



## GREAT LAND TRUST SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

*Conserving lands and waterways essential to the quality of life and economic health of Southcentral Alaska*

### **Memo**

**January 10, 2019**

**To: City of Valdez City Council**

**From: David Mitchell, Conservation Director, Great Land Trust**  
**email: [dmitchell@greatlandtrust.org](mailto:dmitchell@greatlandtrust.org), tel: 907-278-4995**

**Re: Meals Hill Conservation Project Update**

### **Introduction**

- Great Land Trust (GLT) is a nonprofit accredited land conservation organization based in Anchorage that works throughout Southcentral Alaska.
- In 2012 we expanded the scope of our work to cover communities that didn't have a local land trust including Valdez. We have projects in Valdez, Cordova, Kenny Lake, Kenai, Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla, Talkeetna, Kodiak, Afognak. We have completed projects with the Kodiak Island Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough, the State of Alaska, and work closely with other local, regional, state and federal governments as well as individuals, businesses, and community groups.
- One of our programs is in partnership with the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) trustee council. GLT prioritized all the land in the spill area for its ability to provide habitat and function for the species and resources injured by the oil spill. Based on this prioritization, GLT works with willing landowners to purchase high ranking properties and transfer them to public ownership subject to a conservation easement that protects the habitat.

### **Meal Hill Background**

- GLT started working on the Meals Hill project in 2016. The property is 184 acres on the coast adjacent to the ferry terminal. There are existing trails, a gravel road to the summit, and coastal forest habitat. It provides residents and visitors to downtown Valdez an accessible and convenient place to recreate with stunning 360-degree views.

**Great Land Trust | P.O. Box 101272 | Anchorage, AK 99510 | (907) 278-4998 | [www.greatlandtrust.org](http://www.greatlandtrust.org)**

*Board of Directors: John Baker | Kelly Chang | Mark Dalton | Jon Goltz | Sara Jansen | Bri Kelly | Mark Kroloff | Dick LeFebvre | Molly McCammon | Curtis McQueen | Caryn Rea | Gretchen Specht | Cathie Straub  
Emeritus & Honorary Directors: Gary Baugh | Linda Kumin | John McManamin | Eric McCallum & Robin Smith | Pat Pourchot | Susan Ruddy | Marty Rutherford | Jim Stratton | John Strassenburgh & Ruth Wood | Arliss Sturgulewski*

- GLT presented to the Valdez City Council just over a year ago after which the Council passed a resolution of support for the project. This resolution accompanied an application to the EVOS trustee council for funding to acquire the property. This funding was approved in November 2017.
- After funding was approved, GLT worked with the State of Alaska to include receipt authority for the funding in the state budget. The City of Valdez sent letters to the governor and department of natural resources stating their support. The receipt authority was approved and now the funding for the acquisition is available. With the funding available, Great Land Trust has come to an agreement with the landowner, the Port Valdez Company, to purchase the property for fair market value as determined by a qualified appraisal.

### **Ownership of the Property**

- The property will be transferred to the City of Valdez for ownership and management. Because of the property's proximity to town and the benefits this property provides to the City, we would like to give the property to the City subject to a conservation easement.

### **Next Steps**

- Purchase Agreement. The next step is to sign a purchase and sale agreement. Due to funding requirements, the purchase agreement must be signed before May 1, 2019.
- Due Diligence. Due Diligence will include contracting a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to make sure the property has a clean bill of health and there are no environmental hazards found on the property. It will also include a title review to make sure the property has clear title and there are no encumbrances that would impact the City's ability to manage the property for conservation and recreation.
- Park Planning. Great Land Trust, EVOS and the Port Valdez Company have established funding to implement initial property enhancements such as trails, trailhead, interpretative displays, and overlooks. To honor the legacy of their family in Valdez, Port Valdez Company has generously offered to set up a matching grant fund to raise funds to build initial park improvements.
- City Council Resolution. We will come back to the City Council in the coming month to ask for a resolution to move forward with the property acquisition. We will also work collaboratively with the City and EVOS on all due diligence and park planning.



