

Happy New Year!

On December 20, 2012, conservation groups announced the purchase of the 3,000-acre Royal Gorge property on Donner Summit. This purchase ensures protection from development of the largest cross-country ski area in America.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust and The Trust for Public Land, working as part of the Northern Sierra Partnership, raised \$11.25 million, meeting

a Dec. 20 deadline. The total includes private donations along with public money.



The Truckee Donner Land Trust will own the land and lease it during the winter to neighboring Sugar Bowl Resort to manage.

The groups bought the property from Court-appointed Receiver Douglas P. Wilson, who took over the land after a failed development plan that would have built a 950-unit resort on the property. More than 1,000 people donated to the five-month-long campaign. NFARA contributed \$1000.

"It is not exaggerating to say this might be one of the most important conservation victories for the Sierra in a generation", said Perry Norris, Executive Director of the Truckee Donner Land Trust (TDLT). "Now, all of Royal Gorge's remarkable meadows, peaks, natural resources and the Nordic ski area have been protected forever and will be open to the public for world-class recreation." TDLT is developing a public outreach and recreational planning process and will be asking for ideas when the public input process begins in the spring.



NFARA became involved with this development issue in 2006. Most of the proposed development impacts would have been in the North Fork American River watershed, including dams on MacKay and

Serena Creeks. Protection of this land is something we have been working towards. We plan to continue our involvement on Donner Summit and look forward to being part of TDLT's recreational planning process.

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is providing bridge funding to cover for the expected public funds until those funds are available over the next two years. Overall, the three groups are trying to raise \$15.5 million, which will include future improvements on the property and the purchase of 351 acres in Negro Canyon near Donner Lake.

"We couldn't have succeeded today without the astounding generosity of hundreds of people who dug deep into their pockets to make this conservation victory possible," said Lucy Blake, President of the Northern Sierra Partnership. Local residents at Serene Lakes, Sugar Bowl, Palisades, and the Cedars provided most of the private money. Placer County contributed \$300,000 of Park Dedication Fees towards the acquisition. In return, Truckee Donner Land Trust will convey a 50 foot wide trail easement to Placer County for the purpose of building the Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail. The Nature Conservancy, as well as Sierra Watch, also helped raise funds for the campaign.

"Our shared success on Donner Summit will go down as one of the great chapters in the proud history of conservation in California", said Tom Mooers, Executive Director of Sierra Watch, which helped organize opposition to the proposed subdivision and development of the property.

"Future generations will forever appreciate what we've done to prove, once again, that we can work together to protect the places we love."



The Palisades, Mountain Area Preservation Foundation, North Fork American River Alliance, South Yuba River Citizens League,

Sierra Club, Serene Lakes Property Owners Association, and Donner Summit Area Association joined with Sierra Watch in advocating for the conservation of Royal Gorge. The Economic and Conservation Vision for Donner Summit, released in 2009, came out of this collaboration. The Sierra Business Council has also been a strong supporter of conservation on the Summit.

"Saving Royal Gorge is a great example of our goal of protecting land for people," said Will Rogers, President of The Trust for Public Land. "Families have been coming to Royal Gorge for many years and now those families can be assured that this wonderful place will still be there for future generations to enjoy."

Photo Credits:

Devils Peak-Anne Chadwick, Van Norden Kayakers-George Lamson, Natural Bridge on Rowton Peak Trail-George Lamson

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For more information on NFARA activities or on how to join, contact Jim Ricker at 530-389-8344 or email: jvricker@prince-ricker.net or visit our website at www.nfara.org.