

Federal Government Sends A-Team to Tour Saddle River Flood Area with Rothman, Local Officials

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Contact: Kimberly Allen, (202) 226-8364; (202) 420-1524 [cell]

Federal Government Responds to Rep. Rothman, Sends 'A-Team' to Tour Saddle River Flood Area with Him and Local Officials

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Saddle Brook resident Brigida Bailey, a Secretary at Saddle Brook High School, explains the costly damage caused by continual flooding to Asst. Army Secretary Woodley, Rep. Rothman, Saddle Brook Mayor Lou D'Arminio, and others.

(Hackensack, NJ)-At Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-Fair Lawn) invitation, Assistant U.S. Army Secretary John Paul Woodley, Jr., who heads the Civil Works Program, and top U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control officials from Washington, DC and the New York/New Jersey District Office, toured two Bergen County towns severely impacted by Lower Saddle River flooding. Joining them for the site visits on September 4, 2007 were Saddle Brook Mayor Louis D'Arminio, Lodi Mayor Karen Viscana, and Lodi Borough Manager Anthony Luna.

"I commend Assistant Secretary Woodley for coming to Saddle Brook and Lodi to see for himself how many people, how many buildings, and how many businesses were hurt by continued flooding of the Lower Saddle River," said Rothman. "It is a good sign that the Administration sent its A-team today. This tour is a necessary step in pushing the Corps to fund the Lower Saddle River flood control project."

Woodley's visit to Northern New Jersey comes as the Administration begins preparing its Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 budget, which the Assistant Secretary will help write. In 1996, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed a plan to control flooding along the Lower Saddle River, but did not act due to a lack of funding for the estimated \$90 million (in 1996 dollars) project.

Rep. Rothman and local officials say that the Administration can no longer afford to wait to set aside enough money to begin construction on this project. "The devastating aftermath of April's nor'easter and multi-million expense of rebuilding prove that it's more cost-effective to complete construction on the Lower Saddle River flood control project now than to wait for the next major storm to hit," explains Rothman.

In Bergen County alone, FEMA gave out \$6 million in individual assistance following the April nor'easter. FEMA has allocated over \$10 million for aid to towns and municipalities, but has not yet determined how it will disseminate that funding throughout the state. And there are millions in additional costs to individuals, businesses, and insurance companies in the towns affected by Saddle River flooding: Lodi, Saddle Brook, Garfield, Wallington, South Hackensack, Fair Lawn, Rochelle Park, and Paramus.

In Saddle Brook, Woodley and elected officials toured the private residence of Regina Durisko, an 86-year-old woman whose home has been destroyed four times by flooding. She can't afford to uproot and move at this stage in her life and appealed to federal officials to prevent future devastation rather than simply respond to it. She noted that help in the aftermath of a major storm is never enough, adding that she has only received \$5,000 in FEMA aid over the past forty years.

In Lodi, officials toured the Main Street corridor, Boys and Girls Club property, and the Felician College Campus, all of which sit on low lying property close to the river.

Currently, the Army Corps of Engineers is updating the hydraulic and hydrologic modeling, environmental documentation, and economic justifications contained in its 1996 study, thanks to \$315,000 in federal funding secured by Rep. Rothman since FY2006. New, accurate data is necessary if the Corps is to begin construction in the coming years, according to Major General Don Riley, an official overseeing the Army's annual Civil Works Program under Asst. Sec. Woodley. To complete that study, Rothman has requested an additional \$500,000 in the Fiscal Year 2008 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. Once the federally required updated study has been completed, design and construction of the flooding prevention project can take place. The estimated cost of that design and construction work is expected to be in excess of \$100 million.

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