

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Groundswell Building to Save Trillium Forest

GREENBANK, WA - With only two weeks to go, community groups have launched their own pledge drives and fundraising projects to preserve Whidbey Island's 664-acre Trillium property.

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust is leading the charge to raise \$4.2 million by June 10 to buy the island's largest remaining contiguous forest and make it a community forest.

"It's been quite an effort--nine intense weeks to get the word out and encourage people to donate," said Elizabeth Guss, director of outreach and development for the Land Trust. "We're coming into the home stretch and need the entire community to make this happen. Everyone's help is appreciated."

As part of the community effort, Whidbey Island's spiritual community has been invited to proclaim National Trails Day, June 5, as a day of prayer and reflection to help make the Trillium forest dream come true.

Last weekend more than 100 hikers, bikers and horseback riders raised \$110,000 in pledges and donations at trail rides organized by Island County Back Country Horsemen, M Bar C Ranch, Harmony Hills, Whidbey Walks, and the Whidbey Animal Guild. The events were so successful another fundraiser is planned at M Bar C Ranch June 5, to coincide with National Trails Day.

The event will begin about 10 a.m. with riders, hikers and bikers encouraged to begin arriving at M Bar C Ranch around 9 a.m. Lunch will follow the tour, along with a presentation about Trillium with guest speaker Joel Connelly, Seattle P-I Columnist. Those who wish to skip the tour and only make a pledge and enjoy the program should arrive at noon. Pledges and donations for the campaign will be collected. The Ranch is at 5264 Shore Meadow Road (off Bush Point) near Freeland. To reserve a place, call Jerry Lloyd at (206) 730-2519.

More than 80 community groups have endorsed the Trillium project, including the Whidbey Island Yacht Club, Holmes Harbor Rod and Gun Club, Whidbey Island Fly Fishing Club, and the Island County Trails Council. The Trails Council even offered to donate funding for trail construction and maintenance once the property is acquired. Local, regional, and national elected officials have formally proclaimed their support, including Congressman Rick Larsen.

Sixth graders at South Whidbey Middle School also are collecting pledges and donations. The South Whidbey Centaurs 4-H Club has started a competition between local 4-H clubs to see which can gather the most pledges. Members of "Save the Trees" challenged the community to donate and offered to match. They met their goal in days. This inspired others to issue similar challenges and to think creatively about how they can help raise funds. The ideas and the enthusiasm keep coming.

"With all this wonderful community support and several hundred donations, the Land Trust still needs to raise more than \$2.5 million to meet the goal," said Guss. "We need YOU to make a gift NOW to make this community forest a reality."

To donate to the Save the Forest Now campaign, or for more information, visit www.savetheforestnow.org, call (360) 222-3310, or send your donation to the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, Attention: Save the Forest Now, 765 Wonn Road, Barn C-201, Greenbank, WA 98253.



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