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New Jersey Receives Largest Public Assistance/Mitigation Grant Ever Issued by FEMA For Post-Sandy Infrastructure Hardening

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\$260 Million Grant Will Fund Flood Mitigation and Energy Resilience Projects at State's Largest Wastewater Treatment Facility

Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration announced today that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has awarded a \$260 million Public Assistance grant to the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission (PVSC). The award is the largest mitigation grant FEMA ever has issued through the Public Assistance Program. Funding will be used to build a comprehensive flood protection system at the wastewater treatment facility in Newark and incorporate microgrid technology to allow the facility to continue to operate when the larger electric grid fails.

PVSC's Newark wastewater treatment plant, the fifth largest in the nation, serves an estimated two million residents of New Jersey and New York. The plant processes 25 percent of New Jersey's waste and 15 percent of New York City's. Forty-eight communities feed into the system. The extensive physical damage to the 152-acre facility from Sandy's storm surge and the resulting power outage caused significant community and environmental impacts. Power outages shut down key pumping stations for 48 hours and, in order to prevent raw sewage from backing up into thousands of homes, PVSC was forced to discharge 840 million gallons of untreated sewage into Newark Bay. It took six days for workers to restore wastewater treatment capabilities, and the facility was not fully functional for months.

"Investing in the protection of critical facilities is essential to building New Jersey back better and stronger after Sandy," said Governor Chris Christie. "Securing the largest mitigation grant in FEMA history is the result of close coordination between FEMA, the State and PVSC. We thank FEMA for its ongoing partnership with New Jersey in identifying, developing and funding critical recovery and resilience projects."

"This is historically the largest project that FEMA has obligated to the state of New Jersey," said John Covell, FEMA Director of the New Jersey Sandy Recovery Office. "It is the culmination of a partnership between FEMA, the Governor's office of Recovery and Rebuilding, NJ Office of Emergency Management and the PSVC leadership who shared the vision of rebuilding the Passaic Valley Sewer Commission stronger and more resilient to help withstand damage from future events."

"We must ensure the viability, integrity and resiliency of the state's wastewater systems, especially at critical facilities such as PVSC, which was overwhelmed and devastated by the tidal surge caused by Superstorm Sandy," said Department of Environmental protection Commissioner Bob Martin. "This funding from FEMA will ensure that the state's largest wastewater facility can make the improvements that are needed to provide resilience to future storms and ensure service, even during major storms, to residents and businesses in North Jersey."

Authorized by the Stafford Act, FEMA's Public Assistance grant program is the primary mechanism for rebuilding public facilities following a disaster. In addition to funding repairs to damaged facilities, Section 406 of the Stafford Act also allows for projects to incorporate mitigation measures if an applicant can show it meets certain criteria. The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) -- the State agency responsible for coordinating and submitting state and local Public Assistance projects to FEMA -- worked with local applicants to incorporate mitigation measures into their rebuilding plans wherever feasible. NJOEM also joined local partners in advocating for federal approval of these measures.

"At the outset of the disaster, NJOEM significantly increased staffing to handle the influx of state and local Public Assistance funding requests following Sandy and provide technical assistance to our communities," said Colonel Rick Fuentes, State Police Superintendent and Director of the NJOEM. "As a result, we have been able to aggressively pursue Section 406 mitigation funds when applying for FEMA funding. We are thrilled to have helped secure such a significant mitigation award for PVSC."

To date, the State has incorporated Section 406 mitigation into nearly 87% of its large Public Assistance projects (i.e., projects over \$500,000). The \$260 million award represents 90 percent of the total project cost of \$289,676,381. PVSC is required to fund the remaining 10 percent as a local cost share.

The project is expected to take 5 to 7 years to complete. Recognizing the need to protect this critical facility today, PVSC already has invested \$10 million of its own funds and more than \$72 million in federal Public Assistance funding to both repair damage and implement temporary mitigation measures including the installation of flood barriers and the elevation of key systems.

Rebuilding and enhancing critical facilities is a central component of the State's holistic approach to building back Sandy-affected infrastructure assets. FEMA Public Assistance funding is only one source being used to fund resiliency initiatives like these. By leveraging various federal disaster recovery programs, the State has made significant investments in flood hazard mitigation projects and energy resiliency initiatives to better protect the State's critical assets and our communities. For more information on these efforts, please visit the Governor's Office of Recovery and Rebuilding's website at: <http://www.state.nj.us/gorr/>

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