

Since our waterways were clear earlier this year, the borough is continuing to work towards keeping our waterways clear of debris. Letters went out this fall to our local leaf removal contractors as a reminder that the dumping of leaves, limbs and vegetative waste into our waterways is illegal. If you see dumping, please report this activity. We continue to monitor commercial properties and the maintenance of waterways that are adjacent to them and Westwood is participating in the "Hurricane Irene National Emergency Grant Disaster Relief Employment Program". Bergen County received \$1,280,000 in grant funding for this program and Westwood has been approved to hire up to four (4) workers to assist with the Hurricane Irene related clean up and repairs. On Monday December 5th two men started working with the Westwood DPW under this program. Their first assignment will be litter and debris removal along stream banks.

Westwood is one of 13 communities in NJ eligible for funding in the wake of hurricane Irene. On Saturday, December 3rd, local officials, as well as state representatives and approximately 100 residents attended a presentation by FEMA to learn about what federal assistance is available to raise or demolish their flood damaged homes. The FEMA presentation discussed the programs available to residents and the Borough as well as the life cycle of the FEMA program. Presently approximately \$2 million will be available to Westwood out of the current pool of approximately \$45 million. There were no black and white answers at the meeting as to how the funds will be allocated or who is eligible. The borough needs to collect data from residents as to who is seriously interested and FEMA needs to determine the economic feasibility of the properties submitted. Ultimately the borough will determine which properties should be bought at "fair market value" or elevated out of those identified by FEMA. The borough would have to bear the cost of demolishing a home and maintain the property going forward. The time frame is short, FEMA stated that they are looking at a three month turnaround. Information is available at [Floodsmart.gov](http://Floodsmart.gov) or [FEMA.gov](http://FEMA.gov). Westwood is also actively pursuing other funding opportunities from the Blue Acres program.

Senate Bill S-54 continues to sit in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. Recently our local legislators have introduced legislation in response to flooding concerns. Assemblyman Schroeder and Assemblywoman Wagner introduced legislation that would regulate the lowering of reservoir levels during weather emergencies. The bill proposes that the DEP would set levels and the OEM could order the levels lowered. The bill also indemnifies the reservoir owners.