

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Governor Visits Morris County Farm; Emphasizes Importance of Open Space Preservation**

Gov. Christie Whitman today toured the Borgenicht Farm in Washington Township, Morris County to stress the importance of preserving New Jersey's dwindling farmland and open space. The 697- acre farm was saved from development with the help of the state's Green Acres, Clean Water, Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 1992.

"The preservation of this land helps preserve the agricultural industry in this area, the community's way of life and aesthetic quality, maintain a solid tax base, and protects the aquifer," the Governor said. "The importance of our open space preservation program should not be underestimated. We have to increase our commitment to farmland and open space preservation before it is too late."

"We must make open space a top priority -- before we develop every inch of available land and lose the 'Garden' in the Garden State," she said. "Currently, we lose 10,000 acres or more a year to development. Once we lose this land, it is gone forever. For all the good that comes from houses and businesses, we must not lose land that is irreplaceable for food production, recreation and other vital purposes."

The State Agriculture Development Committee provided a total of \$4.3 million of the \$10.3 million cost of the purchase of development easements for the Morris County farm.

Morris County's share of the cost of the easements was \$2.8 million and Washington Township contributed \$3.2 million for the purchase of the development easements. The farm is the largest singly owned farm in Long Valley and is centrally located in the Long Valley farmland preservation project area targeted by the County Agriculture Development Board.

The Governor has set a goal of preserving one million acres of open space and farmland over the next ten years. The goal was recommended by the Governor's Council on New Jersey Outdoors.

Legislation has been introduced in the state Legislature that will ask voters to dedicate approximately \$100 million in existing revenues each year for the next ten years for open space and farmland preservation. The funds will pay for preservation programs and finance the debt service on the bonds needed to reach the Governor's one-million acre goal.

Gov. Whitman said open space preservation is beneficial not only environmentally, but economically as well.

As an example, she said, New York City is considering building a water treatment plant at a cost of \$8 billion in capital costs and about \$200 to \$300 million annually for operating costs. She said for a fraction of that cost - about \$1.5 billion - New York could preserve and protect watershed lands, and in the process protect its drinking water.

"It is more cost effective to let nature clean our water than to build expensive treatment plants," the Governor said. "That's just one reason we want to preserve as many acres of our natural land as we can."

Gov. Whitman also announced today that New Jerseyans can receive information about the importance of preserving the state's remaining open space from the New Jersey website at: [www.state.nj.us/events/openspace/](http://www.state.nj.us/events/openspace/).