

# *Recovering from a Natural Disaster - lessons learned from Penn Yan flooding*

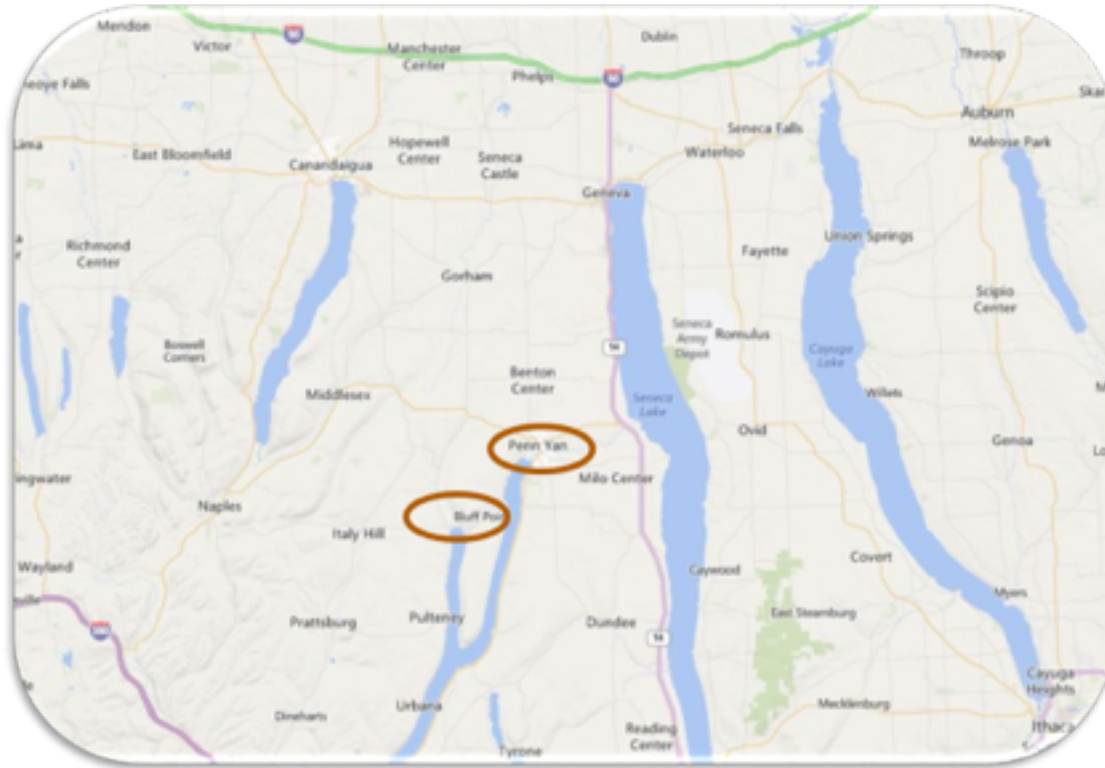
Environmental Finance Center  
Syracuse University  
April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015



**Finger Lakes**  
Economic Development Center

Steve Griffin, CEO

# Yates County Overview



## Yates County

- Population
- County: 25,000
- Penn Yan: 5,200
  - Greater PY: 15,000
- Jerusalem: 4,500
- Lots of wineries & breweries

## Geography

- Keuka Lake
- Rolling hills
  - 1000+ culverts, gullies, creeks, streams
    - 15-20 per mile around the lakes

# Storm Overview - what the heck happened???

- May 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>
- Rain started falling over night catching many by surprise
  - Approximately 6-9” of rain fell between 9pm – 5am on 5/13
  - 2-4” of additional rain fell on 5/16
- Too much water, too fast caused many of the culverts and creek beds to overflow
  - Large debris simply too much to handle
  - Steep hills helped accelerate water flow

# Storm Overview - Impact Toll

- 50 + businesses & 250 + homes damaged
  - Few had flood insurance
    - Last flood happened in 1972
      - Swollen river flood effected properties adjacent to Keuka Lake and Keuka Outlet (connects Keuka to Seneca Lake)
      - May flood was a “gully washer” and effected nearly entire local geographic area
    - Local insurance companies worked hard with clients
- 300 emergency calls over 3 day period
- 248 structure inspections
- Total roads damaged: 126 + parking lots
- Total damage:\$6,500,000+ Roads and Culverts alone































