

OTTER POINT & SHIRLEY RESIDENTS & RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION (OPSRRA) INFORMATION UPDATE **September 2010**

The Otter Point & Shirley Residents & Ratepayers Association (OPSRRA) is a registered non-profit society with an elected Board of Directors and strives to present the points-of-view of its members to local government. OPSRRA was founded in 1992 and has a membership of about **410**. Any resident or property owner in Shirley and Otter Point is eligible for membership.

Lifetime memberships cost \$5.00 per person and are available from OPSRRA directors—see our web site (www.opsrra.ca) for further information and on-line registration. Associate (non-voting) memberships are available for persons who do not reside or own property in Shirley or Otter Point, but who wish to support the Association.

The purpose of our society is to:

- Ensure that the development of the two communities of Shirley and Otter Point takes place in an orderly way and in the best interests of its residents.
- Co-operate with local government and other public bodies in the furtherance of the objectives of the society and benefits to the community.
- Concern itself with the performance of government agencies.
- Encourage citizens to stand for public office.
- Promote community spirit and sense of identity by organizing or supporting appropriate activities.

Are you an OPSRRA member? Do you want to receive the OPSRRA newsletter and notice of meetings directly to your e-mail address? OPSRRA now e-mails this newsletter to over **280** of our members. Contact Arnie Campbell at: d.acampbell@shaw.ca if you want to receive this membership service.

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1. UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Contact Arnie Campbell at: d.acampbell@shaw.ca or **250-642-3113** to have your community event listed in our monthly community events calendar.

Saturday
September 4 **Juan de Fuca Community Trails Society**
Explore the Sooke Hills
9:00 a.m.

A full-day hike.
Meet at the CRD parking lot at the end of Harbourview Road.

We will carpool to the start of a 14 kilometre hike through the Sooke Hills. We will not go to the hill tops.
Bring snacks, lunch and water. Dress for the weather.

Phone Rosemary Jorna, 250-642-2767 or email sid2767@shaw.ca for details.
Web site:
www.jdfcommunitytrails.ca

Thursday
September 9 **Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Parks & Recreation**
Commission
Monthly Meeting
5:00 p.m.

Note:
date change to
accomodate
vacation
schedules.

JDF Electoral Area Services Office
2-6868 West Coast Road, Sooke BC

Saturday &
Sunday
September
11 & 12 **97th Annual Sooke Fall Fair**
Saluting 100 Years of Girl Guides &
Celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity
Saturday 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sooke Community Hall
Shields Road, Sooke BC

Admission by donation

Highlights include:

- the Great Sookeini Race
- the annual Pet Parade
- pancake breakfast

We feature exhibits from T'Sou-ke Nation and the Sooke Region Museum.

Sunday
September 12 **Shirley Fire Protection Society**
General Meeting
2:00 p.m.

Shirley Community Hall

Monday
September 20 **OPSRRA Board of Directors
Monthly Meeting**
Members welcome!
7:30 p.m.
Board Room
SEAPARC Leisure Complex
2168 Philips Road Sooke BC

Agenda available on request.
Contact Arnie Campbell at d.acampbell@shaw.ca

Tuesday
September 21 **JDF Electoral Area Land Use Committee (LUC)
Monthly Meeting**
7:00 p.m.
Sooke Community Hall
Shields Road, Sooke BC

Note:
Location
change.

You can obtain the agenda the Friday before the meeting
on the CRD website at: www.crd.bc.ca/jdf/index.htm
Click on "Agenda" at the top of the page.

Thursday
September 23 **JDF Electoral Area Economic Development
Commission
Monthly Meeting**
6:00 p.m.
Village Foods Meeting Room (upstairs)
6661 Sooke Road, Sooke BC

Tuesday
September 28 **Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Parks & Recreation
Commission
Monthly Meeting**
5:00 p.m.
JDF Electoral Area Services Office
2-6868 West Coast Road, Sooke BC

Note:
No meeting
scheduled for
this month.
Contact CRD
Planning Office
to confirm.

Meeting at the call of the Chair.

Saturday
October 2 **Juan de Fuca Community Trails Society
Hike Broom Hill**
9:00 a.m.

