

One Year Ago, One Year Later

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A little over a year ago, my wife Margaret and I had big plans to celebrate our 34th wedding anniversary. We have beautiful children, a beautiful granddaughter and we've made a good life for ourselves near the St. Lawrence River in Cape Vincent, NY. We were looking forward to the celebration. Sometimes life has other plans, though.

I was a little over eight months into my new job as Commissioner of the State Department of Agriculture and Markets at the time. Some days I get caught up in the day to day minutiae of running an agency, but then something happens that brings me back down to earth and shows me exactly why I do what I do. A year ago, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee happened. When the rains stopped, the damage was severe. Needless to say, my anniversary plans were put on hold.

Governor Andrew Cuomo appointed me co-chair of the Upstate Storm and Flooding Recovery Task Force. I traveled the state to meet with businesses, residents and farmers in the aftermath of the storm. If I saw too much red tape or a hindrance to progress, I let people know that this was not business as usual and jumpstarted the process to get things moving.

Many towns were devastated by flooding. For example, at that time the Town of Jay was still digging out from flooding in the springtime. I personally saw homes where water was five feet deep. Cars were parked in driveways that had dropped three to four feet into the ground. Trees were down, apples were blown to the ground, septic systems were washed away, electricity was out, windows were broken,

basements were flooded, furnaces were ruined, clean drinking water had to be brought in and mud was everywhere.

People helped their neighbors any way they could – with housing, cleanup and hundreds of small kindnesses. I saw the devastation – and these kindnesses – first-hand. It was a sight to see, as was another event that took place on Labor Day weekend in 2011.

That weekend, I participated in Governor Cuomo's Labor for Your Neighbor initiative, which gave New Yorkers a chance to help those affected by these terrible storms. New Yorkers turned out by the hundreds, including many of my fellow co-workers at the Department, helping to clear debris from homes and shovel out basements. It was a great day in New York, with people traveling from communities that were not hard hit to help where the damage was the worst. The Governor himself pitched in to help remove debris from homes.

Before, during and after the storms, Governor Cuomo was on point and state government was on the scene, doing everything possible to help businesses, homeowners and farms. Among the services available to farmers in the aftermath of the storms were:

- Agriculture Disaster Energy Efficiency Program
- Agricultural Community and Recovery Fund:
- Soil and Water Conservation
- Farm Operation Match
- Capital-on-Farm Needs

These programs helped replace electric and natural gas systems, rehabilitated farmland, provided emergency funding for feed replacement, and provided funding for capital losses such as permanent fixtures and equipment.

One year later, the work continues – and state government is still a partner in these efforts.

According to the Governor's office, over the past year, more than \$277 million in direct aid helped farms, families, individuals, businesses, and localities throughout the state, includ-

ing \$137 million to the seven hardest hit counties. To date, 774 farms and 741 businesses have benefited from this state assistance.

I've been a farmer my whole life, but I've never seen anything like I did in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. It was a life changing experience that I will never forget. I am so proud to have had the opportunity to stand with our state's farmers, businesses and citizens through this difficult time. I have seen first-hand how resilient New Yorkers are, and how, with just a little help from the state, we can bounce back from even the most destructive disasters.

This year, my wife and I celebrated 35 years of marriage. I was working again, but this time I was working at the Great New York State Fair – the best Fair in the country. I met a lot of farmers at the Fair this year who couldn't say enough about the work state government did in the aftermath of the storms. A year ago, many of them had lost their crops or their equipment, but they didn't lose hope. A year later, that hope is stronger than ever. It represents the spirit of the New New York that Governor Cuomo is tirelessly working towards.

What a great way to celebrate my 35th Anniversary.

Maple

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Undertaken at the close of the millennium, the project's student interviewer met with more than 20 North Country producers to record their recollections of life in the sugar bush. Audio tapes and transcripts of these dialogues provide a springboard for visitor response, and Museum guests are encouraged to write down their own memories of sap and syrup.

"We have aimed for a more visible presence in terms of community outreach as well as cyberspace," Martin says. "This summer we maintained an information booth at the Woodsmen's Field Days, staffed by knowledgeable Board members with a boost from Gifts-to-Go, featuring T-shirts, caps, and souvenirs