

Castle Highlights New Law He Helped Write to Protect Delaware River from Future Oil Spills -- August 14, 2006

Wilmington, DE -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle joined together today with local environmental, commerce and business officials at Fox Point State Park to highlight a new law he helped write, to prevent future oil spills in the Delaware River.

Joining the Congressman at Fox Point State Park were Captain Ted Harrop, Philadelphia Deputy Sector Commander, U.S. Coast Guard; Sarah Cooksey, DNREC Coastal Zone Manager; John Ramono, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Kathy Klein, Executive Director of Partnership for Delaware Estuary; Tom Keefer, Deputy Executive Director, Diamond State Port Corporation; Ellen Malenfant, DNREC Environmental Program Manager/Emergency Response and Ben Anderson, DNREC Environmental Scientist.

The Delaware River Protection Act was signed into law in July 2006, as part of the FY 2006 Coast Guard Authorization bill. The comprehensive legislation was written in response to the November 26, 2004 Athos I oil spill and includes Castle's provisions to establish a regional committee to address future oil spills and other issues affecting the River and Bay.

"The Delaware River Protection Act is the result of a bipartisan effort of Delaware River Valley lawmakers, and the leadership of Representative Frank Lobiondo, to respond to the Athos I oil Spill that occurred in the river in November 2004. The provisions of the Delaware River Protection Act that were signed into law in July will help to protect the viability of the Delaware River and Bay as a valued environmental resource and commerce channel. We are lucky to have such an important resource in our region, and we must do all we can to protect it," Castle said.

- Role of the Delaware River and Bay Oil Spill Advisory Committee:

Establish 27-member committee comprised of appointed experts from diverse fields--from a representative of the Port of Wilmington to three members who represent environmental organizations active with respect to the Delaware River and Bay to two members who represent operators of oil refineries, among many others;

This Committee will provide advice and recommendations on the prevention of and response to future oil spills on the Delaware River and Bay and will report to Congress within 18 months on the recommendations;

Recommendations do not need to be unanimous; therefore, all sides can be presented.

- Other Key Provisions of The Delaware River Protection Act:

Increases the liability limits for parties deemed responsible for an oil spill to reflect inflation since 1990 and requires that such increases continue to be made at least every three years. The agreement sets the limits at the greater of \$3,000 per gross ton or \$22 million for single-hull vessels, the greater of \$1,900 per gross ton or \$16 million for double-hull tank vessels, and the greater of \$950 per gross ton or \$800,000 for other vessels.

Requires the Coast Guard to report within 45 days of enactment on the extent that oil discharge cleanups may exceed these limits, the impact on the Oil Liability Trust Fund, and recommendations for further increases.

Requires any person who has knowledge of an object that creates an obstruction in U.S. navigable waters to notify both the Coast Guard and the Army Corps.

Requires the NOAA and the Coast Guard to create a program to evaluate environmental effects of submerged oil in the Delaware River and Bay region.

Authorizes funding for the NOAA and the Coast Guard to develop technology and management methods to remove submerged oil from the Delaware River and other navigable waters.