

Since our last report was written, the Pascack Valley experienced another major flooding event. On June 23rd a severe storm that stalled just north of the New Jersey border in Rockland County unleashed a tremendous amount of rainfall in a very short period of time causing widespread flooding and extensive damage in our area. Borough officials met as they have in the past to review the most recent event to determine from an emergency response perspective if there are any improvements to be made regarding how we respond to these emergencies.

In early August the Pascack Valley Waterway Management Task Force comprised of local officials, State Legislators, NJDEP officials, Bergen SWAN, Hackensack Riverkeeper, United Water and other utility authorities will meet to review the three flooding events with engineers present from the municipalities and United Water. We are also looking for the Army Corps. of Engineers to review and update their previously published report on flooding in the Pascack Brook. The goal is to provide a better understanding of the variables that contributed to the flooding and to understand controls and procedures that may mitigate some of the effects of severe storms in the future. Once we have compiled the information, we are hopeful to be able to arrange a public meeting to review the findings with the residents of the region, to make sure everyone has the most up to date information possible.

In July, Mayor Birkner and Councilwoman Waneck attended a presentation by Princeton Hydro that was hosted by Bergen SWAN on Stream Management and Flood Control. Princeton Hydro presented some interesting ideas that can be taken to alleviate nuisance flooding. We learned that some debris is beneficial in stream bank stabilization, for example, a downed tree stump should remain when the rest of a tree is removed as part of de-snagging. Also, we learned that some de-snagging is actually detrimental. It is recommended that de-snagging not occur just to say that you are doing something, but requires thought and planning. The following website provides information regarding large woody debris in the stream, www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/fishing/restoration/largewoodydebrisfactsheet.pdf). The Westwood website has been enhanced with a number of informative resource links and will be updated on a regular basis.

In June, the Borough of Westwood received a report from United Water of the locations identified during the Pascack Valley Waterway Management Task Force walk in the stream that needed attention. The Borough of Westwood had its DPW and Property Maintenance Officer follow up on locations where snags and trash were located as well as sites where owners are dumping vegetative waste. This fall, we will work on educating owners along the streams about ways to preserve stream banks. Bergen SWAN is preparing a homeowners fact sheet on steps to take to stabilize the stream in your backyard. We will also send out a letter to local landscapers and will be diligent about monitoring dumping violations.

Senate Bill S-54 continues to sit in the Senate Environment and Energy committee. Please let Senator Bob Smith, the Chair of that committee know your sentiments regarding this bill, senbsmith@njleg.org.

Cindy Waneck, Westwood Councilwoman