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## **Governor Corzine Signs Legislation Sending Open Space Preservation Measure to Public Vote**

**NEWARK** - Governor Jon S. Corzine today signed legislation allowing voters to decide if bonds should be issued for the purpose of preserving farmland and conserving open spaces for recreation and conservation purposes.

The bill, A3901/S1858 - also known as the Green Acres, Water Supply, and Floodplain Protection and Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2009 - allows a ballot measure that would authorize the issuance of \$400 million in state general obligation bonds for the acquiring and developing of lands for recreation and conservation purposes. This would include the preservation of farmland and funding historic preservation, as well as "Blue Acre" projects, which allows state purchase of flood-prone properties from willing sellers.

"Protection of our invaluable natural resources is an ongoing challenge, and demands the input of our citizens on how best to achieve our preservation goals," said Governor Corzine. "New Jerseyans have a long and distinguished history as good stewards of the environment, and this gives our citizens the opportunity to preserve our open spaces, safeguard our water supply, and curb the proliferation of urban sprawl."

The ballot question will now go to the voters in the fall election.

"By putting his imprimatur on the open space ballot question measure, our Governor has courageously demonstrated his long-standing commitment to the environment. This measure empowers New Jersey voters to make an investment in our future we cannot afford not to make," said Assemblyman John McKeon (D-Essex).

"We must continue our legacy of aggressively protecting New Jersey's diminishing areas of open space and farmland," said Assemblywoman Celeste Riley (D-Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem). "This bond act would create a dedicated stream of funding to support the state's ongoing efforts to preserve critical tracts of land, including farmlands and historic sites, and voters would have final say on whether it should go forward. We have a responsibility to protect these valuable tracts of land today before they are lost to development at the expense of generations to come."

"While many folks in the environmental advocacy community would have preferred a dedicated funding source, this bill moves the ball down the field, and continues our statewide obligation to preserve endangered open space," said Senator Bob Smith, (D-Middlesex and Somerset), Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee. "If voters approve the ballot question this November, we will be able to provide hundreds of millions of dollars for programs dedicated to keeping the green in the Garden State. Voters have approved every open space bonding initiative put before them since the early 1960s, and that's because they recognize how important unspoiled open space is to New Jersey's future."

"Preserved open space - whether it's parks in urban areas or undeveloped farmland in rural regions - is so important to the quality of life in New Jersey," said Senator Steve Sweeney (D-Gloucester, Cumberland and Salem). "Even in tough economic times, we need to continue our commitment to protecting New Jersey from overdevelopment and suburban sprawl, before we lose any trace of our roots as the Garden State. Through this bonding initiative, we can engage the electorate in providing stop-gap funding for the State's preservation efforts, and take advantage of lower real estate prices to preserve more land to benefit generations of New Jerseyans to come."

"As the state's population continues to increase, it is imperative that funding is set aside to preserve our open space and natural resources," said Senator James Beach (D-Camden). "At the same time, residents deserve the opportunity to determine how their tax dollars are spent. Through this legislation, we are enabling residents to choose to protect State resources and open space for future generations. It is a win-win situation for everyone."

"With the current economic trials that many Americans are facing, it is imperative that taxpayers are given more choice over how their hard-earned tax dollars are spent," said Senator Robert Gordon (D-Bergen). "Though I believe that this funding is necessary, it is up to the residents of New Jersey to approve the \$400 million needed to

preserve open space around the state. I believe that this legislation lays out the argument for why this funding is necessary, but voters will decide what works best for them this November."