Meet at the end of Blanchard Road.

This is a two to three hour hike of the loop on a forest trail.
Bring a snack and dress for the weather.

Phone Rosemary Jorna, 250-642-2767 or email
sid2767@shaw.ca for details.
Web site:
www.jdfcommunitytrails.ca

Wednesday
October 6 **Sooke & Electoral Area Parks & Recreation
Commission (SEAPARC)**
Monthly Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Board Room
SEAPARC Leisure Complex
2168 Philips Road Sooke BC

Mondays **Karate for all ages**
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Shirley Community Hall

Contact Alida Long: 250-642-4631

Tuesdays **Yoga**
6:30 p.m.
Shirley Community Hall

Thursdays **Shirley Quilters and Crafters**
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Shirley Community Hall

Everyone welcome

Contact Christien Shipton: 250-646-2687

2. OPSRRA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Your OPSRRA directors are working on activities to promote awareness of the association in the community and to increase our membership. The two month campaign began at last month's Shirley Day with an information table and six new members signed up. One of our next activities includes two roadside information tables in Otter Point in September or early October. It would be helpful if some OPSRRA members could volunteer to assist the directors at these two events. If you are available for an hour or two on Saturday, September 18, Saturday, September 25 or Saturday October 2, we would like to hear from you. We will choose two of the three dates depending on the availability of volunteers. For more information or to offer to help, contact Wayne Fritz at 250-642-0440 or wlfritz@shaw.ca

Other ways in which you can help OPSRRA continue to grow, understand the needs of the community and distribute local information are by:

- Passing along your newsletter to other residents of Shirley and Otter Point.
- Purchasing memberships for other members of your household who are aged 18 or over. Membership is per person and not per household. We estimate that 25% of our members only hold one membership in a household.
- Recommending OPSRRA to a neighbour or new resident of the community.

3. BC TRANSIT STATISTICS FOR ROUTE 63, OTTER POINT LOOP

September 5 will mark the fourth anniversary of the BC Transit community bus service through Otter Point (Route 63). The Otter Point & Shirley Residents &

Ratepayers Association newsletter contacted BC Transit to find out how well it was being used and if there are any changes planned to the service.

The route originates in Sooke and travels west along Otter Point Road to Kemp Lake Road then down Kemp Lake Road to West Coast Road and back to Sooke. The community bus does two morning and two afternoon loops (Monday to Friday) through Otter Point. There is a second route (Route 66) traveled by the same bus from Sooke to East Sooke. Sun River is being added to the East Sooke loop this year; no change is planned for the Otter Point loop.

According to BC Transit, based upon fall 2009 and winter 2010 count data, the community bus has carried approximately 3.5 passengers per trip. Although this figure is down sharply from the 7 passengers per trip reported last year, B.C. Transit said that the ridership actually stayed the same year-to-year as they had recently found an error in the system that inadvertently added some East Sooke passengers to the Otter Point loop. What was happening was that when the Otter Point loop arrived in Sooke some passengers were boarding before the route number was changed to Route 66, East Sooke, and thus being incorrectly counted as Route 63, Otter Point, passengers.

One of the frequently mentioned problems with the present bus service is that it doesn't operate early enough in the morning or late enough in the afternoon to accommodate regular transit users who commute to Victoria. The East Sooke loop provides this service. The **Otter Point, Shirley & Jordan River Developing a Strategic Vision** project identified numerous other changes that residents would like to see made to local transit service, including:

- Adding a route to Gordon's Beach and eventually to Shirley.
- Two direction service in Otter Point.
- Extending Handy Dart service to Shirley.

