



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Step Forward in Preservation of Crebilly Farm

MEDIA, Pa., April 4, 2022 – Natural Lands announced today that the owners of Crebilly Farm have signed an agreement of sale that opens a path for the permanent protection of the property. The iconic property in Westtown Township, Chester County, has been at risk of development.

“We are very grateful to the Robinson family for their willingness to take this important step towards conservation of such a beautiful, historical, and ecologically important property,” said Oliver Bass, president of Natural Lands. “We are a long way from the finish line, but the key to any successful conservation project is a landowner who is willing to preserve their land.”

The conservation plan—which may take 18 months to two years to complete—combines publicly accessible open space and privately-owned preserved land. The agreement of sale between Crebilly Farm’s owners and Westtown Township—which was unanimously approved by the Township’s Board of Supervisors this evening—makes way for the Township to purchase approximately 208 acres intended to become a passive-use township park.

“By acquiring 208 acres of Crebilly Farm, Westtown Township will ensure that this pristine corner of the Township remains unspoiled for generations to come,” said Board Chair Scott Yaw. “We are grateful to both the Robinson family for their commitment to conserving their land and to Natural Lands for facilitating this remarkable opportunity for all concerned.”

Added Police Commissioner Richard Pomerantz, “As the former chair of the Planning Commission and now a township supervisor, I have spoken with thousands of Township residents over the past decade about the importance of preserving Crebilly Farm, the iconic centerpiece of Westtown Township. I am delighted that the Township has entered into this agreement of sale with the Robinson family to protect this beautiful Township gem.”

A second agreement between Crebilly Farm’s owners and Natural Lands is expected to be finalized soon. That deal will enable the land conservation non-profit to purchase up to four conservation easements on approximately 104 acres of the property. These 100+ acres, which contain most of the

property's buildings and residences, will remain on the market to be purchased by private buyers. New owners would be subject to the terms of the conservation easements.

A conservation easement is a voluntary land protection agreement that permanently restricts development on a particular property. Subsequent heirs or owners of the land are legally required to comply with the terms of the agreement in perpetuity.

Late last year, the owners of the property reached out to Natural Lands to discuss possible conservation options. In December 2021, the Westtown Township Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to hire Natural Lands to apply on the Township's behalf for federal, state, and county funding toward conservation of the farm.

Natural Lands and Westtown Township must secure approximately \$25.5 million in grant funding for its purchase of the easements and to fund Westtown Township's purchase of what will be the publicly accessible portion of Crebilly Farm.

"We are hopeful that we'll be able to secure funding from a variety of federal, state, county, and municipal sources over the next couple of years," said Oliver Bass. "However, it is likely that there will be a gap between available funds and the amount we need to raise. While a campaign is not yet underway, we anticipate that there will be an important role for the community—which has been so outspoken in its support of Crebilly's preservation—to play in making up that gap. Bass encourages the public to sign up for updates on the project at www.natlands.org/crebillyfarm.

Said Westtown Township Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Tom Foster, "Westtown has always been defined by its rural character, and Crebilly has long been our centerpiece. The next step in acquiring this beautiful property is probably the most important: financing the project. It is up to Westtown residents to make this deal happen."

The Crebilly Farm site holds significance for more than just its iconic beauty and ecological benefits. The first skirmishes of the Battle of Brandywine—the largest one-day conflict of the American Revolution—took place on these same rolling hills and woodlands on the morning of Sept. 11, 1777. American General Adam Stephen spotted Hessian troops marching across the farm from his lookout atop Sandy Hollow, where the main battle would take place. Stephen dispatched a party of soldiers to the farm to frustrate the Hessians' advance towards the American position.

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—which is member supported—has preserved

more than 125,000 acres, including 42 nature preserves and one public garden totaling more than 23,000 acres. Nearly five million people live within five miles of land under the organization's protection. Land for life, nature for all. natlands.org.

Please note: "Natural Lands" is the organization's official operating name and should be used instead of its legal designation (Natural Lands Trust, Inc.).

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