



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

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## Whitman Appeals Clinton Denial of Federal Disaster Aid for Cape May County

Governor Christie Whitman announced today that she has appealed the federal government's denial of federal disaster aid for Cape May County. In making the appeal, the Governor cited \$485,000 in needed repairs to the washed-out Weatherby Road Bridge as an extraordinary hardship on the county's budget.

"While Atlantic County was hit with the brunt of the storm, the enormous damage it caused to this single site in Cape May County warrants a second look by Washington," said Whitman. "The cost of repairs to the Weatherby Road Bridge will have an extraordinary economic impact on the county's public works budget, not to mention the safety and transportation needs of Cape May's residents and businesses."

Whitman's appeal to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is based on storm damage to the Weatherby Road Bridge (County Road 548). The bridge, which also serves as the Tarkiln Pond Dam, was completely washed out by heavy flooding in August, causing an average 24-mile detour. Weatherby Road is a key support for Routes 47 and 49, which serve as the main emergency evacuation routes for Cape May County. The cost of repairing the structure is estimated at \$485,000.

"The critical nature of this route and the enormous cost of repairing the bridge clearly puts Cape May County in an emergency situation," said Senator James Cafiero and Assemblymen John Gibson and Nicholas Asselta, who represent Cape May County as part of District 1. "We believe FEMA will agree upon re-evaluation of the damage here."

On August 28, Whitman appealed for federal emergency aid for Atlantic, Cape May, Burlington, Cumberland and Ocean counties following severe flooding on August 21-22. A Presidential Disaster Declaration in October identified only Atlantic County as a disaster area, making it eligible for a variety of federal assistance under the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Since Atlantic County was declared a disaster area, the state has been working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to process applications for federal grants and loans to families and businesses adversely affected by the flooding. As of October 23, over \$930,000 in housing assistance and over \$37,000 in individual and family grants have been disbursed, with more than \$370,000 in loans from the Small Business Administration approved.

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