BC Transit wants to hear from you about their service as they begin planning changes for 2011. They are conducting a long term planning process called Transit Future and are interested in hearing what kind of improvements people would like to see in their transit service. You can direct your comments regarding their service to the transit future section of their website: <http://www.transitbc.com/regions/vic/>

Fall 2010 BC Transit schedule for the Otter Point community bus:

Route 63—OTTER POINT LOOP

(Effective **Tue Sep 7, 2010** through **Sun Dec 26, 2010** inclusive)

Monday through Friday - Morning

Trip Notes (see below)	Bus Type	Sooke at Townsend	Kemp Lake at Otter Point	West Coast at Grant	Dufour at Whiffin Spit	Sooke at Townsend
@	Access	08:20	08:35	08:44	08:49	08:55
@	Access	10:42	10:57	11:06	11:11	11:17

Monday through Friday - Afternoon

Trip Notes (see below)	Bus Type	Sooke at Townsend	Kemp Lake at Otter Point	West Coast at Grant	Dufour at Whiffin Spit	Sooke at Townsend
@	Access	02:18	02:33	02:42	02:47	02:53
@	Access	04:33	04:48	04:57	-	05:00

Trip Notes @ Community Bus: Bike rack use limited to daylight hours only.

4. THE LAND CONSERVANCY COMPLETES PARK PURCHASE

The Land Conservancy (TLC) submitted the following information to the OPSRRA newsletter detailing their ongoing efforts to raise 6.5 million dollars towards the total purchase cost of some of the Western Forest Products lands removed from Tree Farm License 25 on Vancouver Island in 2007.

First Phase of TLC's Wild Hills and Beaches Campaign Complete

On August 12, TLC and The Capital Regional District (CRD) completed the purchase and transfer of the first group of Western Forest Products lands on Vancouver Island. The purchase adds critical lands to the Sooke Potholes Regional Park and creates a new Sandcut Beach Regional Park, the first regional park west of Sooke.

5,800 acres of land are being purchased for a total cost of \$18.8 million, which will be paid and transferred in instalments over three years. All of the parcels placed in regional parks will be further protected by conservation covenants held by TLC. Acquisition of these lands includes major additions to the Sea to Sea Green Belt, an inspired, grassroots campaign first envisioned and promoted by Ray Zimmerman and the Sea to Sea Green Belt Society. Over the years community groups including the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and TLC have continued the work to create a 28,400 acre corridor of protected wilderness and parkland on Victoria's western horizon. When all three phases are completed in 2012 the Sea to Sea Green Belt will be 90% finished.

In March 2010, TLC was instrumental in securing an agreement in principle for the CRD to purchase these lands for future regional parks. With the first phase completed, the CRD will take over management of lands adjacent to Sooke Potholes, parcels surrounding Weeks Lake in the Leech watershed, as well as Sandcut Beach. A second parcel of land at Sandcut Beach will be transferred to the CRD ownership in August 2011. Parcels in Jordan River and remaining land in the Sooke Hills will be transferred in August 2012.

The Land Conservancy launched the Wild Hills and Beaches Campaign to fulfill its commitment to raise 35% of the purchase price. "Sandcut Beach, Jordan River and the Sooke Hills are the definition of West Coast paradise. We would like thank the Province of B.C. and co-founder of Thrifty Foods Alex Campbell for their donations," says TLC's Executive Director Bill Turner. "With these contributions, plus many others, TLC now requires just over \$3 million fulfilling its commitment for the next two phases."

Donate today to TLC's Wild Hills and Beaches Campaign at: conservancy.bc.ca or 1-877-485-2422.

5. JUAN DE FUCA ELECTORAL AREA PARKS & RECREATION BUDGET

The Juan de Fuca Parks and Recreation Commission is in the process of reviewing the 2011 business plan for local area parks and recreation services.

The proposed budget for 2011 is \$170,730 for parks and \$56,990 for recreation, for a combined budget of \$227,720. The operating costs for 2010 were budgeted at

\$218,920 for parks and \$61,670 for recreation for a total budget of \$280,590. Efforts are underway to reduce salary costs in 2011 in order to reduce the parks portion of the commission's budget. The goal is to have an operating budget of about \$164,000 by 2015 for parks and about \$62,000 for recreation services.

There is a separate budget for the provision of recreation services to the Community of Port Renfrew. That budget is presently \$61,670 for 2010 and is expected to remain constant over the next five years.

The Parks & Recreation Commission presently oversees 22 parks in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and has four priorities for 2011:

1. Continue William Simmons Memorial Park (Poirier Lake) development in Otter Point.
2. Continue trail construction at Fishboat Bay Park in Shirley.
3. Improve the trail surface at Seagirt Ponds Community Park in East Sooke and construct a small parking lot.
4. Review or complete subdivision and rezoning plans for parkland and trail dedications.

