

For Immediate Release

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**WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY TRANSITIONS LEADERSHIP  
Christopher M. Kocher Named President;  
Thomas J. Kerr Continues In Consulting Capacity**

(Emmaus, PA, September 29, 2006) – The board of directors of Wildlands Conservancy has promoted Christopher M. Kocher to assume the role of president, effective September 30, 2006. Former President Thomas Kerr will continue on as special assistant to the president to help with the transition for the near future.

“In 1987, I was invited to become the chief executive officer of a small, local, nonprofit conservation organization called the Lehigh Valley Conservancy,” Kerr said. “Many goals were set – and surpassed – over the years: Over 45,000 acres of significant open space have been sheltered; hundreds of thousands of children have been challenged and enlightened through our education program; and the quality of the 10-county Lehigh River and its watershed has been materially and positively altered by this organization. I am enormously proud of the achievements the dedicated staff has accomplished. After 20 years, however, it is time for new leadership, and I believe that Chris Kocher will do a superb job.”

The change in leadership marks the conclusion of Kerr's two decades at the helm of Wildlands Conservancy. Kerr joined the Conservancy in 1987 after serving five years as the director of business administration for Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association located in Kempton, PA. During Kerr's service as CEO, Wildlands Conservancy has become one of the most significant conservation organizations in the state and is ranked second in Pennsylvania for total acreage transferred to the government for conservation. Chairman of the board David Shaffer noted that the Conservancy "owes its deepest debt of gratitude to Tom. He will be a tough act to follow."

Kerr believes the "transition of leadership will be seamless," since he and Kocher have worked closely over the last eleven years. Kocher graduated from Susquehanna University in 1995 with a Bachelor of Science degree in geological and environmental sciences, and was hired later that year by Wildlands Conservancy as an environmental scientist. In 1997, he assumed the title of director of the Rivers Program. In 2005, he was named chief program officer, expanding his responsibilities to include day-to-day operations. As president, Kocher, a native of Whitehall, PA, will continue to be responsible for the day-to-day operations and the growth of the Conservancy's four major programs areas: education, land protection, river conservation and trail development. There will be increased emphasis on advancement of the organization to fulfill its vision.

"We all look forward to working with Chris," Shaffer said. "I know he will appreciate the support of the entire board during this transition."

As noted in its updated vision statement, Wildlands Conservancy is dedicated to saving the natural treasures of the Lehigh Valley and the Lehigh River Valley for now and for future generations. Its mission is to preserve, protect, restore and enhance the land, water, ecological and recreational resources of the Lehigh Valley and the Lehigh River Valley.

Established in 1973, the Conservancy collaborates with partnerships throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to achieve its goals. As a non-profit, member-supported organization, the Conservancy has protected more than 45,000 acres of critical farmland and wildlands in eastern Pennsylvania. For more information, please visit [www.wildlandspa.org](http://www.wildlandspa.org).

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