



News Release

June 28, 2016

For Immediate Release

Contact

Karen Sjoquist
ksjoquist@idl.idaho.gov
Forest Legacy Program Coordinator
Idaho Department of Lands

Kennon McClintock
kmclintock@tnc.org
Watershed Manager, Boundary County
The Nature Conservancy in Idaho

Long-time Bonners Ferry family conserves open space along popular lake

Unique project conserves Idaho's wildlife, heritage, water and agriculture

BONNERS FERRY, IDAHO — About 700 acres surrounding Bonner Lake, a popular recreation area, will be permanently protected through a Forest Legacy Program conservation easement. Four generations of the Wages family have owned the property surrounding Bonner Lake since the early 1950s. These lands contain forests, wet meadows and hay ground that provide economic, recreational, wildlife and scenic benefits to the community.

"My grandfather's original intent was to keep the properties together as a working farm and forest," said Adrian Wages. "Through this agreement we were able to honor his wishes, and keep the family lands undeveloped and whole for our children and future generations."

Located between the Purcell and Selkirk mountains, the undeveloped property and surrounding areas provide exceptional habitat for a diversity of wildlife including elk, deer, grizzly and black bears, and contain a variety of rare plants. The property provides a picturesque backdrop from the northwest end of the lake which is accessible to the public for canoeing and year-round fishing.

In partnership with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service, the Wages family will be protecting working forest and farmland, fish and wildlife habitat, and public recreation opportunities.

"We are thankful to the Wages family for having the foresight and commitment to conserve this beautiful and unique property," said Kennon McClintock, watershed manager in Boundary County for the Nature Conservancy. "In partnership with IDL and the Forest Service, we are conserving a place that provides public access, timber, and habitat for fish and wildlife." The project received letters of support from local governments, the timber industry, and the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative.

Funding for the project came through the Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, which seeks to protect "working forests" — those that support the natural resources economy, protect water quality, provide habitat, opportunities for recreation and other public benefits. The conservation easement was purchased for a discounted price, with the Wages family generously contributing the difference as donated land value.

MORE

“Forest Legacy projects are voluntary and support local people and companies that want to keep working forests working, benefiting the local economy,” IDL Director Tom Schultz said. “The counties benefit because they continue to receive property tax from the landowner, and people benefit with access to recreation.”

“The Forest Legacy Program is designed to protect and maintain private working forest for future generations. It is a privilege to be able to help families like the Wages keep their family forest as well as providing for wildlife, clean water and recreational experiences,” said Janet Valle, U.S. Forest Service. “It is truly a conservation partnership.”

The Wages family will continue to own and manage the property under a conservation easement that guarantees it will remain a working forest and will always provide significant environmental and social benefits. The easement will be held by the Idaho Department of Lands, which will be responsible for long-term monitoring. With the easement recently finalized, the Wages made a lasting contribution to forest conservation for Idaho.

In partnership with other willing landowners, future Forest Legacy conservation easements will protect working forests in Boundary and Bonner counties within the McArthur Lake Wildlife Corridor, Hall Mountain near the Canadian border and Clagstone Meadows near Careywood.

No taxpayer dollars are being used to fund Forest Legacy. The money comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing that is allocated specifically for conservation purposes. Forest Legacy funds are used for forest conservation throughout the United States and Idaho receives project grants through a nationally competitive process.

###

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Idaho the Conservancy has conserved and protected nearly 400,000 acres. To learn more: nature.org/Idaho.

The Idaho Department of Lands administers Idaho’s Forest Legacy Program through the Forestry Assistance Bureau. To date, this program has successfully conserved nearly 73,000 acres of privately owned working forestland. In addition, IDL manages more than 2.4 million acres of Idaho endowment lands, for the benefit of endowments, primarily public schools. For more information regarding Forest Legacy, visit: www.idl.idaho.gov/forestry/forest-legacy

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider and employer. For more information visit: www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs



View of Bonner Lake from Wages' property, photo ©The Nature Conservancy