity, in 2005, the Hunters signed a conservation covenant with Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) and the co-covenant holders, The Land Conservancy and the Municipality of Saanich. Through their covenant, the Hunters have protected 4 acres including the Garry Oak meadow, a portion of Prospect Lake shoreline and a section of a winter stream which feeds Prospect Lake. The detailed covenant, along with a baseline study, becomes attached to the land title and is passed on to successive owners. It is a fairly lengthy process to complete the covenant and all landowners are advised to seek legal and tax advice and discuss the implications of the covenant with family and heirs.

Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) is a non-profit regional land trust that has a continuing interest in the Prospect Lake area. They welcome inquiries from landowners interested in leaving a conservation legacy by covenanting their land. Properties with sensitive ecosystems such as streams, lakefrontage and Garry oak or Rocky outcrop ecosystems are of particular interest.

HAT's can be to:

- visit the property to determine its habitat value
- provide information to the landowner about conservation covenants
- negotiate the language of the covenant with the landowner/landowner's agent
- Where possible, assist with survey and baseline report costs and review
- Help to find a co-covenant holder (most conservation covenants are held by at least 2 organizations)
- in most cases, register the covenant on the land title
- monitor the covenant area annually in perpetuity

For more information contact HAT at 995-2428 or hatmail@hat.bc.ca. Information on conservation covenants is also available online at <http://www.wcel.org/wcelpub/2000/13247.pdf>

Frances Hunter
Designer
Beacon Hill Communications Group
203 Goward Road
Victoria, BC V9E 2H8

Phone: 250-479-1956