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Conservation Groups and Local Community Forge Partnership to Protect a Cherished Landscape at Lake Wenatchee

Western Rivers Conservancy, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, and the Lake Wenatchee Community team up to protect recreation and habitat across a spectacular mountainside over Lake Wenatchee

LAKE WENATCHEE, WA—Western Rivers Conservancy and the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust have launched an effort to permanently conserve a property of immense importance to Washingtonians and to the fish and wildlife of the Wenatchee River, Lake Wenatchee and the North Cascade Mountains.

In March, WRC signed an agreement to purchase the parcel, which spans 3,714 acres, including a steep, forested and highly visible mountainside on the southeastern shore of Lake Wenatchee, from Weyerhaeuser Company.

The Weyerhaeuser land is permitted for logging, but the company has agreed to sell it given the importance of the property to the community. To keep the forest intact, WRC, CDLT and the community around Lake Wenatchee must raise \$1 million to fund the acquisition.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said Curt Soper, executive director of CDLT, “The Land Trust has been working since 2000 to conserve this property and support public access. Weyerhaeuser has made the exemplary decision to sell these lands to Western Rivers Conservancy so our forests can stay standing, healthy and utilized. The challenge we now face is raising the money needed to make it happen. When we do, we will protect not just a forest, but a river, a lake, a cherished recreational resource, and the very fabric of our community.”

A network of trails crisscross the property and are used year-round by hikers, mountain-bikers, cross-country skiers and other recreationists from north-central Washington and beyond.

The property is equally important for its conservation values. Its southern reaches flank Nason Creek, which has been a focus for fisheries restoration for years and supports eight cold-water fish species, including spring Chinook, summer steelhead, bull trout, sockeye, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout and mountain whitefish. Nason Creek flows into the Wenatchee River just downstream from Lake Wenatchee and provides critical cold water and prime habitat for important fish species.

The property’s northern half encompasses a forested mountainside above Lake Wenatchee, from just above the lakeshore to the ridgetop, and forms a crucial part of the viewshed for Lake Wenatchee State Park and homeowners along the lake.

“This project has everything WRC looks for when we set out to conserve a property,” says Sue Doroff, president of WRC, “It will benefit multiple species of wild fish, critical wildlife habitat, and the people of Lake Wenatchee by safeguarding local recreation in an area that people from all over Washington have come to cherish. We are thrilled that Weyerhaeuser has decided to work with WRC to protect this important place.”

In addition to conserving river habitat, the project will protect prime habitat for diverse wildlife, including mountain goat, Rocky Mountain elk, pine marten, northern spotted owl and other important species.

ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Western Rivers Conservancy acquires prime river lands along the West’s best rivers and streams to conserve habitat, protect key sources of cold water and provide public access for all to enjoy. It is the West’s only organization dedicated exclusively to saving rivers through land acquisition—an approach that is effective, tangible and permanent. Its motto is “Sometimes to save a river, you have to buy it.” In Washington, WRC has conserved dozens of miles of river land along the Hoh, Skagit, Columbia, Big Sheep Creek and Icicle Creek. It created Robe Canyon Historic Park on the South Fork Stillaguamish and recently protected a critical hillside above Nason Creek, upstream of the Nason Ridge property. WRC has protected hundreds of miles of frontage on other great rivers around the West, including the John Day, North Umpqua, Klamath, Gunnison, Salmon, Yampa, Snake and Madison. To learn more, please visit westernrivers.org.

Chelan-Douglas Land Trust works with local organizations, businesses, and individuals to protect what we all hold dear: beautiful natural areas, a strong economy, clean air and water, abundant wildlife, and the freedom to enjoy it all. The Chelan-Douglas Land Trust started in 1985 as a volunteer organization made up of Wenatchee Valley residents with a vision of a healthy and prosperous future for Chelan and Douglas Counties. Since then it has grown to over 2,500 members committed to preserving the region’s natural areas. Learn more at cdlandtrust.org.

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