

Star-News

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With auction over, explore alternatives for Cougar Island

By Brian Brooks, Julie Manning, Jeff Mousseau, Kristin Sinclair and Craig Utter

On Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2022, a room full of people gathered and watched as the State of Idaho held an auction for Cougar Island. Members from the United Payette Cougar Island Task Force and Steering Committee were there along with Payette Land Trust President Rick Fereday and Executive Director Craig Utter.

After auctioning off two cottage sites in the Payette Lake area, the event focused on Cougar Island. The Island was to be offered under the “multi-parcel” bidding structure or “multi-par.” A multi-parcel auction is an auction where the property can be sold either as a whole or in tracts. The auction company decided to start the offering by putting individual lots for sale followed by an offer for the entire island.

The auctioneer began with Lot No. 2, which is the only Lot with existing structures. The owner of the house was the sole bidder and was successful at the minimum bid price. The auctioneer then offered the remaining four lots on the island which were unsuccessful in receiving any bids.

Upon conclusion of the individual parcel offerings, the Island was presented for sale as a whole unit for its appraised value. Again, the Island saw no active bids and the auction concluded with only Lot No. 2 being sold.

A lot of uncertainty remains around the future of Cougar Island. For now, the State of Idaho remains the owner, and the sole bidder has 60 to 90 days to close on the purchase of his lot.

As for what’s next for United Payette, we plan to continue working with the Idaho Department of Lands, Valley County, and the City of McCall with focus on the short and long-term goals of conserving endowment lands in Valley County using strategies that are included in UP’s PELS Implementation Plan that was issued September 2021. The Plan can be found on UP’s website at unitedpayette.org.

These strategies include:

- Working with local government to conserve open spaces in Valley County, including developing a citizen’s Advisory Group.
- Entering into short-term leases on endowment lands to provide time to work on long term solutions.

- Raising money for potential small-scale purchases of endowment lands when opportunities arise.
- Exploring ideas with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation for potential Ponderosa State Park expansions.
- Communicating with the U.S. Forest Service about its potential acquisition of endowment lands around Payette Lake.
- Turning to bigger ideas and considering other solutions that would fulfill our mission.

(Brian Brooks, Julie Manning, Jeff Mousseau, Kristin Sinclair and Craig Utter are members of the steering committee of United Payette.)

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