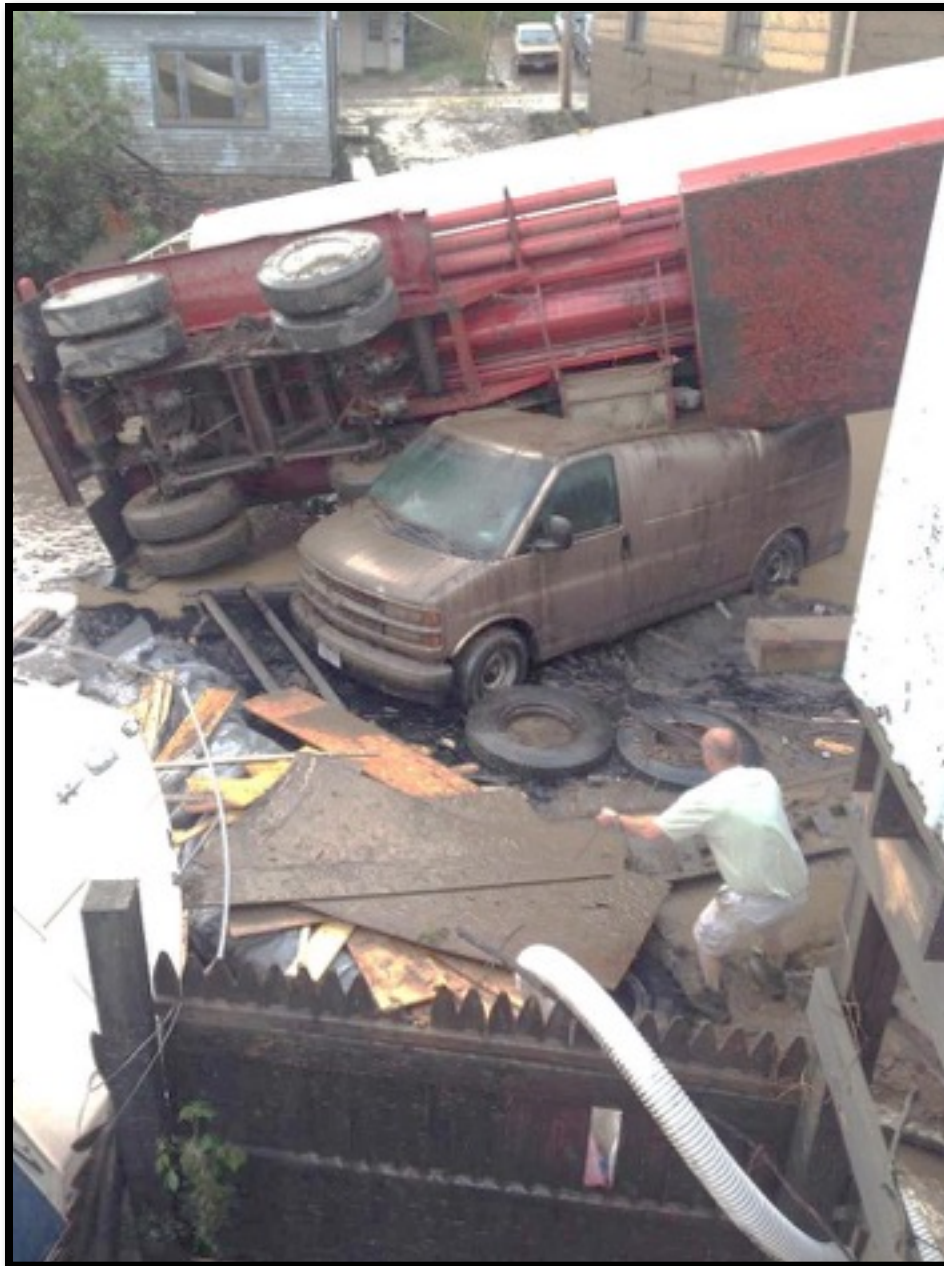


















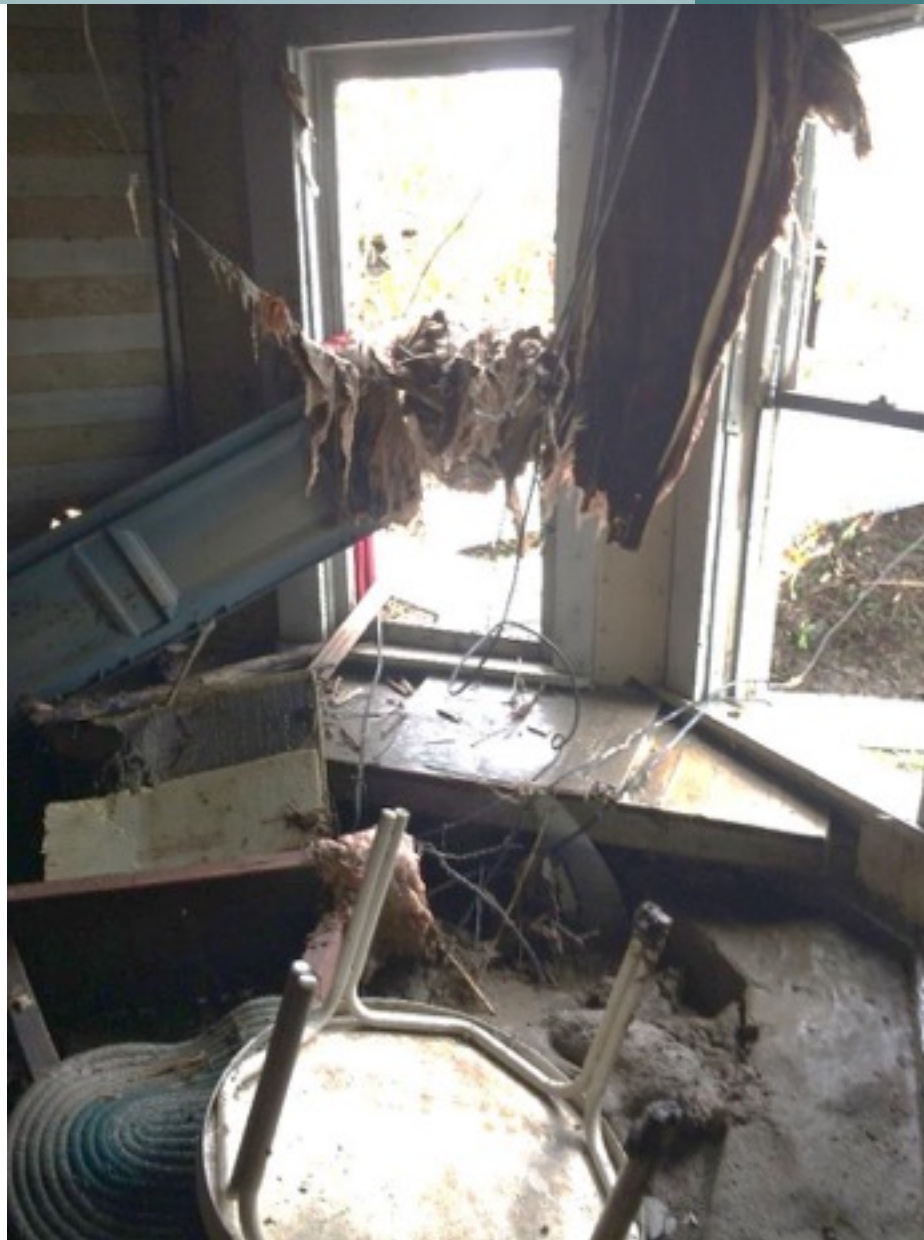




















Area high school students helping with clean up





NYS Emergency Management meeting with effected community

# How did we respond?

- Immediate organization
  - Led by Private and Public organizations
  - Certain individuals gravitated to leadership roles
  - Disseminated information to the public
- Immediate, near and future assistance challenges
- Responsibilities were assigned
- Points of contacts given
  - Infrastructure
  - Business
  - Residential
- Primary organizations stayed in contact coordinating relief efforts





# FLEDC: Direct Assistance

Goal: Get businesses opened ASAP

- Emergency Financing: partnered with Lyons National Bank
  - 0% interest loans – flexible payment terms
    - Payments begin a month or two after re-opening
    - 13 emergency loans - \$419,500 lent out
      - \$ in hands of businesses within 7 days
      - Vetted applicants to verify need
- Work with NYS on financial assistance
  - “Please don’t come unless you have specific program and instructions...”
- Information clearing house with NYS
  - Assisted businesses with NYS applications, refunds, questions, challenges

# Keuka Housing: Direct Assistance

Goal: Get people in homes

- Emergency Financing: partnered with Foundations / Grants
  - 114 applications for direct homeowner assistance
  - Coordinated Local & State assistance
    - Vetted applicants to verify actual need
- Information clearing house with NYS
- Assisted businesses with NYS applications, refunds, questions, challenges
- Continuing grant efforts
  - Hot water tanks, septic systems failures still occurring



# The Living Well: Direct Assistance

Goal: Get people what they need

- Became THE lead volunteer organization
