

Passaic River Basin Flood Advisory Commission Report

Background

- The Passaic River Basin Flood Advisory Commission was established by Governor Christie's Executive Order #23 on April 23, 2010.
 - Commission Chairman Bob Martin, Commissioner, NJDEP
 - Col. Rick Fuentes, Superintendent, New Jersey State Police
 - Assemblyman Scott Rumana, District 40
 - Mayor Kathleen Cole, Borough of Pompton Lakes
 - Mayor Mike DeFrancisci, Township of Little Falls
 - Robert Steven Prezant, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics, Montclair State University
 - John Miller, P.E., CFM, CSM, Water Resource Engineer
- Addressing flooding in the Passaic River Basin is a priority issue for Governor Christie, Commissioner Martin and the DEP.
- The Passaic River Basin has been flooding for 10,000 years and will continue to flood. The Advisory Commission's aim is to reduce and mitigate the impacts.
- The growth of residential, commercial and industrial development over decades has multiplied the risk of serious property damage and loss of life.
- The Advisory Commission's 15-point action plan is a realistic package that recognizes there are no silver bullets.
- The Advisory Commission Report is not being put in a drawer; implementation began immediately upon the plan's release on February 10, 2011.
 - A DEP team reporting directly to Commissioner Martin has been assigned to oversee implementation.
 - There is ongoing dialogue with elected officials in the Passaic River Basin, including a series of technical advisory meetings with mayors in the region.
- The State will buy more properties in the most flood-prone areas...keep residents—and first responders—out of harm's way

Recommendations

Recognizing that there are no silver bullets to the longstanding problem of flooding in the Passaic River Basin, the Advisory Commission on February 10, 2011 issued a comprehensive plan of 15 small and large actions to reduce flooding, minimize the impacts of floods, better prepare for periodic flooding and improve efforts to help flood victims.

1. Expanding and expediting floodway buyouts using State Blue Acres funds and FEMA funds, to keep residents and first responders out of harm's way.
2. When acquisition is not an option, encouraging home elevation projects in flood prone areas.
3. Buying undeveloped land for use as flood storage areas.
4. Improving operation of the Pompton Lakes dam floodgates.
5. Initiating de-snagging and shoal dredging efforts to improve river flows.
6. Removing feeder dams to offer flood relief to Pompton Lakes, Wayne and Pequannock.
7. Adopting National Flood Insurance Program regulations to ensure that State rules are consistent with local flood control ordinances and to eliminate the risk that FEMA could suspend its flood insurance program in New Jersey.

8. Expediting the DEP's permit process so towns can more quickly obtain permits to de-snag and remove river debris, repair retaining walls and remove shoals.
9. Improving effectiveness and efficiency of county and local emergency response plans.
10. Enhancing the Passaic River flood warning system.
11. Contracting with the National Weather Service to create inundation maps to provide critical information that will enable quicker flood projections and greater preparedness.
12. Enhancing public involvement, information and outreach on flood issues.
13. Requesting a re-evaluation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers of potential major engineering projects for long-term flood damage reduction.
14. Updating decades-old floodplain maps that currently do not include detailed modeling.
15. Having towns in the Passaic River Basin pursue flood risk reduction changes to their master plans, zoning ordinances and flood prevention ordinances, in order to guide future development away from floodplains or prevent future development in high-risk flood-prone areas.

More information, including a link to the full text of the Advisory Commission's report to the Governor, is available on DEP's website: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/passaicriver/>.