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## **Teatown Announces Plan to Acquire Significant Open Space Parcel**

***59 Acres to Provide Key Link in Regional Open Space Network; Tract Includes 9-Acre Lake and Extensive Wildlife Habitat***

**Town of Yorktown, NY (March 5, 2010)** -- Teatown Lake Reservation, Westchester's leading environmental education center, announced today that it plans to acquire a critically important 72-acre environmentally sensitive tract adjacent to its own lands in the southwest end of the Town of Yorktown. The property includes a pristine 9-acre lake and mature hardwood forest and provides an important link in the extensive system of preserved open space that includes Teatown's 834 acres. The purchase is expected to be finalized in the coming weeks. The price was not disclosed.

Known as *The Croft*, the property is situated directly opposite Teatown's headquarters on Spring Valley Road and provides a crucial link in the biotic corridor that stretches from the Ossining area to the Hudson Highlands of western Putnam County.

Protection of the open space at *The Croft* has long been a top priority for Teatown. The Reservation is at the heart of some 2,000 protected acres of county and state parkland and New York City watershed property. Several regional hiking trails -- the North County Trailway, Briarcliff-Peekskill Trailway and Old Croton Aqueduct Trailway -- traverse the greater Teatown area.

A highlight of *The Croft* is the 9-acre Vernay Lake. This spring-fed lake lies between Shadow Lake upstream to the east and Teatown Lake downstream to the west. This three-lake system drains directly into the Croton Reservoir near Croton Dam.

The property includes two residences. Teatown is submitting a plan to the Town of Yorktown Planning Board to subdivide two lots for the residences (five and eight acres) leaving 59-acres of permanent open space. The minimum lot size in this recognized environmentally sensitive area of Yorktown is five acres.

The open space is adjacent to the County-owned, Teatown-managed Shadow Lake Preserve. This 50-acre tract fronting on Route 134 was acquired by the County in 2004 with Teatown agreeing to assume all management responsibilities for the property. This was the first such public-private partnership by Westchester County with a private environmental group.

At the time Shadow Lake was acquired it was understood that at such time as *The Croft* became available for acquisition, that every effort would be made to acquire and preserve the bulk of the property as additional open space, in the process linking Shadow Lake to Teatown.

The property, which was originally developed in the early 1900s by Arthur Vernay, a prominent antiques dealer, was acquired in 1922 by Gerard Swope, Sr., president of General Electric, who expanded the property into a country estate where he lived until his death in 1957. His heirs subsequently gave the bulk of the estate including the stable complex to create the Teatown Lake Reservation which began in 1963. The 72 acres on the east of Spring Valley Road that included the Swope family home and a farmhouse were sold to Phil E. Gilbert, Jr., who lived at *The Croft* until his death in 2008.

Mr. Gilbert's heirs had hoped for the conservation of the property as part of Teatown. Commenting on the transaction, Mr. Gilbert's son, Clint, speaking for his family said: "We had always wanted to see this unique and beautiful property that my father so deeply loved preserved and protected. Teatown is a highly respected environmental organization and the appropriate successor to our family. We are very pleased that the extensive undeveloped portion of the property along with Vernay Lake will become part of Teatown and the extensive protected area of this special area of Westchester."

Fred Koontz, Executive Director of Teatown said: "This is a critically important addition to our region's open space. *The Croft* has a unique location adjacent to Teatown and Shadow Lake and is a key link in the Croton-to-Highlands Biotic Corridor, an open space priority of New York State. It offers extensive environmental benefits, provides significant protection to our drinking water supply, will add 1.5 miles of new hiking trails, joins the Shadow Lake property

with Teatown and opens new environmental programming opportunities for Teatown and future generations.”

In the coming months Teatown will be working closely with the Town of Yorktown, one of Westchester’s most progressive communities in terms of open space protection, as well as with Westchester County in integrating *The Croft’s* open space into the extensive open space network of both the county and the town. The subdivision proceeding with the Town is an important first step in the overall process of incorporating the new open space into the regional network.

Teatown said it is fortunate to be working in close cooperation with The Open Space Institute (OSI), a leader in the protection and preservation of critically important open space properties throughout the Eastern United States. OSI has been providing consulting services relating to the acquisition and will play a strategic role in planning for the future positioning of the property.

Teatown hopes to complete all aspects of the transaction over the next six months pending the completion of the subdivision proceeding.

#### **About Teatown Lake Reservation**

Teatown Lake Reservation is a nonprofit, environmental organization with an 834-acre nature preserve and education center located in the Lower Hudson Valley in the Towns of Yorktown, Cortlandt, and New Castle, New York. Teatown’s mission is to conserve open space and to educate and involve the regional community in order to sustain the diversity of wildlife, plants and habitats for future generations. Teatown is devoted to conserving biodiversity, teaching ecology and promoting nature-friendly living.

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