

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2018



Land trust raises \$1 million for Nason Ridge purchase

by Reilly Kneedler | Nov. 9, 2018, 1:26 p.m.

Outdoors

LAKE WENATCHEE — The Chelan-Douglas Land Trust raised \$1.1 million in four months to contribute to the purchase of Nason Ridge — moving one step closer to keeping the 3,714 acres of forested land accessible to the public forever.

“We hit and passed our goal in a short amount of time,” said Curt Soper, the land trust’s executive director. “It says a lot about our community.”

The area overlooks Lake Wenatchee and includes Nason Creek, a crucial salmon habitat that feeds the Wenatchee River. In June, timber company Weyerhaeuser sold the land to the Western Rivers Conservancy instead of developing or logging it.

Over the last few years Weyerhaeuser has been selling properties acquired from a 2013 purchase of Longview Fibre, a timber company with major land holdings in North Central Washington.

Western Rivers partnered with the land trust to find a permanent steward of Nason Ridge, which is also a popular outdoor recreation area. Soper said they’ve had interest from a few parties but the search is ongoing.

“That’s the big, unanswered question at this point,” Soper said.

The first step was finding \$5 million to cover the cost of purchase. The land trust began a \$1 million private donation campaign in July, which it met in mid-October, Soper said.

So far the trust has received 415 contributions, he said.

“We’re absolutely delighted by the result. It’s an important thing for the community to step up like this,” Soper said. “... The campaign is wrapping up now but we’re still getting a few more donations.”

They’ll now look for grants to cover the rest of the purchase cost, totaling about \$5 million.

The land trust will hold the money until a permanent owner is selected, which could take a couple of years, Soper said. Once a permanent owner is selected, Western Rivers will transfer ownership of the land.

“We have to put in applications and that’s usually a longer process than the private (fundraising) we did,” he said.

While the land trust facilitated the fundraising, Soper said most of the hands-on work came from volunteers who were passionate about preserving the area.

“To me, those are the real heroes,” he said. “They stepped up to do this.”

Reach Reilly Kneedler at [509-661-5213](tel:509-661-5213) or kneedler@wenatcheeworld.com. Follow Reilly on Twitter at [@reillykneedler](https://twitter.com/reillykneedler).