



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

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Senate Majority Leader Sweeney, Assemblywoman Riley Participate in Autumn Harvest to Combat Hunger, Promote NJ Farmland Preservation**

SEWELL, NJ – Senate Majority Leader Stephen M. Sweeney and Assemblywoman Celeste M. Riley joined members of New Jersey's farming community and the NJ Keep It Green coalition at a preserved New Jersey farm today to urge voters to support Public Question #1: the "Green Acres, Water Supply and Floodplain Protection, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2009" at the polls in November. The legislators also participated in harvesting food for the Farmers Against Hunger program.

Approval of the ballot question would continue vital New Jersey programs such as the Farmland Preservation Program and Green Acres with a \$400 million investment from the state. The dollars are primarily used to stimulate and match local preservation investments.

"I've been a strong supporter of open space as both Freeholder Director and Senate Majority Leader," **said Senator Sweeney.** "Studies have shown that New Jersey may literally be the first state to run out of space for development. I want to ensure that my children have the opportunity to enjoy New Jersey's beautiful outdoors." Sweeney added, "Anyone who knows my record knows that I'm a fiscal conservative. But preservation is an investment. It's an investment in our agricultural industry, in our property values, in our health and in our communities. For only \$10 a year per family, this is the right investment for New Jersey. I hope everyone will get out and support Public Question #1, whether they're voting in November, or using our new Vote by Mail program."

Senator Sweeney's comments echoed the broad and bipartisan support for the legislation that was passed to put Public Question #1 to voters. "Across the State of New Jersey, and within our coalition's membership of over 135 diverse organizations, people understand that we need to invest in our state's clean water and treasured lands if we're going to enjoy them today *and* preserve them for our children and grandchildren," **said Kelly Mooij, Coordinator of the NJ Keep It Green coalition,** which supports the ballot measure.

**Assemblywoman Celeste M. Riley** spoke of the importance of the ballot question to New Jersey's agricultural resources. "The Third Legislative District has more farms than any other district in the State. So, one of my top priorities has always been to support our agricultural industry," she said. "That's why I sponsored this bond issue, and why I hope all voters, whether they're Democrat or

Republican, will support Public Question #1. This is about investing in the New Jersey economy for our generation and future generations.”

Riley added, “Duffield’s Farm is a great example of how farmland preservation dollars benefit everyone. With help from the farmland preservation program, a family that has been farming for 80 years can continue to keep going into the next generation.”

Duffield’s Farm in Sewell, owned by the family of Dave and Mary Duffield, is a 130 acre property that is enrolled in the NJ Farmland Preservation Program, assuring it will remain a resource to New Jersey and area residents forever. In addition to being a working family farm, it is enjoyed by thousands of people who come to pick their own fruits and vegetables, participate in family activities such as hayrides, and shop for fresh food.

But in the past 30 years, more than 250,000 acres of New Jersey’s farmland has been lost to development, and efforts to preserve existing farms must continue, today’s speakers emphasized. “If the voters need a reason to support continuation of the state’s preservation programs they need look no further than the Duffield’s,” **said Rich Nieuwenhuis, president of NJ Farm Bureau.** “The Duffield family and their farm represent the best of New Jersey agriculture not only because they have they made a commitment to the future of agriculture in New Jersey by preserving their land through the Farmland Preservation Program, but also because they support the state’s neediest citizens, by donating their overproduction to Farmers Against Hunger.”

**Tracy Duffield, among the third generation of Duffield’s farmers, added,** “It was an important decision for the family to put our farm into the preservation program, as the community was growing around us we felt it important to demonstrate that as a working farm we are going to be here now and in the future. That commitment to community is also why we work with Farmers Against Hunger. They make it easy for us to donate our over production to those that need it.”

Preserved NJ farmland is a vital resource to the Farmers Against Hunger Program, **said coordinator Judy Grignon.** “When we work with farmers that have preserved their land we know we are working with someone who has made a commitment to the future of agriculture in NJ,” she said. “By voting Yes on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the citizens of the state will allow more farms to be preserved and ensure a future for agriculture in New Jersey.”

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The NJ Keep It Green Campaign is a coalition of over 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](http://www.NJKeepItGreen.org)

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