

ETF News

www.eugenetreefoundation.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE EUGENE TREE FOUNDATION

City Works to Protect Established Trees

By Whitey Lueck

The protection and preservation of our city's trees occur at many different levels, both literally and figuratively. In terms of the trees themselves, it is important to care properly for all the parts of the tree, including those parts that are above-ground—the crown or canopy, and the trunk—as well as the roots that are mostly hidden from view. And with regard to the people who care for our trees, they can range from a thoughtful neighbor who removes a yard-sale sign nailed to the trunk of a young tree, to our city's urban forestry technicians who oversee the care of trees during construction and development.

What happens to trees' canopies and trunks is apparent to most observant passersby. But what happens to trees' roots, especially during construction and development, goes largely unnoticed, unless a person happens to be there the day the backhoe meets the roots, so to speak.

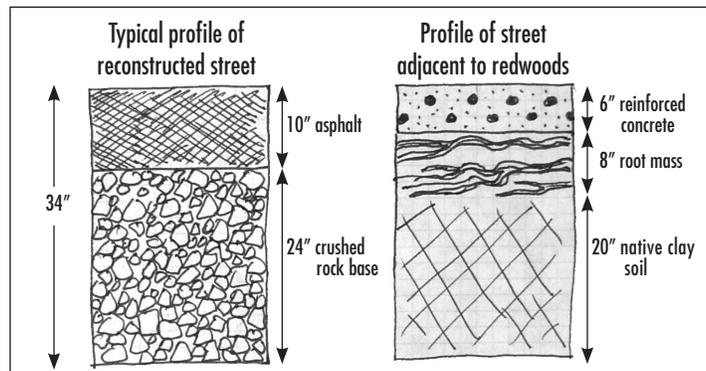
The summer 2006 reconstruction of Hilyard Street between East 13th Avenue and East 24th Avenue is illustrative of some of the work that goes on behind the scenes (and underground) to protect Eugene's trees. Before the reconstruction work even began, all the streetside trees along the project's entire length were inventoried and each tree's Critical Root Zone (based on trunk diameter) was established. For some of the larger trees, such as two coast redwoods in the 1600 block, the CRZ was substantial and extended well out into the street.

The only way to determine the actual extent of a tree's root system—both horizontally across the site and vertically within what is called the soil profile—an exploratory trench is carefully dug parallel to the curb. After removing the old asphalt, City workers discovered in the case of the two redwood trees an extensive and "spongy" mat of roots just below the asphalt that did not extend very deep into the soil profile due to the naturally poorly drained soils in that part of Eugene.

Because the Hilyard Street project involved a



View of City crew examining the extent of the redwood roots by using a water jet to remove the soil, and expose the roots.



complete reconstruction of the street—from the crushed rock base to the new layers of asphalt atop the crushed rock—the necessary excavation to a depth of 34 inches would have required the removal of the under-street portion of the redwoods' root mass, which would have killed the trees in the process—or at least rendered them potentially very unstable. But in an effort to protect the trees, Public Works engineers chose instead to reconstruct that portion of Hilyard Street with just a six-inch layer of reinforced concrete directly atop the root mass, creating a "root bridge" that protects the trees' roots and ensures their continued health.

So next time you are in the 1600 block of Hilyard Street, take a closer look at the two coast redwoods on the east side of the street and the bright white concrete section in the street itself. And be thankful that we live in a community that cares enough about its trees to find innova-

Continued on page 2



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President's Column



It took a while, but it looks like summer has finally arrived in Eugene! Unfortunately, something else has come our way: a flurry of vandalism that has targeted our beloved trees. Tree vandalism has always been present in Eugene—with one broken branch here and another there—but since last fall, we've seen four or five young trees at a time left with snapped trunks and their severed tops lying on the ground.

Lately, someone has added a vicious twist to the vandalism. With the help of a very sharp knife, the vandal(s?) has peeled off the bark around the trunk of ten new street trees, disrupting the vascular system with the intent of killing the trees by what is called "girdling."

Appalled neighborhood residents wrapped with moist cloth the bark that was left hanging like the skin of a half-eaten banana on the trunk and, so far, only one of the ten trees has died.

Of course, my first reaction was to wonder why one would hurt a tree in such a way. Snapping a tree in half is perhaps just a stupid demonstration of force following an evening of too much alcohol. But taking the time to carefully girdle one tree after the other requires good skill with a knife, some understanding of tree biology, and con-

siderable determination.

