



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 24th, 2022

Contacts:

Kelly Snavely, Lancaster Conservancy
Director of Marketing & Communications
717-392-7891x207
kssnavely@lancasterconservancy.org

Mikaela Bender-Rice, Lancaster Farmland Trust
Communications Coordinator
717-687-8484
mbenderrice@lancasterfarmlandtrust.org

**A BIG WIN FOR LANCASTER COUNTY'S
ICONIC LANDSCAPE & WATERWAYS**

Lancaster, Pa. Today, Lancaster County Commissioners [the Commissioners] voted to approve \$2.8 million of American Rescue Plan Act [ARPA] funding to two key partners who are focused on permanently protecting Lancaster County's landscape, Lancaster Farmland Trust [LFT] and Lancaster Conservancy [the Conservancy].

The projects funded by this one-time investment of ARPA dollars will accelerate the Conservancy's work to acquire more publicly accessible natural lands and LFT's efforts to protect more farms. Both organization's initiatives help clean local waterways; align with Places 2040, the County's long-term comprehensive plan; and make Lancaster County an even more desirable place to live and work.

"Lancaster County's future is at a tipping point," said Phil Wenger, the Conservancy's President. "Amazing towns, beautiful boroughs, and a vibrant Lancaster City all attract people to live here. Add in the proximity to major highway and rail systems, and it creates unchecked development pressure on what is a limited resource – our land. Now is the time to act to save our landscape and quality of life. Lancaster Conservancy and Lancaster Farmland Trust, with our combined 80 plus years of success as nonprofit land trusts, are committed to proactively protecting our farms, our forests, and our waterways for the benefits of our fellow county residents."

Jeff Swinehart, President and CEO of Lancaster Farmland Trust, is grateful to Lancaster County Commissioners Ray D'Agostino, Joshua Parsons, and John Trescot for this tremendous investment and for their vision of utilizing ARPA funds to protect our farmland and waterways for the benefit of the community. "We continue to see the loss of farmland across the county, an ongoing concern of Lancastrians, and the agricultural sector is essential in providing clean water for all to enjoy. The Commissioners' action today will advance the community's desire to keep our beloved viewshed intact and enable our local farm community to thrive by assisting them with the resources necessary to achieve our collective clean water goals. This funding will accelerate our preservation efforts of the vital natural resources of Lancaster County that produce our food, clean our streams and rivers, and recharge our groundwater," said Swinehart.

The investment of \$1.52 million of ARPA funding will allow LFT to preserve 21 critical farms, permanently protecting over 1,500 acres of farmland in Lancaster County. This investment will leverage an additional \$4.91 million in match funding and donated development rights value. Multiple conservation projects from riparian buffer plantings to excluding livestock from streams, will be installed on the protected farms. These projects will improve local waterways, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay, by reducing sediment, nitrogen and phosphates that flow into the county's 1,400 miles of streams. The county is expected to reduce nitrogen in waterways by 11 million pounds annually – with 80% of that to occur on our farms. Funding conservation projects on protected farms will help Lancaster reach its goals and ensures these investments are protected in perpetuity.

"This funding also ensures local food security by protecting agriculture, the foundation of Lancaster County," added Swinehart. "The pandemic led to a resurgence of residents sourcing their food locally as grocery store shelves were empty. The past few years have made it clear that we can continue to expect locally produced food to become more important as we experience disruptions to our national and global food supply chains – like droughts in the west and wars in other countries."

The \$1.3 million in ARPA funding awarded to the Conservancy helps acquire two key parcels adjacent to existing County Trails and Parks. "Increasing the amount of natural lands available for recreation and habitat, makes Lancaster County a very desirable place to live and work," said Wenger. "We hear from employers that access to nature and trails for hiking, biking, and kayaking are essential when attracting talented employees to our community."

\$588,000 will help fund the \$1.7 million acquisition of a 90-acre tract in Elizabeth Township adjacent to Speedwell Forge County Park and Speedwell Forge Lake. This critical forested tract protects a stream that flows into Speedwell Forge Lake, while expanding opportunities for hiking trails. Protecting the Hammer Creek Watershed is a high priority for the State and County and restoration efforts are planned on this tract.

\$731,000 was also awarded to the Conservancy to help acquire a 155-acre nature preserve bisected by the County's Conewago Recreation Trail in Mount Joy Township. The acquisition

and permanent protection of this tract made it possible to proceed with a stream restoration project that Londonderry and Mount Joy Townships have been jointly working on for several years. Rail trail users will be able to see nature and waterway restoration in action as the Conewago Creek is restored.

“The Conservancy is grateful to the Lancaster County Commissioners for investing in preserving our community’s iconic landscape,” says Wenger. “During the initial days of the pandemic, the outdoors were a refuge and critical service used by record numbers, revealing the absolute necessity of protecting and providing more publicly accessible open space. The County Commissioners have answered that demand today with their decision. Residents want trails, they want nature protected, they want clean waterways. Our gratitude is heartfelt.”

“The County Commissioners looked into the future and made a critical decision to invest resources in ways that will impact generations of Lancasterians,” said Wenger and Swinehart jointly. “Protecting farms and expanding publicly accessible natural lands are both important community priorities that provide huge benefit without additional costs to future taxpayers. We have only a short window to act to protect what makes Lancaster so special – our community’s farms, our wooded glens, and the iconic Susquehanna River. We must work together to save the lands we love.”

*To learn more about **Lancaster Conservancy** land protection efforts, hiking trails, educational programming, and volunteer opportunities, please visit: lancasterconservancy.org*

*To learn more about **Lancaster Farmland Trust** and the protection and conservation of Lancaster County’s farmland and water please visit: lancasterfarmlandtrust.org*

###