

TOP STORIES

FEMA says it won't pay for Bay Park pipe

BY JENNIFER BARRIOS

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency has rejected the state's request for hundreds of millions of dollars to build a pipe to send wastewater into the ocean from the Sandy-damaged Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant.

In a May 22 letter to state Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Joe Martens, the executive director of the federal agency's Sandy Recovery Office said the ocean outfall pipe project was ineligible for public-assistance funding because, while the DEC warned the county about more stringent standards for nitrogen removal in wastewater coming out of Bay Park, the standards were not officially in place when Sandy hit in 2012.

Martens had written the agency on May 6 requesting \$690 million for the pipe and an additional \$130 million for a nitrogen-removal system.

The Bay Park plant discharges into Reynolds Channel, which is suffering due to the levels of nitrogen in the effluent. High levels of nitrogen weaken coastal marshlands, which are key in protecting shore communities from harsh wave action and flooding during severe storms, according to experts.

The ocean outfall pipe would instead send the treated wastewater into the Atlantic Ocean, thus allowing the impacted Western Bays to recover, according to state officials and scientists.

Martens said yesterday he disagreed with FEMA's conclusions and would request a meeting with federal officials to make the case for federal funding for the outfall pipe.

"I don't think the fact they've rejected our request now is the end of the story at all," Martens said. "It's a disagreement that we're going to continue to work on."

Sen. Charles Schumer

(D-N.Y.) said he would continue to push for the project.

"We always knew it was a long shot," Schumer said of the FEMA funding. "However, there are still a number of federal, state and local funding options."

Brian Nevin, spokesman for Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano, said the county would continue to seek out multiple sources of funds — federal and state — for the project.

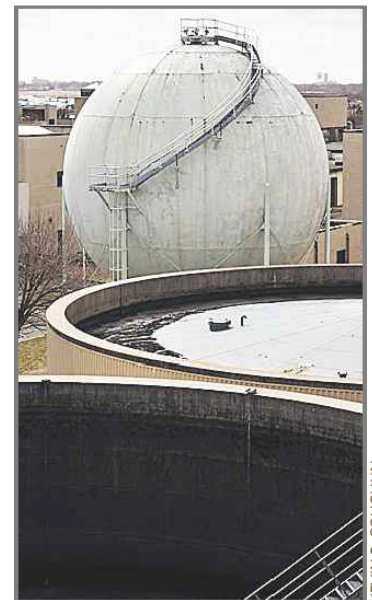
"We have not received notice of any denial and will continue to fight for funding of an ocean outfall pipe," Nevin said yesterday.

The county already has been awarded about \$810 million in FEMA funds to rebuild the plant, which was flooded during Sandy, and is receiving an additional \$150 million for a nitrogen-removal system in Community Development Block Grant money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A source said yesterday

that the DEC's chances of getting federal funding still looked good, especially in light of DEC's strong arguments in favor of the project.

With Keith Herbert



The Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant discharges into Reynolds Channel.

KEVIN P. COUGHLIN