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MT. KONOCTI PRESERVATION EFFORTS UNDERWAY

COUNTY IN PROCESS OF ACQUISITION, FUNDRAISING; SEEKS COMMUNITY INPUT FOR MOUNTAIN'S PUBLIC USE

LAKE COUNTY, CA — County officials report the process for Lake County's monumental acquisition of several large parcels on top of Mt. Konocti continues to move forward while fundraising and park-planning efforts begin.

The acquisition includes 1,689 acres on parcels that span four peaks – Wright Peak, Buckingham Peak, Howard Peak, and South Peak.

With breathtaking views from the top that span all of Clear Lake and north to Mt. Shasta, south to Mt. St. Helena, and east to Mt. Lassen and the Sutter Buttes, Mt. Konocti is truly a gem, and one that has only been appreciated by a select few, as much of the mountaintop has been in private ownership since the mid-1800s.

After initial positive discussions with the owners who were looking to sell large parcels to satisfy a family trust, the County began acquisition efforts in earnest nearly a year ago, when on March 18, 2008, the Lake County Board of Supervisors unanimously endorsed and funded the proposed acquisition of property on Mt. Konocti for public parks purposes.

“The County had been presented with this monumental opportunity to acquire a substantial portion of the mountain,” said Kim Clymire, Lake County's Public Services Director, whose department, in conjunction with the County Administrative Office, is tasked with the acquisition. “And in the Board Chambers that day, as soon as the Supervisors voted five unanimous ‘ayes,’ the entire audience rose to their feet and cheered. Everyone knew this was an opportunity that just wouldn't come around again.”

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“The goal is to preserve a significant portion of the mountain as open space with opportunities for significant public access.”

According to Clymire, the long-term vision is to link the County-owned and BLM-owned parcels on the top and slopes of the mountain with Clear Lake State Park, a lakefront jewel that features complete visitor amenities including a boat launch and marina, lakefront campsites, hiking trails, and an impressive visitor center.

“The ultimate goal is to enable visitors and residents to hike from the lakeshore to the top of the mountain – creating an experience that will really put Lake County on the map as a world-class ecotourism destination,” Clymire said.

While the total price tag is approximately \$3.8 million, the County already has acquired the 176-acre parcel that is home to a communication tower, which generates more than \$100,000 in annual revenue from contracts with various providers. That income will be used for capital improvements and ongoing maintenance of the park. Negotiations are ongoing on the remaining 1,513-acre parcel.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) already owns several other parcels on the mountain, including the Black Forest, which will connect the parcels the County is acquiring, resulting in one large, contiguous area of open space.

While several issues are still being worked out, County Administrative Officer Kelly Cox said he feels confident that the acquisition is moving along smoothly.

“We are in the process of finalizing details, and we are excited to begin to gather input and ideas from the community as to what sort of park they’d like this property to become,” Cox said.

Part of the planning process will include types of use, extent of access, protection of biologically and culturally sensitive areas, a fire management plan, as well as facilities and trails development.

FUNDRAISING

While the Lake County Board of Supervisors has committed to funding the entire cost of the purchase price with one-time revenues from federal geothermal royalties, the Board also acknowledged the need for community support and future acquisition and, in September, voted to allow the County to embark on fundraising for acquisition of parcels on the mountain.

So, fundraising efforts began last fall with a goal of raising \$2.6 million by September 2009. All funds raised will go directly toward the acquisition, offsetting the amount committed by the County. Those offset County funds will then be used for future acquisition of additional parcels to expand the dedicated open space.

Fundraising efforts have garnered support and partnerships from the BLM and several Lake County organizations such as the Lake County Land Trust, the Sierra Club Lake Group, and the Redbud Audubon Society, as well as several local business owners and community members – many of whom have eagerly given of their time and talents to help spread the word.

In particular, community members Chuck Lamb and Holly Harris have played a large role in the County's fundraising efforts by initiating the www.PreserveKonocti.org web site, which enables the County to offer the convenience of online donations, as well as the opportunity to donate as part of a purchase of select Mt. Konocti merchandise.

“We’ve gotten incredible support and encouragement from the community,” Clymire said, “and we truly appreciate every single donation – from \$10 to \$10,000.” All dollars raised, 100% of the donations, will go straight toward the acquisition.

Many realize the acquisition is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help put much of the iconic mountain into public hands for perpetuity.

The opportunities to get involved are many – from monetary donations to in-kind assistance. Many individuals have donated directly and several organizations and businesses are getting involved by working with the County to develop ideas for raising funds.

RELEASE: Mt. Konocti Acquisition Fundraising Efforts Underway

RELEASE DATE: February 27, 2009

Page 4 of 4

In December, Lake County Wine Studio owner Susan Feiler and Lake County artist Renee Geare presented Clymire with a check for \$400 toward the acquisition. Feiler and Geare raised the money by hosting a month-long benefit art show and sale featuring Geare's oil painting project, "100 Views of Mount Konocti," plus proceeds from several benefit wine tasting events featuring Zoom Wines and Sol Rouge.

Community and service organizations have expressed interest and the County is encouraging organizations to think creatively about fundraising and ways they may get involved.

Information about the acquisition effort is available and tax-deductible donations may be made online at: www.PreserveKonocti.org

Donations also may be mailed to Lake County's Public Services Department, 333 Second Street, Lakeport, CA 95453. Checks should be made payable to the County of Lake, with "Mt. Konocti Acquisition" noted on the memo line.

COMMUNITY INPUT

The process for community input begins next month when the County will host community meetings on Wednesday, March 11, and on Wednesday, March 25. Both meetings will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers. The public is encouraged to attend. For more information, contact the Lake County Public Services Department at (707) 262-1618.

Located in beautiful Northern California, Lake County is just two hours by car from the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sacramento Valley, and the Pacific Coast. Lake County is home to Clear Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in California and possibly the oldest lake on the continent, as well as other waters including Blue Lakes, Lake Pillsbury, Indian Valley Reservoir, and Highland Springs Reservoir. Visitors to Lake County experience the state's cleanest air basin, spectacular scenic beauty, fine wines, headliner concerts, and unsurpassed recreational opportunities — from hiking, biking, golf, and off-road adventures to boating, fishing, kayaking, birding, and even rockhounding. The local area code is 707. For visitor information, contact the Lake County Visitor Information Center at (800) 525-3743 or www.lakecounty.com.

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