



Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Dedicated to Protecting Victoria's Heritage Landscape

December 30, 2020
1439 Wende Rd.
Victoria, B.C.
V8P 3T7

To whom it may concern,

At the request of a group of North Quadra neighbors, this letter is to support the recommendation that the property known as 972 Milner Avenue and 978B Milner Avenue has exceptional natural values that should be preserved in its natural state and managed as a Garry Oak Meadow habitat preserve. Of primary concern is a large stand of Garry Oak trees with some associated rare plants.

There have been a number of professional biological inventory surveys of the property that describe it in detail. These are still available. It is also a large enough property to be protected into the future with a combination of controlled access, invasive species management and restoration with appropriate Garry Oak Meadow associated species.

With an initial look at the Garry Oak trees from Leveret Place Rd., they appear mostly in good shape, as noted in the specialist's reports. Appropriate understory shrubbery could be established, if desired, while avoiding those species that tend to "take over" or "dominate" the land. Other plants, such as appropriate flowering meadow species, can be assisted to spread,

At least one of the reports testifies to the potential of this location to be one of the important nodes in connecting the areas of habitat to make genetic corridors through the relative desert of the urban environment. There are several scientific papers written on this subject, and a whole "school" of expertise at the University Of Victoria.

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society was originally formed to preserve the dwindling Garry Oak trees, and their habitat, from being extirpated. Primarily their loss is as a result of various developments or "land use changes". They only occupy now something less than 5% of their original range. With such a shrunken range and gene pool, there should be no need to rank the sites as to importance or priority for preservation, aside from size. All such sites are needed. Keeping the mature trees from being removed has to become a priority. Garry oaks are one of the few local native tree species that best stand a chance of surviving the droughts associated with climate change.

Thus, the genetic islands and corridors can only increase in importance in the role of preserving genetic variation for the fight to survive climate change. GOMPS recognizes this, and also has been involved in operating a Garry Oak tree nursery to be able to replace the trees lost with local genetic stock on this Northern edge of its range. However, planting seedlings cannot replace the lost Garry Oak biomass fast enough to make a difference. Imagine “replacing” a huge 100+ year old tree with 3 seedlings consisting of the same biomass (leaves and new wood) as the tip of just 3 of the multitude of branches and twigs on the mature specimen. The biomass of the seedlings could only replace the original when they have collectively lived as long as the original tree did (100+ years). In the meantime, more big trees are removed or die far faster than replacement can occur. Some municipal “state of the environment reports” include a report on “tree cover loss” which results in measurable amenity losses. *The only way* it is possible to perpetuate the species is to maintain old living trees and stop removing them. There also has to be habitat room for their range expansion to a survivable size.

In summary, the property is well suited to be preserved in perpetuity as a valuable link in a native plant and wildlife corridor. The safest way to achieve that is to acquire it and have it protected by covenants that include at least one registered organization that is dedicated by their constitution to such preservation, such as Habitat Acquisition Trust, or The Land Trust Alliance. A municipality could also place a covenant on it, but it is only permanently secure if it is in partner with a dedicated organization such as the above. Otherwise a change in Government can remove the Natural state covenant if the owner agrees. In other words, at least a dedicated third-party covenant should be included for strength.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Croteau". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Croteau
President

HG/