

# Center for Wildlife launches campaign to purchase land

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YORK – The Center for Wildlife, poised to embark on a major expansion over the next several years, has launched a GoFundMe campaign to help the organization purchase 8.5 acres near its Mountain Road home that is a necessary first step in their plans.

The center has raised \$76,000 toward its \$80,000 goal in just the past several months, and is seeking contributions from the Seacoast community to help it reach its goal, said development coordinator Emma Balina. The funds will be used to purchase land from the York Water District, which currently leases property to the center.

“We’ve been very fortunate,” said Balina. The first gift came from the Maine Beer Company in Freeport, which contributed \$10,000. “They’re huge supporters of our work. They’ve even put some of our ambassadors (wildlife unable to be released to the wild) on some of their beer.” So far, the \$76,000 has been raised by nine donors.

“Now we have this campaign for \$5,000 that we’re hoping will take us over the top,” she said.

Board member Tom Boisvert has been working with the York Water District to secure the land and secure all the permits and approvals necessary for the 8,000-square-foot center that will be built on the land.

He’s met with state agencies and town staff about the plans, particularly on septic and well suitability. “Fortunately, that process has been going faster than we thought. We’ve already jumped through some circles to make it viable, and we’re confident we’re okay.”

Also, some of the center’s current buildings are in the YWD watershed, and the center has agreed to demolish or remove them to allow for a return to a natural state. But the center’s lease with the YWD on its current property doesn’t expire for seven years, and the water district will give the center the time it needs, superintendent Don Neumann has said. When the land purchase is finalized, the board and staff will turn its attention to the next phase of

the project – raising funds for the building. Boisvert estimates the total cost will be \$2 million to \$2.5 million. That campaign, the most significant in the 30-year history of the center – is expected to take several years at a minimum.

The new center will concentrate on the two primary missions of the center – wildlife rehabilitation and education. The plans call for a more sophisticated medical facility to diagnose and care for injured animals, including an X-ray machine and surgical equipment.

There will also be an educational center so that community groups and school groups can come to York to get an idea of the full scope of the operation. Currently, staff take the center's ambassadors to various locations in the Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts area serviced by the staff.

"We get more and more calls all the time from groups that want to learn about what we do. With the new center, we can bring people to us," said Boisvert.

Balina said the board and staff is gearing up to launch the capital campaign. The center takes in sick and injured wildlife from a 150-mile radius, she said, and an effort will be made to reach out to all the communities that use its services. Fortunately, "we have a very active donor base" but she agreed this upcoming effort will require much broader support.

"It's a huge undertaking," said Boisvert. "A lot of people don't realize the impact we have. If towns and fish and game departments had to rescue these animals, it would cost them money. We're a great resource for them.

"Our goal is to say we all live on the same planet and we all need to get along. It takes a village," he said.

To make a donation to the gofundme campaign, go to [www.gofundme.com/centerforwildlife](http://www.gofundme.com/centerforwildlife).