

Another Victory in Battle to Save Meadowlands

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Another Victory in Battle to Save Meadowlands Rothman Secures \$1.2 Million for Land Acquisition

Washington, DC -- Building on his recent success as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today secured \$1.2 million toward realizing his dream of cleaning up, preserving, and creating an environmental park on the remaining acres of undeveloped space in the Hackensack Meadowlands. The House of Representatives this afternoon approved the Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2002, which includes Rothman-authored language that allocates funds for the acquisition of land in the Meadowlands from willing private sellers.

Under the provisions of the measure, the federal government will provide \$1.2 million for land acquisition which will be matched by a local partner for a total of \$2.4 million. It is widely expected that the local matching partner will be the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission.

"In order for us to ensure that the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Meadowlands are saved and restored, it is important that we acquire that area and give control to an authority that is committed to its preservation," Rothman said. "Another very important feature of this measure is that the government is only authorized to purchase land from willing sellers who are given fair market value for their property."

As a lifelong resident of Bergen County, Rothman has made the preservation of the Hackensack Meadowlands a top priority. Over the past several months, Rothman repeatedly urged Congressional budget leaders to include the funds for Meadowlands land acquisition in the Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary Appropriations bill.

Rothman has had great success over the past several weeks as he continues to work toward the preservation of the entire 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Meadowlands. On Monday, President Bush signed into law the Energy and Water Appropriations bill that includes Rothman-authored language that requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a study of how best to save the Meadowlands. Bush also signed the Interior Appropriations bill last week which includes \$140,000 that Rothman had included for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to serve as environmental counselors to the Army Corps during the study.

"We are really making great strides toward something very special," Rothman said of the recently approved bills that help save the Meadowlands. "With each related measure Congress approves and the President signs, we take an important step toward the preservation of the entire 8,400 undeveloped acres in the Hackensack Meadowlands, and toward ensuring that this land is cleaned up and maintained as an environmental park for our children and generations to come. Our dream of protecting, cleaning, and preserving all of the remaining open space in the Meadowlands is moving closer to reality."

The Hackensack Meadowlands supports a diverse concentration of migratory birds and is home to 65 species of nesting birds, and more than 50 species of fish and shellfish. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the Meadowlands as a wetland of national importance, and the National Marine Fisheries Services describes it as an essential fish habitat. The Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary Appropriations bill is one of 13 spending bills Congress is required to pass each year. Following Senate approval, which is anticipated in the coming days, the bill will head to the White House where the president is expected to sign it into law.

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