

Hackensack, Sept. 28

Westwood proactive on flood prevention

Regarding "Reservoir debate in Westwood" (Your Views Sept. 28):

The efforts being undertaken by the borough of Westwood to provide a level of relief to our residents affected by chronic flooding should not be characterized as a battle against United Water.

United Water is an important partner for both the safe and reliable distribution of water to our residents and for the protection of a most precious natural resource, along with lands buffering our drinking water supply.

Our position regarding the operation of the Woodcliff Lake Reservoir and the Bascule gates on its dam is one that respects both an adequate year-round water supply and a certain degree of protection aimed at mitigating the effects of flooding caused by severe precipitation events. Unfortunately, United Water points to the state Department of Environmental Protection, which has been unwilling to cooperate with our requests.

The Woodcliff Lake dam is scheduled to return to normal operation after nearly two years of reconstruction. Immediately upon its completion, our residents will once again be placed directly in harm's way without the modest buffer we are seeking. For several decades there have been a variety of task forces set up with seemingly every new election cycle. Case in point is the Bi-State Flood Commission, which has yet to meet.

Meanwhile, by purchasing homes in flood-prone neighborhoods, replacing leaking sewer lines and requiring adequate retention basins and rain gardens in developments, Westwood has been a leader in flood mitigation and protecting the water supply. We are well-versed in the conditions that cause flooding in our area and in measures we can take to lessen its impact.

John Birkner Jr.

Westwood, Sept. 29

The writer is mayor of Westwood.

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