# Meals Hill Conservation Project

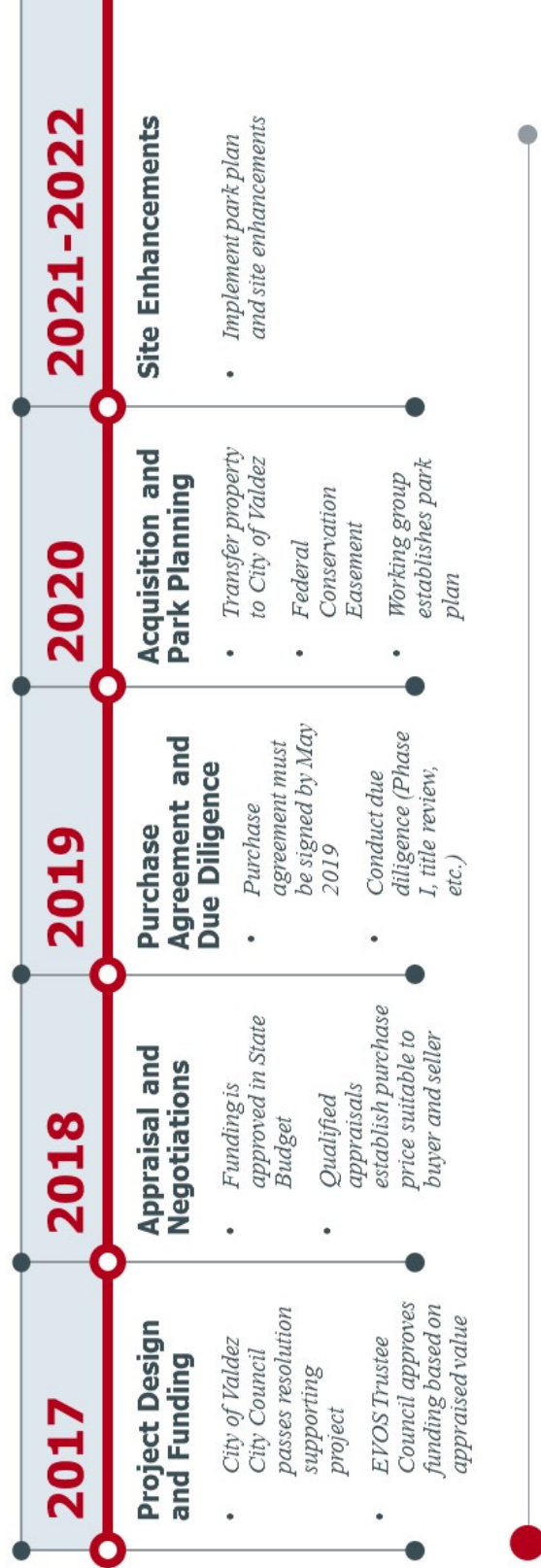




Photo: Meals Hill and surrounding land as viewed from the Alaska Marine Highway ferry.

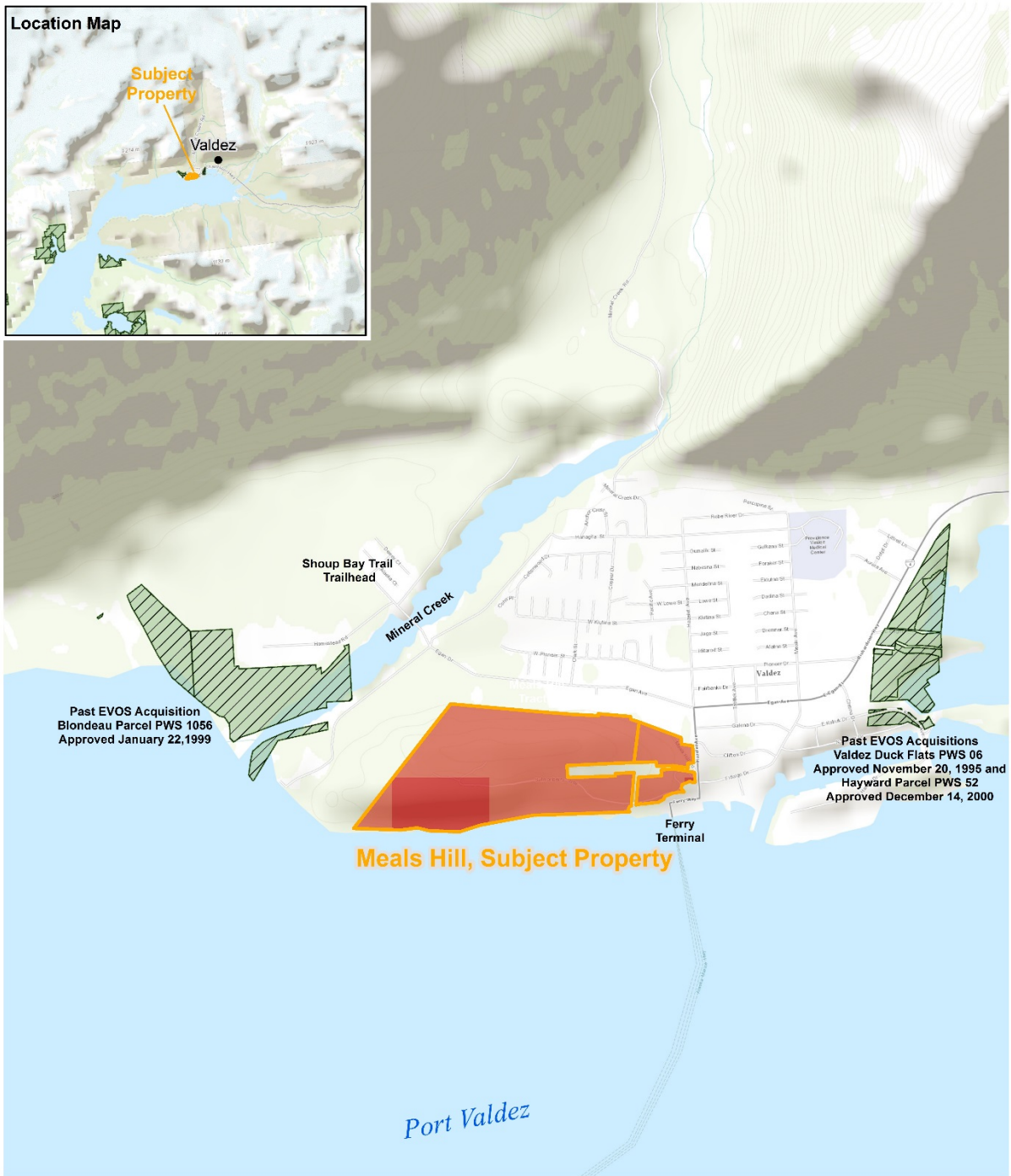
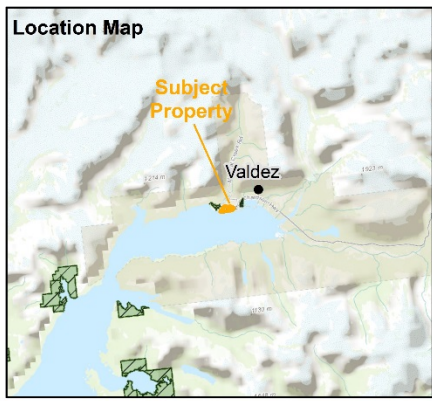


