



town of "Moving forward, together"  
**WHITESTOWN**  
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October 18, 2023

**Re: Update – NRCS Buyout Program**

Fellow Resident & NRCS Buyout Participant:

As we near the fourth anniversary of the horrific 2019 Halloween Flood and three years since the start of the Buyout Program sponsored by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), we want to provide you with as detailed of an update as possible.

**The buyout program is still moving forward and is still fully funded.** Anything you may have heard to the contrary is unequivocally false.

As previously communicated, in an effort to ease some of the federal regulatory burden NRCS was subject to, the Town of Whitestown assumed a greater managerial role earlier this year. NRCS continues to provide oversight, technical assistance and, of course, funding. Above all, NRCS continues to be a good partner. Whitestown took on more responsibilities – with the same level of staffing – because we strongly felt helping NRCS as much as we could was the right thing to do. As we have stated since the beginning of the Sauquoit Creek Channel & Floodplain Restoration Program several years ago, our only motivation is to help those who have suffered from the devastating effects of repetitive flooding by tackling issues we thought warranted more attention, resources and urgency, such as buyouts and mitigation. Like you, we want the NRCS Buyout Program to be completed as soon as possible.

The Town of Whitestown is prepared for closings to start. Before Whitestown can proceed with scheduling and conducting closings, NRCS needs to complete a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review for the buyout program, including each approved property in the program. The purpose of a NEPA review is to assess social, economic and environmental impacts associated with a federal action such as the buyout program. Federal agencies, like NRCS, have to comply with environmental policies and goals as outlined by NEPA. This process can be very tedious and time consuming, but progress is being made. We hope to be able to share a new, tentative timeline by the end of this year. Each applicant will receive a letter with the timeline.

While we acknowledge there is still work to do, when the buyout program was first announced roughly three years ago, NRCS indicated the program would take at least four years to complete due to the large number of applications and slew of program requirements – which have always been beyond Whitestown’s control. Nonetheless, we have made it our mission to work as quickly and efficiently as we can, fully knowing the future of hundreds of people rely on our success – a duty we do not take lightly.

It is important to note we have achieved many significant milestones, including:

- Securing tens of millions of dollars from NRCS to not only buyout homes, but to also demolish homes and restore the project area to its natural state;
- Processing approximately 175 applications;
- Contracting with a firm to complete an independent appraisal of each of the roughly 175 applicant parcels;
- Clearing title on all properties currently in the buyout program; and
- Developing a preliminary restoration plan.

With that said, we realize every applicant receiving a check for their home is the most critical milestone of all. However, we cannot get there unless important – and at times burdensome and time consuming – steps are taken and fulfilled.

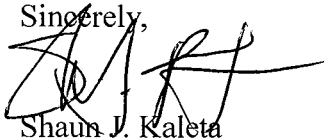
The NRCS Buyout Program in the Village of Whitesboro is the largest buyout program in New York State by a wide margin. The program is a monumental and unprecedented undertaking for a small government, like the Town of Whitestown, to successfully complete from start to finish. Despite the challenges associated with a program of this magnitude, Whitestown, NRCS and our many partners will not be deterred. We remain 100 percent committed to delivering what was promised – ensuring every homeowner impacted by the 2019 Halloween Flood who wants to be bought out, is bought out. In the meantime, Whitestown has completed two of its four proposed mitigation projects. Project 3 – the enlargement of the floodplain bench recently constructed adjacent to the CSX Railroad Bridge – is scheduled to go to bid in 2024. Construction is expected to last about a year.

In closing, we, again, hope to be able to share another update with you by the end of this year. We understand your frustration, but we also appreciate your patience beyond measure. We will not quit.

As always, do not hesitate to contact either of us by phone or email with any questions:

Supervisor Kaleta – (315) 736-1131 or [supervisor@whitestown.net](mailto:supervisor@whitestown.net)  
Maggie Reilly – (315) 736-1131 or [margaret.reilly@ramboll.com](mailto:margaret.reilly@ramboll.com)

Sincerely,



Shaun J. Kaleta  
Town of Whitestown Supervisor



Margaret Reilly, P.E.  
Buyout Program Manager