

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Great Land Trust Completes Conservation Project in Collaboration with the Native Village of Tazlina, Helping to Return Ownership of Traditional Homelands to Tribe

Tazlina, AK-

Conservation nonprofit Great Land Trust (GLT) finalized a project with the Native Village of Tazlina (NVT) this week to purchase and place permanent protections on 162 acres of land historically used for subsistence salmon fishing at the confluence of the Copper and Tazlina Rivers. The project is part of a larger years-long effort by the Native Village of Tazlina to purchase a total of 412 acres, returning the traditional village site to tribal ownership.

Archeological sites on the property show continuous use by Alaska Natives for subsistence purposes dating back 300-700 years, according to a National Park Service survey. The property includes forested uplands rising above the confluence of the Tazlina River and the Copper River, which is renowned for its robust salmon population. The physical and geographic attributes of the property have made it a prime site for Alaska Native settlement and subsistence use for generations. Today, NVT residents continue the traditional practice of subsistence fishing on the conservation property with multiple active family and community fish wheel sites.

In 1956, the 412-acre property was sold by the Federal Government to the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau for the purpose of building a boarding school. From 1954 – 1971 it was the home of the Copper Valley School, a college prep school that educated Alaska leaders from all over the state. The school burned down in 1976 and the site sat vacant for many years. The Archdiocese then addressed remaining issues with pollutants and hazardous materials on the site through an environmental remediation process completed in 2013.

In 2018, the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau signed an agreement to sell the land to NVT. Since then, NVT has raised approximately \$1.7 million in funding needed to purchase the property. GLT is contributing funding through the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund to purchase and protect 162 acres of the traditional homelands which will be permanently conserved to support healthy salmon habitat. By voluntarily placing conservation restrictions on a portion of their land where they intend to continue practicing traditional subsistence activities forever, NVT is both protecting vigorous habitat that is crucial to a healthy salmon ecosystem and supporting the continuation of Alaska Native subsistence practices. Additionally, NVT was able to leverage the conservation of a portion of the land to generate additional funding through other grant programs, which were used to help purchase the remaining parcels.

The conserved area contains significant Copper River frontage, Tazlina River frontage, and rich forest habitat. It is also the location of both family and tribal education fish camps for the village with structures associated with fish camps and a network of dirt roads connecting the multiple fish wheel sites to the area road system. NVT Tribal Administrator Marce Simeon says, “We are so happy to know that all future generations of tribal members will have access to this land and will be able to use it in the same way that we do today and have in the past. The people who live here have a huge connection to this place.”

“Collaborating with partners, like the Native Village of Tazlina, and finding creative solutions to achieve shared conservation goals is one of our strengths at Great Land Trust.” Ellen Kazary, Executive Director of GLT said. “We are honored to have played a role in returning ownership of the traditional homelands to the people of the Native Village of Tazlina and for future generations to call home.”

Great Land Trust is a nonprofit founded by Alaskans for Alaskans with a mission to conserve and steward the lands and waters essential to the quality of life and economic health of Alaskans. Since 1995, GLT has conserved over 56,000 acres of priority wildlife habitat, permanently protected more than 100 miles of salmon streams, secured increased access to public lands, and created parks and public natural areas all throughout its service area of Southcentral Alaska.

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Great Land Trust is a nonprofit founded by Alaskans for Alaskans with a mission to conserve and steward the lands and waters essential to the quality of life and economic health of our communities. For more information visit our website at www.greatlandtrust.org.



The confluence of the Tazlina River and the Copper River. Photo by Nathaniel Wilder.



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Tazlina Village community fish wheel on the Copper River. Photo by Nathaniel Wilder.