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\$10M in Federal Aid for Buyouts of 31 Residential Properties in Borough of Manville, Somerset County



Manville Maxar Ida 2021

Photo: Aerial imagery of Manville after flooding caused by Hurricane Ida.

Source: Maxar.com

On December 1, 2022, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grant program approved \$10 million for the voluntary buyout of 31 homes in flood-prone sections of Manville. The Borough of Manville sustained extensive flooding from the Raritan River and Millstone River, as remnants of Hurricane Ida came through New Jersey in September of 2021.

The approval comes in response to a funding request *DEP Blue Acres [https://dep.nj.gov/blueacres/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]* submitted on July 29, 2022. The \$10 million award reflects the full amount of funding allocated to New Jersey through FEMA FMA's "Swift Current" initiative which seeks to expedite the distribution of assistance to disaster survivors and in advance of FMA's annual grant process.

Blue Acres directly notified the homeowners when the application was submitted and again when the award was announced. Properties not part of the FEMA Swift Current buyout project in Manville will continue to be considered for inclusion within forthcoming and rolling grant applications prepared by Blue Acres in coordination with its partners. In the coming weeks, DEP will be guiding individual homeowners throughout the buyout process to reduce red tape and provide a facilitated experience.

All 31 properties approved for FEMA Swift Current funding meet one or more eligibility requirements of the Swift Current initiative, such as:

- * the home is covered by an active flood insurance policy under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP);
- * the home is within the 100-year floodplain, or Special Flood Hazard Area (this means the property has a 1% chance of seeing a base flood every year, as *mapped by FEMA and publicly available [https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]*);
- * the home incurred "substantial damages" because of Hurricane Ida (this means the local floodplain manager certified that the home's damage was greater than 50% of the building's value); or,
- * the home incurred "repetitive losses" or "severe repetitive losses" because of Hurricane Ida (this is determined by calculating damage claims over time covered by a contract under the NFIP).

28 out of the 31 homes incurred severe repetitive losses over the years and/or were designated substantially damaged by Ida. FEMA is funding either 90% or 100% for each house, depending on its flood loss severity.

This funding award will advance implementation of the *2021 New Jersey Climate Change Resilience Strategy [https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience-strategy.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]* which specifically recommends incentivizing movement to safer areas by buying out repeatedly flooding properties and deploying natural or nature-based solutions for resilience. It will also advance state and federal environmental justice goals, in that thirteen of the properties are located within areas identified as overburdened or socially vulnerable, per New Jersey's environmental justice law and/or the CDC's social vulnerability index.

Buyouts are the most permanent and cost-effective project for protecting human lives and private property against inevitable future flood events. When homes are removed from the floodplain, there are fewer people who will need assistance evacuating in times of disaster. There are also fewer residential structures to exacerbate hazard conditions, including debris, contaminants, and gas and power lines. After a buyout, the land is preserved as open space, providing community benefits such as floodwater absorption and reducing the need for future disaster assistance by police, fire, emergency crews and other first responders. For more information on the Blue Acres program, visit:

<https://dep.nj.gov/blueacres/> [https://dep.nj.gov/blueacres/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]

See *FEMA's Swift Current announcement here [https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20221201/fema-provides-10-million-new-jersey-climate-resilience-projects-communities?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]*.

ICYMI: Flood Risk Identification Tool for Homeowners

*New Jersey's Flood In [https://dep.nj.gov/inland-flood-protection-rule/flood-tool/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]dicator [https://dep.nj.gov/inland-flood-protection-rule/flood-tool/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery] Tool [<https://dep.nj.gov/inland-flood-protection-rule/flood->

tool/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery]*, launched by DEP, supplements FEMA flood maps by aiding the public to gauge flood risk. While the tool does not calculate actual risk, it can be useful in assisting property owners or prospective property owners on potential risk and, by referencing the 500-year flood extent, approximate flood risk and DEP's potential regulatory jurisdiction. Armed with this information, property owners may then decide to take additional steps to determine actual risk, which is dependent on site-specific conditions.

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