The members of the Parks and Recreation Commission are volunteers who are appointed for three year terms by the regional director. Each of the six communities in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area is represented on the commission. Shirley is currently represented by Brenda Mark while Ken Douch and Sid Jorna represent Otter Point. The commission's chair is Louise Paterson from East Sooke.

6. TIMBERWEST WIND TOWER APPLICATION

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board that recently approved the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Rural Resource Lands (RRL) land use and zoning bylaws is about to receive the first applications for Temporary Industrial Permits in the resource lands. TimberWest Forest Corporation, which owns 800,000 acres of forest lands on Vancouver Island, is applying to the CRD for permits to install three 60 metre meteorological towers at three different locations on their properties between Otter Point, Shirley and the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

A Temporary Industrial Permit (TIP) is designed to allow an industrial use in a specified area for two years with a possibility of renewing the permit for two more years. If the industrial use is then proposed to continue, rezoning of the area would be required. The decision to allow a TIP will be made by the CRD Board after a process that allows public input.

The TimberWest application includes a request for a variance to exceed the current height restriction of 6 metres for structures in the Rural Resource Lands. The RRL bylaws includes a height exception for publicly owned meteorological towers but as TimberWest is proposing privately owned towers for their research, they require a variance. The current proposal is that during the first year of the TIP, instruments attached to the tower at each site will collect information on wind speeds. If the numbers support developing a commercial wind farm, the temporary towers will remain for the second year while a business plan is put together.

The applications for a TIP at each of the three sites were received by CRD Local Area Planning Services and brought to the Juan de Fuca Land Use Committee on August 17. After adding the Pacheedaht First Nation to the list, the JDF LUC approved the recommendation of planning staff that the CRD refer the application to the following agencies for comment:

Cowichan Valley Regional District

T'Sou-ke First nation
Pacheedaht First Nation
Malahat First Nation
BC Hydro
Cowichan First Nation
Ministry of Transportation
District of Sooke
Landowners within 5 km of each site
Archaeology Section, Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

7. **UPDATE: OTTER POINT OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW**

The CRD Local Area Planning Services have confirmed that they are currently finalizing a contract with HB Lanarc Consultants Ltd. to undertake community liaison and sensitive ecosystem mapping for the Otter Point Official Community Plan (OCP) review.

Once the contract has been finalized, Planning Services will be assisting the consultants to get a newsletter out to the Otter Point Community which will introduce the consultants, outline the general work plan, request volunteers for the Citizens Committee and set the date for the first Citizens Committee meeting.

HB Lanarc is a planning and design company with offices in Nanaimo and Vancouver. Their company mission is to produce planning and design solutions for a sustainable future and describe themselves as having a "... full service "green solutions" workshop, staffed with dozens of planners, landscape architects and related professionals in fields as diverse as community engagement, sustainable buildings, renewable energy, greenhouse gas reduction, food systems, public policy and information technology."

HB Lanarc was chosen from a short list of six companies who were qualified to undertake the \$100,000 project which includes preparing a sensitive environmental inventory and electronic mapping for Otter Point and facilitating community consultation to review the existing OCP and provide recommendations to CRD Local Area Planning Services and the Juan de Fuca Land Use Committee for any suggested changes to the Otter Point OCP.

8. **OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEWS PREPARATION**

We have begun a new feature on the OPSRRA web site to coincide with the beginning of the Official Community Plan (OCP) reviews for Otter Point and Shirley/Jordan River. Because some of these articles are lengthy, we won't always include them in the newsletter, but will provide a link to the articles on our OPSRRA web site.

Articles to date:

March's feature, [False Economies](#) looked at the experiences of other communities in the Greater Victoria area and suggests what our communities could be doing to identify and acquire local green space amenities as part of the community planning process.

April's feature, [Living in a Forested Community](#), considered the best uses for our local forest land; the economic benefits we gain by retaining our forests; threats to our forests and what we need to do to keep our forest and our community healthy.

