

A vital step in preserving our natural heritage

The Piedmont region of northern New Castle County, Delaware, including lands of the Woodlawn Trustees, teems with mature hardwood trees, lush forest understories, dramatic rock outcroppings, working agricultural fields and bubbling headwater streams. For decades the Woodlawn Trustees managed their lands in a way that preserved critical natural resources so vital to the health and welfare of the surrounding communities, and offered visitors convenient access to the natural beauty of the Piedmont region.

As a group of nine conservation organizations dedicated to the protection and restoration of Delaware's and Pennsylvania's natural resources and defining land and waterscapes, we applaud the outstanding work and great accomplishments of The Conservation Fund, Mt. Cuba Center, and the Woodlawn Trustees. Their collaborative efforts to protect and conserve the natural character of these lands will forever ensure the long-term vitality of significant natural resources of northern New Castle County.

Designation of this area as a national park will safeguard the lands and waters within the region, highlighting for generations to come the splendid cultural, historical and natural beauty and biodiversity of the Brandywine Valley. It is the purpose of the National Park Service to maintain natural areas for the purposes of recreation, enjoyment and appreciation for generations to come. Permanent protection of the Woodlawn property as a national park will not only secure the functionality of the natural landscape but also establish connections between the environment and rich history and unique culture of the region.

Delawareans have instituted many notable and highly successful conservation initiatives in partnership with the private, public and nonprofit sectors. The Delaware Coastal Zone Act of 1971 yielded an unprecedented protection of our coastal zone. The Delaware Department of Agriculture's agricultural preservation program ranks first in the nation for acres of agricultural land protected per capita. Now, working collaboratively, Mt.

Cuba Center, The Conservation Fund, and Woodlawn Trustees have partnered on what may be the largest conservation gift in the history of the State of Delaware.

The health, well-being and appeal of northern Delaware is integrally linked to pristine beauty and vast natural resources of the area. The many historic mills along the Brandywine River propelled economic progress and prominence in the area, and today, thousands of residents and visitors come to the area to experience first-rate birding, canoeing and hiking and appreciate renowned artworks inspired by the natural beauty and resources of the Brandywine Valley. This inter-relationship between human history and natural history is deserving of national attention and recognition. Maintaining the natural and economic productivity of the landscape is important to ensure that the character of this area rich in cultural, historical and environmental resources remains vital and thriving into the future.

Together, as a community of conservation organizations with interests in Delaware, Pennsylvania and the Brandywine Valley, we work to conserve critical landscapes by advancing exemplary stewardship.

Our vision is to maintain the economic productivity of the land and ensuring the availability and functionality of these natural resources for generations to come. We encourage you to join us in recognizing the important role that these natural resources play in the long-term health and vitality of the region and supporting the designation of the Woodlawn properties as Delaware's first national park.

This statement was signed by Kate Hackett, executive director, Delaware Wild Lands; Mark B. Martell, president, Delaware Audubon Society; Pam Sapko, Delaware Center for Horticulture; Peter J. Walsh Jr., president, Delaware Greenways; Brian Winslow, executive director, Delaware Nature Society; Bill Stewart, conservation chair, Delmarva Ornithological Society; Gwen Lacy, executive director, The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County; Richie Jones, state director, The Nature Conservancy in Delaware; and Andrew L.

Johnson, president, North American Land Trust.

DELAWARE VOICE

CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

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