

## **OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

#### **Governor's Weekly Radio Message**

Governor Christie Whitman's radio message this week highlights the importance of open space in ensuring a high quality of life and her continuing commitment to preserving open space in New Jersey.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available tonight, beginning at 7 p.m., and will run through the weekend.

Governor's Weekly Radio Message  
February 13, 1998

Hello, this is Christie Whitman.

Since this is Valentine's Day weekend, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my love for the great outdoors. To ensure the high quality of life that we're all used to in the Garden State, we must preserve more of our open space and farmland.

New Jersey has about 5 million acres. Roughly 3 million of them have been either developed or preserved. That leaves 2 million acres of land that could still go either way.

As much as we gain from new homes and new businesses, we lose out when development occurs haphazardly. Suburban sprawl eats away at our precious open space and clogs our roads. We need open space to help clean our air and water, put food on our tables, and provide opportunities for recreation and tourism.

For the sake of our families today and tomorrow, we need to make sure that at least half of New Jersey's remaining land continues to be undeveloped.

I announced last month at my inauguration a goal of preserving 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next decade. I pledged to work on acquiring at least 300,000 of those acres during my administration.

Last Tuesday at my Budget Address, I made a downpayment on this pledge.

My proposed budget for next year includes funds to begin our efforts to preserve 300,000 acres of open space and farmland over the next four years.

I am committed to finding a stable source of funding this year to achieve this goal. But, as I said Tuesday, I also know that with every day that passes, opportunities are lost. We have to begin saving land now.

Over the past several years, voters in 13 counties and 53 municipalities have approved a dedicated source of property tax funding to preserve open space. I applaud their commitment and want to support their efforts.

My new budget includes a new \$50 million program to match their funds and to purchase more open space and farmland in the coming fiscal year.

This funding will double the effectiveness of these local and county efforts while we work to establish a stable source of funding. It will guarantee that the grass is always green in the Garden State.

Preserving this land may not be easy, but I know you agree that it needs to be done. You, the voters of New Jersey, have shown how much you care about open space. Since 1961, every time a Green Acres bond issue has appeared on the ballot, you have approved it by a large margin.

Through Green Acres and our farmland preservation program, we've saved 115,000 acres in the past four years alone. That's a great achievement. But now it's time to kick into high gear. The longer we wait, the less land there is to save. We need to pick up the pace of preservation before it's too late.

This year for Valentine's Day, let's purchase something with more than sentimental value. Candy and flowers are nice, but land is forever.

Thank you, and have a good week.

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