May's feature, [Towards Collaborative Change: Engaging the Community in Land Use Planning](#) looks at some of the history behind land use, how official community plans and zoning regulate land use, and ways in which the community can participate in land use planning.

June's feature, [Not All Strata are the Same](#), explores some of the basic characteristics of a strata corporation and strata corporation's property ownership.

July's feature, [Residential Taxes in Shirley and Otter Point](#) outlines the process used to determine local area property taxes, compares our mil rates with other areas in the CRD, and details how the property tax is portioned among various services (fire protection, schools, recreation, etc.).

August's feature, [Regional Growth Strategy \(RGS\) Capital Regional District](#) (CRD), describes how Regional Growth Strategies came about, their development in B.C. and how the CRD has recently changed the focus from growth to sustainability. The CRD's Regional Sustainability Strategy is **binding** on the JDFEA and must be adhered to in the upcoming Otter Point and Shirley OCP Reviews.

Note: To read the articles, click on the appropriate link in [Background Articles](#) on the OPSRRA web site.

Times of Change—Seize the Opportunity

Prepared by Arnie Campbell.

This article first appeared in the *Rural Observer*, June 2010.

This article outlines the pressures faced by growing communities such as Otter Point and Shirley and the need for up-to-date OCPs, park plans, zoning bylaws and environmental mapping in order to make good land use decisions.

Five years ago, when the Otter Point & Shirley Residents & Ratepayers Association (OPSRRA) supported the idea of developing a strategic vision for the communities of Jordan River, Shirley and Otter Point, there was enthusiasm for planning how our communities would look in 5 to 15 years. At the time, Southern Vancouver Island was experiencing long-term population growth and, with it, demands for more housing, infrastructure and services. The premise was that as land became more expensive and limited in Langford, Colwood and Sooke, increasing pressure for housing and commercial development in Otter Point, Shirley and Jordan River could be anticipated. Developers had already purchased substantial forest tracts in Otter Point (with similar purchases in Shirley and Jordan River likely to follow) and were exploring ways to convert the land into profitable housing developments and settlement areas.

Although the *Developing a Strategic Vision for Otter Point, Shirley and Jordan River* report helped to identify major community goals and strategies, it needed validation: something that can only happen when a vision is translated into an official community plan (OCP) and zoning bylaw. That opportunity is now before us, as the Otter Point OCP, followed by the Shirley/Jordan River OCP, will be publicly reviewed over the next year. Two other important planning activities will also be happening within this planning cycle. The Capital Regional District will be reviewing the Regional Sustainability Strategy this coming year, and a new zoning bylaw will be developed for the western portion of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area once the Otter Point and Shirley/Jordan River OCP reviews have been completed.

At the same time that these reviews are happening, three major development events will likely be taking place that can either help or hinder how the community plans for its future.

1. An OCP and zoning change will soon be proposed by Canadian Horizons Development Corporation to subdivide its 556-acre property in Otter Point into approximately 300 residential lots ranging from ¼ to 2 acres in size.
2. The CRD's conditional purchase of 467 acres of Western Forest Product's (WFP) private forest lands in the Jordan River area raises the likelihood that some of the land, considered surplus to park needs, will be sold for future residential or commercial development.
3. The outcome of the sales in Otter Point, Shirley and Jordan River of WFP's private forest lands released from Tree Farm License (TFL) 25, which will likely lead to proposals for zoning changes to facilitate new developments.

Why are these events important? Well, the decisions made by the locally elected Juan de Fuca Land Use Committee and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Committee of the CRD Board will shape the future development of Otter Point, Shirley and Jordan River over the next decade. Some of these decisions will be made before the OCP and zoning bylaw reviews have been completed. Some of the changes proposed by developers may well challenge our thinking about rural living and rural sprawl, lot averaging, strata subdivisions, green spaces, land use covenants, higher-density settlement areas, access to water, fire protection services, property tax rates, decreasing CO₂ emissions, increasing road traffic and probably a lot more.

