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Hackensack, NJ -- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) announced five concrete steps to be taken to preserve the last remaining parcels of open space in the Hackensack Meadowlands as a result of a recent environmental "summit" meeting he organized. Rothman held the "summit" on preserving the Meadowlands and brought conservation groups and state, local and federal agencies to the table together for the first time.

"This was an excellent meeting which brought diverse parties to the same table and gave everyone an opportunity to look at the big picture together," Rothman said. "We are now, I think more than ever, united in our efforts to preserve the last remaining parcels of open space in the Hackensack Meadowlands. This important meeting has now energized all the participants to focus our efforts in the Meadowlands primarily towards open space acquisition, clean up and preservation and to work for the first time, as partners, seeking a common goal."

Rothman announced the five concrete steps agreed to at the meeting:

- 1) The conservation groups will provide the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission (HMDC) with a list of additional parcels that should be acquired, as well as justifications for doing so.
- 2) Utilize the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Program under the Army Corps of Engineers to obtain funds to purchase and clean up the Meadowlands. This program is similar to the Florida Everglades program.
- 3) Form a relationship between Green Acres (New Jersey's land acquisition program) and HMDC to explore funding options.
- 4) Have Rutgers University Environmental Law Clinic work with environmental groups and the HMDC to provide a list of all possible funding sources.
- 5) Meet again after a decision is reached by the state about the future of the Continental Airlines Arena site.

"I am excited about the progress we've made and I am very hopeful for the future," Rothman said. "The important thing is that we protect and clean up the remaining open space in the Meadowlands for future generations."

The meeting included representatives of: Hackensack Riverkeeper, Natural Resources Defense Council, New Jersey Audubon Society, New York/New Jersey Riverkeeper, Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, Army Corps of Engineers, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Rutgers University Environmental Law Clinic, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

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[Go back](#)