

Resolution

Requesting Cape May County Freeholders consider submitting a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program Local Government Assistance Application for Land Acquisition and Park Development

WHEREAS, Cape May County is eligible to receive up to 900,000 for land acquisition and park development for the County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program by applying for a matching grant offered through NJDEP Green Acres Program; and

WHEREAS, Green Acres matching grant funding can be used to acquire land for recreation and conservation purposes including ocean, bay and/or river waterfront, or a lake, pond, beach or stream that provides opportunity for physical and visual public access, swimming, water sports, fishing and/or boating; a natural area such as a wildlife preserve, forest and/or wetland that provides opportunity for conservation, nature observation, water quality and water supply protection, camping and/or hiking; an historic property; or land suitable for playgrounds, athletic fields, and other types of active and passive outdoor recreation facilities or opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Green Acres matching grant funds may be used to assist in efforts to complete the Cape May National Wildlife Refuge, which has only acquired 11,800 acres of the 21,820 acres that congress envisioned necessary to protect wetlands and wildlife resources of international importance; and

WHEREAS, Green Acres loan funding can be used for the development of land for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes, which must be accessible to the public; and

WHEREAS, nineteen other counties in the state regularly apply for and receive matching funds from the State Green Acres Program; and

WHEREAS, on November 9, 1989, Cape May County voters approved, by a two to one margin, a ballot question endorsing the establishment of a trust fund to preserve open space and agricultural lands; and

WHEREAS, the Trust is funded by a county property tax of one cent per \$100 of assessed valuation and raised \$5.5 million toward land preservation last year; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Cape May County Open Space and Recreation Plan recognizes that open space is of special importance to the County's future

WHEREAS, the 2007 Cape May County Open Space and Recreation Plan recognizes that the County has an open space deficit of 4,001 acres and is in need of additional public recreational land and open space and therefore, recommends the maintenance and expansion of the existing County Park System, and the continuation of the County's Open Space Preservation Program in conjunction and coordination with other public and private open space preservation programs; and

WHEREAS, the County Comprehensive Plan states that the County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program, in conjunction with State Green Acres and other programs and land trusts, is expected to reduce the County open space deficit; and

WHEREAS, two goals of the Open Space and Recreation Plan are to encourage coordinated open space and recreation planning, acquisition and development initiatives of state, county, and local governments and conservation organizations; and to effectively use funds from the Cape May County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program, and other sources of funding that may become available; and

WHEREAS, Cape May County residents voted 52% in favor of the 2009 Statewide Open Space Bond Referendum and therefore urge the County to leverage dedicated tax dollars with voter-approved Garden State Preservation Trust dollars to support open space projects; and

WHEREAS, County Trust fund monies should be equally allocated towards farmland preservation and open space projects; and

WHEREAS, ecotourism in Cape May County generates over \$522 million annually; and

WHEREAS, over \$260 million was approved through the last funding round of the “2009 Green Acres Bond Act” for local government open space acquisition and park development projects; and

Now therefore, be it resolved by the XXX request Cape May County Freeholders to consider submitting an NJDEP Green Acres Program Local Government Assistance Application for Land Acquisition and Park Development