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Local Boy Scout, NJMC's Meadowlands Environment Center Partner to Enhance Recreational Opportunities for Secaucus Residents

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission honors Boy Scouts of America Troop 146 member Michael Ibarra for earning his Eagle Scout Award for a three-day project to enhance the Mill Creek Marsh in Secaucus. Ibarra's family will host his award ceremony Saturday, November 17 at 11:30 a.m. at the Visitors' Pavilion of the Meadowlands Environment Center.

"The result of Michael's efforts with the MEC, an NJMC facility operated by Ramapo College, are a cleaner, safer, Mill Creek Marsh for active and passive recreation by Secaucus residents," said NJMC Acting Chairman Joseph V. Doria, also the Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. "He is a shining example to the community of the positive difference one motivated, conscientious young person can make to improve the environment."

Ibarra, a Union City resident, worked with staff of the MEC to inspect and repair fences protecting native vegetation islands in the Mill Creek Marsh. He also removed mylar strips installed to protect the vegetation in its infancy against geese, and removed litter and floatable debris from the Mill Creek Marsh Trail. Throughout the phases of the project, Ibarra recruited and managed Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and parent volunteers. The MEC provided him with canoes, hammers, fence material and other tools.

The NJMC acquired the 206-acre Mill Creek Marsh in 1996 and began wetlands enhancement activities at the site in 1998, including the re-establishment of tidal flows, creation of open water impoundments, grading to create low, high and upland marsh areas, and native replantings to attract a diversity of aquatic life and birds. At the south end of the Marsh, the NJMC built a trail system including wooden footbridges that provide a panoramic view of the remains of Atlantic White Cedar Trees. At the marsh's

mouth, the NJMC constructed Mill Creek Point Park for the Town of Secaucus and its residents, which includes a boat and canoe launch, educational signage, benches and walkways. Continuing these efforts, the NJMC is currently constructing a 1,500-foot elevated wooden boardwalk to allow Secaucus High School students and visitors to peer down into a restored urban wetland.

To date, the NJMC has overseen the construction of more than 100 acres of park lands and eight miles of trails throughout the 30.4 square mile Meadowlands District. In the September, the NJMC implemented plans to photograph, research and mark environmental and historical points of interest throughout the region. The results of this effort will be developed into a digital trails map series, beginning with the Mill Creek Marsh, in late 2007.

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