

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation

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Roosevelt Family Acquires 90.3 Acres for Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library

MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA — The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation (TRPLF) purchased 90.3 acres of land from the U.S. Forest Service. The transaction completes an 18-month process that began when TRPLF received Congressional approval to acquire the land for construction of the T.R. Library in western North Dakota. The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Conveyance Act directed the U.S. Forest Service to sell the land. President Donald J. Trump signed the Bill into law in December 2020 and Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue initiated the sale process in January 2021.

“North Dakotans have ensured a legacy not just for their state but also for our nation and the world,” said Theodore Roosevelt V, a great-great-grandson and namesake of the 26th president. “I am pleased the Roosevelt family was able to purchase the land for the T.R. Library, honoring the life and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, and helping advance the ambitious vision of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library.”

Out of respect for the ranching community and T.R.’s history in the region as a rancher, the T.R. Library proactively requested that the Secretary of Agriculture place several conditions on the sale including preserving grazing rights and the Animal Unit Month (AUMs). No later than thirty (30) days after the land sale, the T.R. Library is required to notify the Governor of North Dakota and the Commissioners of Billings County of the completed sale. No later than ninety (90) days from the sale, the T.R. Library will hold a public meeting in Medora, North Dakota, to present its planned development of the land to the local community for comment. The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation continues to be subject to any applicable local zoning regulations.

Theodore Roosevelt founded the U.S. Forest Service during his presidential administration. The U.S. Forest Service worked diligently over the past year and a half to ensure this historic sale.

“The mission of the U.S. Forest Service to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of the present and future generations, remains unchanged since its founding by Theodore Roosevelt in 1905,” said Misty Hays, Medora District Ranger at the USDA Forest Service. “It is good to see the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library plans to incorporate key aspects of that mission.”

“139 years after Theodore Roosevelt first came to Medora the Roosevelts are back in North Dakota,” said Edward F. O’Keefe, Chief Executive Officer of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. O’Keefe announced that an ambitious habitat and native species restoration project has begun on the landscape.

The T.R. Library, in cooperation with North Dakota State University (NDSU), will help restore indigenous plants to the Library’s extensive outdoor spaces. The Native Plant Project aims to collect and cultivate seeds to increase the diversity of native North Dakota Badlands prairie species, including rare and endangered plants. This summer, students, community volunteers, and ecology professionals are collecting seeds for the future T.R. Library landscape from across the Little Missouri Badlands region, including Roosevelt’s own Maltese Cross Cabin and Elkhorn Ranch properties.

The Elkhorn Ranch — T.R.’s home ranch — is known as the ‘cradle of conservation’ and the Maltese Cross Cabin — once a part of T.R.’s working ranch — stands at the entrance to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Theodore Roosevelt National Park, the only of the 62 national parks named for a person, let alone a president, will be a critical part of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library plan.

Theodore Roosevelt lived and ranched in North Dakota for the better part of two years after the tragic deaths of his wife and mother in 1884. Roosevelt returned to the Badlands and Medora almost every year until his death in 1919. In keeping with Roosevelt's experience in the region as a rancher, the landscape will continue to be grazed, encouraging visitors to learn first-hand about the past and vibrant future of ranching and grazing in western North Dakota.

Snøhetta, a U.S. and Norwegian-based firm, is the design architect of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. North Dakota-based JLG is the architect of record. JE Dunn has been named the construction manager, and Fargo-based Confluence is the landscape architect of record. Construction is set to begin in 2023 and a grand opening is planned for July 4, 2026 — the 250th anniversary of America and the Declaration of Independence.

Those interested in being "In the Arena" can donate now at trlibrary.com/donate.

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