

Passaic River Flood Advisory Commission Acknowledgment of Comments

The Passaic River Flood Advisory Commission wishes to thank the public for attending the meetings on July 28, 2010 in Pompton Lakes and on August 18th in Little Falls, for the insightful comments on their experiences, and for offering recommendations to make the Passaic River Basin more resilient to flooding.

The comments have been separated into three groups:

1. Comments that are part or will be part of the PRFAC ongoing deliberations and for which action has been initiated by the PRFAC, NJDEP or other agencies
 - Debris accumulating on the Oakland Dam should be regularly removed.
NJDEP had previously requested that the USACE provide a review of the situation and possible resolutions; the NJDWSC, under contract to NJDEP for maintenance of the floodgates, has periodically removed some of the larger debris, rather than wait for flood flows to move debris over the dam and downstream.
 - Debris and sediment which impedes flow throughout the basin should be systematically removed.
NJDEP, at the request of the PRFAC, will be convening the basin's municipal engineers to identify specific areas that may, if cleaned, improve river flow during flood conditions.
 - Keep reservoirs at 80 per cent full levels; lower reservoirs prior to storms, use reservoir pumps to reduce flooding.
This had been previously referred to the NJDEP Division of Water Supply for a feasibility evaluation at the request of the PRFAC. This evaluation should be completed by November 1.
 - The Pompton Plains Crossroad (CR504) Top Soil Depot fill needs to be removed.
NJDEP has taken legal action against the operator of this site; the operation is in violation of both the Solid Waste Act and the Flood Hazard Area Act and is an active case with the Attorney General's Division of Law. NJDEP will continue to pursue this enforcement action in the courts.
 - The United States Army Corps of Engineers did no downstream studies.
From 1976 on forward the USACE has conducted entire basin wide studies. These have included about 150 alternative solution studies including buy-outs, floodplain regulations, channels, levees, floodwalls, reservoirs, tunnels and multiple combinations of these. These studies were to address upstream as well as downstream flooding issues. As an example, the proposed underground diversion "tunnel" was investigated as a basin wide (upstream and downstream) flooding solution for the basin.
 - How could the Oakland floodgates be built without the Passaic River Flood Tunnel?
The flood control project at Oakland could be effective and independent of the Main Stem project. The effectiveness review is part of the PRFAC deliberations. NJDEP had previously requested that the USACE proceed with other Main Stem Project Elements to be implemented through the USACE/NJDEP Partnership. The other projects being implemented independently of the flood tunnel include the Preservation of Natural Flood Storage Areas, the Joseph G. Minish Waterfront Park, and the Harrison Levee/Floodwall Project.
 - A Pequannock stream dredging permit has expired. Can NJDEP modify the permit's timeframe?
The NJDEP Flood Hazard Area Regulations require that a new permit be applied for if an existing permit has expired.

2. Comments or questions to which specific responses can be provided here, separate from the deliberations of the PRFAC

- Test for DuPont contamination south of the known plume field.
This issue has been referred to the NJDEP Site Remediation Office.
- Why did data disappear from the United States Geological Survey website after the storm?
The data relating to the gages upstream and downstream changed after USGS did a post-storm evaluation and found that the gage downstream had an incorrect datum and the gage upstream failed during the peak of the storm. Neither failure affected the Oakland floodgate operation.

3. Comments that will be considered during the PRFAC ongoing deliberations

Localized Flood Mitigation

- Begin short term projects immediately in anticipation of probable flooding.
- Beatties Dam on the Passaic River should be lowered.
- Beatties Dam should be built higher with a movable spillway; remove rock outcropping.
- Divert floodwaters at Beatties Dam.
- Use Jersey City reservoir pipelines to divert water from the Passaic River during floods; use Cedar Grove reservoir for water diversion; build reservoir in West Essex Park.
- Build floodgate into Beatties Dam.
- Run of the river dams with no active purpose should be removed.
- Open Oakland floodgates before storm at a time that considers antecedent ground conditions.
- Manually operate the Oakland floodgates to maximize flood flow balancing between upstream and downstream.
- More intensive upstream and downstream modeling of the river system is needed to correctly configure the Oakland floodgate operation.
- Keep the Oakland floodgates permanently closed.
- Eliminate the Pompton Lake.
- Place flood valves on storm sewers to prevent backup into streets; storm sewers need regular maintenance; raise storm drains.
- Home elevations are not appropriate in all communities or for all home styles, but should be done where appropriate.
- Buyouts can adversely affect the community and are cost prohibitive.
- Create more flood storage areas and create buffer zones around the river, particularly at the vacant Chevy dealership adjacent to the Ramapo River.
- Wetlands restoration should occur in the property buyout areas.
- Restore the streambank on Riverside Drive and put floodwalls on Riversedge Drive in Pompton Lakes.
- Remove debris field on Green Acres property, Pompton Lakes.
- Remove debris field at Suchorsky Park, Little Falls.
- Dawes Highway Bridge needs to be reconstructed; the Van Ness bridge construction on Riverdale side has used too much fill; bridge abutments should not be located in streams.
- Stream velocities need to be maintained to prevent silt accumulations under bridges.
- Better private property landscaping will retain water onsite; properties should absorb roof runoff.

- Dredge at Two Bridges road.
- Maintain Peckman River.
- Review Route 80 effect on river flow.

Basin-Wide Flood Mitigation

- Multi-jurisdictional (beyond individual municipal) cooperation and oversight of flooding issues should be established.
- The USACE Passaic River Flood Tunnel should be constructed; the Flood Tunnel should not be constructed; the Flood Tunnel study gives all the information needed to make a decision, no need for more studies.
- Channelization, shown to be a success in Oakland, should be considered throughout the basin.
- Move water downstream with aqueducts.
- Dredge the Passaic River.
- Morris flood canal system should be evaluated for use in flood mitigation.
- Lower all basin reservoirs before storms.
- Review the bridge construction plans of NJDOT for abutment placement and potential effects on stream flow.
- Implement TMDLs for the river segments.
- Long term solution to flooding should be evaluated and implemented.
- Each river has a distinct "personality" with unique challenges.

Funding Assistance

- Funding is needed for the FEMA Community Rating System's storm drain management work.
- Work with private sector to accomplish major flood mitigation projects.
- Petition New Jersey Legislature for project funding.

Flood Response & Recovery

- Install more river gages and coordinated web cams to record flood flow observations.
- Multijurisdictional flood warning system should include an AM radio advisory when people cannot access internet and phone; existing phone system to receive river gage info is no longer in place.
- Flooding affects residents' emotions and family financial stability.
- Flood water, because it contains raw sewage and other pollutants, has a significantly adverse aftermath for residents.
- Traffic problems on Route 46 during floods need to be fixed; elevate the road.
- NJDOT should stage flood signage earlier.

Regulatory Reform

- Impervious cover is increasing in the basin, thereby increasing flooding.
- NJDEP regulations prevent or inhibit stream maintenance; permit fees to municipalities should be waived and permits issued more quickly.
- Smaller development does not trigger state stormwater regulations; with much of the Passaic River basin built-out, stormwater management should be required on individual lots and for residential knockdowns and rebuilding of larger structures.
- NJDEP should enforce no net fill in floodplain regulations.
- Place a moratorium on all floodplain construction; decrease permit extension timeframe.