



'SAVE SQUAK' DEAL INKED BETWEEN LOGGER AND KING COUNTY PARKS AND TRUST FOR PUBLIC LANDS. FOUNDERS OF SQUAK CONSERVATION EFFORT PUSH KING COUNTY VOTERS TO FUND DEAL BY RENEWING AUGUST 6TH KING COUNTY PARKS LEVY.

**July 25, 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

We are pleased with the announcement that the Trust for Public Lands and King County signed a purchase and sale agreement with the owner on July 18th for 216 acres of forest land on Squak Mountain located in the Mountains to Sound Greenway view corridor along State Route 900 in King County's unincorporated Issaquah. This agreement is the first official milestone in bringing this land, slated for a clear cut logging operation, into public ownership where it will be preserved as public forest, wildlife habitat, parks, recreation and open space. The 216 acres will be purchased for \$5 million, with funding assistance provided to King County by the Trust for Public Lands. King County will use parks levy funds such as the King County Conservation Futures to secure this purchase. Renewal of the King County Parks levy on the August 6th primary ballot will be absolutely critical as a fundraising source to close this purchase and ensure monies are available to purchase other conservation land.

This purchase agreement is a great credit to many elected leaders, particularly Dow Constantine who signed the purchase agreement, and Reagan Dunn who championed the 'Save Squak' movement making it a reality. This agreement is also a winning and somewhat unlikely example of conservation partnerships. This agreement was facilitated by owner and logger, Kurt Erickson, who initially approached King County to inquire about their interest in a purchase and, who ultimately agreed to forestall logging while negotiating the final terms of this sale. This agreement was possible only with generous funding support from the Trust for Public Lands, an effort led by Ann Welz, who worked tirelessly with appraisers, Kurt Erickson and King County to ensure a fair purchase price and negotiate final terms of the agreement.

Although the effort to Save Squak was accomplished in less than 9 months, the imminent threat of logging and the location of this land made public acquisition a serious consideration early on. Organizing as community stakeholders, the Issaquah Alps Trails Club and 'Save Squak' used their voices and the support of the media to bring awareness to the Greater Seattle area of the beauty of this pristine near old growth forest land. Their message focused on the impending threat of logging to wildlife and fish habitat, and the need to protect the critical May Creek watershed and prevent even greater flooding throughout May Valley. Because the land is located in a mature forest full of diverse wildlife just 15 miles outside of Seattle, alongside King County's Cougar Squak Mountain recreational corridor and Squak Mountain State Park, this location had obvious potential to expand recreational opportunities and connect trails for both people and wildlife between these widely used existing state and regional parks.

Said Tania Issa, representative for 'Save Squak', "The great surprise is that our core group consists of less than 10 persons connected by a passion for this secret gem of forestland on Squak Mountain. Yet we

were somehow able to mobilize so many people and make them believe they could make a difference here. We had grandparents taking their grandchildren to post flyers and a middle school student who created a wildlife poster board for Reagan Dunn. My high school aged son worked with his friends to create a Facebook page. These small efforts were bolstered by huge support from the local media followed by an outpouring of letters and emails from persons in cities all around Seattle. Those voices were the ones King County and DNR heard so loudly. We all did this together, though most of us have never met. Despite all our hard work, it was as simple as a few people saying ‘We can’t let this happen. And we didn’t.’”

The IATC and 'Save Squak' received a strategic boost when their efforts were fortified by the legal counsel and environmental expertise provided by the Washington Forest Law Center, who submitted public comments on all three Forest Practice Applications submitted to WA State DNR by owner and logger Kurt Erickson. Ultimately, the WFLC's comments to DNR resulted in one FPA being withdrawn, another FPA being disapproved, and one FPA being approved but pending appeal. Kara Whittaker, ornithologist for WFLC, painstakingly researched these 216 acres, providing evidence to DNR that this land was subject to logging restrictions due to evidence that it contained habitat for the endangered marbled murrelet. Upon learning of the purchase and sales agreement, Whittaker shared both joy and relief with her words, “A heartfelt congratulations to all. Our and many future generations will benefit from our hard work and persistence!”

David Kappler, President of IATC has already begun to focus on the future of this land, stating, “We look forward to helping plan how this critical connecting piece of the Cougar - Squak corridor will be used to enhance wildlife and human connectivity, preserve near old growth stands of forest and other habitat, protect the headwaters of May Creek and support efforts to restore May Creek. And of course, we are most excited that this purchase provides the opportunity for a much needed regional trailhead for Squak Mountain.”

Now the IATC, ‘Save Squak’ and the Washington Forest Law Center have turned the full force of their energies towards efforts to ensure the passing of the August 6th King County Parks levy renewal. Remembering all that has transpired since this effort began, David Kappler of IATC, recalled a hike he took with Cynthia Welti, Executive Director of Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, in the earliest days of this effort, to show Welti the sheer beauty of this threatened land and it’s clear potential for conservation. Flashing forward to emphasize the importance of the levy passing, Mr. Kappler shared excerpts from a congratulatory message his team received from Mountains to Sound Greenway just after the deal was signed. The letter was written by Cynthia Welti and stated, “We are positively clicking our heels over here that you [King County and the Trust for Public Land] all are pulling off this one! ... We want to keep up the pressure on the King County Parks Levy, integral to the transaction’s ultimate success... Thank you to each of you and your respective great teams and teamwork!” What happens next is up to the voters. But there is great hope that voters will pass the parks levy renewal, ensuring a perpetual source of funding for expanding conservation efforts throughout King County.

About Issaquah Alps Trails Club

The Issaquah Alps Trails Club (IATC) formed in 1979, is an Issaquah-based not-for-profit recreation and conservation group devoted to advocacy for open space protection, hiking, establishing and improving trails and in central King County. The original focus of IATC was directed towards Cougar, Squak and Tiger Mountains, also known as the “Issaquah Alps.” In 1990, the Issaquah Alps Trails Club organized the first ‘Mountains to Sound March’, a hike from Snoqualmie Pass to Elliott Bay in Seattle, to publicize the need to preserve a scenic greenbelt connecting Seattle to the Cascade Mountains. Following this march, the [Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust](#) was founded by regional leaders. IATC leads over a hundred

hikes a year in the Greenway and works on acquisitions and planning throughout the Greenway. However, the focus of IATC's efforts remains directed towards conservation and the establishment of hiking trails in the "Issaquah Alps." David Kappler is the President of IATC.

<http://issaquahalps.org/>

About 'Save Squak'

Save Squak, a group of concerned neighbors and community supporters in Issaquah, May Valley, and throughout Greater Seattle, was established in October 2012, to find an alternative to the environmental impact of clear cut logging planned for 216 acres on Issaquah's Squak Mountain. With the leadership of David Kappler, the group has focused its efforts on ways to bring this land into public ownership, working with King County and other conservation groups to acquire this pristine forest acreage and add it to King County Parks.

<http://www.SaveSquak.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/SaveSquak>

<https://twitter.com/SaveSquak>

About Washington Forest Law Center

The Washington Forest Law Center is a non-profit, public interest law firm dedicated to providing legal services to organizations that monitor and protect the Pacific Northwest's private and state-owned forest lands.

<http://wflc.org/>

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