

Funds Would Go To U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers To Examine Ways In Which To Prevent Future Floods

Washington, DC - Following through on his commitment to prevent local systemic flooding, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) yesterday secured the House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$250,000 for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a feasibility study of flood prevention work along the Esopus, Wallkill and Rondout creeks. Hinchey, who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, had that panel include the funds for the flood study as part of the Fiscal Year 2009 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. The measure still has several legislative steps to go, but having the funds included in the original version of the bill is considered a critical step in the process. The funds may also face a challenge from President Bush who has said he opposes the inclusion of funding for such projects. Additionally, the Army Corps needs to confirm a local partner that could match the federal allocation of \$250,000.

"The approval of these funds by the House Appropriations Committee represents an important step forward in our efforts to have the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conduct a comprehensive study of what can be done to stop the systemic flooding that has plagued communities along the Esopus, Wallkill and Rondout creeks," Hinchey said. "The Army Corps of Engineers wants to conduct this study because it believes it has the technical expertise to help the people who live along these creeks avoid being repeatedly plagued by flooding. I look forward to continuing to push this important funding through the rest of the legislative process and ensuring the commencement of this study in a timely fashion."

At a meeting Hinchey organized in April 2008, representatives from the Army Corps told local officials that their preliminary work found there to be a significant enough federal interest that warranted a full study that would pave the way for flood prevention work. The Army Corps officials said that before their findings are sent to the national headquarters the law requires that a local sponsor of the project needs to be in place. Hinchey is working with the Corps to establish a local partnership.

Last year, Hinchey obtained the authority for the Army Corps to engage in cooperative, long-term activities within the Esopus and Rondout basins that will repair damage caused by continuous flooding, mitigate against future flooding and remove sediment accumulated in portions of the lower Esopus in the Towns of Hurley and Ulster. Additionally, the authorization

Hinchey secured allows the Corps to engage in other projects with economic benefits to communities within the watersheds such as relocating the navigable channel in the lower Rondout in downtown Kingston -- allowing for marina construction and clearing the way for further economic activity on the waterfront.

Once the funds become official, a local partner is confirmed, and the Army Corps' national headquarters approves the program, local Army Corps officials will work with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Ulster County, local municipalities and local non-governmental groups, to oversee the planning and implementation of a plan to address the many challenges facing these waterways.