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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Whitman Spends Day in Essex County, Stresses Need for Open Space and Historic Restoration

Gov. Christie Whitman today spent the day exploring Essex County, where she spoke to citizens about the importance of preserving open space and farmland.

As part of her day-long visit to various Essex County towns, Gov. Whitman took in the vistas from the Washington Rock Overlook in South Mountain Reservation in Millburn, she spoke to children at Morgan's Farm in Cedar Grove, and she walked the downtown district of Caldwell.

At the Washington Rock Overlook, the Governor said voters have an opportunity in November to continue the long-range view and planning that has resulted in parks and farms being preserved over the decades.

"A century ago, as Henry Ford began to revolutionize travel, some very wise people took the long-range view here on South Mountain. They decided to preserve this area so that generations to come would be able to enjoy the scenery and the solace of these more than 2,000 acres," Gov. Whitman said.

Voters will decide on Nov. 3 whether to approve Gov. Whitman's vision for preserving 1 million acres of open space and farmland over the next decade, as well as preserving the state's historic treasures. Ballot Question No. 1 would dedicate nearly \$100 million of existing sales tax revenue each year for ten years to purchase development rights and open space.

"Again and again, through Green Acres bond issues, New Jersey citizens have voted to support preservation. That money has made a difference across the state," Gov. Whitman said.

In Essex County, Green Acres funds have purchased more than 700 acres and created parks such as Weequahic, West Side, Ivy Hill, and Branch Brook.

Although Green Acres bond referendums have been supported by voters in the past, the Governor's plan would step up the pace of preservation efforts and would create a stable source of funding for open space.

The South Mountain Reservation, the largest facility in the Essex County Parks System, covers 2,048 acres in the Watchung Mountains in West Orange, Maplewood, and Millburn. During the Revolutionary War, Washington Rock served as a lookout to keep the British troops on Staten Island from advancing toward Morristown or Philadelphia.

During a tour of Morgan's Farm in Cedar Grove, Gov. Whitman told the fourth graders who had joined her that one million acres is five times the size of New York City and more than the entire state of Rhode Island.

"If Public Question No. 1 passes, then a century from now, the million acres we save will look like they do today - lush and open, clean and green, beautiful and inviting," Gov. Whitman said at the farm. "There will be acres for parks and acres for trails. There will be acres for keeping the water and air clean. And, there will be hundreds of thousands of acres that will still be farms, growing delicious Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables."

Of the million acres, half would be preserved as farmland, with the state buying development rights from the farmers who would continue to farm.

"That's the kind of New Jersey I want you, and the grandchildren you will have someday, to know," Gov. Whitman told the children. "A New Jersey with fields and farms. A New Jersey with parks. A New Jersey with historic buildings like this one, where you can take a step back into the way life used to be."

Morgan's Farm is the last farm in Cedar Grove. The Lenape first used it as a camp and since then two families, the Canfields and the Morgans, farmed on the land. In 1985, the 14-acre farm was donated to the Township of Cedar Grove, which manages the park. It includes nature trails, a garden, and an ice skating rink. The farmhouse serves as a museum and education center by the Cedar Grove Historical Society. The farm is listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Sites.