

Washington, DC - As part of his continuing effort to help limit future flood damage in the Southern Tier, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that he's secured the House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$100,000 for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin a new study that will identify ways to mitigate flooding along the Upper Susquehanna River Basin. Additionally, in order to provide relief to victims of past floods, particularly those affected by the June 2006 flood, Hinchey also announced that he's introduced legislation that would retroactively lift the cap of \$5,400 that was made available to households for home repairs through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2006 and increase total available assistance to \$28,200, which is the level it has been since October 2006.

"By making targeted investments in flood mitigation efforts now, we will save lives and prevent a significant amount of property damage in the future," Hinchey said. "I am very pleased that my colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee agreed to my request that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers receive funding for an important study on ways we can limit flood damage along the Upper Susquehanna River. By bringing in some of the best engineers in the country, we will identify and implement the ways in which we can make adjustments to the river basin so that we don't have to experience anything like the flooding of June 2006 again."

The new flood study for which Hinchey secured funding is one of only 25 new such studies that the Army Corps is conducting across the country. The congressman used his position as a member of the House Appropriations Committee to obtain the funding. The federal money will enable the Army Corps to commence a reconnaissance study that will help determine different ways flooding can be limited or prevented along the Upper Susquehanna River Basin. Following the study, it's expected that the Corps will begin work to implement the study's suggestions.

It's estimated that flood mitigation work that the Army Corps completed prior to June 2006 prevented \$450 million in damage beyond the destruction that occurred. Following the flood event, emergency programs and additional operation and maintenance funds were used to the fullest extent possible. While this aided in short-term and emergency-type assistance, these funds are not available for proactive planning and evaluations to forecast or address future flood events and problem areas. In addition, the short-term and emergency funds are for site-specific issues that arise following a flood event and are not applicable for comprehensive watershed or basinwide solutions. Hinchey said a systems-based approach is needed to identify appropriate federal and non-federal problem areas as well as what types of investments are needed to reduce future flood damages and save lives.

The retroactive flood relief bill Hinchey introduced in the House would enable eligible victims of the June 2006 flood, as well as victims of other major disasters declared by FEMA between January 1, 2006 and October 4, 2006, to potentially receive up to \$22,800 in additional FEMA assistance beyond the maximum of \$5,400 they were able to receive for home repairs at the time of the flood.

"Given that Congress dramatically raised the maximum individual assistance limit for victims of federally-declared emergencies just over three months after the June 2006 flood, it is only appropriate that we rollback that date so that the victims of the flood in New York and other areas can receive much-needed assistance," Hinchey said. "The damage done by the June 2006 flood was so severe that many New Yorkers are still grappling with their losses. This bill would provide them with the same level of support that victims of new federal disasters receive. I thank Conklin resident Greg Jenkins for his tireless efforts to help the victims of the June 2006 flood and for raising this issue on their behalf."

In June 2006, New York was damaged by rainfall that caused severe flooding. Flooding of this magnitude had not been seen since the mid-1930's. Thousands of flood victims were evacuated and many of their homes were destroyed. Hinchey helped secure a presidential declaration of a Major Disaster on July 1, 2006, which enabled individuals in the following counties to become eligible for FEMA benefits: Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Orange, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, and Ulster counties. The victims in those counties would each be eligible to receive up to \$28,200 in federal flood relief assistance to cover damage to their property.

Last month, Hinchey secured the House's approval of \$462,000 for much-needed flood prevention work in the City of Binghamton and the Town of Union. Those funds will be used to construct a concrete wall with a flood closure system and to make improvements to a flood channel.

Earlier this year, Hinchey helped prevent the discontinuation of streamgages along the Susquehanna and other parts of New York that provide valuable flood forecasting and warning information. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which manages streamgages, had planned to close dozens of them because of budget constraints. As a result of pressure from Hinchey and others, USGS announced on April 8 that funding would be restored for 17 of the most critical streamgages along the Susquehanna, Delaware, and Walkill river basins.

