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For Immediate Release

Groups Complete Largest Conservation Project in Montgomery County History

*Natural Lands Trust, Montgomery County Lands Trust and Boy Scouts
complete conservation of 1,200-acre Musser Scout Reservation*

June 20, 2003, Media, PA - On June 19th, the Boy Scouts' Cradle of Liberty Council, Natural Lands Trust, Montgomery County Lands Trust and Montgomery County signed a conservation easement permanently protecting an additional 332 acres of the Musser Scout Reservation. This easement marks the completion of the final phase in the protection of the 1200-acre property in Marlborough and Salford Townships.

The Cradle of Liberty Council of the Boy Scouts agreed in late 2000 to sell a conservation easement to the two, non-profit land trusts, so that the land would remain open in perpetuity. The first easement, on 860 acres, was completed in April 2002.

The Musser Scout Reservation rests mostly north of the Unami Creek in an area that conservationists have identified as a priority in the county. It is home to Camp Delmont, Camp Garrison and Camp Hart and has hosted Scout activities since the early part of the last century. The property has been identified as an important conservation target because of its size, natural resource value and because it is part of the largest contiguous forest in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

A conservation easement is a perpetual, legally binding agreement between a landowner and a qualified holder of easements to remove certain rights from the property. The effect of conservation easements is to provide permanent protection from future development while leaving the land in private ownership.

The easement on the Musser Scout Reservation divides the property into two general areas; the less restricted "Program Area," and the more restricted "Resource Conservation Area." The smaller Program Area will encompass the major improvements where camping activity is concentrated and will remain. The Resource Management area includes critical habitat areas, former camping areas and buffer areas between the camps and surrounding properties.

Funding for the second easement purchase was provided by the Montgomery County Open Space Program (through its Private Organization Challenge Grant Program), the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Keystone Land Trust Assistance Program, and The William Penn Foundation.

Phil Wallis, president of Natural Lands Trust, called the four year, 2.2 million dollar deal "a shining example of the partnerships increasingly required for conservation success. It took dedicated state, county and local governments, non-profit land trusts, private charities and a committed Scouting organization to preserve this wonderful resource that will benefit Montgomery County and the region for generations to come."

Dulcie Flaharty, executive director of Montgomery County Lands Trust, noted that the preservation of the Musser Scout Reservation is the largest single project made possible by the Montgomery County Open Space Program, which expires this year. "Montgomery County residents should be proud that their support of open space has left such an extraordinary legacy. Without that program, the Musser Reservation could have been lost to development, forever."

Natural Lands Trust is a nonprofit land conservancy protecting land in communities throughout the greater Philadelphia region. Since its founding, the group has helped protect more than 105,000 acres of open space - making it one of the oldest and largest land trusts in the country. The group currently owns and manages 45 nature preserves totaling more than 13,000 acres, holds conservation restrictions on more than 12,000 acres and has helped more than forty townships in the region plan for open space conservation.

Montgomery County Lands Trust was founded in 1993 to support the conservation goals set forth in the Montgomery County Open Space Preservation Plan. The group is “committed to increasing education and awareness of conservation so that citizens of Montgomery County can maintain and create communities that make our county a unique and scenic place to live and work.”

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