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STATE OF UTAH

SCHOOL & INSTITUTIONAL TRUST LANDS ADMINISTRATION

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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84102

SITLA and the Nature Conservancy Add Lands to ST. George Nature Preserve

The Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) has sold 161 acres of state school trust lands to The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) to expand the White Dome Nature Preserve in St. George, Utah. The 161-acre parcel was purchased by the Conservancy for conservation of federally listed at-risk species of endangered plants and animals. The \$535,000 purchase price will be deposited in Utah's Permanent School Fund.

Located south of the fast-developing city of St. George, the White Dome Nature Preserve provides protection for plants and animals including the zebra-tailed lizard and loggerhead shrike. It also contains some of the last remaining populations of the threatened Siler pincushion cactus, and the endangered dwarf bear claw poppy. Visitors to the area will eventually enjoy public hiking trails and educational signage.

Since the initial purchase in June of 2005, the Conservancy conducted innovative restoration work improving the area's habitat for the dwarf bear claw poppy. Ecologists restored degraded habitat by de-compacting the soils and planting seeds native to the area. SITLA facilitated this restoration project by contributing biological soil crusts from adjacent lands.

According to SITLA Director Kevin Carter, "SITLA is proud to be part of an effort to preserve some of Utah's most important natural areas and to develop the area in a way that helps St. George residents appreciate the native wonders of the desert. Most importantly, these transactions allow SITLA to receive funds benefiting Utah's public schools, while adding open space that will be protected and preserved."

SITLA is an independent state agency that manages 3.4 million acres of Utah trust lands for the benefit of Utah's schools and other public institutions. Money generated from the school trust lands is deposited in the state Permanent School Fund, a perpetual endowment that annually distributes income to each K-12 public school in Utah.

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