Swamp savers solicit school support

Sooke school trustees branched out into ecological and conservation problems at last week's meeting.

A presentation on Murray's Pond was given by Lois Gardner, who then answered trustees questions about the area.

Plans are underway by owners of the land, Construction Aggregates Ltd., to mine for gravel in the area containing a pond and swamp. The woods, which until recently had been used by local residents as a recreational site, have now been fenced off by the company.

The land is private property but trespassing laws have not been enforced until recently and well worn trails lead through the woods to the swamp. The heavily wooded area lies between Wishart and Dressler Roads.

Gardner has spearheaded a Save Our Swamp movement and would like the area donated to the Capital Regional District for a park.

The swamp has unofficially been used by district schools for nature study, Gardner told trustees.

"When I went to school in this district there were lots of places for nature study. It would be a good move by the school board to make sure places are left for nature study without having to bus the kids somewhere," said Gardner.

Displaying photographs of the swamp, Gardner said it would make a very poor gravel pit.

"The subject matter of the delegation will be received sympathetically by the board and discussed at a later date," said chairman Ken Purse.

About 50 acres would be needed for the park so as to include the watershed, jogging trails and an area where trilliums grow, said Gardner. Even if the area was donated as a park, there would still be a fear the company would mine close to the swamp and "hit the plug" she said.

The company have promised to reclaim the land but as they are selling all the topsoil it is difficult to understand what would grow, said Gardner.

Construction Aggregates is owned by Genstar. "It's an enormous company. It wouldn't make one flip on the stockholders report if they gave us our swamp," she said.

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