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Andrew M. Cuomo - *Governor*

Governor Cuomo Announces Construction Work Begins to Improve Storm Resiliency at Lock E-11 on the Erie Canal

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Canal Corporation's Mitigation Project Part of 'Building Back A Better Erie Canal'

Albany, NY (May 12, 2014)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced \$40 million in construction work is underway at Lock E-11 on the Erie Canal, helping put in place important mitigation and resiliency measures following the major storms to hit New York State over the past years.

Lieutenant Governor Robert Duffy today attended an event highlighting the continuation of the reconstruction and mitigation projects at the Lock.

“As we continue to prepare for the new reality of extreme weather, we are investing in critical infrastructure and rebuilding with the next major storm in mind,” Governor Cuomo said. “The Erie Canal is vital to communities and local economies across the State, and by implementing a state-of-the-art flood warning system and other important mitigation projects we are making the Canal safer, stronger and more resilient for years to come.”

“I applaud the Canal Corporation for building back smarter and stronger, and putting this construction in place that’s sustainable for generations to come,” said Lieutenant Governor Robert J Duffy. “New York State was built on our canal systems, and we’re preserving that history and preparing it for the new realities of extreme weather across our state. These improvements we are making will not just restore New York’s canals, but ensure they are built back better.”

As part of the State's "Build Back Better" program following several years of extreme weather, the Canal Corporation is spending nearly \$40 million to repair, restore and rehabilitate the infrastructure at the Lock E-11 property. Work includes modifying the capabilities of the lock's movable dam, implementing a state-of-the-art flood warning system and restoring the historic Guy Park Manor as well as the surrounding grounds.

"The improvements we are making will have a tremendous impact on bringing New York's Canals back stronger than ever," said Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton. "Under the leadership of Governor Cuomo, the Canal Corporation has sought to bolster our system to stand up to the increasingly extreme weather that is occurring on a far more regular basis. Matched with the new innovative flood warning system, we will be as prepared as we can to deal with the next punch that Mother Nature throws."

"I applaud Governor Cuomo and the Canal Corporation for making this historic site a priority in our rebuilding efforts," said Congressman Paul D. Tonko. "There is no question that our state is experiencing more frequent and severe storms, which makes these efforts to strengthen and improve our infrastructure at Lock 11 and rehabilitate Guy Park Manor so critically important. The City of Amsterdam and our neighboring communities have a long history and deep connection with the Erie Canal and Mohawk River. I am pleased that our partners in state government are working so hard to protect and promote these important historic resources."

"The people of the Mohawk Valley have shown just how resilient they are in the face of great challenges, and we need to ensure that the canals are just as strong and resilient," said Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk. "I applaud Governor Cuomo and the entire Canal Corporation for not only bouncing back from such devastation, but for looking forward and making the improvements needed to make the Canals stronger for the long term."

"Governor Cuomo and Director Stratton have shown tremendous leadership in recognizing ways to strengthen the Canals and protect them from the 100-year storms we seem to be experiencing on almost an annual basis," said Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara. "We must be prepared to deal with these events as they arise and by building the system back better, the Canal Corporation is doing just that."

"The Canal system is a national treasure and the work to strengthen its infrastructure is vital to the recovery in upstate New York," said County Executive Matt Ossenfort. "By making these upgrades to the system, it is now better prepared to deal with Mother Nature's harsh treatment. This work helps ensure the historic Erie Canal will be here for another one hundred and ninety years."

“I am very pleased to see that the State is looking forward and recognizes the importance in bolstering the canal’s infrastructure in the face of extreme weather,” said Amsterdam Mayor Ann Thane. “The Erie Canal and City of Amsterdam have a long history and these improvements will help ensure that relationship will endure despite whatever weather Mother Nature decides to throw at us.”

The very same improvements being made to the movable dam at Lock E-11 are being made at the other seven movable dams at every lock between Scotia and Fort Plain. In fact, the work at Lock E-13 in Yosts was just recently completed.

The movable dams are being strengthened with new steel and other components which will allow them to be safely raised out of the water in anticipation of a major flood event. This will lower 100-year peak water levels and help prevent the back-up of debris at the dams. The Canal Corporation also instituted new operating procedures to be used in conjunction with the strengthened infrastructure when extreme weather is forecasted.

In the early 1900’s when the State decided to build the barge canal, the decision was made to no longer use the original hand dug canal and instead canalize the Mohawk River by building the eight movable dams—an engineering technology that is still to this day found only in Europe. Some confusion has arisen in the past because the word ‘dam’ leads some people to think of a flood control measure, when in fact these structures were built to simply create navigation pools because the Mohawk is naturally too shallow for boats.

The upgrades being completed allow the Canal Corporation to utilize these structures to help mitigate the effects of future flooding. In fact, the new procedures and infrastructure worked as designed in the face of extreme weather at several other locks last June. No communities upstream or downstream of those dams received flood damage from the canal during these storms.

Another essential component of keeping canal communities safe is the Canal Corporation’s state-of-the-art flood warning project, unveiled by Governor Cuomo in October. The new system will improve the forecasting frequency, accuracy, modeling and mapping for any potential flooding throughout critical watershed regions in Upstate New York. The new system will use weather forecasts, precipitation gages, and newly installed and existing stream gages to fine tune flood warnings. In this way, local communities will get more precise flood warnings that will be integrated with online maps to show predicted areas and depths of flooding. First responders will get more detailed and earlier data of impending flooding to evacuate people and save lives. Residents and businesses will be able to go online at any time to see what areas could be affected by floods of varying severities.

Both the movable dam upgrades and the new flood warning system have been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) meaning that 75 percent of the cost for each project will be reimbursed by the Federal government.

Also part of this project is the full restoration of Guy Park Manor and adjoining grounds. The historical building, severely damaged by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, will be raised for flood mitigation. The exterior stone facing will be restored, a new HVAC system will be installed, and interior surfaces will be restored and used for future office space.

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