

# MORIARTY/FISHER BILL PROVIDING \$30 MILLION FOR CONSERVATION EFFORTS BECOMES LAW

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(TRENTON) – Legislation Assemblymen Paul Moriarty and Douglas H. Fisher sponsored to provide more than \$30 million for a litany of farmland, water, and soil conservation efforts was ceremoniously signed into law today by Governor Jon S. Corzine.

Under the measure (A-4259), \$30,660,000 will be allocated to the State Agriculture Department Committee (SADC) from the Garden State Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (GSPT) for preserving farmland, conserving soil and water resources, and to promote the state's ongoing efforts to safeguard farmland from encroaching development.

"Our state's farms and natural resources are under constant siege," said Moriarty (D-Gloucester/Camden). "The land easements and conservation projects that are to receive funding under this law will safeguard our state's agricultural production and protect the quality of life in dozens of communities around the state."

"It's a constant battle to provide more and more resources to protect farmland and soil and water resources when development pressures are claiming land at a rate of 50 acres a day in some areas of the state," said Fisher (D-Cumberland/Salem/Gloucester).

The law cancels prior appropriations totaling \$14.55 million for farmland preservation projects that have been withdrawn or for which obligations have been canceled. The law makes those funds available for other farmland preservation projects.

Additionally, the law appropriates to the SADC such sums from any additional proceeds which may become available by the effective date of the bill due to the resale or lease of farmland previously acquired in fee simple by the SADC for farmland preservation purposes.

Finally, the law appropriates \$393,103 in interest earned from the 1992 and 1995 farmland preservation bond funds to provide grants to landowners for up to 50 percent of the cost of soil and water conservation

projects. Another \$60,000 also is appropriated to purchase farmland preservation signs on preserved farmland.

The GSPT dedicates up to \$98 million of the state's sales and tax revenue for fiscal years 2000 through 2029 to finance open space, farmland, and historic preservation, including paying back the debt incurred from the issuance of bonds by the GSPT. The two other accounts are Garden State Historic Trust Fund and the Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund.

The new law will fund projects that already have been approved by the DEP and the Garden State Preservation Trust.