Photo: Meals Hill showing coastline, coastal forest, gravel road to viewpoint and proximity to Valdez.





Photo: View from top of Meals Hill across Port Valdez to the Valdez Marine Terminal.



CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA

RESOLUTION #17-42

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ,  
ALASKA, SUPPORTING THE MEALS HILL CONSERVATION PROJECT

WHEREAS, Great Land Trust is working cooperatively with the private landowner, and the State and Federal governments, and seeks to permanently protect approximately 184 acres in the area known as Meals Hill; and

WHEREAS, Meals Hill is a prominent landscape feature in Port Valdez providing scenic open space, habitat and recreational opportunities near downtown Valdez and is adjacent to the Valdez Ferry Terminal, 0.3 miles from the Valdez Small Boat Harbor, and 2.5 miles north, directly across Port Valdez from the Valdez Marine Terminal at the end of the Trans Alaskan Pipeline System; and

WHEREAS, Funding for completion of this project is being requested from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC); and

WHEREAS, the Meals Hill property would be acquired and permanently protected in furtherance of the restoration objectives of the EVOSTC; and

WHEREAS, before the property is acquired detailed due diligence will be conducted including a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment; and

WHEREAS, Once acquired, the property would be managed for protection of habitat utilized by spill affected species and public access for recreation, and habitat values, and would provide highly valued new recreational and tourism opportunities in Valdez.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA, that

The City Council of the City of Valdez supports the acquisition and permanent protection of the Meals Hill property with habitat funding from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. The permanent protection of Meals Hill for recreation, tourism and habitat values will benefit the City of Valdez.

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA, this 3rd day of October 2017.



City of Valdez  
Resolution No. 17-42  
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CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA

  
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Ruth E. Knight, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Sheri L. Pierce, MMC, City Clerk





City of Valdez  
Office of the Mayor  
212 Chenega Ave  
PO BOX 307  
Valdez, AK 99686

November 10, 2017

William Walker, Governor  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, State Capitol  
P.O. Box 110001  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Governor Walker:

Valdez is supporting and is excited about what we call the **Meals Hill EVOS Project**. I would like you to understand what this project would do to promote our citizens' health, tourism opportunities, and preserve one of the gems of our natural environment. The Great Land Trust is approaching EVOS with a proposal to purchase the Meals Hill property, from the private land owners. The trustee council will meet and vote on funding this project at their November 14 meeting.

The benefit of this happening is multi-faceted. It will first preserve one of the most beautiful forested areas in Valdez. As a public possession, this land would allow for the development of spectacular and accessible trails to be used by both our tourists and citizens. We are striving to; provide new venues which will encourage more people to visit Valdez; to keep finding additional ways to encourage Valdez citizens to participate in activities that promote healthy lifestyles; and to combat our obesity epidemic.

The City is thrilled about this project and will work with DNR to move it forward. Please contact me or the Executive Director of the Great Land Trust, Dave Mitchell, if you would like more information or have questions about this proposed project.

Thanks you for your service,

Ruth E Knight

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