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Christie Administration Wins Appeal to Extend Sandy-Related State Channel Dredging Efforts

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Tags: [Hurricane Sandy](#)

FEMA Decision Provides Resources to Restore Channels and Improve Coastal Economy

Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration has won an appeal with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that will provide more time and Federal funds to complete the dredging of State channels clogged with sand and silt by Superstorm Sandy. This victory will improve the safety of New Jersey's navigable coastal waterways for recreational and commercial boating and provide a long-term commitment to New Jersey's marine transportation system. Under the favorable ruling, the State will receive an estimated \$60 Million or more for vital waterway recovery projects.

"Superstorm Sandy devastated New Jersey's waterways, depositing sand and silt into many state channels, creating hazards for recreational boaters and commercial fishermen," Governor Chris Christie said. "Restoring the hundreds of affected channels takes time and resources. This decision recognizes the challenges New Jersey faces in meeting the monumental task of returning our navigable waterways to a state of good repair."

"The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has restored 12 channels to their authorized depth since Superstorm Sandy, and another 15 are currently underway," New Jersey Department of Transportation Commissioner Richard T. Hammer said. "But there is still much work to do. FEMA's decision is a recognition of the magnitude of work required and the economic importance of providing safe navigable channels to small businesses that rely on New Jersey waterways, such as marinas, bait and tackle shops, charter companies, as well as the commercial fishing industry."

"We are very pleased with this decision, as it is consistent with the need for a statewide network of safe and navigable coastal waterways," New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bob Martin said. "Safe navigation of these waterways is essential to the economic vitality of our coastal communities, providing recreational boaters access to marinas and docks as part of their enjoyment of the shore's beauty. Safe channels also ensure commercial fishing vessels have reliable access to ports and fishing grounds."

Of the more than 200 channels that had some level of shoaling because of Superstorm Sandy, 131 are eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Federal regulations originally required all of the emergency dredging work to be completed by October 30, 2017. The Christie Administration's successful appeal resulted in FEMA reclassifying the projects as permanent work and extended the deadline for completion to December 31, 2024. NJDOT and DEP worked closely with the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, which is in charge of coordination with FEMA for the state, to facilitate the appeal process.

In granting the extension, FEMA recognized the limited window of only three to four months during the year in which dredging activities are allowed in state channels because of weather, various regulatory timing restrictions often related to protection of wetland species/environments, as well as the constraints on availability of dredging equipment and experienced contractors.

Since shortly after Sandy, NJDOT has been working to ensure safe navigation of channels while also prioritizing dredging under its comprehensive State Channel Dredging Program announced in March 2014. To date, NJDOT has completed the restoration of 12 channels to their authorized depth, with another 15 channels currently underway.

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DEP, NJDOT, and the Governor's Office of Recovery and Rebuilding (GORR) have been working closely together to provide and expedite permits for state channel dredging projects. The DEP and NJDOT's Office of Maritime Resources will continue to work to ensure management of dredged materials in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner.

All channels in the New Jersey Marine Transportation System are managed and maintained by the state for their importance in connecting local and Federal channels and promoting local economies. New Jersey's recreational boating industry contributes \$2.2 billion to the state economy, with more than 1,000 businesses providing nearly 12,000 jobs.

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