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GOVERNOR'S HIGHLANDS ORDER DISAPPOINTS NEW JERSEY FARM BUREAU

Trenton, NJ (September 5, 2008) -- New Jersey Farm Bureau expressed its strong disappointment and disapproval of today's Executive Order by Governor Corzine on the Highlands program.

"With the added stipulations to Highlands regulations, the Governor has burdened the region by this new regulation, making it a de-facto moratorium on planned growth for the region," said New Jersey Farm Bureau President Rich Nieuwenhuis. "This will only aggravate landowner issues and create further adverse economic impacts for those who live in the region."

The Executive Order mandates the imposition of the agenda advocated by environmental lobbyists that were rejected by the Highlands Council because they were deemed to be not in the best interest of the region. It virtually puts the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in charge of planning for the entire region and removes some of the balancing features placed in the Highlands Act by the Legislature.

"This Order undermines the decisions of the Highlands Council members, who have invested more than three years of effort listening to the concerns of hundreds of Highlands residents," Nieuwenhuis said.

While acknowledging the \$10 million for the Highlands TDR credit bank, the Farm Bureau is concerned that it represents a "drop in the bucket" compared with the \$1.3 billion estimated cost of agriculture and conservation priority lands identified by the Highlands Council.

"Because of the severe restrictions in the Highlands Plan and the DEP rules, landowners are already dependent on the open space acquisition and TDR programs for the equity protection of their property," Nieuwenhuis added. "This dependence is only increased with imposition of this Executive Order, as it effectively removes the cluster provision from the Plan, which was a small but meaningful option for landowners to protect lands while saving some part of their land value."

The Farm Bureau believes the Executive Order also places many more acres of land under stricter DEP regulations. The increased burden placed on the land acquisition and TDR programs exacerbates the need for state funding, which is already virtually exhausted.

Further, the Farm Bureau contends that if the "water deficit areas" targeted in the Order are so commonplace in the Highlands to justify this extraordinary protection, one has to question why water is permitted to be exported from the region to support millions of households and other users elsewhere... let alone without any conservation measures on that water use.

"We believe that environmental criteria are being misused to promote no-growth ideals in the Highlands region," said Nieuwenhuis.

For further information, contact the New Jersey Farm Bureau, at The Farmhouse, 168 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608. Phone 609-393-7163; fax 609-393-7072; email mail@njfb.org; website www.njfb.org

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a non-profit member organization of 14,000+ farmers and farm-related individuals within the Garden State. It is the only organization solely dedicated to representing the grass-roots interests and directives of its members in educating all levels of government and the public on the farm community's policies and positions. The Farm Bureau also takes a lead in seeking out initiatives, activities and ventures to enhance the profitability of producer members and ensure the viability of agriculture in New Jersey -- *the Garden State for Good Reason -- our farms.*

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