

The following information on the Blue Acres Program was provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Should you have any questions or desire to receive additional information, please contact the following DEP representatives:

- Fawn McGee, Bureau Chief State Land Acquisition (609) 984-0500
- Martha Sapp, Bureau Chief of Nonprofit and Local Assistance (609) 984-0500
- Courtney Wald-Wittkop, Project Manager (609) 984-0576

Blue Acres is an acquisition program administered by the DEP's Green Acres Program. It allows for the acquisition of flood prone properties (with structures) from willing sellers. Currently there is about \$31 million available in state Blue Acres funds. These funds are in high demand. They must be used in a timely manner to buyout flood damaged properties, protect flood plains as open space and to remove people from harm's way.

Since state Blue Acres funding is limited, the Green Acres Program is seeking to leverage the existing funding. The ability to leverage funds requires coordination and cooperation at various levels of government. Green Acres has been working to secure FEMA Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) grants and FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grants to fund many of the state direct Blue Acres buyouts.

Green Acres has also begun to encourage municipalities to leverage buyout funds. As an incentive, the Local Blue Acres Floodplain Acquisition Grant program has been developed which allows Green Acres to support municipally driven FEMA Hazard Mitigation grants applications by providing the required matching grant funds to acquire the flood prone properties. The Green Acres and FEMA objectives dovetail perfectly since both funding sources require the formerly flooded lands to be vacant, open space in perpetuity. A grant application is being drafted and is expected to be ready in June.

Once a Blue Acres buyout is complete, the structures must be demolished and the land remains deed restricted, open space.

If Green Acres acquires title to a property directly with state Blue Acres monies, it will then be assigned to a local State management entity such as the Division of Fish & Wildlife or the Division of Parks & Forestry. In some cases, where there are no nearby State facilities, local level managers (counties and towns) will be consulted and if amenable, they will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department to manage and maintain the vacant, flood prone properties. Under these circumstances, support from a local management entity must be in place early in the acquisition process and certainly an MOU must be executed before a formal buyout offer can be made to a landowner.

The timing on all Blue Acres acquisitions is dependent on whether the property is eligible for FEMA Hazard Mitigation grant funding. Properties that would make good candidates for both Blue Acres and FEMA Hazard Mitigation funding must have experienced a significant recent flood event or have been subject to repeat flooding events over the last few years. Properties should also currently be covered under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and have had a minimum of two NFIP claims over the last ten years each in excess of \$ 1,000.00. Blue Acres buyout prioritization is heavily influenced by two factors: proximity to existing state facilities and a properties designation as either a severe repetitive loss (SRL) or a repetitive loss (RL) property.

Blue Acres funding is only for the acquisition of flood-prone properties.