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Secretary Jewell Announces \$162 Million for 45 Projects to Protect Atlantic Coast Communities from Future Storms

Interior Bureaus to Work with Local Partners on Coastal Restoration and Resiliency Efforts

GALLOWAY, NJ – In advance of next week’s one-year anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today joined Interior and local officials at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey to announce that \$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.”

With more than 47,000 acres of wetlands spanning from Brick Township to the suburbs of Atlantic City, Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge absorbed much of Sandy’s energy and storm surge, protecting some of the local communities in the path of the storm. Hurricane Sandy destroyed refuge roadways and dumped boats, fuel oil tanks, chemical drums and other debris across 22 miles of refuge lands. The natural buffer provided by the refuge’s marshes, beaches, and forests protected the refuge’s visitor center and headquarters and surrounding local communities from severe flood damage.

These same Forsythe refuge lands provide outdoor recreation opportunities for over 250,000 visitors each year who support \$8 million in economic activity. The refuge is also one of the most important habitats for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds east of the Mississippi River.

The funding announced today provides \$113 million for 25 on-the-ground projects to restore coastal marshes, wetlands and shoreline, create habitat connectivity, improve flood resilience and undertake other efforts to protect nearby areas from future storms. A total of \$15 million will be spent to better protect communities along 60 miles of the New Jersey coast, including Forsythe, by restoring and enhancing salt marshes. An additional \$4 million will be provided for infrastructure resiliency investments at the Ohmsett national oil spill response research and energy test facility in New Jersey.

Other examples include:

- \$19.8 million to restore a highly damaged tidal salt marsh/barrier beach ecosystem within the former impounded wetland system on Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware.
- \$24.9 million to restore Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve south of Alexandria, Virginia, which is currently retreating six to eight feet a year.
- \$11 million to restore natural functions in damaged and degraded salt marshes at Seatuck, Wertheim and Lido Beach National Wildlife Refuges on Long Island, New York.

An additional \$45 million is being invested in assessments, modeling, coastal barrier mapping, and other projects to provide Federal, State, and local land managers and decision makers the information and tools they need to improve resiliency and prepare for future storms.

A Technical Review Panel of ten experts from eight Interior bureaus and the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration evaluated all 94 submitted projects totaling a requested \$541 million. Using a framework developed by Interior's Strategic Sciences Group, the panel scored each project within the Sandy impact area based on the ability to strengthen Federal assets and build coastal resilience to withstand future storms. Projects were selected based on their ability to provide measurable restoration outcomes and resilience benefits or useful data or management tools in a short timeframe. A priority was given to projects that will employ youth and veterans.

A list of all 45 approved projects can be found at [HERE](#).

Jewell also announced that the Department would issue a Request for Proposals on October 29 for an additional \$100 million in grant funding under the Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program announced in August. States, local communities, non-profit organizations and other partners can compete for funding for innovative projects under the program, which is being administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Information on the competition can be found at <http://www.doi.gov/hurricanesandy>.

"The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will use its networks of partners to promote the grant opportunity, aid potential grant applicants in shaping proposals that meet our objectives and to identify

opportunities to leverage the \$100 million with other funding sources to rebuild, restore, and research natural defenses that protect communities," Jewell said. "I am certain that we will see innovative ideas and projects that will help us be much better prepared the next time a super storm rolls up the Atlantic coast."

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