

PASSAIC RIVER RESTORATION REPORTER

Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners

WWW.PVSC.COM

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PVSC CLEARS OBSTRUCTIONS IN FAIRFIELD

In what is perhaps the largest river cleanup project to date the River Restoration Program, at the behest of Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, has begun clearing a four mile section of the Passaic River in Fairfield.

The necessity of this cleanup was brought into high focus in June when a front page article in the Star-Ledger covered a meeting among the DEP, County Executive Joe DiVincenzo and officials and residents of Fairfield. This longstanding problem stems from a section of the river that runs through a nature preserve where, over the years, a great many trees have fallen into the river creating logjams. Heavy rainfalls produce flooding which leaves a section of Fairfield underwater.

Municipal and county officials were able to obtain the permits needed to work in this protected area to remove these trees but they had neither the equipment nor the know-how to effectively remediate this problem. It came as no surprise that County Executive DiVincenzo called upon PVSC to enlist the help of the River Restoration Department.

The project, which started in late July, presents a host of hurdles. In addition to the sheer number and size of trees that need removal the remoteness of the area is such that the last half hour of the trip has to be



One of the many natural dams that have formed on this stretch of the Passaic River.

taken by PVSC's all-terrain vehicle 'buffalos' using pathways that have been cleared by the township bulldozer.

Then there is the river itself that, in a deeply wooded area, has accumulated so many trees that a series of dams have formed; a large tree gets washed into the river and lodges itself across the river trapping silt and other debris along with smaller trees to form a dam. There are any number of these blockages in this part of the river and Passaic Valley River Restoration has the equipment and methods to remove them. We use a boat to get to the trees and chainsaws to remove whatever is necessary so that the large tree can be hooked with a steel cable and pulled out with our Multi-Terrain Loader. This piece of equipment has treads for traction and plenty of power to pull a large tree out. Then, like a game of pickup sticks, everything else is taken out and the logjam is broken.



PVSC crew readies a tree for removal

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A perfect example of the type of fallen tree that our crew encounters.



For the surrounding community a tree this size could cause big problems

FROM PAGE 1

Fairfield, ever on the lookout for flooding, monitors river levels and can see a quick drop in water depth as huge dams are removed. The idea is to clear the river so that when the big rains do come the water can stay in the river and not inundate nearby residential areas. This project which was covered on August 19th by the Star-Ledger is ongoing much to the benefit of those who live nearby.



This particular jam was so thick it sprouted plant life

Who We Are

The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners (PVSC) was established in 1902 in response to a public outcry to alleviate pollution in the Passaic River and its tributaries. Today, PVSC services the wastewater treatment needs of commercial, industrial and residential users in 48 municipalities across Essex, Hudson, Bergen, and Passaic Counties. Currently the fifth largest wastewater treatment facility in the nation, PVSC continues to be a true leader in environmental progress.

In 1998 PVSC began the Passaic River/Newark Bay Restoration Program as a means to return the Passaic River system to its potential as a source of recreation and pride in the communities that we serve.

The Passaic River Restoration Reporter is a publication funded by the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners. It is intended to provide information on the progress of the Passaic River/Newark Bay Restoration Program.

RUNNING TOTALS DEBRIS REMOVED BY PASSAIC RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM SINCE 1998:

Shoreline Cleanups 6,079.10 tons

River Skimming 1,316.03 tons



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A CLEAN SWEEP FOR THE PASSAIC RIVER

The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners River Restoration Program has added another weapon to its arsenal. On the theory that the best way to keep the river free of debris is to not let it get into the river in the first place, PVSC has begun a street sweeper pilot program in four towns in southern Bergen County.

This June, PVSC purchased an Elgin Broombear Street Sweeper and began a program to clear the streets of debris; much of which gets washed into storm sewers and out into the Passaic River during large rainstorms. Various studies have shown that a rigorous program of street sweeping is a key component in controlling so much of the litter that we see in the river. We know this first hand as after most large rainstorms the river is choked with the kinds of debris we see on our streets in dry weather. It is not the final answer to removing all of this material but it is a piece of the overall solution to a floatables abatement program. It is too early to get a real sense of how much of an impact we are having on the river but one thing is for sure the towns where we are conducting our pilot program are happy to have us.



(Left to Right) PVSC Commissioner and Lodi City Manager Anthony Luna with sweeper operator Tom DePiro and DPW Superintendent Jerry Woods.

GET INVOLVED!!

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FLOATING ISLAND GETS LANDLOCKED

Through the years PVSC's skimmer boats have encountered all variety of floating objects on the Passaic River. For the most part we remove styrofoam cups and plastic water bottles along with the ever present driftwood, but every once in a while we'll see something unusual: like a three-wheeler complete with knobby tires and license plates or a fully intact telephone pole with signs.

This particular item is noteworthy not so much for what it is but for its sheer magnitude. It is safe to say that the barge pictured to the right is the single largest object removed from the river to date by PVSC's skimmer boat operation.

The hero of this story is equipment operator Keith Stewart who while out with the smaller skimmer in Rutherford heard from some locals about an 'island' floating in the Passaic River. "They called it an island because it was so covered with all variety of plants including 6-foot tall trees", said Mr. Stewart. He managed, with no small amount of difficulty, to push the barge to The Nereid Boat Club ramp where

a restoration crew, led by Tom Scorsone, secured it by rope to the shoreline. They returned the next day to dismantle it and load it into two 30 yard dumpsters. Total weight of the barge after washing out most of the silt was over 21 tons.



Floating barge as it sits on the Nereid Boat Club's ramp

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