

Restoration and Partnerships on Mill Hill 2009

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A Flurry of Activity on Mill Hill

Neighbours of Mill Hill Regional Park probably noticed a hive of activity in this park over September and October, as a core team of ten hired staff and 168 volunteers converged to remove invasive species. In mid-October, a helicopter flew low overhead, carrying out bundles of Scotch broom that totaled 3.6 tonnes. Less conspicuous activities included the labours of many staff in organizing and managing activities on Mill Hill, and the meticulous surveys carried out by highly trained botanists. This was part of an ecosystem restoration project that began in 2002, which has primarily focused on the 20 hectares of Garry oak ecosystems in this park.

Waste as a Resource

This year, the biomass from invasive species removal was put to good use as a fuel for energy production, one example being in the gasification plant at Dockside Green that supplies heat and electricity to residents of this sustainable community in downtown Victoria. Getting rid of invasive species biomass is often a concern due to the risk of spreading seeds and other plant parts (e.g. rhizomes) if composted or placed in the landfill; meanwhile, the developer of Dockside Green has a vision of closing the loop and using "waste" for energy. This initiative demonstrates yet another benefit for ecosystem restoration involving invasive species control, when incorporated in a science based approach.

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Watershed management extends from the summits to the valleys, and restoration of native ecosystems plays an important part in a regional focus on sustainability.

Volunteers spend hour after hour tirelessly removing broom from the Mill Hill site.



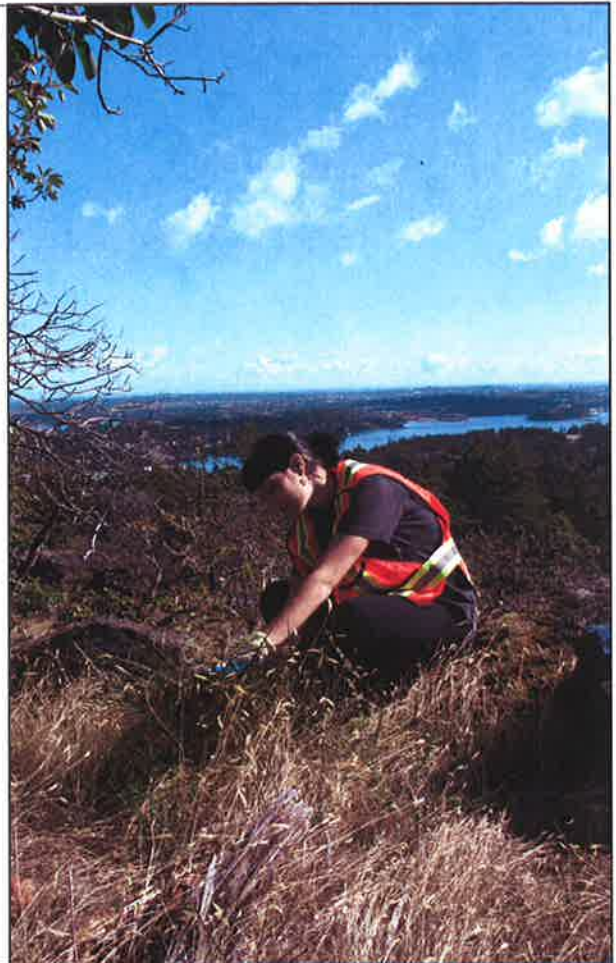
Ecosystem Restoration

The Garry oak ecosystems in Mill Hill Regional Park are home to 13 plant species at risk and a wide variety of other native flora and fauna. Since 2002, staff and volunteers have removed over 50 tonnes of invasive plants over 16 hectares of the park. Careful research has also been carried out to pinpoint rare species and to monitor the effects of removing invasive species – especially Scotch broom but also daphne, sweetbriar, gorse and orchardgrass. Techniques have evolved over the course of the project – for example, Scotch broom is no longer pulled by the roots, it is cut just below the soil surface, to minimize disturbance that favours more invasive species. The federal government’s Habitat Stewardship Program has provided generous funding for this project.

What Next?

Invasive species removal will continue, hopefully requiring a reduced effort over time. Vegetation monitoring and inventory will also continue, providing valuable information regarding long term changes with restoration efforts. CRD Regional Parks continues to look for opportunities to collaborate with other agencies for increased sustainability and ecosystem health. Look for opportunities to volunteer in this project on the Regional Parks’ website (<http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/>) or by calling 250.478.3344.

Perched at the top of Mill Hill, a volunteer works to remove a Scotch broom plant.



Links

CRD Environmental Services - www.crd.bc.ca/es

CRD Stormwater, Harbours and Watersheds Program - www.crd.bc.ca/watersheds

Bowker Creek Initiative - www.crd.bc.ca/watersheds/protection/bowker/

CRD Regional Parks - www.crd.bc.ca/parks

Harbours Atlas - www.harboursatlas.ca

Natural Areas Atlas - www.naturalareasatlas.ca

District of Central Saanich - www.centrialsaanich.ca

City of Victoria - www.victoria.ca

Are you doing work to protect and restore watersheds in our region?

Contact the editor to submit your story for the next issue of Watershed News:

625 Fisgard Street, PO Box 1000, Victoria BC V8W 2S6

stormwater@crd.bc.ca or call 250.360.3256