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HI UTE'S THREE MILE CANYON RECEIVES FUNDING FOR PRESERVATION

Final needed dollars leave preservation opportunity uncertain

Summit Co, Utah –On Wednesday night Summit County Council, acting as the governing body of the Snyderville Basin Recreation District, approved expending \$2,800,000 for the preservation of almost 1300 acres of land in the densely developed Snyderville Basin. Utah Open Lands spearheaded the project and now needs to raise the final \$500,000 to secure this preservation opportunity. The Hi Ute ranch sandwiched between the Factory Outlet Stores @ Park City and condominium development is one of the largest remaining open spaces in the area. The canyon land starts south of the large Hi-Ute barn and continues south for nearly three miles towards Murdock Peak.

Through a tentative agreement reached between Utah Open Lands, and the Hi Ute Ranch LC this amazing acquisition over 1268 acres of critical habitat for sensitive species concern including Bonneville cutthroat trout, black bear and deer will be forever protected from development. In addition, critical trail connections will be accomplished and the spectacular wilderness view down into the canyon from the existing trails will be forever assured.

“Utah Open Lands is in the final stages of raising the necessary final dollars for the preservation of this treasured landscape” explained Wendy Fisher, Executive Director of Utah Open Lands. “The commitment from the Snyderville Basin Special Recreation Bond dollars is a tremendous boost to this project and the possibility of bringing it to fruition.” Fisher said.

According to the Basin Open Space Advisory Committee (BOSAC)Chair, Max Greenhalgh, “Preserving the Hi Ute Ranch has been our highest priority--it has an abundance of wildlife habitat and other sensitive lands. The preservation of this parcel insures that some of the most stunning scenic views along the major corridor into our community will forever be preserved.” It was BOSAC’s recommendation to commit \$2,800,000 of bond proceeds toward the purchase of the Hi Ute/3 Mile Canyon conservation easement.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity to preserve a unique recreational experience which we currently don’t have in the Snyderville Basin,” explained Rena Jordan, Executive Director of the District. “We are thrilled to be working with Utah Open Lands and the landowner to accomplish this preservation, which provides some critical trail connections, but reserves the center of the

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property for a one of a kind recreational experience” said Jordan.

Hi-Ute Ranch began working with Utah Open Lands in 1997 on the possibility of preserving this legacy as a community treasure. In 2004, a conservation easement was placed on the front pastures of the property also preserving the historic and iconic Hi-Ute barn structure. “Hi-Ute Ranch has always had great faith in Utah Open Lands and appreciates its continued diligence in preserving Hi Ute Ranch as well as other environmentally sensitive properties,” said Jay Bell, of Fabian Law a representative for Hi-Ute Ranch. The preservation of the canyon land was made possible in part due to a significant gift from HI-Ute Ranch.

“This is the only way large scale land preservation happens, through the conservation ethic of the landowner, private donors and community partners,” explained Brad Barber, Chair of Utah Open Lands. Limited funding in Utah, has made the preservation of open spaces tougher than in neighboring states where there is dedicated statewide funding.

“Certainly I will reserve my vote for the Council meeting, but I do believe that leveraging our County’s open space bond funds through landowner contributions and private donations is a prudent and responsible way to approach preserving our community’s valuable open spaces,” said County Council Chair Chris Robinson.

Utah Open Lands is depending on year end fundraising efforts and a pending grant to accomplish the final \$500,000 and make the preservation a reality. Considering what is being accomplished through this easement at such a relatively low cost, Utah Open Lands is optimistic that the community, foundations and private donors interested in preserving such space will come through at this late hour to help make this a reality.

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Additional Information

Utah Open Lands – Utah Open Lands Conservation Association (UOL) is a non-profit land trust. Its mission is to preserve and protect open space in order to maintain Utah’s natural heritage and quality of life for present and future generations. This is achieved by assisting private landowners, government agencies and communities in the voluntary preservation of the agricultural, scenic, recreational, historic and wildlife values of open land. The organization has preserved over 54,000 acres throughout the state and is working to save an additional 1300 acres in Summit County by the end of 2011.

Hi Ute's Three Mile Canyon – The Canyon is home to several high priority habitats as identified by Utah's Division of Wildlife Resources, as part of their Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for 2005-2015. These habitats include: mountain riparian, wetlands, aspen and shrubsteppe. The property also possesses high value habitat for the following species: black bear, elk, and mule deer. Documented priority conservation species on the property or in the area include: bonnevillie cutthroat trout, Northern goshawk, Ferruginous hawk and smooth green snakes. The property and its protection also contributes the East Canyon Creek Watershed. Connections necessary for the mid mountain trail and other Basin trails will be accomplished through this preservation.



Photo credit: Martin van Hemert