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Community to Celebrate Ten-Year Anniversary of the Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve

PROSSER..... Benton County, and its partner of the past decade – the Friends of Badger Mountain (“Friends”) – will commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the establishment of the **Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve** (“Preserve”) in South Richland this Friday.

The short ceremony will include remarks from County, Friends, and community leaders; a special recognition of corporate partner Bechtel National; and an update to the “Sprint to the Summit” campaign led by Friends that is raising money for purchase of lands on Candy Mountain for creation of a similar preserve.

Event Details

BADGER MOUNTAIN PRESERVE TEN-YEAR CELEBRATION
11:00AM, Friday, June 5, 2015
Trailhead Park
533 Queensgate Drive, Richland

Speakers and toast promptly at 11:00, with light refreshments. Optional hike to the summit via Canyon Trail to follow.

Background

Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve was created by resolution of the Benton County Commissioners June 1, 2005. The year 2005 marked Benton County’s centennial, the commemoration of which contributed to the naming of the Preserve.

The effort to establish the Preserve was led by the Friends of Badger Mountain organization, a Richland-based nonprofit corporation. Friends organized the fundraising and directed other parts of a grassroots campaign that enlisted the assistance of several local, regional,

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and national organizations. The campaign culminated in the raising of \$700,000 through donations, grants, and mitigation funds to purchase the original 570 acres that included parts of both the north and south faces of the mountain and the east and west ridges.

The original purchase was made from a single local landowner, Sheldon Shore. Mr. Shore passed-away in 2013.

Three parcels on the south face above the orchard were added to the Preserve in 2011 and 2012, bringing the total acreage to over one square mile.

Four formal trails have been constructed within the Preserve, with a fifth trail added in the adjoining City of Richland's Trailhead Park on the north side. These trails have been constructed and maintained by the Friends organization with assistance from Washington Trails Association, several local hiking, cycling, and equestrian user groups, and hundreds of volunteers. The most recent addition alone – the Langdon Trail on the south side – had an investment of over 3400 hours of volunteer labor.

Patronage of the Preserve has increased steadily since its creation. According to trailhead counting devices, the Preserve received in excess of 200,000 visits in both 2013 and 2014, and is on record pace again in 2015.

Such heavy usage has made it clear that the public wants more recreation opportunities like the experience enjoyed on Badger Mountain. As such, Benton County, working with Friends of Badger, has applied for state grant funds to purchase about 200 acres of property on Candy Mountain (west of Badger) for preservation and management as open space with some trails in the same model as the Badger Preserve. Again, Friends is leading a ground campaign of coordination and fundraising, and has enlisted notable corporate support from Hanford Site contractors CH2M Hill and Bechtel National. Benton County will know if it will be offered the grant funds within the next several weeks, and with affirmation will hope to complete property acquisitions by the end of the year.

Badger Mountain and Candy Mountain fit into a larger community narrative articulated in the award-winning *Ridges to Rivers Open Network Space Vision Plan* of 2011, which, among other things, calls for protection of scenic ridges and buttes around the Tri-Cities area for visual, ecological, and recreational uses. The trails on Badger Mountain and possibly in the future on Candy Mountain, will be connected to the extent practical to each other and to other protected areas such as Red Mountain to the west and the Amon Basin to the east.

Badger Mountain Centennial Preserve is owned in its entirety by Benton County and is managed by the Benton County Parks Department. The County has limited resources and relies heavily on its long-time stewardship partner, the Friends of Badger Mountain, for maintenance and advisement on matters related to the Preserve. The County would not be able to make this resource available for the public without the commitment and dedication of hundreds of individual volunteers and of groups such as the Friends of Badger.

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