



**CITY OF COLUMBIA**  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

**December 14, 2015**

**The Honorable Nikki R. Haley**  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia SC 29201

**Dear Governor Haley:**

Thank you for your leadership during one of the most difficult emergencies our state has faced. I appreciate your hands on approach and your cooperation with local officials in the immediate response to the storm. I especially appreciate your reaching out to the congressional delegation to ask for federal assistance with recovery efforts. However, as Columbia and other South Carolina communities, businesses, institutions and property owners assess the impacts of the storm, it is increasingly clear that statewide recovery costs will exceed \$500 million and could possibly reach \$1 billion.

I urge you to work with the Administration and our congressional delegation to secure the necessary federal assistance to address these needs and I pledge my full support in your efforts to do so. Specifically, I respectfully ask that you request:

- \$1B for communities in South Carolina in supplemental Disaster CDBG,
- A special allocation of 4 times the State's annual per capita annual allocation of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits, and Historic Preservation Tax Credits,
- A special allocation of 500 Permanent Supportive Housing Vouchers and
- Waiving the FEMA Public Assistance match requirements for projects larger than \$40 million, which will be critical to our efforts to repair the Columbia Canal.

The Army Corps of Engineers estimates that our state's water infrastructure suffered approximately \$78 million in damage, the Federal Highway Administration estimates that it will cost \$88 million to repair Interstate and other federal-aid highways and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture estimates crop losses of \$376 million. In addition, the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business estimates that the storm had a \$12 billion impact on South Carolina businesses, with an especially harsh impact on our tourism industry.

Here in Columbia, the storm's impact was dire. It nearly wiped out our main water treatment plant, ruptured dozens of water and sewer mains, closed over 100 streets, flooded one fire station and our primary fire training facility, breached multiple dams, and damaged nearly 400 homes and 60 businesses.

Our initial estimate for storm recovery for public facilities in Columbia already total over \$74 million, a

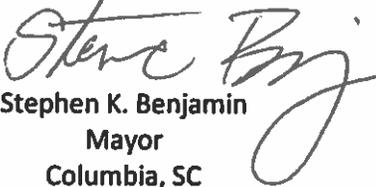
number that increases to \$130 million when long-term mitigation costs are added.

We will face an especially steep challenge repairing the Columbia Canal, which is critical to the operation of our primary water treatment plant, which provides drinking water to approximately 375,000 South Carolinians. We have already spent \$10 million on emergency repairs and estimate that restoring the canal to its pre-storm condition will cost \$40 million. In addition, we estimate that mitigation efforts to reinforce the canal levees and build a permanent bypass pumping system that will protect the canal and our water treatment plant from future storms will cost another \$50 million. Given the importance of this critical infrastructure to the public health, safety and economic wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of South Carolinians, including the tens of thousands of soldiers stationed at Fort Jackson, I strongly believe that exceptional federal assistance for this project is critical and that it should have normal match requirements waived.

I do not make this request lightly. However, a \$25 million match would be a significant burden for our water and sewer system, which has an annual capital budget of \$120 million. It is important to note the cost of repairing and upgrading the canal comes on top of an additional \$120 million that we plan to invest in our water and sewer system above and beyond our normal capital investment baseline, with more than 70 percent of those investment mandated by the federal government. Adding another \$25 million to that price tag would simply be too great a burden for our ratepayers to bear, especially those in low- and moderate-income households.

I appreciate your leadership during this difficult time and thank you for your attention to my concerns and specific requests. Please let me know how I can be of assistance as we work to ensure sufficient federal assistance for our recovery efforts.

Cordially,

  
Stephen K. Benjamin  
Mayor  
Columbia, SC