

# Governor Christie Announces Milestone Purchase of 200th Home as Part of Highly Successful Sandy Blue Acres Buyout Program

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## More than 500 Offers Made for Acquisitions Statewide

**Trenton, NJ** – New Jersey’s Blue Acres Program has purchased its 200th Superstorm Sandy-damaged home as part of a \$300 million statewide initiative to move property owners out of areas impacted by Sandy and other severe storms, Governor Chris Christie announced today.

The program has also surpassed another milestone – the 500th buyout offer made by the state to property owners, with more than 300 offers accepted.

“Just weeks after Sandy devastated many parts of New Jersey, homeowners in some of our hardest hit communities told me they wanted a way out from the constant threat of flooding,” Governor Christie said today in South River, a town severely damaged by Sandy’s storm surge. “We listened, and the Sandy Blue Acres buyout program has been the answer, giving homeowners and their families a chance to move away from all of the uncertainty, fear and expense of living in flood-prone areas. The program is giving them a chance to start over again.”

“The Blue Acres Program has been a tremendous success and is an important part of the Administration’s efforts to make New Jersey more resilient in the face of future storms and flooding,” Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bob Martin said. “The decision to move from your home is one of the most difficult anyone could ever make. We fully understand this and will continue to work closely with future sellers to ensure this process is as easy as possible for them too.”

Launched by the Christie Administration in May 2013, the \$300 million buyout program will purchase some 1,300 damaged homes from willing sellers at pre-Sandy market values. The program is administered by the DEP and is funded primarily by federal funds.

It has been a key part of the Administration’s efforts to make New Jersey more resilient in the face of future storms and flooding. In addition to buyouts, the state’s comprehensive plan also includes working with the Army Corps of Engineers on a \$1 billion comprehensive coastal protection system that includes enhanced beaches and dunes to better protect coastal communities, new elevation standards in flood zones, programs to assist homeowners with the cost of elevations, and \$1.2 billion in potential financing for the hardening of water and wastewater infrastructure.

Under the Blue Acres Program, structures are demolished and the properties converted to open space that provides natural protections for communities against future severe weather events. To date, nearly 100 homes have been demolished.

The 200 homes purchased so far have been in Sayreville, South River, Woodbridge and East Brunswick. The 200th home was purchased on Friday in Sayreville for a price of \$209,000.

Two years ago, the South River Rescue Squad rescued South River resident and Councilman Jim Hutchison and his wife, Teresa, from their Washington Street home as flood waters from the South River poured in during the height of Sandy. They sold the house and property to the Blue Acres Program, and relocated to another part of town.

“We are extremely pleased with the way everything worked out. Every step of the way was just a very, very smooth

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process," Councilman Hutchison said at today's press conference. "I just cannot say enough about everything Governor Christie has done for New Jersey and for everyone affected by Sandy."

So far, the program has identified more than 900 properties for potential buyouts and has made 500 offers to residents in Sayreville, South River, Woodbridge, Newark, East Brunswick and Lawrence, which is located along the Delaware Bay in Cumberland County.

The Blue Acres Program also has approached homeowners about potential buyouts and held community kickoff meetings in Linden, Old Bridge, Manville and Pompton Lakes, and is engaged in dialogue with residents and officials in other communities.

So far, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program has approved more than \$100 million in federal funds for the program, which have been processed through the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management.

Additional federal funding to acquire other properties impacted by Superstorm Sandy will be provided through the a second round of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery funds allocated to New Jersey by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The DEP is using a special Blue Acres team to work closely with willing sellers and process their buyout applications as quickly as possible. Case managers are paired with individual homeowners to help guide them through the process. The original Blue Acres Program, which began in 1995, targeted the purchases of land in floodways in the Delaware, Passaic and Raritan river basins, but it was later expanded to include all state waters. Eligible properties are those that have been storm damaged, that are prone to incurring storm damage, or that may buffer or protect other lands from such damage.

Homeowners interested in selling their homes through this process may contact the DEP's Blue Acres Program at 609-984-0500.

For more information on the Blue Acres Program, visit: [http://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/blue\\_flood\\_ac.html](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/blue_flood_ac.html)

For information on Sandy Recovery, visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/special/hurricane-sandy/>

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