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Hersheys donate conservation easement

In late December, John and Vicki Hershey forever conserved 146 acres of ponds, meadows, fields and forests at Owens Lakes north of Spokane by donating a conservation easement to Inland Northwest Land Trust. After living on the land for many years, they wanted to ensure that the wildlife habitat and scenic vistas would be protected for their lifetimes and beyond, no matter who owns the property. "Not one house on the lake," said Vicki. "Developers and realtors have called us for years, wanting to put houses around the Owens lakes," she said, "but we just didn't want to see anything happen to the lakes. That's why we called the land trust."

The Hersheys have seen bald eagles, pheasants, deer, and great numbers of wildflowers on their land, and for many years have allowed neighbors to skate on the smaller pond and have invited groups on bird-watching trips. (Please note that although the land trust holds a conservation easement, this does not open the land to the public - the Hersheys still own the



Vicki and John Hershey have ensured natural habitat for Bear Lake area wild life.

land and control access to it.) John and Vicki's bird feeders are always a blur of activity - thanks to the variety of open water, wetlands, open fields, and forests on the property. Said John Hershey, "We share this land with so many birds, plants and animals; we've never felt like we really own it all to ourselves, we're just taking care of it."

In fact, the Hersheys were the very first landowners to contact the brand-new Inland Northwest Land Trust back in 1992. Negotiations with the land trust about easements and discussions among family members began in earnest but were sidelined for some years by work overseas, travel, and other projects. Then the land was hit by the 1996 ice storm and by a tornado, necessitating many

months of work to clean up the woods.

In 1998 the Hersheys renewed contact with the land trust and we began work ironing out the terms of the easement, examining the title history, and documenting the natural features and conservation values of the property. The negotiations culminated on December 21, when the Hersheys donated and the land trust accepted the conservation easement, protecting the land in perpetuity. (Note: not all conservation easements take this long! In December INLT accepted another easement that got started only three months earlier, though that was exceptionally quick).

Dues reminder

INLT is supported by its members, and if you find this part of your newsletter highlighted, it means that we have not received your membership dues for 2001. Please send your check to the land trust in the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. Thank you.

continued next page

Hershey easement, continued

The Hershey property is an integral part of the Little Spokane River watershed and system of lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. It also serves as an important buffer for Bear Lake County Park and Washington State land which adjoins it. With the Little Spokane River and Highway 2 corridors experiencing rapid growth, the Hershey easement will help to preserve the rural character and natural habitats of the Little Spokane River watershed.

The Hershey easement is one of several INLT projects that protect land within the Land Trust's Threads of Hope corridor spanning Spokane County (see Little Spokane River Easement article). Threads of Hope focuses our land protection efforts in areas that are ecologically valuable, under significant development pressure, and where we have local support for conservation. These regions are the vital links, greenways, and wildlife corridors winding across Spokane County. "This easement protects a significant piece of our Little Spokane River Thread of Hope and helps provide important ground-



The Hershey wetlands will buffer rapid growth along the corridor of the Little Spokane River and Highway 2.

water protection and habitat connectivity" said Threads of Hope project manager Heather Bateman. For their part, the Hersheys have promised to tell their neighbors and friends about conservation easements and other land-saving options.

This brings the acreage protected by

INLT since 1991 to over 3,600 acres, worth nearly \$7 million in eastern Washington and northern Idaho. Just this past year INLT conserved over 1,500 acres of land through easement donations, gifts of land, and assisting with Spokane County Conservation Futures acquisitions.

Avista works with Land Trust

North Idaho action protects native trout

In partnership with Avista, INLT is protecting pristine trout streams around Lake Pend Oreille. On March 2, INLT purchased one-quarter of a mile of Trestle Creek stream frontage to protect critical west slope cutthroat and bull trout spawning habitat. The 70-acre purchase using Avista funds highlights the importance of protecting significant watersheds from further development. It is the third INLT/Avista trout stream project completed since October.

Chris Downs, Idaho Fish and Game Fisheries Biologist, notes the significance of the INLT-Avista partnership in Lake Pend Oreille watershed conservation efforts, "The protection of riparian habitats and associated watersheds is critical to the long-term survival and persistence of native salmonids." Sandpoint real estate agent, Doug Chaiet, has contributed to INLT's efforts because "...it's nice to be a part of protecting something for future generations. (INLT)

is really doing something positive."

INLT board president, Claude Sappington, recently signed a two-year contract solidifying the INLT-Avista partnership. INLT is proud to be a part of the long-term commitment to help mitigate the impacts on fish and wildlife habitat from Clark Fork River dam operations in the Lake Pend Oreille area.

There is no shortage of work to be done in northern Idaho! Stacey Stovall continues to work energetically on other conservation easements that could protect one mile of the Trestle Creek corridor. Negotiations are ongoing in the Twin Creek and South Gold Creek watersheds to protect an additional 270 acres of native fish and wildlife habitat. Stacey is shepherding nearly twenty INLT projects in Bonner County as we continue to grow and increase our efforts across the Idaho Panhandle.