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Media Contact

Cheryl Fox
Chief Executive Officer
435-640-1171
cheryl@wesaveland.org

SUMMIT LAND CONSERVANCY CLOSES ON MUIRFIELD PARK EXPANSION IN NORTH FIELDS

The conservation easement will protect wetlands, public recreational access, wildlife habitat and the view corridor



(Heber City, Utah) April 10, 2023 – The Summit Land Conservancy, in partnership with Heber City and the Wasatch Open Lands Board, has officially closed on a conservation easement that will protect 9 acres adjacent to Muirfield Park. The property, located just outside Heber City, expands on an existing park which includes recreational trails, wet meadows, and a neighboring creek. Clear views of the Wasatch Back, Mount Timpanogos, and agricultural pastureland can be

seen from the park. A conservation easement will provide public access to water and allow for the extension of soft surface trails.

In November 2018, Wasatch County residents authorized a \$10 million open space bond to preserve critical open lands throughout the area. As part of a collaborative effort, Summit Land Conservancy and Heber City applied to and secured funding through the Wasatch Open Lands Board (WOLB) to buy the property with bond money. The landowner, Heber City, will continue to own and manage Muirfield Park, while Summit Land Conservancy will hold the conservation easement on the adjacent 9 acres which include the creek.

Heber City Mayor, Heidi Franco stated, "We are pleased to announce that a conservation easement is now completed on 9.25 acres of open space, adding to the Muirfield Nature Park. These new acres more than double the existing park. The City is now redesigning the existing Muirfield Park to include the new acreage." A member of the Wasatch Open Lands Board, Mayor Franco also notes, "This project took over two years for the City to purchase the land, receive approval for the Wasatch County Open Space bond money, and work with Summit Land Conservancy to finish. Now we'll all be able to enjoy the beautiful views across our Valley and North Fields with this conservation easement in Muirfield Nature Park."

The Provo River flows through the Heber Valley surrounded by agricultural lands, also known as the North Fields, that are highly susceptible to development. Spring Creek, a tributary of the Provo River Watershed, runs through the Muirfield Park property, and the wet meadow and wetlands winding along the creek create an ideal habitat for waterfowl including Canadian Geese, Killdeer, Red-winged Blackbirds, Mallards, Northern Pintail, Northern Flicker, and Sandhill Cranes. Small mammals such as Marmot, Cottontail Rabbit and Coyotes also utilize the land. Protecting Provo River tributaries like Spring Creek keep the watershed intact as Wasatch County continues to see rapid development and growth. The conservation easement places focus on riparian restoration projects that will improve bank stability and the ecological health of the creek and surrounding wetlands. The Muirfield Park property has traditionally been used for agricultural purposes including the grazing of horses and cattle, however if grazing continues on the park expansion, management will include a rotational grazing method to help restore the ecological health of the property.

"This is a small, but beautiful natural area for people, birds and wildlife," says Summit Land Conservancy CEO, Cheryl Fox. "The Conservancy has worked with other cities to acquire and preserve more than a dozen public natural areas on the Wasatch Back, and we were honored to partner with the Wasatch Open Lands Board, Wasatch County Council, and Heber City Council to expand the Muirfield Park. Funding from our donors and the David Kelby Johnson Memorial Fund helped make this possible."

Muirfield Park is Summit Land Conservancy's 49th conservation easement and the Conservancy's fifth property located in Wasatch County. The land trust is actively talking with landowners and city officials in Wasatch County to preserve more critical lands within the Provo River Watershed.

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About Summit Land Conservancy

Founded in Park City in 1998 as a project of Leadership Park City, the Summit Land Conservancy works with Summit County's communities to protect and preserve land and water along the Wasatch Back for the benefit of people and nature.

In 2011, the Conservancy became the first land trust in the state of Utah to be nationally accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. It currently holds 49 permanent conservation easements and manages 2 preserves on over 13,000 acres of open space, much of it with public access in and around Park City. It protects swathes of Round Valley, Quarry Mountain, Empire Canyon, and the McPolin Farmlands, as well as farms and ranches along the Weber and Provo Rivers. It is currently working to preserve an additional 5,000+ acres across the Wasatch Back.

The Conservancy's goal when it started in 1998 was to raise money locally to save land locally, and that hasn't changed. Since 2011, the Conservancy has brought in over \$31 million federal dollars for local land conservation.

As a regional land trust, the Conservancy understands that open space is the heart of our rural and recreational communities. Area residents' sense of place is clearly defined by the shared landscapes that anchor them here. The mountains, trails, farms, and rivers connect people to each other and to the natural world. The Summit Land Conservancy cares for these lands forever, nurturing a healthy community that is founded on its strong connection to the places it has protected together.

More information is available on the Conservancy's website (wesaveland.org) and on Facebook (facebook.com/WeSaveLand), Instagram (instagram.com/wesaveland) and Twitter @Summit_Land (twitter.com/summit_land).