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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP CREATES MORE THAN 10,000 ACRES OF CONTIGUOUS WILDLIFE HABITAT IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY** *Protection of Roberts Farm Helps Improve Delaware's Air and Water Quality*

**ODESSA, Del.** (Nov. 16, 2015)—One of the state's most rapidly developing areas lies in the heart of the Delaware Bay's fragile coastal zone. Now a significant section of this sensitive ecological region has been conserved thanks to private funding and an exceptional partnership.

A 1,250-acre farm near Odessa has been purchased by [The Conservation Fund](#) and donated to [Delaware Wild Lands](#) (DWL) for permanent protection and management. The entire conservation acquisition was made possible with a grant from [Mt. Cuba Center](#), and creates more than 10,000 acres of contiguous and protected wildlife habitat.

"The Roberts Farm is a key linchpin for wildlife habitat and water quality protection in the upper part of the Delaware Bay because of its large size, important location and careful management," said **Blaine Phillips, Senior Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Regional Director for The Conservation Fund**. "This property has been a priority for protection for over twenty years, and now thanks to the incredible support of Mt Cuba Center, we were able to preserve it forever. Our partnership with Mt. Cuba Center and Delaware Wild Lands brought together the key elements to make sure that the legacy of this family farm will live on."

Known as the Taylors Bridge Roberts Farm, the site was one of the largest unprotected tracts remaining in the coastal zone, featuring freshwater tidal wetlands and remnants of forested coastal plain ponds. DWL will develop a long-term management plan for the property that will include farming, hunting, trapping, wildlife tours and bird walks. School and university groups will visit the property for research and educational opportunities.

"Delaware Wild Lands is pleased to work in partnership with The Conservation Fund and Mt. Cuba Center to permanently protect this high priority land for conservation," said **Kate Hackett, Executive Director of Delaware Wild Lands**. "Many people may not realize how significant the Taylors Bridge area is to conservation history. Protection of the Roberts Farm represents an extension of Delaware Wild Lands' success 50 years ago in preventing the construction of a Shell Oil Refinery in this Bayshore region – an effort that ultimately led to passage of Delaware's Coastal Zone Act of 1971."

“Looking to the future,” Hackett continued, “DWL will support traditional uses of the land that sustained the Roberts Family for generations: plowing agricultural fields and managing hunting and trapping leases. We will also schedule programs for the public to explore the diversity of habitat, natural splendor and iconic beauty of this property.”

Bordered by three waterways, including the state-designated priority Blackbird Creek, the Appoquinimink River and Hangman’s Run, the newly protected Taylors Bridge Roberts Farm supports the health and vitality of the coastal zone. This newly created block of 10,000 acres is comprised of the 5,500-acre Cedar Swamp Wildlife Area and 4,500 acres owned by DWL.

“Conserving open space is critical to maintaining biodiversity and a healthy environment, which is the essence of Mt. Cuba Center’s mission,” said **Ann C. Rose, President of the Board of Mt. Cuba Center**. “Together with the adjacent tracts of protected land, the Roberts Farm property preserves a contiguous, protected corridor along Delaware’s ecologically important coastal zone.”

Owned by the Roberts family for the last 50 years, the property was managed as a working farm with special care for the tidal wetlands, marshes and forests that provide ideal habitat for a variety of species, including bald eagle, osprey, fox, muskrat, otter and shorebirds like the endangered red knot.

“Protection of these 1,250 acres and my family legacy is a remarkable accomplishment for my family and for the future of Delaware,” said **former landowner Chris Roberts**. “For decades, I’ve worked to improve and restore the diversity and quality of wildlife habitat on these lands. I planted dozens of cedar trees along Staves Landing Road that define and protect the interior of the property, refined management of key resources of the property including the 100-acre Big Pond Refuge and kept invasive species and phragmites at bay. I am pleased to know that this property will be forever protected and managed for these purposes.”

The public will be able to experience the Taylors Bridge Roberts Farm at an Open House event in Spring 2016.

***High resolution photographs and additional background materials are available for download at [www.dewildlands.org](http://www.dewildlands.org)***

#### **About Delaware Wild Lands**

Delaware Wild Lands (DWL) is a nonprofit conservation organization founded in 1961. We are the largest not-for-profit non-governmental landowner in Delaware, with significant holdings in all three counties.

We protect and restore Delaware’s important natural areas by purchasing strategic parcels of land. Traditional uses of land, such as hunting, farming, and forestry are integral to our management regime and maintained as important aspects of Delaware’s economy and cultural heritage.

Our organization has played a pivotal role in the permanent protection of more than 31,000 acres throughout Delmarva. Today we own more than 21,000 acres of wetlands, farms and forests that are actively managed for improved wildlife habitat, clean air and pure water. [www.dewildlands.org](http://www.dewildlands.org)

**About The Conservation Fund**

At the Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states to protect more than 7.5 million acres of land since 1985, including more than 18,000 acres of forests, recreational lands, wildlife habitat and cultural resources across Delaware. [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)

**About Mt. Cuba Center**

Mt. Cuba Center is a botanical garden that inspires an appreciation for the beauty and value of native plants and a commitment to protect the environments that sustain them. Over the past 70 years the gardens at Mt. Cuba Center have evolved, transforming fallow cornfields into thriving, ecologically-functional landscapes, thanks to the initiative of Mr. and Mrs. Lammot du Pont Copeland. [www.mtcubacenter.org](http://www.mtcubacenter.org)

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