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**CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES APPROVAL OF GREEN ACRES
PROJECTS BY GARDEN STATE PRESERVATION TRUST**

TRENTON - The Garden State Preservation Trust today approved the Christie Administration's recommended list of more than \$123 million in Green Acres open space acquisition and recreational development projects, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin announced.

All 21 counties are represented in \$66.2 million in funding to municipal and county governments and nonprofit organizations for land acquisitions and park developments.

The Garden State Preservation Trust approved another \$57 million for state Green Acres acquisitions, including land for state parks, forests and wildlife management areas throughout New Jersey. Of this, \$12 million is targeted for Blue Acres acquisitions that will allow the state to remove from harm's way people whose homes have suffered from repeated storm-related flooding, particularly in the Passaic River Basin.

"The Christie Administration is committed to protecting New Jersey's open spaces, which are so vital to the protection of natural resources and enhancement of our quality of life in the Garden State," Commissioner Martin said. "The Green Acres Program continues to play a vital role in sustaining our quality of life in New Jersey. The funding targets urban and other waterfronts, greenway development and athletic fields, and adds to state lands that will preserve wildlife habitats and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation."

Green Acres funding leverages many millions of additional preservation dollars through matching federal, state, county, local and nonprofit funds. The \$66.2 million in local Green Acres funding project approved today includes \$41.5 million for municipal and county open space acquisitions, \$15.8 million for local development of parks and recreational facilities; \$6.6 million to nonprofit groups for land acquisitions and \$2.3 million for nonprofit recreational development.

In addition, the DEP has designated \$45 million in state acquisition money to expand State Parks, Forests and Wildlife Management Areas, and for the purchase of privately-owned parcels, known as in-holdings, which are located within existing state-owned lands.

Another \$12 million provides for state Blue Acres acquisitions to relocate people out of flood-prone areas, including the Passaic River Basin, and create open space. This money also will be used to leverage Federal Emergency Management Agency grants that are used for the same purpose.

Local and nonprofit funding includes:

- \$750,000 for the development of a continuous public waterfront and greenway trail along the 2.8-mile North Camden Waterfront in Camden. Improvements include reconstruction of playing fields, basketball courts, American with Disabilities Act-compliant pathways, stormwater management, fencing and lighting.
- \$600,000 for the second phase of a waterfront park, including an athletic complex along the Passaic River in Newark's Ironbound section.
- \$650,000 for the acquisition of 132 acres of recreational space in Hopewell Township, which will include open space, woodlands and a stream corridor.
- \$750,000 for improvements to 84-acre Joseph Medwick Park, located in Carteret Borough and Woodbridge Township. Some enhanced facilities of the park include a synthetic turf football field, baseball and multi-use athletic fields and observation decks overlooking the Rahway River.
- \$487,500 to assist with the purchase of eight flood-prone properties in Saddle Brook.
- \$900,000 for the next project phase of improvements to the South Mountain Recreation Complex in West Orange, as well as improved roads, landscaping and lighting throughout the Essex County Park System.
- \$900,000 toward a multi-use recreation facility at James J. Braddock Park in North Bergen Township, including an overlay of soccer and football fields and several softball/baseball fields, a reforestation area with connecting pathways and an irrigation system utilizing stormwater runoff.
- \$600,000 for the rehabilitation and additional development of the Hetzel Field Park in Trenton.
- \$306,400 for the acquisition of properties in the "Green Seam" project area in Somerville, which will provide trail linkage to its downtown area and NJ Transit rail station, rehabilitate a tributary of the Raritan River and open up 40 acres of open space for recreation.
- \$600,000 to help the city of Long Branch make repairs to its oceanfront boardwalk between South Bath Avenue and Brighton Avenue.
- \$600,000 toward the creation of a waterfront park located in Brick Township that will provide waterfront access and recreational opportunities on the Barnegat Bay and provide a link to the adjacent Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

State acquisition project funding includes:

- \$8 million to acquire and connect open space in the Highlands, critical to ensuring the integrity of New Jersey's source waters in the north central portion of the state.
- \$8 million for the protection of land and ecosystem integrity in the Pinelands.
- \$3 million to protect islands, wetlands and uplands in the Barnegat Bay watershed as part of the Christie Administration's 10-point plan for restoring the bay's ecological health.

- \$5 million to link together publicly held lands in the Ridge and Valley area of the state, a region bounded by the Highlands and the upper most regions of the Delaware River that is popular among campers, hikers, hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts.
- \$2 million for acquisitions on the popular Cape May peninsula, where places like Cape May Point State Park and Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area serve as wildlife habitat and offer unique bird-watching opportunities and access to ecosystems.

"Green Acres is among the most successful conservation financing programs in the United States", said Anthony Cucchi, New Jersey State Director for The Trust for Public Land. "The grants recommended today, provided under the 2009 Bond Act, will leverage millions of dollars in matching funds from towns, counties, and private donors, allowing playgrounds to be built in park-poor urban neighborhoods and protecting critical watershed lands from the Highlands to Barnegat Bay."

The Legislature must now enact an appropriations bill to be signed by Governor Christie.

The Green Acres program was created in 1961 as the result of an innovative bond referendum. Together with public and private partners, the Green Acres program has directly protected 650,000 acres of open space and provided hundreds of recreational opportunities for a wide range of activities, including natural areas, city parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, boat ramps, docks, fishing piers and environmental education.

In addition to providing recreation opportunities, Green Acres projects help protect water quality and stimulate economic development by creating jobs, at the same time making cities and towns more attractive places to live and work.

For details on approved funding to local government and nonprofit organizations for open space acquisition and park development, visit: http://www.nj.gov/dep/docs/local_nonprofit_pp.pdf

For Green Acres State land acquisition 2009 Bond Act project descriptions, visit http://www.nj.gov/dep/docs/sap_fy2013final.pdf

For more information about Green Acres visit: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/>