



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 16, 2018**

**For More Information:**

Jason Gohlke, Pacific Forest Trust, Communications Manager

[jgohlke@pacificforest.org](mailto:jgohlke@pacificforest.org), (415) 561-0700 x. 17

## **One of Oregon's largest family-owned forests protected for timber and wildlife**

*Mountcrest Working Forest project shows that private landowners are key to protecting natural resources*

After 5 years of collaboration, a broad partnership has protected the largest non-industrial forest near Ashland, Oregon. The 1,771-acre Mountcrest Forest has been managed by the Parsons family for nearly 100 years, sits on the historic Siskiyou Pass, hosts part of the Pacific Crest Trail, is home to numerous imperiled species, and forms a key wildlife bridge between the Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest and the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument.

During a time when management of public lands and resources is mired in political battles, **the Mountcrest Forest project shows that working with private owners of working forests can create huge public benefits.**

"I've managed the Mountcrest Forest with my family for over 60 years," said Jud Parsons. "I've fallen in love with the property and want to see its many significant natural qualities protected, yet remain a working forest and in our ownership. We practice sustainable forestry and the wildlife here benefit from our efforts to maintain healthy habitats for them. Oregon's land use laws are good, but they are subject to change. To ensure lasting protection and maintain quality management for the future, we decided to partner with the Pacific Forest Trust."

The Parsons Family voluntarily sold a conservation easement to Pacific Forest Trust to ensure Mountcrest Forest will never be broken up or developed, and that it will continue to be owned and well managed by the Parsons family for timber, wildlife habitat, and watershed values. The easement is noteworthy because it is unprecedented in Oregon for public agencies to fund a conservation easement that both ensures sustainable timber harvest *and* protects significant habitat for threatened and endangered species.

"We are honored to work with the Parsons Family to sustain the heritage of excellent forestry on this large property. Their commitment to lasting management that benefits threatened fish and wildlife is inspiring," said Constance Best, Co-CEO of the Pacific Forest Trust. "This project helps us demonstrate how essential private, working forests are to sustaining the things we care about as Americans, and it shows that there are ways that private landowners can make a real difference for water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation, and the economy."

The project has earned the praise of Oregon's U.S. Senators:

"Private forests make critical contributions to the natural values important to all Oregonians. The collaborative conservation of the Mountcrest Working Forest shows what can be accomplished when people work together to protect wildlife and watersheds. This project is a ray of light in this time when our public lands are under attack," said Senator Ron Wyden.

"Oregon has shown time and time again that collaboration benefits both our economy and environment," said Senator Jeff Merkley. "The Mountcrest Forest partnership shows how voluntary collaboration among private land owners and public agencies can achieve Oregonians' priorities for wildlife and watersheds, while also keeping timberland in private ownership and productive economic use."

-more-

(continued from p. 1)

#### **More Details:**

- Mountcrest is in the Klamath-Siskiyou Ecoregion, one of the most biodiverse places in the world. It straddles the crossroads of the Klamath, Siskiyou, and Cascade mountain ranges. It lies within the Siskiyou Crest Conservation Opportunity Area identified in the 2016 Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- The rich array of habitats on the Mountcrest Forest support northern spotted owl, coho salmon, and gray wolf— all listed under the Endangered Species Act—as well as dozens more rare or imperiled species such as the Pacific fisher, western pond turtle, and northern goshawk.
- The property is west of Interstate 5, along the Mount Ashland Ski Road, minutes from Ashland. It is under increasing development pressure for building and recreation.
- Mountcrest Forest has a colorful history. Many travelers crossed the land over the Siskiyou Pass, from Native Americans to Hudson Bay trappers, from President Rutherford B. Hayes to the notorious train robbers the DeAutremont brothers.
- Partners on this project include Mountcrest Forest LLC, Pacific Forest Trust, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, granted through The Nature Conservancy as part of efforts to identify and protect Pacific Northwest lands that will provide resiliency in the face of climate change, and the Pacific Crest Trail Association.
- Mountcrest Forest LLC also made a very generous donation of more than a quarter of the value of the \$3.2 million conservation easement, bringing the purchase price down to \$2.5 million.

#### **More Quotes:**

Paul Henson, Oregon State Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said, “This project is a model of voluntary private-public cooperation to conserve Oregon timberland to benefit not only listed species but ecological functionality of the site and broader landscape. The Mountcrest forest strategically links the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest and Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, bridging gaps within Critical Habitat for northern spotted owl.”

Curt Melcher, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said, “We are delighted that the conservation of the Mountcrest property is complete so that the forest remains intact and undeveloped, with management that maintains and enhances ecological and hydrologic function while continuing to contribute to the economic vitality of the region.”

Meta Loftsgaarden, Executive Director, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, said, “Oregon’s watersheds and wildlife benefit from the conservation of large landscapes, across public and private boundaries. As a partner with the Pacific Forest Trust, we applaud the Parsons family. They are a leading example of the contributions that excellent forest management makes to meeting our strategic goals for thriving fish and wildlife.”

To learn more about the Mountcrest Forest project, visit  
<https://www.pacificforest.org/conservation-project/mountcrest/>.

###

#### **About Pacific Forest Trust**

Since 1993, the Pacific Forest Trust has been dedicated to conserving and sustaining America’s vital, productive forest landscapes. Working with forest owners, communities and an array of partners, we advance innovative, incentive-based strategies to safeguard our nation’s diverse forests. In so doing, we’re ensuring forests continue to provide people everywhere — from rural communities to urban centers — with a wealth of benefits, including clean water, sustainably harvested wood, green jobs, wildlife habitat and a livable climate. <http://pacificforest.org/>