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SENATE OK'S BIPARTISAN MEASURES TO PRESERVE OPEN SPACES AND HISTORIC PLACES

TRENTON – A package of bipartisan bills that would provide direct grants to numerous communities for the direct preservation of open space, farmland and historic properties was today passed by the Senate.

In total, the eight bills would provide more than $260 million in Green Acres, Blue Acres, Farmland Preservation, and Historic Trust funds to county and local governments and community organizations.

Senators Bob Smith (D-Middlesex) and Christopher "Kip" Bateman (R-Somerset), the chairman and ranking Republican on the Senate Environment & Energy Committee, respectively, praised the Senate's unanimous support for the bills.

"New Jerseyans have long supported Green Acres and farmland preservation, both in principle and at the ballot box, because they simply are the right thing to do to ensure that there are open spaces for our children and future generations to enjoy," said Smith. "And we cannot know where we are going unless we understand where we have come from, making historic preservation essential to the future of our state."

"Even in difficult economic times, New Jersey residents recognize the importance of preserving open space, farmland and historic and cultural sites," Bateman continued. "These important bills give us a chance to set a large amount of land aside so it can be used wisely and enjoyed for generations to come."

The specific measures – which now head to the Assembly – are:

S-2857 Codey, Richard J.

/Doherty, Michael J. Appropriates $84,495,199 from "2009 Green Acres Fund" and "Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund" for local government open space acquisition and park development projects.

S-2858 Greenstein, Linda R.

/Kean, Thomas H. Appropriates $14,818,787 from "2009 Green Acres Fund" and "Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund" for grants to certain nonprofit entities to acquire or develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

S-2859 Gordon, Robert M.

/Beck, Jennifer Appropriates $45 million from "2009 Green Acres Fund" and $12 million from "2009 Blue Acres Fund" for State acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes, including Blue Acres projects.

S-2894 Whelan, Jim

/Singer, Robert W. Appropriates $8.831 million from "2009 Farmland Preservation Fund," "2007 Farmland Preservation Fund," and "Garden State Farmland Preservation Trust Fund" for grants to certain nonprofit organizations for farmland preservation purposes.

S-2895 Greenstein, Linda R.

/Oroho, Steven V. Appropriates $23 million from "2009 Farmland Preservation Fund" and "Garden State Farmland Preservation Fund" for planning incentive grants to municipalities for farmland preservation purposes.

S-2896 Van Drew, Jeff

/Oroho, Steven V. Appropriates $39 million from "2009 Farmland Preservation Fund," "2007 Farmland Preservation Fund," and "Garden State Farmland Preservation Trust Fund" to State Agriculture Development Committee for county planning incentive grants.

S-2897 Whelan, Jim

/Singer, Robert W. Appropriates $23,588,760 from "2009 Farmland Preservation Fund" and "Garden State Farmland Preservation Trust Fund" to State Agriculture Development Committee for farmland preservation purposes.

S-2898 Gordon, Robert M.

/Allen, Diane B. Appropriates $10,250,780 from 2009 Historic Preservation Fund and 2007 Historic Preservation Fund to provide grants for certain historic preservation projects, and appropriates $600,000 from "2009 Historic Preservation Fund" for associated administrative expenses.

The Green Acres program is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2011, and has been funded throughout the half-century through 13 successful statewide ballot initiatives, as well as the 1999 constitutional dedication of sales tax revenues.

The state's Blue Acres program allows communities to purchase properties that have been damaged by floods or are prone to flooding, or that may buffer or protect other lands from floods.

The Farmland Preservation Program was established in 1983.

Created in 1967, the New Jersey Historic Trust has provided financial investments in planning and capital projects to stabilize, repair, restore and rehabilitate historic properties.