



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

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PRESS STATEMENT

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Coalition applauds signing of legislation to place continued funding for preservation efforts on Nov. ballot

NEWARK – Today Governor Corzine signed legislation that puts a public question on the November 3 statewide ballot to let voters decide whether to continue the state's efforts to preserve clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, working farms, historic places, and forests.

On June 25th, 2009, the New Jersey Assembly and Senate approved the legislation with strong bipartisan support. The Governor's signature is required to authorize the statewide ballot question, the "Green Acres, Water Supply and Floodplain Protection, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2009."

The state's open space and farmland preservation efforts will essentially come to an end if voters don't approve the continued funding on November 3. Remaining funds from a 2007 ballot measure approved by the voters have been appropriated.

"The public question will give voters a choice on preserving things that are near and dear to New Jersey: the quality of our drinking water, the health of our lakes and streams, our native wildlife, working farmland and other natural treasures that are worth preserving in our state," **said Kelly Mooij, Coordinator of the 132-organization NJ Keep It Green coalition.** "Continuing these efforts will make us better-off today and ensure a better New Jersey for our children and grandchildren."

If approved by voters, the \$400 million bond act will continue the pace of preservation efforts that voters approved in 2007. The investment will cost households \$10 annually, and enable the protection of over 70,000 acres of land that will deliver economic and other benefits far exceeding the costs, according to an analysis released by NJ Keep It Green. Jobs are created when funds go toward the construction of parks and the restoration of historic landmarks, while "ecosystem benefits" such as water purification, waste treatment, and flood mitigation result from land preservation. Economic benefits also come from New Jersey's diverse fish and farm economies, and outdoor recreation activity linked to open space.

Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee chairman John F. McKeon welcomed today's signing of the open space ballot measure by Governor Jon S. Corzine. "Today's bill signing empowers New Jersey voters to make an investment in our future that we cannot afford

not to make," Assemblyman McKeon (D-Essex) said. "Funding open space is even more significant in these challenging times because it delivers a high economic yield to New Jersey including saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in water purification costs every year and providing a much-needed stimulus to the state's agriculture and tourism industries."

"Our recent analysis shows that the economic benefits of clean water and natural land preservation will exceed the costs by a factor of 10 to 1," **said Tom Gilbert of the Trust for Public Land.** "Given that land prices are lower than they've been in years, we now have an extraordinary opportunity to continue investing in open space."

The public question also provides for full public disclosure of all spending, and citizen oversight would be ensured through the Garden State Preservation Trust, which must approve all projects.

Senator Bob Smith, Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee said, "Open space preservation is one of our best tools for protecting New Jersey's quality of life, by creating vibrant parks, preserving vulnerable watersheds, and maintaining our State's agricultural roots." "New Jersey voters have a long-standing record of supporting State preservation efforts because they recognize just how important protecting undeveloped land is to their communities. We hope voters will once again recognize the importance of open space and make a statement at the ballot box this November," said Senator Smith (D-Middlesex and Somerset).

Senate Minority Leader Thomas H. Kean, Jr. (R-Essex/Union/Somerset/Morris), who co-sponsored the legislation, agreed, saying, "Bonding is appropriate when it pays for projects such as open space preservation that will benefit our State far into the 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 New Jersey – Keep It Green Campaign is a coalition of 132 organizations from across the state working to restore funding to strengthen and renew the Garden State Preservation Trust. For more information on this Campaign, please visit www.NJKeepItGreen.org.