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FIRE ISLAND LEADERS LAUD APPROVAL OF EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO BEACHES DAMAGED BY STORMS

Community leaders urge Army Corps to move expeditiously to start work; express deep gratitude to the Army Corps of Engineers, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, Governor Hochul and county and town leaders.

New York, NY (March 25, 2024) – Fire Island community leaders today thanked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and elected officials for announcing the approval of an emergency beach repair project on Fire Island's eastern end. Senator Chuck Schumer, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Governor Kathy Hochul announced the approval today, beginning with an initial disbursement of $3.5 million to begin project engineering and design.

The eastern half of Fire Island – from Seaview to Davis Park – was devastated by storms over the past year. This triggered an intensive effort at every level of government to win the approval for an Army Corps project to repair the barrier island, which is crucial to the protection of Long Island's south shore.

The community leaders urged the Corps to begin work as soon as possible.

"We are deeply thankful for the work of so many of our elected leaders that led to this day," said Suzy Goldhirsch, President of the Fire Island Association. "This is a milestone in the effort to protect a barrier island whose survival is critical to the protection of the mainland. It is imperative that work begin soon."

A state grant by Governor Hochul earlier this year funded a critical short-term, stopgap dune protection project that Suffolk County completed earlier this month. The more comprehensive project approved today will restore the beaches to the contours of the Army Corps' original beach rebuilding project in 2019.

Tom Ruskin, president of the Seaview Association, thanked the Army Corps and urged them to begin work as soon as possible. "The timing of this project is critical, and we are grateful that Seaview will be part of this," he said. "While the stopgap project went a long way to reinforcing our dunes, the island is still highly vulnerable to future storms, and the restoration of the beaches cannot come quickly enough."

“Today’s announcement is the culmination of months of effort by Fire Island’s residents to turn around a desperate situation,” said Henry Robin, president of Fire Island Pines Property Owner’s Association (FIPPOA). “It is a tribute to the power of community organizing. I could not be prouder of our residents for never giving up in the face of enormous odds. We urge the Army Corps to start work as soon as possible.”

Goldhirsch, Ruskin and Robin expressed deep gratitude to the elected and appointed officials who worked tirelessly on behalf of Fire Island. In addition to Schumer, Gillibrand and Hochul, they singled out Congressman Andrew Garbarino, Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine, Brookhaven Supervisor Daniel Panico, and deputy Brookhaven Supervisor Neil Foley. They also thanked the staffs of the State Department of Environmental Protection, the County Department of Public Works, and the Brookhaven Town Supervisor’s office.

“Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, Governor Hochul and the local elected and appointed leaders are heroes,” said Goldhirsch. “We thank them on behalf of all the residents of Fire Island.”

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