



Andrew M. Cuomo –*Governor*

Governor Cuomo Announces Plan to Strengthen Roberto Clemente State Park Waterfront; Protect Morris Heights Neighborhood

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*Project Will Replace Failing Seawall and Improve Park Waterfront Esplanade
New York State Will Use Up To \$46.5 Million of Community Development Block Grant
Disaster Funds for the Project*

Albany, NY (June 6, 2014)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a plan to replace a failing seawall at Roberto Clemente State Park that was directly impacted by Superstorm Sandy with a stronger, more storm- resilient bulkhead along the Harlem River. The new wall will protect park and residential housing complexes in the Morris Heights neighborhood of the Bronx from future storms. The State will utilize State and Federal resources to restore and enhance Roberto Clemente State Park. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation will apply for up to \$46.5 million in Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) funds for the project. The funds provided to the State by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are managed through the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery. New York State has been awarded \$4.4 billion of HUD disaster recovery funds to date to address recovery needs resulting from the impacts of Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee to the State.

“Superstorm Sandy showed us just how devastating the new reality of extreme weather can be – and that is why we are actively working to reimagine our vital infrastructure and strengthen our communities with the next major storm in mind,” Governor Cuomo said. “This project will rebuild an essential coastal protection measure for the Morris Heights neighborhood, helping to ensure that the area’s residents, businesses, and parks are

safeguarded from the impact of future flooding. Our administration is pleased to be working with our federal and local partners to make this project a reality as we continue to build back stronger, smarter and better than ever before.”

“I’m thankful for Governor Cuomo’s commitment to repair the damage done by Superstorm Sandy to Roberto Clemente State Park and protect the neighborhood it serves,” State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said. “The project is a reminder that parkland is important for providing places for fun and recreation, but – especially in urban areas – serves as an essential buffer for our communities, providing much-needed open space and often absorbing and mitigating the impact of stronger and more frequent storms.”

“Through all of our NY Rising programs, we aim to create a stronger, more resilient New York,” said State Director of Storm Recovery, Jamie Rubin. “Implementing storm mitigation measures in Roberto Clemente State Park is another example of this commitment, as we work to prioritize federal funding for the completion of critical infrastructure projects. Every day, through this undertaking and others like it, we are helping communities rebuild from recent storms, while also laying the groundwork to combat future weather events.”

“Roberto Clemente State Park is a true Bronx treasure, that honors a man who was not only a great baseball player but a great humanitarian as well. I applaud Governor Cuomo for his great commitment to the Bronx and for putting forth this new project that will strengthen the park’s waterfront which in turn will enhance this historic park and protect the surrounding neighborhood,” said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

Roberto Clemente State Park was directly impacted by Superstorm Sandy. Due to the damage Sandy caused portions of Clemente will remain closed, directly increasing the risk that future storms pose to residents of the housing complex and jeopardizing public schools. Governor Cuomo is committed to repairing Roberto Clemente damaged infrastructure and increasing recreational opportunities and create natural resiliency measures so that area residents have more natural and open areas to enjoy.

Roberto Clemente is a 25-acre park with 3,700 linear feet of waterfront along the Harlem River. The 2,200-foot-long steel bulkhead at the center of Roberto Clemente State Park provides coastal defense for extensive park infrastructure; the adjacent RiverPark Towers residential complex that is home to 5,000 residents and two public school buildings serving 650 elementary and middle school students; as well as a Metro-North

Railroad line; and a major power transmission line serving the Bronx. As such, it is an essential component to protecting lives, increasing public safety and infrastructure from the impacts of severe storms, flooding, wave and tidal action.

Roberto Clemente experienced three feet of flooding during Superstorm Sandy. Following the storm, inspection of the 40-year-old bulkhead revealed severe corrosion of the steel sea wall and loss of backfill beneath the park esplanade. The condition has led to closing sections of the esplanade to park patrons and emergency vehicles that use it to respond to emergencies at the RiverPark Towers complex or on the Harlem River.

State Parks will hold two public information meetings Thursday, June 19 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m. at the park to brief the community about the project.

The project will enable State Parks to rebuild the bulkhead with a more resilient design and enhance the adjacent esplanade area. The redesigned waterfront will provide enhanced flood protection; storm resilience and green infrastructure. The outdated esplanade will be rehabilitated into a more park-like setting, featuring new plantings and a scenic 9,000-square-foot inter-tidal area that will provide natural habitat for plant and animal life, absorb heavy rainfall. In addition, the project will provide the park that has been historically walled off from the Harlem River with safe new access to the water and spur unique environmental education opportunities.

In addition, the funds will help to stabilize 1,400 feet of natural shoreline located directly north of the bulkhead, protecting park facilities including baseball fields and recreational fields. The shoreline project will complement and protect \$25 million in recent investments in the rehabilitating the pool facilities, the new playground, the new heat and hot water system in the park's activities building, and a new rehabilitated natural turf baseball field.

The bulkhead will protect other planned improvements for the park, including rehabilitation of the upper plaza to enhance the arrival to the park, open up views to the park, improve landscaping and upgrade the plaza's bridge-like support structures. In the park's Lower Plaza, work is planned to expand the BBQ areas, make connections to inter-tidal area and the river, create a new stage, and add recreational facilities such as chess tables and shuffleboard courts. The Upper and Lower Plaza improvements are expected to be supported by \$7.5 million from Governor Cuomo's New York Works initiative and a \$500,000 grant from Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

Named after the first Latino-American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, Roberto Clemente State Park attracts 1.3 million visitors a year. The park offers a variety of recreational and cultural activities year-round for youth, adults, senior citizens and the physically challenged. The facilities include a multi-purpose recreation building, an Olympic-size pool complex, ball fields, basketball courts, picnic areas, playgrounds.

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation manages 180 state parks and 35 historic sites which are visited by 60 million people annually. A recent study by commissioned by Parks & Trails New York found that New York State Parks generates \$1.9 billion in economic activity annually and supports 20,000 jobs. For more information on any of these recreation areas, call [518-474-0456](tel:518-474-0456) or visit www.nysparks.com, connect on [Facebook](#), or follow on [Twitter](#).

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