

WASHINGTON – Congressman Steny Hoyer, a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee and the only member from Maryland, today announced that the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2006 Energy and Water Appropriations conference report, which named the Poplar Island project for U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes. The conference report also provides \$13.4 million for the Poplar Island project as well as \$17.2 million for Baltimore Harbor maintenance dredging.

“It is appropriate and fitting that Congress recognize the leadership and commitment Paul Sarbanes has shown over the years to restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay. I am proud to have led the effort to bestow this well deserved honor on one of the real environmental champions in the U.S. Senate and the state of Maryland,” Hoyer said.

In addition to being renamed the Paul S. Sarbanes Ecosystem Restoration Project at Poplar Island, the conference report also provides \$13.4 million in funding for the project. Over the past eight years, Congressman Hoyer has worked to secure more than \$130 million in funding for the Poplar Island project. This project, which has helped the Army Corps of Engineers address the critical issue of disposal of dredge materials from the Baltimore Harbor, is also the largest environmental restoration project undertaken by the Army Corps.

Poplar Island was recently on the verge of disappearing, but is today a national model for habitat restoration and the beneficial use of dredged material. When completed, an 1100-acre wildlife sanctuary, including wetlands and bird nesting habitats, will have been created. The total federal cost of the project is estimated at \$254 million. Construction began in 1998 and the project is expected to be completed by 2020.

“I am pleased to support a project that will turn the dredge spoils from the Baltimore Harbor into a wildlife sanctuary for many species of wildlife native to the Chesapeake, including eagles, osprey, heron, egret, and the diamondback terrapin,” added Hoyer.

The conference report also provides the Army Corps of Engineers \$17.2 million for work on the Baltimore Harbor, to continue its annual dredging of approximately 2.5 million cubic yards of material to maintain the deep channels in the Baltimore District each year so that large shipping vessel boats can navigate the channels. Rep. Hoyer fought to provide an increase of more than \$2 million above the President’s request. Over the years, Hoyer has secured hundreds of millions of dollars for improvements at the Baltimore Harbor.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for maintaining the federal channels used by ships and watermen in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the Baltimore Harbor. The dredge materials are barged to Poplar Island where over time, it will help to restore the island.

“The Port of Baltimore is a significant economic engine for our state and as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I am pleased to have worked for the past several years to ensure that Congress maintains its long-standing commitment to the Baltimore Harbor,” said Congressman Hoyer. “The Harbor presently supports nearly 115,400 jobs in the State of Maryland, generates more than \$1.4 billion for the State and regional economies and represents one-tenth of Maryland’s gross state product.

“As we are faced with heightened homeland security concerns at the major ports throughout the nation, it is critical that we continue to ensure that points of entry like the Baltimore Harbor are maintained to insure their continued viability. I am pleased that this bill reaffirms Congress’ long-standing history of supporting this important dredging project to insure the viability of Baltimore as a major port,” Hoyer concluded.

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