



For Immediate Release

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF STORM RECOVERY ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION PROJECT TO PROMOTE RESILIENCY IN EAST RIVER PARK

The project aims to create a new one-acre wetland in park, which is located in Lower Manhattan

New York, NY (November 12, 2014) – The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) today announced a \$1 million proposal to create a one-acre wetland in East River Park. The project, which was developed by the Lower Manhattan NY Rising Community Reconstruction (NYRCR) Planning Committee, will be the first of many community resiliency initiatives to be implemented in Lower Manhattan.

Superstorm Sandy's impact on Lower Manhattan— and especially the Lower East Side— was unparalleled. The storm flooded much of the Lower East Side— a neighborhood with large concentrations of subsidized housing and community facilities. Once constructed, the new wetland would replace an impervious surface with an absorptive one, providing additional stormwater capture capacity for the immediate area and establishing a precedent for increasing water absorption through green infrastructure. In addition, the project would complement other resiliency proposals planned for the area, including a coastal protection endeavor announced through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's (HUD) Rebuild By Design Competition, to improve areas of the Lower Manhattan waterfront.

"The communities of the Lower East Side are highly vulnerable to extreme weather events given their proximity to the East River," said Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. "Superstorm Sandy wreaked significant havoc in the community, impacting the lives of many of the City's most vulnerable residents and flooding the majority of the community. Applying lessons learned from Sandy, we must explore every opportunity to make New York better and stronger than before."

"Wetlands and green infrastructure investments are a key piece of the City's climate resiliency plan and can play a vital role in managing rainwater during storm events," said Daniel Zarrilli, Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency. "This effort will complement the adjacent coastal protection investments planned in East River Park. The City looks forward to partnering with the State to implement this important wetlands project."

"The creation of a wetland in the East River Park is a key example of the way Parks and open spaces are an integral part of our resiliency infrastructure," said New York City Parks Commissioner, Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP. "This wetland will improve and beautify the site, help absorb precipitation during storm events, and serve as an important educational tool year-round. This project also illustrates the ways in which partnerships between NYC Parks, the City, State and local community groups can result in projects that improve waterfront spaces and protect communities."

The one-acre wetland would be constructed at a site where a local community group plans to build a new composting facility near Corlears Hook. The larger project includes the following components:

- Constructed wetland, meadow, and pond;
- Composting windrows which would allow for large-volume composting; and
- Outdoor classroom and shade structure.

Over an eight-month period following Superstorm Sandy, Lower Manhattan was one of 50 communities (representing more than 100 localities) to participate in the State's \$650 million NYRCR Program. Managed by GOSR, NYRCR is a grassroots planning and implementation process that strives to empower storm-impacted communities to rebuild, while becoming stronger and more resilient.

Altogether, more than 500 participants serve on NYRCR Committees throughout the State, having proposed approximately 600 projects with an aggregate cost of more than \$800 million. Each participating community was allocated between \$3 million and \$25 million to implement eligible projects that incorporate and capitalize on local needs, strengths, and challenges. This past summer, New York State launched "Round 2" of the program, extending the opportunity to 16 new communities.

Working with GOSR and experts on resiliency, the Lower Manhattan NYRCR Committee developed a multi-faceted approach to recovery, taking into consideration both the programmatic needs and infrastructure needs of the community.

"Through the construction of this new wetland, we see the work of a true grassroots planning and implementation process in action," said Executive Director of Storm Recovery, Jamie Rubin. "From start to finish, our Community Reconstruction Program is community-driven, and focuses on the local needs and opportunities of each region."

"This Committee-supported project to create a wetland area in East River Park will provide a much needed natural solution to manage storm water," said Catherine Hughes, Co-Chair of the Lower Manhattan NY Rising Community Reconstruction Committee. "This terrific, community-developed idea will provide yet another layer of protection against flooding in a very vulnerable area of Manhattan."

"The wetland creation project is a unique opportunity to make the Lower East Side more resilient, while also educating New Yorkers on managing storm water, providing a sanctuary for local birdlife, and continuing the great work of the Lower East Side Ecology Center as a leader in composting," said Daniel Ackerman, Co-Chair of the Lower Manhattan NY Rising Community Reconstruction Committee.

The Lower Manhattan NYCRC Planning Committee's East River Wetland project is one of several community-developed projects that will be executed through a collaborative City/State partnership. The State will be providing the City with funding from its HUD's Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) allocation, as well as technical assistance, to implement select NYRCR projects and programs.

Established in June 2013, GOSR coordinates Statewide recovery efforts for Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee. Through its NY Rising Housing Recovery, Small Business, Community Reconstruction, and Infrastructure programs, GOSR invests more than \$4 billion made available through the CDBG-DR Program to better prepare New York for future extreme weather events.

For more information, visit www.stormrecovery.ny.gov.

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