



Campaign to preserve New Jersey's parks, natural areas, clean water, farmland, and historic treasures

142 W. State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608
Website: www.NJKeepItGreen.org

Tel: (609) 392-1181
Fax: (609) 392-1182

MEDIA RELEASE

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Contacts:
Tom Gilbert, Trust for Public Land, 267-261-7325
Kelly Mooij, NJ Audubon Society, 609-577-1434

NJ Keep It Green Kicks Off Campaign: Vote YES on Public Question #1

TRENTON - Today the NJ Keep It Green coalition of 135 organizations launched its campaign for passage of Public Question #1 on the November 3rd statewide ballot. Approval of this referendum on the Green Acres, Clean Water, Farmland Preservation Act will continue the state's wise investments to protect clean water and open spaces for our children and grandchildren.

"We're here today because every person and business in New Jersey needs clean water," said **Tom Gilbert, Chairman of the NJ Keep It Green coalition**. "And the best way to keep providing clean water is to preserve the natural land that filters the water before it goes into our water system," he added.

"This campaign is also about protecting our quality of life and leaving a legacy for future generations," said **Kelly Mooij, Coordinator of the coalition**. "We want a state that's healthy and beautiful, where we can enjoy clean drinking water, wildlife and natural areas, and protect the water quality of our rivers, lakes and streams."

Yet the fund enabling New Jersey to invest in preservation is essentially empty. "As a state, we must choose to make wise and prudent investments in our future, in order to face our challenges ahead," said **David Epstein, Treasurer of the coalition**. "What's more, at a time when land prices are low, our preservation dollars will go even further toward securing a more prosperous future," he added. The cost of the \$400 million bond issue will be \$10 annually per household, less than \$1 per month.

Senator Bob Smith, Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee, echoed the high returns of investing in our natural resources. "Preserving open space, farmland, and our historic assets generates \$10 for every \$1 invested. We cannot miss this opportunity to help New Jersey's environment and economy."

The location of today's kick-off event, at South River Walk Park in Trenton, was created in part using NJ Green Acres dollars. The park is one of many of community investment projects by Green Acres, the NJ Farmland Preservation Program, and NJ Historic Trust in recent years across our cities, suburban towns and rural areas. Most of the state dollars are used to match and stimulate local and private non-profit investments. All of the investments are subject to full public disclosure and are listed on the above organizations' websites.

Highlighting the urgency of approving the funds on November 3rd, **Assemblyman John F. McKeon, Chairman of the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee**, said "New Jersey voters

realize the high stakes in funding open space. We are in a race against time to protect and preserve our natural resources. The loss of land is permanent and irreversible and there are a finite number of undeveloped acres in our state.”

McKeon also emphasized the investment returns of land preservation. "Citizens of New Jersey will have the choice to vote for fresh drinking water for our state's nearly nine million population. They will have the choice to save billions of dollars in water filtration costs by preserving thousands of additional acres in the Highlands. They will have the choice to save hundreds of millions in property damage by preserving flood-prone areas and to limit sprawl by preserving valuable tracts of farmland that have been lost to development at the rate of 10,000 acres a year," he added.

Indeed, some of the land lost to suburban sprawl in recent years has been working farmland. “New Jersey has almost 200,000 acres of its farmland preserved,” Said **Ryck Suydam 2nd Vice President of NJ Farm Bureau**. “By the voters choosing to approve this ballot measure, we can keep the farmland preservation program going strong, which will be crucial if we are to reach the goal of 500,000 acres preserved to maintain New Jersey’s agricultural industry.”

Wise investment in the State of New Jersey is a serious emphasis of the Campaign, echoed by **John Hatch, the President of Preservation New Jersey**. He said, "The matching grants provided by the New Jersey Historic Trust leverage millions in private investment, and spur further investment in the neighborhoods in which the restored and rehabilitated landmarks are located. New Jersey has made no wiser investment than the historic preservation grant programs of the New Jersey Historic Trust."

Senator Thomas H. Kean, Jr., Senate Minority Leader, said, “Bonding is appropriate when it pays for projects such as open space preservation that will benefit our state far into future. I believe voters should have the opportunity to decide whether to preserve open land before it is lost to development. Our children deserve the legacy this legislation provides.”

The NJ Keep It Green campaign plans additional public events before Election Day, November 3rd.

For more information, please contact us directly, or visit www.njkeepitgreen.org or www.facebook.com/njkeepitgreen.

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The New Jersey – Keep It Green Campaign is a coalition of 135 organizations from across the state working to renew the Garden State Preservation Trust, and provide for clean water, open spaces, farmland preservation and historic preservation. For more information on this Campaign, please contact us directly or visit www.NJKeepItGreen.org