



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

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
June 25, 2009

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

Groups Applaud State Legislators for Granting Voters the Choice on Open Space

(Trenton) Today the State Legislature voted with strong bipartisan support in the Senate (26 Yes, 7 No) and Assembly (66 Yes, 9 No, 3 Abstain) to let the New Jersey voters decide in November whether to continue the state's investments in open space. The 129-organization coalition, the New Jersey – Keep It Green Campaign, applauded this overwhelming support.

The timing was crucial, with the Garden State Preservation Trust essentially empty and no longer able to undertake new preservation vital to New Jersey's water supply, health and prosperity. The Trust has been pivotal in supporting statewide and local efforts to provide for open space, parks, farmland preservation and historic preservation.

Twelve Senators and 37 Assembly members sponsored or co-sponsored the legislation (S1858/A3901). "Our elected officials have put their faith in voters to make the call on the future of New Jersey's open space," **said Thomas Gilmore, Chairman of the NJ-Keep It Green coalition** that favors the \$400 million bond issue. "Every time New Jersey voters have been given that choice in a statewide ballot, they have voted in favor of open space investments because of the immediate and future value we experience for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren." Voters have approved all 12 of the 12 statewide open space ballot issues since 1961.

The NJ-Keep It Green coalition highlighted the leadership of prime sponsors Senator Bob Smith and Assemblyman John F. McKeon, and the leadership of Senators Stephen M. Sweeney, Robert M. Gordon, James Beach, and Thomas H. Kean, Jr., and Assembly members Celeste M. Riley, Jon M. Bramnick, Louis D. Greenwald, Joan M. Quigley, L. Harvey Smith, and Joseph R. Malone.

"We applaud the legislature for letting the voters choose to continue investing in preservation efforts," **said Anthony Cucchi, NJ Director of the Trust for Public Land**. "These investments will provide \$10 worth of benefits for every \$1 invested," he added. Benefits are in the form of ecosystem services (such as water purification, waste treatment and flood mitigation), natural goods (such as fish and farm products), and outdoor recreation and tourism activities, for instance. In addition, jobs will be created from historic preservation, park construction, and other activities. The cost would be \$10 annually per household, based on a 20-year bond at 5% interest.

The NJ-Keep It Green coalition highlighted the importance of continuing the state's open space investments during current difficult times for the economy and budget. "The passage of the act gives us the opportunity to purchase land after a dramatic price reduction not seen in a generation, while repaying the interest at rates that are near the lowest in our lifetimes," **said David Epstein, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy of New Jersey**.

“With the downturn in the economy, depressed land prices and willing sellers make the need and timeliness for this funding even more critical,” said **Michele Byers, Executive Director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation**. “We are at a key point in our state's history, and tens of thousands of significant lands will now be preserved instead of paved.”

The coalition called for signature from Governor Jon Corzine, who has spoken favorably on several occasions of giving voters the choice on open space.

“Today the Legislature showed its support for letting voters choose in November to preserve land that keeps the ‘garden’ in the Garden State and ensures enough clean drinking water, parks and open spaces today and for future generations,” said **Jennifer Coffey, Policy Director Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association**. “This is a proud day for New Jersey,” she added.

The NJ-Keep It Green coalition also highlighted the role of co-sponsors in supporting the legislation, including Senators Anthony R. Bucco, Thomas H. Kean, Jr., Joseph F. Vitale, Christopher Bateman, Sandra B. Cunningham, M. Teresa Ruiz, Sean T. Kean, and Dana L. Redd, and Assembly members Reed Gusciora, Nilsa Cruz-Perez, Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr., Valerie Vainieri Huttle, Peter J. Biondi, Ruben J. Ramos, Jr., Amy H. Handlin, John J. Burzichelli, Jack Conners, Anthony Chiappone, Sheila Y. Oliver, Mila M. Jasey, Mary Pat Angelini, David P. Rible, Vincent Prieto, Thomas P. Giblin, Joan M. Voss, Caridad Rodriguez, L. Grace Spencer, Cleopatra G. Tucker, Sandra Love, Eleese Evans, Herb Conaway, Jr., Frederick Scalera, Ralph R. Caputo, Gordon M. Johnson, Joseph V. Egan, Wayne P. DeAngelo, Nancy F. Munoz, and David W. Wolfe.

#####

The New Jersey – Keep It Green Campaign is a coalition of 129 organizations from across the state working to renew the Garden State Preservation Trust, and strengthen funding for the Department of Environmental Protection’s Divisions of Fish and Wildlife and Parks and Forestry. For more information on this Campaign, please contact us directly or visit www.NJKeepItGreen.org