

## Office of the Governor

### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Governor Whitman Visits Fort Lee Historical Park, Stresses Need for Open Space and Historic Preservation**

Gov. Christie Whitman today toured the Fort Lee Historic Park, where she told visitors that New Jersey must step up the pace of preserving open space, farmland, and the state's historic treasures.

Gov. Whitman said voters in the Nov. 3 election will have an opportunity to preserve historic sites in New Jersey, as well as 1 million acres of open space and farmland, by constitutionally dedicating a stable source of funding for preservation.

"Fort Lee Historic Park gives us a rare opportunity to experience what New Jersey was like when George Washington was battling the British for control of the Hudson Valley - indeed for control of our new nation," Gov. Whitman said. "It is important to preserve our history, which helps us understand our heritage and gives us pride in our state."

The commission's long-standing commitment to the preservation of our national and historic resources was visionary. Today, almost 100 years after the Palisades Interstate Park Commission was formed, the citizens of New Jersey have the opportunity to do something just as visionary," Gov. Whitman said.

The Governor's plan for New Jersey would leave 1 million acres for development, but would use existing state revenue to preserve the other 1 million acres for farmland, open space, greenways, and watershed protection. It would also preserve historic sites throughout the state.

Of the state's nearly five million acres of total land, two million are already developed and one million acres are forever preserved as open space and farmland. If approved by voters, the referendum would result in two-fifths of the state's land being preserved as open space or farmland.

"To put this into perspective, one million acres is five times the size of New York City. Just as important, it is half the available land left in New Jersey," Gov. Whitman said. "Currently in New Jersey, we lose 10,000 acres of open space every year. If we don't act quickly to save some of this land, the decision will be made for us."

The Governor said the one million acres is needed to preserve our water supply and clean our air, protect farming as a viable industry, and preserve the character of the Garden State for future generations."

Created in 1900, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission acquires and preserves shorelines and cliffs in New Jersey and New York. It owns more than 81,000 acres in Bergen County as well as the New York counties of Rockland, Orange, Ulster, and Sullivan. In New Jersey, 2,500 acres have been preserved. The commission is funded through appropriations from the two states and from private contributions.

The 33-acre Fort Lee Historic Park features nature trails, reconstructed gun batteries, an authentic 18th century soldiers' hut, and a visitors center with exhibits and films. In addition, overlooks from the park offer stunning views of the George Washington Bridge, the Hudson River, and the New York skyline.