Meanwhile, what we need to help our communities make good decisions are up-to-date OCPs, park plans, zoning bylaws and environmental mapping. And one of the best ways to develop these planning documents is to do so in consultation with the communities. Granted, this can sometimes be a lengthy, stressful and tedious process; interest can wane and outcomes may feel more like compromise than accomplishment. However, as we saw with the recent Rural Resource Lands land use and zoning bylaws, the outcomes can be positive and widely supported.

One way to keep the planning process vibrant and constructive is to give the community ample warning of potential changes and provide information and points of view that help to complete residents' understanding of the issues. For example, one of the many organized activities that happened in conjunction with the Developing a Strategic Vision project were community forums on Rural Land Use, Water and the Environment, Economic Development, and Governance. These forums tried to bring expert, but sometimes differing, points of view to the discussion about a vision for our communities. Another example is the background information articles that OPSRRA is preparing in advance of the Otter Point and Shirley/Jordan River OCP reviews. The first two, "Living in a Forested Community" and "Buying Back Your Community Amenities" are posted to the OPSRRA web site: www.opsrra.ca. Others articles are being planned to address property taxes, engaging the community and water.

The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Planning Services department will soon be inviting local residents to participate in meetings, surveys and workshops to consider changes to the Otter Point OCP. This invitation to become involved in shaping the future of your community happens only once every five years. OPSRRA urges all Otter Point resident and ratepayers to get involved. Standing still isn't a choice. Carpe Diem.

9. UPDATE: INTERNET SERVICE COMING TO SHIRLEY

Last month's newsletter detailed the announcement that Shirley had been selected by Broadband Canada as one of the rural communities in Canada to receive federal funding to connect to the Internet and Shaw Communications was identified as the service provider. Teri Alcock, who has been coordinating the community's

efforts to replace their present dial-up Internet service, recently sent this update to Shirley residents:

This is the news we have all been waiting for—Shaw Communications has been awarded a grant from Industry Canada to bring broadband to Shirley. I contacted Shaw to ask for details and was told that they will be proceeding immediately to obtain the necessary permits and are moving forward with design work for the system. The grant approval was based on the work being completed by December 31, 2011. However, they hope that it will be up and running before that, but don't expect to see it this year since the process to obtain approvals is a long one. We could be looking at next spring or summer.

The good news is that Shaw will be providing all services that are currently enjoyed by Shaw customers in the city i.e., cable television, digital phone and internet services.

Coverage will extend to approximately 10900 West Coast Road with about 261 homes included.

For additional information, please contact Mr. Kerry Hunt, Regional Manager for Shaw. 250- 475-7277

10. UPDATE: A SUCCESSFUL SHIRLEY DAY

Fiona McDannold, President of the Shirley Community Association, submitted the following report on last month's Shirley Day event to the OPSRRSA newsletter. The association organizes the annual event.

A very big thank you goes out to all those who contributed to and participated in Shirley Day this year.

This event could not happen without the vendors, artisans and crafters who set up for business in our park each year. Thanks also go to those who contributed items to our blind auction and to the media/book exchange.

Doug and Rosanne Day and Marcie Gauntlett put on a yummy pancake and sausage breakfast, and Christien and Harold Shipton were masterful BBQ chefs for the Salmon dinner.

James Powell, Linda Tenecke, Melody Kimmel and Colleen Minten were invaluable in keeping the activities inside the hall running smoothly.

Marg Johnson, Mary Dunn and Fiona McDannold put in many hours preparing and serving delicious food in the Shirley kitchen—many thanks to Sue and Anne of the Sooke District Lioness Club and to Jessica Wade: we could not have managed without you!

The Shirley Fire Department was a great attraction with their shiny trucks and hose display. Fire Chief Donovan Ray was especially proud to be able to show off a brand new fire truck, which the Fire Department had taken delivery of only 2 days before.

A special thank you goes out to Nicole, Rick, Richie and Adela Gardner for their long hours of organization for the children's games, beer garden and for overall logistics for the day.

11. LOCAL AREA FARM TOURS

Although we tend to identify ourselves as a forested community, there is a surprising amount of agricultural land in Shirley and Otter Point. According to the Otter Point Official Community Plan (OCP) there are an estimated 760 acres classified as agricultural in Otter Point, and the Shirley/Jordan River OCP identifies about 200 acres in Shirley. This represents 9% of the land base in Otter Point and 2% in Shirley.

