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### **For Immediate Release**

*October 31, 2003, Lederach, PA* – Hard work, cooperation, and lots of patience go into most land preservation efforts. The 59 acres of recently preserved land near Camp ArthuReeta in Lower Frederick Township is no exception. Camp ArthuReeta straddles both sides of Swamp Creek, an important waterway that forms a riparian corridor running through the western part of Montgomery County. Abundant and diverse wildlife lie along much of this creek’s path, making the area a high priority in Lower Frederick Township’s open space plan.

Jake Lea, Director of Land Preservation for Montgomery County Lands Trust began working on this project in 2000 when a local resident alerted us to the availability of 307 acres owned by Spring Mountain Partnership. The owner became interested in selling his development rights after several meetings with Jake. We made grant applications, obtained the many documents, and received a letter of intent by the owner to sell a conservation easement. We then waited for notice of our grant approvals.

In January 2001, the County gave us approval for a grant that would provide half the funding required to purchase the easement. The long-awaited DCNR grant, providing

funds for the other half, was announced in June, 2001... the same day we learned that Spring Mountain Partnership had signed an agreement of sale to another party! It was back to the drawing board for the Land Trust.

The purchaser, Malpasso Enterprises LLC, run by Michael Sham became a new partner in our effort to preserve this important area. Mike's goal was to manage and improve Camp ArthurReeta. At first he was unsure about preserving any of the land due to a concern about limiting camp activities. Then Jake met with him several times and he began to see how a plan for the area would benefit both the camp and community preservation goals. He agreed to sell the upper portion of the property, outside of the camp activities. That portion was contiguous to the County's Sunrise Historic Mill.

The Trust then worked closely with Montgomery County who saw the advantage of becoming the ultimate owner of this section. The property joins not only with Sunrise Historic Mill, it also lies near the 207-acre Stone Hill preservation area for which MCLT will be working to secure a permanent, natural connection. A future Montgomery County trail, to be called Sunrise Trail, is also proposed for the area. After we purchased the land with a restructured DCNR grant and attached a conservation easement, we then donated the parcel to the County. In our purchase offer, we requested that a conservation easement also be placed along the area running along Swamp Creek, through the heart of the camp.

We jumped several more hurdles as we prepared to turn the land over to Montgomery County. On October 31, 2003, the deal was sealed and the permanently preserved land became part of the Sunrise Historic Mill Site. Montgomery County Lands Trust holds an easement on both the county land and on the portion inside the camp along the creek. With 59 acres secured, we hope to find more partners in our efforts to preserve this unique section of Montgomery County.

**History Tidbit**

Camp ArthuReeta derives its unusual name from two camps begun in the 1920s known as Camp Arthur, a boy's camp, and Camp Reeta, a girl's camp. New owner Mike Sham had actually attended Camp

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