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April 22, 2005

GOVERNOR CELEBRATES EARTH DAY ON LONG ISLAND

Announces Partnership to Preserve More Than 300 Acres of Core Pine Barrens Acquisition
Protects Largest Remaining Privately-Owned Parcel in Preserve

In celebration of Earth Day 2005, Governor George E. Pataki today announced that the State has entered into a partnership with Suffolk County, the Town of Southampton and The Nature Conservancy to acquire the largest remaining privately owned parcel in the Core Preservation Area of the Central Long Island Pine Barrens - the 309-acre WJF Realty property.

"New York State is a national leader in open space conservation, having protected more than 900,000 acres across the Empire State in the last ten years, including more than 6,700 acres in the Core Preservation Area of the Long Island Pine Barrens," Governor Pataki said. "As we celebrate Earth Day today, this acquisition represents an important victory for the people of Long Island and for the future of New York's unique and precious natural resources. "Together with our local partners, we've made a commitment to ensure that the Core Pine Barrens would be forever protected from development. With today's acquisition, we are taking another major step in fulfilling our goal for the protection of the Pine Barrens. We're proud that our efforts are helping to protect these environmentally significant lands and Long Island's critical underground water resources for future generations."

The Governor was joined by numerous State and local officials in making the announcement today at a press conference at the Quogue Wildlife Refuge in the Town of Southampton.

Senator Kenneth LaValle said, "This acquisition demonstrates the state's continued commitment to ensuring environmentally sensitive lands remain protected forever. As sponsor of the original Pine Barrens legislation, I am pleased that everyone involved has come to an agreement that enhances our open space preservation efforts and protects this valued resource for generations to come."

Assemblyman Fred Thiele said, "Through the leadership of Governor Pataki, a land use dispute in the Town of Southampton which lasted more than fifteen years has been successfully resolved. This intergovernmental partnership between the State, Suffolk County and Southampton Town will also insure that the largest remaining open space in the core of the Central Pine Barrens with its critical habitat will be protected along with the region's drinking water supply. There could not be a more suitable way to celebrate Earth Day on Long Island."

Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy said, "It is partnerships like these, where government and the private sector work in lock step toward a common goal, that have placed Suffolk County at the forefront of the preservation movement and allows for landmark acquisitions such as the 309-acre WJF property. These types of partnerships allow us to preserve far more land than if one municipality were to attempt a purchase on its own. I thank the Governor for his substantial

contributions to this purchase as well as Supervisor Heaney and our great friends at The Nature Conservancy for making this long-awaited purchase a reality."

Patrick "Skip" Heaney, Supervisor of the Town of Southampton, said, "This collaborative effort between the State, County, Town and the Nature Conservancy is one that achieves so many goals. I am grateful to Governor Pataki and to all those involved for their efforts to preserve our Pine Barrens."

George Motz, Mayor of the Village of Quogue said, "The Village of Quogue, which has always been a leading supporter of land preservation, congratulates the State, County, Town of Southampton and the Nature Conservancy for their bold move in preserving this valuable piece of property in the all important Pine Barrens."

Paul Rabinovitch, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy's Long Island Chapter, said, "The Nature Conservancy is very pleased to see this parcel preserved. Not only because it protects Long Island's drinking water and not only because it protects the Pine Barrens, but also because it is the largest part of a globally rare forest located in the heart of the Pine Barrens. The Conservancy applauds Governor Pataki, County Executive Levy and Supervisor Heaney for their commitment to protecting landscapes for future generations."

Under the agreement, which was negotiated with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy, the State will utilize \$3.67 million from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to acquire 154 acres of the property. Suffolk County will acquire the remaining 154 acres. The agreement also settles long standing litigation between WJF and the Town of Southampton arising out of various development proposals over several years.

Ray Corwin, Executive Director of the Long Island Pine Barrens Commission, said, "With this milestone preservation agreement, Governor Pataki has once again reaffirmed New York State's commitment to preserving both the ecological resources and the vital groundwater recharge role of Long Island's Central Pine Barrens. This acquisition is a major complement to both prior State acquisitions and those of its preservation partners at the County and private level, and serves as continuing evidence of the Governor's support of the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act and the Pine Barrens Plan on the tenth anniversary of the Plan."

James T. B. Tripp, General Counsel of Environmental Defense and chair of the Long Island Pine Barrens Credit Clearinghouse, said, "The WJF parcel is a critical part of the dwarf pine barrens, the ecological gem of the Long Island Pine Barrens, and Governor Pataki, the Town of Southampton and The Nature Conservancy also deserve enormous credit for their roles in protecting this parcel. I am thrilled that Pine Barrens Credits have played a significant role in the consummation of this major transaction. With the issuance of 100 credits to WJF, the Pine Barrens Credits program has now resulted in the preservation of over 1000 acres of core area Pine Barrens. Their use as part of this transaction shows that these credits have substantial economic value in all three towns that are part of the Central Pine Barrens region."

In June 1995, Governor Pataki signed the historic Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use

Plan to protect the 100,000-acre Pine Barrens. The Plan established a Core Preservation Area of 52,500 acres where development is strictly limited, and a surrounding Compatible Growth Area of 47,500 acres where economic development activities are allowed only under strict controls.

The Land Use Plan set a goal to protect 75 percent of the 15,000 acres in the Core area that were not protected. Since the signing, 11,364 acres have been preserved through State and county efforts - surpassing the 75 percent goal. New York State has invested more than \$50 million to acquire and preserve approximately 6,700 acres in the Core Preservation Area, and has helped finance the county's efforts through the State Environmental Facilities Corporation.

The Pine Barrens is made up of a globally rare and imperiled forest community of dwarf pitch pine and scrub oak. Dwarf pine barrens are characterized by a canopy that is generally less than six feet in height, soils that are sandy, excessively well-drained and nutrient poor, and a shrub layer dominated by huckleberry, bearberry, blueberry, wintergreen, with some hudsonia and little bluestem. This community exists in only two other places in the world: the Shawangunk Ridge in New York's Hudson Valley, and the New Jersey Pinelands.

Long Island's dwarf pine forests harbor several rare plant and animal species including tick-trefoil, low sand-cherry, and Houghton's umbrella sedge, as well as the largest population of coastal barrens buck moth in New York. A breeding population of at least three pairs of Northern harriers has been observed in the area; important because breeding populations of this ground-nesting raptor are declining elsewhere in the region. The property is also habitat for pine and prairie warbler, and several declining migrant songbirds, such as whip-poor-will. Large populations of deer, fox, rabbit and other small mammals are also known to benefit from wildlife habitat on the parcel.

State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Acting Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan said, "Protecting open space in the Pine Barrens Core helps protect the water upon which millions of Long Islanders depend. This acquisition will also create new public access in an area where public ownership is currently fragmented, and help connect State lands to Suffolk County lands, creating greatly expanded opportunities for hunting, hiking and other passive outdoor recreational opportunities."

Since 1995, Governor Pataki has committed more than \$530 million to protect nearly 910,000 acres of land across New York State. During that time, the Governor has provided unprecedented funding for open space preservation and other critical environmental projects through the State's Environmental Protection Fund, including a record \$150 million in this year's State Budget - a 20 percent increase over last year and a six-fold increase since 1995. Environmental spending in New York now totals more than \$1.4 billion annually.