



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

PO BOX 004  
CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor  
Gene Herman  
(609) 777-2600

TRENTON, NJ 08625  
RELEASE: October 10, 1997



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### GOV. CHRISTIE WHITMAN SIGNS BILL PROVIDING \$4.9 MILLION FOR WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND POLLUTION CONTROL

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed the Watershed Protection and Management Act of 1997 which establishes a watershed-based approach to water quality management and pollution control. The bill also provides for the first annual appropriation of \$4.9 million to implement the watershed management program.

"This legislation shows the progress we have made in cleaning New Jersey's waterways," Whitman said. "We are now ready to move away from concentrating solely on point-source pollution, such as discharge pipes, to looking at entire watersheds."

"Having had such success in addressing pollution at its direct source, we can begin addressing more fully pollution coming from non-point sources, such as stormwater runoff," the Governor said. "Today, we are taking the next logical step in our effort to make New Jersey's waters as clean as possible."

The bill, S-1776, creates a Watershed Management Fund as a nonlapsing revolving fund in the Department of Environmental Protection. The fund will be used for water quality point and nonpoint source monitoring, watershed-based water resource planning and management and nonpoint source pollution prevention projects.

Monies for the fund will come from the dedication of one-sixth of the 4 percent corporate business tax. Last November voters supported a constitutional amendment to dedicate a portion of the corporate business tax to help preserve and protect the environment. The Watershed Management Fund will be credited annually with funds appropriated from the corporate business tax.

The bill also appropriates \$4.9 million in corporate business tax funds dedicated in Fiscal Year 1997.

The bill allows the establishment of watershed management groups whose purpose is to improve the conditions or prevent further degradation of a watershed or watersheds. A watershed management group may include local and county government officials, and a representative of water purveyors, wastewater utilities or authorities, the business community, the development community and the environmental community.

Officials of regional planning agencies located within a watershed management area may also be included in watershed management groups and would be entitled to loans and grants.

The legislation, sponsored by Senators John O. Bennett (R- Monmouth) and John H. Adler (D-Camden) and Assembly Members Steve Corodemus (R-Monmouth) Anthony R. Bucco (R-Morris), is the latest action by taken by Whitman to protect the environment.

The Governor's environmental initiatives include:

- Preserving more than 80,000 acres of open space through the Green Acres programs.
- Blocking New York's attempt to dump raw sewage in New Jersey waterways, threatening beaches and shellfish beds.
- Leading the fight in Congress and working with New York State to preserve over 15,000 acres of woodlands in Sterling Forest and signing legislation to spend \$10 million to help buy Sterling Forest, a source of clean water for New Jersey residents.
- Preserving over 16,000 acres of farmland through the Farmland Preservation Program.
- Signing a comprehensive management plan with New York State and the federal Environmental Protection Agency for the New York/New Jersey harbor estuary which will restore and protect the coastal waters from Cape May to Long Island.
- Supporting federal tougher federal air pollution standards to reduce the amount of air pollution blowing into New Jersey from Midwestern States which elevates pollution levels in the state.

In addition, due to improved water quality, New Jersey early next year will open nearly 3,000 additional acres of state waters for shellfish harvesting. The proposed reclassification will bring the total acreage available for shellfishing to more than 584,000, or 87 percent of the state's coastal waters.

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