

Community bands together to save open space

Tuesday, May 11, 2004

By Helen Warriner

The Daily Astorian

Carwashes, phone-a-thon to raise money to finalize Seaside's Circle Creek Project

SEASIDE - A band of community members are preparing to use phone lines and buckets of suds to help the North Coast Land Conservancy purchase 364 acres of open space in south Seaside.

The area known as the Circle Creek Project is located entirely inside Seaside city limits, west of the Circle Creek Campground. It is one of the largest remaining Sitka spruce swamps on the Oregon Coast and provides important habitat for endangered species such as Coho salmon and northern bald eagles. NCLC has been working for more than two years to raise the \$1.2 million needed for the acquisition. Most of the money has been raised through grants, donations and a \$68,000 contribution from property owner Russ Earl. The City Council voted 4-3 at its April 26 meeting not to provide \$38,000 in parks system development funds to help with the acquisition.

Several community members, including Councilor Stubby Lyons, Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Executive Director Mary Blake, Broadway Middle School Educational Aid John Rippey and Resource Assistance for Rural Environments participant Darci Connor, have planned a phone-a-thon and three carwashes to help raise the needed funds.

"This is something the community needs to get involved in and I'm happy to be part of it," Lyons said. "There are not many green areas or open spaces left. I think the fact that people have gotten a fund-raiser together says a lot about what the community stands for. People working together can accomplish good things."

The property's closing date is June 1, although there is a possibility of a 30-day extension. NCLC will be able to purchase the property even if the needed \$40,000 is not raised, but will have to use loans to do it. Every dollar raised means one more dollar the organization doesn't have to borrow. Right now, there is a good prospect for an \$18,000 private donation, which would lower the amount needed to approximately \$20,000, Executive Director Neal Maine said.

"I think this community fund-raiser is terrific," he said. "It's the exact imagery we've been promoting all along. The NCLC is the community. We're doing this for conservation values for the people and the land. We're not doing this so we can resell the land for money. The more the community feels a sense of ownership, the more accurately this project is being portrayed."

Local surfers will operate a phone-a-thon beginning Wednesday evening. The volunteers will call city residents, explain the project and ask for a donation.

The car washes will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 15, 22 and 29 in the Sunset Pool parking lot. The cost is \$10 per car and advance tickets will be sold at the pool.

Students and skateboarders from Broadway Middle School will help wash cars.

“This will allow the students a fund-raising experience that they can then apply to helping to build a skate park,” said Rippey. “They will definitely see that open space that has been preserved and have a pride that they were an integral part in saving it.”

Connor said it is important that the community of Seaside have a partnership in the NCLC’s fund-raising effort because many of the granting agencies may provide money for other parks in the future. Many granting agencies require some sort of community or city commitment.

“I think this effort really drives home the point of independent people joining together to secure a community treasure,” Connor said. “This speaks to having a parks system that meets all the needs and values of the community.”

To Donate

Donations for the Circle Creek Project may be mailed to the North Coast Land Conservancy, P.O. Box 566, Astoria, OR 97103. Indicate on the check or cover letter that the money is for the Circle Creek Project. All donations are tax deductible. To volunteer for the phone-a-thon or carwashes, call Connor at 440-4737.

Content © 2004 The Daily Astorian
Software © 1998-2004 1up! Software, All Rights Reserved