

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Focuses on Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor discusses her goal to preserve 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next decade. New Jersey voters will be asked to approve a stable source of funding for open space, farmland and historic preservation on the November ballot. The Governor's plan will not raise taxes or end development in New Jersey. It will encourage development where it most makes sense, and ensure clean air, clean water and a high quality of life for New Jerseyans today and the generations to follow.

Attached is the text of the message.

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

Governor's Weekly Radio Message October 9, 1998 Open Space Preservation

Each week for the past nine months, I have used these messages to share my thoughts about timely New Jersey issues, ranging from lower car insurance bills to higher academic standards, from remembering our veterans to remembering to buckle up. Each week has brought a different topic.

For the next few weeks, however, I will focus on one subject because I believe it is critical to the future of our state. It's the question that will appear on the ballot this November, asking New Jersey voters to approve a stable source of funding for open space, farmland, and historic preservation.

Here's what we are asking through Public Question No. 1. The State would like to establish a stable funding level, of \$98 million annually, to enable us to reach the goal I have set for New Jersey: namely, to preserve 1 million acres of open space and farmland.

Here's what we are NOT asking.

We are not asking to raise your taxes. No state tax will go up because of this proposal.

We are also not asking to end all development in the State of New Jersey; instead, we are seeking to encourage development where it makes the most sense - where the infrastructure of roads, sewers, and schools is already in place.

If you've driven around the state over the past few years, I don't have to tell you how urgently we need more preservation. Where once we saw trees we now see townhouses; places that could have been parks are now parking lots. As open space has disappeared, it has begun to threaten the quality of life we enjoy - clean air, clean water, and places to run around and have fun.

I hope New Jersey historians will define this era - the turn of the millennium - by the commitment our state makes to preserving open space. We've already saved hundreds of thousands of acres all around the state through efforts like the Green Acres program. But we have to accelerate our rate of preservation.

The million acres we hope to preserve includes 500,000 acres of farmland, but also 200,000 for public recreation and 200,000 for greenways along streams and trails,

along with 100,000 acres for watershed protection.

Those million acres will help preserve our water supply and clean our air. They will enable more people to enjoy parks, go fishing or hiking. Those acres will strengthen the farming industry and help keep our state attractive to business investors and tourists, which is so important for job creation and a healthy economy. And 1 million acres will help your grandchildren know the character of a state we're all so proud to call home.

The proposal passed the State Senate by a vote of 37-0. It passed the Assembly by a vote of 70-3. That's 107 votes, and that's a good start. But for this proposal to become a living, breathing plan, it will require another few million votes. Unless you and your fellow voters say "yes" at the polls this November on Public Question No. 1, we won't be able to start saving more land.

This is the most permanent legacy all of us together can leave to the people of New Jersey.

Roads and bridges will come and go. Buildings will rise and buildings will fall. Policy directives established today will change in time. But once this land is preserved, that's for life. Not just for today. Not just for you or for the children you bring into the world. But for your grandchildren and for the generations that will follow them.

Ernest Cook, the vice president of the Trust for Public Land, which is based in California, said that saving this land will put New Jersey "pretty much at the forefront" of the land preservation movement. New Jersey already leads the nation in so many positive ways - adding open space to that list would be a great start to a new century.