

STATE PARKS MAKE GREAT STRIDES TOWARDS POST-SANDY RECOVERY; LIBERTY STATE PARK NOW ALMOST FULLY OPEN  
Christie Administration Hires Unemployed Workers to Aid the Parks Cleanup Effort

(13/P24) JERSEY CITY - The Christie Administration announced today that up to 78 unemployed state residents can be hired by the Department of Environmental Protection to help clean up and restore Sandy storm-damaged state parks through a National Emergency Grant obtained by the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL).

The DEP already has brought on 33 previously unemployed residents through this program who are working at seven state parks, supplementing full-time state work crews on various projects aimed at getting all state parks ready for the upcoming summer tourism season. The DEP is working with DOL on additional hirings.

"Getting all of our state parks fully cleaned up and restored for the spring and summer outdoor seasons is a priority for the Christie Administration," DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said. "The employees we are hiring through the Department of Labor grants are helping in this important effort at parks that were battered by Superstorm Sandy. They are helping clear debris, repair walkways, restore dunes, and remove trees that are blocking trails and many other important tasks."

The hirings were announced today during a news conference at Liberty State Park. All of New Jersey's state parks have reopened post-Sandy, including Liberty. Most of Liberty Walk (the Hudson River Walkway), which offers unparalleled views of the Statue of Liberty and the New York skyline, has reopened. The Caven Point section of the park recently re-opened, and some 300 of the park's 343 public use acres now are accessible.

But there is still plenty of cleanup, repair and reconstruction work to be done around the Park System, including restoration of dunes at Island Beach State Park and the clearing of trails at many of the state's northern parks.

The \$15.6 million National Emergency Grant or NEG program already has been used to put more than 700 people to work on cleanup efforts on city streets and public properties across 16 hurricane-ravaged Garden State counties since the federal funds were first obtained by the Department of Labor just days after Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey. The NEG program enabled the Christie Administration to directly aid local, county and state government agencies with labor needs for their ongoing cleanup and restoration projects.

"This National Emergency Grant already has gone far toward helping many counties and towns get a handle on repairing their communities. It only makes sense to put some of the funds toward repairing our state parks. While we restore some of New Jersey's natural jewels we also are giving our unemployed neighbors a chance to work and perhaps find opportunities for more permanent employment," Labor Commissioner Harold J. Wirths said at today's press conference.

The DEP currently is employing people through this grant at its two busiest parks, Liberty State Park and Island Beach State Park, and also at Cheesequake State Park, Allaire State Park, Hacklebarney State Park, Washington Crossing

State Park and the Round Valley and Spruce Run recreation areas. The DEP also is considering using these workers to help clear Sandy debris that continues to wash up on beaches along the state's coastline.

State Park Service Director Mark Texel and Liberty State Park Superintendent Rob Rodriguez hope to enroll about a dozen workers through the Department of Labor grant to help continue efforts to fully restore the park, which is the gateway to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. For the past four months, Liberty staff and teams of state parks employees from across New Jersey, supplemented by inmate labor provided by the Department of Corrections, have worked to make repairs and clear away vast amounts of debris caused by the tidal surge that hit the park during Sandy.

Assessments are still being done to determine how to repair and restore the iconic Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal Building, which sustained serious water damage as a result of Sandy's nearly six-foot storm surge, and the bulkhead along the Hudson River at the damaged ferry slip.

"There is still plenty of work to do at Liberty and other state parks, and we intend to take advantage of this program through the Department of Labor to bring on temporary employees to help get the job done," said DEP Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources Richard Boornazian.

Job-seekers interested in signing on for this NEG employment should report to local One-Stop Career Centers or send e-mails to [sandyhelp@dol.state.nj.us](mailto:sandyhelp@dol.state.nj.us). They may also log onto [www.Jobs4Jersey.com](http://www.Jobs4Jersey.com) or call 1-877-682-6238 or 1-800-233-5005 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please be patient if lines are busy.

For more information on Liberty State Park visit:  
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/liberty.html>

For updates on the recovery status of the state's parks and historic sites visit:  
[http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/parks\\_open\\_close.html](http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/parks_open_close.html)