



# Preservation of Natural Flood Storage Areas, Passaic River, NJ

## Flood Damage Reduction Project

As of: February 2012

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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### DESCRIPTION

Flooding has long been a problem in the Passaic River Basin. Since colonial times, floods have claimed lives and damaged property. The most severe flood, the "flood of record," occurred in 1903, and more recent floods in 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, two in 1975, 1984, 1992, 1999, 2005, 2007 and 2010 were sufficiently devastating to warrant Federal Disaster declarations. The flood of 1984 resulted in the loss of three lives and caused \$642 million in damages (October 2006 dollars). Tropical Storm Floyd in September 1999 caused over \$261 million in flood damages (October 2006 dollars). The April 2007 flood caused over \$686 million in damages (October 2006 dollars).

### AUTHORIZATION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been working on plans to reduce flooding in the basin since 1936, but no comprehensive plan has yet been implemented. Congress authorized a new study of the Passaic River Basin for the State of New Jersey in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1976 (Public Law 94-587) which led to a plan authorized in WRDA 1990 and modified in WRDA 1992, WRDA 1996, and WRDA 2000. The project includes several elements (see separate fact sheet on the Passaic River Main Stem).

The element described herein is the Preservation of Natural Flood Storage Areas, which the State asked the Corps to implement. The Preservation element includes the acquisition of approximately 5,350 acres of natural storage areas, 5,200 acres of which are wetlands and could conceivably be developed, worsening existing flood problems. The State of New Jersey has agreed to continue to protect 6,300 floodway acres, thus avoiding any secondary development. About 9,500 acres of the Central Basin are already protected as designated parkland, bringing the total of natural flood storage areas that would be permanently protected with the project to 21,000 acres. The Preservation element will prevent flood damages from becoming worse. It will not reduce flooding in the Passaic River Basin. The cost sharing is set at 75% Federal and 25% State. The State, as non-Federal sponsor may reduce its share by applying credits included in the authorization.

**STATUS:** The General Design Memorandum for the element was completed in July 1996 and the State requested that the Corps proceed with its implementation at a current cost of \$22.1 million dollars (October 2003 price level). The Corps completed a Real Estate Design Memorandum for purchasing the natural flood storage lands and executed a Project Cooperation Agreement with the State in June 1999. To date, over 3,400 acres have been acquired in fee, by conservation easement, or already held under State protection. The Corps will continue to acquire lands with completion funds received in FY10.

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**Congressional Districts:** NJ-08, NJ-11