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Last modified: Sunday, June 10, 2007 11:54 AM EDT

Clear Lakers raising money to save unspoiled island

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CLEAR LAKE — Members of a group of Clear Lake residents are asking for their neighbors' help in keeping a piece of their lake experience undeveloped and unspoiled.

The Clear Lake Conservancy is looking to purchase Kasota Island, which sits in the southwest corner of the lake. The group is in its final push toward making the purchase and conservation of the island a reality.

Resident Bob Geiger, who has lived on the lake since 1955, says many on the lake have used Kasota as a vacation away from their lake homes through the years.

"I camped out there with my kids, and we'll have campfires out there with the grandkids, and we all use the beach on the island," Geiger says.

The island has also been used as a spot for weddings and for Boy Scout and Cub Scout events. Canada geese lay eggs on the island and year-round residents often see an eagle stop there in the winter, Geiger added.

Unlike the rest of the lake, there is not any development on the island. Geiger, resident Bob Lewis and other members of the conservatory intend to keep it that way.



Scenic Kasota Island inspires the fundraising efforts of Clear Lake residents.

"We want to make it a conservancy," Geiger says, "we're not going to build anything on it. We want to keep everything there in its natural habitat."

Lewis said the plan to purchase the island first took shape in late 2005, when a small group of residents tried to put the idea to a vote of the town, which failed. The efforts didn't stop with that setback, however, as members of the conservancy pressed ahead, attempting to raise money through donations and other fundraisers, such as sales of Clear Lake cookbooks and the now-famous pin-up calendar.

Lewis, Geiger and others meet each week to stuff envelopes and put together other canvassing activities, either at the town hall or the yacht club.

Through those efforts and the other fundraisers, the group has raised nearly \$1.3 million toward the purchase of the island.

Geiger said the island was priced at approximately \$1.5 million, putting the group very near the goal.

"We're \$363,000 away, we're very close" Lewis says. "I feel confident we can end this by August. We've been getting a lot of positive feedback."

Lewis invited any Clear Lake residents interested in helping with the final stages of the fund-raising effort to meet at the Clear Lake Yacht Club on Fridays, where a group ranging from 14-25 people has been helping to stuff envelopes and collect pledges.