

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## GOVERNOR CELEBRATES EARTH DAY ON LONG ISLAND

State, Town to Preserve 34 Acres along Carmans River in Brookhaven Announces \$695,000 in Environmental Grants for Nassau and Suffolk Counties

Governor George E. Pataki today celebrated Earth Day on Long Island and announced that the State and the Town of Brookhaven will preserve and protect from development nearly 34 acres of environmentally sensitive land along the scenic Carmans River in Brookhaven, Suffolk County. The Governor was joined by State and local officials at an Earth Day event where he also announced \$695,000 in Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grants for six open space, recreation and restoration projects across Long Island.

“Earth Day is one day a year, but we’re working hard to ensure that New Yorkers have access to open space and enjoy a cleaner, healthier environment every day of the year,” Governor Pataki said. “Through the State’s Environmental Protection Fund and our open space conservation efforts, we are making unprecedented investments in the stewardship of New York’s natural assets, expanding public access to waterfront recreation and picturesque views and improving the quality of life for residents on Long Island and across our State.”

“Earlier today I announced the largest land conservation agreement in State history – an agreement that will protect more than 260,000 acres in the Adirondack Park,” Governor Pataki said. “That landmark agreement, coupled with our announcement here in Brookhaven to protect environmentally sensitive land along the scenic Carmans River, will place us well on our way to achieving our ambitious goal of protecting more than one million acres of open space by the end of the decade.”

With today’s announcements, the total amount of open space preserved since Governor Pataki has been in office totals 780,000 acres – an amount of land roughly equivalent to the size of the State of Rhode Island.

The purchase being announced today includes 33.9 acres and more than 700 feet of frontage along the Carmans River, in the Hamlet of Yaphank. The property, also known as the Connecticut River Estates, will be acquired by both the Town of Brookhaven and New York State. The State is purchasing approximately 27 acres for \$1.9 million, and the Town is purchasing approximately seven acres for \$600,000. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will utilize funding from the EPF to make the acquisition.

In addition to the land purchase, the EPF is also supporting six local parks and preservation projects on Long Island, three each in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Highlights of the grants include \$255,000 for restoration work at the Nassau County Museum of Art in the Town of Hempstead, \$100,000 to the Town of Islip to rechannel Penataquit Creek and restore Mill Pond, and \$63,582 to restore the bell tower at St. George’s Church in the Village of Hempstead.

The remaining projects include acquisition and development of trails in the town of Southold, improvements to recreational facilities at two town parks in North Hempstead, and rehabilitation of a portion of the Farm Complex at Caumsett State Park in the Village of Lloyd Harbor.

State Senator Kenneth LaValle said, "I commend the Governor for his continuing efforts to preserve our Long Island environment and heritage and for his support of so many important local projects. I am especially pleased to celebrate Earth Day 2004 with the announcement of the state and town acquisition of the Connecticut River Estates property in Yaphank. This beautiful riverside acreage is a treasure which is being saved from development and will be preserved for residents and future generations. It is a perfect location for passive recreation and enjoyment of the Carmans River."

Senator Michael Balboni said, "The Nassau County Museum of Art and the local parks where our families relax and play are just a few of the things that make Long Island a great place to live. I commend Governor Pataki, Commissioner Crotty and Commissioner Castro for their part in securing the funding to restore and rehabilitate these local treasures.

Senator Kemp Hannon said, "At 180 years old, the bell tower at St. George's Church is a landmark in the Village of Hempstead, much admired and recognized by residents. I join my constituents in thanking Governor Pataki for allotting much needed funds to restore the bell tower to its prime condition before Mother Nature took its toll. Our community greatly appreciates the restoration." Assemblywoman Patricia Acampora said, "Governor Pataki's continued commitment to protect and enhance our values resources has had a significant influence on local efforts to improve our quality of life. The purchase of Connecticut River Estates, and its unique ecosystem, will protect this critical resource area from development and preserve it for limited recreational use. The Laurel Lake Trail initiative in Southold will improve access and enhance ongoing preservation efforts. Working in partnership with local government, Governor Pataki has made unprecedented strides to protect the natural qualities that make Long Island a special place."

Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy said, "This acquisition secures another significant piece of the Pine Barrens along the Carmans River, building upon the County's preservation efforts in this area and significantly enhancing Camp Olympia. I am pleased that the Governor continues to commit state resources for preservation of critical open spaces here in Suffolk and throughout the state. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with my state and local colleagues to enhance the quality of our environment."

John Jay LaValle, Supervisor for the Town of Brookhaven, said, "I am very proud to be standing near the banks of the Carman's River that will be preserved for generations to come because of our actions today. With this purchase, we will be adding a key part of the Carmans's river to the already substantial holdings of the town, county and state along this watershed. I thank Governor George Pataki and Senator Kenneth LaValle for their environmental leadership and partnership here on Long Island and in New York State."

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said, "The

Carmans River is treasured by Long Islanders because it provides rich and diverse wildlife habitat and supports a myriad of flora and fauna. This new acquisition will help protect this vibrant ecosystem against the growing demand for development along the river banks. In addition, this acquisition supports the protection of the South Shore Estuary Reserve.”

The Brookhaven property being preserved by the State and Town is a level, wooded site identified as a critical resource area in the Central Long Island Pine Barrens Compatible Growth Area and is adjacent to the Town and County’s jointly preserved parcel, Camp Olympia. The property is also in close proximity to DEC’s Lower Lake Fishing Access Site.

The Carmans River, also known as the Connecticut River, is a State-designated Scenic and Recreational River, and contains the largest naturally reproducing brook trout population on Long Island. Property owners had planned to use the parcel for residential development. As a result of today’s announcement, the land will now be permanently preserved for passive outdoor recreational use.

DEC Commissioner Erin M. Crotty said, “Governor Pataki’s commitment to protecting valuable open space in the Pine Barrens and throughout the State is demonstrated here again today with the purchase of Connecticut River Estates. Through Governor Pataki’s ongoing leadership, the EPF will continue to preserve critical resources and offer increased recreational opportunities for this and future generations of New Yorkers.”

State Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro said, “Today’s announcements highlight Governor Pataki’s unwavering dedication to preserving New York’s unique natural and cultural heritage. These initiatives, supported through the EPF, will enable communities on Long Island to have greater access to improved public parklands and local historic resources for the benefit of residents and visitors well into the future.”

The six EPF grant awards for Nassau and Suffolk counties are as follows:

#### NASSAU COUNTY

\* Nassau County Museum of Art, Repair the Southeast Garden Wall and Service Wing, \$255,000. The grant will allow restoration of the architecturally significant Neo-Georgian mansion in North Hempstead which welcomes more than 2.4 million visitors each year.

\* St. George's Church, Restoration of the Bell Tower, \$63,582. Exposure to the elements has resulted in damage to the structural integrity of the bell tower for the 180 year old building in the village of Hempstead.

\* Town of North Hempstead Parks and Recreation, Rehabilitation of Martin "Bunky" Reid and Broadway Parks, \$56,035. Project will rehabilitate the playground, basketball court and comfort station at the Park.

#### SUFFOLK COUNTY

\* Town of Islip, Restoration of Bay Shores' Mill Pond -- \$100,000. Through public/private

easements, land donation and a partnership with adjoining Southside Hospital, project involves the rechannelization of Penataquit Creek and restoration of the Mill Pond.

\* Town of Southold, Laurel Lake Preservation and Trail Plan -- \$97,500. The town and Suffolk Co. will purchase two properties as part of the Laurel Lake Preservation Plan. Project includes replacement of a dock, parking improvements, and trail design.

\* The Caumsett Foundation, Stabilization of the Creamery -- \$123,330. Project continues adaptive reuse of the State Park's historic structures for use as part of an educational and interpretive center.

Since 1995, New York State has preserved a total of more than 780,000 acres of open space statewide. This includes an investment of more than \$50 million to acquire and preserve approximately 6,700 acres in the Core Preservation Area of the Long Island Pine Barrens. During that same time, the Governor has committed over \$1 billion in EPF to support environmental projects to communities across New York State, including \$5 million for municipal parks projects on Long Island.