

Simmons to announce grant for lighthouse

By **GLADYS ALCEDO**
Day Staff Writer

Groton — The local grassroots group working to restore the historic Avery Point Lighthouse will take a step closer to its fund-raising goal after the federal government agrees to earmark \$100,000 to the project.

The funding from the Save America's Treasures program was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives Thursday and is to be considered by the U.S. Senate Monday, according to the office of U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District.

Simmons will join members of the Avery Point Lighthouse Society at 1:30 p.m. Monday in front of the lighthouse to announce the funding. The 55-foot-tall lighthouse is located at the University of Connecticut's Avery Point campus.

"It's a tremendous contribution for

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SUZANNE OUELLETTE / The Day

Workers replace blocks on the Avery Point Lighthouse in Groton. A grassroots organization is leading the fund-raising effort to restore the structure.

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Mike Bruzas of Kronenberger & Sons Restoration of Middletown cuts blocks for use on refinishing the Avery Point Lighthouse.

Lighthouse set to receive federal grant

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the restoration," said James L. Streeter, co-chairman and co-founder of the lighthouse society, the group that has labored for more than three years to save, restore and re-light the landmark. "We are extremely pleased and this is due in part the hard work of the three congressional people."

The group will need to raise another \$25,000 to \$50,000 to finish the work, he said. The overall project will cost more than \$350,000, up from the \$175,000 estimated two to three years ago because of inflation, higher estimates and unexpected costs.

Two years ago, Simmons asked his fellow legislators for \$200,000 for the lighthouse effort.

"On this one to get \$100,000 to me is a huge success, and the fact of the matter is the citizens involved in raising money has been very successful in bringing private funds to the equation," Simmons said Friday. "When I first requested the dollars, I didn't think we were going to be successful ... While this is a project of great interest to me and the citizens of Groton, I wasn't convinced I would be able to persuade my colleagues in Washington."

Age, the elements and neglect can

be blamed for the deterioration of the lighthouse, built by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1943.

It's the last lighthouse to be built in Connecticut and is the only one erected as a memorial to lighthouse keepers.

The lighthouse is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Crews have been working for nearly a month to replace the blocks at the lighthouse, Streeter said. The crews, hired by UConn with funds raised by the lighthouse society, may finish the masonry work by the end of this month.

Construction of a replica of the

octagonal, wood-and-glass lantern room has also been progressing, Streeter said.

The second phase of restoring the 32 ornate, vase-shaped balusters that encircle the lantern room would begin next spring.

Other phases of the project would include the stripping the old paint, which may require some lead abatement, additional site work, developing a museum at the lighthouse and building a dedicational walkway leading to the structure, Streeter said.

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