

Hudson River Caucus Will Coordinate and Bolster Efforts to Further Hudson River Revitalization

Governor George E. Pataki, joined by Congressional representatives John Sweeney, Sue Kelly and Nita Lowey, announced the formation of a new Hudson River Congressional Caucus -- a bipartisan delegation that will be dedicated to preserving the River's cultural, historical, environmental and economic resources.

The Governor and Congressional leaders were joined by local elected officials and representatives of several Hudson River organizations in making the announcement at Riverfront Park in Beacon on the banks of the Hudson, where they discussed the mission of the newest Congressional Caucus.

"The formation of this new bipartisan Hudson River Congressional Caucus represents another significant step in our efforts to protect and renew the Hudson River," Governor Pataki said. "We're proud of the tremendous progress we've made to safeguard the health of this majestic waterway and communities up and down the banks of the Hudson are reaping the benefits of our efforts to increase access, enhance water quality, protect habitat and improve the overall quality of life for residents. I look forward to working with New York's Congressional delegation to make even greater progress in securing the future health of the Hudson River."

The Caucus will be chaired by Congressman John Sweeney and Congresswoman Nita Lowey. Other members of the Caucus include Representatives Sue Kelly, Sherwood Boehlert, Eliot Engel, Maurice Hinchey, John McHugh, Michael McNulty, Jerrold Nadler, Charles Rangel, and Jose Serrano.

"With the formation of the Hudson River Caucus, the Hudson now has a powerful friend in Washington," Congressman Sweeney said. "This group will do everything it can to ensure a healthy and prosperous Hudson."

Congresswoman Nita Lowey said, "From Henry Hudson's early explorations and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' to today's waterfront development projects, the Hudson River has enriched life in this region for centuries. Ensuring the health of this waterway is not only about protecting the environment, it's about preserving history and boosting our economy. I look forward to working with the members of the Hudson River Caucus to protect this magnificent resource and make the most of the opportunities it offers the Hudson Valley."

As a bipartisan coalition of Representatives from the Hudson Valley and Hudson River region, the group will be dedicated to preserving the river's cultural, historical, environmental and economic resources. Its primary objectives are:

- * the establishment of the Rivers and Estuaries Center in conjunction with local universities and State and federal agencies to advance the understanding of rivers, estuaries and their watersheds through integrated, collaborative research and education designed to guide policy for conservation and management of these natural systems, from the Hudson River to the rivers and estuaries of the world;
- * support for the American Heritage Rivers Initiative for the Hudson, which is designed to assist Hudson River communities and the State to implement federal programs and to attract federal funds;
- * ensure the Hudson River's various historical designations maximize funding for

related tourist destinations and economic development in the region; and
* enhance public access by redeveloping former industrial sites, preserving green spaces, and developing bike and pedestrian paths along the river.

The Caucus will work on federal funding initiatives, legislation and raising awareness to their three agenda items in Washington.

The announcement was made near the site of the future Rivers and Estuaries Center on the Hudson in the City of Beacon. Governor Pataki proposed the development of the Rivers and Estuaries Center on the Hudson in his 2000 State of the State Address. Last year, the Governor announced the selection of Beacon as the future home of the Center. When completed, the Center will be a world-class facility dedicated to the study of rivers and estuaries.

In addition to the main Rivers and Estuaries Center, satellite facilities will be established in Rensselaer and Rockland counties by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University to further advance river and estuary studies.

The Center will also offer unique educational programs, including seminars designed specifically for teachers, students and citizen scientists. The complex will consist of a main office, conference center, docking facilities, classrooms and laboratory facilities. A series of public lectures, forums and special events will be offered, utilizing the expertise of Center staff and visiting professionals.

John Cronin, Managing Director of the Rivers and Estuaries Center, said, "The Hudson River Congressional Caucus brings together the nation's most formidable Congresspersons to be the federal leaders in the restoration of the Hudson River, the rebuilding of its waterfronts, and the transformation of its waters and watershed into a global center for environmental learning, research, and education."

In May 1996, Governor Pataki released the Hudson River Estuary Action Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for the long-term protection and renewal of the river and its ecosystem from New York Harbor to the Troy dam. The plan was last updated in 2002, and to date \$190 million has been committed to its implementation from a variety of sources including the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and the State Environmental Protection Fund.

In 1997, Governor Pataki successfully nominated the entire length of the Hudson River to be one of the nation's first American Heritage Rivers. While more than 100 rivers or river segments were proposed for this program, the Hudson was one of only 14 rivers selected the following year.

In 1998, Governor Pataki signed legislation to create the Hudson River Park and Park Trust and has committed \$100 million toward construction of the 550-acre Hudson River Park, the most important and dramatic open space project undertaken in New York City since the creation of Central Park. The legislation also creates a 401-acre Estuarine Sanctuary for the underwater lands located in the southern portion of the park.

In 1999, Governor Pataki petitioned the federal government to have the Hudson River designated a waste "no discharge zone" for boats from Manhattan to the Troy Dam. The Governor also signed legislation in 1999 to support the "no discharge zone" designation by requiring marinas located on the Hudson River to provide pump-out facilities and dump stations for boaters in numbers sufficient to meet the federal criteria. Under the Clean Water Act, states may petition, by a written application, for a "No Discharge Area" designation from the EPA Regional Administrator. Last fall, the new designation was approved.

To date, Governor Pataki has targeted more than \$250 million for projects that will improve the health of the Hudson River, including \$190 million for initiatives in the Hudson River Estuary. Funding for the Estuary includes:

- * \$50 million from the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act earmarked for water quality improvement and habitat restoration projects from the New York Harbor to Troy. All of this funding has been awarded.
- * \$47 million from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), an average of \$6 million annually, since 1996 for implementation of the Hudson River Estuary Action Plan;
- * \$22 million in additional Bond Act funds have funded open space protection, municipal park improvements and brownfield investigation and cleanup projects;
- * \$51.7 million in other State and federal funds for waterfront revitalization, habitat restoration, public access and non-point source pollution control projects;
- * \$19.6 million as New York's share of river-wide monitoring and trackdown of contaminant sources and pollution cleanup funded through the New York-New Jersey Port Restoration Agreement.