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5,000 acres purchased for Monument protection

More than a hundred supporters and wilderness enthusiasts joined the Pacific Forest Trust and Soda Mountain Wilderness Council at the Buckhorn Springs Resort today for a seventh birthday celebration honoring the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and the anticipated public acquisition of close to 5,000 acres designated for the monument.

“The Monument is a key anchor for biodiversity in the Klamath-Cascade eco-region,” PFT President Laurie Wayburn said in a press release issued today. “Conserving these nearly 5,000 acres of threatened forest, meadows and wetlands within the monument’s planning boundaries is a critical milestone towards ensuring the integrity of this globally outstanding region. We look forward to working closely with the monument’s supporters, Oregon’s congressional delegation and the Bureau of Land Management to complete our vision of expanding the Monument’s protected areas.”

Established in 2000 as the only national monument designated specifically for its biodiversity, the monument includes high desert plant life of the Great Basin and flora and fauna of the Pacific Coast rainforests. Monument supporters refer to the area as the “Galapagos of North America.” They tout it as the home to more than 3,500 plant and animal species, many of which are exclusive to this region.

While the monument offers environmental protection to roughly 60 percent of the 85,300 areas, the remaining land is privately owned.

Seeking to expand the acres protected under the monument, PFT purchased many of these private tracts, including lands along the historic Pacific Crest Trail.

“These protected lands will create a more cohesive landscape, one that will improve the ecological integrity of the wildlands, watersheds and wildlife habitats within the monument,” the press release stated. “By purchasing and protecting these lands, PFT is also helping to unify the region under a common conservation strategy.”

PFT and its partners are now working with the Bureau of Land Management to have these lands permanently protected within the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

“The Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument area provides crucial biological connectivity between the globally significant Klamath-Siskiyou eco-region and the rest of the West,” said Dave Willis, who chairs the SMWC and spearheaded the campaign that led to the monument’s proclamation. “But commercial and development pressures have turned this crucial connectivity corridor into an unraveling ecological thread.”

To celebrate both the monument’s seven-year anniversary and the PFT’s land acquisition, organizers offered guided tours of monument lands as well as a hosting a barbeque reception.