

## Rothman Secures Funding Partnership Agreement to Purchase 1,000 Undeveloped Acres in Meadowlands

April 23, 2003

Rothman Secures Funding Partnership Agreement From New Jersey Meadowlands Commission To Purchase 1,000 Undeveloped Acres

State Commits \$3 Million To Match \$3 Million Congressman Secured For Environmental Park

Lyndhurst, NJ -- Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ9) plans for an 8,400 acre Meadowlands Environmental Park took a critical step forward today when he secured a funding partnership agreement from the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) that will result in the purchase of approximately 1,000 of the 1,800 remaining undeveloped acres in the Meadowlands that are privately owned. NJMC Chairwoman Susan Bass Levin announced that the NJMC will match the \$3 million Rothman obtained for land acquisition as part of the Fiscal Year 2003 budget, bringing the total funds available for land acquisition this year to \$6 million.

"The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission continues to demonstrate that it is a true partner in our effort to save, cleanup, and preserve the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Hackensack Meadowlands in order to turn those acres into an environmental park," said Rothman, who had asked Bass Levin to continue to have the NJMC serve as the local matching partner of federal land acquisition funds. "In agreeing to match the \$3 million I secured this year from Congress, for a total of \$6 million, Governor McGreevey, NJMC Chairwoman Bass Levin, NJMC Executive Director Bob Ceberio, Commissioner James Anzevino, Commissioner Michael Gonnelli, Commissioner Leonard Kaiser, Commissioner Mia Macri, Commissioner Eleanore Nissley, and Commissioner Arleen Walther are helping to make the dream of a Meadowlands Environmental Park a reality."

Rothman, a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, this year secured \$3 million from the federal government for land acquisition in the Hackensack Meadowlands from willing sellers at fair market value -- the highest level of funding that Congress has ever appropriated for the environmental park Rothman has been fighting to create in the Meadowlands. As a condition for releasing the funds, Congress required a local partner to match the funds. That condition was met today through the NJMC commitment.

"A few years ago many thought that saving the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Meadowlands would be impossible," Rothman said. "But today, with this latest installment of \$6 million of federal and Meadowlands Commission funds, we can purchase approximately 1,000 of the remaining 1,800 acres not yet publicly owned. As a result of this matching grant, we will soon be more than 90 percent of the way toward having secured all of the open space."

In June 2001, Rothman, a lifelong resident of Bergen County, got the U.S. House of Representatives to authorize a formal U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study on how best to purchase, cleanup, and turn the 8,400 acres of undeveloped land in the Hackensack Meadowlands -- just a stone's throw from the Continental Airlines Arena site -- into an environmental park. Then, as part of the budget for Fiscal Year 2002, Rothman used his position as a member of the House Appropriations Committee to secure \$1.2 million for land acquisition, which was matched by the NJMC for a total of \$2.4 million. Additionally, he obtained \$140,000 in federal funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to serve as environmental consultants to the U.S. Army Corps in its study.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2003 budget, Rothman obtained \$180,000 for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and \$100,000 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their joint study along with the NJMC on how to go about cleaning up and preserving the 8,400 undeveloped acres into an environmental park. In what was the last necessary authorization before the study could commence, the NJMC's Board of Commissioners in January 2003 approved the joint federal-state study, which Rothman worked to put in place.

“At a time of over development in New Jersey and across the nation, this environmental park will be a testament to our foresight on the importance of open space preservation. I look forward to the day when all of us, followed by our children and our children’s children will be able to enjoy the Meadowlands Environmental Park with all of its magnificent natural beauty,” Rothman said. “As residents of the most densely populated region of the most densely populated state in the nation, saving, cleaning up, and preserving these remaining undeveloped acres is crucial to improving the quality of life for this and future generations of New Jersey and New York Metropolitan area residents.”

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.

###

[Go back](#)