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KOSTMAYER TO INTRODUCE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE PROTECTION ACT

Citing the need to protect America's unique and significant areas, Congressman Peter Kostmayer, D-8, announced that he is introducing legislation to recognize and help protect key landscapes throughout the United States.

"The American Landscape Protection Act of 1990" to be introduced by Kostmayer tomorrow would provide technical and financial assistance to states, communities and nonprofit organizations seeking to preserve significant landscapes.

"Many of our Nation's most well-known and indeed cherished places face unprecedented threats to their character and very existence," stated Kostmayer. "Endangered areas include the Amish country in the Lancaster area, the Napa Valley in California, the Thousand Islands in New York State and the Hill country in Texas.

"Closer to home, such key resources as the Delaware River islands and the rural villages which may still be found in parts of Bucks County are clearly deserving of our preservation efforts," said Kostmayer.

While the federal government currently recognizes and extends protection to historic resources, the Kostmayer bill would also take into account cultural, scenic, recreational and ecological factors in determining American landscapes which are deserving of support and protection.

"My proposal seeks to provide a modest level of federal support to state and local governments as well as the private sector to help assist in the protection of the very best parts of the American landscape," noted Kostmayer. "While it is neither possible nor even desirable in many instances for the federal government to acquire major additional land areas, we can support and encourage communities to take positive steps to preserve some of our critical landscapes."

Under the Kostmayer proposal, four states would initially be selected to perform statewide assessments of critical areas. In addition, ten specific landscape areas would be selected in which federal assistance would be available to help develop comprehensive plans designed to protect key resources.

"This proposal represents an attempt to avoid the pervasive homogenization of the American landscape which increasingly results in the loss of the special character of our communities," said Kostmayer. "This phenomenon is especially evident in rapidly developing regions such as the Boston-to-Washington corridor in which my congressional district is located. My congressional district alone has lost 73% of its farms since 1960, while neighboring New Jersey has lost almost 50% of its farmland over the past four decades. If we fail to take concerted action, we will soon find ourselves with nothing left to protect," he said.

Kostmayer, who chairs the Interior Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, is introducing this measure following four hearings during the past year on "Open Space and the American Landscape in the 21st Century."