



March 18, 2018

Dear Friend,

There is a hidden, tree-lined river canyon in Virgin, Utah known to locals, mountain bikers, and a few other adventurers. It is home to a diversity of wildlife species that rely on an abundance of water in the otherwise desert-scrub landscape. Locals enjoy walking its scenic trails, and the popular “Rim Trail” on the south side of the river is widely known by mountain bikers. These trails and the river pass through a 419 acre privately owned parcel of land which has come to be known as “**Sheep Bridge Crossing**,” the name given by the landowners to a concept plan for a 275-home subdivision.

Over a year ago, the owners reached out to the local organization that raised the funds to purchase Confluence Park below LaVerkin and Hurricane. They asked if Virgin River Land Preservation Association (VRLPA) and The Nature Conservancy of Utah (TNC) would be interested in buying their Sheep Bridge parcel for conservation. After a year of negotiation, we have a contract to purchase the property for \$4.4 million dollars. Now the real work begins! We have met with the Mayor, Town Council and Planning Commission and they have expressed interest and support for a park that blends river corridor conservation with expanded non-motorized recreation opportunities on the bench lands.

Community Benefits. The property extends from Falls Park on the east to the diversion dam on the west—over 2 miles of river frontage. We anticipate:

- improved trailheads
- clearly marked hiking trails, located away from neighboring homes
- additional bike trails that serve users of varying ability
- picnic areas and educational signs

We will encourage planning for a larger regional trail system that interlinks with Sheep Bridge and Falls Park to the east, and Hurricane Canal and Hurricane Cliffs to the west. We would like to work with Virgin Town to improve access to Falls Park from the current single-lane cliff-hanger to a safe access road.

Similar to Confluence Park, we anticipate after the Sheep Bridge property is purchased, ownership of the land will be passed to an entity willing to take on long-term management. Prior to transfer, deed restrictions on the uses of the property will be recorded to protect the land’s conservation and recreation values in perpetuity. Washington County took ownership of Confluence Park, and it is managed cooperatively by the communities and entities that helped make the park a reality. Virgin River Land and The Nature Conservancy look forward to discussions with Virgin Town and others who may be interested in assuming long-term management of Sheep Bridge.

We have one year to raise at least half of the purchase price. We will reach out to a variety of funders, including state and federal funding sources, private foundations, and individuals throughout the region. However, a critical part of fundraising is demonstrating strong local support for the project.

We are reaching out to those who love Virgin first, knowing this purchase profoundly benefits all of us by permanently securing public recreation access. Instead of another subdivision, we protect a river canyon habitat and anchor a trail system which will enhance our town's character and desirability.

Our goal is to raise ten percent of the purchase price through local pledges by the end of June. Our purchase price per acre is \$10,500. You are invited to help buy the Sheep Bridge property by "adopting" one or more acres at this amount. Alternatively, you can grow a "flock" of virtual sheep for a donation of \$100 per head, or lambs at \$10 per head. In the old days, herds of a few thousand sheep crossed Sheep Bridge one at a time so they could be counted. If we secure pledges to adopt 25 acres and grow a "flock" of 2,000 sheep and lambs, funders will know their investment is valued by the local community.

A pledge form is included with this letter.

We are forming a local fundraising committee, a youth advisory council, and are seeking volunteers and contributions for summer events including an art auction and guided tours of the property. There is a section on the pledge form to let us know ways you would like to help.

We are committed to use our resources to reach out to public and private funders who support projects which blend conservation with recreation, but we need your support to successfully secure this funding. Please join us in protecting the Sheep Bridge property with as generous of a gift as you can afford. All gifts will be used exclusively to purchase the property.

Thank Ewe (pun intended)!



Lori Rose

Virgin River Land Preservation Association

Learn more about us at: VirginRiverLand.org

Contact us at: vrlpa@infowest.com

Visit us at: facebook.com/VirginRiverLand and facebook.com/SheepBridgeCrossing

