



news releases

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CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION MARKS 600th BLUE ACRES PURCHASE WITH ACQUISITION OF NEW MILFORD HOME

TRENTON – The Christie Administration’s Blue Acres Program has reached another milestone with its 600th acquisition, a house in New Milford, Bergen County, Commissioner Bob Martin announced today.

The Blue Acres Program, an important component of the state’s strategy to make New Jersey more resilient to storms, uses federal and state funds to acquire residential properties in flood-prone areas from willing sellers and preserve the land as open space. “The Blue Acres Program has proven to be extremely successful, making a big difference by moving hundreds of families out of harm’s way,” said Commissioner Martin. “This program is providing homeowners with a viable alternative to living with the constant threat of flooding, at the same time creating open space that provides buffers to flooding.”

The 600th acquisition was a property on Columbia Street, along the Hackensack River, for \$390,000. Closing took place this past Friday. It is the 19th acquisition in New Milford.

Funding for Blue Acres buyouts comes from \$185 million provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, \$175 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and \$15 million from the Blue Acres and State Land Acquisition funds within the DEP’s Green Acres Program.

The Blue Acres Program works with willing sellers to provide them a fair, pre-storm price for their properties. The program utilizes a special implementation team that assigns a case manager to work closely with each property owner.

“Key to the program’s success is the implementation of sound acquisition strategies based on best management practices, good partnerships with local and federal governments, and lots of teamwork and empathy by our staff,” said Blue Acres Director Fawn Z. McGee. “It’s always a tough decision for a property owner to move and we make this process as easy as possible.”

Over the past five years, the Blue Acres Program and its acquisition practices have earned national recognition, including awards from FEMA and HUD.

Of the nearly 900 offers made by the Blue Acres Program, 678 have been accepted with the balance moving through the process. More than 460 homes have been demolished, creating open space that will mitigate flooding and protect communities.

The program has also successfully facilitated short sales or payoff approvals with lenders for 64 properties for which owners owed more on their mortgages than the appraised value of the home. This resulted in debt forgiveness of more than \$4.5 million, enabling more families to move out of harm’s way.

In 2013, Governor Christie designated Blue Acres to run the state’s post-Superstorm Sandy effort to purchase homes from willing sellers at pre-Sandy values. The program was subsequently expanded to include acquisitions in communities that may not have been directly impacted by Sandy but are prone to repetitive flooding.

After a Blue Acres purchase, homes are demolished and the land is permanently preserved as open space for recreation and/or conservation. The goal is to purchase clusters of homes to provide areas that will absorb flood waters.

The Blue Acres Program has been active in 14 municipalities: Sayreville, South River, Woodbridge, Old Bridge and East Brunswick in Middlesex County; Manville in Somerset County; Pompton Lakes in Passaic County; Newark in Essex County; Rahway and Linden in Union County; Lawrence and Downe in Cumberland County; New Milford in Bergen County; and Ocean in Monmouth County.

The Blue Acres Program funds construction of beaches and dunes, elevating homes, improving water and wastewater infrastructure, and assisting local governments with flood mitigation.