



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Coastal Barrier Resources System

Hurricane Sandy Remapping Project

Program Summary

Certain actions and programs of the Federal Government 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) 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 John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System (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.

The CBRS is currently comprised of 862 geographic units totaling 3.5 million acres. The Secretary of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), is responsible for maintaining and updating the maps; however, only Congress has the authority to modify the boundaries of the CBRS by adopting new maps through legislation (there are minor exceptions).

Statement of the Problem and Project Authority

Most of the maps that depict the CBRS were last comprehensively updated in 1990 using what are now outdated base maps and cartographic techniques. Some of the maps contain errors that negatively affect property owners and project proponents. Congress recognized the deficiencies associated with the outdated maps and, through the 2006 reauthorization of CBRA, directed the Secretary of the Interior to modernize the entire set of



Homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy in Mantoloking, NJ (Unit NJ-04B is in the background).

maps and recommend additions to the CBRS.

Following Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the Department of the Interior funded the Hurricane Sandy Remapping Project to modernize the official maps of the CBRS along the North Atlantic coast.

Project Summary

In 2014 the Service initiated a project to comprehensively modernize the maps for the CBRS units in the nine states most affected by Hurricane Sandy: Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York (Long Island), Rhode Island, and Virginia. The project comprises 44% of the total units and 16% of the total acreage within the CBRS, encompassing a total of 458 units (368 existing units and 90 proposed new units). The draft revised maps will only become effective once they are adopted by Congress through legislation. Comprehensively revising the maps will help enhance coastal resiliency and sustainability following Hurricane

Sandy by improving compliance with CBRA and by adding other vulnerable coastal areas 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.

States Affected

The project is divided into two batches. The first batch includes: Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey. The second batch includes: Connecticut, Maryland, New York (Long Island), Rhode Island, and Virginia.

Project Stakeholders

The project involves coordination with other federal agencies; state natural resource agencies; local planning and land use departments; conservation and recreation organizations; and other entities. Some of these stakeholders provided data during the research phase of the project, and all interested parties have the opportunity to provide input on the proposed changes to the CBRS during a public comment period.

Proposed Changes

The proposed boundaries for the Hurricane Sandy Remapping Project would remove 1,344 acres from the CBRS (971 acres of fastland and 373 acres of associated aquatic habitat) and add 277,340 acres to the CBRS (11,108 acres of fastland and 266,232 acres of associated aquatic habitat). The proposed boundaries for the project would remove 657 acres of private fastland (i.e., private land not held for conservation/recreation) from the CBRS and add 3,272 acres of private fastland to the CBRS. The proposed boundaries for the project would remove 914 structures (mostly private residential) from the CBRS and add 295 structures to the CBRS (more than half of which are park-related).

	Fastland Acres ¹		Associated Aquatic Habitat Acres ²		Total Acres		Total Structures ³	
	<i>System Unit</i>	<i>OPAs</i>	<i>System Unit</i>	<i>OPAs</i>	<i>System Unit</i>	<i>OPAs</i>	<i>System Unit</i>	<i>OPAs</i>
Added to the CBRS	3,265	7,843	61,732	204,500	64,997	212,343	71	224
	Total: 11,108		Total: 266,232		Total: 277,340		Total: 295	
Removed from the CBRS	544	427	255	118	799	545	671	243
	Total: 971		Total: 373		Total: 1,344		Total: 914	
Net Reclassified ⁴	(7,722)	7,722	(10,304)	10,304	(18,026)	18,026		
Net Change	Total: 10,137		Total: 265,859		Total: 275,996		Total: (619)	

¹ Land above mean high tide.

² Associated aquatic habitat includes wetlands, marshes, estuaries, inlets, and open water landward of the coastal barrier, but does not include open water seaward of the shoreline. This information is derived from an interpretation of base map imagery in consultation with National Wetlands Inventory data and other data sources as necessary.

³ Approximate structure count derived from base map imagery. Structures without walls and a roof (e.g., picnic shelters) and structures with fewer than 200 square feet are not included in this structure count because they do not meet the definition of a "structure" in 16 U.S.C. 3503(g)(2).

⁴ Reclassified areas are areas currently within the CBRS that are recommended for reclassification from System Unit to OPA or vice versa.

Public Review and Next Steps

The Service held a 120-day public comment period for the first batch of states (Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey) from March 12 through July 10, 2018. The 120-day comment period for the second batch of states (Connecticut,

Maryland, New York (Long Island), Rhode Island, and Virginia) will be open from December 18, 2018 through April 17, 2019. The proposed boundaries are accessible via the CBRS Projects Mapper at <https://www.fws.gov/cbra/maps/Mapper.html>.

Following the public review period, the Service will make appropriate adjustments to the boundaries based on public comments, CBRA criteria, and objective mapping protocols, and will then prepare final recommended maps for Congressional consideration. The final recommended maps are planned for transmittal to Congress in 2020. If adopted by Congress, the revised maps produced through this project would remove areas that were previously included within the CBRS in error and add new qualifying areas to the CBRS.

Additional Information

For more information about this project, visit <https://www.fws.gov/cbra/maps/Hurricane-Sandy-Project.html>.

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Great Point Lighthouse at Nantucket National Wildlife Refuge, MA. The refuge is part of the Coastal Barrier Resources System.