Natural Lands (https://natlands.org/)

Delaware River Watershed Initiative Builds on Conservation Successes

April 5, 2018

By Natural Lands

Natural Lands leading new wave of progress for clean water protection

MEDIA, Pa., April 4, 2018 – Natural Lands is leading a major project to protect clean water in the region as a member of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative (http://www.4states1source.org) (DRWI).

The DRWI's bottom-up approach represents a strategic path forward for the Delaware River basin. It is a nationally significant model that demonstrates the power of an organized, independent, non-profit-driven approach that encourages partnership between communities and the philanthropic sector.

"The thousands of miles of our region's rivers and streams literally connect us all. These waterways are the lifeblood of the Mid-Atlantic, supplying drinking water and jobs for millions of us," said Molly Morrison, president of Natural Lands. "We have come a long way from the polluting times of the industrial revolution, but there are still grave threats

to our watershed. Natural Lands is honored to be part of this ground-breaking effort to protect forested headwaters, increase access to nature, and ensure clean water for us all.

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At its 2014 launch, the DRWI catalyzed local and regional groups to accelerate conservation efforts. The DRWI stands out as a basin-scale program driven by non-profits and guided by science. In just over three years DRWI partners have strategically:

- initiated projects that will protect 19,604 acres and restore an additional 8,331 acres, and
- monitored and sampled water quality at more than 500 sites across four states.

Because of its broad reach across the watershed and long history—65 years and counting—Natural Lands was asked to play an integral role in five of the eight priority areas within the watershed.

In the **Brandywine-Christina** region, Natural Lands has:

- Partnered with Brandywine Conservancy to assist six townships with progressive zoning that restored trees to "riparian buffers" along streams.

Going forward, Natural Lands will focus on partnering with other organizations in the DRWI to assist at least five municipalities in implementing local stormwater management plans, and adopting open space plans and land use regulations that conserve water quality.

In the **Schuylkill Highlands** region—which covers the area around Reading, Pennsburg, and Pottstown—Natural Lands has:

- permanently protected 2,000 acres of land,
- worked with multiple DRWI partners to develop the Schuylkill Water Stewards program and train more than 50 volunteers in water monitoring, and
- hosted a workshop for 50 municipal staff, officials, and consultants focused on green stormwater infrastructure, redevelopment, and parking area greening.

Going forward, the organization will focus on protecting an additional 2,000 acres of land, and work with municipalities to create open space and green stormwater infrastructure plans, update ordinances pertaining to zoning and subdivision land land development plans, and hold a workshop focused on tools to implement water protection measures.

In the **Poconos-Kittatinny region**, Natural Lands has:

- assisted communities with updating zoning codes to better protect natural resources and encourage innovate stormwater practices, and
- hosted workshops for municipal officials focused on ordinance updates and land use measures designed to improve or maintain water quality.

Going forward, the organization's efforts will focus on saving open space in Monroe County; updating local ordinances to boost water quality protections; and hosting additional municipal training workshops on topics such as green infrastructure, public lands stewardship, and conservation design.

In the **Upper Lehigh** region, Natural Lands has:

- added 148.76 acres of permanently protected land to its Bear Creek Preserve, and
- helped five municipalities adopt zoning regulations that improve water quality, including standards for new residential development with open space, and greening of commercial parking lots.

Going forward, Natural Lands will focus on saving another 500 acres of land; and assist at least seven more municipalities with plans, programs, and land use regulations that conserve natural areas and water quality, thereby augmenting land protection efforts.

In the **Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer** region, Natural Lands has:

- assisted with the permanent protection of 119 acres of forest adjacent to Sunset Lake and of a 417-acre property that was the former Sheppard's Mill Girl Scout Camp.

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Going forward, Natural Lands' efforts will include helping Woodstown High School's ecology program expand to include an advanced placement class focusing on water quality and quantity issues.

The William Penn Foundation announced more than $40 million in new funding for the DRWI, which is among the country's largest non-governmental conservation efforts to protect and restore clean water. The DRWI is a first-of-its-kind collaboration involving 65 non-governmental organizations working together to protect and restore the Delaware River and its tributaries, which provide drinking water for 15 million people in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware.

This additional $42 million, three-year investment builds on initial successes to protect and restore an estimated 43,484 additional acres and continue science-driven, data-informed efforts to secure clean, abundant water in the basin. The Initiative provides a replicable model that can be used to improve water health across the country.

Threats to the Delaware River basin are significant, demanding a concerted response from private landowners and local officials to protect our natural resources. The DRWI is tackling widespread pollution sources that harm clean water in our rivers and streams: erosion and runoff from deforested acres in headwaters, polluted runoff from agricultural fields, flooding and polluted stormwater from cities and suburbs, and a depleted aquifer in southern New Jersey. These growing problems will threaten drinking water for millions of people every day if left unaddressed.

"By design, The Delaware River Watershed Initiative aligns the work of 65 organizations in the watershed to accelerate conservation," said Andrew Johnson, program director for Watershed Protection at the William Penn Foundation. "The Initiative is rooted in the strength of these organizations individually and in their ability to collaborate using science to target the most important places for conservation. Together they are protecting and restoring those places, measuring the impact of their efforts on local streams, and learning collectively to improve their work."

About Natural Lands

Natural Lands (https://natlands.org/)

Natural Lands is dedicated to preserving and nurturing nature's wonders while creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone. As the Greater Philadelphia region's oldest and largest land conservation organization, Natural Lands has preserved more than 125,000 acres, including 43 nature preserves totaling more than 23,000 acres. Some 2.5 million people live within five miles of land under the organization's protection. Land for life, nature for all. natlands.org (http://www.natlands.org/).

About the Delaware River Watershed Initiative

The Delaware River Watershed Initiative is a collaboration of 65 leading nonprofit organizations that have developed shared action plans to reduce four priority threats to clean water. Informed by science, the Initiative is working in eight targeted areas, where analysis indicated that interventions could significantly safeguard or improve clean water. Together, these eight areas constitute 25 percent of the river basin and include portions of Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. For more information, including a list of all participating organizations, visit www.4states1source.org (http://www.4states1source.org).

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