



Preserving our land

PSEG occasionally offers this space to environmental groups. Today's was written by Thomas Gilmore, chair of NJ Keep It Green and president of the NJ Audubon Society.

We all depend on clean and abundant water, yet few of us stop to consider where it comes from when we turn on our faucets. Though our families use parks and playgrounds, we seldom pause to ask how they're acquired.

New Jersey's Garden State Preservation Trust is the state fund that helps to purchase land for purifying our water, obtain open space for parks, preserve farmland for benefits such as locally grown food, and save our historic landmarks to revitalize our downtown centers.

Yet, the Garden State Preservation Trust has now essentially run out of money. Unless we find a way to renew it, New Jersey's ability to preserve land for our benefit today – and for future generations – will severely decline.

The NJ Keep It Green Coalition of over 100 organizations is calling on our elected leaders to support a ballot question this November to give voters the opportunity to invest \$600 million over three years to preserve our open space. This measure would cost \$16 annually per household, a reasonable investment given the immediate and future benefits to us all.

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Continuing New Jersey's open space funding is not only critical to our way of life, but also important for job creation. For instance, one economic study found that \$1 million invested in historic preservation projects creates almost 30 jobs.

We are in difficult economic times, with job losses and economic instability at their highest levels in years. Yet it's worth remembering how heavily we are borrowing from the future as we watch open space disappear at a rate of nearly 50 acres per day. Along with that land goes our future ability to provide clean drinking water and give our children places to play.

Investing in our open spaces makes sense because prices of land are at multi-year lows. This opportunity could prove fleeting. Once conditions change, it will

become much more expensive to preserve the same land for the benefit of all residents.

It's no wonder that an April poll of likely New Jersey voters found that 80% want an open space funding measure on the ballot. Most New Jerseyans understand the importance of preserving our open space and want the opportunity to exercise their vote.

What's your view? Please let us know at Opinion@PSEG.com



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