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## NJMC Authorizes Innovative Soil Study at the Secaucus High School Wetlands Enhancement Site

**LYNDHURST, N.J.** – The NJMC Board of Commissioners today gave the green light for the agency to partner with a team of researchers from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Princeton University to study engineered soils supporting two high marsh communities the agency has established at the 42-acre Secaucus Wetlands Enhancement Site.

“As we continue to move forward acquiring, preserving and enhancing open space in the Meadowlands District, we are heedful of the importance of gathering and sharing information on this unique ecosystem,” said Acting NJMC Chairman Charles Richman, also acting Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. “What we learn at the Secaucus Wetlands Enhancement Site will build upon this agency’s proven track record of founding environmental policies on hard scientific data.”

Enhancement activities at the Secaucus Wetlands Enhancement Site, including increasing tidal flows and enhancing biodiversity, have been underway since March 2007. The NJMC developed two high marsh communities at the site this summer utilizing sand and a sand/organic material mixture and planted native grasses, including *spartina patens* (saltmeadow hay), *distichlis spicata* (spike grass) and *juncus gerardii* (saltmeadow rush).

The engineered soils used to create the two high marshes are believed to be conducive to immobilizing and isolating potential contaminants in sediments. Data analyzed in the study will help the NJMC determine the best practices for sustaining additional high marsh communities and maximizing the engineered soils’ capacity to give natural processes an opportunity to propel wetlands vitality. Up to \$100,000 has been appropriated for the study.

The Secaucus Wetlands Enhancement Site will provide a key habitat for fish, mammal and bird species, notably the yellow-crowned night heron which nests in nearby Schmidt’s Woods. The NJMC is also constructing a 1,500-foot elevated wooden boardwalk at the site that will allow students from Secaucus High School and the public in general to view the continued growth of the restored urban wetland. The boardwalk

will feature several observation benches and award-winning signage. This access point will increase the waterfront recreational opportunities available to Secaucus residents and visitors and become part of the Secaucus Greenway, a planned 15-mile pedestrian trail interlinking retail, office, commercial and residential areas while preserving open space. The Secaucus Wetlands Enhancement Site is expected to be complete by late fall 2007.

“We look forward to building on our tradition of good environmental stewardship and developing access points to the River for residents in Secaucus and the District as a whole,” said NJMC Executive Director Robert Ceberio. “We will continue to repeat the successes of Mill Creek Point Park, the Mill Creek Marsh Trail, Hudson County Park at Laurel Hill and all of the other contributions we have had the privilege to make.”