



JACKSON HOLE LAND TRUST NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 21st, 2011

Contact: John Shepard, 307-733-4707 or john@jhlandtrust.org

Jackson Hole Land Trust and LOR Foundation Secure River Springs Property Community Access at Heart of Project

Jackson, Wyoming -- The Jackson Hole Land Trust and The LOR Foundation announced today a highly-anticipated acquisition that will ensure unprecedented community access to acreage along the Snake River in Wilson. "Conserving this property has been a top priority for the Land Trust and our partners," said Pete Lawton, president of the Jackson Hole Land Trust board. "We recognized the River Springs Project as an incredible opportunity to protect public access and open space."

The River Springs Project consists of about 40 acres located to the north and west of the Highway 22 Bridge over the Snake River and includes the Wilson boat launch, a popular community access point for boating, angling, swimming, and pedestrian paths along the levee. The property will be held by the Rendezvous Lands Conservancy, a non-profit entity jointly created by the Jackson Hole Land Trust and The LOR Foundation, a Jackson-based charitable foundation that seeks to enhance livability of the inter-mountain west. The Land Trust ultimately will hold a conservation easement on the property, guaranteeing public access to riverfront trails and other recreational amenities in a natural setting, and preserving the future possibility for boat launch and pathway improvements, including a Snake River pathway bridge landing.

The Jackson Hole Land Trust and The LOR Foundation forged a key new partnership to negotiate and finance the deal, with timely support from The Conservation Fund, which provided bridge financing to the Jackson Hole Land Trust for the project. The Community Foundation of Jackson Hole's willingness to sponsor the project also helped make this a reality. "We are excited to have partnered with the Land Trust on this project and to ensure public use and enjoyment of the River Springs land into the future," said Hal Hutchinson, Executive Director of The LOR Foundation, which made a major contribution to the project. "We really came together over our mutual vision to conserve this land for the benefit of the community." The Land Trust will have two years to repay the bridge financing they received from The Conservation Fund.



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The transformation of the property into a community recreation centerpiece will be a collaborative, multi-stage effort between project partners, including the Jackson Hole Land Trust, The LOR Foundation, and other community groups. The site currently houses a commercial gravel processing and storage facility that is slated for reclamation and conversion into a new public park with trails, fishing ponds, and restored habitat by July 2014. An extensive rehaul of the Wilson Boat Launch to improve the boat ramp, parking, shoreline, and swimming access is also possible.

The acquisition means that a pathway bridge on the north side of Highway 22, linking Emily's Pond to the Stilson transit center, will be considered as a viable option for town and county officials. Located at the intersection of Highway 22 and 390, the site is poised to become a hub for the planned network of community pathways connecting the Town of Jackson, Wilson, and Teton Village.

The Jackson Hole Land Trust has been working to protect the River Springs property since May 2009. After failed negotiations to purchase the property from the previous owner, the Land Trust and The LOR Foundation recently partnered to negotiate the purchase of the property from its new owners, closing on the deal today. "We are thrilled to have been given a second chance to conserve this property – and grateful to Jim Walter and Crystal Creek Capital LLC for their good faith cooperation throughout the process and for their recognition of the value that this property has to the community," said Laurie Andrews, Jackson Hole Land Trust executive director. "All the months of planning and discussions are well worth the amazing outcome - we really see this project as an enduring gift to our community."

To date, the Jackson Hole Land Trust has conserved more than 2,200 acres along the Snake River between Wilson and South Park, providing expanses of unspoiled views for recreationalists and protecting critical wildlife habitat in the riparian corridor. With the addition of the River Springs property, public access to this 12-mile stretch of river is now guaranteed in perpetuity.



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About the Jackson Hole Land Trust

The Jackson Hole Land Trust is a private, non-profit organization that works to protect the scenic, ranching and wildlife values of Teton County and the surrounding areas. Since its inception in 1980, the Jackson Hole Land Trust has protected over 20,000 acres of open lands in and around Jackson Hole. For more information please visit www.jhlandtrust.org

About the LOR Foundation

The LOR Foundation is a private charitable foundation committed to enhancing livability in the intermountain west region by promoting efficient and sustainable land uses, context sensitive transportation choices, and cultural and recreational amenities, as a means to strengthen community, inform land use decisions and preserve open spaces.

About The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we combine a passion for conservation with an entrepreneurial spirit to protect your favorite places before they become just a memory. A hallmark of our work is our deep, unwavering understanding that for conservation solutions to last, they need to make economic sense. Top-ranked, we have protected nearly 7 million acres across America. For more information please visit www.conservationfund.org