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## SMITH & SPENCER PRAISE CREWS FOR COMPLETION OF FORSYTHE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE CLEANUP

*Legislators Looking Ahead to Restoration of Area Marred in 2012 by Sandy*

LAVALLETTE – Following a joint legislative committee meeting on Monday, Senate Environment and Energy Committee Chair Bob Smith and Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee Chair L. Grace Spencer praised the work of cleanup crews who removed massive amounts of debris from a coastal habitat in southern New Jersey.

“We have made significant progress through the tireless cleanup and recovery efforts of the wildlife refuge since Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc on this valuable coastal community, but the work here is not complete. We must continue to engage with officials at the federal level in order to continue making progress,” said Smith (D-Middlesex/Somerset). “We can now begin to restore and enhance the wildlife refuge, with its wetlands, salt marshes and coastal habitats along the Jersey Shore, and protect the area against any future storms.”

The Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, which protects 47,000 acres of New Jersey wetlands, marshes and coastal habitats, was the site of nearly 2,000 tons of debris deposited after Hurricane Sandy. Working under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) supervision, cleanup crews finished removal of the wreckage last month.

“Because of the hard work of many dedicated individuals, New Jersey can now move toward the next phase of this process, which is restoring the habitat on behalf of local wildlife and planning ways to limit damage in the event of a future disaster,” said Spencer (D-Essex). “In addition to providing a home for migrating birds, this refuge is an ecotourism gem, so making progress here is a boon for both our environment and our economy.”

Due to its location in a highly active flight path, the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge plays a key role in seasonal bird migration, according to the USFWS. The refuge extends through parts of Ocean, Burlington and Atlantic counties.