

House Approves Rothman Measure to Preserve Meadowlands

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to Conduct Restoration Study

Washington, DC -- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) used his position as a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee to win a major victory in his continuing effort to save the entire 8,400 undeveloped acres in the Hackensack Meadowlands. The U.S. House of Representatives today approved the Energy & Water Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2002 that includes language Rothman authored to require a study of how best to restore all of the open space now left in the Hackensack Meadowlands.

"Today we have won a major battle in our effort to preserve the last undeveloped parcels of the Hackensack Meadowlands, one of the few large tracts of open space remaining in Northern New Jersey," Rothman said. "In order to save this land from development and then to clean up and restore it as part of an open space environmental park or preserve, we must first explore all the many different resources available. This measure will allow the Corps of Engineers to develop a comprehensive plan about how to best save and restore the open space remaining in the Meadowlands."

Rothman, a lifelong resident of Bergen County, has made the preservation of the Hackensack Meadowlands a top priority. Earlier this year, Rothman held an environmental summit that brought conservation groups, state, local, and federal agencies to the table for the first time to provide direction on a plan to preserve the Meadowlands.

"Preserving the Meadowlands will not be done in one day, and it will not be done by one federal, state or local agency," Rothman said. "However, working together, I am hopeful we can realize the dream of protecting, cleaning up and preserving all the remaining open space in the Meadowlands for future generations."

The study provision Rothman authored will be conducted as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Hudson-Raritan Estuary Restoration Project, which provides environmental restoration feasibility studies to identify, select and evaluate solutions for estuary-wide ecosystem restoration projects. Currently the project involves 13 sites in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. Under the bill the entire 8,400 acres of open space in the Hackensack Meadowlands will be examined for restoration and preservation.

Last month, the House and U.S. Senate approved another Meadowlands measure Rothman authored that provides \$140,000 to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to serve as an environmental counselor to the Army Corps during its restoration study.

The Hackensack Meadowlands supports a diverse concentration of migratory birds and is home to 65 species of nesting birds, and more than 50 species of fish and shellfish. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the Meadowlands as a wetland of national importance, and the National Marine Fisheries Services describes it as an essential fish habitat. The Energy and Water Appropriations bill is one of 13 spending bills that Congress is required to pass each year. Following Senate approval, which is anticipated in the coming days, the bill will head to the White House where the president is expected to sign it into law.

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