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FEMA Approves County Application Acquiring Flood-damaged Properties Affected Land and Homeowners to Receive Pre-flood Property Value

(Richland PIO) – County residents whose properties were substantially damaged during the October 2015 flood will soon have the opportunity to participate in a buyout program that will prevent future homes from being built in flood prone areas.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently authorized and awarded federal funding for two of Richland County's applications, allowing the future acquisition of 29 flood risk properties in order to return them to County-maintained greenspaces. This property buyout program is funded through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) allowing governments to implement approved long-term hazard mitigation measures that reduce damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure in the event of future disasters.

By pursuing multiple avenues for federal assistance, Richland County's flood recovery personnel successfully procured sufficient funding to ensure these land and home owners will receive 100 percent of the pre-flood value of their properties.

"We are encouraged FEMA has begun awarding these desperately needed funds earlier than anticipated, and we hope this trend continues for the five remaining applications," said Richland County Flood Recovery Chief Mike King. "The remaining applications will allow us the opportunity to acquire a total of 70 flood-prone properties substantially damaged during the 2015 flood event."

The 29 parcels are located within a "special flood hazard area" designated by FEMA. Many of the homes are along Crane and Gills creeks, and all 29 had to meet specific criteria and be approved by FEMA to qualify for the buyout program.

"The County is excited about this approval, as it represents the first major step in providing long-awaited relief to some of our flood impacted citizens," said Tracy Hegler, Richland County Director of Community Planning and Development. "We are working hard to ensure the last few steps run as smoothly as possible for them and help bring some closure to this devastating event."

Once demolition of the properties is complete, they will become County-maintained greenspaces, designed to enhance naturally existing features in a way that helps reduce the impact of hazards on surrounding properties.

For more information about Richland County's flood recovery program, visit rcgov.us/floodrecovery.

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