

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

East Providence, RI



Overview

In July 2022, NRCS approved over \$7.2 million in federal funds to restore floodplains damaged by Tropical Storm Ida in East Providence. 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 in the Luther's Corner neighborhood of East Providence have suffered from severe flooding of roads and homes. Impassable roads hindered emergency response and local emergency services often had to rescue residents from their homes by boat.

For the East Providence site restoration, NRCS partnered with the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD) and the City of East Providence (EWP Sponsor) to purchase flood-impacted properties. The properties will be returned to their natural conditions to increase flood storage capacity along the Runnins River corridor.

Progress to Date

NRICD 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.



NRICD accepted applications from homeowners and secured appraisals for eligible properties. Property acquisitions began in November 2023 and were completed in February 2024.

NRICD purchased 18 flood-impacted properties at fair market value – 13 residential homes and 5 vacant lots. Demolition began in Fall 2024 and completed in Spring 2025. Restoration will commence in Summer 2025.

The City of East Providence now holds the titles for these properties and will maintain them in perpetuity. RI DEM holds permanent conservation easements on the properties 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.

