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## *A Call To Action*

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Everyone in Dover and the surrounding towns and rural areas of Kent County is saying the same thing: Our communities are changing, and too quickly. Delaware natives and longtime residents bemoan the traffic, loss of green spaces and a lessening of the area's small-town feel. Even newer residents see changes coming very fast and wonder if the qualities of Kent County that attracted them in the first place can be sustained.

Many people see this change as inevitable; bigger is better and there's no stopping "progress." For others, this change in the character of the community is a serious concern that threatens our very way of life.

A core group of your neighbors and conservation professionals has convened for the purpose of establishing a new conservation organization in Kent County to address these very issues. The ultimate objective of this effort is to develop the tools necessary to preserve the ecological, cultural and economic characteristics of our county.

The Kent County Conservancy is conceived as an all-volunteer, non-profit corporation. The Conservancy will work to acquire land and conservation easements in strategic locations using private market mechanisms and existing tax incentives, working alone or in concert with other community partners. These and other tools of the "land trust" will be available to individuals and corporate land owners who value the lands that they cherish and who share the objectives of the Conservancy. Both present and future generations will be the beneficiaries of these efforts to preserve visible, tangible and living components of our central Delaware heritage.

The Board of Directors of the Kent County Conservancy has adopted the following Mission Statement:

*"The Kent County Conservancy is dedicated to the conservation of agricultural and forest lands, historical and cultural preservation, and natural resource and ecosystem protection in order to improve the economic character and quality of life for all residents."*

The value of preserving properties with natural resource and cultural values has dramatic implications. Imagine a Kent County with sparse, fragmented forests and a frail farm economy; a Kent County with inadequate parks and diminished natural areas; a Kent County without healthy wetlands to support our wildlife populations and maintain our water quality; a Kent County with few historic buildings and properties to remind us of our communities' cultural heritage.

Through the years, governmental agencies have shouldered all of this responsibility. Their successes have been legion but so much remains to be done. A comprehensive collection of federal, state, county and local parks and wildlife areas is the foundation for a system of open spaces and greenways that must continue to grow. State efforts to preserve productive farmland have been very successful but can't keep pace with development, suburban sprawl and rising land values. And, dramatic improvements in land-use policies and practices still leave many critical resources unprotected.

The best efforts of government to create a more Livable Delaware will fall short if individual citizens and organized conservation organizations are not there with their voices, actions and pocketbooks to be partners and to fill the void. Surprisingly, there is not a single conservation organization based in Kent County dedicated to this purpose or its major components. Simply put, an organization with the mission, scope and vision of the Kent County Conservancy is essential.

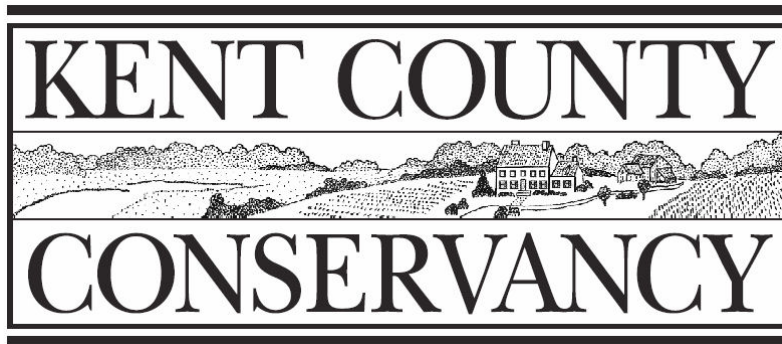
The organizers of the Kent County Conservancy believe there is a choice of futures for us and our neighbors. We have a *vision* of an organization and a community that reflects the best of our citizens and their aspirations for themselves and their posterity:

*The Kent County Conservancy actively preserves the ecological, cultural and economic character of Kent County, Delaware. We seek to accomplish these goals by recruiting respected individuals whose expertise can be utilized to support our goals and values.*

*The Kent County Conservancy's primary focus is to permanently conserve productive agricultural, forested, and environmentally sensitive lands to sustain Kent County's quality of life. We accomplish these objectives by identifying land owners, concerned citizens and dedicated community leaders and providing them with the means of fulfilling their visions.*

*The Kent County Conservancy acts as a partner to help cities, towns, and rural communities to conserve the land and the rich history they have identified as essential to preserving their way of life. We develop these relationships by integrating our organization's efforts with those of community groups, elected officials, state and local agencies and business interests.*

The Kent County Conservancy enlists your support for and participation in this effort. You and many other volunteers, board members, donors, advocates and supporting members can help – and make a measurable difference. Please consider contacting one of the Kent County Conservancy officers or board members (listed on our web site) to find out how you can get involved. Ask your own questions and see for yourself how you can play an important role in this compelling effort to protect the economic, cultural and ecological future of your home, Kent County.



## **VISION/ACTION STATEMENTS**

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