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Sandy recovery to be 'a long slog,' most in NJ think

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By Peg Quann Staff writer

Posted on April 26, 2013 by **Peg Quann** Sandy is long gone, but most New Jersey residents think it will be years before the superstorm is forgotten. Nearly 64 percent of residents who responded to a new Rutgers University-Eggleton poll said it will take at least one to five more years before normalcy in the state returns, while another 20 percent said it will take much longer, if at all.

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A large majority — nearly 90 percent — think specific measures should be taken to avert a similar catastrophe in the future. They include mandatory use of pilings to elevate buildings in flood-prone areas as well as the construction of sea walls and sand dunes.

Those were the main findings of the poll, taken of 923 New Jersey adults the first week of April.

The poll showed that respondents were more evenly split when asked whether shore-front development should be repaired to its pre-Sandy state without significant changes: 48 percent favoring versus 47 percent opposed; 5 percent didn't know.

David Redlawsk, poll director and a professor of political science at Rutgers University, said the apparent contradiction in the strong support for improving the shore with the more equal polling for and against repairing shore-front development to pre-Sandy conditions showed that people will respond favorably to specific recommendations.

“When we ask with a specific thing, people focus on that specific thing. It’s not really that people are contradictory. They just think of different things,” Redlawsk said in a telephone interview. “For the most part, people support broad efforts to minimize future damage.”

About 71 percent either strongly or somewhat supported converting former developed land into open spaces, while the same total favored replenishing or widening beaches with public funds.

The polling showed that about half the state’s residents were affected by the storm and its aftermath personally — 10 percent seriously, 39 percent moderately and 51 percent a little. Most reside in northern or shore counties. Only 22 percent of South Jersey residents in the Philadelphia region said they were affected.

“For the most part, New Jerseyans seem realistic about the challenges facing the state,” Redlawsk noted. “While some see things as already back to normal most recognize the recovery effort is a long-term event. While people hope it will all go well, they recognize it’s a long slog.”

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