



North Coast Land Conservancy

Katie Voelke, the executive director of the North Coast Land Conservancy, leads a tour at the Rainforest Reserve property before the nonprofit purchased it. The reserve includes important habitat and is home to rare animals and plants.

# Reserve: ‘We need it for ourselves. For our sanity’

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The Arch Cape Water District is pursuing the remaining 1,500 acres in order to secure full ownership of Arch Cape’s watershed and create a community forest. A purchase could be finalized by next summer.

The land conservancy has pushed for the reserve for more than a decade and it is certainly the most ambitious project they have tackled, said Katie Voelke, the executive director.

Besides the scale of the project, there was the cost. After signing a purchase and sales agreement in 2016, the land conservancy launched a five-year effort and \$10 million fundraising campaign to acquire the acreage.

In 2021, the cost increased unexpectedly to \$11.8 million. An appraisal of the property, required ahead of purchase, came back reflecting a historic high in lumber prices tied to supply-and-demand issues exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

It may be tempting to think of the purchase as an

ending, Voelke said. But, she added, “really it’s the beginning of the rest of the story.”

The land conservancy will need to create a final stewardship plan for the reserve that spells out how the property will be managed and what kind of public access and recreation will be allowed, among other details.

For now, public access at the Rainforest Reserve will not change, though some areas will be closed because they are dangerous or sensitive. People can still walk into the reserve to hike or hunt for deer and elk. Daytime access only. No camping.

Not every property the organization conserves is open to the public, but Voelke is adamant that the reserve needs to be one that is.

“It’s wild, it’s huge, it’s tall,” she said of the reserve. “You’re in the clouds. You’re above the rain. All this incredible coastal wildness and it’s just right there. You can get to it. You can go for a day hike and have one of the most incredibly rich experiences on the coast, and we all need that.”

“We need it for ourselves. For our sanity.”

Up until the purchase documents were signed on Tuesday, Voelke found herself getting nervous when she was out in the reserve.

“Because the more I’m out there, the more I know how irreplaceable this particular place in the world is and how terrible it would feel to fail at this vision that we have,” she said.

Grants provided about \$4 million for the purchase of the land. The rest of the funding came from numerous donors, including people from all walks of life and political backgrounds: People who hiked around the property as kids or who have hunted there all their lives. It was a place they had been to and seen and cared deeply about.

Years from now, Voelke hopes the conservation of the Rainforest Reserve will seem inevitable — maybe even a little unremarkable, a natural course of events.

“Like, of course this happened,” she said.



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

People gather at the beach during Hood to Coast in August.

# Hood to Coast: ‘Smoother every year’

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“We’ll continue to have open dialogue with everybody here in this room, outside this room to make sure that we continue to be welcome members and contributing members to this community,” Floyd said.

Next year is the last of

the five-year Hood to Coast contract with the city. In 2022, the relay will pay more than \$30,000 to the city. The event is scheduled for Aug. 26 and Aug. 27.

In 2015, City Councilor Randy Frank moderated a workshop where he and local business owners complained about rude behavior by runners, arro-

gant organizers and vendors who tapped into private power supplies.

“It’s become a much better event,” Frank said Monday night. “And not only here, but all the way along the route, whether it’s restrooms or volunteers. ... It just gets smoother every year, and it was great having it in town.”



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