I have had plenty of time to think about this unfortunate event. I even thought that it would be best to simply ignore the perpetrator's obvious request for attention who likely hoped for anger and despair to result from the action. Instead, I'll follow the advice of one of our readers who e-mailed me after I wrote in the last newsletter about the vandalism of trees. The writer suggested that it's better to reach out and try to find the people responsible for the vandalism so we can give them our full attention, understand their frustration, and hopefully channel their energy into something positive by inviting them to...a tree planting, for example!

Alby Thoumsin, President

The Removal of Healthy Tree Should Always Be A Difficult Decision

By Whitey Lueck

When I moved into my house on Potter Street in 1998, a friend suggested—when she first saw the house and the magnificent two-trunked coast redwood out front—that I had actually bought the tree and the house just came with it! Indeed, the tree dominates my property and is loved by all who visit or pass by my house. Despite its size, though, the redwood is younger than I am, having been planted around 1960.

Soon after moving into the house, I had the redwood's two trunks cabled together, which is a relatively common and widely accepted arboricultural practice. I did this because of the inherently weak "crotch" of multi-trunked conifers—and my concern for both life and property, since the house stands northeast of the redwood, or downwind of it during winter storms. In the ten years that have elapsed since then, I have dutifully watered the tree twice monthly during our annual summer drought—because redwoods are native to the coastal Fog Belt and need summertime moisture in order to maintain their health—and I have watched

the tree grow bigger and bigger.

Like the tree itself, the risk of living downwind of it has continued to grow, too, until I now feel that I can no longer accept that risk. Removing a perfectly healthy tree is not something that a tree-lover like me ever really wants to do, and the expense of its removal is considerable. So coming to a decision about the tree has been a long and arduous process for me.

But I have finally decided to have the redwood removed in October 2008, and will see to it that every part of the tree is put to good use after it is felled. Dimensional lumber from the trunk will be sawn on-site after the felling, and the rot-resistant chipped branches will be made available to neighbors and others for mulching or to use for garden paths. Plus, several "rounds" of the two trunks will be made into table-tops. In short, I want the redwood to "live on" in as many forms as possible after it is gone.

In the ten years that I have lived in my house, I have planted more than two dozen trees in the front yard that are ready to help fill the void created by the departing redwood. In addition,

I plan to plant a half-dozen more where the redwood now stands.

For ETF's fall 2008 newsletter, I shall write an article describing in more detail the removal process, but because none of us tree-lovers likes a "surprise" (that is, the sudden disappearance of an old tree friend), I wanted to announce my plans—to readers, neighbors and passersby—well in advance of the tree's removal.

Continued from page 1

City Works to Protect Established Trees

...tive ways to protect and preserve them, even during major projects that in the past—and in most other communities—would have likely required their removal.

ETF Plants 450 Trees!

Details in next issue of *ETF News*.



Fuzzy-the-Giant

By Alby Thoumsin

It was a gorgeous July evening and I was leaning against a tree trunk. The sun was still bright but fast approaching the hilltop in front of me, and the characteristic scent of the forest was beginning to become even more pronounced. A lawn of green needles was spread in front of me and resembled a huge meadow caressed by the last rays of the sun. The only difference was that this green lawn was in fact the *canopy* of a forest and I was looking at it from the top of a 220-foot-tall Douglas-fir. Meet Fuzzy-the-Giant!

Three hours earlier, little did I know what a nice day it would turn into as I drove my old Nissan through a portion of the Willamette National Forest that I've hiked for years. The Fall Creek Corridor—where I would meet Fuzzy—is located southeast of Springfield and the beautiful creek flows through some of the finest low-elevation old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest. Old-growth forests are characterized by four components: 1) very large living trees; 2) very large trees that are dead but still standing (“snags”); 3) very large, decaying tree trunks lying on the forest floor; and 4) a forest canopy composed of more than one tree species—typically Douglas-fir in the upper canopy and western hemlock in the middle and lower canopy.

After a pleasant drive that was briefly interrupted by the relative moon-scape of the 2003 Clark Creek forest fire, I stopped along the side of the road where Robin Miron—a guide for Pacific Tree Climbing Institute—had asked me to meet him. I heard voices and soon Robin called to me and asked me to follow the deer trail visible at the edge of the road.

