



NEW YORK STATE
FLOODPLAIN AND STORMWATER MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

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September 12, 2013

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The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Re: Amendments to the Hudson River Park Act—A.8031/S.5824

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NYSFSMA) asks you to support the objective of a resilient New York coast that is better able to withstand future storms by vetoing the Amendments to the Hudson River Park Act (A.8031/S.5824). This legislation would enable harmful changes to the Hudson River Park that would make New York City more vulnerable to the devastating impacts of coastal flooding.

The New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association is a statewide professional organization dedicated to reducing loss of life and property damage resulting from floods and promoting sound floodplain management. Our membership consists of more than 300 professionals who work in various capacities to manage the risks associated with drainage and flooding.

The legislation (which has passed both the Assembly and the Senate) would allow additional development on piers, in near-shore waters, and along the shoreline of the Hudson River (between Battery Park and West 59th Street). New storm-vulnerable development could include: office space, schools, and a heliport built on floating structures. This is an area where the recent Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Coastal Study identified increased wave hazards and higher flood elevations (based on current conditions). Future hazards are expected to be greater. NYSFSMA thus considers additional building construction on the shoreline and piers of the Hudson River Park to be unsafe and unwise. In addition, NYSFSMA is concerned that the legislation would shift the liability for storm damage in the Park to the taxpayers of New York City and New York State. The Hudson River Park is an extremely vulnerable area where robust safety planning and standards are needed to minimize the destruction of future flood events. It is not an appropriate setting for promoting new development.

The most recent flood hazard work maps for New York City, developed by FEMA, show portions of the Hudson River shoreline of Manhattan to be in a coastal wave velocity zone. This zone has the greatest risk of flood damages due to wave action on top of storm surges. The mapping was conducted for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This is a FEMA program that provides flood hazard maps and encourages states and municipalities to participate by managing flood prone development in return for the availability of federal flood insurance and disaster assistance. Minimum NFIP development standards, adopted by the state and

most of its local communities including New York City, require that any new buildings constructed in coastal velocity zones be located landward of the reach of mean high tide.

Following Hurricane Sandy, you and your administration articulated a vision for increased resilience to flooding and storm damage. NYSFSMA commends you for the progress that has been made toward achieving that vision. In light of the flood hazards in the Hudson River Park area, we recommend that open space be retained and that new building construction on the piers and shoreline be minimized. Vetoing the proposed amendments to the Hudson River Park Act would demonstrate your commitment to resilience, while protecting the people of New York, first responders, and the financial obligations of the City of New York and New York State.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership on flood policy, risk awareness, and public safety. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your administration to identify opportunities for reducing the costs and disruption of future flood events. Please contact us if we can assist with identifying and promoting appropriate uses off New York State's shorelines. Our Public Policy Committee Chair, Janet Thigpen, can be reached at 607-737-5271 and via email at jthigpen@co.chemung.ny.us.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenneth Jennison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kenneth Jennison, CFM
Chair

Cc: Chad Berginnis, Executive Director, Association of State Floodplain Managers