

**Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve
5th Anniversary Celebration
Trailhead Park, June 21, 2010**

From President of FoBM Sharon Grant:

On June 21, 2010, we celebrated five years since the acquisition for the public of the original 574 acres of Badger Mountain. Richland City Council members John Fox and Ed Revell, John Butterfield of the City Parks & Rec Commission, and Claude Oliver, former Benton County Commissioner, all spoke eloquently about the value to the community of preserving Badger and other special open space.

Andy Plymale and Gary Danielson gave us great jazz on guitar and sax, and the weather cleared, creating a fine evening for hiking the longest day of the year.

My remarks acknowledging the contribution made by all of you to the success of this effort follow.

Remarks by Sharon Grant, Co-Founder and President
Friends of Badger Mountain

The organization that became Friends of Badger Mountain started New Year's Day 2003. The local Inter-Mountain Alpine Club had a tradition of hiking Badger on New Year's Day for over 50 years. Because of development we had already lost access to Badger so we were hiking Red, two ridges to the west. That day a homeowner at the base of Red tried to prevent us from hiking past his home. That fellow doesn't know what he wrought! All hikers like to go up. He got our attention...we were losing access to our local ridges. We had to do something.

A small group formed and we first established with local authorities that we indeed had a right to hike Red. When we learned land was for sale on Badger we named ourselves "Friends of Badger Mountain." More than two years and 100s of meetings, planning sessions and negotiations later — five years ago this week — we celebrated the successful acquisition of 574 acres of Badger. Recently we added 25 acres for a total of 599 acres.

To paraphrase a wise saying — it takes a community to preserve special land and habitat. Today I want to acknowledge a number of the people who were critical to the success of preserving this spectacular land for all to enjoy for all time.

But first, I want to emphasize...yes, as hikers we were thrilled to save a local ridge for access. We also deeply cared that as much as possible of our ridge viewscape and habitat was preserved. We are very blest in the Tri-Cities to have striking features of both ridges and rivers that define our landscape. Our ridges formed by cataclysmic forces millions of years ago are world class. They give us our sense of place. As we return from any direction when the ridges come into view we know we are coming home.

Someone said recently, Seattle, Spokane, Portland all let their ridges be developed, while the Tri-Cities preserved Badger, its most stunning ridge. The community also helped build three trails to give the public access close to home where one can get away and hike, mountain bike and horseback ride in a peaceful natural setting of shrub steppe habitat.

Friends of Badger Mountain, a citizen-based, all-volunteer non-profit organization raised the funds to acquire the land in 3-1/2 months over the winter of 2004-2005 and arranged in advance to cede the land to Benton County in whose jurisdiction it lie. Benton County then is the owner, while Friends of Badger agreed to maintain the land in perpetuity for non-motorized public recreational access.

I want to thank first Mark Hoza, the co-founder, along with myself, of Friends of Badger Mountain, and the people who formed our original committee—Bob Bass, Brad Benton, MaryJo Coblentz and Roger Stephens. At the time, none of us had experience in working with local government on behalf of things we cared about. Adam Fyall with Benton County and Wyn Birkenthal and Phil Pinard with the City parks and recreation department were our entries to understanding how county and city government worked. Adam, Wyn and Phil, we could not have done this without you. We did our first public presentation May 2003 before the City parks and recreation commission. Jon Erlandson and John Butterfield became our advocates. Rick Kilgore and Hank Sauer were their counter-parts on the County parks board. We presented before the County Commissioners. Claude Oliver, at the time the liaison to the county parks board, spoke eloquently on our behalf. He worked with his fellow commissioner Leo Bowman to give us the critical two out of three votes — seven times! -- that we needed to keep moving forward with the County. Claude and Leo, also with support from Jerome Delvin, we could not have done this without you. Now we add Jim Beaver to these ranks. City deputy manager Bill King and planning department staff became critical to our understanding of city dynamics. As we presented before the City Council John Fox, Carol Moser and later Ed Revell and Sheila Sullivan got behind our effort. The city made a major contribution to our fundraising effort. John and Carol, Bill and Rick we could not have done this without you.

Stepping back — we were very blest that the 574 acres for sale was owned by one person, Sheldon Shore. The Trust for Public Lands agreed to negotiate on our behalf. Sheldon agreed to sell at a reasonable price. Even though others came along and offered him more he never raised the price on us, nor was he willing to break off and sell parcels to others. He wanted us to succeed. Multiple steps were taken to raise the agreed upon price. The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society agreed to accept contributions on our behalf under their auspices as a nonprofit organization. The community gave at such a pace. We raced past our initial fundraising goal in two months and went on to raise \$60,000 more -- all of which we committed for the acquisition of ridge land. Then an angel appeared in the guise of the WA ST Energy Site Evaluation Council. They gave us a substantial amount from monies that had to be used for mitigation of shrub steppe habitat. You can read about it on our web site. LCBAS, Sheldon Shore, Peter Dykstra, Jim Luce — we could not have done this without you.

Bringing us to today...those who serve or have served on the Board — Debbie Berkowitz, David Comstock, Bob Spaulding, Tom Page, Christi Gomez, Mark Tardiff, and Karen Weida. Those who have stepped up on our many critical tasks: Gene Weisskopf, Carla Chiotti, Margie Bass, Kent Richert, John Roberts, Diana Stevens, Andrew Stevens, Vicki Patton, Karen Nelson -- and the person who has marshaled the forces to see that three trails have been built and are continuously maintained, our Trailmaster, Jim Langdon. With Jim and his right hand crew Ken McFarland, Ray Merriman and Russ Treat organizing every effort and the WA Trails Association bringing their expertise to each trail building launch, 100's of volunteers have turned out to build and maintain the trails. As you know if you hike or ride Badger, continuous maintenance is required because the trails are so heavily used. **New stats tell the story. There**

have been over 160,000 users since we started counting in the spring of 2008; 73,000 users counted in 2009 and 51,000 users as of June 12 this year! The community has spoken—Badger is an unqualified success. Jim and the community, all of you here who have contributed in some way to creating this outstanding experience for our area ...let's give a huge round of applause to all the people and organizations that have been critical to the success of this amazing effort.

A final note— we are not done yet. What a surprise! We have more ridge land to secure for public recreational access, we have more trails to build, more special shrub steppe habitat to preserve and care for. As we know local development is occurring at such a rapid pace that now is the time to achieve these goals. Wherever we don't succeed will be developed. We want to work in conjunction *with* development, each enhancing the other. To this aim, we were one of the founders of the Ridges to Rivers Open Space Network for the purpose of developing a long term plan for open space in Benton and Franklin counties. Learn about this effort. Visit the Friends of Badger website to stay up to date. Work with us. We've been at this 7-1/2 years. We could use your help. It does take a community if we are to continue to create this incredible legacy — giving the opportunity for our children and grandchildren to know the outdoors like we do. Thank you Tri-Cities! We couldn't have done this without you.