

NJ Congressman Van Drew helps SFEC secure a Living Shorelines Grant

The federal grant that the SFEC has secured through our Congressman, Jeff Van Drew, will allow the SFEC and our partners to design and build a *Living Shoreline* in Strathmere's back bay. Our *Living Shoreline* initiative will be built as a part of the bay-shoreline from the Bayview Avenue boat ramp area south, along the meadow/wetlands shoreline extending south to the approximate entrance area of Whale Creek.

In addition to the NOAA description and definition of a *Living Shoreline*, this shoreline design will help stop the ongoing erosion and shrinkage of the adjacent wetlands. Upper Township Engineers recently highlighted and pointed out the rapid annual loss rate of wetlands in that area.

Wetlands are an essential component to a viable, sustainable, and secure barrier island community. A healthy wetland acre will absorb one million gallons of salt water in a flood, while also mitigating wave action and eroding storm currents.

Wetlands also play the vital role for local ecosystems as they form a breeding ground, nursery for young, and natural habitat for indigenous wetlands wildlife. Wetlands are also an irreplaceable habitat. A healthy wetland community provides habitat for many small fish, crabs, shrimp, and other crustaceans. In addition, various bird species nest, breed, and reside in the wetlands. All of these wildlife types contribute and are part of a healthy and viable food source/food chain that are also important for some little-known wetland mammals such as seals, otters, and fox that seasonally call the wetlands their home.

Our wetlands are essential to a healthy ocean, barrier island and bay environment and cannot be replaced or substituted by artificial nests, reefs, or pumped beach sand. These wetlands represent a delicate coastal ecosystem and measures must be taken to save them.