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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**State Treasurer Pearce Highlights Use of Title III Funds in Bennington County**

POWNA, Vt.—State Treasurer Beth Pearce today applauded work by fire and town emergency crews in Pownal and Bennington in responding to Tropical Storm Irene. Pearce was in Pownal to meet with local officials and view ways these communities used Title III federal reimbursements to cover expenses related to the storm.

"I am pleased my office was able to facilitate the reimbursement of more than \$25,000 to the Town of Pownal and to the Bennington Rescue Squad for emergency services related to flooding caused by Tropical Storm Irene," said Pearce. "We want to utilize every funding option available to assist Vermont communities in making a full recovery. I especially appreciate the work of Rep. Bill Botzow and other legislative, town and emergency officials, to work quickly to identify qualified expenditures so that we could take advantage of these available funds."

In all, approximately \$110,000 in Title III funds was disbursed by the State Treasurer's Office to five Vermont communities. The town of Pownal received \$11,000 to repair a fire pond adjacent to Pownal Elementary School after it became unusable following Tropical Storm Irene. Bennington Rescue received \$14,181 to cover personnel costs related to Tropical Storm Irene and to replace equipment damaged or lost during their storm response.

"I appreciate that the Treasurer found a way to help a small rural community like Pownal with a much needed safety and infrastructure repair. Her resourcefulness in notifying communities about these funds is a great help to our towns as we continue with our recovery efforts," said Pownal and Woodford Rep. Bill Botzow.

Last year, the Treasurer's office initiated a request for funding to towns with Green Mountain National Forest land within their borders for reimbursement of emergency service expenses stemming from damage due to floods in 2011, including Tropical Storm Irene. The source of the federal funds was available to the State under Title III of the Secure Rural Schools Act. The Act provides funds to the Green Mountain National Forest for projects that benefit infrastructure, watersheds, ecosystems and other natural resources on the forest. The funds channeled to Vermont could only be used for specific reimbursement for emergency services on the National Forest, for development of community wildfire protection plans, and activities that encourage fire safety preparation by homeowners.

"Our crews worked around the clock during the storm evacuating people from area neighborhoods. Of course, in any big event, equipment will break or go missing. It is very helpful to have funds like this to reimburse us for such costs," said Bennington Rescue Interim Executive Director Erin Ingebretsen.

Other towns receiving reimbursement through Title III were the Town of Hancock, \$1,758; Town of Jamaica, \$9,095; and Town of Ripton, \$73,856.

"We want to make sure we don't leave resources on the table when they could be used by Vermonters," said Pearce. "By strengthening our emergency services, we will be better prepared for any challenge that comes our way."

Pearce also recognized Vermont's Congressional delegation, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Green Mountain National Forest personnel, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture for assisting in the process.