

CASTLE LEADS PRESERVATION OF AMERICAN COASTS -- September 23, 2008

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, a long-time advocate of natural resource protection, successfully worked to pass the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Act (CELCP), H.R. 1907, 313-59, which will hopefully be considered in the Senate before adjournment. Since 2003, Congress has funded the program, which provides much needed federal funds for the purchase and protection of sensitive coastal ecosystems with the goal of better ensuring the ecological and economic health of coastal communities. With 60 percent of Americans expected to be living along the coast by 2010, Rep. Castle believes it is now more important than ever to ensure we are protecting our coastal resources.

"I strongly believe in conserving lands currently threatened by rapid development across the country," Rep. Castle said. "CELCP makes valuable contributions to the protection of coastal and estuarine lands, which are considered important for their ecological, conservation, recreational, historical, and aesthetic value.

"Formally authorizing CELCP will build on the successful Coastal Zone Management Act and allow for continued investment in coastal conservation projects through strong partnerships among federal government, state agencies, local governments, private landowners and non-profits.

"I have been privileged to work with Representative James Saxton (R-NJ) and applaud his dedication to formally authorizing this program that Congress has funded since 2003."

CELCP has provided the necessary funding for strong partnerships in Delaware, through the Nature Conservancy, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Delaware's CELCP funding totals around \$10 million; most recently it has helped ensure that Blackbird Creek, with wetlands, forest, and important species, remains ecologically valuable today and in the future.

To date, CELCP has invested over \$200 million towards over 100 completed conservation projects in nearly three-quarters of the nation's 35 coastal states, which has leveraged more than an equal amount of state, local and private funding.

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