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# **Reed Announces Over \$12 Million Buyout Lifeline for Flood-Prone Properties in East Providence, Middletown and Narragansett**

## **FEDERAL FUNDS WILL HELP HOMEOWNERS & OFFER NATURAL STORM PROTECTION TO VULNERABLE NEIGHBORHOODS**

**EAST PROVIDENCE, RI** – Nobody wants to be swamped by repeated flooding. Now thanks to federal funding under a program that offers buyouts to owners of chronically flooded properties, fewer homes will be flooded during future storms.

Today, U.S. Senator Jack Reed, along with officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS), and East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva, joined local residents to announce approval of up to \$9.65 million in federal funding for property buyouts for eligible homeowners along Marsh Street and around the State Street neighborhood. Additionally, the purchase of floodplain easements and restoration of land damaged by Tropical Storm Ida in Middletown and Narragansett bring the total federal flood prevention investment for this initiative to over \$12.2 million. No local match is required for this funding.

In East Providence, the new federal funding will provide relief to eligible residents who have been impacted by repeated flooding along the Runnins River.

The federal funding, which Senator Reed helped secure, is being made available through NRCS's Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Senator Reed says the federal funds will allow residents who volunteer to participate in the buyout program to sell their homes for fair value. Once acquired, homes and other structures will be removed and the land will be restored to its natural state. The acquired properties will be designated as floodplain easements within an undevelopable wetland watershed area. When flood-prone properties become natural open space, they provide

an additional flood buffer for the rest of community, absorbing additional stormwater and creating new natural habitat.

“This is a wonderful community, but nobody wants to be swamped by increased flood risk and the bills and hardships that come with it. This voluntary buyout program is an opportunity for repetitive flood loss victims to get fair market value so they can relocate while simultaneously improving flood mitigation and developing smarter long-term flood management solutions. I appreciate NRCS staff for their diligent, expeditious efforts to help people and we want this process to move forward before another high water event occurs. We can’t undo the damage floods have done or replace treasured family photos and heirlooms that were destroyed, but hopefully we can help people out of difficult circumstances so they can get a fair deal and move forward with their lives away from flood-prone areas. And we’re also improving the environmental integrity of the floodplain,” said **Senator Reed**.

“This flooding issue has been plaguing this neighborhood for decades now. And we now, thanks to Sen. Reed, have the opportunity to give our residents real relief and peace of mind,” said East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva.

“Floodplains can provide significant protection from flood damages to downstream landowners,” said **Phou Vongkhamdy, Rhode Island State Conservatoinist for NRCS**. “These easements will significantly limit future uses of land in the floodplains, making it available to store flood water. Restoration of the land to a natural condition will increase flood storage capacity.”

In addition to the initial \$9.65 million cost estimate for East Providence, Middletown is slated to receive \$1.2 million and Narragansett should receive nearly \$1 million in federal funding under NRCS’s Emergency Watershed Protection Program for similar projects.

The next step will be for NRCS to distribute information and applications to property owners, followed by an appraisal process.

If property owners decide to sell through the federal property buyout program, the town becomes the property owner, subject to a floodplain easement. No other permanent structures may be built on the land within the floodplain easement, and it must remain forever “green” in accordance with NRCS regulations, which can allow for recreation.