



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Coastal Barrier Resources System Map Modernization

Supporting Coastal Resiliency and Sustainability following Hurricane Sandy

Project to Modernize the Maps for Hurricane Sandy Affected Areas

The Department of the Interior (Department) announced on October 24, 2013, that it will fund a \$5 million project to comprehensively modernize the maps of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS) for eight states along the North Atlantic coast affected by Hurricane Sandy. Funding for this project is provided through the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 (Pub. L. 113-2) to help increase the resiliency and capacity of coastal habitats and infrastructure to withstand future storms and reduce the amount of damage caused by such storms.

Program Summary

Certain actions and programs of the Federal Government (such as beach nourishment and flood insurance) have historically subsidized and encouraged development on coastal barriers, resulting in the loss of natural resources; threats to human life, health, and property; and the expenditure of millions of tax dollars each year. To remove the Federal incentive to develop these biologically important, highly dynamic, and storm-prone areas, Congress enacted the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA; 16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.) in 1982. CBRA and its amendments designated relatively undeveloped coastal barriers along the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico coasts, as part of the CBRS, and made these areas ineligible for most new Federal expenditures and financial assistance. CBRA does not prohibit development and it imposes no restrictions on development conducted with non-Federal funds.

Statement of the Problem

The 3.1 million acres that comprise



Homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy in Mantoloking, NJ. *Photo Credit: Greg Thompson, USFWS*

the CBRS are depicted on a set of maps that are maintained by the Department of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Most of the existing CBRS maps were created more than 20 years ago and are outdated technologically, difficult to interpret, and in some cases contain errors that adversely affect property owners.

Project Summary

Congress recognized the challenges associated with the existing CBRS maps and, in the 2006 reauthorization of CBRA (Pub. L. 109-226), directed the Secretary of the Interior to prepare comprehensively modernized maps for the entire CBRS. To date, the Service has completed comprehensively revised maps for approximately 90 CBRS units (comprising about 10% of the total units within the CBRS). With the funding for this project, the Service will complete such maps for about

370 CBRS units along the North Atlantic coast (comprising about 44% of the total units and 16% of the total acreage within the CBRS). The draft revised maps will only become effective once they are enacted into law by Congress.

Comprehensively revising the CBRS maps will help enhance coastal resiliency and sustainability following Hurricane Sandy by improving Federal agency compliance with CBRA and by adding other vulnerable coastal areas that qualify as undeveloped coastal barriers to the CBRS. This effort will also correct mapping errors affecting property owners and provide more accurate and accessible CBRS data for planning coastal infrastructure projects, habitat conservation efforts, and flood risk mitigation measures.

This project will make significant progress towards fulfilling a



Seals on the beach at Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge, MA. The refuge is part of the Coastal Barrier Resources System. *Photo Credit: Amanda Boyd, USFWS*

Congressional mandate to modernize the entire set of CBRS maps, as well as recommendations made by the Government Accountability Office and the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force related to modernizing the CBRS maps and enhancing CBRA compliance across Federal agencies.

This project will be supported by data that is produced through an existing interagency partnership between the Service and the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA) to conduct a “digital conversion” of the official CBRS maps and place the updated CBRS boundaries on FEMA’s Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). The purpose of the digital conversion project is to: (1) ensure that the CBRS boundaries depicted on the FIRMs are consistent with the official CBRS maps and (2) update the CBRS maps to account for natural changes (i.e., erosion and accretion) and to incorporate any voluntary additions and excess



Great Point Lighthouse at Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge, MA. The refuge is part of the Coastal Barrier Resources System. *Photo Credit: Amanda Boyd, USFWS*

Federal property within the CBRS (authorized under 16 U.S.C. 3503(c)-(e)). The maps produced through the digital conversion project will be adopted administratively by the Service upon publication of a notice in the Federal Register. The CBRS digital conversion effort is complementary to the comprehensive map modernization project for the North Atlantic coast and the two projects will be coordinated and pursued concurrently to accelerate the availability of more accurate and user-friendly CBRS data and maps to the public.

States Affected

Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia

Project Partners

This project will include collaboration with other Federal agencies such as FEMA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Geological Survey; state natural resource agencies; and local planning and land use departments. Some of these partners will provide data for the project and all partners will have the opportunity to provide input on the proposed changes to the CBRS during a public review and comment period.

Project Timeframe

The Service plans to prepare comprehensively revised draft maps for the eight North Atlantic states by 2017. However, the Service’s recommended changes to the CBRS (including proposed removals and proposed additions) will only become effective when the revised maps are enacted into law by Congress.

Additional Information

Additional information concerning CBRA can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/cbra/>.

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