



Park facilities damaged on Ellis Island National Monument. Photo by NPS/Bauer

## **Support Funding for National Parks Damaged by Sandy**

*The Frelinghuysen Amendment Has Needed Funds for National Parks through the National Park Service, Department of the Interior and Army Corps of Engineers*

Hurricane Sandy destroyed communities from the Mid-Atlantic through the Northeastern states, hurting families and businesses. The vast impact of the storm also includes unprecedented damage to many areas of the National Park System. Absorbing these costs, which dwarf those of the looming budget sequester, would have major budgetary consequences for an already overstretched and underfunded National Park System.

### **The National Parks Conservation Association supports the following provisions of the Frelinghuysen amendment:**

The Frelinghuysen amendment includes **\$348 million in critical disaster relief funding for the National Park Service construction budget** (p. 29) to continue their recovery efforts and ensure America's national parks are open for business.

The **\$50 million appropriation for the Park Service's Historic Preservation Fund** (p. 28) supports preservation projects and planning, including

the preservation, stabilization, rehabilitation, and repair of historic structures and sites listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The bill's **\$360 million for Department of the Interior departmental operations** (p. 29) is needed to restore and rebuild parks in a manner that restores and rebuilds devastated ecosystems and increases their resiliency to withstand and reduce the damage of future storms events.

National parks in the regions impacted by the storm would also benefit from multi-agency efforts to protect and restore habitat, water quality, and access to the harbor. Funds proposed to support replacing damaged infrastructure should be used to rebuild in a more sustainable way that will reduce flooding and storm damage in the future. Accordingly, NPCA also supports the bill's **\$20 million for a comprehensive study on flood control** (p. 12) that will protect waterfront communities and our national parks from future storms, similar to the process authorized after Hurricane Katrina. This would tier from current

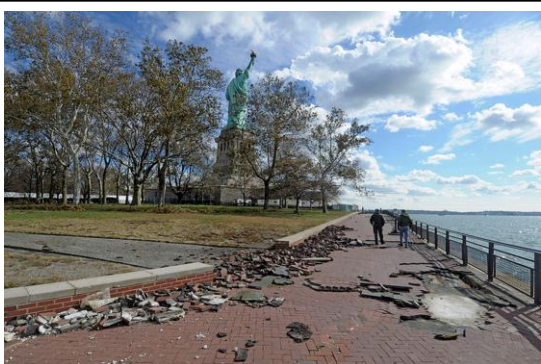


ecosystem restoration plans, like the Hudson-Raritan Comprehensive Restoration Plan, to restore the health and strength of the New York-New Jersey waterfront. Tiering the plan will ensure target areas are identified in a cost-effective and efficient way and future projects have been vetted by local communities.

Additionally, **the \$51 million to expedite continuing authorities program (CAP) projects being undertaken by the Army Corps** (p. 16) will increase the long-term sustainability of the coastal ecosystems, communities, and the region's national parks and reduce economic costs and risks associated with large-scale flood and storm events.

For example, under their CAP authority, the New York District Army Corps are rebuilding tidal wetlands in Jamaica Bay, a park unit of Gateway National Recreation Area. In addition to providing important habitat for plant and animal species, Jamaica Bay's tidal wetlands naturally filter the region's water and provide flood and storm protection for local communities. Decades of development have diminished the Jamaica Bay wetlands by up to 90% in some areas, leaving nearby waterfront communities in Brooklyn, Queens and the Rockaway Peninsula vulnerable to storms like Superstorm Sandy. However, with the help of emergency CAP funding, the Army Corps can continue to invest in tidal wetland restoration that will help protect these communities from future floods and storms.

**The National Parks Conservation Association urges Congress to support no less than the above level of funding to assist national parks with storm recovery efforts.**



Hurricane Sandy damage at Liberty Island. Photo by NPS/Daley

The National Park Service has already over-extended itself during the recovery process by relocating hundreds of rangers from parks across the country to assist with cleanup efforts in the northeast. The storm

affected nearly 70 national park sites. As of January 11<sup>th</sup> 2013, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island are still closed to visitors, and it remains unclear whether the beaches of Sandy Hook and other areas in Gateway and all of Fire Island National Seashore will be open this summer. Unless recovery funds are provided, this could further devastate local economies and communities throughout the northeast region.



Maintenance workers pause from cleaning debris at Ellis Island National Monument. Photo by NPS/Everitt

### Compounding a Challenging Fiscal Situation for National Parks:

The National Park Service is already struggling with underfunding, and the storm damage complicates an already challenging situation. Overall, the National Park Service budget is 15 percent less than it was a decade ago and national parks suffer from an operations shortfall of more than \$500 million annually. And under the discretionary spending caps mandated by the Budget Control Act, it will be difficult if not impossible for the park service to keep up with uncontrollable fixed costs, recently amounting to more than \$25 million each year, for things like cost of living adjustments for staff (step adjustments even with a pay freeze to COLA), fuel, and utilities. This will mean squeezed operating budgets even before accounting for threats from both storm damage and the debate over deficit reduction.

With the added threat of the fiscal cliff, the Park Service budget could be further cut by more than \$150 million dollars, making it virtually impossible for the Park Service to absorb the additional costs associated with storm recovery efforts.

### The extent of storm damage to National Park Service units:

More than 925 personnel from 160 parks throughout the country were redirected towards the incident management teams to assist with cleanup and stabilization at more than 70 park units. As of

December 11 2012, there were 328 employees working on recovery operations. To date, approximately 70 local park staff have also been assigned to the incident.

