



Conservancy Leads Effort to Acquire and Protect Wild Basin Parcel



It could have been a worst-case scenario for Rocky Mountain National Park: a "Land for Sale" sign going up on the largest privately-held, developed parcel in the Wild Basin area. If not for a quick response from the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, a 12.5-acre property would have been listed for public sale for only the second time in 70 years. With a 2,000 square foot house perched on a rocky overlook and easy motorized access, the demand for this unique private property would have been great. Instead, the Conservancy, with assistance from the Wilderness Land Trust and the National Park Trust, secured its purchase for the park. The property was purchased on December 14.

Saving this land for permanent protection had been a high priority for the Conservancy since 2009, when the property was originally listed for sale. At that time, a generous conservation buyer agreed to purchase and hold the property until the Conservancy or the park was in a position to purchase it for final protection. That buyer decided that they wished to sell and transfer the property this year. "We knew right away that we had to step in quickly with what land protection reserves we had." Charles Money, Executive Director of the Conservancy said. "The last time it was on the market, there was immediate interest from many possible buyers."

Thanks to the successful completion of the Cascade Cottages Centennial Capital Campaign earlier this year, the Conservancy was able to provide \$300,000 in Land Protection Fund reserves for the purchase of the Wild Basin parcel. However, more assistance was needed to meet the \$750,000 purchase price. The Conservancy subsequently engaged the assistance of the Wilderness Land Trust, and the National Park Trust. The Wilderness Land Trust negotiated the purchase contract with the landowner and agreed to provide additional funds for the purchase. The National Park Trust engaged the support of a generous local donor who wished to make a significant gift to the park during the centennial year of the National Park Service. The financial contributions of these partners and the Conservancy enabled the purchase of the parcel.

Located approximately one mile from the Wild Basin entrance, this parcel along the access drive is within the Wilderness Area boundary in the park. As a result of this purchase the land will finally be able to be managed as wilderness (the highest level of conservation protection for federal lands). The addition of the property to the park and removal of the access drive will

eliminate a developed 33-acre incursion into the wilderness area, including the road. However, the house and access drive must be removed. The Wilderness Land Trust will undertake the deconstruction process, which will be funded by the Conservancy. The planned deconstruction process, scheduled for spring of 2017, will recycle as much of the building material as possible.

Darla Sidles, superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park said, "We are extremely grateful to the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, The Wilderness Land Trust, and National Park Trust in acquiring this private piece of land inside the park. This is a gift that will live on forever as protected wilderness."

Thank you to you, the Conservancy's donors and members, for making this project possible. We hope you will enjoy this addition to the Wild Basin area of the park.