

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor Whitman Recognized for her Efforts to Keep New Jersey Green; Presented Leadership Award by The Nature Conservancy**

Gov. Christie Whitman today was awarded the "Conservation Leadership in Government Award" by The Nature Conservancy for her commitment to preserve New Jersey's open space. The award recognizes a person in the public arena who is ambitious and innovative in his or her attempt to set aside public money for the protection of open space.

"By championing the preservation of New Jersey's open space, Gov. Whitman has demonstrated that states can play a vital role in protecting their remaining natural resources," said John C. Sawhill, President and CEO of the Nature Conservancy. "She has proven herself as a forward-thinking conservation leader who recognizes that preserving our nation's natural heritage cannot be achieved through private efforts alone."

The leadership award recognizes a person who serves as a role model and exhibits a bold vision and broad initiative to conserve and protect land for the public. In addition, the award is given to someone who makes a significant effort to dedicate public funding for the purpose of land preservation. The award nominee must also implement a program that will be a model for other regions.

"Thanks to the Governor's vision and commitment to improving the quality of life in New Jersey, one million acres of open space, parks, farmland, and historic sites will be preserved for future generations to enjoy," said Michael Catania, Executive Director of the Nature Conservancy's New Jersey chapter.

The Governor said she hopes the overwhelming support for open space preservation in New Jersey encourages other states in their own preservation efforts. The Nature Conservancy presented the award to the Governor at its international headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

The Nature Conservancy is a private, international, non-profit organization established in 1951 to preserve the world's natural resources. The Conservancy and its more than 900,000 members have protected more than 10 million acres in the United States and over 55 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada, Asia and the Pacific.

The Governor's speech is attached.

**REMARKS OF GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN  
ADDRESS TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1999**

Thank you, Michael (Catania), for that introduction. It is a pleasure to be here. And it is an honor to accept this award.

Before I begin, I would like to thank everyone at The Nature Conservancy for the work you've done to help preserve our environment.

The Nature Conservancy has been a leader in helping our nation face the reality that we cannot go on taking our natural resources for granted.

My state is facing that reality -- some experts believe New Jersey could become the first state in the nation to run out of developable land.

This is not surprising when you consider that although New Jersey ranks 9th in terms of population, our largest city, Newark, ranks only 63rd in terms of population. The reality is that sprawl is settling in over our open space.

As one of the first industrialized states and as the most densely populated, we are also one of the first to get the bill for a century of explosive growth.

In New Jersey, we've paid the price in lost habitat and in paved farmland. Too often, what was a forest three decades ago - or even three years ago - is now a shopping center or housing development or an office building.

People are living farther out from their workplaces and, as a result, our roads are becoming more congested. Sprawl is creating traffic jams that add frustration to people's lives and pollution to our air.

However, the frustration over our changing landscape did give us something positive: a mandate from the people of my state to take action.

In New Jersey, there was a consensus among families, environmentalists, and businesses that something had to be done - and done quickly -- to save land and encourage more responsible planning.

I felt the same sense of urgency, and working with the State Legislature, we placed a statewide proposal on the New Jersey ballot which asked voters to save an additional one million acres of open space and farmland over the next decade.

I am proud that our ballot question passed by a margin of 2- 1.

What's more, voters also supported 45 local ballot questions to dedicate local taxes for open space preservation. Of all the land preservation questions before American voters last year, nearly half of them were New Jersey state, county, and local initiatives. As a result, 16 of the 21 counties in New Jersey now have voter-approved open space funds, as well as 92 of our municipalities.

One thing was made abundantly clear: voters in New Jersey recognize the need to act now to preserve the environment and protect the quality of life for future generations.

Another thing that was clear was how much we owe to nonprofit groups, like The Nature Conservancy, for getting the message out to voters and helping us get our open space initiative passed. In particular, I want to thank Mike Catania, who co-

chaired the get- out-the-vote coalition, and Maureen Ogden, who headed the advisory council that made the million-acre recommendation two years ago.

Today, New Jersey is well on its way to an historic achievement for open space -- saving that million acres with a permanent source of funding.

Of the land preserved, one-half will be farmland. Saving our remaining farmland is crucial for both the survival of New Jersey's agricultural industry and the preservation of habitat.

The importance of nonprofit groups to conservation efforts like this cannot be overestimated. Such groups are in a unique position to work with the public and private sectors.

I look forward to working with nonprofit environmental groups, such as The Nature Conservancy, as we begin the hard work of meeting our million-acre goal.

