



## **LEADING ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION TO CONDUCT IN-DEPTH STUDY OF PLANNED OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY**

### **FASNY Retains Teatown Lake Reservation as Environmental Consultant for Planned Open Space Conservancy**

**WHITE PLAINS, NY (July 9, 2012)** -- The French-American School of New York (FASNY) said today that it has contracted with one of the region's leading environmental education organizations to conduct an in-depth baseline biodiversity study of the 84 acres of the former Ridgeway County Club that it is dedicating for its Greens to Green Conservancy, permanent publicly accessible open space.

The school, which purchased the 130-acre former private golf club in January 2011, said the study would be conducted by Teatown Lake Reservation Inc., headquartered in Yorktown in northern Westchester, a respected regional environmental research and education center with expertise in assessing natural conditions and species. Teatown's assessment will serve as the foundation for all future management and research decisions relating to the Greens to Green Conservancy at the French-American School of New York in White Plains. The study will commence this month and will assess the site during all four seasons.

The school's concept for the conservancy is to restore the natural character of what for a century had been an intensively managed, artificial golf course environment to a more natural state, which the school refers to as 'undevelopment.' Key aspects of the study will include analysis of habitat and meadow restoration. Teatown will evaluate various strategies applicable to the site including meadow, wetland, pond and forest restoration. Potential short- and long-term agricultural uses for the site will also be evaluated and a protocol for on-site evaluation of meadow restoration practices will be developed.

"We are fortunate that Teatown agreed to serve as the primary consultant on the Greens to Green Conservancy, a significant component of the plan for our school campus and conservancy on the former golf course property," said Mischa Zobotin, Chairman of the School's Board of Trustees. "The members of our Conservancy Task Force spent many months visiting and meeting with the leaders of virtually every environmental education organization, land conservancy, nature center and land trust in the region, including Westchester, adjacent Connecticut and the Lower Hudson Valley. From this very impressive array, Teatown stood out as offering a science-based program that could

provide the kind of in-depth analytic knowledge we need to create this unique conservation opportunity.”

Dianne Barron, Teatown’s Interim Executive Director, said the chance to work with the French-American School of New York at the early stages of the Greens to Green Conservancy was welcomed by the organization and its staff. “To be able to work on a creative plan for the restoration of a golf course back to a natural state comes along very rarely. We applaud the French-American School of New York for its willingness not only to set aside nearly two thirds of the property it acquired as permanent publicly accessible open space, but for its commitment to exploring the unique educational opportunities that it affords. We look forward to a successful collaborative relationship as Greens to Green evolves.”

The site studies will be led by Michael Rubbo, Ph.D., Teatown’s Director of Conservation Science. Rubbo directs Teatown’s scientific research program and has extensive experience as an environmental consultant specializing in biodiversity assessments and conservation planning. He received his Ph.D. in Biology from The Pennsylvania State University and his B.S. from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. He held a post-doctoral appointment at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He has authored numerous articles on ecology and conservation in international scientific journals as well as in the mainstream media.

Through the Greens to Green project, Teatown extends its involvement in White Plains. In partnership with the White Plains Youth Bureau and Kids Excel program, Teatown has worked with 450 White Plains students a year for the past three years, a demonstration of the city’s belief in the impact of environmental education.

John Botti, parent of a student at the school, Trustee, and member of the Conservancy Task Force, said the biodiversity study and restoration analysis are evidence of the school’s commitment to the project and is the next step in developing a management plan for the Conservancy. “A great deal of preliminary study has gone into the Greens to Green concept planning, but at this stage we need to turn to experts to conduct the in-depth evaluation that will provide the baseline upon which a management and stewardship program will be based. The Conservancy will play an integral role in the future educational program of our school as well as providing a significant addition to the open space inventory of White Plains. We have a chance to make this a unique teaching and learning opportunity while at the same time providing a beautiful natural setting for the enjoyment of the public. We want to get it right, and Teatown has the expertise to help assure that we do.”

The school recently launched the GreenstoGreen.org website that provides a comprehensive overview of the concept including maps and renderings. There is also an on-line petition for those who wish to express their support for the project. The City of White Plains is currently reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact Study for the proposed plan to create the French-American School of New York’s campus in White Plains, including the Greens to Green Conservancy.