

Summary: Post-Sandy Funder Briefing--Series I

Funder Briefing: #12

Date: February 11, 2013

Topic: NJ Recovery Fund and Post-Sandy Environmental Issues and Challenges

Speakers: **Hans Dekker**, President - Community Foundation of New Jersey;
Michael Catania, Past President - Conservation Resources (current ED of Duke Farms);
Tim Dillingham, Executive Director - The American Littoral Society;
Tom Gilbert, Regional Conservation Services Director - The Trust for Public Land

HIGHLIGHTS

Announcements:

CNJG is planning a funder's site visit/bus tour for Hudson and Bergen counties, based on the informative and successful tour of Monmouth and Ocean counties, and is looking for help in underwriting the costs.

New Jersey Recovery Fund (NJRF) – *Hans Dekker – NJRF*

Grants will be awarded by the end of March. \$5M raised for the NJRF so far. Ideally, projects will include collaborations between organizations in communities, and there will also be a series of non-competitive grants on capacity building, health care services, and community development. NJRF will also provide resources to help navigate Federal aid. Funded Areas:

- Public Information/Community engagement
- Policy reform
- Community and regional planning, for demonstration projects and other planning
- Environmental restoration/protection
- Arts

Environmental Issues and Challenges

Michael Catania - Conservation Resources

NJ is the first state projected to reach complete buildout in the next 20 years or so. Therefore, we are the policy laboratory. Sandy has complicated current policies that regulate development, protection of natural resources and tourism initiatives. The Philanthropic community can take a leadership role in thoughtful and long-term plans for recovery, where public entities may not be able to do the same. E.g.: Instead of reacting to proposals, Conservation Resources actively works with applicants and encourages them to find appropriate collaborative partners.

Tim Dillingham - [The American Littoral Society](#)

Impacts to coastal environment:

- Sandy exposed weaknesses in our current policies and are handicapped by the fact that we don't have a policy framework, capacity or approach that looks at resiliency.
- Nostalgia is dominating the view of how we rebuild after the storm instead of looking forward
- Restoring coastline is important - we've lost a lot of natural resilience. Sandy reshaped physical landscape - marshes, bays, inlets. With Sandy we saw water quality issues - physical habitat changes, pollution events

that carried raw sewage into the bays, estuaries and communities. Pesticides and herbicides were carried from basements into water, petroleum tanks failed, as well.

- Access to the coast for recreation, subsistence or business uses are now affected, which translates to lost jobs, lost physical ports and the fleets tied to them.
- Urban areas - had equally significant impacts from flooding - inability of folks to move due to more fixed nature of infrastructure

Tom Gilbert - [The Trust for Public Land](#) and [Keep It Green Coalition](#)

- State funding for preservation programs such as [Green Acres](#), [Blue Acres](#), and [Farmland Preservation](#) was recently finished being allocated so isn't available to help with new Sandy needs. These types of preservation programs help to set aside land from development and can assist with buyouts.
- Blue Acres - has been focused on inland waterways, and a coastal Blue Acres program will likely grow, and both FEMA and [CDBG-DR](#) funds could be leveraged to address the need for that growth.
 - Recent project collaboration helped set aside 5,000 acres for preservation in Little Egg Harbor, and in Barnegat Bay 15 high priority parcels were preserved, equaling about 17,000 acres.
- Green Acres - has also been using funds through Blue Acres type projects to acquire flood prone lands and can play a role in boardwalks, docks fishing piers, waterfront parks, recreational infrastructure repairs, and prevent development and impervious surfaces.

On February 4th, the State Environment & Energy Committee met to look at three principle options in the legislature to help fund environmental policies:

- Water user fee
- \$400M bond measure
- Dedicated \$200M annually in sales tax revenues over a 30 year period (this option appears to be gathering momentum)

Gilbert says Gov. Cuomo (NY) is taking proactive response with lots of attention flooding issues, buyouts, etc. In NJ, it's a much less public process than in NYC, driven by narrow economic concerns about property taxes and tourism dollars. While those concerns aren't unfounded, the longer term costs and benefits for the future are not being measured.

What can funders do?

- Raising awareness and education is essential - past public education campaigns about the Green Acres & Blue Acres programs supported by private foundations have been very helpful
- There are a number of funders that support land conservation organizations:
 - Gifts of land play a huge role in our ability to change development and the proposed cap on charitable giving would cause huge problems in this regard.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Speakers and members are all welcome to join the CNJG Environmental Affinity Group.

Beginning on the first Monday after Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey, The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers began hosting weekly conference calls for grantmakers in-state and nationwide, facilitated by CNJG President Nina Stack, to discuss their response to Sandy and strategies facing NJ as a result of the storm. Each conference call briefing offered expert guest speakers who represented government agencies (FEMA, HUD, HHS, etc.), national philanthropic leaders, expert psychologists with experience in PTSD, planners and community redevelopment leaders, and representatives from NJ's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, among others. The twenty-five audio files and written summaries are available at:

<http://cnjg.org/hurricane-sandy>