It took me just three minutes of walking along a sinuous trail among vine maple trunks and small Douglas-firs and hemlocks to reach Robin who was sitting with a client at the base of a colossal Douglas-fir. “Meet Fuzzy, Alby!” Robin grinned from ear to ear knowing that I'd be in total admiration of such a giant tree. I couldn't wait to

touch Fuzzy and delicately caress its bark, then work my way around its base without missing a ridge. As expected, my fingers were covered afterward with black charcoal, evidence of a forest fire that likely passed through here a century or more ago, judging by the mature vegetation around me. It is very possible that Fuzzy was already a good-sized tree when Columbus reached the shores of the New World.

Finally, I was ready to ascend up into my new friend's canopy. I put on a tree-climbing saddle that supported my thighs and cinched at the waist. Two ascenders connected to long straps were clipped to the rope that ran parallel to Fuzzy's trunk and the straps were connected to my saddle. Below the lower ascender were two other straps, each with a loop where I fit my feet. I slid the top ascender up three feet and sat in the saddle, allowing the rope to stretch a bit. After that, it was time to slide up the lower ascender and move my feet up with the same motion. Then, pushing on my legs, I sat up and repeated the same movement with the top ascender.

Not unlike an inchworm, I moved slowly up along the giant trunk of the ancient tree and marveled at what was below and around me. After five minutes of a good workout, I stopped at about 50 feet and took the time to appreciate the view. I was still far below the top of the tree but what I saw already was incredible. I was above a lot of the smaller trees and looked for the first time at the top of 40-foot-tall hemlocks spreading their delicate needles to receive the little light that is available that low in the forest canopy. Vine maples below gave a slightly different color to the palette of greens offered to me.

After another 20 feet, I stopped again. At 70 feet, I had just reached the first branch! No more signs of fire at this height. I travelled around the tree using my hands to grab the bark and I realized that the trunk was still about seven feet in diameter at that height!

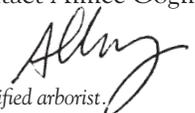
I began to see the low sun illuminating the trunk and soon found myself

reaching the top of the surrounding trees after 150 feet of inchworming along. Wow, what a view! But Fuzzy still had more to offer. Patiently and with growing enthusiasm, I approached the top, passing by wind-tormented large limbs covered with mosses unknown on the forest floor, and seeing in small cavities the fecal pellets of red tree voles, the principal food of the northern spotted owl.

Finally, I reached the last available limb that was strong enough to support me and I stood there with awe. I was overtaken by a strong emotion that blurred my eyes. There was no feeling of conquest; rather, I felt at that moment a connection to everything around me and a need to forget my humanness.

Robin thought of everything! A “tree boat”—a sort of hammock—had been set up a little below me and, without taking off my saddle, I laid down in it and looked around me. Except for a dozen similar giant trees poking up their heads in the distance, we were above everything else. When I saw the full moon rising on the east edge of the summer sky, I began to regret that I had not planned to spend the night. After another hour, it was time for me to rappel down the tree. Despite the fool-proof device that would allow me to descend the tree, I still felt nervous for the first 20 feet or so, but I was soon enjoying the 220-foot-long goodbye to my new friend. Even though the top of the tree was still in the last light of the sun, it was dark on the forest floor. I stretched out my arms and hugged Fuzzy one last time before leaving.

This education piece was purposely not technical and was written to encourage you, too, to leave the urban forest for a while and enjoy your summer in a somewhat different way. Pacific Tree Climbing Institute is located in Eugene and specializes in the climbing of large trees. The City of Eugene's Outdoor Program also allows you to climb some of the trees in our city parks; just contact Aimee Goglia. Until next time!



Alby Thoumsin is a certified arborist.



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ETF Board Positions

By Jane Renfro Smith

The search is on for qualified persons to fill several additional positions on the ten-member board of Eugene Tree Foundation.

Individuals interested in serving on the board may call the ETF voice message number, 284-9854, to request that an application be sent to them.

Attributes sought in new board members are an interest in the natural environment, including the City's urban forest; the capacity to work collaboratively; and a willingness to support the mission of ETF as well as carry out the various duties of the board.

We hope to further strengthen the organization with board members who have experience in financial management, communications and neighborhood engagement. Always, we look for people who have a positive outlook and a belief that beneficial change can occur through voluntary group effort.

Thank You, ETF Donors!

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A Very Special Thanks!

In honor of Earth Day, ETF was invited by **Down to Earth** to set up an information table in the downtown store. Members of our Board distributed brochures and answered questions about the work we do. Down to Earth pledged five percent of its total sales—in both stores—to ETF! As a result, we received a wonderful donation of over \$400. Thank you Down to Earth!