

Rothman's Proposed Meadowlands Environmental Park Picks Up Steam As Congress Approves \$3.28 Million

February 14, 2003

Rothman's Proposed Meadowlands Environmental Park Picks Up Steam As Congress Approves \$3.28 Million
Congressman Secures \$3 Million For Land Acquisition, \$280,000 For Study On How To Save The Wetlands

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ9) plan for an 8,400 acre environmental park in the Hackensack Meadowlands took another major step forward late last night as Congress approved \$3.28 million for land acquisition in the Meadowlands and for the federal government to conduct its study of how best to save those acres. Rothman, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, worked with budget leaders to secure the Meadowlands money, which constitutes the highest level of funding that Congress has ever appropriated for the environmental park.

"With \$3.28 million in federal funds now on their way to save and preserve the Meadowlands, our dream of an environmental park is on the fast-track to becoming reality," Rothman said. "Coupled with Wednesday's news that the precious 592 acre Empire Tract will be spared from development by the Mills Corp./Mack-Cali's designation as the Arena site redeveloper, plans for the Meadowlands Environmental Park have advanced dramatically this week."

Under the provisions of the just approved 2003 budget, the federal government will provide \$3 million for land acquisition in the Hackensack Meadowlands from willing sellers at fair market value. Additionally, \$180,000 will go to 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 New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) on how to go about preserving and cleaning up 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 last month approved the joint federal-state study, which Rothman got Congress to approve and local authorities to agree to.

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.

"I am delighted that my colleagues in Congress have approved this historic level of funding and continue to see the importance of saving the 8,400 undeveloped acres of the Hackensack Meadowlands. Given the current fiscal situation in the country, I am grateful to have gotten the \$3.28 million, and will press for even more funding in next year's budget," Rothman said. "Six years ago, people thought it would be impossible to turn these 8,400 acres into an environmental park. Today, we are proving those skeptics wrong."

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.

The Meadowlands money was included in the final spending bill for Fiscal Year 2003 that the House and Senate both overwhelmingly approved Thursday night. The measure now moves to the White House where President Bush is expected to sign it into law.

###

[Go back](#)