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Uses Position On House Appropriations Committee To Bring Money Back To New Jersey

Washington, DC - In a critical step forward for his plan to turn the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Hackensack Meadowlands into an environmental park, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today got the U.S. House of Representatives to approve \$900,000 as part of the Fiscal Year 2004 budget for an ongoing joint federal-state study and environmental remediation of the wetlands. Rothman, who originally got Congress to authorize the study in 2001, used his position as a member of the House Appropriations Committee to convince his colleagues to provide the \$900,000 in federal funds to continue the Meadowlands study. The \$900,000, which will go to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to continue the study, is nine times the amount Congress provided to the Corps for the Meadowlands last year.

"Getting the Congress to approve these funds for the Meadowlands environmental study and remediation is a double victory for the people of New Jersey who will have their quality of life enhanced by this environmental park, while also being spared \$900,000 in local taxes for this effort," Rothman said. "This is the biggest financial commitment the Congress has ever made to the environmental study of the Meadowlands, and I am very pleased that I was able to make this happen."

The \$900,000 will help pay for the three-year, \$5.2 million U.S. Army Corps of Engineers joint study with 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. A \$100,000 portion of the \$900,000 appropriation will go toward remediation efforts in the 8,400 undeveloped acres. Rothman has consistently fought to bring home money needed to create his vision of a Meadowlands Environmental Park. Over the past two years, Rothman secured \$4.2 million for land acquisition in the Meadowlands, which the NJMC matched for a total of \$8.4 million. Additionally, last year Rothman secured \$100,000 for the study, and over the past three years, he secured \$370,000 for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to serve as environmental consultant to the Army Corps.

"Once the Meadowlands Environmental Park is created, New Jerseyans will have a natural oasis in a region of overdevelopment that will make our area more livable for generations to come," Rothman said. "I look forward to continuing to use my position in Congress and on the House Appropriations Committee, to do everything necessary to make the Meadowlands Environmental Park a reality."

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 -- 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, other recreational activities, and an environmental education center for children.

The \$900,000 for the study and remediation is included in the Energy & Water Development Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2004 - one of 13 spending bills Congress is required to pass each year. Following Senate approval later this week, the measure next moves to the White House where President Bush is expected to sign the bill into law.

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