

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Christie Whitman today told students of the Governor's School on the Environment in Pomona that preserving open space and farmland is one of her most important goals.

Gov. Whitman said she has made it a priority of her second term to reach the goal recommended by the Council on New Jersey Outdoors - preserving one million acres of open space and farmland within the next ten years.

"This initiative will ensure that you high school students, your children and grandchildren will still have woods to hike through, clean streams to swim in, and fish to catch," the Governor said. "Preserving our open space is important for so many reasons. Not only does it improve our quality of life, but open space is vital for a healthy environment."

The Governor's School on the Environment at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey brings together 100 high school seniors for a month-long course on environmental issues. The state-funded program encourages students to become leaders in their communities through hands-on activities such as field experiments and research. Courses focus on New Jersey policy, pollution, public health, and environmental protection while considering local, national, and global dimensions.

Legislation has been introduced in the state Senate that will ask voters to dedicate approximately \$100 million in existing revenues each year for the next ten years for open space and farmland preservation. The funds will pay for preservation programs and finance the debt service on the bonds needed to reach the Governor's one million-acre goal.

"Our Green Acres open space and Farmland Preservation programs have helped us to save hundreds of thousands of New Jersey acres," the Governor said. "But we have to pick up the pace of preservation. We have to act fast because time is not on our side. In fact, we have lost more than half of our farmland since 1950. Every acre that is lost is lost forever."

The Department of Agriculture has determined that 500,000 acres of farmland must be preserved in order to maintain a viable farming industry in New Jersey. Half of the 1 million acres preserved will be productive farmland.