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RELEASE: October 16, 1998

NEWS RELEASE

Governor's Weekly Radio Message Addresses Farmland Preservation

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week Gov. Whitman discusses the importance of agriculture to New Jersey's character and economy. Productive farms cover about 20 percent of the state's land and produce more than 100 different kinds of fruits and vegetables. The farming industry, however, faces a real threat from development. More than half of New Jersey's farmland has disappeared since 1950. Voters will be asked to approve Public Question Number 1 on the ballot this November, which will permanently set aside \$98 million in the state budget each year for open space, farmland, and historic preservation. Without increasing a single statewide tax, these funds will allow us to reach the Governor's goal to preserve 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next decade. One half of the total acres preserved will be farmland.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

Governor's Weekly Radio Message October 16, 1998 Farmland Preservation

I grew up on a farm. There once was a day, not that long ago, when a lot of New Jersey citizens could say the same thing. We are, after all, the Garden State, and agriculture has always been an essential part of our state's character and economy.

Even though fewer and fewer New Jerseyans live on farms, agriculture remains important to us all. Productive farms cover about 20 percent of our land. Our more than 9,000 farms generated cash receipts totaling nearly \$800 million last year - part of a multi-billion dollar food industry in our state.

Many of these farms produce more than 100 different kinds of Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables. In fact, New Jersey is one of America's top producers of cranberries, blueberries, peaches, cucumbers, sweet corn, tomatoes, and eggplant. And, of course, we also have thriving horse farms, dairy farms, sod farms, and Christmas tree farms.

But the farming industry in New Jersey faces a real threat - not blight or drought but development. So much of the new office parks, shopping centers, and housing complexes that have risen up on the New Jersey landscape have been built on former farms. Why? Because farmland offers wide open acres that are easy to clear and in attractive areas of the state.

But developing farms means losing that farmland forever. It also creates a need for infrastructure that wasn't needed before, such as more roads, more sewers, and new schools. Just as important, it shrinks this vital industry.

More than half of all our farmland has disappeared since 1950. The Department of Agriculture underscored the urgency of farmland preservation by stating that New Jersey needs to save at least another 500,000 acres to keep farming as a viable industry in the Garden State.

We have to support our farming heritage. We have to keep the Garden in the Garden State. I hope you will agree, and I ask for your help.

On the ballot this November, voters will be asked to approve Public Question Number 1, which would set aside \$98 million in the State budget each year for the next 10 years, for open space, farmland, and historic preservation.

Without increasing a single statewide tax, these funds will allow us to reach the goal I set for New Jersey: namely, to preserve for all time 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next decade.

Fully 500,000 acres - or one-half of the total - will be farmland forever. That will be good for farming, but it will also be good for the way we continue to develop our state.

In setting aside a million acres for preservation, we are also allowing development to continue in other areas of our state. And that's important. Thoughtful, intelligent development is healthy for our economy. In fact, I hope we can see more development in our cities and towns that already have the infrastructure to support those businesses and homes.

In the coming days, as you enjoy Jersey Fresh produce on your dinner table, or decorate your front porch with a Jersey Fresh pumpkin, remember: you don't have to grow up on a farm to appreciate all that farms mean to New Jersey.

Together, we can preserve our farming heritage. Together, we can keep the Garden in the Garden State.