

NORTH COAST LAND CONSERVANCY:

30 years of success

THE SEASIDE-BASED LAND TRUST CELEBRATES ITS ACHIEVEMENTS AND ANNIVERSARY WITH A PUBLIC SUMMER PICNIC AUG. 25

By DAN HAAG

Whether you live on the North Oregon Coast or just visit from time to time, it's easy to take the area's natural beauty for granted. Surrounded as we are by pristine beaches, swaths of forest and mountain vistas, we often assume it has always been and will always be this way.

But without attention to conservation and action by passionate local advocates, forests and fields could be covered in housing developments, high rises and clear cuts.

As the North Coast Land Conservancy prepares to celebrate 30 years of conserving natural landscapes on the Oregon Coast, the nonprofit land trust knows its best works are yet to come.

TIME TO CELEBRATE

For three decades, North Coast Land Conservancy's focus has been on stewardship actions with a mission of conservation at its core. It's a mission with multiple facets: land acquisition projects, facilitating habitat development, and participating in community outreach programs.

The goal of all of this has always been a fully functioning coastal landscape where people, plants and wildlife thrive.

From its grassroots beginnings, NCLC has evolved into an organization that is responsible for coastal property from Astoria to Lincoln City.

Jon Wickersham, associate director of NCLC, says the organization now manages over 3,000 acres north to south, from the tip of the coast range into the ocean.

That includes the newly enhanced 365-acre Circle Creek Habitat Reserve property in Seaside and the recently acquired 340-acre Boneyard Ridge on Tillamook Head, which shares a mile-long border with Circle Creek.

With those projects coinciding with the 30-year anniversary of NCLC, the

SUMMER PICNIC

4 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 25

Circle Creek Habitat Reserve,
end of Rippet Road, Seaside

Bring a potluck dish to share, a
blanket or chair

503-738-9126

time seemed right to share the celebration.

From 4 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 25, friends and supporters of NCLC and its mission are invited to the Circle Creek Conservation Center to toast the past and the future.

The anniversary event will feature a ribbon-cutting for a legacy loop trail and boardwalk trail through wetlands at Circle Creek, guided trail walks, and music by Cannon Beach's Wes Wahrmond.

People are encouraged to bring a potluck item and chairs to make the event a picnic for all.

"We have a lot to celebrate," Wickersham says.

'RIGHT PATH FORWARD'

NCLC is especially proud of the Boneyard Ridge property and with good reason; it is the culmination of nearly five years of work by staff and volunteers.

"We're all very excited about this one," Wickersham says. "The sweet spot is usually about three years or so to do a project, depending on complexity and the price tag."

Not only was Boneyard Ridge one of the most time-consuming projects NCLC has tackled, it was also the most expensive, coming in at \$1.3 million.

"As you can imagine, it took us awhile to figure out the right path forward," Wickersham says.

The land was purchased from Greenwood Resources, and monetary support

was garnered from more than 120 private donations and a \$524,000 grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the funding agency for acquisitions and protection of watersheds in the state.

"There's no way we could have done this without private donations or the help of Greenwood," Wickersham says.

While the huge time and effort spent on the acquisition of Boneyard Ridge is more exception than rule, any project NCLC invests in has multiple moving parts.

Wickersham says that matching a project with NCLC's priorities is key.

"One thing we really look at is connectivity and proximity to other conserved land," he says.

The first step usually involves NCLC personnel getting out onto a potential acquisition and conducting an ecological assessment. From there, a conservation committee and the NCLC board of directors take a close look to ensure the organization's mission is being met.

Wickersham says all of the normal stages of any property purchase are combed through, including appraisals, environmental assessments, drafting easements, and lots of title research.

"The whole process runs the gamut of anything you can imagine," he says, adding that great detail is also given to potential granting partners.

While many of us might feel bogged down in frustration of such tedium, Wickersham says the payoff is worth the effort.

"We don't get too frustrated, because the work is always rewarding," he says.

Wickersham adds that his favorite part of the job is working with landowners and people who are passionate about land conservation and sharing the NCLC vision.

Plans for Boneyard Ridge are simple: Let it grow into a mature rain forest, something that is in rather short supply on the Oregon Coast.

With its proximity to Ecola State Park



PHOTO BY DANNY MILLER

Jon Wickersham, associate director of North Coast Land Conservancy, poses for a portrait at a trailhead on NCLC's Circle Creek Habitat Reserve property in Seaside.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

NCLC and volunteers planted 10,000 early blue violets in the Clatsop Plains in November 2015. The native flower is essential to the survival of the Oregon silverspot butterfly.