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SF group to buy Noyo River Redwoods

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Save the Redwoods League, a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, announced Friday that it has reached its fundraising goals and will be purchasing the 426-acre Noyo River Redwoods property along the Skunk Train's route near Willits.

The land was purchased by the Willits Redwood Company in 2006, which prepared a harvest plan and was preparing to log it when it was approached by the league, which describes itself as dedicated to saving "ancient redwood forests and redwood ecosystems."

Chris Baldo, co-owner of WRC, said his company agreed to give the group a year to raise the \$7 million price tag.

With the April 1 deadline a week away, the league said it had raised the money it needed from the public -- \$3.5 million -- and would use \$4 million from its Redwoods Land Fund to complete the purchase.

The remaining \$500,000 will be used for "initial restoration and stewardship of the property's forest and river habitats." According to the league, the property has 123 acres of old-growth redwood and Douglas-fir forest, which represents "30 percent of all remaining old-growth forest in the Noyo River watershed."

The league learned about the property through a group of Mendocino County residents who had reportedly wanted to "protect the land for decades" because of its redwoods and its proximity to the Noyo River headwaters.

Ruskin Hartley, executive director of the league, said when the property is purchased, it will be the culmination of "decades of

work by people focused on protecting" the trees, which he described as "increasingly rare treasures."

Once the property is acquired next month, the league will first serve as the land's interim manager, then will "draft management and restoration plans and convey the property to a local land trust for permanent protection."

During that process, the league said it will have "ongoing restoration and stewardship costs," and said the public can donate to the "Rails Through the Redwoods" campaign by visiting SaveTheRedwoods.org or by calling 415-362-2352.

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