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Land Conservation in Silver Spring Township

December 12, 2017

By Natural Lands

Community takes a proactive approach in the state's fastest-growing county

MEDIA, Pa., December 12, 2017 – In 2013, Silver Spring Township's residents approved an open space funding program—the first in Cumberland County—and hired Natural Lands to help determine priorities for land preservation. Since that time, Natural Lands has protected nearly 174 acres of land through conservation easements.

The most recent property protected is the 19.2-acre Keller Farm, a scenic property located in the southern part of Silver Spring Township. By protecting the farm fields and woodlands, the conservation easement ensures that the landscape of the county will be preserved.

Cumberland County, PA—still a relatively rural community—is also the fastest-growing county in the state. Seeing the signs of development, Silver Spring Township began a proactive and comprehensive approach to protecting their community's green space.

In addition to establishing an open space funding program, the township formed a Land Preservation Review Board. Shortly after forming, the Board hired Natural Lands to help determine priorities for land preservation and to assist in structuring the program. In

2014, Silver Spring Township adopted Natural Lands' Growing Greener: Conservation by design zoning ordinances, which enables the township to set aside half of every future development parcel as open space.

"Natural Lands is thrilled to work with the community to preserve nearly 174 acres in Silver Spring," said Molly Morrison, president of Natural Lands. "We look forward to future collaboration to help preserve the beautiful, rural character of the township, one property at a time."

"Silver Spring Township has found the partnership with Natural Lands to be invaluable not only in the capacity of setting up and monitoring the conservation easements, but in helping the Board members structure the program, establish criteria for choosing parcels, and understand the preservation process," said Laura Brown, chair of Silver Spring's Land Preservation Review Board.

These easements are an agreement between the landowners and Natural Lands that permanently limits uses of the land. Under a conservation easement, property remains in private ownership, but is protected from future development. If landowners with an easement choose to sell their land or pass it on to their heirs, the restrictions on its use remain in place. In the case of Silver Spring Township's landowners, the .01% tax increase authorized by the 2013 voter referendum allows the Township to pay them to preserve their land.

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/).

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