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Governor Christie Announces Expansion Of Successful Blue Acres Program To Protect More New Jersey Homeowners

Monday, October 23, 2017

Tags: [Hurricane Sandy](#)

Additional Funds Will Strengthen Communities Affected By Flooding

Keansburg, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today announced an additional \$75 million for the successful Blue Acres program to protect homeowners affected by repeated flooding incidents.

This program allows the state to purchase the properties of willing sellers in disaster-prone areas at pre-flood market values, providing them the resources to move to safer locations. This federally- and state-funded initiative also is used to demolish existing homes in danger zones and convert that land into open space to mitigate the impact of flooding events from oceans, bays, rivers, and creeks.

"The expansion of this successful program will provide a lifeline and new hope for hundreds of additional families, ensuring they can live free from the looming threat of future storms, disasters, and floods," Governor Christie said. "This extra infusion of state money will help the Blue Acres program to convert several hundred more at-risk homes in Keansburg and elsewhere around the state into safe open-space opportunities."

Governor Christie made the announcement in Keansburg, which is already on the list of additional communities where local officials and homeowners have agreed that buyouts are wanted and desired. The program has and will be reaching out to other communities that have expressed an interest in participating or could be expected to benefit from the buyouts.

"The expansion of the successful Blue Acres Program will be a welcome relief to many more New Jerseyans now living with the constant threat of flooding," said Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin. "This program provides at-risk homeowners with a viable alternative to living in these circumstances and I thank the Governor for his leadership and this decision."

The Blue Acres Program complements a wide range of storm-resiliency efforts spearheaded by the DEP, including construction of a statewide system of engineered beaches, dunes, floodgates and seawalls, development of protective standards for elevating homes in coastal areas, protecting and improving water and wastewater infrastructure, and assisting local governments with flood mitigation projects. The DEP also has launched a comprehensive study with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers into strategies to reduce flooding from back bays and other coastal waterways.

After a Blue Acres purchase, homes are demolished and the land is permanently preserved as open space for recreation and/or conservation. The goal is to purchase clusters of homes to provide areas that will absorb flood waters.

In 2013, Governor Christie designated Blue Acres to run the state's post-Superstorm Sandy effort to purchase homes from willing sellers at pre-Sandy values. The program was subsequently expanded to include acquisitions in communities that may not have been directly impacted by Sandy but are prone to repetitive flooding.

Previous funding for Blue Acres buyouts came from \$185 million provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, \$100 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and \$15 million from the Blue

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Acres and State Land Acquisition funds within the DEP's Green Acres Program. Over the past five years, the Blue Acres Program and its acquisition practices have earned national recognition, including awards from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Of the nearly 900 offers made by the Blue Acres Program as of October 23, 689 have been accepted, 610 acquisitions have closed and 475 homes have been demolished, creating new open space that will mitigate local flooding and protect communities. The program also has successfully facilitated short sales or payoff approvals with lenders for 66 properties for which owners owed more on their mortgages than the appraised value of the home. This resulted in debt forgiveness of more than \$5.1 million, enabling more families to move out of harm's way.

The Blue Acres Program already has been active in 14 New Jersey municipalities: Sayreville, South River, Woodbridge, Old Bridge, and East Brunswick in Middlesex County; Manville in Somerset County; Pompton Lakes in Passaic County; Newark in Essex County; Rahway and Linden in Union County; Lawrence and Downe in Cumberland County; New Milford in Bergen County; and Ocean in Monmouth County.

Homeowners interested in selling their homes or who have questions about the buyout program may call the DEP's Blue Acres Program at (609) 984-0500.

For more information on the Blue Acres Buyout Program, visit:

www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/blue_flood_ac.html

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