On August 8, 2010 four Otter Point farms were part of the first **Farm and Food Garden Tour**. The Sooke Community Food Initiative organized this event to support their **New Farmer Mentorship** program. The tour was a wonderful opportunity to see how both commercial and private operations were using the land to generate jobs, income and good food!

Mary Alice Johnson of Otter Point, one of the event organizers and the operator of ALM Farm and Full Circle Seeds in Otter Point, submitted the following account of the day to the OPSRRA newsletter.

Sooke Region Food CHI's First Annual Farm and Food Garden Tour

Sunday, August 8, the south end of Vancouver Island tipped to the West Coast when serious gardeners and farmers came to Sooke for our first Farm and Food Garden Tour. This event did Sooke proud showcasing 12 farms and food gardens of great diversity.

Being the first time for this event, organizers and farmers were uncertain whether many people would come but over 250 tickets were sold, many on the day of the event. Children under 15 were free and many children attended so the total number of guests was over 300. A large majority of the guests were from outside Sooke with many urban gardeners and new gardeners as well as established farmers and gardeners. Teresa and Matt of Silver Cloud Farm told us "We were shocked at how many people came (well over 120) and we really enjoyed meeting all these enthusiastic people. We actually did not think anyone would show up to our place because we were the farm furthest out, but while we were eating a late breakfast pondering how to pass the day, 6 cars came down the driveway (and it was only 10:55 am)--it was busy until 5pm."

The goal was to encourage people to grow food. Guests remarked on the friendliness of the hosts and volunteers and the beauty and diversity of the gardens and farms, often taking a seat and staying at each farm for over an hour. Very few were able to visit more than half the sites on the tour.

Many of the farms and gardens on the tour have a long history of growing food. Visitors were interested to hear that history. One of the farms is the one of the oldest active farms in BC and another was recently carved out of forest land by a young family. They had a photo album showing the transition. More than one visitor asked farmers, "How do you get your soil so good?" Sometimes the answer was "by adding organic matter and picking rocks for 100 years."

Lots of small children came on the tour and they were entertained all day. We saw young moms taking notes and children with cameras photographing piglets and chickens. One farm focused on showing children how to plant food crops. Lots of people were interested in the Children's Garden Club and 3 new families in Sooke were interested in coming to the next meeting. One young mother remarked on how

each farmer/gardener had a different approach to growing which encouraged her to just get started. Before the tour, she lacked confidence and thought "I'll just read another gardening book." After the tour she got out and started planting.

Thanks go to Sooke District and the Juan de Fuca Economic Development Commission for their support of this event. Money raised by the Tour goes to our New Farmer Mentorship project now in its second year. Last year nine wannabe farmers were mentored by local farmers. The group visited nine farms in the area and listened to farmers talk about how to set up a farm, where to market, what to grow, and what infrastructure is needed. Then they were matched with a farmer who visited their site and gave them specific advice on setting up a farm. If you are interested in taking part in this program, go to <http://www.sookefoodchi.ca/SookefoodCHI-Projects.htm#mentorship> to learn more, or phone 250-642-3671.

12. HERITAGE SIGNS

Driving around Shirley and Otter Point recently became more interesting with the addition of seven new heritage signs. The signs are part of a larger project of the Sooke Region Historical Society and the Juan de Fuca Economic Development Commission (EDC) to increase the number of historical markers through-out the region. The Historical Society provide the signs and the EDC supplied the posts and the covered the cost of installation.

New additions in our area are:

- Henry Clark Farm at the west end of Otter Point Road.
- Tugwell/Gordon Farm at Gordon's Beach.
- Harris House at ALM Farm on Otter Point Road.
- Poirier Farm at the Highway 14 end of Kemp Lake Road.
- Muir Creek at the Muir Creek Bridge.
- Emerson School on Otter Point Road west of the Fire Hall.
- Coal/Kirby Creek at West Coast Road and Kirby Creek.

13. DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

Spar Tree was originally the name used to identify trees suitable for masts on sailing ships? Until the 1850s most of the spars for ships came from European forests, especially the Baltic region. With the world's supply of suitable spar trees dwindling and the settlement of the Pacific Northwest bringing a shift from fur trapping and trading to forestry, a new business opportunity arose. By the mid 1850s the Muir family had begun exporting local spars to England and the Continent. Soon the demand increased and other loggers joined the business of finding and falling these special trees. In 1855 one local logger and exporter estimated that his company alone had exported 1,200 spar trees to the San Francisco market.

Over time, the demand for spar trees diminished as mariners switched to a combination of sail and steam and eventually entirely to propeller driven vessels. However a recent article in the Guardian reports that, faced with increasing costs for fuel, owners of large commercial vessels are fitting them with sails to realize savings from auxiliary wind power. Will we perhaps see a return to a demand for wooden spars?

Although the harvest of spars for ships ended, the term Spar Tree survived in the woods. In the language of logging, a Spar Tree was a carefully selected standing tree that was limbed and topped and then rigged with wire rope and blocks and tackle to lift and move logs through the bush to landing areas. The more modern version was a mobile steel tower which sometimes included a telescopic feature which allowed it to increase or decrease its height. Spar Trees have now been replaced by Grapple Yarders and other machines which can quickly and more easily move felled trees through the logging area to the landing sites where they are loaded onto trucks and taken to the sorting yards.

[Click here](#) to view some excellent images of Spar Trees (past and present).

Do you have local historical information that you would like to share, or questions that you would like answered? If so, let us know and we'll try to help. Contact Arnie Campbell by phone (250-642-3113) or by email: d.acampbell@shaw.ca

14. OPSRRA SMALL BUSINESS LISTINGS

Do you operate a small business? Are you an OPSRRA member? OPSRRA is offering a free business listing service for members, on its web site: www.opsrra.ca. We will list non-members for a suitable donation!

The purpose of this service is to provide an opportunity for businesses in Jordan River, Shirley and Otter Point to advertise their goods and services to their local community. We anticipate having listings for accommodation, farm produce, art, furniture-making, fishing charters, eco-tours, firewood, knitting, soaps, landscaping, bookkeeping, sewing, spas and more. More information, businesses already listed, and an on-line registration form are available on OPSRRA's web site (www.opsrra.ca) under **Business Listings**.

Note: OPSRRA does not accept responsibility for the services provided. Always check references and ask for confirmation of Work Safe B.C. Registration if applicable.

Support local businesses. The OPSRRA web site has more information about the following business listings

1001 Welding & Equipment Repair

Accent in Grooming

A Point of View B & B

ALM Organic Farm

Beaches West B & B

Bear Home Remodelling

Birds Edge Press

Bridge over Troubled Water Autism
Intervention & Respite Service

DanCyn Kioti Excavation

Eagle Cove Beachfront Guest Suite

Fancy That Esthetics & Body Care

Farmer Notary—Shawna Farmer, Notary Public.

Full Circle Seeds

Heron's Rest B & B

Jambo Pet Sitting Service

Kirsten Sykes, Realtor

Knotty Beds by Nature

Le Sooke Spa

Malahat Farm Heritage Cottage

Ocean Wilderness Inn

Otter Point Beach House

Otter Point Electrical

Reflexology by Marlene Barry

Rock Beach Grill and Groceries
(formerly Kemp Lake Store & Cafe)

Rhythm's Edge Percussion Shop

Road's End Construction

Sandy's Drywall Ltd

Smiling Goat Farm Sitting Service

Stick in the Mud Coffee House

Straitview Ridge Bed & Breakfast

Three Sisters Farm

Tugwell Creek Honey Farm

Tugwell Creek Meadery

Wood Visions

15. BACK ISSUES OF THE OPSRRA NEWSLETTER

Back issues of the OPSRRA newsletter are available on the OPSRRA web site.

This monthly newsletter is prepared by the directors of OPSRRA. It is available to members by e-mail and to others on our web site: www.opsrra.ca. To have an item you would like to have considered for placement in the newsletter, or make a comment about the newsletter, contact an OPSRRA director. OPSRRA tries to verify the correctness of the information in this newsletter; if we got it wrong we will acknowledge that and make a correction as quickly as possible.
