

Bellone, Mangano put focus on water quality

by John Callegari
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Long Island's two county executives said they have water on their mind as they enter 2014. The heads of Suffolk and Nassau counties spoke to a group of more than 500 business leaders about the state of their respective counties today at the Crest Hollow Country Club as part of an annual Long Island Association breakfast event.

Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano, who spoke first, said federal money from Hurricane Sandy relief could be used to rebuild the county's sewer infrastructure, which has been under duress for many years.

"New Jersey has 14 ocean outflow pipes; Nassau has one," Mangano said. "That means the Bay Park effluent, which serves 500,000 residents, is going right into the bay. We need to reconstruct Bay Park. Sewer infrastructure is the most important priority for this money."

Sandy aid money has been trickling out slowly, if at all, although Mangano said he has hope the region will see a good amount of the appropriated funds this quarter.

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone echoed Mangano's call to protect Long Island's coastal waters, but also noted that the region's groundwater is increasingly at risk.

"Water quality is the new focus of my administration this year," Bellone said. "It's vitally important and has been declining for years."

The Suffolk executive said he would devote resources to bolstering the county's ground water quality, while also seeking funds for surface waters, which have a large effect on the local economy by directly influencing the fishing and shellfishing industries, among others.

Both Bellone and Mangano pledged to keep seeking to increase economic development opportunities for the region, but it was the water issues the men were truly pushing for their 2014 agendas.