

# Environmental Alert

## NJDEP Seeks Applications for \$10 Million in Competitive Grants for Stormwater Utilities & Resilience Planning



**On August 2, 2022**, the Governor’s office released an announcement regarding a new \$10 million grant fund to provide “assistance to municipal, county, and utility authorities to plan to become more resilient, including conducting studies on the feasibility of forming stormwater utilities and resilience planning for local governments impacted by Tropical Storm Ida, that will focus on strategies to better manage the impacts of stormwater.”

This fund is part of NJDEP’s and Commissioner Shawn LaTourette’s effort to help improve water quality throughout New Jersey, and to help build resiliency to minimize the impacts of flooding caused by storms and worsened by climate change and sea level rise. On September 1, 2021, Tropical Storm Ida made landfall and quickly became the deadliest storm in New Jersey since Superstorm Sandy in 2012. As with the NJDEP regulations on stormwater management and stormwater pollution prevention planning, the purpose of these grants is to help develop strategies that better manage the impacts of stormwater with the following goals:

- Reduce flood damage
- Reduce soil erosion
- Construct, maintain, and improve existing and proposed stormwater infrastructure, including green infrastructure
- Improve groundwater recharge
- Prevent or reduce nonpoint run off pollution

New Jersey is a highly developed state with a great deal of impervious cover, such as buildings, asphalt, and concrete. All of this impervious cover creates a great deal of stormwater runoff, rather than allowing the water to infiltrate back into the soil and groundwater underneath. With greater runoff comes greater (and faster) accumulation of stormwater in low lying areas, which in turn increases the possibility of flooding. The NJDEP periodically revises these regulations to improve their goals of managing both stormwater quantity and quality. As an additional note, the NJDEP released a new draft Tier

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A Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) on July 28, 2022, with a 45-day period for public comment. A copy of that draft permit, as well as related information and contact information, can be found [here](#).

## Funding

The grant is divided into two parts. The first consists of \$7 million from the state's Corporate Business Tax and Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF) intended to be used for items such as green infrastructure, stormwater asset management planning, improving existing stormwater infrastructure, and removing and restoring impervious areas into pervious ones that will allow for greater stormwater capture and groundwater recharge. NJDEP has issued a "Request for Proposals" in order to solicit ideas and grant applications for eligible projects. These grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, and the deadline for submissions is September 14, 2022. A link to the grants program and related materials is available [here](#).

The second part of this fund is itself divided into two parts – with \$2 million allotted for stormwater utility feasibility studies, and \$1 million allotted for stormwater resiliency planning. The concept of a stormwater utility is not new in other parts of the U.S., but New Jersey has been slower in adopting this strategy. In short, a stormwater utility provides a way to manage the costs and challenges of stormwater management by sharing the costs of managing the infrastructure and services among several municipalities within a region, rather than having each municipality develop their own programs. Much like a wastewater or drinking water authority that may handle water from a number of municipalities, the stormwater utility would look to reduce costs by having a single management group provide professional services for a number of municipalities. It would also, like a water or wastewater authority, have the ability to self-fund through fees assessed. As stormwater management becomes more technically advanced, and the ability to manage these stormwater "facilities" outgrows the local Department of Public Works, it seems to make sense to have a dedicated regional group to focus on these problems. Two million of the three million dollars for this part of the fund is allocated to help municipalities, counties, and public authorities study the feasibility of a stormwater utility in their area.

The last \$1 million portion of the grant fund is set aside through the Resilient NJ program for resiliency planning and is targeted for local governments that were impacted by Tropical Storm Ida in 2021. NJDEP will provide both technical and planning assistance to help develop community led planning that results in action toward climate resiliency.

Further details regarding this grant program, contact information, and links to public meetings can be found on Governor Murphy's ["News and Events" page](#).

This newsletter is for information purposes only and does not represent legal or technical advice.

If you need a more detailed explanation of this topic or need assistance in interpreting how it may impact your municipality, the EJIF suggests that you contact the EJIF environmental consultants for further information.

All EJIF members please feel free to contact Richard Erickson or Sunita Dhar of First Environment at [rerickson@firstenvironment.com](mailto:rerickson@firstenvironment.com) and [sdhar@firstenvironment.com](mailto:sdhar@firstenvironment.com), respectively, or 973.334.0003.