



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Successful Result from the Save Crebilly Campaign

MEDIA, Pa., November 1, 2024 – Natural Lands and Westtown Township announced today the successful completion of Natural Lands’ Save Crebilly Campaign—a final step in the multi-year fundraising effort to preserve the entirety of Crebilly Farm in Westtown Township, Chester County.

The campaign was an intentionally fast-paced, two-month effort, which targeted the communities within a 10-mile radius of Crebilly that will benefit most from the protected and publicly accessible open space. The call to “come together friend by friend, neighbor by neighbor, and gift by gift” attracted the support of more than 750 households—all of whose contributions were matched dollar-for-dollar thanks to a special challenge Natural Lands received from Mt. Cuba Center and another donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

In June 2023, partners celebrated an important milestone when one-third of the property was permanently protected through conservation easements held by Natural Lands.

The final step in preserving Crebilly Farm is Westtown Township’s purchase of the remaining 206 acres that will become a passive-use park with walking trails through the stunning landscape. With the completion of the campaign, sufficient funds have been raised for that purchase and settlement is set for December 2024, though the park will not be open to the public for some time.

“Natural Lands, Westtown Township, and the Robinson family—which has called Crebilly Farm home for multiple generations—are moved by this extraordinary demonstration of conservation care,” said Oliver Bass, president of Natural Lands, the Greater Philadelphia region’s oldest and largest land conservation nonprofit. “When iconic landscapes like Crebilly Farm, which help root us in—even epitomize—our communities, are threatened, so is our essential relationship with nature. Their preservation is essential to our wellbeing.”

Bass added, “It took an extraordinary coalition of funders to preserve Crebilly Farm. This included leadership support from public partners to include the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and

Natural Resources (using grant monies from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund), the Chester County Commissioners, and the residents of Westtown Township, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of an open space fund referendum in 2022.”

“Private funding from foundations and individuals was also essential and came from the Open Space Institute’s Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund (conditionally funded and made possible with funding from The William Penn Foundation for its Delaware River Watershed Initiative, which seeks to protect water quality in the Delaware River Basin); Mt. Cuba Center; the Marshall-Reynolds Foundation; and all of the individual donors and devoted community volunteers who helped get this project to the finish line. It is a stunning assemblage of conservation support and a model of public, private, and grassroots partnership.”

“Of course,” added Bass, “the opportunity to save Crebilly forever would not have been possible without the Robinson family, which opened a pathway to conservation in 2022, was patient as this process unfolded, and made an exceedingly generous gift to bring the project to completion.”

“We are extremely thankful to Natural Lands, and join them in our heartfelt gratitude for everyone, known and unknown, who has generously contributed their creativity, spirit, time, talent, and financial resources to make this momentous occasion possible,” David and Laurie Robinson said. “We are humbled by the incredible community support in fulfilling this extraordinary conservation and preservation effort.”

According to Dick Pomerantz, Westtown Township supervisor and WEGO Police Commission chair, “The Save Crebilly story would turn out to be comprised of so many challenges, involving long and winding roads. It’s been an extraordinary journey that began with the most daunting of must-dos: ‘To have any chance at all, your team must win the referendum.’ And so they did!”

Pomerantz added, “What they did, and what ensued thereafter through the efforts and commitment of so many along the way, was perfectly captured in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: ‘When one stands on their conviction and their abide, the whole world will come around.’”

As one of the largest remaining unprotected open spaces in our region, Crebilly’s conservation has required significant financial investment. In November 2022, the residents of Westtown Township voted overwhelmingly in favor of an Open Space Fund referendum, which provided about \$7.5 million for the property’s preservation and stewardship. Natural Lands raised \$16.5 million in additional public and private grant funding and gifts from individual donors.

Chester County Commissioners Josh Maxwell, Marian Moskowitz, and Eric Roe said, “For more than 30 years, Chester County’s land preservation program has focused on partnering with conservancies, townships, the state, and private landowners to invest in saving land, and Crebilly Farm is a perfect

example of this. The investments the County has made over the years—with overwhelming public support—has leveraged hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars through our partnerships. Crebilly Farm will be saved because of that same public support; public support that has raised the final funds needed, guaranteeing the permanent preservation of 300-plus acres.”

“Providing public access to natural spaces is central to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ mission, and we are grateful to everyone involved in the efforts to conserve Crebilly Farm,” Department Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said. “This campaign has helped protect land that is under pressure from development, improved community access to trails, and helped develop green infrastructure that helps absorb stormwater during heavy rain, all of which are huge wins for Chester County and the Commonwealth.”

Said Ann C. Rose, president of Mt. Cuba Center’s Board, “As part of Mt. Cuba Center’s commitment to conservation, we are proud to support the purchase of Crebilly Farm. Maintaining this land as open space will benefit not only plants and animals in the local ecosystem, but also provide people with more opportunities to connect with nature.”

“Saving Crebilly Farm has been a community effort and an act of persistence. I am thrilled that we’ve persevered towards its permanent protection,” said State Senator Carolyn Comitta. “The people of Westtown Township and the surrounding communities have worked for years to ensure this property remains the iconic landscape we all know and love. And the fact that it was their tireless work—and now generosity—that put us over the top is a testament to our ongoing commitment to historic, ecological, and environmental conservation in Chester County.”

“This is a tremendous moment for Westtown and our surrounding communities,” said State Representative Craig Williams. “Protecting this historically significant piece of land is a testament to our collective commitment to preserving our heritage, culture, and open space. I extend a hearty congratulations and my great gratitude to the many stakeholders involved in this difficult task, including Natural Lands, Westtown Township, the Robinson family, the Commonwealth, Chester County, the numerous other funders and donors, my elected colleagues, and most especially the people of Westtown who voted to spend their tax money to preserve this local treasure. Thank you!”

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 135,000 acres, including 40+ 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.).

As per **Westtown Township** Comprehensive Plan 2019, Westtown is the second oldest municipality in Chester County. It is a very special community, with natural creek valleys, tree-canopied roadways, beautiful homes, vibrant parks, expansive open spaces, rolling landscapes, and high quality of life. While Westtown has experienced great change over the last few decades, much change has been accommodated in a manner that maintain that unique community character. Westtown is dedicated to continued special efforts to carefully guide changes and preserve the most important features of the community. westtownpa.org

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