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House Appropriations Committee Approves Funds Ten Times Current Level For U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Washington, DC - A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study on how to go about creating Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ9) plan for an 8,400 acre Hackensack Meadowlands Environmental Park received a critical boost today, when Rothman secured \$1 million from the House Appropriations Committee for the study and environmental remediation as part of the Fiscal Year 2004 budget. 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 continue providing funding to help create the environmental park. The \$1 million appropriation, which next moves to the House floor where it is expected to pass easily, is ten times the level of funding that Rothman secured for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' study as part of the Fiscal Year 2003 budget.

I am delighted that my colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee recognize the importance of saving the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Meadowlands and approved \$1 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine the best way to create our environmental park," Rothman said. "As we continue to put the pieces in place for the creation of the Meadowlands Environmental Park, it is critical that we have the resources and expertise of the federal government. I was very pleased to use my position on the Appropriations Committee to secure these crucial federal funds that will really help push our efforts along."

The \$1 million will help pay for the three-year 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 \$1 million appropriation will go toward remediation efforts in the 8,400 undeveloped acres. Rothman has consistently used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to bring home money that is 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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the study, and over the past two years, he secured \$320,000 for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As a lifelong Bergen County resident and father of two children, I recognize the importance of saving these 8,400 undeveloped acres as an environmental park and legacy for future generations of New Jerseyans," Rothman said. "In an area that is so overdeveloped, the Meadowlands Environmental Park will provide a refuge for all of us to relax and enjoy our natural settings by ourselves or with family and friends."

A century ago, the Meadowlands was a vast piece of open space spanning 21,000 acres. Today, just outside of the Arena and Giants Stadium property, only 8,400 of those acres remain undeveloped, keeping river water from flooding the streets of surrounding communities. That part of the Meadowlands still supports a diverse and growing concentration of migratory birds and is home to 65 species of nesting birds and more than 50 species of fish and shellfish.

The \$1 million for the study and remediation is included in the Energy & Water Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2004.

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