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NEWS RELEASE

Governor Whitman Visits Bergen County, Presents Checks for Preservation of Farmland and Open Space

Gov. Christie Whitman today presented a mock check representing \$5.7 million for open space preservation projects in the Northeast region of New Jersey which will be funded this fiscal year. The funds are part of the first \$90 million appropriated for the Governor's plan to preserve 1 million acres of land over the next 10 years.

"Yesterday, I signed into law historic legislation to undertake a land preservation program unprecedented in its size and scope," said Gov. Christie Whitman. "Today, I am pleased to present these checks that will preserve precious land, saving it forever from development."

Last fall, voters overwhelmingly approved a plan to constitutionally-dedicate \$98 million each year to preserve 1 million acres of farmland and open space and historic sites statewide in the next decade. The legislation authorizes the issuance of up to \$1 billion in revenue bonds.

The Governor's preservation program, which will eventually lead to the permanent preservation of 40 percent of the state's land mass, is already considered a national model for providing a stable source of funding for preservation.

The legislation signed Wednesday by Gov. Whitman establishes the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT), a nine member board that will approve projects submitted by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), at least twice a year.

The bill allows projects funded under the Trust Fund to begin immediately by allowing \$90 million to be appropriated through the appropriations act for FY 2000. This will appropriate money for eligible projects prior to the establishment of the GSPT which is expected to be operational in the fall of this year.

"Today is the first day of the first year of this remarkable effort," Gov. Whitman said. "I want to start it out right by presenting these checks to show the commitment we have made in this budget to preservation in this part of the state."

In addition to a \$5.7 million check representing projects that will be undertaken in the Highlands Greenway and Ramapo Lake Area, Gov. Whitman presented a check for \$128,000 to Maywood Borough Mayor Thomas Murphy for improvements at Duvier Park, where the Governor visited today.

"These checks aren't just a matter of dollars and cents. They are a down payment on the kind of New Jersey we want to pass on to our children and grandchildren. They honor the beauty of our past by preserving it for the future," the Governor said. "And, they are one more way we are making New Jersey the best place to live in America."

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**The following projects will be funded in Fiscal Year 2000
from the Garden State Preservation Trust**

Project	Location	Grant Amount
Passaic River Historic Park	Garfield	\$600,000
Park Acquisition	Montvale	\$1 million
Duvier Park Improvement	Maywood	\$128,000
Highlands Greenway	Parts of Bergen, Morris Passaic, and Sussex County	\$2.5 million
Ramapo Natural Area	Passaic, and Sussex County Parts of Bergen and Passaic County	\$1.5 million
Total		\$5.728 million

