

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: July 8, 1999

Governor Whitman Addresses Summit on Land and Water Conservation

Gov. Christie Whitman today told the Land and Water Conservation Fund Summit that restoring statewide federal funding is key to keeping the Garden State in the forefront of land preservation efforts.

The Governor last week signed the Garden State Preservation Act, which will save from development 1 million acres of open space and farmland over the next decade. Considered one of the most aggressive land preservation programs in the nation, the program is already a national model.

The Governor told the conference that despite the commitment by the state and its citizens, land preservation efforts in New Jersey are hampered by the federal government's decision to stop the flow of conservation funds to the states.

"Restoring the stateside funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund would help New Jersey meet our million-acre goal. It would also help us to acquire lands here in the Garden State that are truly of national significance...like the Pinelands, the Highlands, and our precious coastal areas," Gov. Whitman said.

"It would help us to continue developing urban waterfront parks, a vital part of restoring our cities to greatness. And New Jersey's growing partnership in preservation with local governments and nonprofit agencies would benefit tremendously from a restored stateside allocation," she added.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, created in 1964, uses revenues from offshore oil and gas receipts for the purchase of parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and open space.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Summit, held at the State Museum in Trenton, was hosted by Americans for Our Heritage and Recreation and the Governor's Council on New Jersey Outdoors.

A text of the Governor's remarks is attached.

**REMARKS OF
GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN
LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND SUMMIT
NJ STATE MUSEUM
THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1999**

Thank you, Mike (Catania).

I am very pleased to be here today. In this room are the faces behind the news. When the headlines in the New York Times, or the Trenton Times, say: "New Jersey Dedicates More Than \$1 Billion to Land Preservation," they are talking about all of you.

You made it happen. Your commitment to New Jersey's future led to a landmark bill - the Garden State Preservation Trust Act - which I signed last week. This new law embraces open space and farmland preservation, protects our historic treasures, and enhances the quality of life in our urban areas through park development.

With this legislation, we will preserve our water supply and clean our air. More people will enjoy parks, go fishing or hiking. Our farming industry will be stronger, and our state will be more attractive to business investors and tourists alike.

Of all the bills I have signed as Governor of this great state, this is the most lasting for the future. Because the land we save through the Preservation Trust Act is going to be that way forever.

It is my hope that many years from now, children will look back on 1999 and say that we knew what we were doing and that we gave them a great gift.

We, the people of New Jersey, have used our collective wisdom to choose to voluntarily preserve 40 percent of our land by the year 2010.

Of course, the Garden State has a national reputation for making consistent and aggressive efforts to preserve and protect its natural resources. Between 1961 and 1995, our voters approved bond issues totaling more than \$1.4 billion dollars to acquire 390,000 acres of open space, preserve historic sites, and develop parks.

We added to our reputation last November with the overwhelming voter approval of the one billion open space plan.

But national reputations are earned the hard way - through good old-fashioned hard work and a lot of perseverance.

The kind of hard work and perseverance personified by Maureen Ogden and Helen Fenske. Years before anyone else took up the charge, Maureen and Helen took it as their responsibility to push for preserving open space.

Like voices in the wilderness, they kept making the argument that we were losing open lands to office parks, housing complexes, and shopping centers, and that we needed to do something to save our state.

And, of course, all of the groups represented here today have persisted in driving this message home to all our citizens.

But the struggle is never over. As Margaret Thatcher said: "You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."

Today, we continue the fight to revitalize the federal portion of open space partnership, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or what's been called the

"cornerstone of American conservation and recreation:"

Our citizens have enjoyed tremendous benefits from LWCF, and from the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program. Since 1965, these programs have provided New Jersey with over \$145 million in matching funds to acquire open space and develop recreation facilities and urban parks.

For example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund supported the first county park to open in Hudson County in 80 years. It also helped us add nearly 650 acres of land to Jenny Jump State Forest, and develop Liberty State Park, one of our state's most culturally and historically significant attractions.

Clearly, we can make preserving our open spaces a priority, but the need to preserve land exceeds the supply of state and local funds.

Restoring the stateside funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund would help New Jersey meet our million-acre goal. It would also help us to acquire lands here in the Garden State that are truly of national significance...like the Pinelands, the Highlands, and our precious coastal areas.

It would help us to continue developing urban waterfront parks, a vital part of restoring our cities to greatness. And New Jersey's growing partnership in preservation with local governments and nonprofit agencies would benefit tremendously from a restored stateside allocation.

Until 1995, we could also count on the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program for the kind of vital land acquisition and park development that spurs revitalization efforts and new economic development in our cities and older towns.

Combined with New Jersey's smart growth strategic land acquisitions, these funds encouraged development and ensured a higher quality of life in our urban areas.

In April, I testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. I spoke about our accomplishments in preserving open space here in New Jersey. I stressed that States and local governments are leading the way in the preservation of land and natural resources, and that we welcome federal efforts that build on and complement what we are already doing are welcome.

The committee is considering various legislative proposals to direct \$2 billion of offshore oil and gas drilling royalties - currently used to offset the federal budget - to fund a variety of state and federal conservation programs.

New Jersey's share of these funds could be as high as \$40 million - money that we could use to protect our shoreline, reduce pollution, preserve precious open land, increase recreational opportunities, and maintain wildlife.

I believe that since Outer Continental Shelf revenues come from a nonrenewable source, it makes sense to dedicate them to natural resource conservation rather than dispersing them for general government purposes.

Passing federal legislation will require a shift in the budgets of other federal programs. It is important that funds provided to states under this legislation, not come at the expense of other federally supported state programs.

State and local governments need maximum flexibility in determining how to invest these funds. In this way, federal resources can be tailored to complement state plans, priorities, and resources.

And that is why we are here today - to further discuss what we think are the priorities for New Jersey. Those decisions should rightly be made here, and not by the federal government in Washington.

We're doing our part in New Jersey. Now it's time for the federal government to rejoin our partnership by restoring state and local funds from the LWCF.

You can take great pride in your role in making New Jersey first in the nation in preserving open space. Campaigns, like the one you initiated, have started taking place across the country. New Jersey's commitment to open space protection has helped increase awareness for environmental concerns throughout the country.

Given your record of accomplishment of perseverance in this pursuit, I know we will succeed.

Thank you for all you've done. Let's continue the good fight.

