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Town of Carefree and Land Trust Partner for Open Space Protection
Remote 60-acre preserve features wildlife habitat and cultural resources

(Carefree/Cave Creek/Scottsdale, AZ) – In an impressive show of shared community values, donors and supporters of the Desert Foothills Land Trust and the Town of Carefree have come together to permanently conserve 60 acres of pristine Sonoran Desert in northern Carefree.

The Town of Carefree used Open Space Development Fees totaling \$280,000 to fund the acquisition of 30 acre acres of land, the landowner granted 10 acres to the Land Trust and another nearby landowner, Paul Van Weelden, generously donated an additional 20 acres to the Town.

The new preserve, dubbed the Carefree Heritage Preserve, is situated along a rocky wash and features sensitive archaeological resources, significant wildlife habitat and the open, rugged landscape characteristic of our Upland Sonoran Desert.

“The Land Trust had the expertise to identify an appropriate property for Carefree’s first open space preservation purchase,” says Carefree Mayor David Schwan. “It was a pleasure to watch these two dedicated organizations as they worked accomplished this significant acquisition.”

This model public-private partnership represents an encouraging blueprint for future conservation projects as the Land Trust and its partners continue to preserve more critical habitat.

“The permanent protection of this important cultural resource has been a Land Trust goal for more than 20 years,” adds realtor Mark Hazelton of Russ Lyon Realty, a longtime Land Trust advocate. Both Hazelton and Russ Lyon waived their fees for facilitating this transaction.

The late Grace Schoonover, a tireless supporter of the Land Trust and local conservation efforts, was also an early champion for this exceptional site. She shared her extensive archeological knowledge with Land Trust staff and volunteers over more than two decades.

The property is difficult to access and environmentally sensitive, so public access is not currently feasible. However, the Town of Carefree and the Land Trust are jointly developing plans for future guided access, and are working together on a long-term stewardship and management plan for the property.

The Carefree Heritage Preserve joins the existing network of conservation lands already enjoyed by numerous residents and visitors to the North Valley, including a total of 660 acres protected on 21 Land Trust preserves. “This new preserve, and the partnership between Carefree and the Land Trust, is truly a remarkable conservation legacy for our communities,” says Land Trust executive director Sonia Perillo.

About Desert Foothills Land Trust:

Desert Foothills Land Trust works with landowners, communities and partners to protect the most special and important natural areas in the Arizona communities of Carefree, Cave Creek, north Scottsdale, north Phoenix, Anthem and New River. The Land Trust has permanently protected 660 acres on 21 preserves, many of which are open to the public for exploration and passive recreation. In 2010, the Land Trust was awarded accredited status by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission – a mark of distinction in the land trust community. More information is available at www.dflt.org or 480-488-6131.

Photo credits: All photos courtesy of Desert Foothills Land Trust.

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