

News Release



For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, November 6, 2013

For further information:

Michelle Potter, refuge manager, 631/286-0485 ext. 2112, Michelle_Potter@fws.gov

Tom Sturm, public affairs specialist, 413/253-8339, Thomas_Sturm@fws.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will invest \$15 million for post-Sandy cleanup and marsh restoration on Long Island

Shirley, N.Y. – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has received almost \$15 million in Hurricane Sandy recovery appropriations for coastal cleanup and marsh restoration at national wildlife refuges on Long Island. Contracts have been awarded to fund debris and downed tree removal. The Service will use the majority of the funding - \$11 million - to restore marshes at three national wildlife refuges, improving the resiliency of the Long Island coast against future storms. An additional \$1 million will be invested in projects to repair visitor facilities and Service assets damaged during the super storm.

“The marshes at Long Island refuges helped to protect inland areas from the full brunt of Hurricane Sandy,” said refuge manager Michelle Potter. “We will focus our restoration efforts on returning the ecological functions of these marshes by removing invasive plants, allowing native plants to return and restoring natural tidal flows. The restoration efforts will provide important wildlife habitat and enhance the refuges’ value for coastal protection.”

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) has awarded contracts to two New York companies to begin cleanup and tree removal efforts at eight national wildlife refuges on Long Island. [Coastal Environment Group, Inc.](#) received a \$2.5 million contract for the debris removal. The company is a small, minority-owned business based in Edgewood, NY. It has worked with the federal government on major environmental projects including Hurricane Katrina response and remediation at Superfund sites, and has committed to hiring local workers and supporting local businesses. Coastal Environment Group will begin with aerial and ground damage assessments to develop a project plan. Debris removal should begin in the next few weeks.

SavATree, a tree removal company with offices in Brookville and Southampton, NY, will remove downed trees that are causing public safety hazards at several refuges. Tree removal will begin in the next few days. Both companies will take precautions to minimize environmental damages during the project. Service biologists and independent project inspectors will advise crews and monitor progress.

For safety considerations, it may be necessary to close national wildlife refuge areas during periods of heavy work. The public will be notified of any closures in advance.

The \$11 million marsh restoration project will restore and enhance 432 acres of salt marsh at the Wertheim and Seatuck National Wildlife Refuges and the Lido Beach Wildlife Management Area, in the Long Island towns of Shirley, Islip and Hempstead in Suffolk and Nassau Counties.

Restoration and mitigation projects are part of a comprehensive, multi-agency Hurricane Sandy Resiliency plan that Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell recently announced in advance of the storm's one-year anniversary. The refuge has just begun project planning and will update the community as contracts are awarded and work moves forward.

[Long Island refuges](#) include 6,500 acres of important nesting, wintering and migratory stop-over locations for hundreds of species of birds, and hosts 465,000 visitors annually. The refuges also protect threatened and endangered species, fish and other wildlife, and serve as natural extreme weather buffer zones for many of the island's populated areas.

For more information about Hurricane Sandy recovery and resiliency efforts by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, visit <http://www.fws.gov/hurricane/sandy>.

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 in the Service's Northeast Region, visit www.fws.gov/northeast.

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