

## Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004  
TRENTON, NJ 08625

### NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor  
Wendi Patella  
609-777-2600

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#### **Governor Whitman Addresses Garden Club of America, Highlights Initiative to Preserve Open Space**

Gov. Christie Whitman today spoke to the Garden Club of America's annual meeting in Parsippany, where she said that keeping New Jersey as the "Garden State" is one of her top priorities.

In November, New Jersey voters passed the first stable source of funding for land preservation in New Jersey history when they overwhelmingly approved of Gov. Whitman's plan to preserve one million acres of open space and farmland over the next decade.

"Preserving open space means our children will have the chance to walk through the woods or enjoy an urban park. It means our grandchildren will have the opportunity to run through fields of daffodils. And it means our great-grandchildren will be able to fish on the bank of a stream, hearing nothing but the birds chirping and the water flowing," the Governor said.

A text of the Governor's remarks is attached.

#### **GOVERNOR CHRISTIE WHITMAN 1999 GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA'S ANNUAL MEETING TARA HOTEL, PARSIPPANY MONDAY, MAY 17, 1999**

Thank you for that introduction. Let me begin by welcoming the Garden Club of America to New Jersey, the Garden State.

Over forty years ago, there was a debate in New Jersey about a proposal to put the words "Garden State" on our license plates. Some people objected to the idea of using what they considered an unofficial slogan. But ultimately, the idea won out, and for good reason.

New Jersey is the home of the Pine Barrens, which have an ecological system unlike any other in the world. It is the home of Branch Brook Park in Newark, which has more cherry blossoms than Washington D.C. It is the home of the remarkable botanical gardens surrounding Skylands Manor. And it is the home of thousands of wonderful family gardens.

These areas of natural beauty are only a small part of what truly makes New Jersey the Garden State, and a perfect place for your annual meeting. I am delighted you chose to convene here.

As you know, the mission of the Garden Club of America is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to educate, and to protect the quality of the environment. This is a noble purpose, and I know it is one you take very seriously.

The work of the New Jersey clubs makes our state proud. I am delighted to recognize our state's three Founders Fund winners -- the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Morristown, the "Backyard Habitat" project in Englewood, and the Newark Museum Garden -- as well as all of the Garden Clubs in New Jersey.

Clubs all over the country are active in preserving and nurturing the nation's natural habitats - from preserving the Redwoods in California to working with the National Arboretum in our Nation's Capitol.

Whether it is programs like "Project 2000," or the nature and garden centers established throughout the country, or your land conservation initiatives, the Garden Club diligently strives for excellence in all it undertakes. I want to thank all of you and encourage you to continue this great work.

Land conservation and open space is an issue that is near and dear to my heart.

Preserving open space means our children will have the chance to walk through the woods or enjoy an urban park. It means our grandchildren will have the opportunity to run through fields of daffodils. And it means our great-grandchildren will be able to fish on the bank of a stream, hearing nothing but the birds chirping and the water flowing. Because of people like you, this beauty and nature will remain preserved for years to come.

As many of you may know, last November, New Jersey voters passed the first stable source of funding for land preservation in our state's history. Citizens of New Jersey have given us a mandate to preserve one million acres of open space and farmland over the next decade.

Everyone attending today's annual meeting understands the importance of preserving open space - open space to be used for gardening, for farming, for urban and suburban recreation, for greenways, and for keeping our air and water clean.

For those of you less familiar with New Jersey, let me take a moment to explain why there is a special urgency to preserve our land.

New Jersey is a state of 8 million people living on 5 million acres of land. New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country, even though it maintains wildlife reserves, national park areas, lakes, rivers, and streams.

In recent decades, development has gobbled up thousands of acres every year. Over the years, our voters have approved a number of short-term preservation bonds, but the pace of development has been faster than the pace of preservation. So we need to save more land more quickly or lose the race for open space. We need to curb suburban sprawl before it curbs the planting of flowers and trees.

Our million-acre plan has drawn a lot of attention, and for good reason. Add that million to what's already been preserved, and by the year 2010, a full 40 percent of New Jersey's land will have voluntarily been preserved.

This preservation will save contiguous parcels of open space so that a hiker can hike for miles on undisturbed land. This preservation will protect New Jersey's watersheds so that we can have clean and plentiful drinking water. This preservation will ensure that the Garden Club of America will continue to have land on which to plant, nurture, and cultivate, both today and tomorrow.

New Jersey, of course, isn't the only state concerned with preserving land.

Texas, for example, has a Landowner Incentive Program. The State offers landowners financial incentives to conserve rare species living on their property. And just last year, New Hampshire created a Land and Community Heritage Commission to protect the Granite State's natural, cultural, and historical resources.

As these examples suggest, a growing number of states are pursuing one of the primary goals of the Garden Club of America: protecting and preserving natural resources including air, water, and open space, as well as endangered species and their habitat.

I know you all understand the importance of protecting and preserving our precious land, and I encourage everyone here to support local, regional, and national efforts in land conservation. And let me suggest another way each of you can make an impact in your communities.

Last month I took part in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Arbor Day in New Jersey.

It was a pleasure to talk to school children about the importance of open space and planting trees, and about the State's efforts to work with communities in helping them to manage tree resources. That effort is part of a national program, the Urban Forestry Demonstration Project, which encourages tree planting and long-term planning in cities throughout the country.

This is a program in which each of us can participate. Here in New Jersey, we like to say that "trees turn cities into hometowns." Trees and vegetation make urban areas a welcoming and pleasant place to live and visit. Tree planting projects also remind people they can work together to make their environment healthier, and their state greener.

Saving our precious land is the centerpiece of New Jersey's effort to build a future in which we can sustain both the strength of our economy and the integrity of our environment. Preserving one million acres of open space means gardens, farms, parks, greenways, and clean air and water for decades to come.

I am proud that New Jersey is at the forefront of this national effort, encouraging and supporting other states to follow suit. By protecting endangered species, conserving natural resources, and planting vegetation, we can all make a difference. Preserving open space is important to everyone - to me, to New

Jerseyans, to the Garden Club, to the country, and even to the small child marveling at the beauty of a neighbor's garden.

Let me close with a poem that used to grace my grandmother's garden, a place that still holds fond memories for me. The poem read: "With the kiss of the sun for pardon, and the song of the birds for mirth, one is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth."

Thank you.

