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Paso Robles Will Celebrate River Land Acquisition at the Festival of the Arts!

The City of Paso Robles, co-host of the Festival of the Arts, closed escrow this morning on 154 acres along the Salinas River Corridor thanks to grant funds matched by Festival efforts.

Paso Robles, CA – What started as a dream came to reality this morning when escrow closed on the 154-acre parcel along the river. The parcel was sold by the John Will Family and represents the largest parcel the City has purchased to date as part of the Salinas River Vision plan to preserve open space along the river.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the purchase was the fact that a community event was conceived in 2009 to help generate required match funds for the multi-million dollar State Water Resources grant, saving the City of Paso Robles and its taxpayers a sizable amount of money while preserving lands for future community use. The inaugural Festival of the Arts in 2009 was conceived as a way to meet many stated community goals bringing culture to the downtown, adding an event to the Memorial Day Weekend calendar and, most importantly in a time of shrinking budgets, providing a strong basis for the grant match. By honoring the river as its focus, the Festival was able to contribute directly to the success of the River Parkway Grant effort and amassed \$217,000 in matching funds in the form of sponsorship donations, volunteer time, advertising and logistic dollars spent. The amount generated by the Festival represents over a third of the required match.

The community laid out its vision for the river during a multi-day community design workshop in 2005, and the result was the Salinas River Corridor Project, dubbed “Follow the River, Follow the Dream”. The vision includes preservation of river habitat and key vistas, enhanced recreational trail systems and public access, improved public art and educational opportunities to learn of the Salinas River’s habitat and history, a redeveloped urban edge at Paso Robles Street, and new connections to the downtown core.

Meg Williamson, Assistant City Manager and project manager for the Salinas River Corridor Project says, “The Festival of the Arts is truly unique in all that it has accomplished for our community to date and what it holds for the future. Last year’s event generated over \$200,000 toward a state clean water grant

and also provided a fun, engaging platform to educate residents about the Salinas River Corridor Project. Knowing that the grant acquisition was expected to come through made it exciting and provided inspiration for this year's River Art Exhibition. We will also be celebrating the land acquisition at 11:30am on the steps of the Carnegie Library during the festival, so stop by to celebrate this turning point with us. Keep in mind that portions of the Festival day art sales will benefit the on-going implementation of the river vision efforts, and if you've not seen the material before, you can head over to the River Vision booth for visuals of what the future plans for the Salinas River Corridor entail."

Portions of the proceeds of the Festival day's art sales will continue to support the River efforts. The REC Foundation, a 501c3 organization who supports community recreation needs in Paso Robles, has lent their support by establishing a special Salinas River Fund that is to be used for future opportunities that advance the River vision principles.

"I think locals and visitors will again enjoy the Festival of the Arts and the many activities available, especially all of the family-friendly activities," states Mayor Duane Picanco. "Paso Robles has benefitted from this cultural event and this year locals and visitors can come out and support the arts, the environment, or our historic downtown. We hope that visitors will make this a multi-day stay to experience all that our community has to offer over the Memorial Day weekend."

Admission to the Paso Robles Festival of the Arts is free and all ages are welcome. The event starts at 10:00AM and activities will end at 6:00PM. For more information, visit www.pasoartfestival.com

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About the Festival of the Arts: *The Paso Robles Festival of the Arts takes place on May 29, 2010 in the Paso Robles City Park and celebrates both the arts and the environment with a special exhibition of art honoring the Salinas River Corridor Project. The event kicks off at 10:00AM with a Plein Air Quick Draw Competition and Auction, a fine art exhibition, art demonstrations for adults, a public mural project, hands-on children's and teen art stations, live music and performances, stilt walkers, face painters and more. Free scenic educational tours of the beautiful Salinas River Corridor are also back by popular demand.*