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## **ENVIRONMENTALISTS CALL FOR PARTIAL SUSPENSION OF CPF Seek Temporary Halt to all but Open Space Purchases**

**For Immediate Release    Contact: Richard Amper (631)369-3300**

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society has called for a temporary moratorium on Community Preservation Fund activities on the South Fork, for the purpose of “implementing some much needed reform” to the program which has saved 6,000 acres of land across the East End since its inception in 1999.

The environmental group said the interruption could last as few as two or three months – enough time to receive an audit from the State Comptroller’s office, expected in June; the completion of rule promulgation by a committee of government and non-government agencies, anticipated by July and a determination of how the towns of East Hampton and Southampton will reimburse their CPF funds as the result of their having spent CPF money impermissibly.

“The South Fork towns have been playing fast and loose with a voter-approved fund intended principally to protect drinking water and preserve open space,” said Pine Barrens Society Executive Director, Richard Amper. “The brief moratorium would reassure South Fork residents that CPF money is being spent properly and comes at a time when land preservation has dwindled to a near standstill,” he added. At one point, East Hampton preserved 363 acres per year; last year just 30 acres. As far back as 2001, Southampton saved 560 acres in a year; last year only 42. “Our proposed hiatus of all CPF activity except open space may actually help get land preservation back on track,” Amper said.

The call for a “time out” comes in the wake of the introduction of a resolution to transfer land purchased using CPF funds, to the Westhampton Cemetery Association for expansion of its cemetery. The proposal calls for transfer to the town of cemetery-owned property which is appraised at only half the value of the CPF purchased land and would require an act of the New York State Legislature to “alienate” the preserved land as well as a referendum by Southampton voters. No land has ever been alienated after CPF purchase. “This would be a dangerous precedent,” said Amper, “and would undermine public confidence that when land is purchased using CPF funds – it will remain preserved.”

Amper said that alternatives to the land swap were agreed to weeks ago, but were not adequately pursued. He called on Assemblyman Fred Thiele and State Senator Ken LaValle to refuse to sponsor the required legislation and to support a temporary moratorium on all but land purchases under the CPF, while reforms are put in place. “We hope that this tightening of controls will discourage inappropriate uses in the future,” Amper concluded.