

Rothman Announces Funds to Continue His Work to Save 8,400 Acres in the Meadowlands

For Immediate Release: May 1, 2006

Contacts:

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

Christopher Gale, Meadowlands Commission, (201) 460-4692; (201) 274-3849 [cell]

Rothman Secures Over \$3.6 Million for Meadowlands Environmental Park

With Open Space at a Premium, Funds Will Help Continue His Work to Save the 8,400 Acres

Pictured: Congressman Rothman and students from Paterson Public School #18 in the Hackensack Meadowlands.

(Lyndhurst, NJ)—Joined by third graders learning about the Meadowlands, Rothman and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) today announced progress toward an 8,400-acre environmental park in the Meadowlands thanks to ongoing federal support. Rothman presented the NJMC with \$3,660,000 to continue planning and preservation activities in the Hackensack Meadowlands.

“Now that we’ve saved these 8,400 acres from development, these additional federal dollars will help the NJMC carry out the clean-up and construction work necessary to begin the creation of the Meadowlands environmental park. During the past 6 years, much progress has been made to turn what was once seen as a poisoned marshland into a magnificent recreational, educational, and environmental experience for the people of this area,” said Rothman. “Already we have children and students visiting the Meadowlands for environmental education programs and river rides, and to see the spectacular return of birds, wildlife and native plants in the area,” said Rothman.

Ever since he came to Congress in 1997, Rothman has fought to save, preserve, and clean-up the last 8,400 acres of open space in the Hackensack Meadowlands, with the goal of establishing a Meadowlands Environmental Park. Last Wednesday, the preliminary findings of a study about bird populations in the Meadowlands showed promising results. Visitors can now observe over 265 different species of birds, many of them endangered or threatened, in the Meadowlands.

"Realizing the goal of a fully revived and ecologically vibrant Meadowlands should be pursued in innovative ways that do not specifically burden state taxpayers and that recognize the national importance of this urban wilderness," said NJMC Chairwoman and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin. "Congressman Rothman's support toward that end and the passion he shares with us for the revitalization of this unique environmental treasure and its message of hope and recovery has been invaluable."

"Every year Congressman Rothman has come back from Washington with federal dollars that have helped this agency and our stakeholders realize the goal of a sustainable and environmentally sound future," said NJMC Executive Director Robert Ceberio. "This is important work and partnerships like the one that has been forged and renewed here are crucial to success."

Pictured: Congressman Rothman greets third graders visiting the Meadowlands to study "Ecology of the Estuary."

Of the new funding, \$2.1 million dollars has been set aside for remediation, which is general enhancement work to make the land a better habitat for wildlife and visitors. For instance, efforts to restore tidal flow, curb invasive species harming the land, and heal polluted areas are underway for 1,027 acres, including the 587 acres that comprise the oft-referenced "Jewel of the Meadowlands," the Richard P. Kane Natural Area.

The remaining \$1.56 million in federal funds will be used to fund water quality improvements and ongoing environmental studies of undeveloped space in the Meadowlands by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and NJMC. These multi-year federal studies, commissioned by Congress at Rothman's request, began in 2003 and are expected to be complete within the next two years provided funding remains available. The findings of this research will lay the groundwork for the next decade of remediation.

Since 2002, Rothman has secured over \$9.7 million for work toward a planned Meadowlands Environmental Park, including \$4.2 million for land acquisition, \$2.63 million for planning and research, \$2.2 million for clean up and remediation, and \$700,000 for water quality improvements. These totals include the \$3,660,000 presented today, which were secured in the 2005 and 2006 Energy and Water, Interior, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bills.

###