



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Planning support offered to coastal utilities recovering from Hurricane Irene

RALEIGH – State and federal agencies are seeking to help coastal water utilities prepare for sea level rise and future storms such as Hurricane Irene.

The Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program, or APNEP, is seeking proposals from sound-front wastewater and drinking water utilities that are vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding, hurricanes and other storms.

The APNEP Citizens' Advisory Committee will select proposals based on criteria such as the vulnerability of the infrastructure to coastal hazards, the population served by the utility and planned infrastructure investments.

Once proposals are selected, representatives from APNEP and the Environmental Protection Agency will work with the utility to pilot a modeling program recently developed by the EPA. The project team will use the model to assess risks, identify adaptation costs and recommend solutions for protecting vulnerable infrastructure.

“This project continues our efforts toward making government work more efficiently,” Gov. Bev Perdue said. “North Carolina and the federal government are partnering with utility companies in developing innovative ideas to protect North Carolinians from future storms.”

In addition to technical expertise, APNEP will provide up to \$6,000 in support of the projects. Project proposals are due Sept. 30.

In the future, scientists predict that climate change will bring rising sea levels as well as coastal storms with increasing intensity and more flooding.

Low elevation and aging infrastructure are prompting more challenges for utilities in coastal North Carolina, especially during major storms. As a result of the storm surge from Hurricane Irene, water infrastructure in many places temporarily failed. This caused some sewage spills into local waterways and forced some homeowners to boil water to ensure it was safe to drink.

“Hurricane Irene reminded us of the vulnerability of much of our coastal infrastructure,” said Bill Crowell, director of Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program. “We hope to help coastal communities invest wisely as they consider how to adapt to future risks.”

Details and application information can be found online at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/apnep/grants>.

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