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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR HERALDS SUCCESS OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION, CITES NEED FOR EXPANDED EFFORTS IN MERCER COUNTY AND ACROSS NJ

Gov. Christie Whitman today visited the Johnson Farm in Lawrence Township to highlight the property as an example of the benefits that can be reaped through the protection of farmland and open land in Mercer County and across the Garden State.

"Today I am proud to visit land that has been preserved under our Farmland Preservation Program - land that will be preserved for our future generations," said Gov. Whitman. "The preservation of farms and undeveloped land today will ensure that our grandchildren will have cleaner air and water and will be able to enjoy the fruits of our farmland for many years to come."

"But we must recognize the urgent need to continue our efforts. Owners of 10 farms in Mercer County, covering more than 500 acres, would apply for preservation grants if the money were available. But there isn't enough to go around," said Gov. Whitman. "That is why it is so important that we increase our commitment to preservation, before it's too late."

"New Jerseyans value our open space where they can walk, hike and enjoy nature," said Gov. Whitman. "I am proud of New Jersey's commitment to open space, proud that together we have preserved more than 115,000 acres over the last four years. Together, we will continue that commitment and continue to invest in the future."

Gov. Whitman has pledged to protect 300,000 acres of land during her second term and set a goal for New Jersey to preserve one million acres in the next ten years. The Governor is currently working with the Legislature to develop a permanent and stable source of funding to support her open space preservation goals and all future preservation projects.

The Governor toured Johnson Farm, a 66-acre farm that is used for growing hay, oat grain and soybean, with owners David and Elizabeth Johnson. The development rights on the farm were purchased on June 4 through a combination of state and Mercer County funds.

"Here in New Jersey we appreciate the environmental and economic benefits that our agriculture industry offers to us and our families," NJ Agriculture Secretary Art Brown Jr. noted. "Our Farmland Preservation Program has always enjoyed strong support from urban, suburban and rural New Jerseyans who all understand the importance of our effort to preserve valuable, irreplaceable farmland."

Gov. Whitman has demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental protection and the preservation of open space throughout her administration. She has approved the preservation of more than 115,000 acres of open space. The Whitman Administration has also permanently preserved more than 23,500 acres of farmland, more than any governor in New Jersey during a four year period. Gov. Whitman supported the 1995 Green Acres Bond Act that provided \$340 million to preserve open space, farmland and coastal and inland flood plains.