

Whitman Woods Project



Pledge Form

I (We) pledge the sum of \$ _____ to help an appropriate, fully vetted Conservation Steward (approved by both Camden County Open Space and the Borough of Laurel Springs, New Jersey) acquire and own the 3.75-acre wooded lakefront tract in Laurel Springs, New Jersey (identified as Block 61/Lot 1 & Block 62/Lot 5); protect the woodland habitat and historically significant site from residential development in perpetuity; and manage the site as “Whitman Woods,” a wildlife sanctuary, passive park, outdoor classroom and a living tribute to Poet Walt Whitman, who summered nearby, walked the woods and lakeshore daily and wrote prolifically about the Natural World he encountered in this, his favorite habitat. *(See Project Backstory on page 2)*

The family trust that holds the land is depleted and faces imminent dissolution. Funding “Whitman Woods” is crucial to saving the woodland from development. To facilitate this preservation effort and enlist major donors, it is essential to document your intended grassroots donation via this completed pledge agreement. In addition to gifts of cash, other options, such as securities, life insurance and real estate, are considered viable pledges. *Donations, when executed, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

I (We) understand that all parties are relying upon my (our) pledge to help achieve conservation of the above-described site. Once Whitman Woods Project reaches its minimum funding goal of \$1.2M, a Conservation Steward is designated and acquisition nears completion, I (we) will be notified in writing, and I (we) will send payment in satisfaction of my (our) pledge within 10 business days following such notification to the designated Conservation Steward. If the acquisition is not completed for any reason, my (our) monies will be returned.

By signing below, I (we) acknowledge that we have reviewed the information on this page in full.

Print Name: _____ OR Corporation/Foundation: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Is Signatory a foundation or corporate officer? No Yes Title: _____

Mailing Address (Street or POB): _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

How would you like to be cited in our messaging? _____ Anonymous

Mail to: Whitman Woods Project, c/o NALT, PO Box 467, Chadds Ford, PA 19317 | or pledges@NALT.org

Whitman Woods Project



Backstory

This towering lakefront woodland is a rare remnant of the now near-relic Inner Coastal Plain Forest as it existed in Poet Walt Whitman's day. Bald Eagles again forage and fish daily from the Camden County, New Jersey, site intended to be preserved as "Whitman Woods." Humans seek out this wooded urban oasis for solace, renewal and the pure joy of communing with Nature — basic needs felt even more keenly during the 2020 Pandemic.

Most notable, it's widely acknowledged that Whitman penned much of his powerful, enduring works in what is now the Borough of Laurel Springs, New Jersey, while summering there in his prolific twilight years, writing *Specimen Days* in this locale and drawing inspiration for significant additions to *Leaves of Grass*. He shared the joy he took in walking the banks of Laurel Lake — which he deemed "the prettiest lake in America or Europe" — and the beauty of the surrounding woods and springs in effusive letters written to an international cast of friends. Forging a cultural/conservation Whitman legacy on this enchanting site will pay tribute to the immortal poet whose words so eloquently celebrate Nature.

Funding "Whitman Woods" is crucial. Saving this rare, wooded tract from development in the locale where Whitman famously sought renewal in the embrace of Nature defines the Whitman Woods Project Vision. To succeed, Whitman Woods Project must secure \$1.2 million at minimum to endow the passive park and convey it to an appropriate Conservation Steward to transform, manage and own in perpetuity.

Because there is no formal public lake access to Laurel Lake (which rims three modest boroughs: Laurel Springs, Lindenwold and Stratford), area residents and Whitman pilgrims have considered this private land a park in all but name for nearly 50 years. Finally preserving these 3.75 lakefront acres as a passive park will rectify that deficiency, and provide a permanent, protected sanctuary for local and migrating wildlife, too.

Owned since 1925 by the same family, the land is now held in an irrevocable trust that faces imminent dissolution. To help facilitate its preservation, Chadds Ford, PA-based [North American Land Trust](#) (NALT) is serving as lead project advisor and chief conservation collaborator. The nonprofit has demonstrated a unique ability to creatively rescue and protect Open Space since its 1992 founding. NALT worked with the family to help define the project and develop a site plan distinguished by history, conservation, culture and community. Endowing the land via the private sector and conveying it to an appropriate conservation entity that can steward the "green island" as a passive park in perpetuity are the near-term imperatives.

Thank you for making a PLEDGE toward establishing "Whitman Woods" from the last remnant of undeveloped woodland where Whitman once walked, where 21st-century human visitors are restored and where urban wildlife find sanctuary and sustenance.