

Christie Administration Moves To Buy Out Another 85 Sandy-Damaged Homes In South River And Sayreville

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Applications Filed with FEMA to Get Owners Fair Market Value

Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration today announced that an application has been filed with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the acquisition and demolition of 85 homes from willing sellers in Superstorm Sandy battered sections of South River and Sayreville in Middlesex County at an estimated cost of \$18.1 million.

This adds to the 129 Sayreville homes already approved for buyouts by FEMA, which previously awarded nearly \$29.5 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding for those purchases. This is part of the Christie Administration's overall plan to acquire some 1,000 homes impacted by Sandy and another 300 repetitively flood-damaged homes in the Passaic River Basin at a total estimated cost of \$300 million.

The first offers to willing seller homeowners from the first round of applications in Sayreville are expected to begin within two weeks through the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Blue Acres Program, with the first closings completed within one year, said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin.

"The Christie Administration is committed to expediting the process of moving willing sellers in flood-prone areas out of harm's way as quickly as possible," said Commissioner Martin. "We are working closely with FEMA to get these applications processed promptly, and with minimal red tape, so that families who have been impacted negatively by Sandy can move on with their lives and start over again, free from the worry of flooding. We know these are huge and difficult choices for families to make, to sell their homes and move from places they have long lived. We are committed to moving this process along as quickly and smoothly as possible for these residents."

The latest application to FEMA includes the acquisition of 76 properties in South River and 9 in Sayreville. In addition to providing fair market, pre-Sandy payouts to residents, the acquisition and demolition of these properties will eliminate the need for future disaster assistance since the land where these homes once stood will be maintained as open-space in perpetuity.

An invitation-only meeting will be scheduled for the owners of these 85 properties with representatives of the DEP, FEMA and other key agencies in the near future to begin to help ease them through the buyout process.

Meanwhile, the state will continue to submit buyout applications to FEMA for other properties on a rolling basis over the next several months. The state is particularly targeting clusters of homes and entire neighborhoods for buyouts. The homes will be razed and the land will be maintained as open space that can handle future flood waters.

The DEP has created a special team to work closely with willing sellers and process their applications as quickly as possible. Case managers are working with individual homeowners personally to help guide them through the process.

The buyout program is a joint effort of the DEP, State Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). DEP administers all Blue Acres purchases and OEM handles the financing through FEMA.

The initial Blue Acres Program targeted purchase of lands in floodways in the Delaware, Passaic and Raritan rivers basins, but 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.

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

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