

MEDIA ADVISORY

The Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands and the Idaho Shakespeare Festival (ISF) will hold a news conference on Monday, May 13, at 10:30 A.M. near the Barber Dam location and ISF amphitheater to announce the creation of a new 12-acre open space park/natural habitat area. The park will be developed in an area that was previously proposed as a 43-home subdivision four years ago.

Officials with the Foundation and Idaho Shakespeare Festival will be on hand to explain the property purchase and how the land will be shaped to blend into the Barber Pool Conservation Area and ISF property.

Access for the news conference: Turn south onto Lysted Avenue just west of Riverstone International School and follow to a roundabout. The press conference will be held on the berm inside the fence of the 12 acres.

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IFPL to break ground on new 12-acre open-space habitat called “The Gateway Reserve” next to Idaho Shakespeare Festival.

BOISE – (May 13, 2019) – The Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands announced today that it will break ground on a 12-acre project that will transform former industrial lands into an open-space riparian habitat, after a joint fund-raising effort garnered more than \$2 million to acquire, clean up, and design a sustainable landscape for the property.

Several years ago, a 43-home residential subdivision was proposed for the parcel, which lies directly adjacent to the popular Idaho Shakespeare Festival outdoor amphitheater.

The new amenity, called “The Gateway Reserve,” is designed to receive spring flows from the Boise River improve the native environment. It is located next to the historic 115-year-old Barber Dam and remnants of a lumber mill that operated into the 1930s. The Gateway Reserve will promote the values of the Barber Pool Conservation Area, an “urban wildland” set aside for more than 300 species of wildlife, including bald eagles.

“We are very excited to make this announcement today that we’ve been successful in raising sufficient funds to not only acquire the property but also develop it into a beautiful natural open space parkland for the community,” said Judy Peavey-Derr, a board member and spokesperson for the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands (IFPL).

“It is a joy to work with our friends, neighbors and partners to bring not only protection and restoration to this parcel, but also to turn it into an inheritance for future citizens of Boise and southwestern Idaho to enjoy,” said Andy Scoggin, President of the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. “Many people are moving into nearby homes and will be learning more about the connection of residential living and an appreciation for the wildlife, with which we share our lives and in whose backyard we recreate, picnic, and celebrate ‘great theater in the great outdoors.’”

Much of the area, whose expansive gently-flowing waters are attributed to the Barber Dam, was gifted to IFPL by Boise Cascade Corporation in 1978. It can be viewed from either the new Peace Valley Overlook Reserve on a bluff above the river, or from the Greenbelt east of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation state office. Eventually, The Gateway Reserve will include connections to biking and walking paths, and be blended into the Idaho Shakespeare Festival property. The funding for the project was raised by both the Foundation and the Festival.

The 12-acre property once served as wastewater lagoons for Golden Dawn Estates, Riverstone International School, and the Shakespeare Festival. In 2012, those ponds were phased out when sewer lines were extended into the Harris Ranch area by the City of Boise. In the coming weeks, the earthen banks that once enclosed the lagoons will be reshaped to prepare the land for planting this fall with natural vegetation, blending the land into the natural habitat of the Barber Pool Conservation Area.

The Wetlands Group, which removed all the former waste from the site, has volunteered the resources needed to open the southern portion of the site to the river and shape its northern areas for the grass and shrub planting that would restore native shrub-steppe habitat, officials said. IFPL/ISF have obtained all of the necessary approvals from the City of Boise, Ada County, the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Boise City Department of Arts and History collaborated with the IFPL/ISF to receive a federal planning grant through the National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” program that brought several dozen stakeholders together for a sequence of meetings, led by ISF landscape architect Don Belts, which set forth the initial vision for The Gateway Reserve. The grant allowed the IFPL/ISF to work with top environmental engineering and wetlands-restoration professionals to create a state-of-the-art design under the guidance of a pro bono team from Forsgren Associates and RHP Risk Management.

The project fully complies with the City of Boise Comprehensive Plan. The Boise City Planning and Zoning Commission approved the design at a public meeting, and City officials moved the process forward earlier this year.

Specifically, the project meets Goal SHCC12, “which promotes natural open space areas where the public can observe nature and seek solitude, and where wildlife habitat can be protected. It will provide an open space amenity for residents, and it integrates natural features adjacent to residential neighborhoods while serving the larger community” (Principle GDP-N.2(a) and GDPN.(b)). Policy ES 2.7 and ES7.1 (c) “encourages the protection and enhancement of the native vegetation on the property and natural environment while allowing for an urban interface with the river that will not adversely impact wildlife habitat.”

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