- Coordinated receipt & delivery of physical donations
- Feet on the street
  - Directed volunteer help to those that needed it
    - Assigned project managers, home inspectors to home owners in need

# Lessons Learned: Be Ready to...

- Difficult to be physically ready for a natural disaster
- Efficiency and speed in response is key
- Who are the key organizations?
  - Establish primary points of contact/local agencies to
    - Be information clearing houses
    - Coordinate volunteers, donations, media
    - Local Agencies outperformed National Agencies
- Develop platform for sharing information across all parties
  - Government entities / key organizations / media / effected individuals & businesses
- Pre-arrange funding through local financing institutions for those effected
  - Have applications ready



# Lessons Learned: Be Ready to...

- Continuing public education:
  - Conduct Citizen preparedness classes
    - Importance of keeping household items far away from stream beds
    - Urge home and business owners to annual review insurance policies
      - AND to understand what is/isn't covered
- Establish Emergency Operation Center
  - Yates EOC received some water damage during flood
- Verify Local Emergency Planning Committees are meeting
  - Yates County LEPC continues to improve their efficiencies
    - 60+ individuals met prior to Hurricane Sandy

# Lessons Learned: Be Ready to...

- Determine current emergency housing supply
  - If needed establish plan for additional units
    - Was a real challenge for some areas including Yates County.
- Develop plan to manage volunteer labor
- Establish main entity for financial contributions
- Have media plan
  - Publicize the entity for financial contributions
  - Who volunteers should contact
- Conduct follow up meetings to analyze what worked and what needs improvement



# We're Back....

