

Washington, DC – Congressman Steny Hoyer today announced that the House of Representatives has passed the Agriculture Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2005, which includes significant federal funds for a number of programs that will benefit Southern Maryland. Rep. Hoyer, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, took a lead role in securing the funding for these important projects which were not included in the President's budget for fiscal year 2005.

"I am pleased that the House continues to recognize the value of investing in programs that develop partnerships to support agriculture, forestry or other natural resource-based industries throughout the state, while also working to preserve Maryland's vital open spaces," said Congressman Hoyer. "I am a strong supporter of the work being done at the Center for Maryland Agro-Ecology at the University of Maryland."

Hoyer also announced that the "Alternative Uses of Tobacco Project," which has been carried out at the University of Maryland, College Park for the past two years, will also receive additional funding in the House bill. "Of Maryland's 1,017 tobacco growers, 863 have participated in the state tobacco buyout program agreed to in November of 1998. The buyout program is voluntary but once a farmer signs up to participate he or she may only produce tobacco for non-smoking purposes and must keep the land in agriculture for ten additional years. As a result of the buyout, there has been a decrease in Maryland tobacco production and tobacco growers need alternative uses to keep the crop economically viable. This funding demonstrates the important federal partnership in one of the potential solutions to saving agriculture in our region," added Hoyer.

"Finally, the technologies currently under development at the University of Maryland through the Chesapeake Bay Agro-Ecology Research Initiative may one day lead to effective methods for reducing nutrient concentrations in tributaries and the Chesapeake Bay. **"I will work to ensure that funding for these programs is included in the final legislation when it is signed into law,"**

Hoyer

concluded.

Congressman Hoyer helped secure funding for the following list of programs that will benefit Southern Maryland.

University of Maryland Tobacco Alternative Study, \$350,000

For over 350 years tobacco production has been the heart of agriculture in Southern Maryland. As tobacco production for use in cigarettes becomes increasingly less profitable, farmers will require new crop options if agriculture is to remain viable in Southern Maryland and other traditional tobacco-growing regions. There is tremendous promise in alternative uses for tobacco. At the request of Congressman Hoyer, the Congress provided \$360,000 in each of the fiscal years from 2002 to 2004 for the Alternative Tobacco Program at the University of Maryland. Funding for this program was not included in the President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget. The federal funding secured by Congressman Hoyer is the only source of funding for this study. This research is working to develop new non-smoking uses for tobacco, and explores the many valuable uses of the plant. Successful development of this project could help maintain an agricultural base in Southern Maryland, and serve as a model for other tobacco-producing areas.

Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology to Receive \$355,000

The Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology was established, under the leadership of former Maryland Governor Harry Hughes, to convene environmental, business, and elected leaders to develop a consensus on research, education and policy programs in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The Center provides competitive grants and works to educate key officials and the public about the aesthetic, environmental and economic value of our farms, forests and other open spaces and the need to protect and enhance open space-based industries in Maryland.

Congressman Hoyer helped secure \$357,000 in fiscal year 2004 and \$400,000 in fiscal year 2003 for the Center for Agro-Ecology to support vital initiatives that protect Maryland's open space and farm and forest-based enterprises which are significant contributors to Maryland's economy.

University of Maryland Chesapeake Bay Agro-Ecology Research Initiative to Receive \$334,000

Over the past several years there have been serious outbreaks of the toxic microorganism Pfiesteria along the Atlantic Seaboard. Linked to the flow of excess nutrients into waterways, these toxic algae blooms seriously impact the regional agriculture-based economies and threaten vital finfish resources in the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland has emerged as the leader nationally in implementing agricultural nutrient management, soil conservation, tributary teams

and other cooperative planning strategies to confront the Pfiesteria problem.

Congressman Hoyer has helped lead this response to these invasive and destructive algae, securing more than \$10 million to react to the outbreak, contain it and study its effects on humans. He helped secure \$286,000 last year for the Agro-Ecology Research Initiative, \$320,000 in fiscal year 2003 and \$175,000 in fiscal year 2002. This year's funding of \$334,000 would continue the progress of this program and would be matched equally by University of Maryland funds.

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