



Emergency Watershed Protection

Middletown, RI



Overview

In July 2022, NRCS approved over \$1.6 million in federal funds to restore floodplains damaged by Tropical Storm Ida in Middletown. Federal assistance will help to safeguard lives and property from imminent hazard of flooding, severe erosion and infrastructure loss in future storms. Federal funds are being used to purchase properties affected by recurring flooding in the watershed.

NRCS requested the federal funding through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. EWP authorizes Project Sponsors to purchase private properties on eligible lands and restore floodplain functions to their natural conditions. Eligible sponsors include State agencies, Federally recognized Indian tribes or tribal organizations, or units of local government. Program participation is voluntary. NRCS funding can cover between 75% and 100% of actual project costs, except for infrastructure.

Background

For years, residents on Woolsey Road in Middletown have suffered from severe road and home flooding. The impassable road hindered emergency response and local emergency services often had to rescue residents from their homes by boat.

For the Middletown site restoration, NRCS partnered with the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District (ERICD) and the Town of Middletown (EWP Sponsor) to purchase flood-impacted properties. The properties will be returned to their natural conditions to increase flood storage capacity along the Bailey Brook corridor.

Progress to Date

ERICD contacted eligible property owners with information on how to apply for EWP and helped them with the application, appraisal, and acquisition process, if they chose to participate.



ERICD accepted applications from homeowners and secured appraisals for eligible properties. Property acquisition began in January 2023 and was completed in December 2023.

ERICD purchased 1 flood-impacted property with a single residential home at fair market value. Demolition is expected to begin in early Spring 2025 and restoration will commence when demolition is completed.

The Town of Middletown now holds the title for this property and will maintain it in perpetuity. RI DEM holds a permanent conservation easement on the property to prevent redevelopment of the land.

Next Steps

Restoration may include both structural and nonstructural measures to restore floodplain functions such as water storage, flow control and erosion control, and establish native vegetation.

Major project elements include demolition of frequently-flooded homes and implementation of nature based solutions to lessen future flood conditions.

