

New legislation makes \$78M available for Sandy-racked Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission

AUGUST 25, 2015, 6:55 PM LAST UPDATED: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2015, 8:56 AM
BY RICHARD COWEN
STAFF WRITER | THE RECORD

Governor Christie on Tuesday signed legislation to make \$1.9 billion in state financing available to utilities to protect drinking water and waste water infrastructure from storms.

The legislation makes available low-interest loans and no-interest financing for 280 projects in New Jersey through the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust. The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, which was devastated by Super storm Sandy in 2012, is eligible to receive \$78 million.

Following Sandy, the legislature set up the Statewide Assistance Infrastructure Loan (SAIL) program, which was designed to expedite the financing process in anticipation of reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Utilities borrow the money through SAIL and then pay it back with their FEMA reimbursement.

Sandy sent a 12-foot tidal surge through the PVSC plant in Newark, flooding the underground network of tunnels and destroying electrical systems. Without sufficient power, the commission could not treat effluent for several weeks after the storm and was forced to dump more than 800 million gallons of raw sewage into Newark Bay.

As part of the recovery, FEMA has committed \$260 million to building a new power plant and a sea wall to protect the treatment plant in future storms. FEMA has also provided a \$72 million grant to repair the sludge treatment building and to improve the combined sewer overflow system.

PVSC spokeswoman Hollie A. Gilroy said financing that is obtained through the state's SAIL program will be reimbursed by FEMA.

Among the other big projects that will benefit from the legislation are:

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- \$185 million for the Middlesex County Utilities Authority for restoration of Sayreville and Edison pump stations.
- \$72 million for restoration of the Bayshore Regional Sewerage Authority in Union Beach.
- \$33 million for seal wall at Atlantic County Utilities Authority treatment plant in Atlantic City.
- \$16 million to build wet weather pumping stations and up to \$30 million for storm water projects in Hoboken.

“Projects such as these are critical to ensuring these vital public services remain in operation in times of natural disasters, and that our environment is protected,” said DEP Commission Robert Martin. “Sandy dealt a devastating blow to our drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, much of which is located along rivers and coastal areas that are vulnerable to severe flooding.”

Email: cowenr@northjersey.com