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ISLAND COMMUNITY KEEPS WATMOUGH WILD

San Juan Preservation Trust's \$650,000 Fundraising Campaign Succeeds

LOPEZ ISLAND, WASHINGTON – The San Juan Preservation Trust today announced that it has raised the \$650,000 needed to purchase and protect a 7-acre property that was susceptible to development inside Lopez Island's Watmough Bight. This acquisition ensures that Watmough Bight will remain an undeveloped conservation area accessible to the public for generations to come.

"The island community responded in a big way in a very short period of time," said Sven Haarhoff, director of charitable giving for the San Juan Preservation Trust. "The overwhelming support of this conservation project from throughout San Juan County – and beyond – underscores the importance of this dramatically beautiful, ecologically sensitive, and much loved bay. Thank you to everyone who took part in making this land conservation project a success."

The San Juan Preservation Trust contributed \$150,000 from its reserves (Funds previously donated by members of the Preservation Trust) and raised an additional \$500,000 from more than 650 individuals, families and businesses. The San Juan County Land Bank, a public agency, contributed \$575,000 to the \$1.225 million project. The Land Bank will own and manage the Watmough Bight conservation area while the Preservation Trust will hold a conservation easement to ensure it remains in its natural state and publicly accessible in perpetuity.

"Much of the success of this project is due to the amazing generosity of Tex Gieling, a neighbor who owns the remaining private property inside the bay," explained Tim Seifert, executive director of the San Juan Preservation Trust. "Tex made this an attractive two-for-one deal by donating her land adjacent to the 7-acre property, giving the public even more acreage to enjoy. Her gift will be appreciated by the community for generations to come."

“Once again the Land Bank and the Preservation Trust have worked together to protect a spectacular property that will be available for public enjoyment” said Lincoln Bormann, director of the San Juan County Land Bank. “It is a great legacy for the Islands.”

Tremendous Community Effort on Lopez

While people from across San Juan County contributed to the Watmough campaign, it was the Lopez Island community that mobilized all its resources to conserve an area that is of tremendous importance to many Lopezians.

“It took everything from childrens’ lemonade stands, teen dances, and young ladies selling friendship bracelets at the Lopez farmer’s market to benefit concerts, wonderful matching gifts and generous five-figure donations to make this campaign a success,” said Charles Givens, co-chair of the campaign. “I am really proud to be part of this community.”

About the Campaign to Keep Watmough Wild

County planning and development officials were prepared to approve an application to develop the 7-acre parcel adjacent to the beach at the head of Watmough Bay. That plan called for the removal of 60 percent of the trees on the property, including some that are at least 400 years old. It also called for the construction of a house on the slope overlooking the public beach, rocky cliffs, and sensitive wildlife habitat that have already been protected by the Land Bank and the federal Bureau of Land Management

About the San Juan Preservation Trust

The San Juan Preservation Trust (www.sjpt.org), known for its recent acquisition and protection of Turtleback Mountain on Orcas Island, is a private, non-profit land conservation organization that has permanently protected more than 200 properties, 26 miles of shoreline and 12,000 acres on 18 islands, including land now managed as public parks, private nature preserves, working farms and forests. The Preservation Trust was founded in 1979 by a group of island citizens concerned about the future of cherished island places.

About the San Juan County Land Bank

The San Juan County Land Bank (www.co.san-juan.wa.us/land_bank) was created by citizen vote in 1990 to help preserve the unique natural heritage of the San Juan Islands. Since its inception, the Land Bank has protected over 3,000 acres of land, including picturesque shorelines and ridges, historical buildings and working farmlands. This public program is funded by a one percent real estate transfer tax paid for by purchasers of property in San Juan County.

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