



CASCADE LAND CONSERVANCY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First use of Transfer of Development Rights in Kittitas County results in significant forest conservation

Ellensburg, May 15, 2009 - A forested portion of the storied Parker Ranch, an historic ranch located in the Umptanum area west of Ellensburg, has been conserved through the first-ever use of Transfer of Development Rights in Kittitas County.

About 480 acres of the 1,460-acre ranch were conserved through the sale of development rights on the property by the Parker sisters, Franki Storlie, Mickey Parker, Lori Macke.

The Parker sisters' father, Jack Parker, bought the ranch in the Manastash Hills near Ellensburg back in the 1960s and the family grew up learning to work with and love the land.

But as was the case with many property owners in Kittitas County, they were not able to buy all the rights along with the land. An industrial timber company retained the timber rights and visited the property regularly to harvest the old-growth ponderosa pine.

When the opportunity came to work with the Cascade Land Conservancy and use special transfer of development rights funding from the 2007 Legislature and the Governor, the sisters decided to take the opportunity and use the money to buy back their timber rights. Now the sisters can manage the timber on their property to their own specifications and realize a goal long held by their family. Enthusiastic about the prospect of managing their timberland into the future, the family has joined the Washington Farm Forestry Association (WFFA), an organization that supports family forest landowners. "Our members are working to provide communities throughout Washington with clean water, air, wildlife and timber. We are pleased to have the Parkers join our ranks, and appreciate community support for landowners who are making great sacrifices to maintain their forests for the benefit of our neighbors today and for future generations," said WFFA's Executive Director, Rick Dunning.

In a transfer of development rights transaction, landowners are paid an agreed-upon price for the development potential of their lands, creating development credits that can be sold to builders or developers in other parts of the county. The credits allow a development

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project to be larger or contain more living units than might be permitted under existing zoning. A conservation easement is put in place on the seller's property ensuring that it remains working land by preventing further development of the protected property.

Kittitas County currently is in the process of publicly reviewing a complete TDR program proposal including both sending sites – such as the Parker Ranch – and receiving sites in areas of the county that better accommodate development. However, the decision where development will and will not be permitted is still a county decision.

A public hearing on the recommendations for the TDR program in the county will be held on May 19th at the County Commissioner's Auditorium.

Funds for the purchase of the development rights came from 2007 Legislature. The capital budget included funds for transfer of development rights pilot projects on family forestlands in three areas of Washington State including Eastern Washington. The Kittitas County project fell under the Eastern Washington portion of the funds.

"This project shows the power of the transfer of development rights program to create real change in our environment," said Gov. Chris Gregoire. "Important forest lands in the county are now conserved and will remain as working forests forever, providing clean air and water as well as maintaining the rural quality of life."

"My sisters and I feel very honored to have Parker Ranch and to be able to do our part to assist with the conservation of the earth's natural environment," said Franki Storlie, one of the Parker Sisters. "This easement would not have been possible without the Cascade Land Conservancy. The staff in the Ellensburg office are very committed."

"Kittitas County has been a part of the Cascade Agenda from the beginning," said Gene Duvernoy, President, Cascade Land Conservancy. "This project shows the reach of the Agenda and its ability to achieve significant conservation throughout the region."

"I am very pleased the county is able to partner with the Cascade Land Conservancy for this project," said Kittitas County Commissioner Paul Jewell. "Rural character and scenic resources are a key component to the quality of life for our residents and the culture of our county. It is very exciting to be taking an active role in preserving those assets for our future. Hopefully, this demonstration project will serve as an example of the benefits that a voluntary Transfer of Development Rights program can have in Kittitas County."

"I was thrilled to be able to work with the Parker sisters on this conservation project," said Jill Arango, Cascade Land Conservancy's Kittitas County Conservation Director. "The property is a treasure to their families and to our community. We now know the timber will be harvested in a sustainable manner, the land will continue to be in resource production, and the family can be in control of management decisions."

After Jack Parker bought the ranch in the 1960s, he ran around 200 head of cattle on the ranch and also grew dry land wheat on part of the ranch. Jack became well-known in the Northwest and California for his horsemanship and training of horses. Many of his horses were sent to film sets Hollywood and for the television show "Gunsmoke." James Arness,

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the star of the television series that ran from 1955 to 1975, came to meet Jack to see the origin of the wonderful sure-footed horses that starred in his show.

The ranch was originally homesteaded in the 1800's by Fred Hansen. The barn, cabin, and other ranch buildings were recently placed on the historic preservation registry for the State of Washington. The cabin was originally the schoolhouse for the Umptanum area in the 1800s.

The ranch is designated as an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society because of the wide variety of birds that can be seen on the ranch. Deer and elk live on the ranch. The ranch is a natural migration route for the elk with the cow elk using the ranch in the spring to birth their calves. The ranch terrain includes shrub-steppe, wheat fields, fir trees and ponderosa pines. A branch of Umptanum Creek runs through the middle of the ranch and there are many natural springs for wildlife.

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