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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**NATURAL LANDS TRUST AND DRWC ANNOUNCE ACQUISITION OF LAND
FOR NEW WATERFRONT TRAIL AND WETLANDS PARK**

\$1.25M grant from DCNR to Natural Lands Trust to acquire waterfront piers and riparian lands on behalf of DRWC

PHILADELPHIA (March 1, 2012) The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has awarded a \$1.25 million grant to Natural Lands Trust on behalf of the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) to acquire a large waterfront site comprised of five acres of land and 11 acres of riparian lands at the end of Pier 70 Boulevard. Acquisition of this land was an essential first step to create the permanent multi-use recreational trail along the river and to create the southern anchor of a new ecological wetlands park, both of which are critical components of DRWC's recently released Master Plan for the Central Delaware.

"This award marks another step on our way to creating the best waterfront in the country, a green, sustainable gem along the river where people live, work and play," said Mayor Michael A. Nutter. "I would like to thank DRWC for collaborating with Natural Lands Trust on this important project. It is only through working with partners that we will continue to build on our successes at the Delaware River waterfront."

In late 2010, DRWC and Natural Lands Trust began collaboration on a joint application to DCNR to acquire this land at the southern end of DRWC's Master Plan project area. The DCNR grant to Natural Lands Trust represents a portion of the property value. The property owners, Delaware Associates, L.P., will contribute a matching amount in the form of a charitable donation. The entire transaction is expected to be finalized in late spring 2012.

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“This is the first of many creative partnerships and multi-partner negotiations using the innovative financing techniques necessary to acquire public spaces along the river, integral to implementation of the Master Plan for the Central Delaware,” said Alan Greenberger, deputy mayor for planning and economic development.

“The acquisition of this major parcel of waterfront land is a very important step in the development of a cohesive waterfront trail,” said Tom Corcoran, president of DRWC. “We are very grateful to Governor Corbett and his administration for supporting this important element of the Master Plan and to the Natural Lands Trust for providing their unique expertise in acquiring private lands for public use.”

“We are thrilled to be partnering with DRWC on a project that will benefit both the environment and city residents,” said Natural Lands Trust president Molly Morrison. “Nearly 60 years ago, at the infancy of our organization, Natural Lands Trust worked to protect a different section of land along the Delaware River—now the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. This project represents a return to the city for us in our land protection work and, as such, has special meaning.”

In a separate award, DCNR granted DRWC \$250,000 toward funding a portion of the design and construction costs for the on-pier improvements for Pier 53 at Washington Avenue Green, including ecological restoration which will serve as the northern boundary of this future wetlands park. These improvements include the construction of a self-supported boardwalk and kayak launch to increase public access to the Delaware River.

“The Central Delaware Advocacy Group is thrilled to hear of these two grant awards,” said Steve Weixler, chair of the Central Delaware Advocacy Group (CDAG). “CDAG has been a constant advocate for increased public access along the Delaware River waterfront, and both of these grants contribute greatly to that goal.”

The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) is a nonprofit corporation organized exclusively for the benefit of the City of Philadelphia and its citizens. DRWC acts as the steward of the Delaware River waterfront to provide a benefit to all of the citizens and visitors of the City.

The fundamental purpose of DRWC is to design, develop and manage the central Delaware River waterfront in Philadelphia between Oregon and Allegheny Avenues. DRWC intends to transform the central Delaware River waterfront into a vibrant destination location for recreational, cultural, and commercial activities for the residents and visitors of Philadelphia. DRWC will serve as a catalyst for high quality investment in public parks, trails, maritime, residential, retail, hotel and other improvements that create a vibrant amenity, extending Philadelphia to the river’s edge.

Natural Lands Trust is the region's largest land conservation organization and is dedicated to protecting the forests, fields, streams, and wetlands that are essential to the sustainability of life in eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. Since its founding, Natural Lands Trust has preserved more than 100,000 acres, including 40 nature preserves totaling nearly 21,000 acres and 19,000 acres on which it holds conservation easements. For more information, visit www.natlands.org.

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