

August 18, 2014

TO: Camden County Freeholders

Camden County Parks Division; CCOS Director Jack Sworaski

& Walt Whitman Arts Center

c/o Elizabeth Hanson Kuehner Trust

201 Cedar Avenue

Somerdale, NJ 08083

RE: Passive Open Space Preservation Stewardship

of Block 61, Lot 1 & Block 62, Lot 5, Laurel Springs, NJ

As you know, Walt Whitman is a National treasure. His poetry is legendary. Many 21st-century artists and poets are literally following in his footsteps at Laurel Lake. We hope the Freeholders will help to save the above-cited precious piece of wooded lakefront from development. Residents use it daily as the area's only significant wooded place to commune with "Nature," and my art students (80 in number ranging in age from 10 to 60) draw inspiration from these gorgeous woods and the lovely lake setting.

I've been teaching art for 33 years here and regularly take my students down to this serene spot for landscape and lake painting – it is truly one of the most beautiful green places in South Jersey and it is highly valued by area residents. Many of my former students continue to return here to contemplate Nature, fish or launch a canoe; it's the only place to do so on the entire lake, which is otherwise lined with private homes.

It's highly a valued gem of ancient woods and it continues to be used as Walt Whitman did so long ago -- for the Arts!

Aside from my teaching, I personally seek solace here with my family; I revel in the natural beauty and the wildlife that inhabits it. In the birdsong and springtime violets. And so much more. >

I understand the Walt Whitman Arts Center has stepped forward to be the land's responsible steward. **I am asking the Freeholders to grant WWAC the funding to save the land from development. It could not be a more fitting solution.** To conserve the 3-acre tract in hopes of it being called "Whitman Woods" will be a credit to our county and our state. In addition to my signature, my voting-age Camden County students have signed this letter to express solidarity.

Rebecca Tait
Laurel Springs, NJ