Examples of substantial damage include the **Statue of Liberty**, where mechanical systems were flooded and destroyed, **Sandy Hook in Gateway** which was inundated, and **Fire Island**, which experienced severe erosion all along its length and two overwashes. Ellis Island, Castle Clinton, Paterson Falls, and other sites in the region experienced flooding, significant damage to mechanical systems, the destruction of employee facilities, and considerable landscape damage

It is impossible to outline the full extent of storm damage to these park units in a brief fact sheet. For further information, see the park service storm damage [flikr](#) webpage and [morning reports](#) describing recovery activities each day.

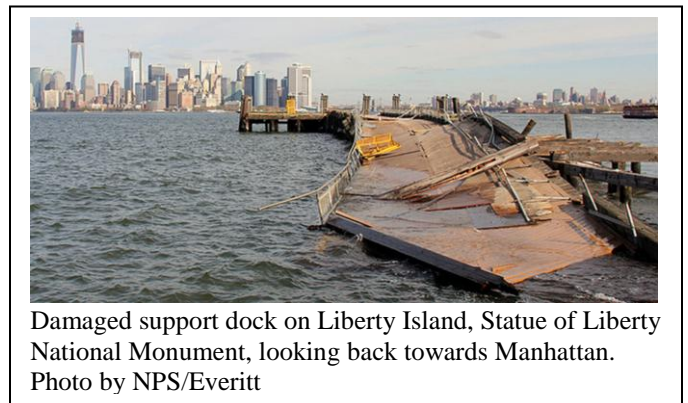


Saw crew member, David Adams from Stones River National Battlefield, stands in front of Washington's Headquarters at Morristown National Historical Park.

As of the December 11, 2012 report: At **Ellis Island**, debris cleanup and heavy equipment repair continues. The elevator is inoperable because of four feet of water in the shaft. At **Fire Island**, debris removal at Sailor's Haven and stabilization efforts at the Patchogue maintenance garage continue. At **Gateway**, resource advisors continue working on mapping wrecked boats and coordinating upcoming boat removals. At **Fort Tilden**, road and trail operations, building utilities repairs, and sand redistribution continue. A contractor has begun mold mitigation at residences. At **Jacob Riis Park**, road and trail clearing and sand redistribution continues. The process of putting clean sand back onto the beach is

15% complete. Work continues on boarding the windows and doors of the bathhouse.

At **Great Kills**, debris removal operations and sand redistribution continued. The project was about 10% complete. At **Fort Wadsworth**, debris removal continued at Seabee Park. Eight to ten loads of debris are being hauled out each day; 204 loads are being hauled in daily. At **Sandy Hook**, debris removal from roadsides and beach plazas continues, as did replacement of oil tank gauges and the construction and placement of shutters on exposed windows and doors on buildings at Fort Hancock. Work also continues on repairing the main waterline. A contractor was clearing the wastewater treatment plant and the project was about 40% complete.



Damaged support dock on Liberty Island, Statue of Liberty National Monument, looking back towards Manhattan. Photo by NPS/Everitt

### The threat of national park storm damage to local economies

Sandy Hook in New Jersey is among the park units needing federal funds for recovery. Among other damage, the ferry dock was destroyed by the storm, and it took five days for crews to push sand to the side of the roads to make them passable. A month after the tidal surge, crews were still clearing parking lots covered in sand. Officials are concerned about unexploded ordnance that may have been exposed when so much sand washed off the beaches, once an Army testing ground for ammunition. As of a recent report, crews were still pumping sand and water out of the sewage stations. Workers were still checking the pipes that carry water throughout the peninsula for damage, and the sewage treatment was also being evaluated.

The park is a popular area where people run, swim, bicycle, and attend summer concerts, among other activities. It draws more than 2 million visitors a year and is a unit of Gateway National Recreation Area, which supports more than \$160 million in visitor

spending annually and countless jobs. There is currently no estimate as to when some areas of the park may reopen, raising local alarm about the potential impact of the park's closure to local economies that benefit substantially from visitation.



The Statue of Liberty survived the storm, but the surrounding island was so badly damaged that the National Park Service doesn't know when the island will reopen or how much repairs will ultimately cost. Damage includes broken railings, torn-up paving stones, damaged equipment and flood-wrecked buildings, and destroyed boilers, sewage pumps and electrical systems.

The national monument is among the most visited in the country, with nearly four million visitors a year. In 2010, visitors spent more than \$165 million, supporting nearly two thousand private sector jobs.

Sandy Hook and the Statue of Liberty are just two illustrative examples of the importance of park service sites as tourism destinations, the disrepair of which threatens to impact local economies that greatly benefit from visitors.

The National Park System supports more than \$30 billion in spending annually and more than a quarter million jobs. One out of every five international visitors goes to a park service site. These tourism destinations are not just protecting our national heritage but supporting local economies. And the American public wants them supported and funded. Polls show that national parks are among the most popular federal benefits and that 9 out of 10 likely voters, Democrat, Republican or Independent, want funding for national parks to be maintained or even increased.

**National parks protect our national treasures and draw tourists from throughout the world. We urge Congress to support the funding levels in the Frelinghuysen amendment to support communities and national park units affected by Hurricane Sandy so those parks can be restored, more resilient to future disasters, open to the public, and can continue to benefit the tourism economies that depend on the long-term recovery of the region.**

***For More Information:*** Contact John Garder, Budget and Appropriations Legislative Representative, at [jgarder@npca.org](mailto:jgarder@npca.org) or (202) 454-3395; Alex Brash, Senior Regional Director for the Northeast Regional office at [abrash@npca.org](mailto:abrash@npca.org) or (212) 617-298; or April Mims, Program Manager, Northeast Regional Office, at [amims@npca.org](mailto:amims@npca.org) or (212) 617-2771.



Saw crews from Great Smoky Mountains National Park remove downed trees at Fire Island National Seashore.



Storm damage to ferry terminal at Sandy Hook