

HIGHLANDS BILL SIGNING AT WANAQUE RESERVOIR
SENATOR BOB SMITH, D-MIDDLESEX AND SOMERSET
AUGUST 10, 2004

! TODAY WE ARE SIGNALING AN HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTAL VICTORY FOR THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN, WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT MY GRANDSON, FOSTER JOSEPH ABBATE, TO WITNESS THIS HISTORIC CEREMONY

! WE ARE CELEBRATING THE PASSAGE INTO LAW OF ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES IN DECADES, TO PROTECT QUALITY DRINKING WATER FOR MORE THAN FOUR MILLION NEW JERSEYANS WHO RELY ON THE NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS AS THEIR DRINKING WATER SOURCE.

! WE ARE GUARANTEEING OUR CHILDREN, AND OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN, THAT THEY WILL BE SUPPLIED WITH CLEAN DRINKING WATER FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE THAT, DESPITE ENCROACHING DEVELOPMENT, WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ITS PRISTINE BOUNTY, AND WILL NOW HAVE THE PROTECTION OF LAW AS A SHIELD AGAINST FUTURE ATTEMPTS TO JEOPARDIZE NEW JERSEY'S WATER SUPPLY FOR COMMERCIAL GAIN.

! I COULD EASILY SAY THAT THIS IS A GREAT DAY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN NEW JERSEY, BUT IT'S MORE THAN JUST THAT. THIS IS A GREAT DAY FOR NEW JERSEY, PERIOD.

! SO MANY CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE HIGHLANDS INITIATIVE, AND I'D LIKE TO PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THEM HERE, FOR THE LAST TIME IN CONNECTION WITH THE HIGHLANDS PROTECTION AND PLANNING ACT.

! ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES PROVIDED A STRONG VOICE OF CONSCIOUS, IMPLORING US TO DO WHATEVER WE COULD TO SAVE THIS LAND. THEY GAVE US DIRECTION, AND DESERVE A HUGE ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

! TAKING UP THE CALL, THE GOVERNOR'S HIGHLANDS COMMISSION PUT IN COUNTLESS HOURS OF RESEARCH AND PROVIDED A PAINSTAKINGLY DETAILED REPORT ON WHICH MANY OF OUR EFFORTS WERE BASED, AND UPON WHICH THOSE EFFORTS WERE GALVANIZED. THEY GAVE US DEFINITION, AND DESERVE OUR UTMOST GRATITUDE.

! MY FELLOW BILL SPONSORS, SENATOR BOB MARTIN, WHO CROSSED THE PARTISAN LINE FOR THE GOOD OF NEW JERSEY, AND ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN McKEON AND LOUIS MANZO, THEIR COMMITMENT TO THIS CAUSE, UNWAVERING DESPITE THE VERY VOCAL OPPOSITION OF SOME, IS A TESTAMENT TO OUR BELIEF THAT THE HIGHLANDS PROTECTION ACT IS BOTH WARRANTED AND NECESSARY.

! TO THE LEGISLATIVE STAFF, THE GOVERNOR'S STAFF, AND THE OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES STAFF, WHO PUT IN DAYS AND NIGHTS, WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS OF LONG HOURS IRONING OUT THE DETAILS, WE COULD NOT HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS WITHOUT YOU.

! AND TO OUR RESPECTIVE COMMITTEES, THE SENATE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AND THE ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE, WHO HELPED US REFINE OUR POSITION IN TERMS OF FAIRNESS TO PROPERTY OWNERS WHO ACT IN GOOD FAITH AND HAVE MINIMAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, YOUR INVOLVEMENT WAS INTEGRAL IN COMING UP WITH A FAIR AND BALANCED APPROACH TO PROTECTING THE HIGHLANDS.

! AND FINALLY, TO GOVERNOR MCGREEVEY, WHO PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN HELPING US GET THIS THROUGH THE LEGISLATURE: JIM, CONGRATULATIONS. WITH THE STROKE OF YOUR PEN, YOU'LL BE TRANSFIXING AN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY THAT WILL PUT YOU ON PAR WITH OTHER GREAT PRESERVATIONISTS LIKE BRENDAN BYRNE, WHO FOUGHT FOR PINELANDS PROTECTION, AND TOM KEAN, WHO FOUGHT FOR WETLANDS PROTECTION. I DON'T KNOW IF THEY'LL NAME AN ARENA OR A COLLEGE AFTER YOU, BUT HERE'S TO HOPING...

! JONI MITCHELL, A FOLK SINGER FROM THE SIXTIES, SANG A SONG THAT RANG OUT AS A RALLYING CRY TO ENVIRONMENTALISTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND AROUND THE WORLD. HER ICONIC SONG, "BIG YELLOW TAXI," CONTAINS THE LINE "THEY PAVED PARADISE, AND THEY PUT UP A PARKING LOT."

! WELL, JONI, THE PARKING LOT MIGHT BE RIGHT OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR PRESERVATION AREA, BUT THIS PARADISE, KNOWN AS THE NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS, WILL REMAIN INTACT FOR MANY, MANY YEARS TO COME. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.