

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service restoring Maryland wetlands to protect coastal communities from future storms

In advance of next week's one-year anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced that a total of \$162 million will be invested in 45 restoration and research projects that will better protect Atlantic Coast communities from future powerful storms, by restoring marshes, wetlands and beaches, rebuilding shorelines, and researching the impacts and modeling mitigation of storm surge impacts.

The investments are consistent with President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force [Strategy Report](#) and the Administration's commitment laid out in the [Climate Action Plan](#) to build resilience by restoring natural features along shorelines to help better protect communities from future storms. The Department of the Interior has already invested \$480 million in Hurricane Sandy response and recovery efforts since the storm hit last October.

“What we witnessed during Hurricane Sandy was that our public lands and other natural areas are often the best defense against Mother Nature,” Jewell said. “By stabilizing marshes and beaches, restoring wetlands, and improving the resiliency of coastal areas, we not only create opportunities for people to connect with nature and support jobs through increased outdoor recreation, but we can also provide an effective buffer that protects local communities from powerful storm surges and devastating floods when a storm like Sandy hits.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will lead projects to restore marshes and beaches, improve aquatic connectivity in rivers and streams, and provide the science needed to make sound conservation decisions now and in the future. One of these projects, the Ferry Point, Nanticoke River – Pocomoke Sound Marsh Restoration, will restore healthy wetlands to protect communities on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Maryland Department of Natural Resources will treat 2,000 acres of degraded wetlands on the Nanticoke River in Dorchester and Wicomico counties with herbicide to control Phragmites and restore natural hydrology to 600 acres of ditched and drained wetlands on Pocomoke Sound in Somerset County.

Phragmites is an invasive weed with little value for native fish and wildlife that outcompetes native wetland plants. Unlike native grasses that support wetland soils with high density root systems, Phragmites leave large chunks of non-root infused soils which are more easily eroded by waves.

Hurricane Sandy's high tides in Maryland spread the invasive plant inland. Removing this plant will restore the degraded marsh and protect the Nanticoke Unit of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and nearby land from infestation by Phragmites.

This project will also restore 600 acres of tidal salt marsh on Pocomoke Sound near Crisfield, Maryland. The marsh, important for filtering runoff and protecting the City of Crisfield from storm surges, was ditched and drained for mosquito management in the mid-twentieth century. Wetlands modified by ditching are more susceptible to erosion, do not filter water efficiently and do not provide high quality habitat for fish and wildlife.

Ditch plugs will be installed to maintain water in pools and pannes during low tide. Restoring natural hydrology to the 600-acre Pocomoke Sound wetland will improve its resiliency to sea-level rise and increase its ability to protect nearby infrastructure in Crisfield, as well as 3,000 acres of adjacent salt marsh at the State of Maryland's Cedar Island Wildlife Management Area.

A list of all 45 approved projects can be found [HERE](#). Visit the [DOI](#) and [FWS](#) Hurricane Sandy websites for more information.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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