

BC Parks helps blaze trails

By Barb Brouwer

OBSERVER STAFF

Things are looking up and out for Debra McDonald.

With a \$7,200 grant from BC Parks in the offing, Salmon Arm will soon be getting its first TrailRider, a specially designed wilderness access vehicle that will allow the former forester and outdoors enthusiast to access her beloved trails.

McDonald, whose mobility is severely limited by MS, has campaigned steadily for a TrailRider so she and others with limited mobility can access the great outdoors.

McDonald credits The Shuswap Trail Alliance for helping her in her quest. An equally excited trail alliance co-ordinator Phil McIntyre-Paul believes success in getting the funding for one TrailRider and a couple of

harnesses will segue into three in the community by next summer.

"We have a really strong working relationship with BC Parks," he says, noting the funds meet the ministry's requirement as a regionally significant project that increases access to the province's parks. "They've been one of the big regional partners working together on the Shuswap Trails initiative."

McIntyre-Paul says the TrailRider is very well designed and can easily access Shuswap trails, including the Enderby Cliffs.

The goal is to raise \$21,000 plus an additional \$9,200 in in-kind support to purchase three TrailRiders and all the equipment and storage container to run a successful and safe signout program. The Shuswap Trail Alliance is supporting the effort by managing dona-



FILE PHOTO

Great outdoors: Cheryl Hillocks takes Debra McDonald for a spin.

tions, issuing charitable receipts, and working with McDonald, who will manage the sign-out program.

Individual donations are in excess of \$1,000 and McDonald is working on several other possibilities.

"I am so excited and very thankful for having partnered with the alliance. They really helped to make this possible," says McDonald. "And BC Parks has really stepped up to make

the parks accessible to people with mobility issues. They're trying to include a demographic that really wasn't included in the parks and that's a big step forward."

Donations can be made by mailing a cheque (marked for the TrailRider) to the Shuswap Trail Alliance, PO Box 1531, V1E 4P6 or call 250-832-0102.