Before we can purchase land or development rights, we have to identify the land that is most suitable for preservation. Our state plan is a good start.

We are also working with all of our State Agencies to identify vacant state-owned land that could be deed-restricted.

What's more, I am working with the State Legislature to increase the incentives for individuals to donate land for preservation.

I believe nonprofit groups will have an important role to play in helping to identify land available for preservation and land that may be donated. And I look forward to working with nonprofit groups to find the acres that make the most sense to save.

We have already demonstrated our ability to work together effectively. The Nature Conservancy has already safeguarded more than 40,000 acres in my state.

I hope to do even more to make it easier for our nonprofit organizations to save land and create parks. Currently, we are waiting to hear if the New Jersey State Legislature approves our plan to provide matching grants to qualifying nonprofit organizations to acquire and develop lands for conservation or recreation purposes.

However, conservation is not just about buying land or development rights. It is also about responsible management of the land that has been saved.

That is another area where our nonprofit corporations are a tremendous resource. The efforts of groups like The Nature Conservancy in the area of conservation science contribute to our knowledge of our fragile habitats. And the more we know about our natural resources the better we can protect our environment.

There is no doubt, as we approach the 21st century, that protecting our environment has become a primary concern.

Today, 46 states, including New Jersey, have major land acquisition and conservation programs.

Here in Washington, both the White House and Congress are showing interest in land preservation.

As the federal government looks to reauthorize major funding for land and water conservation, I urge you to support efforts that complement state plans to save land.

At the same time, I believe that prescriptive federal requirements or a redirection of money from other critical state programs would not be helpful, and may even slow down state momentum for saving land -- and preserving our environment is our critical objective.

One citizen put it best when he wrote in a letter to me: "We must preserve what is left of open space in New Jersey. As we close in on the millennium, this may be this generation's defining moment."

I think that he is right - the momentum is there to make a difference.

I hope the overwhelming voter support for open space preservation in New Jersey will encourage other states in their own land preservation efforts.

That's what conferences like this are about: learning from each other and working toward our common goal of a healthy environment.

If you've been following the debate over what to call the first decade of the 21st century some have suggested "the naughts" others stand behind "decade one". I have one more suggestion to add. I think we should refer to that decade as "the conservation decade" because it is the decade we will fulfill our legacy of leaving a cleaner planet to future generations.

Again, I look want to thank The Nature Conservancy for the work you have done to protect our open space. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you.

Now I would like to take any questions.

### **New Jersey Gov. Christie Whitman's Accomplishments for the Environment**

**Stable Source of Funding for Open Space, Farmland, and Historic Preservation** - Hailed as one of the most aggressive conservation efforts in the nation, Gov. Whitman's open space plan will preserve one million acres of farmland and open space for recreation and protecting the environment. Combined with the 1 million acres already preserved through the Green Acres and Farmland Preservation program, the initiative will result in the preservation of more than 40 percent of the total land in the Garden State. In a state-wide referendum, New Jersey voters overwhelmingly approved of a permanent, stable source of funding for natural resource, farmland, and historic site preservation efforts.

**State Development and Redevelopment Plan** -The State Plan has been energized by Gov. Whitman, who made it a priority for all state agencies to work

toward implementing development and conservation according to the guidelines of the plan. The State Plan is a blueprint for economic growth and development, balanced with conservation and environmental protection needs.

**Sterling Forest** - Legislation was signed providing \$10 million to assist in the purchase of Sterling Forest, almost 20,000 acres of forest on the New Jersey and New York border. The forest protects the state's water supply and preserves a natural and recreational resource.

**Habitat Conservation** -- The Landscape Project, a nationally- recognized and innovative approach to conserving habitats, was used to complete a major environmental inventory of the Highlands. The Landscape Project methodology is to determine rare and priority species, conduct intensive surveys for these target species in previously unsurveyed areas and produce precise GIS (Geographic Information System) maps of rare species populations and critical areas.

**Farmland Preservation Legislation** - Three bills appropriating \$22.5 million in farmland preservation bond monies for farmland preservation, soil and water conservation, and program implementation costs were passed during the Whitman administration. The legislation also approves funding eligibility of certain farmland preservation projects across the state.

**Open Space Preservation Program** - As part of her inaugural promise to preserve 300,000 acres of land in the next four years and one million acres in the next decade, the Governor's Fiscal Year 1999 budget appropriated \$50 million to provide grants for approved preservation projects.