



Governor's Office of Storm Recovery

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Governor's Office of Storm Recovery Announces Completion of Resiliency and Preparedness Improvements in Essex County

\$2 Million Investment Includes Ausable River Restoration and Emergency Shelter Upgrades in Jay

Jay, N.Y. - The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) today announced the completion of a nearly \$2 million investment to improve resiliency and emergency preparedness in the Town of Jay. They were joined by representatives from Essex County, the Towns of Jay and Keene, the Ausable River Association, and others for a ribbon-cutting. The two projects included enhancements to the Ausable River and upgrades to the town's emergency shelter.

GOSR Executive Director Katie Brennan said, "Resilient waterways and vital emergency shelters are essential infrastructure, especially as our climate changes and extreme weather becomes more frequent. By reducing flooding along the Ausable River and improving the emergency shelter, the Town of Jay is more resilient and has the resources it needs when the next severe storm hits."

The investment included a \$1 million project along the East Branch of the Ausable River to improve the flow of water and reduce flooding. The project restored floodplain features, including a bankful bench and toe wood structures, to dissipate high flows of water and reduce erosion. These improvements will help prevent ice jams, decrease sediment and debris build-up, and support the local ecological habitat. In addition to making the river more resilient in future storm events, the restoration will allow the river to serve as greenspace for people to access and enjoy nature.

The investment also included a \$900,000 project that transformed the Jay Community Center into a fully functioning emergency shelter. The building is now equipped with a backup boiler, a large commercial kitchen, and ADA-compliant facilities so that the entire community can gather there to recover during emergencies.

Improving resiliency along the Ausable River has been, and will continue to be, a priority for New York. This initiative follows the Rome Dam Removal, a previous GOSR project that removed a structurally unsound, high hazard dam from a bedrock gorge on the West Branch of the Ausable River. In addition, further streambank restoration work will be conducted along the [East Branch of the river as part of a \\$500,000 grant](#) from the State's Water Quality Improvement Project Program. The additional restoration work was identified as a result of GOSR's [community-driven planning process in the Towns of Jay and Keene](#).

Flooding from heavy rains, ice jams, and snowmelt has been a reality in Jay for generations. During Hurricane Irene, the Ausable River discharge was more than 200 times the average. Roads, bridges, and

culverts washed out, isolating residents, challenging emergency response, and severely disrupting the flow of traffic. Dozens of homes were severely damaged or destroyed. First responders and residents used the Town's community center as an emergency shelter even though it lacked the resources and infrastructure necessary for facilitating recovery efforts for all.

The community surrounding the Ausable River is especially prone to flooding, erosion, and habitat loss after generations of using the East Branch for industry. Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee in 2011 compounded these conditions, causing major flooding throughout Essex County and especially in Jay. The East Branch's banks collapsed and widened, channels morphed, debris and sediment deposits built up, and ice jams became frequent. As a result, residents were displaced from their homes. The street flooding and lack of emergency shelter hindered the Town's recovery efforts.

"Every winter, our region is hit by extreme weather," said **Senator Dan Stec**. "This makes emergency preparedness a top priority. The \$2 million for the Town of Jay will help protect residents and businesses along the East Branch of the Ausable River and ensure the Jay Community Center is better equipped to assist those in need during an emergency. These measures will go a long way toward protecting our communities during a storm crisis."

Town of Jay Supervisor Stanley said, "I am very excited to show off the improvements to the Town of Jay that were made possible by the grant from the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery. The Community Center improvements to the kitchen and bathrooms will be extremely helpful when we need to open as an emergency shelter. We have also seen how the restoration work performed on the East Branch of the Au Sable River can help mitigate the jamming of ice on the river. I am hopeful that this and future projects will make it so residents and nature can coexist along the river in our town."

About GOSR

Established in June 2013, GOSR coordinates statewide recovery efforts for Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee. More recently, GOSR is also coordinating recovery and resiliency efforts for Hurricane Ida.

In October 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul announced the creation of the Office of Resilient Homes and Communities, which will assume GOSR's portfolio.

Through its NY Rising Housing Recovery, Small Business, Community Reconstruction, Infrastructure, and Rebuild by Design programs, GOSR invests \$4.5 billion in federal Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding to help New Yorkers recover from and better prepare for extreme weather events. The agency is also leveraging Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds to implement resiliency initiatives. More information about GOSR and its programs is available at <http://stormrecovery.ny.gov/>.

Through the NY Rising Community Reconstruction (NYRCR) and Infrastructure Programs, the State takes on a variety of initiatives developed during its bottom-up community planning process to improve resiliency, protect critical infrastructure, mitigate the risks of loss and damage associated with future disasters, and reduce hardship. Now in the implementation stage, GOSR works with a variety of municipal, county, and non-profit partners to bring hundreds of locally devised proposals to fruition.

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