

House Overwhelmingly Passes Rothman Request to Fund Meadowlands Environmental Park

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1.2 Million Allocated For Environmental Study and Restoration of 8,400 Undeveloped Acres

Washington, DC - Reaffirming its commitment to the creation of Congressman Steve Rothman's vision of an 8,400 acre Meadowlands Environmental Park, the U.S. House of Representatives today overwhelmingly approved the Congressman's request for \$1.2 million to help pay for an environmental study and the restoration of those 8,400 undeveloped acres. Rothman used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to secure the funds, which are part of the Energy and Water Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2005. The measure still has several more legislative steps to go through before the funds become available, but today's approval is considered a very significant and important step forward.

"We are making real progress in our effort to create the Meadowlands Environmental Park and this new federal allocation of \$1.2 million will help move our work even further along," Rothman said. "These new funds will allow for us to determine the best way to create our environmental park, while also continuing the process of cleaning up these acres. Once this park is completed, New Jersey residents will have an environmental oasis in an area once written off by many as a toxic wasteland. While our efforts to secure funding for the creation of this environmental park are only a few years old, we have already seen a dramatic change in the perception and appreciation of the environmental and recreational value of these 8,400 undeveloped acres."

Joined by members of the environmental community and others in the Northern New Jersey area, Rothman led the successful initiative against efforts to develop the 8,400 acres for a mega-mall and other purposes. The Congressman dealt a serious blow to those plans by getting the U.S. Congress to officially authorize and begin to pay for a study on how to clean up and preserve the 8,400 acres - keeping them free from development so that they can be turned into an environmental park.

Half of the \$1.2 million will help pay for the joint federal-state study between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) on how to preserve and clean-up the 8,400 undeveloped acres and turn them into an environmental park. The other \$600,000 portion will go toward remediation efforts in the 8,400 undeveloped acres.

Just last week, Rothman secured House approval for \$180,000 in federal funds to pay for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to serve as environmental counselors to the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. Over the past several years, Rothman has secured \$4.2 million for land acquisition in the Meadowlands, which the NJMC has matched for a total of \$8.4 million. Additionally, Rothman has secured a separate \$1 million over the past two years for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct the study and he has secured a total of \$370,000 in previous years for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to serve as an environmental consultant to the Army Corps. Rothman has also previously brought home \$500,000 in federal funds for remediation of the 8,400 acres.

"In passing this \$1.2 million for the Meadowlands Environmental Park today, the House has once again demonstrated its commitment to this very worthwhile project," Rothman said. "With this new federal funding we are taking new steps forward in our effort to create this environmental park, while also sparing state and local taxpayers from the full cost of this endeavor."

Rothman, a lifelong resident of Bergen County, has made the preservation of the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Hackensack Meadowlands -- less than half a mile from the Arena/Giants Stadium property and ten times the size of New York City's Central Park -- a top priority. He has led the effort to spare the presently undeveloped wetlands, landfills, and toxic sites from development with the intention of cleaning them up, revitalizing them, and turning them into an environmental park with opportunities for canoe trips, nature walks, bird watching, eco-tourism, other recreational activities, and an environmental education center for children.

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