

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR TOURS SAW MILL TRAIL; SIGNS AGREEMENT FOR HACKENSACK MEADOWLANDS COMMISSION TO MANAGE TIDAL WETLANDS

Gov. Christie Whitman today demonstrated her commitment to open space preservation when she toured the Saw Mill Trail portion of the Meadows Path in Lyndhurst. The Meadows Path is a 21-mile pedestrian trail that will span the length of the Hackensack Meadowlands District from Little Ferry to Kearny.

The Governor also signed the Bureau of Tidelands Riparian Management Rights Agreement. The agreement will allow the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission (HMDC) to manage 1,563 additional acres of tidal wetlands in Lyndhurst, North Arlington and Kearny.

"The Meadows Path will allow people to better appreciate the delicate wetlands environment," Gov. Whitman said. "It will alert people to the need for protecting our environment and cleaning up areas that have suffered environmental abuse."

"The Bureau of Tidelands Riparian Rights Agreement will enable the HMDC to manage wetlands that are crucial to keeping our water clean," she said.

"As the country's most densely populated state, New Jersey has a pressing need to preserve its natural resources," the Governor said. "We need wildlife refuges, parks, and trails like the Meadows Path, so that we can hike or walk or just enjoy the outdoors."

Gov. Whitman said the Saw Mill Trail is a great example of how much can be achieved when the public and private sectors work together. The Saw Mill Trail is being partially constructed on a PSE& G service road and the Meadows Path spans 62 individual properties with 18 different ownerships, necessitating the cooperation and commitment of the owners, public utilities, Meadowlands District municipalities, as well as various federal and state regulatory agencies.

Gov. Whitman said approval of Public Question No. 1, which will appear on the ballot in next Tuesday's election, is crucial to the state's efforts to preserve open space. Approval of Public Question No. 1 will ensure a stable funding level -- \$98 million annually for ten years - for preserving one million acres of open space and farmland and for historic preservation projects throughout New Jersey.

The Governor said her goal is to preserve one million acres of open space over the next ten years, including 500,000 acres of farmland, 200,000 acres for public recreation, 200,000 acres for greenways along streams and trails and 100,000 acres for watershed protection.

The 5.1-mile Saw Mill Trail will provide the only pedestrian link from the Richard W. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst to nature trails planned for the Saw Mill Creek Wildlife Management area in Kearny.

Saw Mill Trail is one of four segments of the Meadows Trail which will link existing parks, wilderness areas, and cultural resources and serve as a dedicated pedestrian artery through nine of the 14 Meadowlands District municipalities. When complete, the Meadows Trail will offer direct access to more than 500,000 people living and working in the Meadowlands District.

